

Appendix 11.1 – Landscape Character Extracts

The Landscape Assessment of Kent

October 2004



ALDINGTON RIDGE



High up on the Hythe Beds the Aldington Ridge stands out above the plain of the Low Weald. The good quality loam soils are generally well-drained and support a mixed land use ranging from large arable fields east of Aldington to the pastures north of the B2067 from Court-at-Street to Upper Otterpool. Along the edge of the ridge south-west of Aldington are distinctive irregular pastures developed on former landslips, that are characteristic of this junction between the Hythe Beds and the Atherfield Clay below.

Although essentially a rural landscape the settlements at Lympe and that north of Port Lympe introduce discordant elements in the landscape, their siting appearing unrelated to topography or other natural features. These developments grew up in association with the wartime airfield, however, sited to take advantage of the elevated position of this hinterland to the historic Old Romney Shoreline. This airfield is now closed, which also explains why the land locally appears disturbed where much of the fabric has been demolished. The village of Aldington too has spread haphazardly down its Roman road giving little sense of structure. It retains dramatic views over the Low Weald, however.

Court-at-Street is an attractive village, however, on the edge of the North Downs AONB. To the south there are fantastic views glimpsed through the often wooded AONB to Romney Marsh below.

Along the B2067 in the vicinity of this village are bushy hazel hedges but locally these have been lost giving a gappy appearance. North of the B2067 the land falls away more gradually to the Sellindge plateau with the North Downs framing the views beyond.

[next >>](#)

ALDINGTON RIDGE

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Raised landscape with steep slopes down to neighbouring character areas. Good quality loam soils. Mixed, generally open farmland. Landslips in association with the underlying clays. Dramatic views to the Low Weald, Romney Marsh and the Downs.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

The ridgeline landscape is strongly unified with few visual detractors. Built form has a moderate positive impact - large farmsteads and houses are interspersed with 20th century linear development. Ecological interest is weak due to sparse woodland cover and intensive arable use over large areas.

Sensitivity

There is an ancient time depth to the area which is influenced by the isolated ridgeline farms, the ridgeline road, and the occurrence of some remaining pastures and small copses. Historic features such as hedgerow and field boundaries do not contribute greatly to the local distinctiveness. Ragstone farm buildings constitute a unique element in this landscape which adds to the strong continuity. Tree cover is limited and visibility is high within this area.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Restore the frequency of woodland areas to the lower slopes of the ridgeline.
Restore a smaller scale, but more open landscape by removing field boundary divisions.
Conserve the open settings of the farmsteads.
Conserve the infrequency of built form and conserve open views.
Conserve the open nature of the field system.
Conserve and restore small woodland areas.
Restore ecological interest by the sensitive management and restoration of small pastoral grasslands.

CONTEXT

Regional: Greensand Belt

Condition

good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
	low	moderate	high

Sensitivity

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

Moderate.

Pattern of elements:	Unified.
Detracting features:	Few.
Visual Unity:	Strongly Unified.
Cultural integrity:	Variable.
Ecological integrity:	Weak.
Functional Integrity:	Weak.

Sensitivity

High.

Distinctiveness:	Characteristic.
Continuity:	Historic.
Sense of Place:	Moderate.
Landform:	Apparent
Extent of tree cover:	Open
Visibility:	High.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE AND RESTORE.

Conserve and restore small woodlands.
Restore open areas of farmland.
Conserve the infrequency and scale of built form.
Restore the ecological interest of pastoral land.

[previous <<](#)

ALDINGTON: LYMPNE



ALDINGTON

In the extreme west of this area, the underlying sandstones gradually give way to the heavy Weald Clay, resulting in softer, more rounded slopes. This change is also reflected in the high proportion of deciduous, ancient woodland, most of which was formerly coppiced, which dominates the scarp at Aldington. The gentle topography of the lower slopes, however, allows some arable cultivation and as a result the wild, bleak appearance of the eastern sections is lost. The loss is reinforced by the elements of suburbanisation associated with the substantial properties which are scattered across the area, overlooking the magnificent views.

LYMPNE

Aldington lies within the larger character area of Lympe.

The most southerly part of the AONB extends from Hythe west to Aldington. The character area includes part of the Hythe escarpment, which overlooks Romney Marsh. Until the early Middle Ages, this scarp formed the edge of a large, marshy lagoon. Gradually, however, the lagoon was reclaimed, through a combination of the natural accumulation of silt and shingle, the construction of sea defences and sustained drainage. The resulting land now forms one of the most fertile areas of Kent, with a particularly long growing season.

Most of the Hythe escarpment is the eroded face of the greensands and in particular of the calcareous Kentish ragstone. Over the centuries the surface has gradually slipped to form a steep, uneven slope, enclosing the northern edge of the marsh. The vulnerability of the coast to attack has left a legacy of old military defences scattered across the area, from the tumbled walls of the Roman fort of Lemanis, to the 19th century Royal Military Canal at the foot of the escarpment and the last of the Second World War 'Sound Mirrors' behind Burmarsh, 'listening' for approaching aircraft.

The scarp is highly visible from the flat marsh, forming a long hillside of rough grassland, dotted with scrub. Several large deciduous woodlands break up the sweep of the landform, being more characteristic in the west around Aldington. Between these woodlands there are spectacular views across Romney Marsh and the English Channel.

[next >>](#)

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Rounded slopes
Deciduous woodland dominates the scarp.
Gentle lower slopes with arable cultivation.
Large properties with views over the marsh

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

This is a strongly unified, simple landscape with very few visual detractors, dominated by heavily-wooded ridges. Broadleaf woodland and managed coppice provide widespread semi-natural habitats. The limited number of secreted residential properties overlooking the marsh have a positive impact on the area. This area functions well - it is ecologically robust and has a clear cultural focus. It is considered to be in a very good condition.

Sensitivity

Although on a dominant scarp landscape, views are well enclosed by woodland, therefore the visibility is limited to 'moderate' within the area itself. There are open views over the adjacent marsh from points at the top of the ridge. The sensitivity of the area remains high due to the very strong time depth of the woodland and steep, wooded lanes. Other characteristic elements are more recent, such as the ridgeline residential development.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Conserve the limited influence of built development within the area and in views of the scarp
Conserve the wooded, narrow characteristics of highways
Conserve the scale and unity of broadleaf woodland coverage over the area

CONTEXT

Regional: Kent Downs AONB

Condition				
good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE	
	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE	
	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE	
		low	moderate	high
Sensitivity				

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition		Very Good.
Pattern of elements:	Unified.	
Detracting features:	Few.	
Visual Unity:	Strongly Unified.	
Cultural integrity:	Variable.	
Ecological integrity:	Moderate.	
Functional Integrity:	Strong.	

Sensitivity		High.
Distinctiveness:	Characteristic.	
Continuity:	Ancient.	
Sense of Place:	Strong.	
Landform:	Dominant.	
Extent of tree cover:	Enclosed.	
Visibility:	Moderate.	

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE.
Conserve the scale of woodland coverage
Conserve the limited influence of built development
Conserve the key characteristics of highways

BRABOURNE LEES MIXED FARMLAND



On the Folkestone and the Sandgate Beds to the east of Ashford, these gently undulating mixed farmlands extend from the outskirts of the town at Willesborough Lees to the small settlement of Lilyvale. The character area is bounded to the south by the M20 motorway.

The topography is varied ranging from the lower and flatter lands close to Ashford and the Great Stour to the undulating landscape at Hatch Park and the knoll at Brabourne Lees. The soils are generally fine and loamy but those over the sandy Folkestone Beds are better drained and of higher quality whilst the Sandgate Beds can give rise to seasonal waterlogging because of the clay beds within them.

Woodlands are locally characteristic of the landscape notably around Hatch Park, although much of this is managed for coppice. At Flowergarden Wood the acid soils have given rise to a characteristic ground flora consisting of heath bedstraw, tormentil and foxglove under a canopy of sessile oak and birch.

Also interesting are the remnants of a rich valley bog which can be found at the adjoining Willesborough Lees. This is a landscape of damp rough grazing land surrounding the marsh with its marsh violets, purple moor grass and unusual sedges and bog mosses. These Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs) are close by the eastern outskirts of Ashford so may come under increasing pressure for recreation. At Hatch Park a large part of the south of the parkland has been lost to arable since the 1960s.

This part of the park also suffers immensely from the presence of the M20 especially from traffic noise which can be very dominant. The north of the park is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and has many old pollards of historic and conservation interest despite losses due to the 1997 storm. Much of the grassland has been invaded by bracken and ragwort. From this higher part there are tremendous views to the North Downs to the north. Much of the surrounding woodland is chestnut coppice or is being interplanted with conifers.

To the east Brabourne Lees sits on a rise above the surrounding countryside. To the north-west the landscape is quite open with many hedges removed. The village itself sits up quite noticeably in the landscape.

[next >>](#)

BRABOURNE LEES MIXED FARMLAND

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Gentle undulating landscape with fine loamy soils locally subjected to waterlogging. Medium-sized woodlands locally important. Mixed farmlands. Remnant heathy habitats such as valley bogs, acid grasslands and woodlands.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

This is a unified landscape in which historic farmlands and woodlands co-exist with wetlands and grasslands on an undulating landform. There are very few visual detractors and the ecological integrity of the area is very strong, due to the diverse network of woods, pastures and wetland.

Built form, which includes estate cottages, has a positive impact on the landscape. Formerly widespread hedged field boundaries are mature and declining. The area is considered to be in very good condition.

Sensitivity

This is an historic landscape with the notable exception of the ancient parkland at Hatch Park. The key elements combine to give a characteristic landscape, although the heathy habitats within the deer park are considered to be rare. A strong sense of place is derived from the very varied characteristic features which include oak standards, willow and ash on stream lines, strong and varied patches of woodland, estate planting and localised detail in farm cottages. Views are intermittent over an unremarkable landform, therefore visibility is low.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Conserve the frequency, scale and diversity of the woodland.
Conserve the small scale of the rural landscape.
Reinforce the elements of ancient parkland by long-term management.
Reinforce hedged field boundaries by appropriate management and replanting.

CONTEXT

Regional: Greensand Belt

Condition				
	good	REINFORCE	<u>CONSERVE & REINFORCE</u>	CONSERVE
	moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition		Very Good.
Pattern of elements:	Coherent.	
Detracting features:	Few.	
Visual Unity:	Unified.	
Cultural integrity:	Variable.	
Ecological integrity:	Moderate.	
Functional Integrity:	Strong.	

Sensitivity		Moderate.
Distinctiveness:	Unique/Rare.	
Continuity:	Historic.	
Sense of Place:	Strong.	
Landform:	Insignificant.	
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent.	
Visibility:	Low.	

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE AND REINFORCE.

Conserve woodland
Conserve small scale field patterns
Reinforce ancient parkland
Reinforce hedgerows

[previous <<](#)



This long narrow, gently sloping character area lies on the Gault Clays east of Ashford and forms a continuation of the Hampton and Wye character areas described in The Kent Downs Landscape. The landscape is contained by the Great Stour's alluvial valley, west of Naccolt and to the north-east by the AONB boundary.

Characterised by clayey or loamy soils subject to waterlogging the traditional crops of the area are winter cereals and short term grasslands. Small woodlands and larger plantations are also locally characteristic and with the sometime bushy hedgerows, give parts of the area a feel similar to the Low Weald. Settlement is restricted to farmsteads and small hamlets.

The land between Naccolt and Nackholt Wood is significantly wet, necessitating a series of dykes and drains to allow its use as pasture. It is significant that this area has remained under grass whilst over the past thirty years the better drained land round about has been converted to arable. Further east beyond Fords Water, the landscape becomes more open with a mix of pasture and arable.

The most significant woodlands are those north of Naccolt Farm that form a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). These include Nackholt, Foreland and Hampton Woods. Although managed in very different ways, all these woods retain many of the features of very damp ancient woods, with oak standards and mixed coppice of hornbeam, ash, field maple, hazel and alder. Also present is a rich ground flora and many species of butterfly and moth. Elsewhere these woods have been replanted with conifers, poplars or chestnut coppice.

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Gentle sloping landform with poor quality soils subject to waterlogging
Mixed farmland including a large percentage of grassland
Small copses and larger woodlands locally, of high nature conservation value

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
This area includes some woodland clusters of high nature conservation value and also some more intensive arable farmland. Heritage features are distinctive and in good condition. The large patches of woodland are a strong element. Notable features include distinctive red brick farmsteads. Generally, built development has a moderate positive impact. There are very few detractors in this rural landscape. The landscape pattern is occasionally interrupted by the decline in field boundaries.

Sensitivity
Visibility is very low throughout the enclosed but unremarkable landform. A strong sense of place is derived from historic landscape elements and from a greater time depth associated with the woodland. This landscape has a range of distinctive features from pollard ash to mature hedgerow standards, wide road verges and long-roofed barns. It is considered to be of moderate sensitivity.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Conserve the existing woodland cover and reinforce the use of broadleaf species at key locations. Reinforce semi-natural habitats between woodlands. Identify and reinforce the ecological interest of wetland corridors. Reinforce distinctive features such as pollard ash and standards in hedgerows. Reinforce the wide verges and hedged boundaries of highways by ensuring their reinstatement as part of engineering works. Conserve the isolation and characteristics of historic farmsteads.

CONTEXT

Regional:	Greensand Belt
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Condition	low	moderate	high
good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
	Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

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

Sensitivity	Moderate.
Distinctiveness:	Unique/Rare.
Continuity:	Historic.
Sense of Place:	Strong.
Landform:	Insignificant.
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent.
Visibility:	Low.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
CONSERVE AND REINFORCE. Conserve and reinforce broadleaf woodlands Reinforce wetland habitats Reinforce mature standards in hedgerows Conserve historic farmsteads and their settings

HYTHE ESCARPMENT: LYMPNE



HYTHE ESCARPMENT

The Hythe escarpment, unlike the chalk face of the Downs, is furrowed throughout its length by small streams, which emerge from the sandstone, high up on the hillside and run down into Royal Military Canal. To the east of the Port Lympne Wildlife Sanctuary, most of the scarp face is botanically rich rough grassland, with a considerable amount of scrub encroaching up the slopes. The sparse vegetation and the pitted, unstable soils produce a bleak, wild landscape, reflecting its exposed location. To the west, however, it becomes shallower. Remnant hedgerows are still evident across the slope, while bright green fields of improved grassland jar with the softer, seasonally changing colours of the rough pasture. Many of the buildings, including Lympne Castle, are built in the local ragstone.

The simplicity and integrity of this landscape and its high visibility from much of Romney Marsh mean that any developments or changes which take place on its slopes will have major effects not only on the immediate landscape but also on the wider setting of Romney Marsh.

LYMPNE

The Hythe Escarpment forms part of the larger character area of Lympne.

The most southerly part of the AONB extends from Hythe west to Aldington. The character area includes part of the Hythe escarpment, which overlooks Romney Marsh. Until the early Middle Ages, this scarp formed the edge of a large, marshy lagoon. Gradually, however, the lagoon was reclaimed, through a combination of the natural accumulation of silt and shingle, the construction of sea defences and sustained drainage. The resulting land now forms one of the most fertile areas in Kent, with a particularly long growing season.

Most of the Hythe escarpment is the eroded face of the greensands and in particular of the calcareous Kentish ragstone. Over the centuries the surface has gradually slipped to form a steep, uneven slope, enclosing the northern edge of the marsh. The vulnerability of the coast to attack has left a legacy of old military defences scattered across the area, from the tumbled walls of the Roman fort of Lemanis, to the 19th century Royal Military Canal at the foot of the escarpment and the last of the Second World War 'Sound Mirrors' behind Burmarsh, 'listening' for approaching aircraft.

The scarp is highly visible from the flat marsh, forming a long hillside of rough grassland, dotted with scrub. Several large deciduous woodlands break up the sweep of the landform, being more characteristic in the west around Aldington. Between these woodlands, there are spectacular views across Romney Marsh and the English Channel.

[next >>](#)

HYTHE ESCARPMENT: LYMPNE

<div>PHOTOGRAPH</div> <div></div> <div>CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES</div> <div>Sandstone scarp with rough grassland. Remnant hedgerows. Unimproved agricultural grasslands Scrub at base of slopes</div> <div>LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS</div> <div>Condition</div> <div>This is not an entirely traditional landscape; the view of agricultural grasslands is occasionally interrupted by wire fencing and inappropriate planting. Prominent castles and extensive houses have a high positive impact on the area. Inaccessibility is also a strong element of this landscape. Rough pastures on the scarp and the strong corridor of the canal and ditches at the base of the scarp provide much ecological interest within the more sterile improved grasslands. The condition of this area is considered to be good.</div> <div>Sensitivity</div> <div>The scarp is a dominant landform, particularly as it looks over the wide expanse of coastal marsh. The limited tree cover does not curtail the high visibility within and around the landscape. There are notable unique ancient and historic sites within this landscape. Historic farmsteads also follow a distinct pattern on the strong landform, contributing to the strong sense of place. The sensitivity of the area is considered to be very high.</div> <div>LANDSCAPE ACTIONS</div> <div>Conserve the setting of ancient/historic sites and monuments by ensuring long views to sites, but retaining the element of inaccessibility. Ensure the sensitive management of rough and pastoral grasslands in key areas. Conserve the woodland cover to the ridge tops, and links with small copses on the scarp. Conserve the network of drainage courses feeding the canal, using sensitive management to realise the full ecological potential.</div>		<div>CONTEXT</div> <div>Regional: Kent Downs AONB</div> <div>Condition</div> <table><tr><td>good</td><td>REINFORCE</td><td>CONSERVE & REINFORCE</td><td>CONSERVE</td></tr><tr><td>moderate</td><td>CREATE & REINFORCE</td><td>CONSERVE & CREATE</td><td>CONSERVE & RESTORE</td></tr><tr><td>poor</td><td>CREATE</td><td>RESTORE & CREATE</td><td>RESTORE</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>low</td><td>moderate</td><td>high</td></tr></table> <div>Sensitivity</div> <div>SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS</div> <div>Condition</div> <div>Good.</div> <div>Pattern of elements: Coherent. Detracting features: Few. Visual Unity: Unified. Cultural integrity: Variable. Ecological integrity: Moderate. Functional Integrity: Coherent.</div> <div>Sensitivity</div> <div>Very High.</div> <div>Distinctiveness: Unique/Rare. Continuity: Ancient. Sense of Place: Very Strong. Landform: Dominant. Extent of tree cover: Intermittent. Visibility: High.</div> <div>SUMMARY OF ACTIONS</div> <div>CONSERVE.</div> <div>Conserve wooded top to the scarp Conserve rough and pastoral grasslands Conserve the canal, wetlands and drainage courses Conserve open views to/from sites and monuments</div>		good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE	moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE	poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE		low	moderate	high
good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE																
moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE																
poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE																
	low	moderate	high																

MERSHAM FARMLANDS



This small character area on the Hythe Beds south-east of Ashford is an undulating farmed landscape on the Hythe Beds at around 60 metres. The landscape is one of open arable fields and small-scale pastoral farming with small copses and old gappy hedgerows. The good quality soils used to support a few orchards but these were never typical of this area and have now gone. Suburban housing wraps around the village centre at Mersham with its pleasing ragstone and red brick buildings.

The remaining pasture and hedgerows are vulnerable both to potential removal for arable use and, some have been lost to the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. It is likely that the proposed mixed use development at Cheeseman's Green to the south will have a profound effect on the tranquillity and character of Mersham and the surrounding farmland. Increased traffic levels could put pressure on the narrow lanes and village for 'improvements' that would destroy their rural character. This small character area is gradually being enclosed by development on three sides.

Although not often visible in the undulating landscape, the M20 remains audible within these otherwise quiet farmlands.

[next >>](#)

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Undulating landscape with good quality soils. Mixed farmland with small-scale pastoral farming and more open arable fields. Small copses and gappy hedgerows.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

The condition of this area is influenced by many visual detractors which include the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, urban edge development and unsympathetic farm buildings. The landscape pattern itself is a coherent pattern of farmland and settlement around the ridgeline, interrupted by loss of hedged boundaries. Many fields are intensively farmed, woodland is limited and hedgerows are declining - semi-natural habitats are therefore not widespread and the ecological integrity of the area is weak. Heritage features of hedgerow and tree cover are vulnerable.

Sensitivity

Landscape features do not contribute to a real sense of local distinctiveness. The narrow highways retain some character, following ancient routes. Settlement is recent and undistinguished. A sense of place is very weak. Historic features such as field boundaries are becoming obscure.

Views are open over and apparent landform, and therefore visibility is high. This area has a moderate sensitivity due to the high visibility.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Restore the cultural integrity of the landscape by enhancing the setting of the ridgeline road and the setting of existing settlements.

Create integrity within the farmland by removing redundant hedgerows and replanting small copses on the lower slopes.

Control the effect of visual detractors. Maintain views where possible.

Create more diverse habitats by the sensitive management of selected pastoral and arable farmland.

CONTEXT

Regional: Greensand Belt

Condition				
good		REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
		poor	CREATE	<u>RESTORE & CREATE</u>
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Very Poor.
Pattern of elements:	Coherent.
Detracting features:	Many.
Visual Unity:	Interrupted.
Cultural integrity:	Poor.
Ecological integrity:	Weak.
Functional Integrity:	Very Weak.

Sensitivity	Moderate.
Distinctiveness:	Indistinct.
Continuity:	Recent.
Sense of Place:	Very Weak.
Landform:	Apparent
Extent of tree cover:	Open
Visibility:	High.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

RESTORE AND CREATE.

Create small copses

Create diverse grassland and arable farmland

Create open landscapes where appropriate

OLD ROMNEY SHORELINE WOODED FARMLANDS



This character area is a gently undulating landscape characterised by extensive coppiced broadleaf and mixed plantation woodlands, such as Orlestone, linked by small to medium sized fields and paddocks. Hornbeam can be dominant as the coppice layer with wood anemones carpeting the ground in spring, and conspicuous ditch and bank at the laneside.

As the land rises towards the south and south east, it begins to divide into a distinct pattern of ridges and valleys until the woodlands open out at the edge of the Old Romney shoreline, giving spectacular views over Romney Marsh as far as Dungeness. The land drops steeply down through an open arable landscape towards the expansive low-lying flat farmlands of the marsh and Shirley Moor.

The landscape between Woodchurch, Kenardington and Appledore is more undulating with a smaller scale landscape pattern similar to the High Weald due to the underlying Tunbridge Wells sands. Settlement is scattered and consists mainly of farmsteads and small suburban-style villages such as Bromley Green and Shadoxhurst that cluster round a few vernacular buildings of more historic origins. Appledore stands out architecturally in the locality, but with the old shoreline too marked by a number of churches of historic origin. The Royal Military Canal is a remarkable historic feature at the edge of the character area, valued now as much for the wildlife it supports.

Generally the feeling is of a remote and unpopulated landscape. The area has a less prosperous ambience than the London-orientated western Low Weald, with occasional vernacular buildings in poor repair.

The traditional land use pattern has been affected by mechanisation to give the large hedgeless fields on the south-east slopes, by the creation of conifer plantations within the broadleaf woods and through the linear creep of development in the past from the few villages along the otherwise unspoilt lanes. Rusting, overgrown cars are testimony to a time when dumping in the woodlands was locally a problem. A strong sense of concord is maintained in most places, due to the enclosure provided by the large tracts of woodland and many small fields and lanes at their margins. Where this pattern breaks down on the south facing slopes a different although bleaker identity is in harmony with the cultivated and open landscapes of Romney Marsh.

[next >>](#)

OLD ROMNEY SHORELINE WOODED FARMLANDS

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Flat, or gently undulating with distinctive ridges and valleys dropping down to Romney Marsh.
Large broadleaf or mixed woodlands.
Small -scale pattern of pastoral fields.
Scattered settlement.
Historic churches along the Old Romney Shoreline.
Remote feel

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

This heavily wooded area is largely intact in the west, but interrupted on the eastern parts by more intensive and open farming. There are few visual detractors and the area is generally unified. Wooded semi-natural habitats are extensive. Built form has a varied mix of vernacular style but has a positive impact on the landscape. Culturally, the area is strong and retains a remote but well functioning atmosphere, although there are areas of remnant plum and cherry orchards.

Sensitivity

This remote area has a strong sense of place. Woodlands, settlement patterns and highways have an ancient quality, whilst the farmsteads themselves are historic. Woodland also has rare characteristics such as very large oaks, hornbeam coppice and wood bank vegetation, which contribute to very distinctive elements of an otherwise 'characteristic' landscape. Views are mostly enclosed by the frequent tree cover and visibility is low.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Conserve the woodland cover.
Reinforce the low intensity and diversity of land use within small farming areas.
Reinforce wooded areas to arable areas.
Reinforce local vernacular detail in built form - identify emergent styles.
Conserve the narrow winding characteristics of highways with wide verges, shallow ditches and well maintained hedges.

CONTEXT

Regional: Low Weald

Condition

good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
	low	moderate	high

Sensitivity

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

Very Good.

Pattern of elements: Coherent.

Detracting features: Few.

Visual Unity: Unified.

Cultural integrity: Good.

Ecological integrity: Strong Network.

Functional Integrity: Very Strong.

Sensitivity

Moderate.

Distinctiveness: Characteristic.

Continuity: Ancient.

Sense of Place: Strong.

Landform: Apparent.

Extent of tree cover: Enclosed.

Visibility: Low.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE AND REINFORCE.

Conserve woodland characteristics - broadleaf with oak standards
Conserve highway characteristics
Reinforce local vernacular built form
Reinforce wooded edges
Reinforce small scale non-intensive land use

[previous <<](#)

ROMNEY MARSH SETTLEMENTS



The initial settlements on the marsh grew up on the horseshoe-shaped land which bridged the tidal zone between the old shoreline and the offshore shingle bar.

Most of the Romney Marsh Settlements character area follows the sandier substrata of this older marshland, which was not inundated by the storms of 1287, in contrast to the old marshland south of the Rhee Wall.

To the south, the Rhee Wall is a visual and physical boundary. To the north and east, the area is contained by the old cliff line and the coast, respectively. Views are distantly enclosed by the cliff line and by tree-lined horizons.

The landform is low lying with undulating creek ridges. Field patterns are irregular, and have the appearance of being large due to the lack of immediate enclosure. Farming is predominantly cereals but there are some potatoes, soft fruit and blocks of pasture, especially around Snargate and nearer the old cliff line at Hamstreet.

The pasture often appears very ragged; different colours and textures of grasses grow in patches on old creek ridges and fencing is a mixture of old timber and new metal and wire. In contrast, the arable fields have a uniform appearance and are seasonally variable in colour and movement, although there are still sheep fencing and gates to be seen. Farmsteads are dispersed, mostly single dwellings close to a larger group of big agricultural buildings.

The villages of Burmarsh, St.Mary in the Marsh, and Ivychurch are some of the ancient settlements which sit on the edge of the area, formerly round the edge of an inland lagoon. The circuitous road which links them would have followed the edge of the lagoon. These are very compact, small villages; each centred on a church and sheltered from view, and from the weather, by groups of trees.

Ditches are an integral part of the landscape, some reed fringed, describing straight lines through the middle of fields; many cleared or grazed to the edge of the water level by sheep. Hedgerows are an occasional feature as field and road boundaries, more frequent towards the old cliff line. Roads are tortuous and narrow, following the top of banks and dykes with narrow grass verges and ditches to either side.

Groups of willow remain from the lines of pollard willows which are thought to have been a more widespread feature of the ditch system. Occasional clusters of trees around buildings and in hedgerows give some sense of enclosure, although on a large scale, and the views are still distant.

Running parallel to the northern boundary of the character area is the Royal Military Canal, designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). In some stretches, such as south of Hamstreet, it goes almost unnoticed as the arable crops are taken up to the canal edge. This is in stark contrast to other stretches of the canal which have mature trees and grassy earth banks to emphasise its presence. Bridges, sluices and pumping stations are regular elements all over the character area, but are especially noticeable at junctions around the canal.

The landscape in the Romney settlements is largely unified, despite the introduced seasonal variations of arable cultivation. Its great potential to support wetland habitats is limited by the influence of the current farming methods which are supported by the European Common Agricultural Policy.

The Rhee Wall is a very large distinct earthwork, behind which the landscape of the Romney Settlements sinks. The ditch along the north side of the Rhee Wall is very wide, suggesting that it was the source of material for the earthwork. The sides of the bank itself are grassy with occasional scrub vegetation and are high enough to afford long views over the adjacent farmlands.

[next >>](#)

ROMNEY MARSH SETTLEMENTS

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Distinctive lowland with dominant flat landform and drainage ditches.
Remnant willow pollards.
Varied tree lined distant enclosures with distinctive poplars. Narrow roads, ditches either side.
Scattered farmsteads, small villages.
Small bridges and sluices common.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

The condition of the area is considered to be high. The landscape elements are unified and there are few detractors in the view. Irregular fields are delineated by ditches and the remote settlements on minor sandy ridges are accentuated by clusters of willow and poplar. The extensive network of ditches has high ecological potential but the habitats are modified by reduced water levels, unsympathetic management and the intensity of arable and pastoral fields. This remote area has a strong cultural integrity. There are few obvious vernacular styles, but the built form has a moderate positive impact.

Sensitivity

This historic landscape is generally distinct and also has some locally distinct elements, such as the churches and sheep fencing. This area is comparatively rural and has fewer recent features than some of the marsh areas. Visibility is very high over the dominant landform.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Conserve the ditch network and enhance it by managing water levels to support wildlife habitats and incorporating adjacent banks.
Conserve the wildlife potential in arable and pastoral areas by selecting key areas for sensitive management.
Conserve open views
Conserve clusters of vegetation around settlements, and the isolation of farmsteads and villages.

CONTEXT

Regional: Romney Marsh

Condition			
Condition	good	moderate	poor
	low	moderate	high
	Sensitivity		
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	good	moderate	poor

ROMNEY MARSH: LYMPNE



ROMNEY MARSH

The AONB includes a small part of the vast, flat expanse of Romney Marsh, which stretches down to Rye. The name 'Marsh' is misleading, as this area is now highly productive arable land and pasture. Nevertheless, it still retains an extensive network of drainage ditches or 'sewers' which regulate the water table, and support characteristic fringes of feathery reeds between the fields. There are almost no hedges on the Marsh and the occasional scrubby, windblown trees which dot the landscape are largely the result of 19th century attempts to create shelter.

The flatness and remote qualities of the Marsh make it very vulnerable to the intrusive effects of development, which are often worsened by inappropriate measures to conceal the damage, such as conifer shelterbelts.

LYMPNE

The area of the Romney Marsh within the AONB is part of the larger character area of Lympne.

The most southerly part of the AONB extends from Hythe west to Aldington. The character area includes part of the Hythe escarpment, which overlooks Romney Marsh. Until the early Middle Ages, this scarp formed the edge of a large, marshy lagoon. Gradually, however, the lagoon was reclaimed, through a combination of the natural accumulation of silt and shingle, the construction of sea defences and sustained drainage. The resulting land now forms one of the most fertile areas in Kent, with a particularly long growing season.

Most of the Hythe escarpment is the eroded face of the greensands and in particular of the calcareous Kentish ragstone. Over the centuries the surface has gradually slipped to form a steep, uneven slope, enclosing the northern edge of the marsh. The vulnerability of the coast to attack has left a legacy of old military defences scattered across the area, from the tumbled walls of the Roman fort of Lemanis, to the 19th century Royal Military Canal at the foot of the escarpment and the last of the Second World War 'Sound Mirrors' behind Burmarsh, 'listening' for approaching aircraft.

The scarp is highly visible from the flat marsh, forming a long hillside of rough grassland, dotted with scrub. Several large deciduous woodlands break up the sweep of the landform, being more characteristic in the west around Aldington. Between these woodlands, there are spectacular views across Romney Marsh and the English Channel.

[next >>](#)

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Drainage ditches and canal. Reed vegetation.
Flat remote.
Rich arable and pasture.
Scrubby, windblown trees around settlements.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

The flat and remote landscape has a coherent pattern of elements but with many visual detractors, although some of these are small scale, such as temporary buildings. The long views permit the intrusion of large scale elements such as lines of pylons. There is a very strong ecological interest, based around the network of ditches and wetlands associated with the canal.

The rural elements of the landscape are strong, but there is a lack of coherence in built form, e.g. bridges and farmhouses, and these have a moderate negative impact on the landscape. This area is considered to be in moderate condition.

Sensitivity

Visibility is high in the open landscape and, although flat, the landform is less dominant due to the varied relief of the adjacent slopes. The historic land pattern traced by ditches and embankments is characteristic, but there are more recent inherent features which define the local character, such as highways, built form and scrub vegetation. The sense of place is relatively weak and the sensitivity of the area is therefore considered to be moderate.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Conserve the historic landscape pattern by managing ditches so that they retain their visual significance in the landscape.
Conserve the ecological interest by sensitive management of banks and water levels.
Create a sympathetic and coherent design code for built form and engineering details and agricultural built form.

CONTEXT

Regional: Kent Downs AONB

Condition				
	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & <u>CREATE</u>	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition		Moderate.
Pattern of elements:	Coherent.	
Detracting features:	Many.	
Visual Unity:	Interrupted.	
Cultural integrity:	Variable.	
Ecological integrity:	Moderate.	
Functional Integrity:	Strong.	

Sensitivity		Moderate.
Distinctiveness:	Characteristic.	
Continuity:	Recent.	
Sense of Place:	Weak.	
Landform:	Apparent	
Extent of tree cover:	Open	
Visibility:	High.	

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE AND CREATE.
Conserve the ecological interest of wetland and ditches within the farmland
Create a design code for built form and its surroundings
Conserve the visual significance of the ditches

[previous <<](#)

SELLINDGE PLATEAU FARMLANDS



On the Head Brickearths that overlie the often flat plateau of Hythe, Sandgate and Folkestone Beds in this area, deep silty soils have developed that are dominated by cereals, potatoes and other field vegetables. It is a large scale landscape of open fields with the small sprawling settlement of Sellindge and Folkestone racecourse at the centre.

The M20 and the Ashford to Folkestone railway bisect the character area from east to west affecting the landscape aurally over a wide area and causing discontinuities and discordance in the landscape.

South of the A20, around Westenhanger and Moorstock large areas of pasture persist. The land south of the A20 rises up above 70 metres AOD towards the Hythe escarpment with small marshy pasture edging the small streams. The hedgerows are gappy or missing.

North of Sellindge the land again rises as the brickearths cloak the Folkestone Beds below, into a smaller-scale more wooded landscape of pastures, old mineral sites, small lanes and bushy hedgerows. Views extend from the top of the rise at Hyham Hill back to the Downs in the north. Occasional attractive farmsteads of red brick and tile add to the varied rural nature of the scene.

[next >>](#)

SELLINDGE PLATEAU FARMLANDS

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Flat to undulating plateau farmlands on good quality soils. Open arable landscape with pasture locally important on more undulating ground. Small copses and gappy hedgerows on undulating ground.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

This is a fragmented landscape with little clear pattern and many visual detractors associated with road and rail transport corridors and linear development. Agricultural buildings and fences also detract from the view. The area is predominantly covered with intensive arable farmland with very limited potential for natural habitats. The condition of rural heritage features such as tree cover is poor and built form has a high negative impact on the area. Ragstone and brick vernacular buildings are overshadowed by recent built development.

Sensitivity

Historic land patterns are generally obscured or have no real function in the present landscape, with the notable exception of some estate landscape to the north of the character area. The flat landscape is apparent and has long views: visibility is therefore high. The sensitivity of the area is considered to be moderate.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Create a new framework for this transitional landscape which respects the open, arable use, transport corridors and adjacent small scale character area patterns. Existing built form and settlement edges need to be defined, and the impact of the many visual detractors needs to be controlled. This landscape presents and opportunity to create new landscape features. Restore ecological interest to selected areas of arable land by sensitive management.

CONTEXT

Regional: Greensand Belt

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

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition		Very Poor.
Pattern of elements:	Coherent.	
Detracting features:	Many.	
Visual Unity:	Interrupted.	
Cultural integrity:	Poor.	
Ecological integrity:	Weak.	
Functional Integrity:	Very Weak.	

Sensitivity		Moderate.
Distinctiveness:	Indistinct.	
Continuity:	Historic.	
Sense of Place:	Weak.	
Landform:	Apparent	
Extent of tree cover:	Open	
Visibility:	High.	

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

RESTORE AND CREATE.

Create a view landscape framework using small woodland and copses
Create ecological diversity within arable farmland
Restore historical landscape framework in key areas immediately around the remaining farming settlements
Create landscape features to define linear settlements and transport corridors

[previous <<](#)

STOWTING: POSTLING VALE



STOWTING

West of Tolsford Hill and Summerhouse Hill is a more open, intensively farmed agricultural landscape, which extends out of the AONB towards Ashford. Large arable fields are surrounded by small shaws or overgrown hedges or by trimmed remnant hedges. Although the scarp is largely grassland, there are occasional blocks of deciduous woodland on the top, such as Postling Wood or Brockman's Bushes on Tolsford Hill. These distinctive features draw the eye away from scarp-foot developments such as the motorways, and provide a means of orientation in the landscape. In the west, towards Brabourne, the scarp becomes shallower and some areas have been cultivated. This has marred the characteristic 'natural' appearance of the eastern slopes, which is further compromised by gradual ribbon development and pockets of suburbanisation along the scarp foot.

In contrast, the flat farmland around Pedlinge is broken up by large blocks of woodland and small ditches. A significant amount of hedgerow loss has occurred in this area and windblown trees straggle along the overgrown channels.

POSTLING VALE

Stowting lies within the larger character area of the Postling Vale.

Folkestone lies at the most easterly end of the Greensand Belt, on a narrow tongue of land contained by the Downs in the north and the flat expanse of Romney Marsh in the south. These physical constraints have resulted in a considerable amount of activity and development being confined within a small area, on the very edge of the Kent Downs AONB.

The landscape here is dominated by major roads and by the new Channel Tunnel Terminal, all of which are situated on the edge of the AONB between north Folkestone and the Downs. These landscape developments are set against the dramatic backdrop of the steep scarp, which supports botanically rich chalk grassland. A series of remote coombes in the scarp towards Etchinghill overlook the now rare coppiced ash woodland of Asholt Wood. Scrub extends up some of the lower slopes and thick hedges draw attention to the route of the Pilgrim's Way along the scarp foot. Beyond this, the landscape is gently undulating, with large fields and substantial blocks of woodland.

Further south, around the outskirts of Hythe, this open, large-scale landscape gives way to a more intimate countryside of steep stream valleys, small woodlands and pasture. In the west, around Pedlinge, tracts of mixed woodland enclose flat arable fields, which form the edge of a larger area of intensively cultivated farmland, extending beyond the AONB.

[next >>](#)

STOWTING: POSTLING VALE

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Relatively open. Intensively farmed, grass-scarp slopes and wooded hilltops. Motorway and ribbon development at foot of scarp on edge of area.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

This landscape has a coherent pattern of elements with very few detracting features. Ecologically, rich grasslands and small woodlands combine with the open arable fields at the scarp foot to give a moderate ecological value to the area. Rural heritage features - woodland, hedges, small villages - are in good condition, built development in general has a moderate positive impact on the area. The landscape has strong cultural links.

Sensitivity

The landform is a dominant element of the view and visibility is very high over the open landscape. There is an historic time depth to landscape elements and landscape pattern, although field boundaries are becoming indistinct. The rounded chalk hills contribute to the sense of place which is also influenced by characteristic woodland, beech stands and cross contour roads. Built form is a less distinct element of the landscape. This is considered to be a highly sensitive landscape.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Conserve existing woodland on hilltops.
Conserve views of the dominant landform.

CONTEXT

Regional: Kent Downs AONB

Condition

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	<u>CONSERVE</u>
		CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
		CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high

Sensitivity

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

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

Sensitivity

Very High.

Distinctiveness:	Characteristic.
Continuity:	Ancient.
Sense of Place:	Strong.
Landform:	Dominant.
Extent of tree cover:	Open.
Visibility:	Very High.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE.

Conserve existing woodland on hilltops.
Conserve views of the dominant landform.

[previous <<](#)

UPPER STOUR VALLEY



A flat generally open landscape of the Great Stour and East Stour rivers, the land use is one of mixed farming with crest top woodlands, as at Godinton Park, enclosing views in the middle distance. These hills are formed from Greensand outliers which intrude into the clay vale in this area. These low ridges also include Hothfield, the site of Godinton House itself, and the outlier that forms Hurst Hill, Clap Hill and that at Great Chart. Occasionally, east of Ashford, there are views north-east over the low rise of the Greensand to the North Downs beyond.

Clumps of field trees and copses provide interest as does the irregular presence of riparian vegetation along the river. Where the river has lost its associated vegetation, however, it is often inconspicuous. Hedgerows are relatively infrequent and often gappy, with many of the field trees being of a similar age with no sign of renewal of the stock. A more intimate enclosed landscape of hedged fields can be found south of The Forstal, on the East Stour, and several old mills add to the historic scene. The loss of hedgerows is associated with the conversion of unimproved pasture to vast, arable or improved pastureland and it is likely that the remaining pasture may be vulnerable to further conversion. The advent of under field drainage and improved mechanisation has allowed this blurring of the traditional land use boundaries between the river floodplain, the clay soils and the freer-draining Greensand.

The loss of hedgerows and trees contributes to a loss of visual unity, and is eroding the traditional wildlife corridors along the river and between the fields.

Diversity is limited to the tree copses, hill top woodlands beyond the character area and residual riverside vegetation, but often the fragmentation of these elements contributes to a discordant sense of change, coupled with an increasingly bland picture, starved of variety, formed by the flat, arable and improved grass fields.

The landscape around the South Willesborough dykes is similarly open but has long views to the suburbs of Ashford. Fingers of pasture and neglected farmland extend right up the A2042 to the town centre. The Ashford to Folkestone railway line cuts across to the north of the area, rarely impinging on the landscape, but this may change significantly when the Channel Tunnel Rail Link is constructed. A major part of the remaining valley character is under pressure for a mixed development at Cheeseman's Green and Conscience Farm which may be contributing to the sense of neglect and degradation.

[next >>](#)

UPPER STOUR VALLEY

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Flat, open valley landscape enclosed by outliers of Greensand.
Mixed farming including a high percentage of arable. Historic mills on river.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

The flat, arable landscape is showing increasing fragmentation as a result of the loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. The landscape is interrupted by intensive cultivation and visual detractors such as post and wire fencing, overhead cables, transport corridors, industrial development and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. The loss of hedgerows and the intrusion of development contributes to a loss of visual unity. Ecological integrity is moderate, with a network of ditches and streams, although many ditches adjoining agricultural land have been cleared of natural vegetation. Although there is much intensive arable cultivation, there are some areas of neglected land. Field boundaries of ditches and roadside hedgerows are vulnerable. Heritage features contributing to cultural heritage include large red brick farms, estate parkland, ragstone walls and bridges. These have a moderate positive impact on the landscape, although large farm buildings, silos and recent village enlargements detract.

Sensitivity

Strength of character is weak with an indistinct sense of place. The ditch system is not visible except where marked by characteristic pollarded willows and hedgerows are fragmented. Landform is insignificant and the lack of significant tree cover gives a moderate visibility. Overall, the sensitivity of the area is low.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Create a new landscape structure building upon the existing ditches and hedgerows to create linked corridors for wildlife.
Ensure that the important roadside hedgerows are gapped up and reinforced with standard trees to give structure to the landscape.
Create new hedgerows and copses to screen intrusive elements such as the urban edge and transport corridors.
Create new waterside and ditch vegetation using native wetland species and pollarded willows to reinforce the riparian character.

CONTEXT

Regional: Low Weald

Condition

good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
poor	<u>CREATE</u>	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
	low	moderate	high

Sensitivity

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

Very Poor.

Pattern of elements: Coherent.

Detracting features: Many.

Visual Unity: Interrupted.

Cultural integrity: Poor.

Ecological integrity: Moderate.

Functional Integrity: Weak.

Sensitivity

Low.

Distinctiveness: Indistinct.

Continuity: Historic.

Sense of Place: Weak.

Landform: Insignificant.

Extent of tree cover: Open.

Visibility: Moderate.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CREATE.

Create a new landscape structure of linked ditches and hedgerows
Gap up roadside hedgerows and reinforce with standard trees
Create and reinforce new hedges and copses to screen intrusions
Create new waterside vegetation including pollarded willows

[previous <<](#)

Ashford Landscape Character Assessment



June 2009

JACOBS



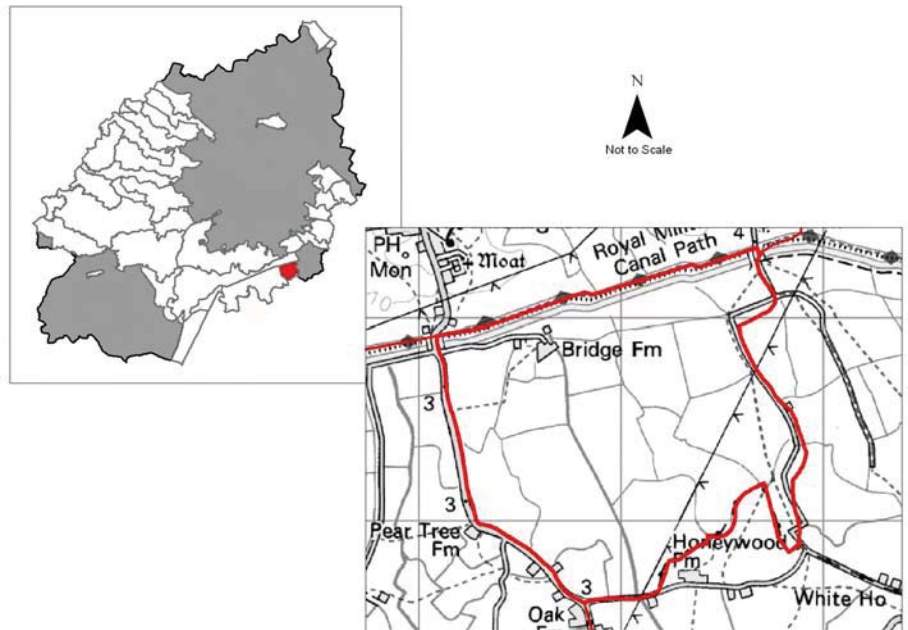
Ashford
best placed in Britain

3. Royal Military Marshlands

Key Characteristics

- Flat, low lying marshland which forms part of the immediate foreground to the Kent Downs AONB which rise to the east
- Rising Downs to the east, and higher ground to the north provide enclosure to the marsh
- Large irregularly shaped arable fields, divided by a network of reed filled drainage ditches
- Sporadic clumps of scrubby vegetation
- Open and unvegetated Royal Military Canal
- Recent, large scale agricultural buildings at Bridge Farm
- Narrow, unenclosed lane skirts the edge of the marsh to the east
- Transmission towers

Landscape Description



The geology comprises Hastings Beds to the south, with a band of Weald Clay to the north. Marine (Estuarine) Alluvium overlays the solid geology and soils are clay. The landform is flat and low lying, and the marshland forms part of the immediate foreground to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which rise to the east, and higher ground which forms part of the old shoreline to the north. The surrounding landform provides enclosure to the marshland and reduces the open and exposed character which is more prominent in marshland to the west. Outside the character area, the settlement of Bilsington to the north, and the tall and distinctive 'Cosway Monument', provide landmark features visible from the Marsh which draw the eye. Views within the area are across open, predominantly arable fields with little in the way of tree cover. Along the periphery of the Kent Downs AONB, however, mature trees line the road, marking the transition between the Marsh and the rising Downs to the east.

Fields are large and irregular in shape, their edges defined by a network of reed filled drainage ditches and sporadic clumps of scrubby vegetation. The Royal Military Canal lines the





northern extent of the area. Open and unvegetated along this stretch, the Canal flows almost unnoticed, and The Royal Military Canal Path, which is a promoted National Trail/Long Distance Route, follows its route. A distinctly wider drainage ditch initiates at Bridge Farm and flows south through the marshland on its journey to the sea at Dymchurch.

Bridge Farm to the north provides the only development within the area. Buildings are mostly recent, with some large scale barns. Roads, which are narrow, unenclosed and winding with some 90 degree bends, skirt the periphery of the area. Lines of visually intrusive transmission towers march across the flat arable marshland to the south and to the north.

Condition

The consistently flat topography and the network of drainage ditches provide a coherent landscape. There are few visual detractors, which include large and visually prominent agricultural buildings and large transmission towers. The Royal Military Canal and the drainage ditches provide a distinct and historic field pattern. The historic significance of The Royal Military Canal is illustrated through its designation as a Scheduled Monument. However, the intensive agricultural land use and the generally treeless character provide a limited framework for habitats, although the Royal Military Canal is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Overall the landscape is in moderate condition.

Sensitivity

The field pattern, dictated by the reed filled drainage ditches and the Royal Military Canal, provides a very strong sense of place. The location at the foot of the Kent Downs AONB which rise to the east and the higher ground to the north, which forms part of the old shoreline, contribute to the local distinctiveness of this area of marshland. This area of Marsh is sensitive in terms of the setting it provides to the Kent Downs AONB, and the transition between the flat, open Marsh and the undulating downland. The flat landscape and the intermittent tree cover provide high visibility. Overall, the sensitivity of the



landscape is high.

Guidelines

The overall guidelines for the area are to conserve and restore the landscape:

- Conserve the largely undeveloped and rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve and appropriately manage drainage ditches and the Royal Military Canal
- Encourage marginal grasses and wetland flora along ditches and the Royal Military Canal
- Avoid further arable intensification around Bridge Farm
- Avoid incongruous features within the widely visible landscape

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Functional integrity:	Weak
Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

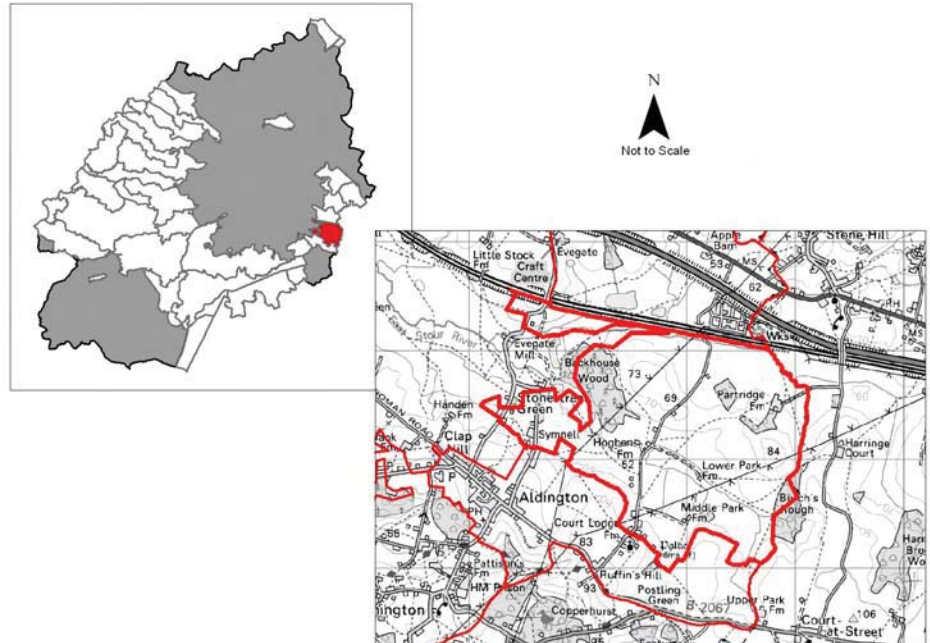
Guidelines: Conserve and Restore

10. East Stour Valley

Key Characteristics

- Well vegetated East Stour River cuts through valley with land rising to Bested Hill in the north
- Mosaic like pastoral field pattern
- Mixed and broadleaf woodland blocks
- Mature isolated oak trees within pasture
- Narrow lanes follow the undulations of the landscape, often hedgerow and ditch lined
- Some recent individual housing sporadically located along the lanes
- Scattered farmsteads set back from the lanes

Landscape Description



The geology mainly comprises Weald Clay with Hythe Beds surrounded by a rim of Atherfield Clay across a high point east of Backhouse Wood, and soils are loam to clay. The topography is undulating, with the East Stour River running through a valley from Stonestreet Green in the west, between Lower Park Farm and Middle Park Farm in the east. The land rises to the north and south, forming a high point at Bested Hill, east of Backhouse Wood. Views out of the area of Evegate Mill and water bodies are available from higher ground to the north. Aldington Church provides a prominent landmark feature outside the character area, raised on higher ground to the south. Within the area views are across pasture, enclosed by dense vegetation belts along the East Stour River, native hedgerows and the backdrop of Backhouse Wood to the west, which comprises mixed woodland and a subsequently has a dark and dense appearance.

A mosaic like, pastoral field pattern is concentrated around the East Stour River, with field shape often dictated by the non linear route of water courses. Woodland blocks are scattered throughout the landscape, and





mature isolated oak trees provide landmark features throughout pasture. Aldington point to point racecourse is located to the north of Lower Park Farm. Whilst rustic hurdles are permanent features, the course is marked only by timber posts and the landscape is grazed openly. On higher ground to the north, intensive agricultural land use has led to some hedgerow removal and a less enclosed character.

Some recent housing has emerged sporadically along the lanes. A number of farmsteads are scattered across the landscape, often set back from the rural lanes and accessed via long straight dirt tracks. Roads comprise narrow lanes, following the undulations across the landscape. Hedgerows often line the lanes, at times containing hedgerow trees, becoming more significant tree belts in places. Ditches often line the lanes, supporting reeds and other wetland flora.

Condition

The continuity through the landscape provided by the East Stour River and the predominantly pastoral land use provide a coherent pattern of elements. Visual detractors, which include pylons, large agricultural barns and some fencing which is in poor condition. Small paddocks used for grazing horses and livestock are sometimes concentrated around houses, enclosed by a variety of fencing types including post and rail, post and wire and chainlink. Structures for animal shelter are often located within such paddocks, adding to the complexity of materials. The East Stour River, ditches, pasture, hedgerows, tree belts and isolated oak trees provide an intricate framework for wildlife and Backhouse Wood is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. However, there has been a degree of hedgerow loss for agricultural intensification and many hedgerows are gappy.. Backhouse Wood and Burch's Rough are ancient, and illustrate the heritage value of the landscape. To the east, a Roman building is designated as a Scheduled Ancient? Monument. Overall, the landscape is in moderate condition.

Sensitivity

Woodlands provide a very distinct sense of enclosure in places and hedgerows provide continuity along the roads and throughout the pastoral landscape. Vegetation which lines the East Stour River is often dense, distinguishing the route of the river and promoting distinctly non-linear field enclosure. Recent development is indistinct and detracts from the key features of the landscape. The dominant valley landscape, the rising valley sides and the intermittent tree cover provide high visibility. Overall the landscape has a high sensitivity.



Guidelines

The overall guidelines for the area are to conserve and restore the landscape:



- Conserve and appropriately manage ancient woodland
- Conserve native hedgerows and restore/gap up where deteriorating
- Seek to restore field pattern where hedgerows have been lost to agricultural intensification
- Conserve the well vegetated course of the Great Stour River
- Avoid highway improvements which widen river crossings and broaden the characteristically narrow roads
- Encourage marginal grasses and wetland flora along field and roadside drainage ditches
- Conserve isolated oak trees and plant new standards to ensure continuity of this distinctive feature
- Encourage sympathetic fencing types where necessary
- Encourage the use of local materials including ragstone and Kent peg tiles

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual unity:	Coherent
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Coherent
Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

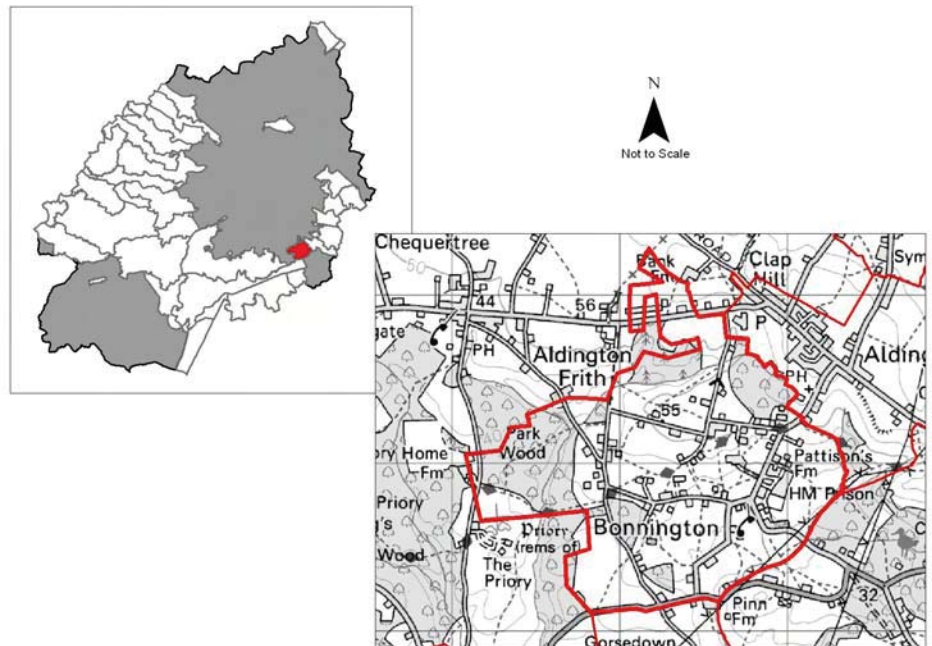
Guidelines: Conserve and Restore

14. Bonnington Wooded Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Undulating landform which forms part of the immediate foreground to the Kent Downs AONB which rises to the east
- Mixed farmland with small fields
- Deciduous and evergreen enclosing woodland blocks
- Native hedgerows with large standard oak trees
- Isolated oaks trees set within pasture
- Strong sense of enclosure
- Equestrian grazing and land use
- Narrow and hedge lined roads
- The non nucleic settlement of Bonnington with traditional houses and stone farm buildings
- Recent housing development arranged around closes

Landscape Description



The solid geology is Weald Clay and soils are loam to clay. The landform is undulating and the landscape forms part of the immediate foreground to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which rise to the east. A series of springs emerge at the heads of valleys and a series of narrow streams flow across low ground. Views out of the area are restricted by both the undulating landscape and the series of woodland blocks which are scattered frequently across the farmland. Within the area, views are across mixed farmland to the enclosing edges of deciduous woodland blocks. Handen Wood comprises evergreen woodland, which provides a dark and dense wooded horizon to the west of Dickson's Bourne Road. Native hedgerows, often with large standard oak trees, mark roads and divide farmland, and isolated oaks are strewn across pasture. The woodlands, hedgerows and small field pattern provide a strong sense of enclosure. Much of the area is used for equestrian grazing, and is often segmented into smaller paddocks with post and rail fencing. Exercise arenas, stabling and wooden field shelters are strewn across the landscape.

Bonnington is situated along a series of narrow





lanes and comprises a number of individual farms and houses. Bonnington is not nucleic and has no distinct village centre. To the east, the disused HM Prison Aldington is enclosed by high wire fencing although the prison buildings are not easily discernible from the surrounding countryside. A recent housing development is situated on the eastern outskirts of the prison and is made up of a densely populated modern weather clad and brick properties around a network of curved access roads and closes. Communal garden areas around the housing are planted with ornamental shrub species and enclosed by timber close boarded fencing. Roads, which are narrow and hedge lined, follow the undulations of the landscape.

Condition

There is a coherent pattern of elements provided by the hedgerows, large oak trees and woodland blocks. However fencing, sheds and stabling in association with the significant amount of equestrian land use degrade the landscape in places. Some traditional stone farm buildings have been recently re-roofed with prominent metal roofing material rather than the traditional Kent peg tiles which remain intact above some barns. Other farm buildings appear to be disused, with windows boarded up and security fencing blocking access. High security fencing surrounding HM Prison and pylons crossing the landscape to the south are also visual detractors, but are not clearly visible from the surrounding landscape because of the undulating, wooded character. There is a strong habitat network provided by the woodland, hedgerows and stream corridors. Poulton Wood is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and woodland to the east and woodland and pasture to the west are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Overall the landscape is in good condition.

Sensitivity

The undulating landform and narrow streams, the woodland blocks, hedgerow network and particularly the significant amount of mature oak trees within hedgerows and set within pasture provide continuity throughout the landscape and strong local distinctiveness. However, whilst there are some distinct timber framed buildings, converted oast houses and stone farm buildings, the settlement of Bonnington is indistinct because there is no clear centre. Visibility is moderate because whilst the landform is undulating, the extent of tree cover within woodlands and hedgerows restricts the extent of views. This landscape is sensitive in terms of its rural and



wooded character which immediately abuts the Kent Downs AONB. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape is moderate.

Guidelines

The overall guidelines for the area are to conserve and reinforce the landscape:



- Conserve and reinforce the rural landscape which provides the immediate setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve and appropriately manage woodland and hedgerows
- Conserve and reinforce the abundance of oak standards within hedgerows and pasture and provide continuation of this key characteristic by planting new standards
- Encourage sympathetic conversions of traditional buildings which do not urbanise the character of the building
- Encourage sympathetic restoration work to deteriorating farm buildings including appropriate use of materials such as Kent peg tiles as roofing material
- Encourage sensitive integration of equestrian facilities, for example through positioning exercise arenas and stabling sympathetically within the landform and using appropriate planting blocks to help screen and integrate new structures
- Avoid highway improvements which increase the width of existing lanes

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Good
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual unity:	Coherent
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Strong
Functional integrity:	Strong
Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

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

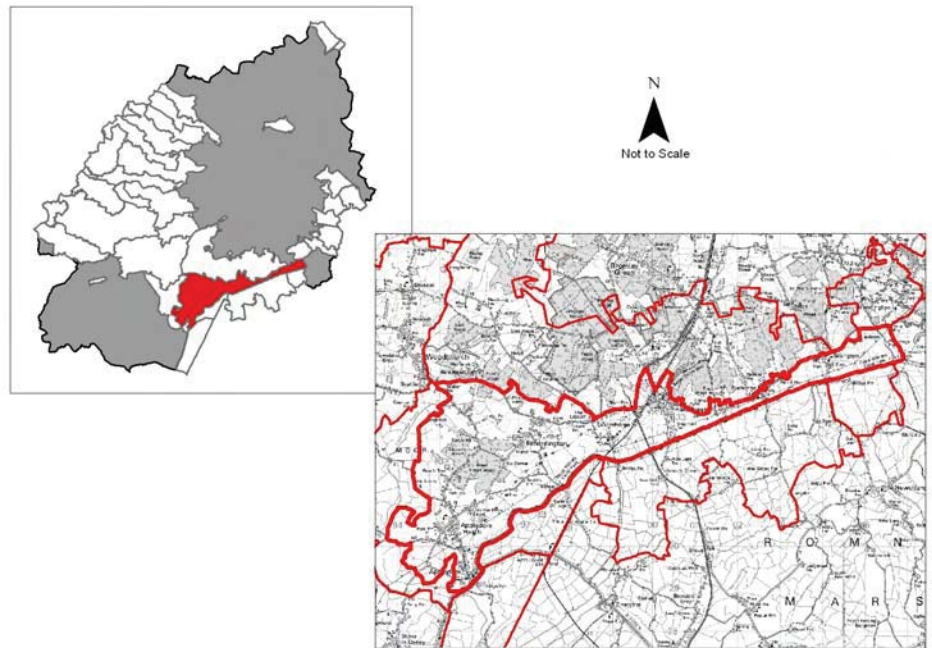
Guidelines: Conserve and Reinforce

19. Old Romney Shoreline Settlements

Key Characteristics

- Undulating landform slopes southwards towards Romney Marsh
- Open views out of the area across the Romney Marsh to the south
- Mixed land use
- Higher wooded ground to the west, which would have been an island prior to reclamation of the surrounding marshes
- Numerous small settlements along the former shoreline
- Distinctive stone churches are prominent landmark features

Landscape Description



The geology comprises Tunbridge Wells Sand to the west, with Weald Clay marking the fringes of the Low Weald to the west. An area of Weald Clay is situated on slightly higher ground north of Appledore Heath, which is likely to have formed an island prior to the reclamation of the Romney Marsh. Drifts of Alluvium follow narrow drainage ditches on the edge of the marsh, and a small area of peat is located to the south east of Kenardington. Soils are loam to clay, becoming siltier around Appledore, Appledore Heath and Kenardington. To the south along the Royal Military Canal, soils are clay. The landform is undulating, and slopes southward towards the Romney Marsh.

Extensive views out of the area are available to the south across the flat expanses of the Romney Marsh, where wind turbines stand out as prominent features in the largely treeless landscape. Within the character area, views stretch across undulating mixed farmland of predominantly oil seed rape and sheep grazing. There is a varied field pattern although to the south, immediately adjacent to the marsh, grazed fields are more extensive and exposed. The open and less enclosed character is partly owing to the extensive views out of the area across the marsh to the south. Ditches and sewers run southwards towards the marsh and some of the lower land is evidently wetter, with sedges emerging through the grazed pasture.

Native hedgerows contain some of the smaller fields to the north. Although post and wire fencing replace the hedgerows in many instances, oak trees set along the fence lines often mark the original field pattern. An extensive mixed woodland block on higher ground to the west forms a prominent visual backdrop within many views from the surrounding landscape. The woodland block is formed from a number of



separately named woods, and contains a number of plant species including beech, hornbeam, pine, birch, wild service trees, bluebells, wood rush, primrose and the medicinal St. John's Wort. Some of the woodland is actively coppiced which provides habitats for many wildlife species and birds, including nightingales, woodpeckers and warblers.

A number of settlements are scattered along the old shoreline, overlooking the Romney Marsh. Recent housing and bungalows cluster around vernacular buildings of more historic origins, such as timber framed houses, white weather boarded cottages and houses made from chequered brickwork. The small and distinctive stone churches within these settlements stand out as frequent landmark features, often visible within

views from the wider landscape. A tall ragstone pillar, known as the Cosway Monument, at Bilsington stands out as a prominent landmark feature. Built in 1835, the monument is in memory of Sir Richard Cosway who was killed in a coaching accident. Appledore, once a port on the Rother Estuary and part of the ancient Saxon Shore Way, is architecturally distinct in the locality, with its vernacular timber framed buildings, medieval houses and 14th century church.

A railway line cuts across the landscape between Hamstreet and Warehorne, passing over the B2067 above a distinctive stone archway which is orientated at an unusual angle to the road. Roads are narrow and winding and are often named to reflect the direction in which they are heading, for example 'Church Lane', 'Moor Lane' and 'Marsh Road'. Roads are enclosed by hedgerows and garden vegetation where housing aligns the routes. Roads are dark where overhanging branches provide a tunnel effect along routes which pass through the woodland block to the west. The Saxon Shore Way promoted National Trail/Long Distance Route runs through much of the area, affording clear views out across the Romney Marsh to the south.

Condition

The pattern of settlements dotted along the raised ground immediately above the Romney Marsh, set within mixed farmland, provides a degree of consistency throughout the landscape. Whilst the higher wooded ground to the west provides a feature within the surrounding landscape, there is a coherent pattern of elements. There are few visual detractors, which include a line of large pylons which run along the southern extent of the area, an electricity sub station, large agricultural barns and silos, polytunnels around Appledore Heath and some recent housing styles and materials which do not respect the local vernacular. Sewers and ditches, which run down to the marsh, the woodland to the west and native hedgerows throughout the landscape provide a reasonable habitat framework. The extensive ancient woodland block north of Appledore Heath is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Although there is some intensively farmed arable land, there is a significant amount of grazed pasture land. However field



boundaries have been removed in places and some hedgerows are gappy. Overall the landscape is in good condition.

Sensitivity

The settlement pattern and the distinctiveness of each of the village cores, provide both an element of continuity throughout the landscape and strong local distinctiveness. In particular, the frequent pattern of small and unique stone churches promotes the sense of place. The domed landform to the west, topped with woodland, is visually prominent as a backdrop within a number of surrounding views. This raised dome, probably once an island, forms a unique feature which is directly relevant to the historic reclamation of the surrounding marshland. The dominant landform and the intermittent tree cover provide high visibility. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape is high.



Guidelines

The overall guidelines for the area are to conserve the landscape:

- Conserve the rural, prominent backdrop to the Romney Marsh
- Conserve the open, rural character of the south facing slopes which run down onto the expansive low lying farmlands of the marsh
- Conserve the small scale of settlements and avoid further enlargement
- Conserve vernacular style buildings
- Conserve the historic churches which mark the old shoreline, their prominence within settlements and within views from the surrounding landscape
- Conserve the narrow, winding highways and avoid road widening
- Conserve wide, open views across the Romney Marsh to the south
- Conserve and appropriately manage woodland to the west, and hedgerows
- Avoid further agricultural intensification
- Maintain the lack of large scale development

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Good
Pattern of elements:	Unified
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Coherent
Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Continuity:	Ancient
Sense of place:	Strong
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

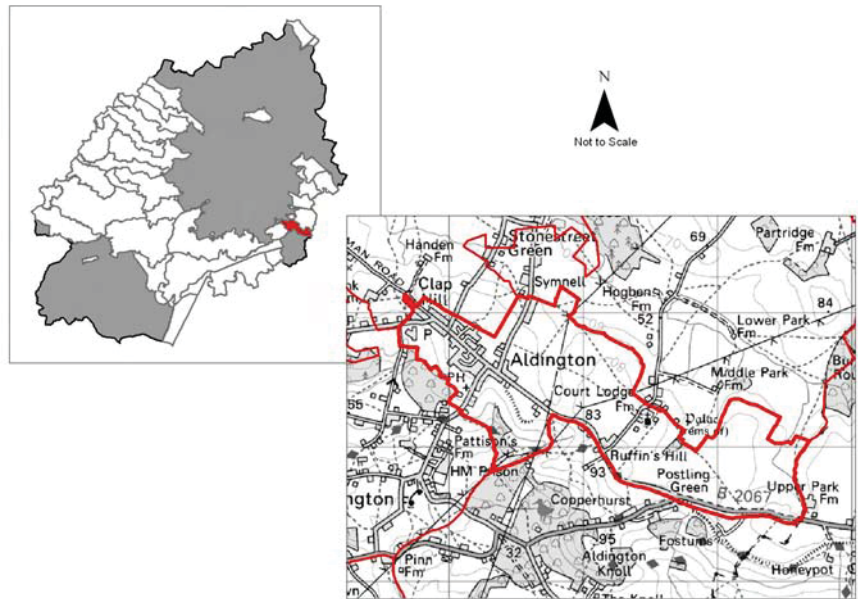
Guidelines: Conserve

25. Aldington Ridgeline

Key Characteristics

- High ridgeline topography
- North Downs frame the views to the north
- Mixed farmland with enclosed pasture immediately surrounding settled areas
- Loss of historic field pattern where land is intensively farmed
- Small woodland copses, tree belts and native hedgerows
- Very distinctive ragstone church and remains of Archbishops Palace isolated from main settlement of Aldington
- Strong use of ragstone and locally distinctive chequered brick
- Farm building conversions
- Recent development within Aldington situated along a Roman road

Landscape Description



The geology comprises Hythe Beds surrounded by a fringe of Atherfield Clay. The good quality loam soils are generally well drained and support a mixed land use with large arable fields located across the landscape, and more enclosed pasture immediately surrounding settled areas. High up on the Hythe Beds, Aldington stands out above the plain of the Low Weald. Aldington was once on the coast of England, prior to the reclamation of the Romney Marsh. The dense arrangement of settlement within Aldington restricts views out from the roads, although views from the B2067 are open across the arable farmland. The undulating landscape, along with the North Downs which frame the views beyond, give the perception of a small scale landscape even where arable fields are generally large. Whilst arable intensification has led to some loss of historic field pattern in places, some hedgerows and remnant vegetation clumps mark former boundaries. Small woodland copses, tree belts and native hedgerows enclose pasture surrounding settled areas.

Aldington Church, Court Lodge Farm and the remains of the Archbishops Palace are situated away from the main settlement of Aldington as a result of the village being affected by the Black Death during middle ages. The very distinctive church and





immediately adjoining farm buildings and walling are constructed from ragstone and together they provide strong local distinctiveness. Conversions of traditional farm buildings at Ruffins Hill and Goldwell Lane, including oast houses and barns, continue the use of ragstone and chequered brickwork also appears as a frequent material. Whilst some ragstone is incorporated in low stone walling around some of the more traditional cottages throughout Aldington, the village itself comprises many recent houses. Styles include a mixture of bungalows, terraces and large brick houses centred around an open village green and adjacent modern village hall with associated car parking and tennis courts. Close boarded fencing frequently marks property boundaries, and garden vegetation provides strong seasonal variation. The road network throughout Aldington is narrow and parked vehicles provide a degree of congestion. The main road along which development is concentrated is Roman, and therefore notably straight in its alignment.

Condition

The continuity provided by hedgerows, and the use of ragstone as a building material, provides a coherent landscape. Visual detractors comprise large agricultural barns, often partially screened by conifer belts, and pylons. Conversions are sometimes slightly urbanising in terms of the detailing used, and recent development within Aldington detracts slightly from the wider landscape character and sense of place. Aldington Clap Hill, situated along the Roman Road in the heart of Aldington, is designated as a Conservation Area. Whilst Aldington Church, Court Lodge Farm and the remains of the Archbishops Palace are very distinct and form the core of Aldington Church Conservation Area, later barns constructed from corrugated metal have been attached unsympathetically to the historic buildings, and repairs to stonework have been made using red brick and timber weather boarding. The ecological interest is weak due to the sparse woodland cover and intensive agricultural land use, which has resulted in some hedgerow loss. There is much 20th century development, with little reference to the wider character of built development. Overall, the condition of the landscape is moderate.



Sensitivity

The ragstone church and ragstone farm buildings constitute a unique element which provides continuity throughout this landscape. However the village of Aldington has spread, with much 20th century development failing to reflect the wider sense of place. Tree cover is limited and visibility is high within this prominent ridgeline location. Overall the landscape has a high sensitivity.



Guidelines

The overall guidelines for the area are to conserve and restore the landscape:

- Conserve the rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Resist further expansion of Aldington
- Avoid large scale development along the visually prominent ridgeline
- Encourage the restoration of historic boundary hedgerows
- Encourage plantations of small woodland copses and shaws to improve the ecological network
- Conserve and restore historic buildings and walling using appropriate materials
- Encourage sympathetic conversions with traditional and locally appropriate finishes and detailing
- Encourage the use of ragstone, Kent peg tiles and chequered brickwork
- Conserve the pastoral land use and resist further agricultural intensification
- Encourage the removal of alien conifer and replace with appropriate native planting

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual unity:	Coherent
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Coherent
Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

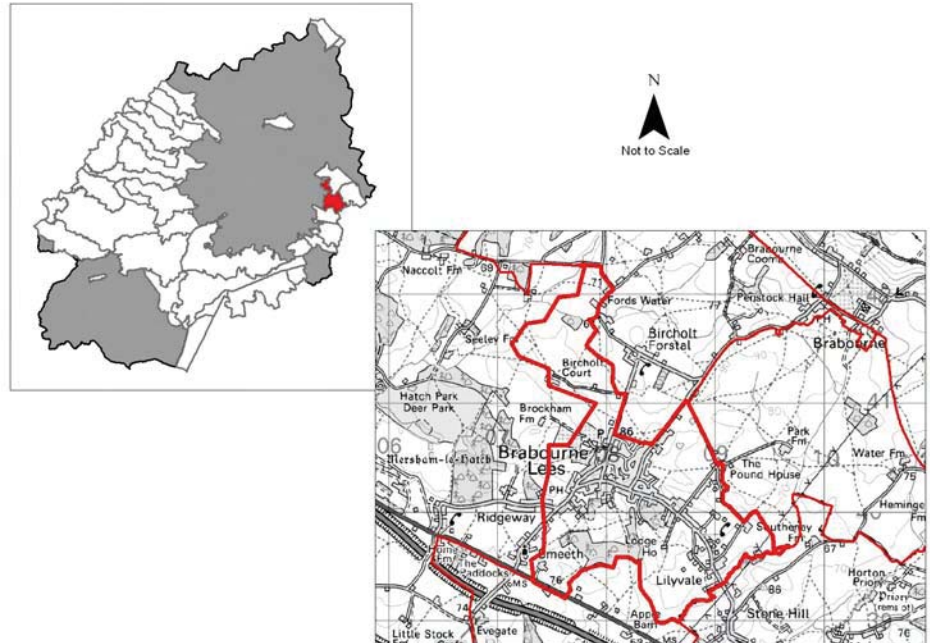
Guidelines: Conserve and Restore

26. Brabourne Lees Hilly Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Hilly topography
- Strong sense of enclosure provided by woodland blocks, hedgerows, landform and settlement
- Pasture for horses and livestock
- Chestnut coppice and evergreen woodland blocks
- Recent development within Brabourne Lees
- Large, historic farm houses to the south amid a parkland landscape of pasture and isolated trees

Landscape Description



The solid geology comprises Folkestone Beds, with fringes of Gault Clay to the north and London Clay to the south. Soils are loam, with some clay across the Gault Clay to the north. The topography is hilly, comprising frequent undulations which restrict views both within and outside of the area. Pockets of chestnut coppice woodland are scattered across the landscape further restricting views and, together with the landform and the settlement of Brabourne Lees, provide a strong sense of enclosure. Scott's Hall Plantation, with blocks of evergreen trees, provides enclosure to the small pattern of fields to the south, along with a well established network of hedgerows. A small lake is situated on lower ground to the north, providing local variation to the landscape character.

A number of small, irregularly shaped paddocks, providing pasture for livestock and horses, are situated across the hilly ground, enclosed by an amalgamation of native hedgerows, clusters of native vegetation, post and wire and timber post and rail fencing. To the south of Brabourne Lees, a more regular pattern of





hedgerow enclosed pasture with scattered isolated trees provides a semi parkland character around a series of large, traditional farm houses. Brabourne Lees is located around a grassed village green is noticeably on a rise above the surrounding countryside. The village extends along a number of busy but minor roads and properties are mostly recent houses and bungalows, the style of which is often replicated providing a limited sense of place. Houses are densely positioned along the roads and a series of closes stem off the main highways. Some recent houses support a number of highly visible solar panels set within their roofs. Ornamental garden vegetation provides a variety of colours and seasonal vegetation within Brabourne Lees.

Condition

The hilly landscape and the irregular field pattern and means of enclosure provide an incoherent pattern of elements. Corrugated barns and modern housing, which does not support local vernacular or contribute to local distinctiveness, comprise visual detractors. However the lack of intensive arable farmland and the network of hedgerows, tree clusters and coppice woodland blocks, along with garden vegetation, provide a coherent ecological network. Whilst hedgerows appear to be in poor condition in places and fields have been subdivided with fencing in areas, heritage features are generally intact. The periphery of Smeeth Conservation Area lies to the south west, adding to the cultural heritage value of the landscape. Overall, the landscape is in good condition.

Sensitivity

Whilst the chestnut coppice blocks and native hedgerows are distinct features which provide an element of continuity across the landscape, the settlement of Brabourne Lees and its buildings contribute little to local distinctiveness and sense of place. However there are distinctive pockets of historic, pastoral landscape, which comprise small hedgerow enclosed



fields across a distinctly hilly topography. The hilly topography and intermittent tree cover provide high visibility in places, although visual enclosure is common on lower ground. Overall the landscape has a moderate sensitivity.

Guidelines

The overall guidelines for the area are to conserve and reinforce the landscape:



- Control further development, and suburbanisation, within Brabourne Lees
- Avoid development on higher, most visible, ground
- Conserve and appropriately manage woodland blocks and chestnut coppice
- Conserve the pastoral, hedgerow enclosed landscape
- Conserve vernacular building styles and materials
- Encourage the use of local building materials and styles
- Encourage sympathetic fencing types where essential
- Avoid further segregation of fields

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Good
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Coherent
Cultural integrity:	Good
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Strong
Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of place:	Weak
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

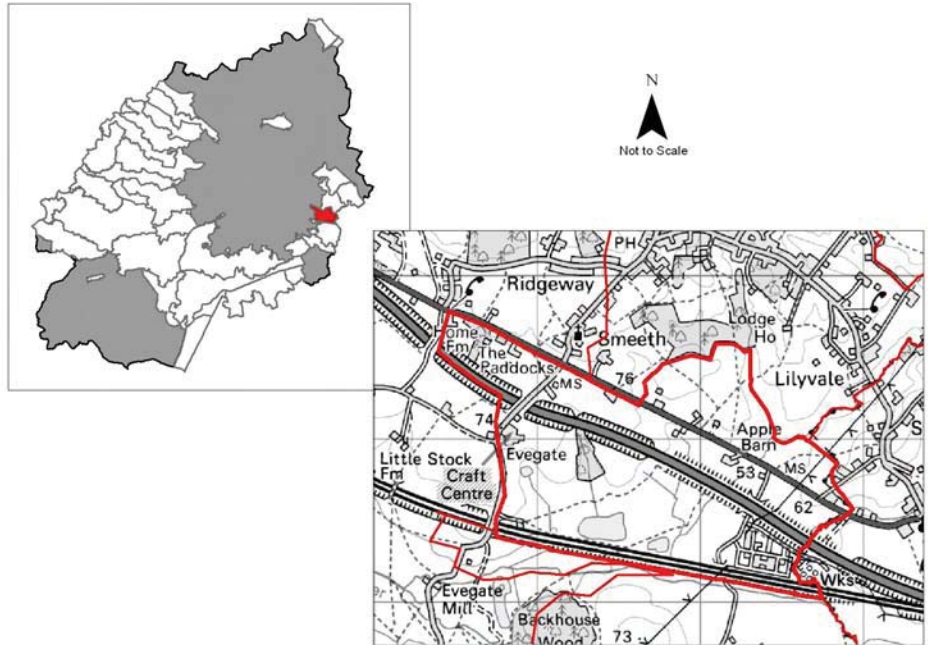
Guidelines: Conserve and Reinforce

29. Evegate Mixed Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Undulating topography
- Intensively farmed landscape with small pockets of pasture
- Comprehensive network of tree cover provided by highway planting, hedgerows and a block of broadleaf ancient woodland
- Ponds and vegetation lined water courses
- Fragmentation caused by major infrastructure routes
- Large electricity sub station
- Converted oast houses at Evegate Business Park

Landscape Description



The geology comprises Hythe Beds to the north, with bands of Atherfield Clay across lower ground to the south and the edge of Weald Clay to the very south along the edge of the valley containing the East Stour River. Swathes of Alluvium extend across the lower reaches. Soils are loamy, with loam to clay across lower ground to the south. The topography is gently undulating, and falls in a general southerly direction, with a distinct pattern of valleys containing streams to the west and a domed landform to the east. A spring is located at the head of the valley to the west, which filters into a distinct pond surrounded by mature trees including a number of willows.

There are long distance views out of the area to the North Downs and Aldington Church, which provides a prominent landmark feature raised on higher ground to the south. There is a comprehensive network of tree cover, provided by highway planting, hedgerows along minor roads, vegetation lined water courses and a block of broadleaf woodland which lies across a narrow valley containing a stream to the west. The land is largely intensively farmed, although pockets of





pasture are scattered within more enclosed parcels of land. A series of artificial water bodies have been formed across lower ground to the south as part of the landscape mitigation scheme for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL). Surrounded by wetland vegetation, the ponds reflect the low lying landscape and water bodies to the south of the CTRL at Evegate Mill.

The pattern of the landscape is much influenced and fragmented by major infrastructure routes. The M20 and the A20 run parallel, bisecting the area and leaving a narrow strip of land which is used mostly for arable production and as pasture. Although not widely visible in the undulating landscape, the M20 remains audible within these otherwise quiet farmlands. Cut into the landscape throughout much of the area, views of the motorway are mostly restricted to higher vantage points along the minor roads which it passes beneath and from minor roads it passes above. Views of the A20 are often restricted due to vegetation belts along its length. However, recent business development along the A20 emphasise the route. The CTRL lines the southern extent of the area, although mitigation planting in association with the construction of the CTRL restricts clear views of it. However from close proximity, safety fencing and associated infrastructure where the CTRL crosses minor local roads emphasise the route.

There are no settlements within the area, although there is a fragmented assortment of building types and properties. A large electricity sub station to the east provides a dominant feature within the landscape. The sub station extends on either side of Church Lane and bridges the gap between the M20 and the CTRL, increasing the perceived size and dominance of the development. To the west a cluster of traditional converted buildings, including barns and oast houses, and some new builds in traditional style form Evegate Business Park. A number of properties, mostly recent but with some traditional ragstone, are strewn along Station Road. Further west, Home Farm comprises large agricultural barns.

Condition

Whilst infrastructure corridors are not widely visible, they cause a large degree of fragmentation and interruption across the landscape in terms of pattern and coherency. Visual detractors include the extensive electricity sub station and large pylons, infrastructure corridors and moving vehicles where visible, and recent business developments along the A20. Whilst the range of visual detractors is not extensive, the size, fragmentation and degradation of the landscape caused by the detractors is dramatic. Whilst much of the land is intensively farmed, ponds and wetland areas, stream corridors, woodland, hedgerows and highway planting provide a reasonable network of corridors and bases for wildlife. Park Wood is ancient and as a result of highway planting and mitigation planting for CTRL, planting is varied in terms



of age structure. Overall, however, the landscape is in poor condition.



infrastructure corridors restricts the continuity of landscape pattern. Views are often open across the farmed landscape where they are not interrupted by the landform and vegetation belts along roads and water courses. Overall the landscape has a poor sensitivity.

Guidelines

The overall guidelines for the area are to improve the landscape:

- Conserve and appropriately manage ancient woodland
- Improve the significance of the ancient woodland through creating a wider framework of interlinking woodland planting
- Conserve ponds, wetlands and water courses which are characteristic features within the landscape and improve connectivity through incorporating within a wider habitat framework
- Improve culverting methods
- Avoid further fragmentation of the landscape
- Improve the visual impact of incongruous features within the landscape through an improved framework of vegetation
- Avoid development on higher, most visible, ground
- Conserve traditional buildings

Sensitivity

The ponds and wetland areas, the ancient woodland block across the narrow valley, traditional converted buildings and the use of local ragstone in some development are locally distinct. However, the fragmentation caused by the

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Poor
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
Detracting features:	Many
Visual unity:	Interrupted
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Coherent
Sensitivity:	Low
Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of place:	Weak
Landform:	Apparent
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

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

Guidelines: Improve

Downland Fringes



Much of the higher, undulating land immediately adjacent to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) forms part of the peripheral fringes of the North Downs. Whilst geographically dispersed to the north east, east and north west of Ashford, the Downland Fringes share geological and topographical qualities. South of the Downs, the scarp slope forms a prominent feature rising up steeply outside the study area boundary to the north. The Downland Fringes along this edge appear as part of the immediate and foreground and landscape setting of the Downs. To the north of the Kent Downs AONB, Old Wives Lees Orchards fall within the Downland Fringes. Situated on the dip slope of the Downs the landscape does not form part of the visible foreground to the Downs, but rather forms an integral part of the wider undulating downland setting.

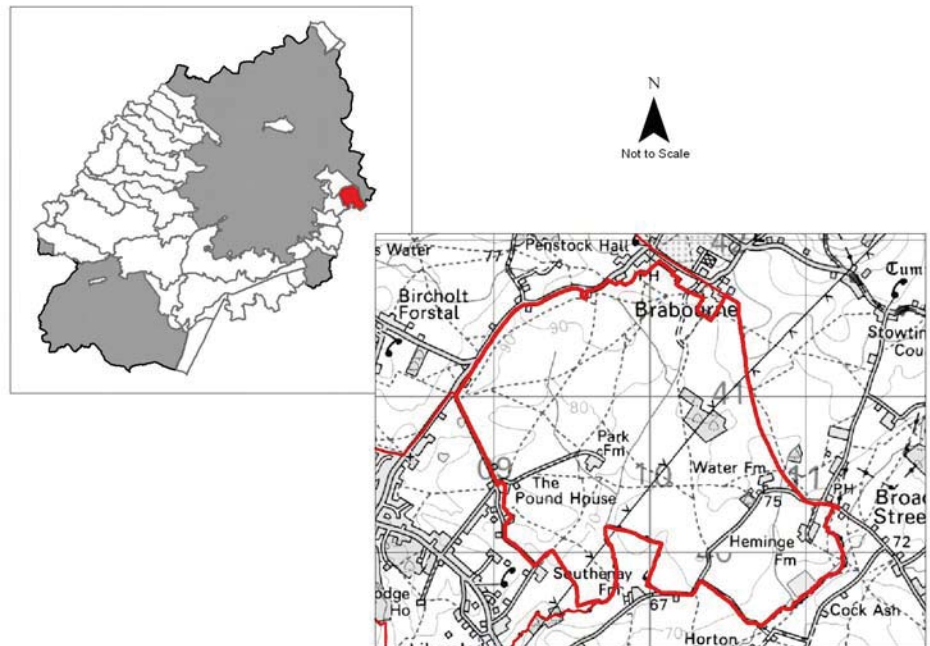


30. Brabourne Arable Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Intensive arable land
- Large, open, extensive fields
- Extensive hedgerow loss and limited tree cover
- Dramatic panoramic views of the Kent Downs AONB
- Narrow water courses originating from a series of springs along the foot of the Downs
- Isolated farms

Landscape Description



The geology is Gault Clay, with fringes of Lower Chalk at the very foot of the North Downs to the north. A layer of Head lies along the course of a stream between park Farm and Water Farm. Soils are clay, becoming siltier across the chalk to the north. The topography is gently undulating, and the landscape forms part of the immediate foreground to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Dramatic, panoramic views of the Downs are available from throughout the character area. There is limited tree cover as a result of the intensive arable land use and subsequent significant hedgerow loss, although infrequent remnants of hedgerow vegetation, and the occasional mature tree, loosely mark the historic field boundary pattern. Whilst there are small clusters of native vegetation surrounding farmsteads, there are few significant woodland blocks, although Forty Acre Wood draws the eye in the largely featureless arable farmland. In general this is an open and slightly exposed landscape, which provides a poor sense of enclosure. However to the east, Southenay X Lane is enclosed by hedgerows and smaller scale grazing paddocks for sheep and





horses commonly surround farmsteads.

A network of narrow water courses cross the landscape, originating from a series of springs set along the foot of the Downs to the north of the area, their routes marked by sparse vegetation belts in places and often supported by post and wire fencing. 'Water Farm' is aptly named, with one water course flowing in a southerly direction across its farmland. Ponds are located to the east around Heminge Farm and within a small woodland copse, 'Clay Pit Shave', south west of Water Farm.

There is little development within the area, although a number of isolated farmsteads are scattered across the landscape. The farms provide focal points within the

arable landscape, comprising an amalgamation of large agricultural barns and some traditional buildings such as oast houses. There are few roads, although Southenay X Lane to the east forms a characteristically narrow and hedge lined route which winds past a number of farmsteads.

Condition

The regularly undulating landform, the consistency of arable land use with little vegetation cover and the isolated farmsteads provide a coherent pattern of elements. Visual detractors within the somewhat simplistic landscape become visually prominent features. Large pylons march across the arable fields and are evident from throughout the surrounding landscape. Post and wire fencing around farmsteads and along water courses is in poor condition in parts and where it encloses smaller scale paddocks, it detracts from the open character of the arable land. Although Forty Acre Wood is ancient, there is little tree cover across the landscape and the ecological integrity of the area is weak. The very intensive agricultural use and the extensive loss of hedgerows provide barren expanses for wildlife. Where remaining, hedgerows are thin and gappy, and trees often appear to be over mature and unmanaged. Overall, the condition of the landscape is poor.

Sensitivity

The predominantly arable land use with little tree cover, and the pattern of sparsely located farmsteads, provides continuity throughout the landscape. The traditional Kentish oast house at Water Farm, the network of streams and the characteristically narrow and the hedge lined Southenay X Lane are locally distinct. The open landscape with limited tree cover provides high visibility. Whilst the largely featureless landscape does not provide a distinct sense of place, the location at the foot of the North Downs makes it a sensitive landscape in terms of the rural setting it provides to the Kent Downs AONB. Overall the landscape has a moderate sensitivity.



Guidelines

The overall guidelines for the area are to restore and improve the landscape:



- Conserve the rural and largely undeveloped setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve the rural setting of Brabourne and the largely unsettled character
- Restore, improve and appropriately manage woodland
- Restore field boundary pattern through encouraging the reinstatement of hedgerow boundaries
- Improve the water courses through appropriate management and encouraging waterside vegetation to create a wider riparian corridor
- Encourage ecological interest to selected areas of arable land to improve connectivity
- Encourage sympathetic fencing types where necessary
- Encourage the integration of large agricultural buildings into the landscape with appropriate clumps of native planting
- Restore the setting of traditional buildings
- Avoid incongruous features within the open landscape
- Conserve narrow winding lanes and avoid widening and the introduction of engineered features such as kerbs

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Poor
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Many
Visual unity:	Interrupted
Cultural integrity:	Poor
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Functional integrity:	Weak
Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of place:	Weak
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Open
Visibility:	High

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

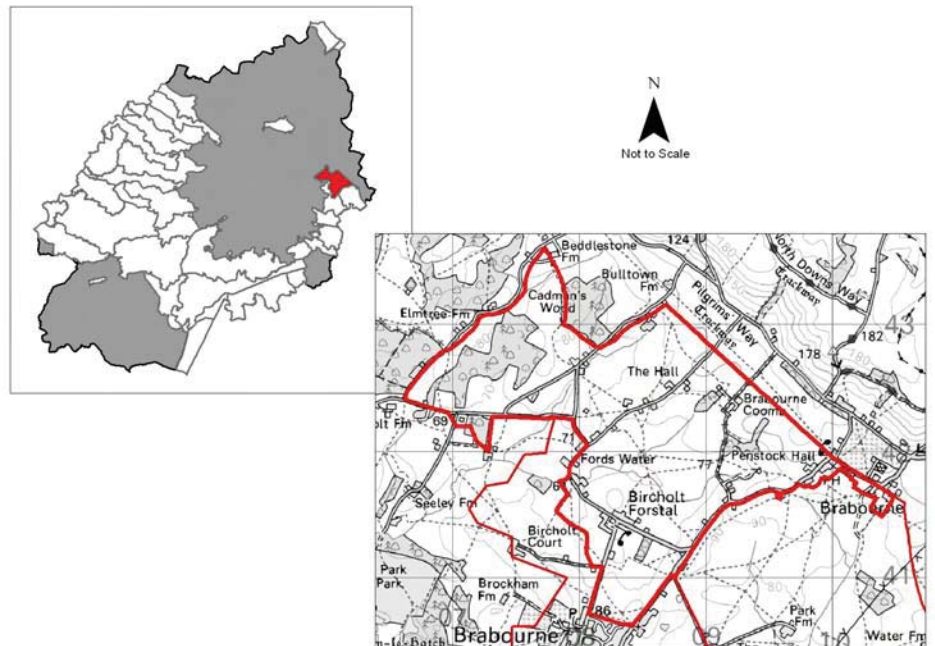
Guidelines: Restore and Improve

31. Brabourne Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating landform which forms part of the immediate foreground to the Kent Downs AONB
- Series of narrow streams run perpendicular to the Downs
- Mature pollard ash trees mark woodland boundaries
- Isolated oak trees set within arable fields
- Series of parallel narrow lanes run perpendicular to the Downs
- Clusters of vernacular style buildings
- Traditional and more recent residential development is strewn along the lanes

Landscape Description



The solid geology predominantly comprises Gault Clay, with a fringe of Upper Chalk to the north at the foot of the North Downs. Soils are clay, becoming silty to the north across the Upper Chalk. The topography is gently undulating, and the landscape forms part of the immediate foreground to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Dramatic, panoramic views of the Downs are available from throughout the character area, although within the character area itself views are restricted by the undulating landform and broadleaf woodland blocks. A series of narrow streams flow along the low ground, often perpendicular to the Downs and marked by native vegetation and reeds.

The land comprises mixed farmland, with paddocks used to graze sheep and horses concentrated around isolated properties. The grazed pockets of landscape are set within a network of small paddocks, divided by either hedgerows or post and wire or timber post and rail fencing. Arable land is situated within a slightly larger field pattern, sometimes enclosed by native woodland blocks which are scattered throughout the landscape. A scattering of evergreen pine





trees throughout the woodland provide seasonal continuity. Mature pollard ash trees mark woodland boundaries in places, and mature isolated oak trees reduce the perception of expanse across arable fields. A strong network of native hedgerows enclose many fields and line the lanes. Whilst generally intact, agricultural intensification has led to some loss and degradation of hedgerows, and some have been replaced, or are supported by post and wire fencing. A series of narrow, parallel lanes run perpendicular to the Downs. Settlement is sporadic, with clusters of vernacular style properties including converted barns clad with weather boarding and oast houses on the southern periphery of the village of Brabourne and at Brabourne Coombe. A mixture of traditional and more recent properties are strewn along the narrow lanes, and a group of recent properties and a village hall are situated around the road junction at Bircholt Forstal.

Condition

There is a coherent pattern of elements throughout the landscape. Visual detractors comprise visually prominent fencing and gateways which occur in places, electricity cables which run above the hedgerows along the lanes and some large corrugated metal agricultural barns. The area provides a network of ecological opportunities with its robust hedgerow network, broadleaf woodland blocks and mature isolated oaks. However there are areas of intensive agricultural farmland, and some hedgerow degradation/loss. Much of the woodland is ancient, and Foreland Wood and part of Cadman's Wood to the west are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Generally, built development respects local vernacular and promotes a distinct sense of place, and the southern extent of Brabourne is designated as a Conservation Area. Overall, the landscape is in moderate condition.

Sensitivity

There is a distinct sense of place provided by the undulating landform against the backdrop of the North Downs. Vernacular style buildings, the pattern of narrow lanes lined with native hedgerows and the mature isolated oak trees and pollard ash which mark historic boundaries add to the local distinctiveness. The rural, undulating landscape is sensitive in terms of the setting it provides to the Kent Downs AONB. Overall the landscape has a high sensitivity.



Guidelines

The overall guidelines for the area are to conserve and restore the landscape:

- Conserve the rural and undeveloped, undulating foreground to the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve and appropriately manage strong woodland blocks and chestnut coppice
- Conserve isolated oak trees and pollard ash
- Seek to plant new isolated oak trees within arable land and ash along woodland boundaries to provide continuation of these characteristic landscape features
- Conserve vernacular style buildings and their settings
- Conserve isolated hamlets and avoid enlargement
- Conserve narrow winding lanes and avoid widening
- Conserve native hedgerows and restore where deteriorating
- Conserve the pastoral landscape and avoid further arabilisation
- Encourage sympathetic fencing types where essential



Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual unity:	Coherent
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Coherent
Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

Guidelines: Conserve and Restore