Ashford Local Development Framework
Landscape Character Study

for Ashford Borough Council & English Partnerships

BACKGROUND DATA REPORT

November 2005

122/doc/013

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Executive Summary

This background report was researched in August 2004 when the original scoping document was being refined, and prior to starting field work around Ashford, and refined over the months following this. It was first issued in draft in December 2004 and subsequently revised and issued as 122/doc/002rev b in April 2004. The report has been revised again and augmented with new information on the latest Countryside Stewardship programme that reflects changes in the Common Agricultural Policy, and historic information from early editions of the the Ordnance Survey. The order and pagination have changed for clarity so this latest revision is presented with a new document number 122/doc/013.

Starting with an overview of the preferred Greater Ashford Development Framework (GADF) expansion option as of November 2004, and the environmental constraints prepared for the GADF by Studio Engleback in April/May 2004, the background report looks at the landscape policy guidance, and illustrates the arrangement of designated landscapes, habitats, and agricultural land designations in the study area.

The Countryside Agency first produced a map of the landscape character areas of England in 1996 and followed this with a more detailed region by region assessment of the country. In chapter 3 we provide an overview of the relevant broad landscape character types with illustrations for the Countryside Agency report.

A more detailed county-wide landscape character assessment was carried out by Babtie for Kent County Council in 2003. Jane Farmer, from Babtie, who worked on this study has been involved in meetings with Ashford Borough Council and has provided some input into this study. An overview of the county landscape character types and the resulting landscape character strategy is given. Prior to starting detailed site work, the Studio Engleback team visited the whole area to get an overview of the variety of landscapes, and chapter 3 concludes with locations and illustrations of the seven the county landscape character types immediately impinging on the current town limits.

The important cultural dimension to the landscape of Kent is illustrated in the Kent Historic landscape characterisation study carried out for Kent County Council and English Heritage by the Oxford Archaeological Unit. This was a mainly desk based exercise that defined 87 historic landscape types within Kent and these were grouped into 14 broad categories. The division of the landscape into these smaller units within the county landscape character types defined by Babtie become the basis for our own landscape description units (LDU) and with the agreement of Ashford Borough Council the fieldwork was carried out on this basis. The benefit of field work was that some LDUs could be refined and it is hoped that in the phase 2 work this study will relate directly to the County work in terms of zooming in on the detail - the first phase of the study addresses only the hinterland of the proposed expansion areas rather than the whole town. This chapter concludes with an illustrating of the distribution of each historic landscape type with typical site photographs taken during the survey.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of the more detailed landscape character studies carried out in other parts of Kent as a reference point for this study. In view of the nature of the landscape around Ashford and the significant expansion earmarked, it was agreed with Ashford Borough Council to consider the area in greater detail than some of these other studies.

Underpinning the very varied landscape characters to be found around Ashford is the geology running in diagonal bands through the town and its immediate hinterland – chalk, clay and sandstone. Chapter 6 opens with a description of the country and local geology, and the topography that has derived from this and natural processes upon it. Rivers and land drainage are a major factor in this landscape with five Environment agency designated “Main Rivers’. Much of the land is low lying and the rivers rise on impermeable clay soils making them ‘flashy’ in character and leading to regular flooding. These wetland and floodplain landscapes are a significant part of the Ashford landscape. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of the current climate and the effects of climate change on the area, which in our opinion need to be addressed seriously with regard to the effect on the character of the landscape around the town.

Over the past 40 years with the advent of mechanised farming on a large scale and agricultural subsidies - starting with the ‘Green Pound’ and followed by the European Community Common Agricultural Policy, the landscape has seen dramatic changes compared to the century or more before this. The Kent Landcover Survey showed that Ashford Borough has 14% cover of woodlands and that there has been a significant change from pasture to improved agricultural land. This has been accompanied by a significant altering of the spatial arrangement of the rural scene in some areas by the enlargement of fields and removal of hedgerows. The damage to the landscape has been further increased by the development of National infrastructure links to the coast – the M20 and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL). The effects of these changes are reflected in the Country landscape Strategy which evolved from the County Landscape Character Assessment.

As the closest county to continental Europe, and the part of the UK formerly joined to it, Kent has a rich history related to the waves of immigration and invasion over 5000 years. This is an essential component of the region's cultural heritage. Chapter 8 provides an overview of Kentish and Ashford history, and illustrates the disposition of conservation areas and listed buildings. The Belvedere Memorandum (1999) is a policy document that examines the relationship between cultural history and spatial planning. The project was set up in 1997 to feed into the debate about the country's future spatial planning policy. Significantly, attention has been devoted to the cultural dimension of planning. Cultural identity and the preservation of regional diversity were considered the point of departure for planning specifications for the future, so we have provided an overview of this document as an example of the type of issues that should be considered in the Ashford Local Development Framework.

The framework for the landscape character around Ashford has been set by geological conditions and the impact of mankind. As a consequence the landscape character is essentially man made. Nature has found and exploited niches in this landscape that provide detail and delight for people, and these systems need to be recognized as they are in a very delicate balance with a variety of other pressures on this crowed part of our island.

The Kent Habitat Survey was updated between 2001 and 2003 following earlier work in the late 1990s. This provides an impressive patchwork of habitat information through the whole county and was the foundation of the Kent Lifescapes project (K-LIS) which was published in draft in 2004 and is still being developed. K-LIS takes the habitats data and, looking at soils and geology etc., illustrates the potential of the land for recreating, extending, or linking these habitats.

Combined with the County Landscape Strategy this provides a rationale for enhancing the existing landscape resource. It is very important not to compartmentalise the disciplines and areas of study in the landscape. Each area of interest informs another, and together they provide what Romans called the Genus Loci or, as we more prosaically called it, Local Distinctiveness. The poet and friend of the early british landscape architect William Kent, Alexander Pope, wrote that before making any designs one should consult the 'genius of the place' and that in essence is what this whole study is all about.

This background report ends with recommendations for the direction of the work to be undertaken. In understanding the many inputs that have produced the subtly changing local landscape character, we conclude that the fieldwork needs to provide an indication of landscape character 'signatures' in the landscape around the town that can be used in the expansion areas. A key consideration is how to meld town and country and to manage the existing landscape resource. This could usefully combine with the management of water and the production of green energy as drivers for this landscape management. These ideas have been taken forward in Studio Engleback's work on the GADF, with key ideas expressed in reports issued to Ashford's Future and English Partnerships by the lead consultant Urban Initiatives, and more detailed information contained in the background reports to the GADF study produced by Studio Engleback.

Green 'Tunnel' typical of South and West of Ashford

We acknowledge the help of Kathy Putnam and Sharon Banks of Ashford Borough Council for reviewing the draft text, Lis Dyson (Kent County Council) for the Kent Historic Characterisation Study and Belvedere Memorandum, Andy Jones and Laurence Tricker (KCC) for the Kent Habitat Survey and K-LIS information, and informal comments at presentations of this work from the Ashford Nature Conservation Forum and Ashford Green Corridors Group.

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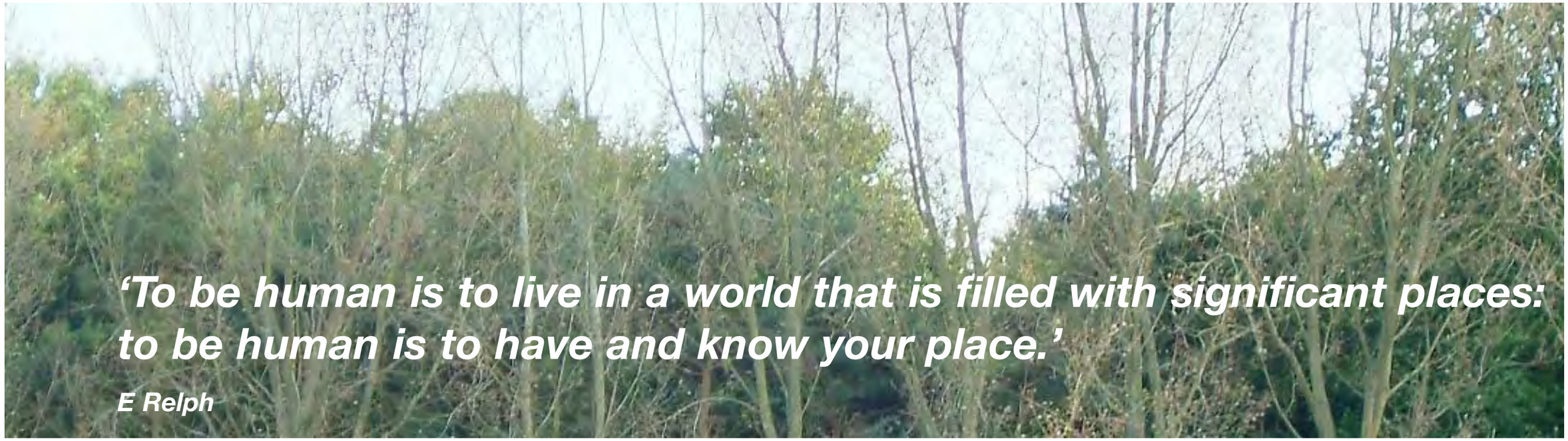


‘To be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: to be human is to have and know your place.’

E Relph

Section 1 Introduction

Introduction

Background
In August 2004 Ashford Borough Council commissioned Studio Engleback to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment of Ashford. The Landscape Assessment will cover the urban fringe area around Ashford, expected to be affected by the growth of Ashford Town, and any rural settlements affected by this growth outlined in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) Sustainable Communities Plan. The main aim of the landscape character assessment is to further the understanding of the Borough's landscape. This improved understanding will assist the formulation of the Greater Ashford Development Framework (GADF) and in formulating landscape policies as part of the production of the Local Development Framework. The landscape character study should reveal the carrying capacity of the landscape for development, and also suggest landscape 'signatures' that can inform the design of neighbourhoods and urban fringes to enhance local distinctiveness.

Context
The Countryside Agency has been at the forefront of the process of landscape character description and assessment in England. In 1994 it launched its Countryside Character Initiative followed by the publication in 1996 of 'The Character Map of England: wildlife and natural areas'. This map was published jointly with English Nature and featured 120 English Nature Natural Areas and 159 Countryside Agency Character Areas. Natural Areas can be formally defined as 'biogeographic zones which reflect the geological foundation, the natural systems and processes and the wildlife in different parts of England, and provide a framework for setting objectives for nature conservation' (HMSO, 1995). Thus the Natural Areas profiles were based on the distinctive ecology of rural areas, while the Character Area profiles analysed landscape character on a broad scale via the assessment of physical influences, historic and cultural influences, buildings and settlement, land cover and changes in the landscape. These Character Areas are more focused on landscape character and are therefore considered as more relevant to the current study. Seven Character Areas were identified as lying wholly or partly in Kent. These are:

Greater Thames Estuary
North Kent Plain
North Downs
Wealden Greensand
Low Weald
High Weald
Romney Marshes

of which the last six concern the area covered by Ashford Borough, and three (North Downs, Wealden Greensand and Low Weald) are relevant to the GADF.

Thinking about Landscapes
'Place' involves the integration of elements of nature and culture. Each place has its own order its special ensemble, which distinguishes it from the next place. E Relph emphasises the importance of place – its identity, its 'genius loci'- the spirit of place that gives it its unique personality and the need to create and maintain significant and diverse places.

'If places are indeed a fundamental aspect of man's existence in the world, if they are sources of security and identity for individuals and for groups of people, then it is important that the means of experiencing, creating and maintaining significant places are not lost. Moreover there are many signs that these very means are disappearing and that 'placelessness ' – the weakening of distinct and diverse experiences and identities of places – is now a dominant force. Such a trend marks a major shift in the geographical bases of existence from a deep association with places to rootlessness, a shift that, once recognised and clarified, may be judged undesirable and possibly countered. It will then be of no small importance to know what are distinctive and essential features of place and of our experiences of places, for without such knowledge it will not be possible to create and preserve the places that are the significant contexts of our lives.'

Landscape character assessment assists in capturing the richness and diversity of landscapes through a process of characterisation and evaluation. This knowledge can then be applied to Local Development Framework, and more specifically the Greater Ashford Development Framework. It can inform the new expansioon areas, and importantly can guide our approach to the urban rural interface. This zone is the first part of the town seen by a visitor or resident returning home, we believe that it needs to have a multi-functional role rooted in local distinctiveness. This idea has been set out in the Urban Initiatives GADF Reports and in the supplementary environmental design codes and spatial plan chapters prepared by Studio Engleback. The Countryside Agency recognised this opportunity and states:

'The rural urban fringe is a space to create exciting new landscapes for the 21st century….'.

GADF Spatial Plan

Favoured Option

The GADF spatial plan has evolved from nine scenarios developed during the first series of workshops with stakeholders in the spring of 2004. Three scenarios were developed for three different urban types - the PPG 3 densities taking the largest area of land reflecting planing policy guidance on housing density; the urban village types which was a little denser, and the compact urban model which seeks to make the town work in urban terms with viable public transport and an attempt to discourage the use of cars. This last scenario was preferred by the stakeholders as it had the smallest footprint for the expansion of the town.

Urban Initiatives them took the three options for the compact model that had emerged from the workshops, and sought to meld them into one scenario. This became the starting point for the summer series of workshops with stakeholders which modified it. Four options were developed which were fairly similar to each other but with a slightly different emphasis on areas developed, and then a fifth option was added which took on board as many comments as possible. This was worked up with the UI team to produce the draft spatial plan in November 2004. Aspects of this Landscape Character Study have already fed back into that plan.

Environmental Constraints

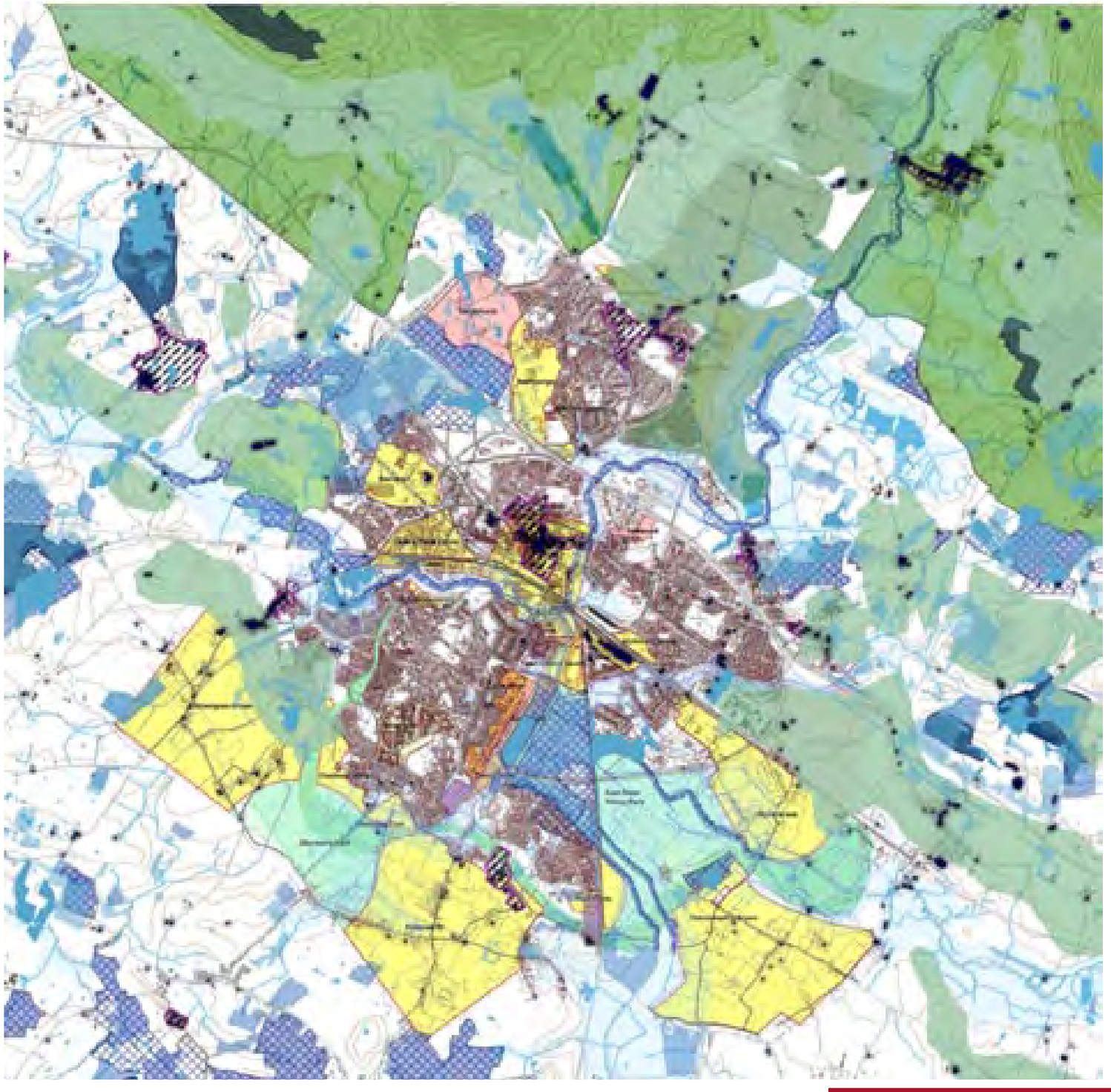
Throughout the GADF planning process constraints have been considered and addressed. Opposite are the combined environmental constraints applied to one of the options that was refined to produce the final draft plan shown on the preceding page.
The coloured areas and highlighted dots represent a series of constraints ranging from agricultural quality and landscape designations to ecological and heritage designations.

The first phase for the plan will be to work from the town centre outwards, using brownfield sites and healing the existing town fabric. This will have little impact on the current town setting.The major residential expansion will be to the south of the town with smaller areas of infill around Kennington, and the major workplace expansion will be either side of the town adjacent to the M20.

Most of the expansion areas and particularly Cheesemans Green, Kingsnorth and Chilmington largely avoid key environmental constraints. Whilst preparing the GADF, developers had independently advanced some projects, including the Waterbook scheme that appears to compromise the integrity of Captains Wood located on rising ground south the Willsborough Dykes wet grazing by surrounding it with development.

The purpose of this study is to capture the essence of the local landscape character around Ashford, which is varied and could be used to imbue the different expansion areas with a particular local distinctiveness. The study is also about assessing the sensitivity of the landscape to development, and to suggest ways of better absorbing the expansion areas using elements of the local landscape character such as woodlands, tree belts etc.

The Design Codes for the GADF looked at environmental issues at a strategic level. Key to this was the idea of ‘Land Banking’ for future ‘Green Infrastructure’ which could deliver ‘Green Services’ to the town. A key notion is that greenfield land is needed not only for built development, but also for the green infrastructure, some of which is already extant but underutilised, such as local woodlands. The following page illustrates the idea of using the hinterland of the town to provide green energy and water cleaning, as well as re-establishing the link between land management and the effect of natural processes. We think this should point to the rationale for reinforcing or conserving particular landscpae characetr. Of particular concern is surface water management to seek to reduce the causes of flooding in the town, whilst at the same time retaining moisture in the landscape during increasingly dry summers and autumns.



Space for Green Infrastructure

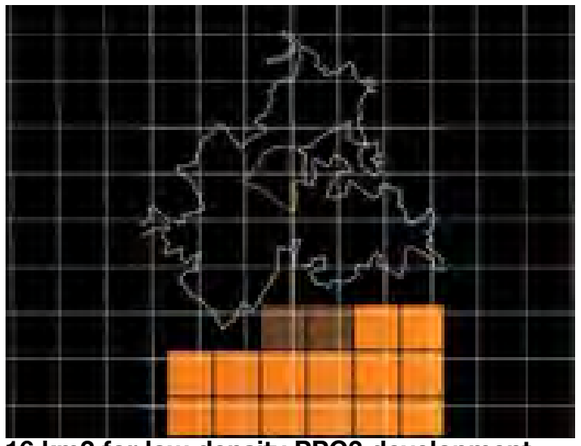
Green Infrastructure Delivering Green Services
The Studio Engleback team lead the environment work stream in the GADF and stated that space was needed for green infrastructure that delivered green services. This green infrastructure would be more than just parks, walks and open space, we believed that it should be multi-functional, helping to deal with flooding, surface or waste water management, energy conservation or supply, reinforcement of biodiversity, respect or reflect local heritage and landscape character.

Although the green infrastructure must thread throughout the town itself, using the existing green corridors as the main routes in a multi-functional green network or grid; we suggested that there should be a green girdle around the town where these functions were particularly prevalent, extending to include a wider hinterland of the town. This would include all the areas currently being considering in the Ashford Landscape Character Study and beyond. A realistic hinterland for biomass production, for example might be ten kilometres.

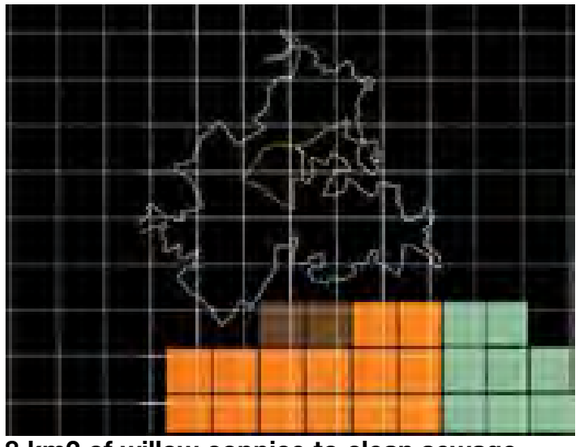
The diagrams shown opposite illustrate this issue. At the lowest density for development advised in Planning Policy Guidance 3 the area needed to accommodate 31 000 new homes and 28 000 new jobs in Ashford would be 16 square kilometres. The GADF promoted a more efficient use of space by denser planning. If a non-conventional approach was taken to treating sewage from the 31 000 homes using coppiced osier willows, approximately 8 square kilometres of land would be needed in close proximity to the town (other bio-technologies such as reed beds and lagoons would take less).

The osiers, harvested every two years, have the capability of producing enough energy to heat one third of the new homes assuming they were built to energy efficient standards. This suggests that, in crude terms, 24 square kilometres of coppice willow woodland might be sufficient for a zero carbon heating regime for all the projected new homes. New willow plantations could reflect exiting or even pre-existing field boundaries in a move to re-establish the grain of the land lost in recent decades to intensive arable farming.

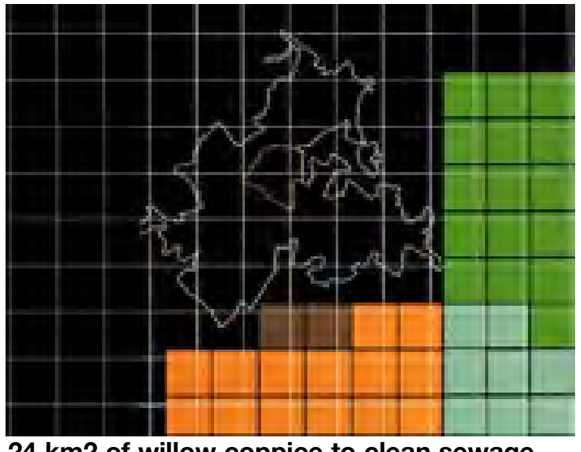
The notional plan of the areas of willow coppice and reed beds need for the proposed development to the south of the town show this respect for landscape grain. Of course there are also arable crops that could be used for biomass - oilseed rape and miscanthus among them. The wider map shows all the existing woodlands, many of which are either hornbeam or chestnut coppices that fall within 5 and 10 km of the current town limits. Many of these woodlands need a market to ensure they are managed, if this market is found in providing biomass for a local energy network in Ashford, the landscape character of the area could be sustained in a viable manner.



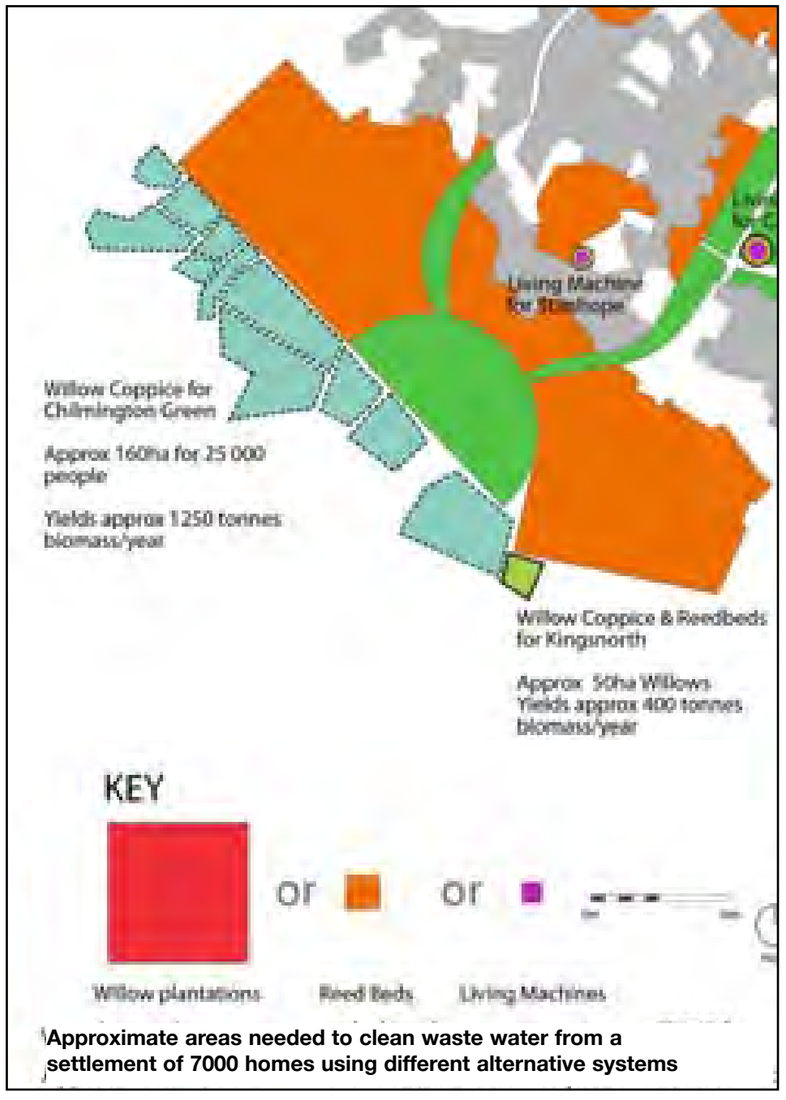
16 km2 for low density PPG3 development



8 km2 of willow coppice to clean sewage



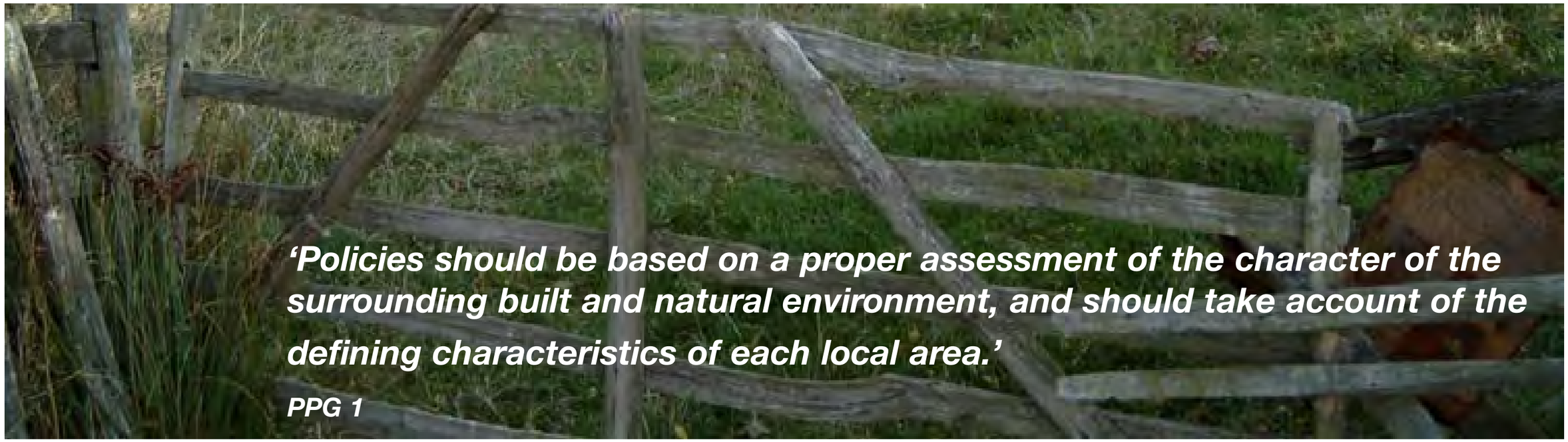
24 km2 of willow coppice to clean sewage



Approximate areas needed to clean waste water from a settlement of 7000 homes using different alternative systems

An approach to areas needed for biomass water treatment of two expansion areas that respect field boundaries and the grain fo the land

Existing Woodlands in a 5km and 10km zone around the current town limits



‘Policies should be based on a proper assessment of the character of the surrounding built and natural environment, and should take account of the defining characteristics of each local area.’

PPG 1

Section 2 Policy Guidance

Landscape Policy Guidance

National and International Policy Guidance

The importance of landscape character is reflected in an array of measures provided through the European and Domestic law and policies, and other international conventions to which the UK is signatory. In general these act to set out measures that must or should be adopted to conserve landscape character relevant to land-use planning.

National planning policy guidance is provided through a series of Planning Policy Guidance Documents published by the Government to cover the whole range of planning issues. PPG1: 'General Policy and Principles' promotes the use of landscape character assessment. It states that 'policies should be based on a proper assessment of the character of the surrounding built and natural environment, and should take account of the defining characteristics of each local area.'

Landscape character is addressed more specifically in PPG7: 'The Countryside: Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development', which contains a section on the character of the countryside and refers to the Character of England map. It states that the character approach 'should help in accommodating necessary change without sacrificing local character'. It can help ensure that development respects or enhances the distinctive character of the land and built environment.

County Planning Policy

The need to protect the landscape and townscapes of Ashford Borough is recognised by both Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council. Policy ENV1 of the Kent Structure Plan 1996 states that Kent's countryside will be protected for its own sake and development in the countryside should seek to maintain or enhance it. Additionally, Policy ENV2 states that: 'Development will not be permitted if it leads to the loss of features or habitats which are of landscape, historic, wildlife or geological importance or of an unspoilt quality free from urban intrusion, unless there is a need for development which outweighs these countryside considerations.' Proposals will be required to reflect the need for conservation, reinforcement, restoration or creation of countryside character and provide for the appropriate management of important features and the wider landscape.

Although the current Ashford Borough Local Plan contain policies protecting landscape (EN26: 'Landscape Conservation in AONBs' and EN27: Landscape Conservation'), guidance and best practice on landscape character assessment has evolved significantly since the preparation and eventual adoption of the current Local Plan in November 1997. In order to protect the landscape of Ashford Borough fully, there is a need to address the issue of landscape character assessment as part of developing the Local Development Framework.

From Ashford's Strategic Growth:

The Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9 March 2001) identified Ashford as one of the growth areas in the South East. It did not state how much Ashford should grow but that the local authorities, with regional and central government partners, should carry out a study to assess the scope for growth and how to achieve it.

The Ashford's Future Study was published in December 2002. It concluded that within the period to 2031, Ashford has the capacity to provide an additional 31,000 homes and 28,000 jobs. More importantly, the study also concluded that achieving this quantity of development would be conditional on the necessary social, community and physical infrastructure being in place at the right time as well as for a step change to be made in terms of the quality of the town centre and developments being planned in and around the town. Although the Ashford's Future Study is not a formal policy document it was carried out with the detailed participation of the Government Office, Regional Assembly, County and Borough Councils. The approach taken has moved away from a top down approach to planning. The Ashford's Future Study has fed into a number of policy documents with its conclusions being reflected in:

- Sustainable Communities in the South East, building for the future (ODPM February 2003) – The Government's action plan for creating sustainable communities;

- Regional Planning Guidance for the South East Chapter 12 - Ashford Growth Area (Government Office for the South East July 2004);

- Draft Kent and Medway Structure Plan (September 2003).

The Study will also be reflected in the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy and along with the Greater Ashford Development Framework masterplanning will form the basis for the preparation of the Ashford Borough Local Development Framework.

From Kent Design: A guide to Sustainable Development

Published jointly by the local authorities in Kent its Principle 10.1 states that the value of open space, landscape and nature conservation should be recognised within the development proposals and that landscape character assessments at local level are a means to achieve this and should be encouraged.

District Policies

For the purposes of this study the following policies within the Ashford Borough Local Plan, June 2000 are particularly relevant:

GP2 To protect and improve the quality of the Borough's urban, village and rural environments by safeguarding the setting and the character of settlements and buildings, and protecting the countryside for its landscape, heritage, nature conservation and recreational value.

GP4 To propose developments on specific sites in a way which minimises damage to the environment by respecting the character of the surrounding areas, protecting important features in the landscape, heritage features and wildlife habitats and providing compensating environmental benefits where damage by development cannot be avoided.

GP6 To encourage high design quality and an appropriate 'sense of place' in new development in the design of buildings, their relationship with each other, and the spaces and landscape around them.

DP1 and DP2 policies emphasise the need for new development to provide a coherent sense of place, respecting the character and appearance of the countryside around it.

EN9 Development proposals which would damage significantly buildings, landscape features, or important views, which contribute to the settings and entrances of towns and villages will not be permitted.

EN10 In new developments proposed on the edge of existing settlements the boundary treatment should respect that which forms the settlement's established character, providing an appropriate transition to the surrounding countryside. Applications will need to demonstrate how this has been achieved.

Oast house near Stone Cross

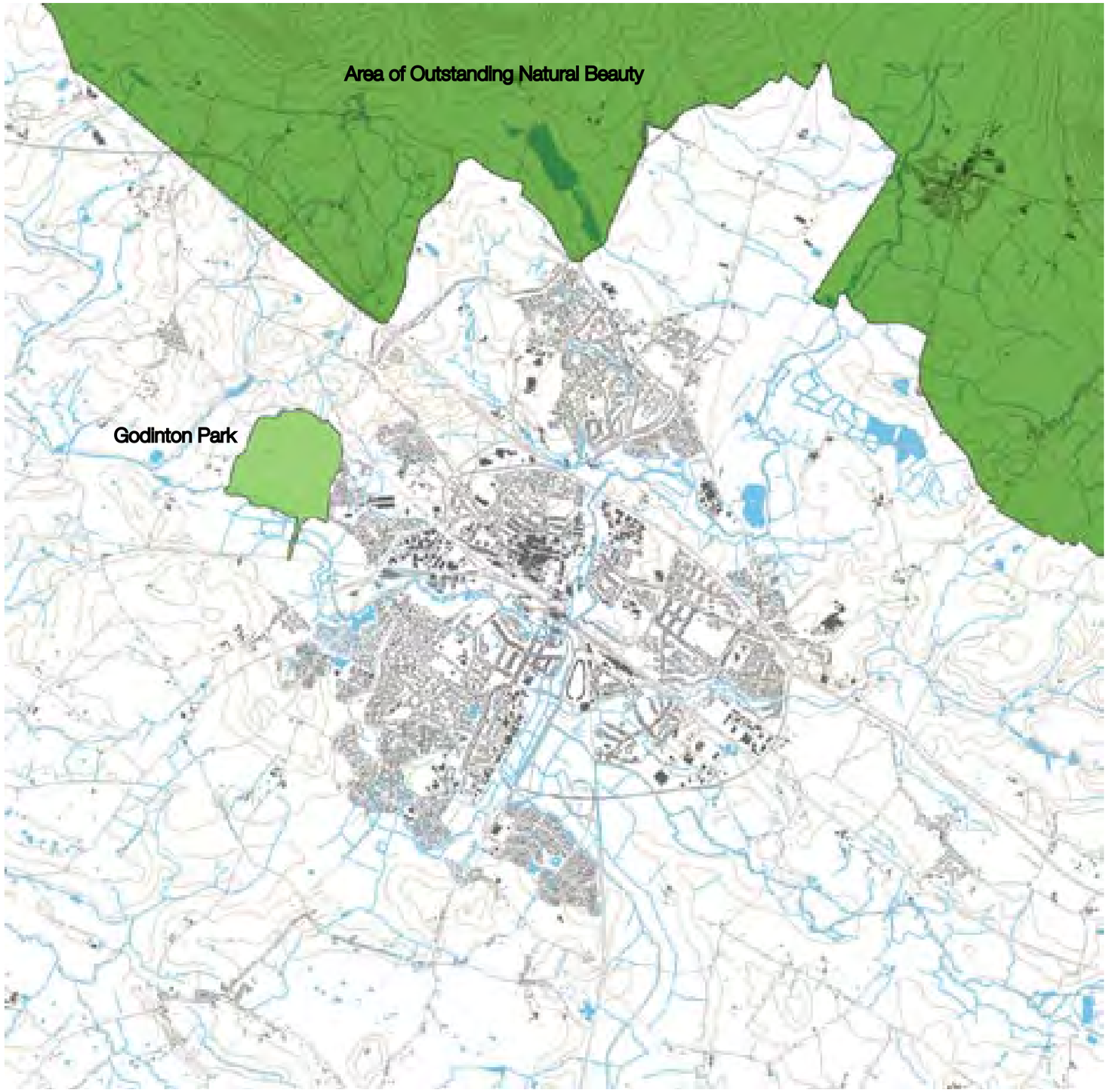
Designated Landscapes

National Designations

National Landscape designations within the Borough apply to two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) (the Kent Downs and the High Weald),

The North Downs AONB is adjacent to the area of search, the High Weald AONB is further away, and so not affected by the expansion proposals.

Godinton Park, located to the west of the town, is a Special Landscape Area - classic parkland on the greensand ridge.



Designated Habitats

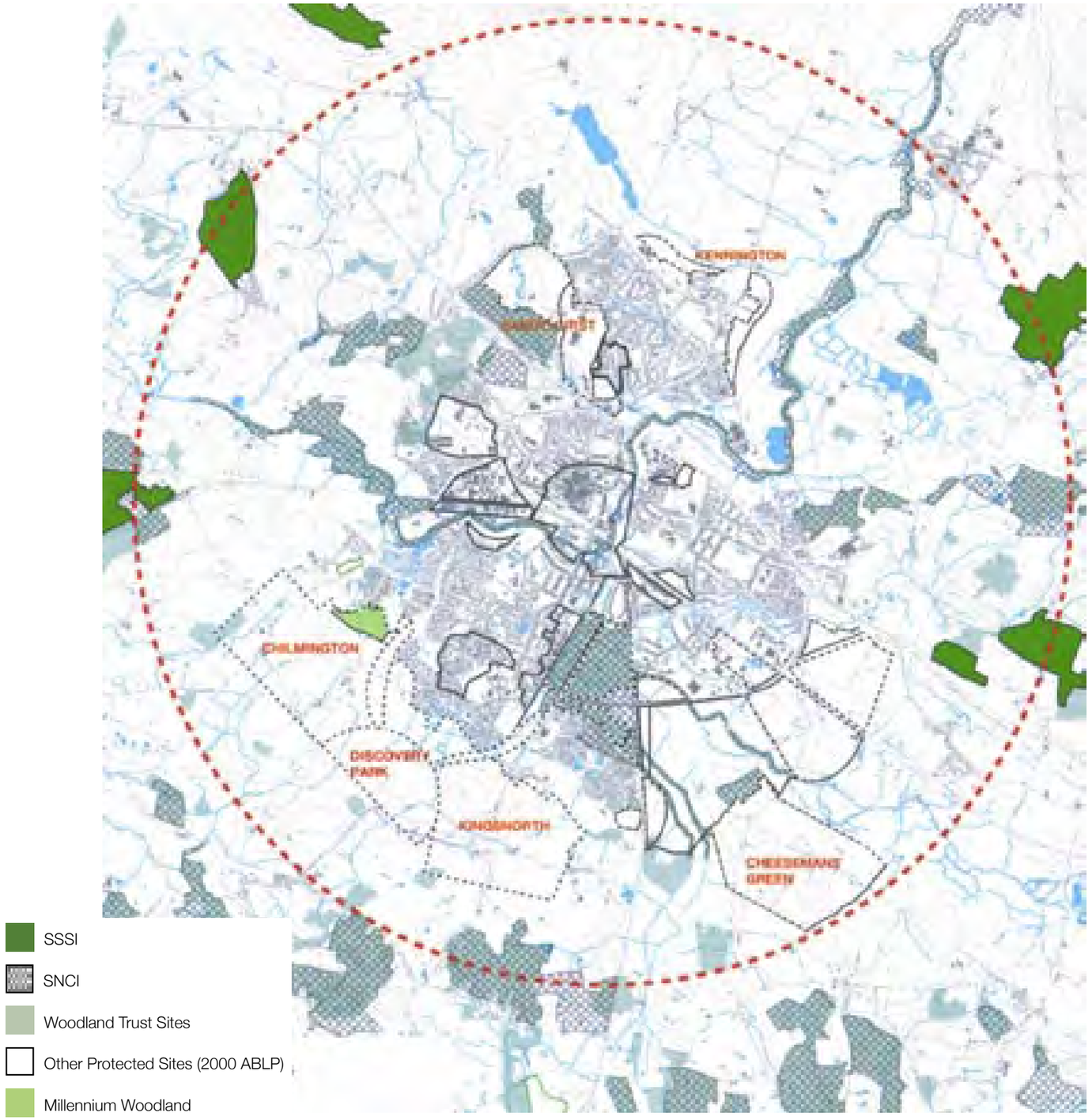
There are two National Nature Reserves (NNRs) (Hamstreet Woods and Wye Downs), and 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in the vicinity of Ashford. Furthermore, there are 68 Sites of Nature Conservation Interest of County-wide importance.

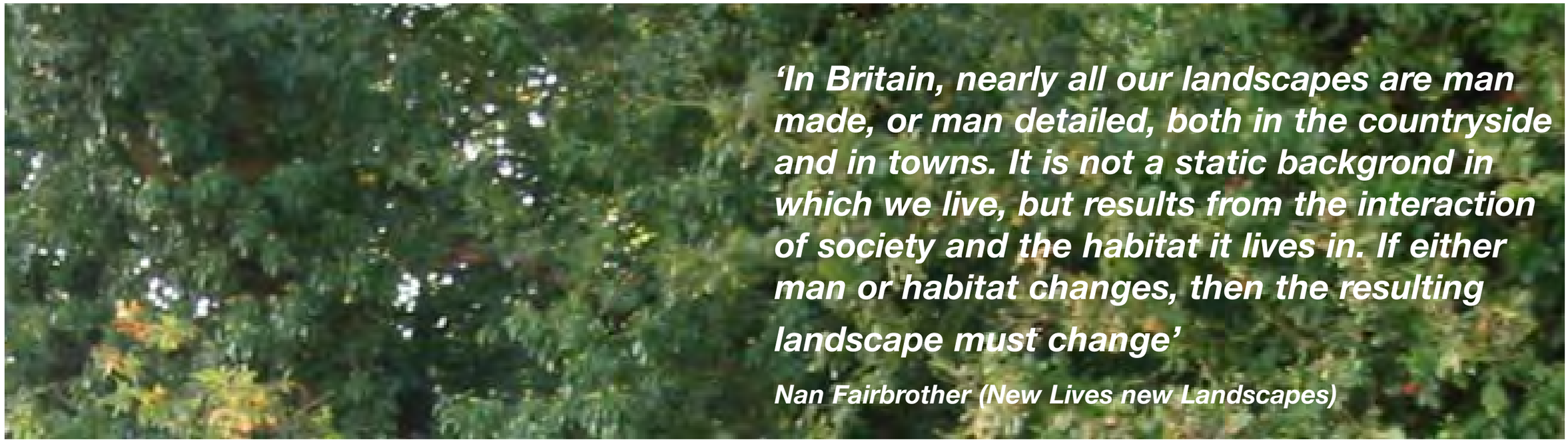
The area of search shown as the dotted red line, approximately 3km for the current edge of town includes 5 SSSI sites on the periphery, notably Hothfield Common and Hatch Park both related to the underlying greensand.

The bulk of the SNCIs near the town centre related to the flood plain and wetlands of the Stour system, although there are some key woodlands including the Warren, north west of the town centre, and Captain's Wood at Cheeseman's Green.

These conservation areas have a distinct character and sense of place too. Woodlands have this in high degree, and it should be noted that the large area of woods to the south of Ashford around Ham Street, associated with the old Saxon Coastline provide an opportunity to integrate the new urban edge with the countryside if extended northwards.

The wetlands and floodplain are a different matter. By and large, these areas have great potential for increasing ecological value. Many of these areas are of low visual quality however, being low grade grazing marsh with poached hedges and scrubby hawthorns. Improving the quality of the habitats can also be a driver for improving the visual quality and reinforcing the character of this major resource.





‘In Britain, nearly all our landscapes are man made, or man detailed, both in the countryside and in towns. It is not a static backgrond in which we live, but results from the interaction of society and the habitat it lives in. If either man or habitat changes, then the resulting landscape must change’

Nan Fairbrother (New Lives new Landscapes)

Section 3 Landscape Character

Landscape Character of South East England

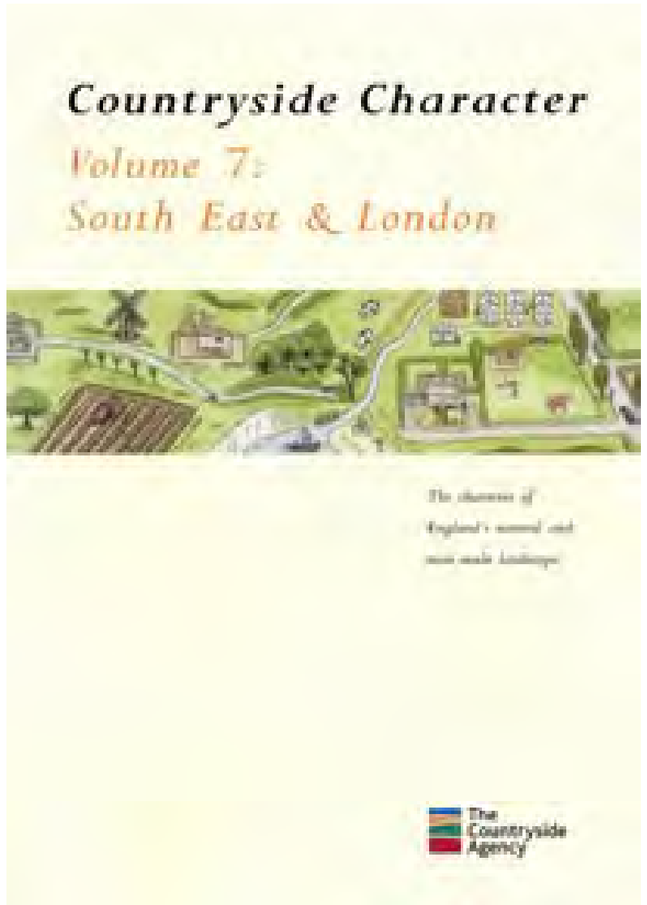
National Assessment

The 1994 Government organisational review of both the Countryside Commission and English Nature resulted in encouragement for the two organisations to work jointly to produce a single national map that would underpin both landscape and nature conservation measures in future. The concept of Countryside Character found expression in the production, by the Countryside Agency and English Nature with support from English Heritage, of 'The Character of England' map, sometimes referred to as the Joint Map. This combined English Nature's Natural Areas and the Countryside Commission's Countryside Character Areas, derived from the National Mapping project, into a map of Joint Character Areas for the whole of England. The map is accompanied by descriptions of the character of each of the 159 character areas, the influences determining that character and the pressures for change, described in eight regional volumes.

The Borough of Ashford includes part of six distinct Character Areas: the North Kent Plain, the North Downs, the Wealden Greensand, the Low Weald, the High Weald and the Romney Marshes. By definition each area has a unique make-up of geology and soils, biodiversity, appearance, settlement and land use patterns, history, locally distinctive architecture, and degree of tranquility.

The scope of the GADF does not include the entire Borough but focuses on the urban fringe area around Ashford town. Within a 5km radius of the edge of Ashford there are three Character Areas, and from North to South these are: the North Downs, the Wealden Greensand, and the Low Weald.

The Landscape Character of England
(Countryside Agency 1994)



The Landscape Character of South East England
(Countryside Agency 1999)

The Wealden Greensand

The Wealden Greensand (Character Area 120) runs in a long curved belt parallel to the North Downs with considerable local variation, but is unified as a result of its underlying geology and topography and the distinctive spring line settlements below the Downs. Lowland heath is the most characteristic habitat of the Wealden Greensand. Once very extensive on the Greensand ridge, today heathland is concentrated in West Sussex, Hampshire and western Surrey. Many ancient woodlands have survived throughout the area, though often in fragmented patches and on steeper slopes. These include the Wealden Edge Hangers of Hampshire on the steep chalk and Upper Greensand escarpment, and sessile oak woods on the acid, sandy soils of Surrey, West Sussex and Kent.

The Wealden Greensand includes part of several river valleys, notably the Arun, the Rother and the Wey. These support a series of wetland habitats including alluvial grazing meadows with drainage ditches, marshy grassland, reedbeds and wet woodlands. Other habitats include dry acidic grassland and parkland, and a number of large, artificial ponds that are notable for aquatic flora and invertebrates.

In East Kent the Greensand is less distinctive than the dramatic wooded topography of the west. East from Maidstone to Ashford the landscape is less wooded and does not give the impression of intimacy so prevalent in the west, except where contained by shelterbelts and remaining hedgerows. The presence of the railway and motorway corridors in the vale between the Greensand and North Downs scarp is strong. The more open farming and heathy quality to the landscape are typified by the agricultural land around Pluckley and the acid grassland, light woodland and bogs of Hothfield Common.

There has been a general degradation of major river-floodplain landscapes in the Greensand due to mineral extraction and changes in agriculture. This is an essential feature of the landscape east of Ashford. Orchards and Hop Gardens are particularly prevalent around Maidstone, with associated high hedgerows or shelterbelts and areas of chestnut coppice for hop poles, but closer to Ashford these are replaced by irregular arable fields. The south-eastern extreme of the belt forms a scarp forming a sea cliff giving extensive views over Romney Marshes. Panoramic views south across the Low Weald are extensive from the Greensand ridge in general.

The Landscape Character of South East England
(Countryside Agency 1999)

The North Downs

The North Downs (Character Area 119) escarpment is a striking and dramatic feature in the surrounding landscape. The wide north-facing dip slope merges into the plateau of the North Kent Plain, while the steep south-facing scarp rises to over 180 metres and overlooks the lower Wealden Greensand and the extensive clay vale of the Low Weald. The North Downs landscape is unified by the strong chalk topography and the open expanses of rolling downland, with its pattern of copses and woodland in the numerous dry valleys. The calcareous soils support an outstanding variety of wildlife. On the south-facing scarp slope, cut by a series of steep-sided combes, sheep and cattle grazing has maintained a grassland rich in plants and insects. Some of these grasslands are internationally important for their orchids. The north-facing dip slope, level in places with shallow, dry valleys, has been agriculturally improved with the main land uses being arable farming and improved pasture. Many of the downland ridges are wooded with oak, ash, beech and yew.

On the deeper soils, such as clay-with-flints, which cover the top of the Downs, the vegetation is very different from that of the thin chalk soils. It is less distinctive and often lacks any calcareous influence. Some soils, especially where there are sandy deposits, are markedly acidic and here heathland can be found, in striking contrast to the chalk downland. The ridge of chalk is cut by the valleys of the Rivers Wey, Mole, Darent, Medway and Great Stour, and there are riverside cliffs at Box Hill.

The Landscape Character of South East England
(Countryside Agency 1999)

The Low Weald

The Low Weald (Character Area 121) is a low-lying region crossed by several rivers, distinguished by heavy clay soils with a flat or gently undulating topography and a predominantly agricultural land use. Small towns and villages are scattered among a mosaic of woodland, permanent grassland, hedgerows and wetlands. Arable crops form part of this mosaic, within which hop gardens and extensive orchards are a particular feature.The area includes major parts of the valleys of several of the principal rivers of the region including the Wey, Mole, Arun, Adur, Ouse, Eden, Medway, Teise and Beult. Like the High Weald, the Low Weald and Pevensey is one of the most densely wooded areas of England with extensive blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland.

Locally there are scarce areas of damp, neutral grassland that supporting a rich meadow flora but unimproved grassland is now a very rare habitat. Wetland habitats are an important component of the landscape and include rivers and streams, ponds and larger water bodies as well as areas of grazing marsh in the river floodplains, most notably at Pevensey Levels.

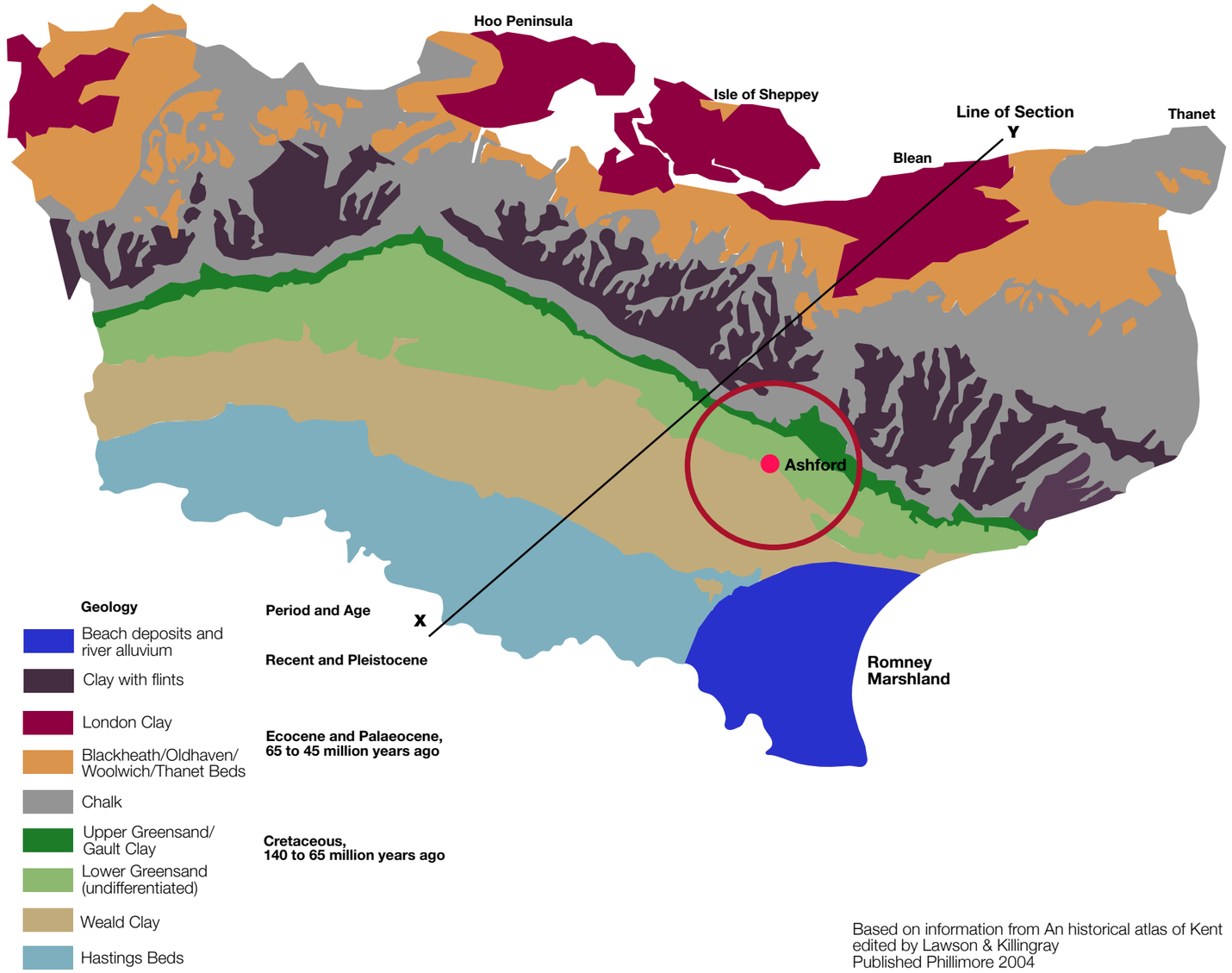
Ashford is located at the eastern end of this character area. Since much of the land is flat and wet, settlements developed on the slightly higher, drier, ground where pockets of sandstone or limestone were present. The dispersed nature of settlements that arose because of this is a feature of the Low Weald.

The Landscape Character of South East England
(Countryside Agency 1999)

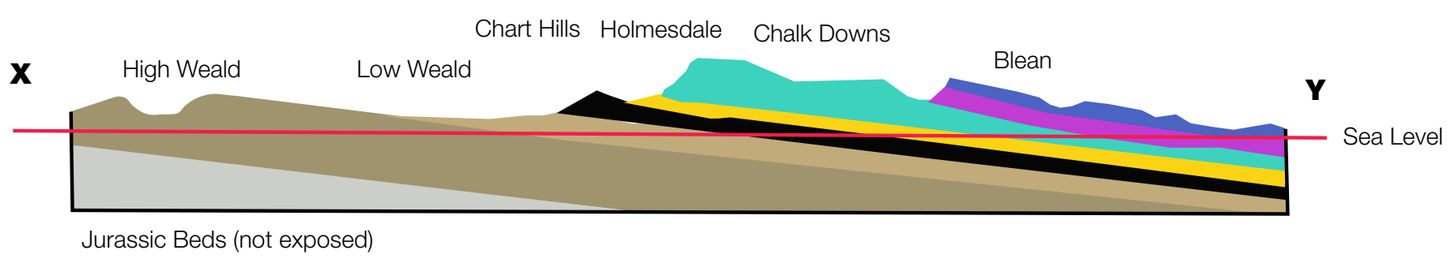
Section 4 Physical Influences

Geology and Soils

The main characteristic of the geology of Kent is the general northward dip of the sedimentary strata caused by folding during the Cretaceous period to create the Wealden dome or anticline. Over time the strata has been eroded to reveal a series of generally parallel outcrops lying west to east across the county. The most resistant strata of chalk forming the North Downs.



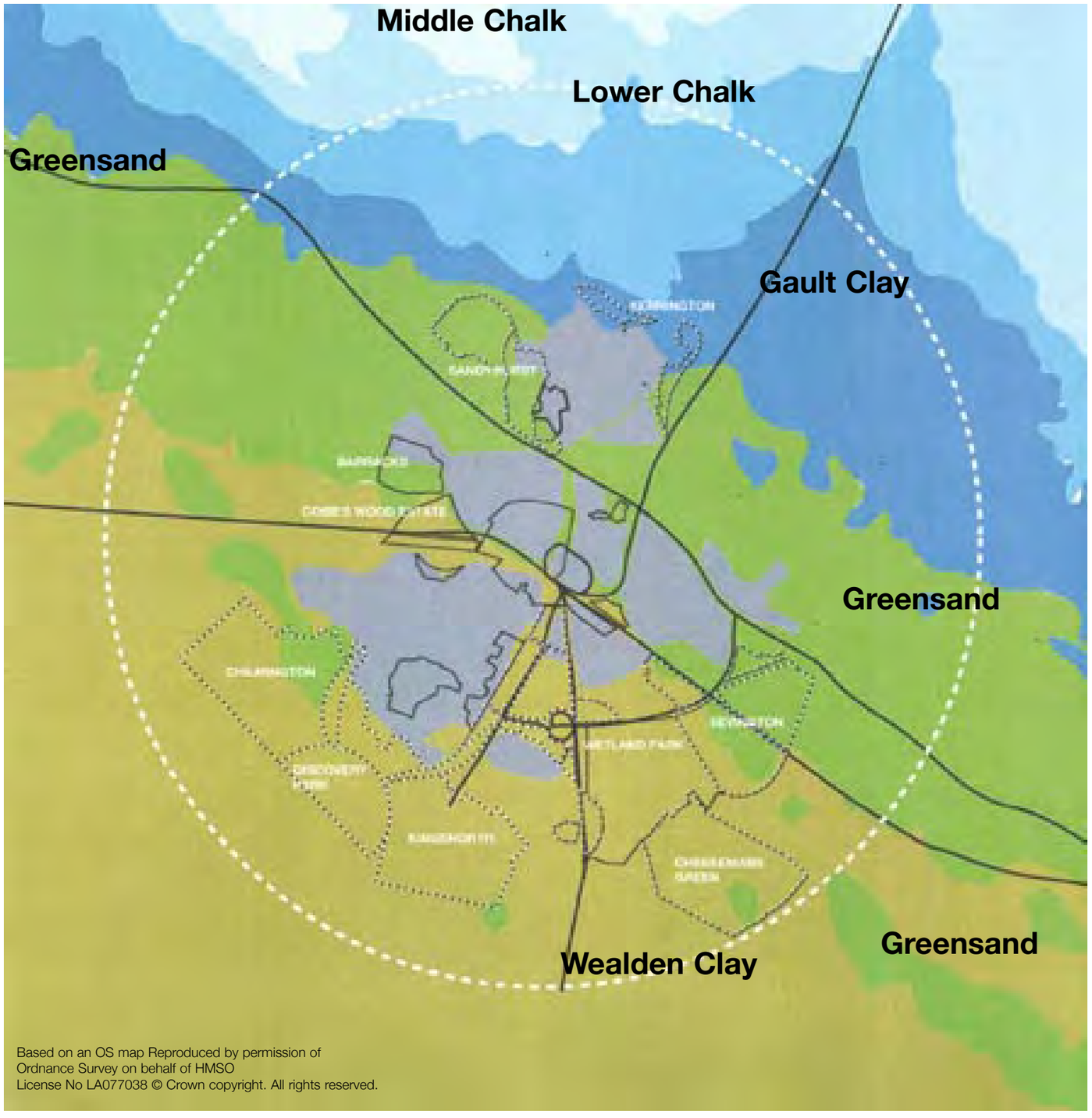
Based on information from An historical atlas of Kent
edited by Lawson & Killingray
Published Phillimore 2004



Information derived from ‘An Historical Atlas of Kent’
Lawson & Killingray (eds) Pub. Phillimore 2004

Ashford lies at the junction of four geological formations – Wealden Clay to the South, Lower Greensand through the centre, Gault Clay through the northern suburbs and bordering the Chalk Downs. Geology and history have resulted in subtly different landscapes in the hinterland around the town. The north is hilly while the south is more level where three of the five rivers that flow through Ashford have extensive flood plains.

The soils have had an impact on vegetation to some degree, with Scots Pine and Gorse common on the Greensand Ridge, while oaks and ash grow in the heavier clay soils. In the alluvial floodplains and associated drainage courses, wetland species and moisture-loving tree species such as willow and poplar are common.



Topography

Kent can be broken down into a series of seven recognisable and definable topographic areas based on the geology. Three areas are relevant to GADF:

1. The North Downs with their chalk base overlain with extensive deposits of clay-with-flint

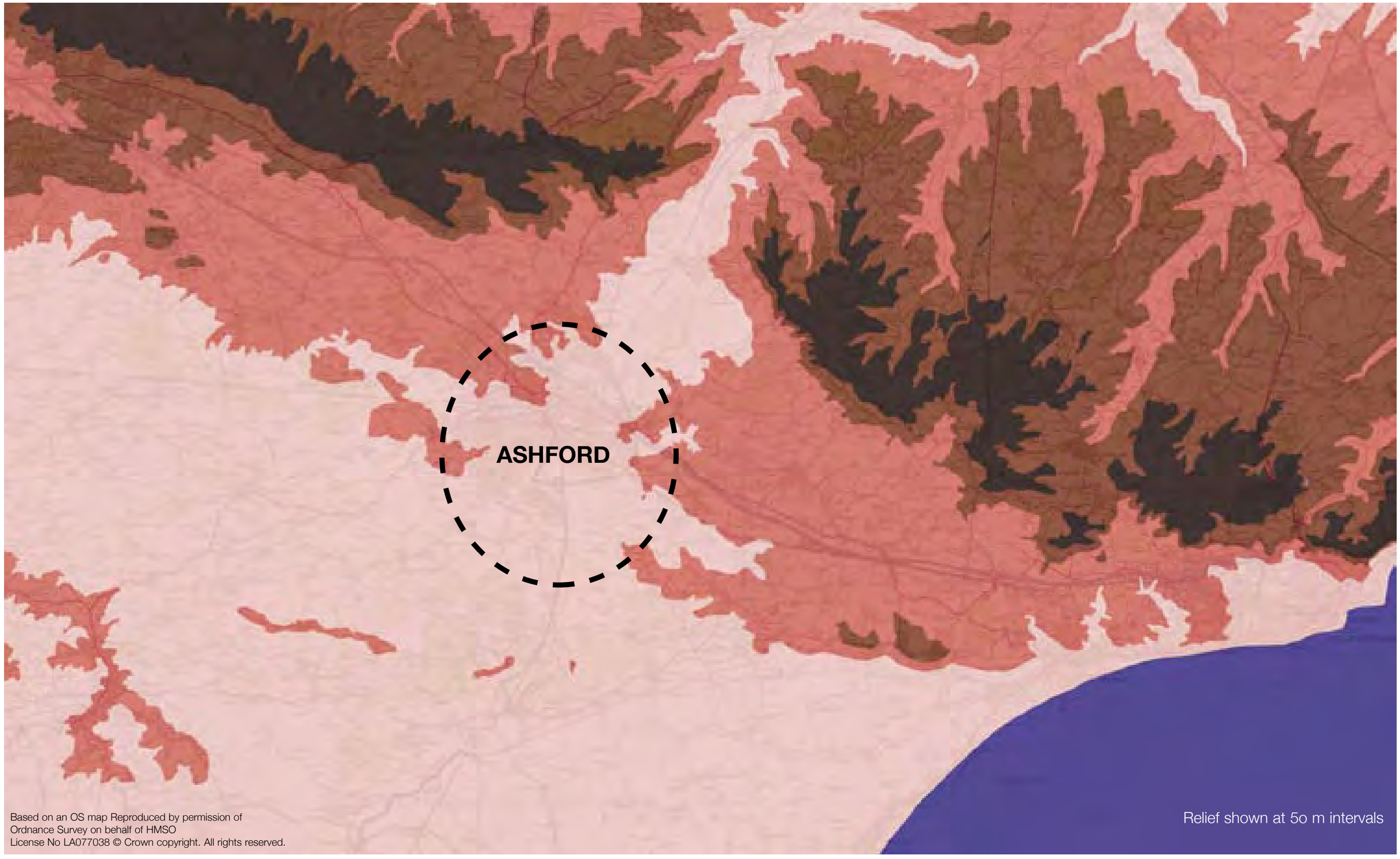
2. The Greensand Area based on Lower Greensand deposits

3. The Low Weald on the Wealden Clay

The relief broadly corresponds to these areas, and to the north of Ashford is characterised by the boundary between the North Downs and Greensand area with a steep southerly facing scarp slope (the Gault Clay Vale). To the south of Ashford the relief broadly reflects the descent to the Low Weald which is marked by a less dramatic but equally convoluted scarp slope with a southerly aspect.

Relief indicating steepest slopes

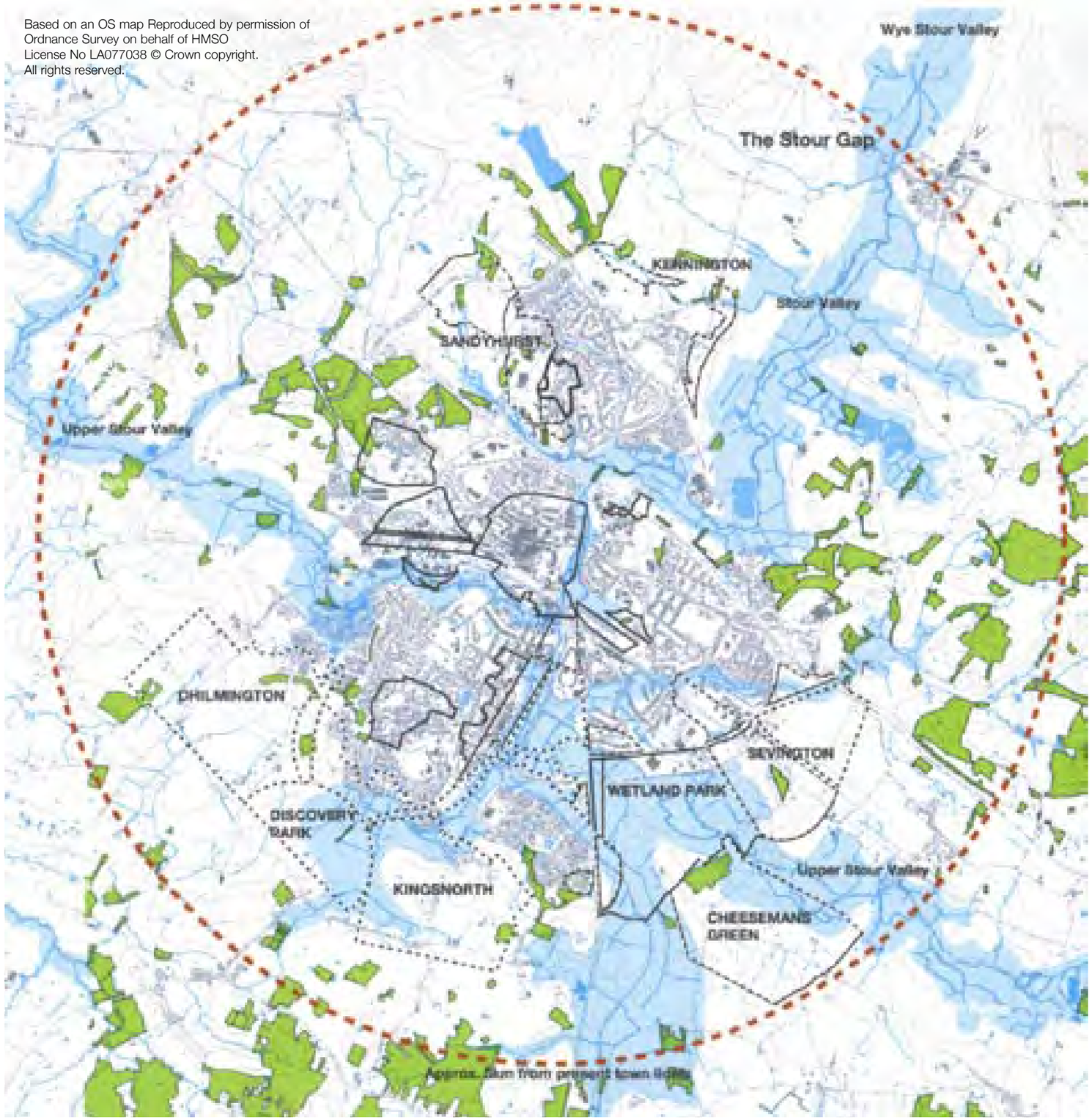
Relief shown at 25m intervals



Rivers and Drainage

Ashford lies at the confluence of five ‘main’ rivers (as classified by the Environment Agency): the Great Stour, East Stour, Aylesford Stream, Whitewater Dyke and Ruckinge Dyke.

Clay soils in the headwaters mean that these rivers are ‘flashy’ in response to rain events, and historically there has been widespread flooding of both rural and urban areas near Ashford, most notably in 1973 and 1979. The flooding problem is likely to be exacerbated by extensive development. Catchwaters and SUDs will be important in attenuating the effects of heavy rainfall.



Areas prone to 100 years flood shown in blue

Climate

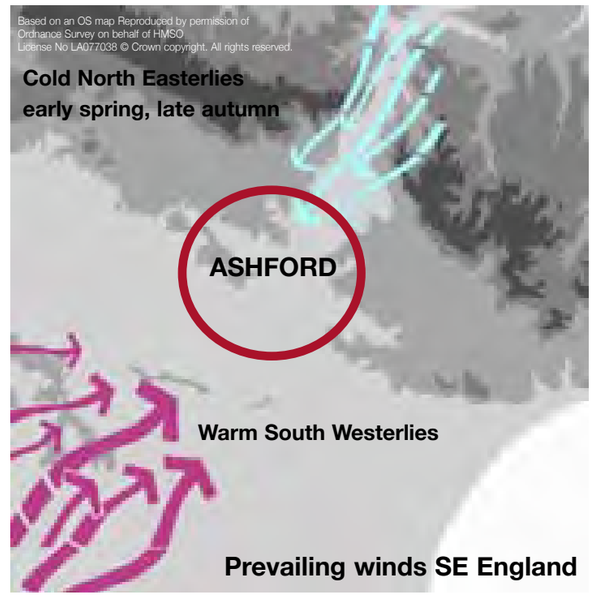
Kent has a continental climate, warm in summer and cold in winter and is one of the drier regions in the UK. The rainfall distribution is influenced by the North Downs and the High Weald. In summer the rainfall is showery and more intense than the winter rainfall. A day's steady rainfall can give on average 10-15cm. Heavy thundery rainfall over an hour or so can give between 25 and 50mm.

Kent has extremes of weather. It can be the hottest place in the country during summer with the best sunshine, wettest in autumn and the coldest and snowiest in winter. The UK's hottest temperature of 38.5C was recorded at Brogdale near Faversham on 10th August 2003. In July the warmest month on average the highest average temperature ranges from 20C on the coast to 22C inland. In January the average minimum ranges from 2C to 0.5C or less inland.

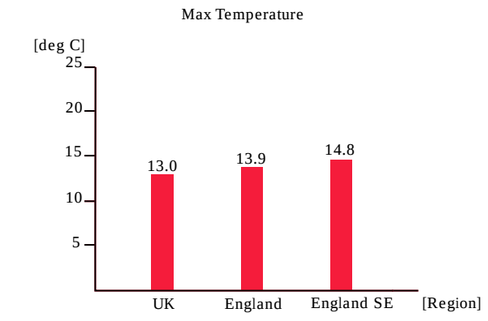
Comparison of the 1961-1990 and 1971-2000 averages for Wye show that the maximum and minimum temperatures, sunshine hours and rainfall have all increased slightly. The sunshine hours have increased from 1570 hours to 1603 hours and rainfall from 720mm to 728mm. Of particular note are the days of air frost which have reduced by 10% to 43 days per year over the period.

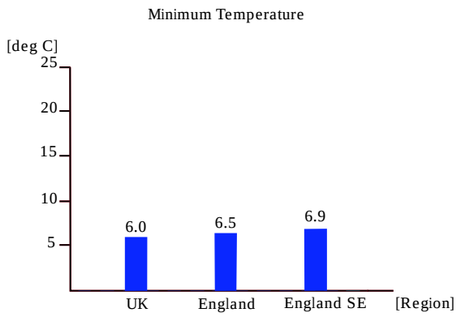
These compare to the 1971-2000 averages for South East and Central England of 1589 sunshine hours, 777mm of rainfall and 47 days of frost.

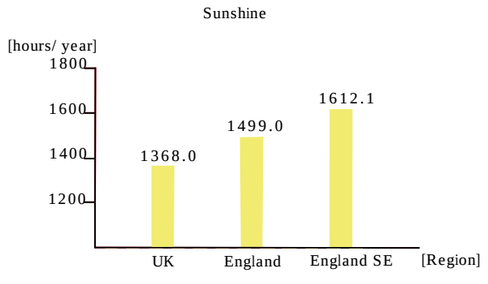
Annual 2004 data for England gives 1499 sunshine hours and 887mm of rainfall.

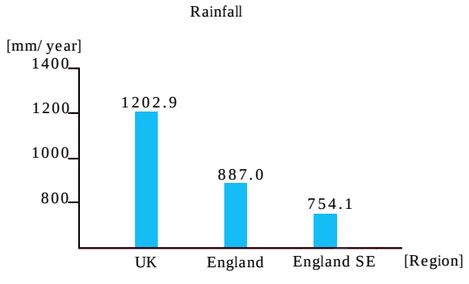


Temperature: Annual 2004 Averages





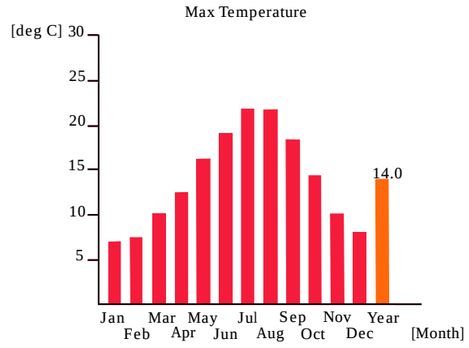


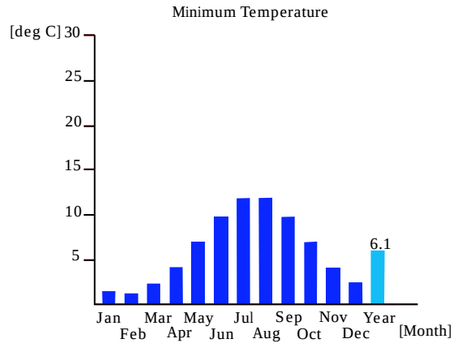


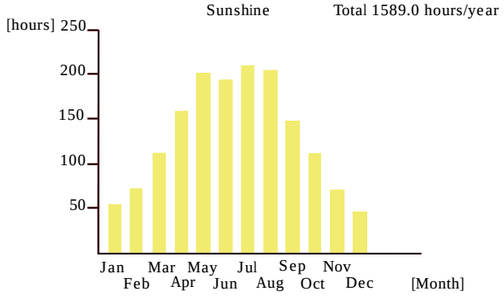
Data Sourse:Met Office Website -www.metoffice.gov.uk
Graphic:Studio Engleback

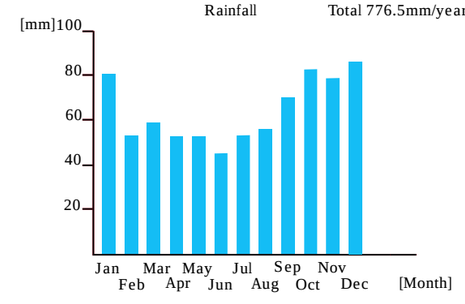
Data source: Met Office Website Graphic: studio engleback

Temperature: 1971-2000 Averages SE England





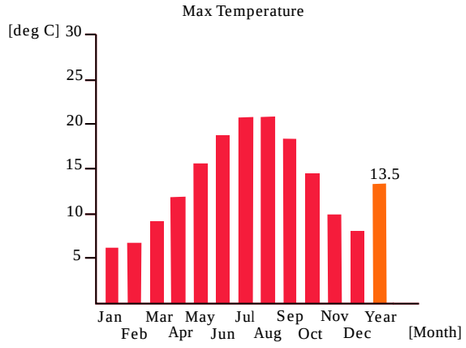


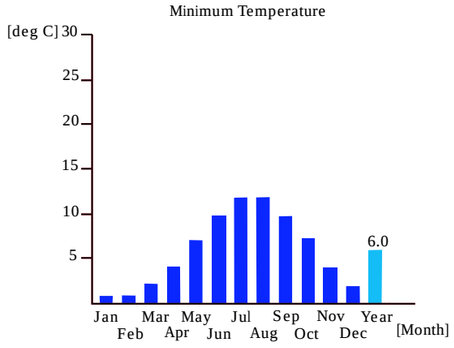


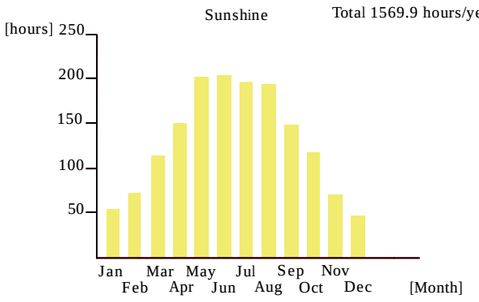
Data Sourse:Met Office Website -www.metoffice.gov.uk
Graphic:Studio Engleback

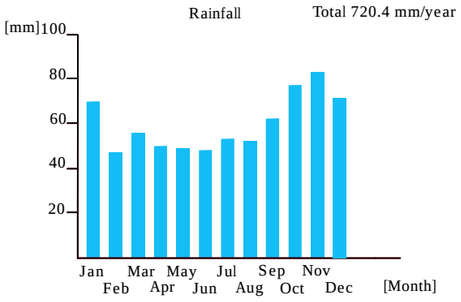
Recent research on climate change by the UK Climate Impacts Programme (UK CIPS) indicates that the South East of England may experience the greatest rises in temperature, and colder winters will become rarer. Summer precipitation may decrease by 50% or more by the 2080s, whilst winter precipitation may increase by 30%. Projections for sea level rise in Kent suggest an average rise of 4.25mm/year in North Kent and 13.25mm/year in Dover by 2060.

Sunshine Rainfall Temperature
Wye Averages 1961 - 1990



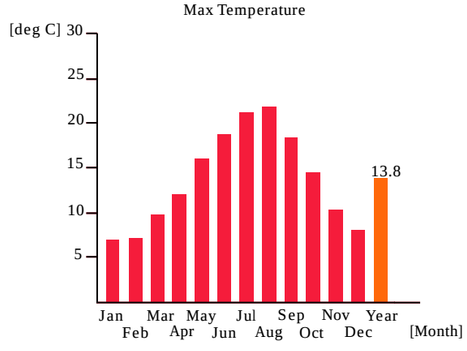


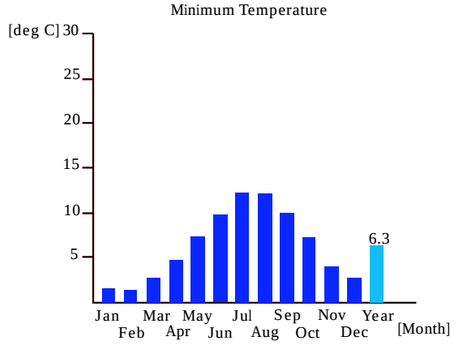


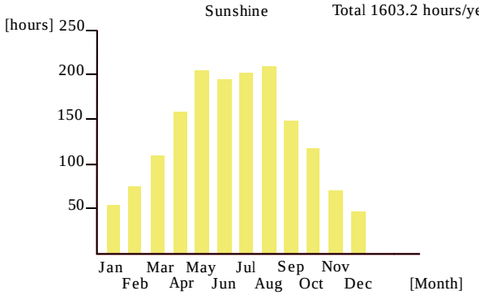


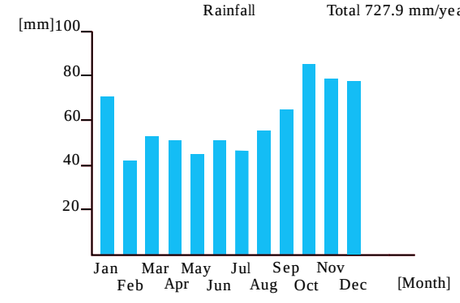
Data Sourse:Met Office Website -www.metoffice.gov.uk
Graphic:Studio Engleback

Sunshine Rainfall Temperature
Wye Averages 1971 - 2000









Data Sourse:Met Office Website -www.metoffice.gov.uk
Graphic:Studio Engleback

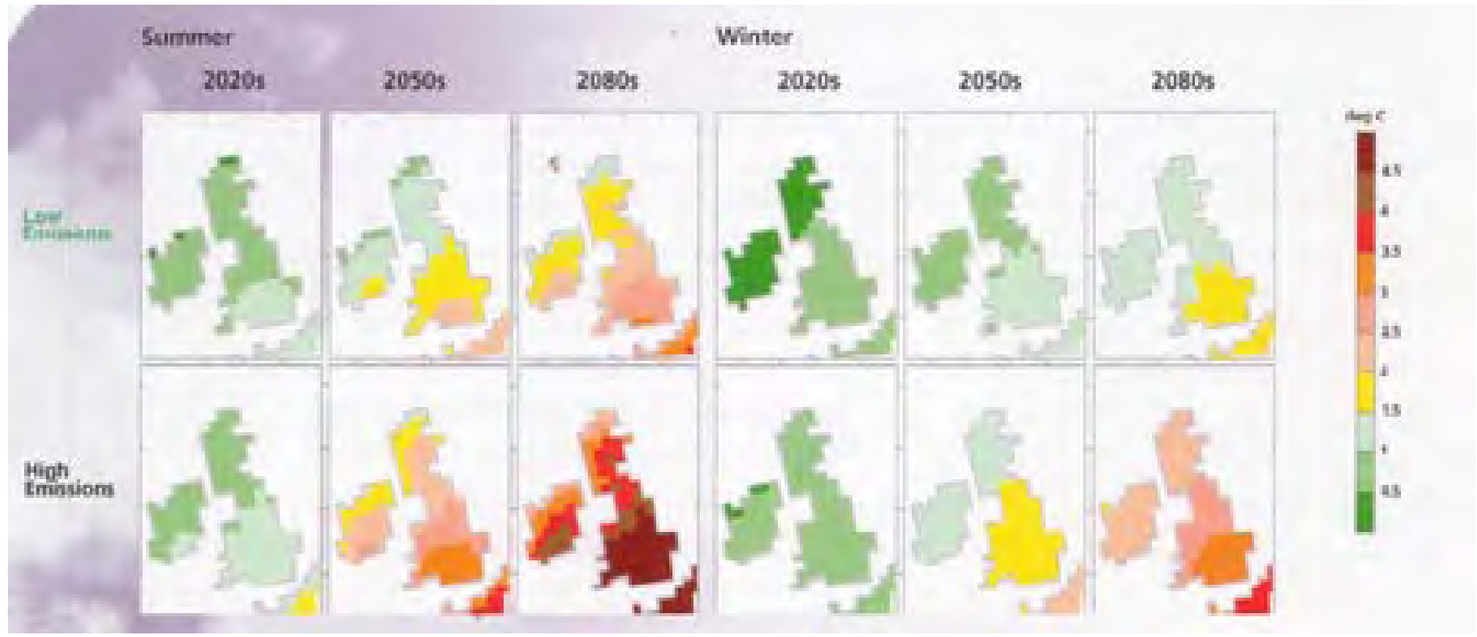
Climate Change

The government has acknowledged that evidence is pointing to climate warming in the UK and that the trends are expected to continue. They are tackling climate change on two fronts: action to reduce greenhouse gases, and adaptation as a response to the threat of climate change.

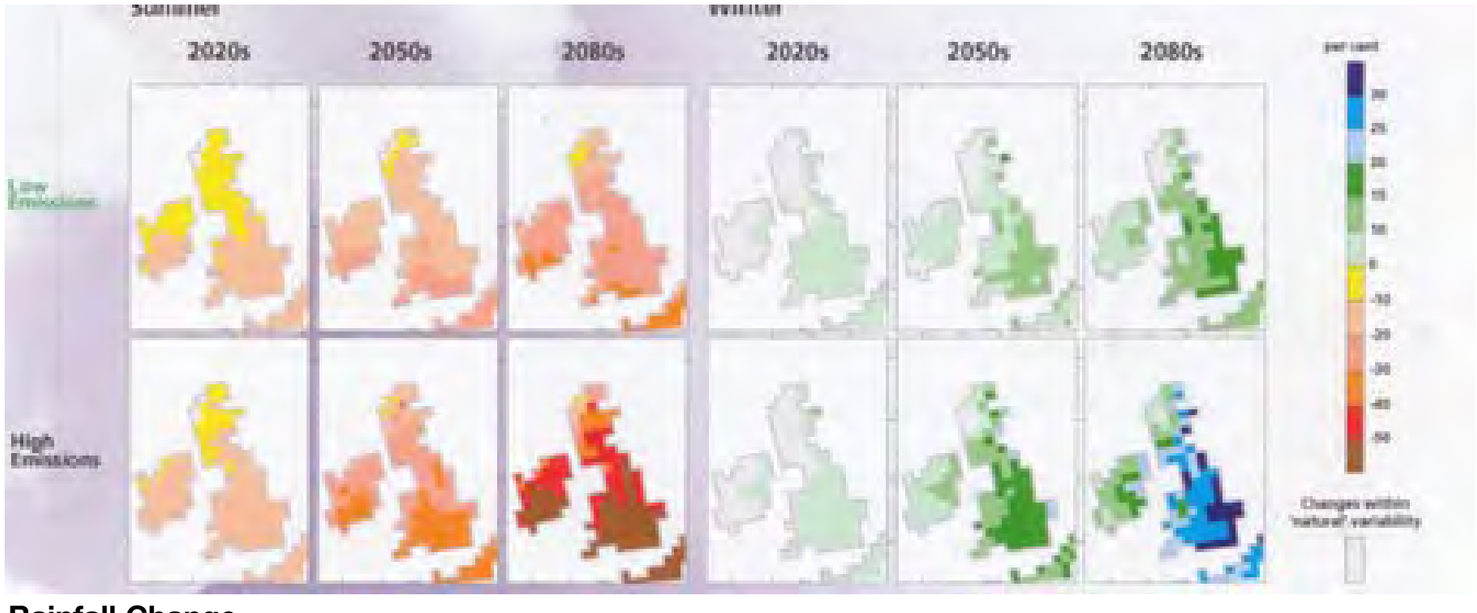
Current studies are suggesting that climate change may be set to increase by an average of 2-3.5˚c by the 2080s, that winters will be wetter and summers substantially drier – with some conditions we currently consider to be very uncharacteristic to become quite commonplace.

Climate change will have an increasingly significant impact on the landscape. With a tendency towards warmer weather all round, fewer frosts, more winter rain and less summer rain there may be effects on the vegetation of the region. Perhaps more marked may be a change in agriculture and thus the way the land is managed and appears. For example global warming is affecting the Champagne region of France and the area around Ashford is starting to be considered as a new wine growing area.

The UK Climate Impacts Programme, DEFRA, the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change, and the Met Office Hadley Centre are working on scenarios for climate change based on different levels of greenhouse gas emissions over the next 50 years. The Climate Change maps have been reproduced here are from two publications- ‘Climate Change Scenarios for the United Kingdom – the UK CIP 02 Briefing report’ April 2002, and ‘Building Knowledge for a Changing Climate – the impacts of climate change on the built environment’ February 2003 published by UK CIP and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).



Temperature Change



Rainfall Change

The South East of England may experience the greatest rises in temperature, and colder winters will become rarer. By the 2080s, the high emissions scenario suggests that the South East will be an average of 5˚c warmer than at present. A hot summer such as experienced in 1995 or 2003 may occur one in five years by the 2050s and 3 in 5 years by the 2080s under the medium-high emissions scenario, and even at the low emissions scenario two summers in every 3 may be as hot as 1995.

Summer precipitation may decrease by 50% or more by the 2080s, whilst inter precipitation may increase by 30%. In this same period soil moisture may decrease by 40% for the high emissions scenario.

Changes in Soil Moisture Content

The combination of shifts in precipitation, periods and long periods of dry weather, wind speed and radiation (i.e. related to cloud cover) change soil moisture content. This is partly by soil water stress from plants and trees needing to transpire more in warmer weather, and the ability of dry soils to absorb moisture, especially impermeable clay soils. This is likely to have a significant effect on the stress placed on natural and cultivated plant communities. Weaker plants are more prone to disease and in the case of out tree heritage, some diseases that do not get a foothold in this country at present due to climate may ravage the countryside. It is not so long ago that a vast number of Elm trees that were so much a part of the English rural scene simply disappeared as a consequence of Dutch Elm Disease. This was especially noticeable in part of the country where the Elm was a dominant hedgerow tree such as the coastal plain around Chichester. Of concern for some time now has bee the potential threat of Oak wilt and other diseases that cold have a serious effect on the appearance of the Kent countryside.

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Changes to Wind Speeds and Storm Hazard

High winds can be very damaging, but estimating future wind speeds is difficult. Studies of recent storm events appear to show an increase in severe autumn/winter winds. Perhaps more alarming is the apparent change in the tracking of winter storms from the Atlantic. The Benfield Hazard Research Centre has illustrated that mean winter tracking is affecting the United Kingdom and northern Europe more than formerly. Research from Dronia,H “Zum vermehrten auftreten extremer tiefdruckgebiete uber dem nord-atlantik” 1991 published in Die Witterung in Ubersee, 39(3), 27. This showed that normal winter storms tended to split before reaching the British Isles due to pressure systems, and that warmer winters are closing this divergence with increased storms tracking through the English Channel. This has been borne out by storm events over the past 15 years. Further research presented by the Environment Agency, showed that the coast and hinterland of south Kent appeared to be at significantly greater risk from these altered storm events – a concern for Ashford given the open nature of the land to the south of the town.

Section 5 Historical & Cultural Influences

Ashford History

History From ‘A History of Ashford’ – A. Ruderman (1994)

Ashford was situated on the edge of the immense forest of Anderida, or the Weald (which stretched from immediately west of Great Chart across Kent and Sussex and into Hampshire), in open country, on the slope of a rise, and near to the water supply of the River Stour. It would therefore seem to be an ideal place for primitive man to settle, and later when all the lines of communication were developing, Ashford was well placed at the SW end of the only gap through the North Downs for a considerable distance east or west, and with easy access both to the sea and to the north west. Indeed, the Kentish historian Edward Hasted described the town as ‘standing most pleasant and healthy, on the knoll of a hill, of a gentle ascent on every side’.

Earliest proof of occupation is provided by the discovery of a large Bronze Age urn at Potters Corner and an axe on the golf course in 1935. There is no evidence of any permanent Roman settlement, although they undoubtedly knew the area. A Roman road from Tenterden to Canterbury ran on the line of the Beaver Road in south Ashford, crossed the river just south of where the railway runs today, continued up Station Road, Wellesley Road and so northwards through Kennington. Another Roman road ran from Lympne to the west, and crossed the first road at the end of what is now Beaver Road, at the point where the road still makes a right-angled turn to Kingsnorth.

Nothing is known of the likely date for the Saxon occupation of the area and the beginnings of a permanent settlement. There can be no doubt to the existence of a Saxon settlement at Ashford since the name derives from them. In his book Continuity and Colonization Professor Alan Everitt suggests the possibility of a settlement on the river at Ashford in the early Jutish period (about the beginning of the 6th Century), but the earliest written reference is a will of Wulfgyth dated 1053 where she gives land at Essetesford to her daughter Elgyth.

There is no doubt that Ashford was an established community by 1085, the year that William the Conqueror ordered the making of the Domesday Survey. The entry for Ashford is somewhat obscure. There are references for Ashford: south Ashford, East Stour (identified with the Domesday manor of Essella, and later called Esture), and to the town itself where there was a church and two mills.

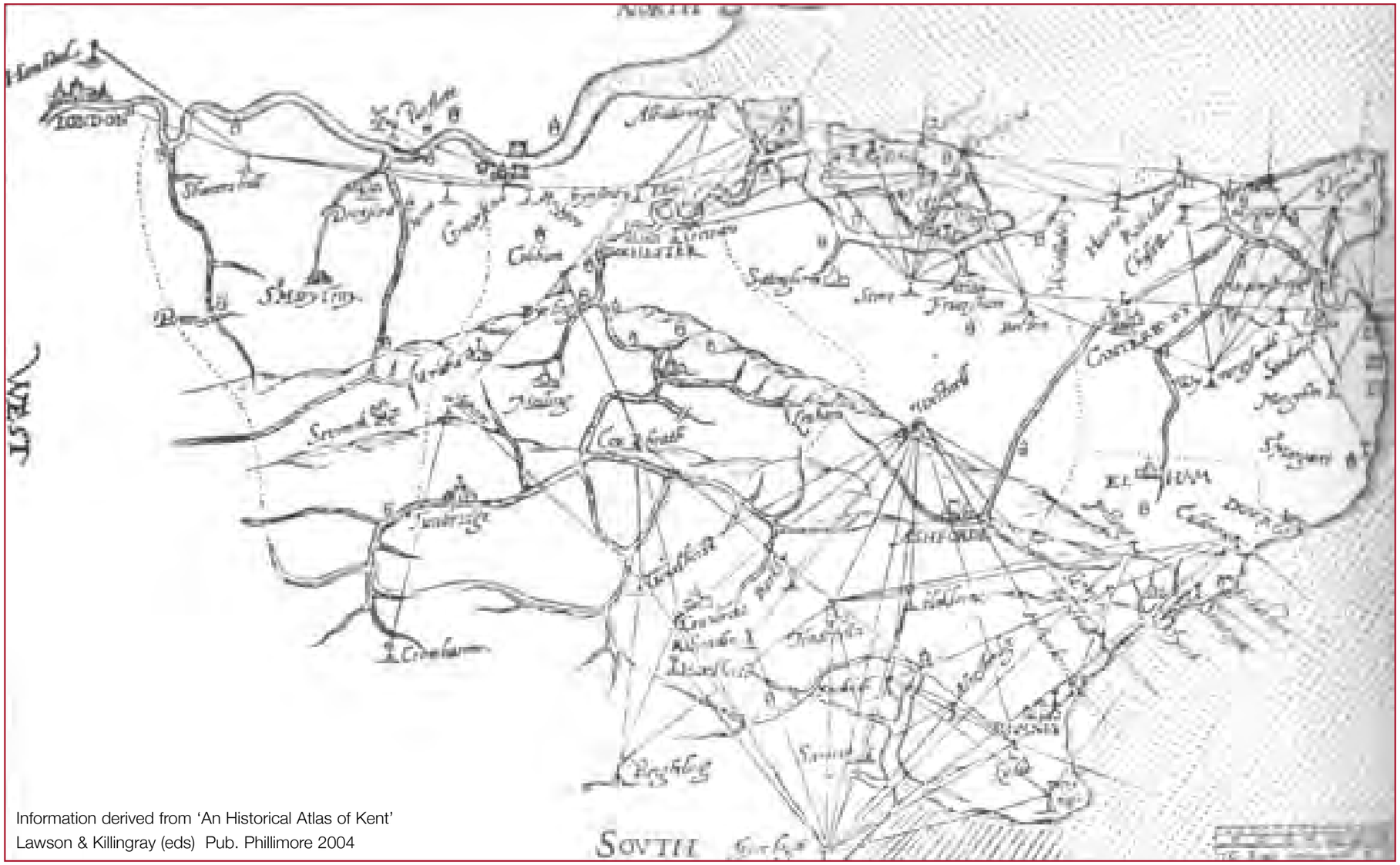
Geographical position has been a dominant factor in Ashford’s history and one which also looks likely to shape its future. There are different schools of thought as to how the name Ashford was derived. Records show that for several centuries the settlement or town in Ashford was known as “Essetesford”. The 16th century writer Philpot believed that “Essetesford” stood for “ash trees growing near a ford”, while Lampard, a 16th century local historian, suggested that it meant “a ford over the river Eshe or Eshet”, which was the old name for the tributary of the River Stour which rises at Lenham. No one can be quite sure when the first settlement was made in the area. Roman remains have been found locally at Westhawk, and a road, built to transport iron ore from the Weald of Kent to the north Kent Coast, went through the town, roughly following what is now Kingsnorth Road and Beaver Road in South Ashford and Station Road and Wellesley Road through to Kennington.

It is believed that the town’s real origins lie in the ninth century when the country was invaded by the Danes in 893. At that time there were settlements at Great Chart and Appledore, and as the Danes plundered and raided these communities the inhabitants fled to the forests for safety. It is thought that many of the survivors settled either in nearby forest or in the “Royal Ville of Wye”. As a reward for their services in battle a group of people are thought to have settled on land in what is now Ashford, given to them by the Saxon Lord.

Prior to the Norman invasion, it is known that part of Ashford was owned by St. Augustine’s Abbey at Canterbury, part belonged to King Edward the Confessor and part to Earl Godwin, the father of King Harold. After the Conquest, St Augustine’s retained its possessions, but the remainder was given to Hugh de Montfort, one of the Conqueror’s commanders, as a reward for his services in battle. In the Domesday Book survey compiled by the Normans in 1086, Ashford is entered as having a church and two mills.

By 1600 Ashford was well established as an important and flourishing market town. Ashford was aided in this by its location, with roads to the port of Faversham and to Canterbury, Hythe, Romney Marsh and the Weald. Just as important was the number of large estates in the district owned by the nobility. The town consisted of a small mediaeval gathering of buildings with the Parish Church of St. Mary the Virgin at its centre. Close by was the Six Bells, the Chequers and the Court House, a number of ale houses, shops, craftsmen’s premises and cottages. The present Middle Row was known as The Shambles and provided markets for fish, corn, meat, butter and livestock. Down by the river stood the mill and the tannery. New Rents and St. John’s Lane were narrow ways out of the town and can still be seen today. The countless Tudor buildings made Ashford one of the most picturesque towns in the county and this little jewel was set in water meadows surrounded by ancient woodlands.

The History of the Borough – Ashford B.C. website
http://www.ashford.gov.uk/pages/abt_ash/abt_ash_hist.jsp



Information derived from 'An Historical Atlas of Kent'
Lawson & Killingray (eds) Pub. Phillimore 2004

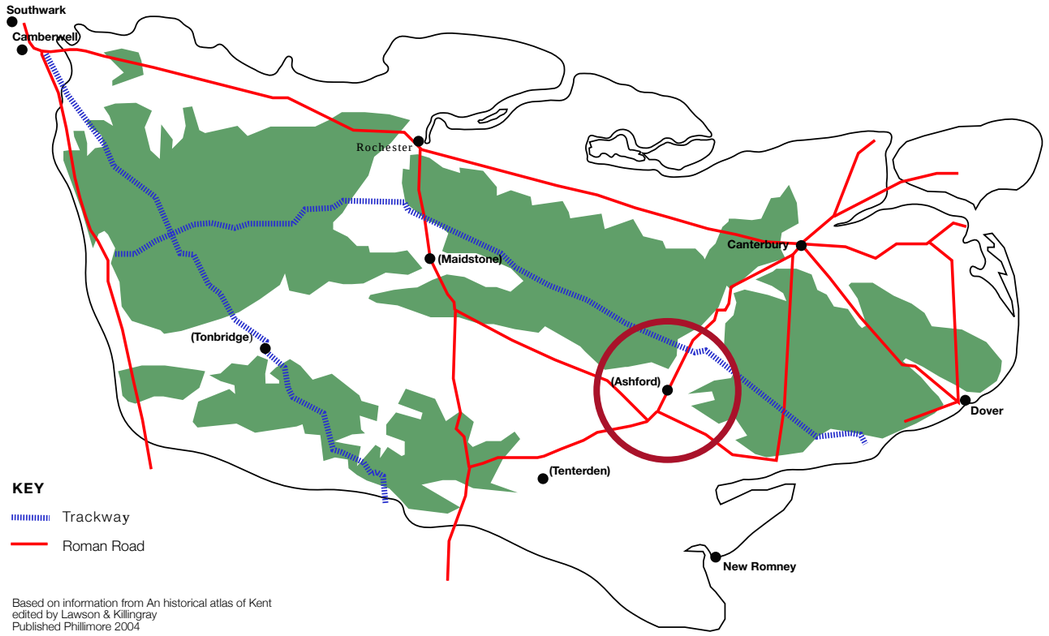
William Lambarde's beacon map of Kent produced in 1570 to warn of imminent invasions

Kentish History

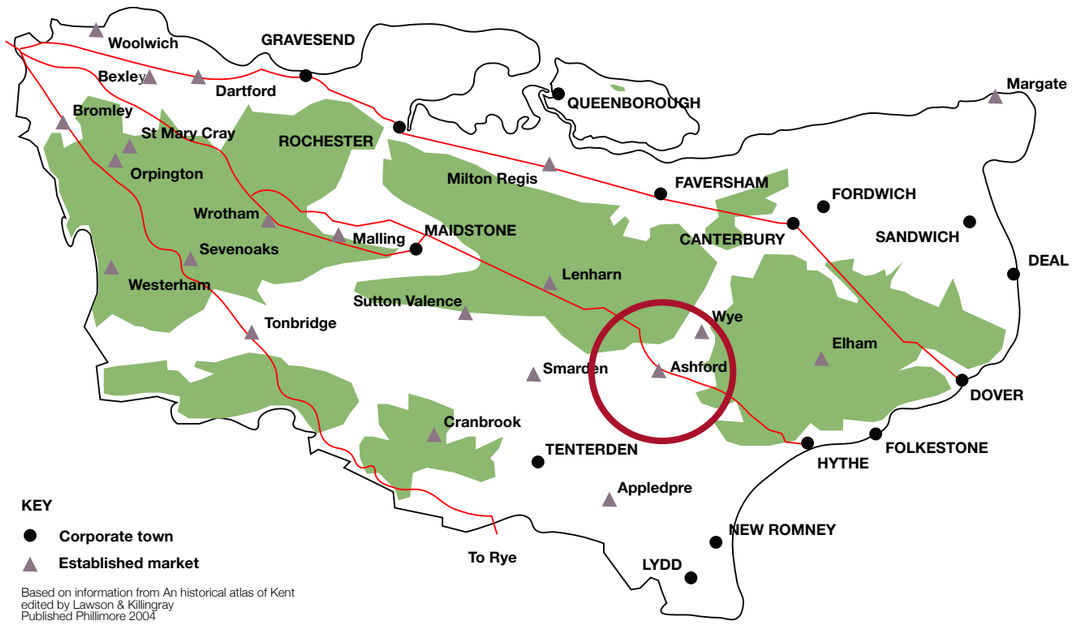
History From ‘West Kent and the Weald’ – J. Newman (1980)

During the Early Bronze Age immigrants from the Rhineland settled in southern and eastern Britain on the trade route between Ireland and the Continent. In Kent the coastal areas were favoured and also the major valleys inland such as the Medway and Stour. The abundant reserves of the Weald were exploited and settlements grew in areas where metal work was concentrated. The Iron Age saw a significant growth in population and increasing contact with The Roman Empire. Caesar recognised the Belgae who settled in Kent as the most civilised of the peoples of Britain - their innovations included the use of coinage and a modified plough that allowed the heavier clay soils to be cultivated for the first time. Rochester and Canterbury on Watling Street grew as important market and administrative centres and Richborough and Dover became important ports. The countryside was also densely settled, particularly in the valleys of the Darent and Medway and the line of Watling Street. The Weald with its supply of iron ore and wood was crutial to the Roman military.

During the 5th century the settlers rebelled against the Romano-British and the area to the east of the Medway was seized with Canterbury becoming a Saxon town and Kent becoming the first English Kingdom. These Anglo-Saxon incomers exploited the High and Low Weald for pannage using droveways which are still evident today. New permanent settlements continued to be established throughout the Weald - most of the Wealden villages and hamlets which we know today were in existence by 1500.



Roman Roads and Ancient Trackways



Towns, established markets and land communications 1500-1700

Geologically Kent belongs to the Cretaceous system and the bricks and tiles are predominant building materials. The brick making materials were drawn from three geological strata – the alluvial clays and brick earths of North Kent giving the reds and yellow brown hues, the stiff bluish clay overlying the Lower Greensand known as the Gault giving the white/ pale yellow hues and the clays of the Weald giving the deeper reds. Tiles were produced in Kent in the Roman times and the Benedictine monks were manufacturing tiles at Wye near Ashford during the reign of Edward III. Tile hanging was introduced into Kent in the 17th century; typically for those parts of the building that would be exposed to the elements.

The colours of the bricks and tiles is described by J. Newman 'Colour, as always is of the greatest importance, and happily the Weald still abounds in gorgeous terracottas, often with minute variations of tint and gradations of density almost from tile to tile, some being a little more orange, others a little more vermilion.'

Between 1784 and 1850 when bricks were taxed use was made of brick tiles which were exempt.

In addition to bricks other building materials typify the Kentish vernacular. These include sandstones from the Hastings beds and fine-grained Wealden sandstones that could be cut into huge blocks or split for roof tiles. The Lower Greensand at Ashford provided the Kentish Rag or Ragstone, a limestone used by the Romans. Coarse textured and brittle it does not readily make dressed stone and is uncoursed, irregularly bonded and rubbly.

The chalk of the North Downs was dressed and used for the quoins of Norman churches and provided the durable flints that could be split or 'flint-knapped' and set into walls with the split faces showing. The 15th century gatehouse near Margate is an early example of the use of knapped flints laid in alternate bands with dull red and pale yellow bricks. Later flints were squared to reduce the amount of mortar necessary and improve strength.
The clays of the Thames basin yielded nodules of soft crumbly stone known as 'septaria' whereas the Wealden Clay provided the Paludina freshwater limestone for the Bethersden marble that was finely polished and used indoors.

Caen oolitic limestone was also imported from Normandy and used for the finer details of church buildings such as the traceries and finials.

Wood was also an important building material, typically oak and sweet chestnut used in the construction of half timbered buildings especially in the Wealden Area. These were often plastered over with wattle and daub or partly covered with huge tiles or re-fronted with brick.

Where the timbers were left exposed lath and plaster was used sometimes with a brick nogging herringbone infill. Decorated plasterwork was known as 'pargeting'.

During the 18th and 19th centuries weather boarding painted white or cream was used in the Weald area; cleft oak shingles were used on church spires.

Buildings are always a feature in the Kentish landscape because of the good farming land which was given over to individuals during the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the system of 'gavelkind' - land tenure peculiar to Kent since the 11th century whereby the estate was divided equally between all sons. The land was enclosed and farmed privately such that there are few private estates or country houses.

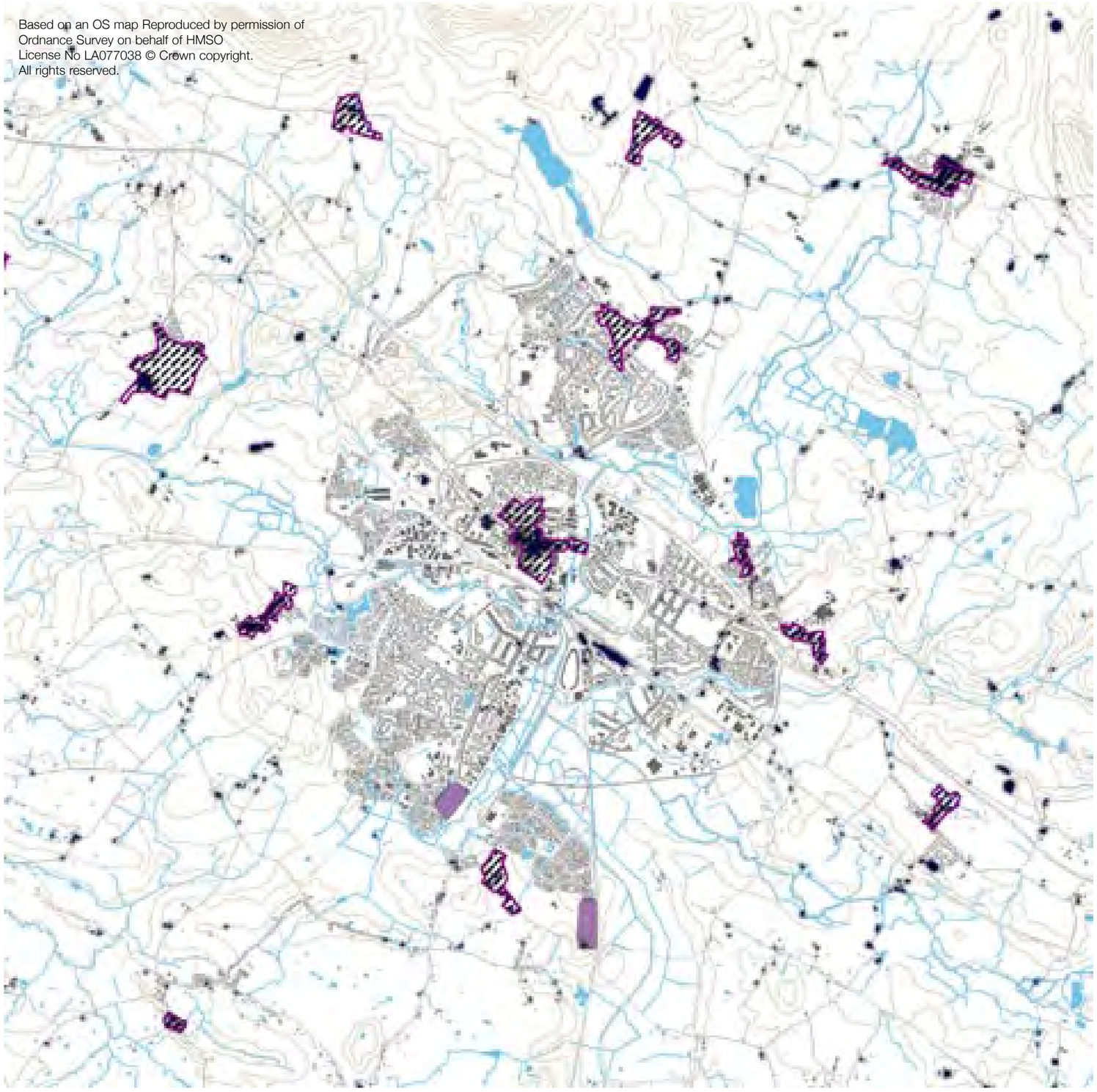
Buildings and Settlement

From ‘Ashford’s Strategic Growth’

Ashford has a historic town centre area with buildings from the medieval, Georgian and Jacobean periods. The core town centre is located within the A292 inner ring road, which is a barrier to access in and out of the town centre and a constraint on its expansion. The town centre currently offers a pleasant environment for shopping with both pedestrianised and shared surface streets. The town’s most recent retail offer is the Factory Outlet Village which is located to the south of the town centre and the railway line and is, at present, poorly connected to centre for those shoppers on foot. Ashford International Station is an important facility within the town. The station is again not well connected to the core town centre area.

Much of Ashford’s post war expansion has been in the form of suburban housing estates, many of which exhibit shortcomings in planning and design including:

- Single use development with low levels of activity during weekdays;
- Inefficient land use due to inefficient densities;
- Poor accessibility to amenities and public transport resulting in over-reliance on private car usage and
- Residual open spaces rather than positive, high quality public realm.



Andrews Dury and Herbert's map of Ashford c.1789

Halstead's map of Ashford c. 1789

Halstead's map of Ashford c. 1789

The Belvedere Memorandum

The Belvedere Memorandum is a policy document that examines the relationship between cultural history and spatial planning. It was compiled in 1999 in the Netherlands under the joint responsibility of the Ministry for Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management and the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment.

The Belvedere project was set up in 1997 to feed into the debate about the country's future spatial planning policy. Significantly, attention has been devoted to the cultural dimension of planning. Cultural identity and the preservation of regional diversity were considered the point of departure for planning specifications for the future. The recognition of this issue as a requirement indicated an awareness that spatial planning is a cultural act, and that there were real concerns about the cultural and historical qualities at stake in relation ot the rapid and extensive spatial changes happening in the Netherlands.

The Belvedere policy document gave substance ot the intentions annoucned in the Dutch Cultural Policy 1997 - 2000: ***Armour or Backbone ?***, and in the Architectural Policy 1997 - 2000: ***The Architecture of Space***. The memorandum also elaborated on statements made in respect of the importance of cultural and historical identity int he ***Structural Action Plan for Green Areas***, in the implementation of the policy for Physical planning and an initial paper on spatial planning ***Space in the Netherlands*** published in 1999.

The objective of the Memorandum is to ensure that cultural and historical values play a prominent role in determining the spatial planning of the Netherlands. This will improve the appearance of the country and reinforce the interconnections between the cultural and historical values of archaeology, architecture registered as historic buildings and the historic man-made landscape. These cultural-historic characteristics should be incorporated into any new design to maintain the historic identity of a place and its links to the past. This has resonances for the development of Ashford, and adds weight to the rationale for the Landscape Character Assessement of the areas to be developes and the whole hinterland of the town.

Cultural history is an expression of cultural identity - ***'it is of truly vital importance as it raises the culture, the society, and the individual above the immediate, and places them within the scale of time.'***

The Dutch provinces are now active in recording and evaluating their cultural historic assets to inform the regional plan and design policy and similarly local authorities are undertaking such studies. However central government has been slow to embrace this aspect of spatial policy. The document ***'Recommendations on Spatial Development Policy'*** by the Netherlands Scientific Council on Government Policy in 1998 and ***'Initial Paper on Spatial Planning in 1999'*** address the areas of responsibility shared by central goverment downwards to strengthen the cultural history aspect within spatial planning.

Concern for cultural identity is also reflected in the Maastricht Treaty, Section 112 which states that all existing legislation must be re-appraised in terms of its impact on cultural aspects.

Cultural history as one of the key elements in rural development policy is emphasised in the European Union's framework legislation for rural development (part of Agenda 2000), ***'The Policy Document on Culture'*** 1996 and ***'Culture as confrontation: basic principles for cultural policy 2001-2004.'***

The Fourth Policy Document on Town and Country Planning 1998 and the Initial Paper on Spatial Planning 1999 states:

'cultural diversity and heritage contributes to the identity, the perceptual value and the international recognisability of our country. We wish to ensure the ongoing maintenance of this heritage, while at the same time bringing about greater diversity and creating new cultural qualities. This will provide the Netherlands with a greater focus, greater depth and a greater understanding of its place in the passage of time.'

Following on from the Belvedere Memorandum a number of towns, cities and rural areas within the Netherlands have been identified as being of significant cultural-historic value. This has led to defining areas of particular cultural-historic identity and recommendations for certain spatial planning opportunities. The government and regional authorities recognise the cultural historic significance of these areas which will be taken into account when forming subsequent spatial policies in documents such as the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and future versions of the Structural Action Plan for the Green Areas.

Seeking the connection:

'Each area and each location has its own unique history with its own specific form of spatial design and hence its own character. To build upon these aspects will at least guarantee a certain resistance to uniformity and will also offer explicit opportunities for development of high quality.'

Belevdere Areas + Areas & World Heritage Sites (hatched)

Belevdere Towns and Cities

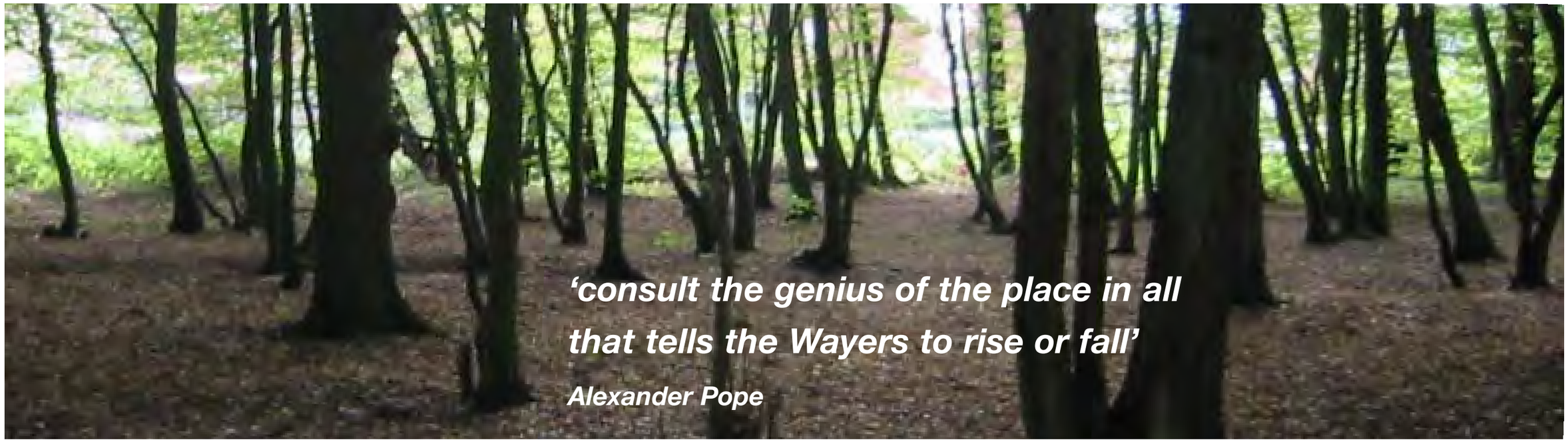
The following case studies within the Memorandum are of particular relevance to our study.

Leidsche Rijn: cultural historic effects on a new town
This is a new development proposed to the west of Utrecht for 100,000 people in an area that has a long history of human habitation and numerous sites of great archaeological significance. A Cultural Historic Impact Report was drawn up before a masterplan was produced. This revealed that the ridges which were heavily settled in the past and therefore of greatest archaeological potential should be kept free of development and incorporated into open spaces to preserve the archaeological heritage for future generations.

Villages amid greenery in Noordwest- Overijssel
The Villages Amid Greenery project ran from 1994 to 1998 which give advice on the traditional planting types to local residents and provided funding. During the course of the project more than 100, 000 trees and shrubs, including fruit trees and hedgerows, typical of the region were planted in the participating villages.

The planned extension to Utrecht. Greenspace was allocated to the areas with the most archeological remains the old block parcelation and ridges

Past settlements had always been on the higher ridges overlooking the Rhine. the yellow areas were the oldest square landparcels dating from the Middle Ages, the blue ares are the polders



Section 6 Historic Landscape Character

Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation Study

County Assessment: Historic Landscape Types

Historic landscape characterisation involves recognising the ways in which the present physical landscape reflects how people have exploited, changed and adapted to the physical environment through time, with respect to different social, economic, technological and cultural factors. In 2001 KCC and English Heritage published the 'Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation' carried out by the Oxford Archeological Unit (OAU) that defined a total of 87 Historic Landscape Types (HLTs) within Kent. These HLTs were grouped into 14 broad categories:

1. Field patterns
2. Commons
3. Horticulture
4. Woodland
5. Reclaimed marsh
6. Downland
7. Valley floor and water management
8. Coastal
9. Settlements
10. Parkland and designed landscape
11. Recreation
12. Extractive and other industry
13. Inland communication facilities
14. Military and defence

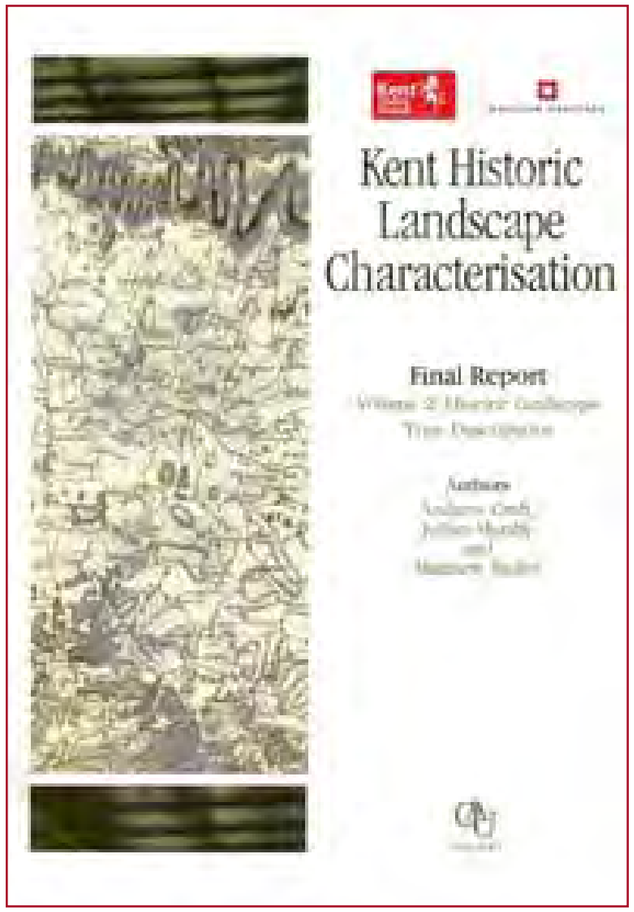
The OAU study was mainly desk based with some site visits. Many of these categories are not relevant to the current study, with the area around Ashford being dominated by arable fields, woodland, valley floor/water management and settlements.
Depending on the extent of the study area, there are between 654 and 724 HLTs within the scope of project. In order to narrow the area of search for the GADF divisions were made that partition the overall study area into smaller zones around each proposed growth area following the HLT boundaries and extending from the town limits to 1km outside the proposed growth area. These divided as follows:

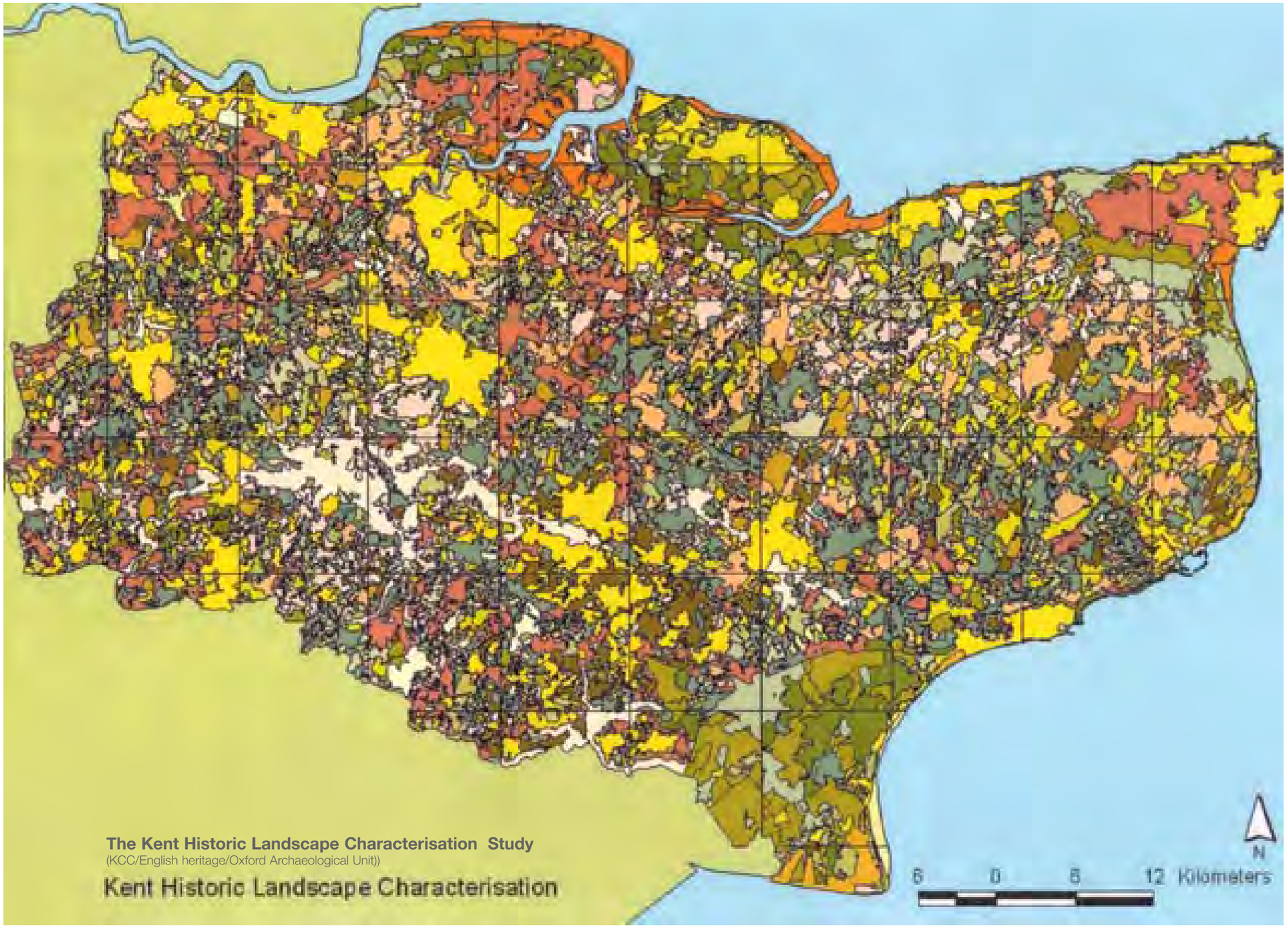
- Cheesemans Green 45 HLTs
- Kingsnorth 49 HLTs
- Sevington 13 HLTs
- Chilmington Green 28 HLTs
- Kennington 24 HLTs
- Sandyhurst/Barracks/Bockhanger 24 HLTs

The Historic Landscape Characterisation project also described a series of 34 Historic Landscape Character Areas (HLCAs) defined by analysing distinctive patterns and groupings of HLTs. These were created without any reference to any other from of LCA and therefore represent a new definition of the Kent landscape based on an understanding of the development of the historic character of that landscape. The HLCAs were not considered in the current study to avoid confusion.

A limitation of Historic Landscape Characterisation is that the technique is desk-based using maps as the primary reference source and therefore has a solely 'vertical' viewpoint. The HLTs therefore formed the basic landscape 'parcel' for the current study that was then verified in the field to add a 'horizontal' perspective. Moreover, the Countryside Agency stress that it is important to recognise that HLC projects do not by themselves offer definitive statements of importance. Every part of the landscape has some type of historic character, which will be affected by change, either positively or negatively. However, HLC is a tool for informing the decision-making process; it does not come with a set of prescriptions nor does it provide an indication of absolute value. The process of evaluating which Types are most significant and which can absorb change are best carried out in response to a clearly-defined threat, impact or opportunity (such as the GADF).

The study has followed an important strand of advice set out in national policy guidance on conservation of the historic environment (PPG 15) which states that the commitment to sustainable development…. "has particular relevance to the preservation of the historic environment, which by its nature is irreplaceable. Yet the historic environment of England is all-pervasive, and it cannot in practice be preserved unchanged. We must ensure that the means are available to identify what is special in the historic environment; to define through the development plan system its capacity for change, and, when proposals for new development come forward, to assess their impact on the historic environment and give it full weight alongside other considerations."




The Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation Study
(KCC/English heritage/Oxford Archaeological Unit))
Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation
6 0 6 12 Kilometers
N

historic landscape characterisation - Time Depth

A Landscape of Layers:
Time Depth in Historic Character

The KCC / English Heritage Historic Landscape Characterisation report incorporates some definite chronological thresholds and typological distinctions to provide some broad patterns illustrating the development of the Kent Landscape. The mapping opposite from that report do not represent a picture of the landscape at any particular period but show areas that may potentially contain identifiable remains of early landscape characteristics. This may be important when considering the means to conserve a landscape, or at least to be aware of the living cultural heritage that could be lost for ever.

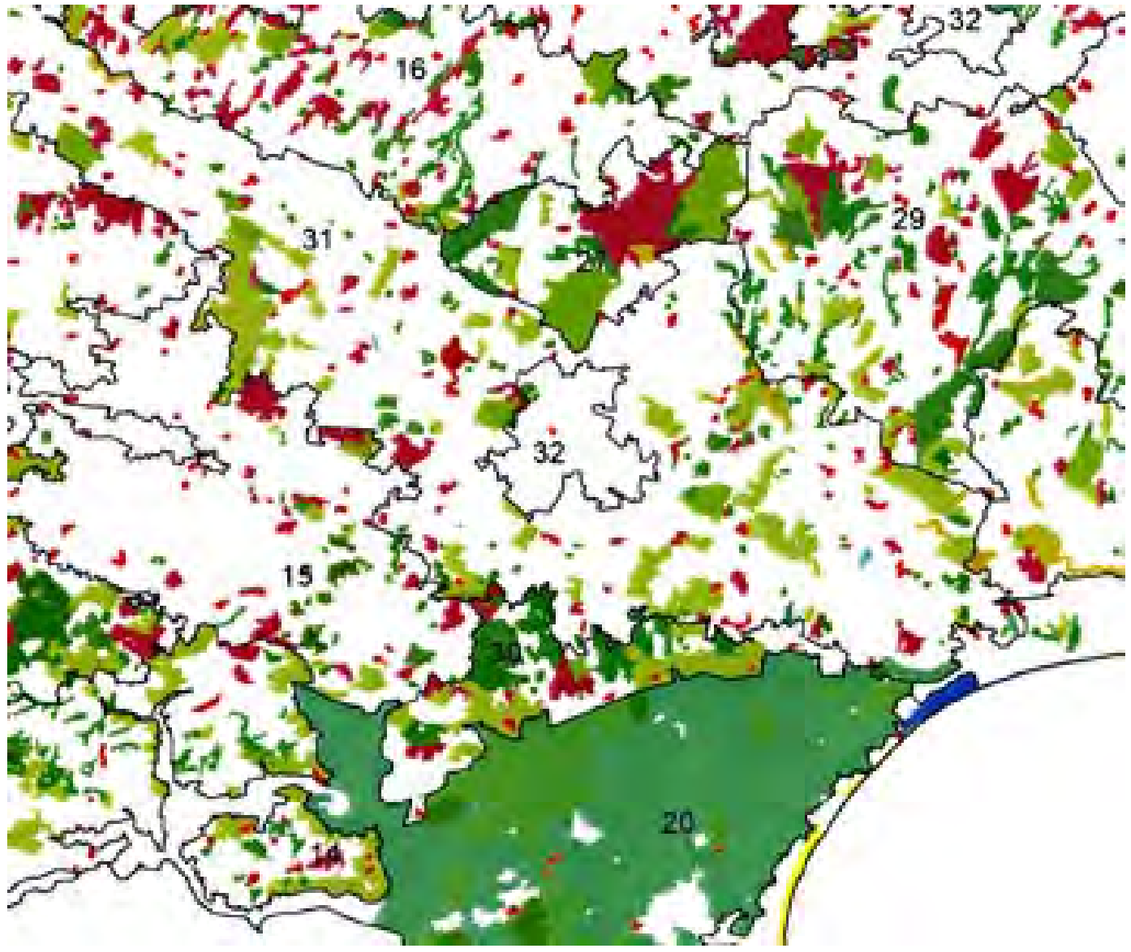
The first map shows those features that are most likely to retain morphological attributes characteristic of changes and developments that may have occurred in the medieval and early post medieval period even though much of the detail such as individual houses in settlements and trees in woods are likely to be more recent. Intensive agriculture and urban expansion have had a negative impact on the survival of these features.

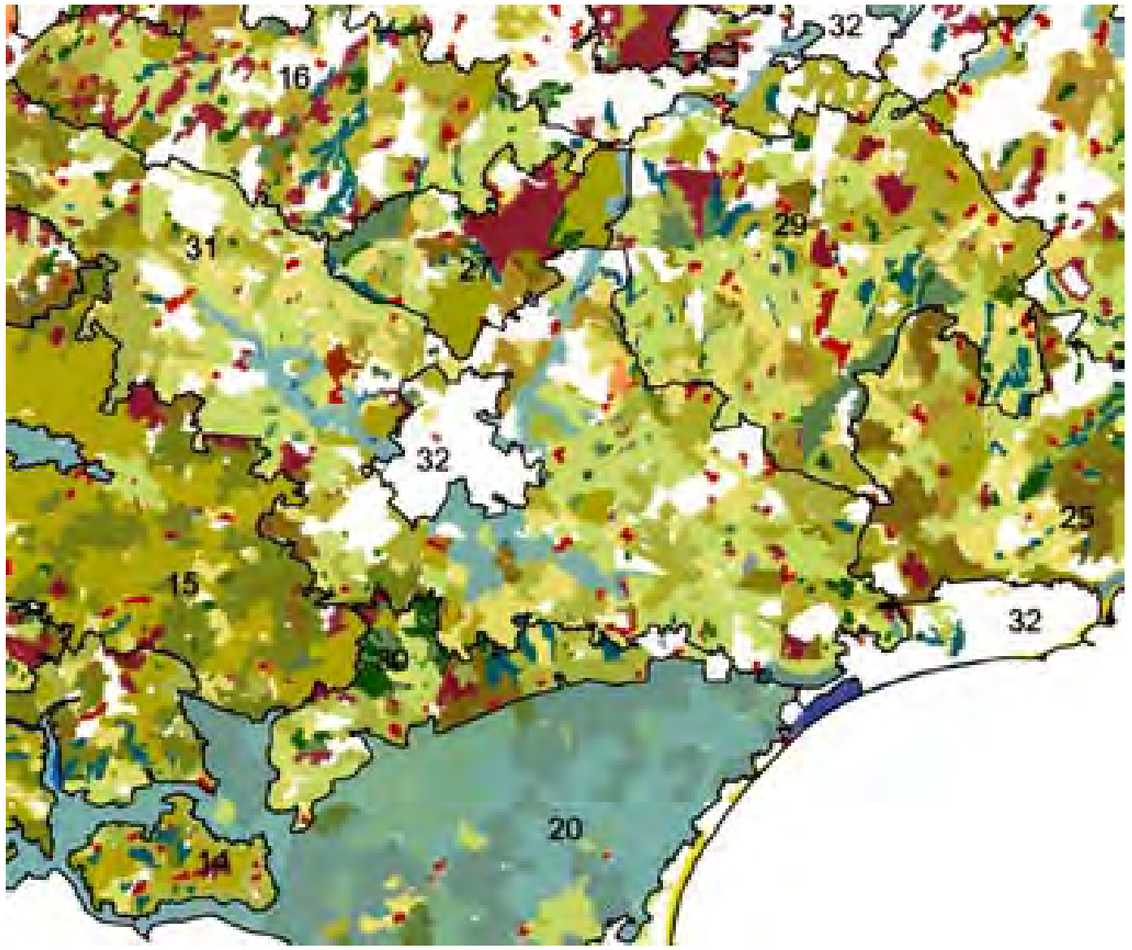
The central map shows areas added to the post medieval map that are mostly likely to retain attributes or morphological traits characteristic of changes in the centuries between the post medieval period and the start of the nineteenth century. The overall pattern reinforces the view that much of the Kent landscape has potentially early origins for its basic form and character, although significant elements of it have been radically altered from the late nineteenth century to the present day.

The last map adds features to the early 19th century map to show areas likely to retain those attributes or changes that took place in the nineteenth century, but excluding the post 1801 urban development, much of which occurred in the twentieth century.

Of interest in this study area is coppice woodland - an ancient craft still practised in the modern landscape and with modern applications. Although few new coppices were planted in the last 100 years, it is possible that areas of coppice were planted or converted from woodland in the last two centuries; however it was assumed that all coppice is early in date.

Overall Kent is an ancient landscape. Elements of the southern part of the county have undergone slow and gradual change since the establishment of permanent settlement. There is a deep and complex time depth to this landscape which needs to be considered in landscape and conservation management policies, and ought to be reflected in new and restored landscapes.

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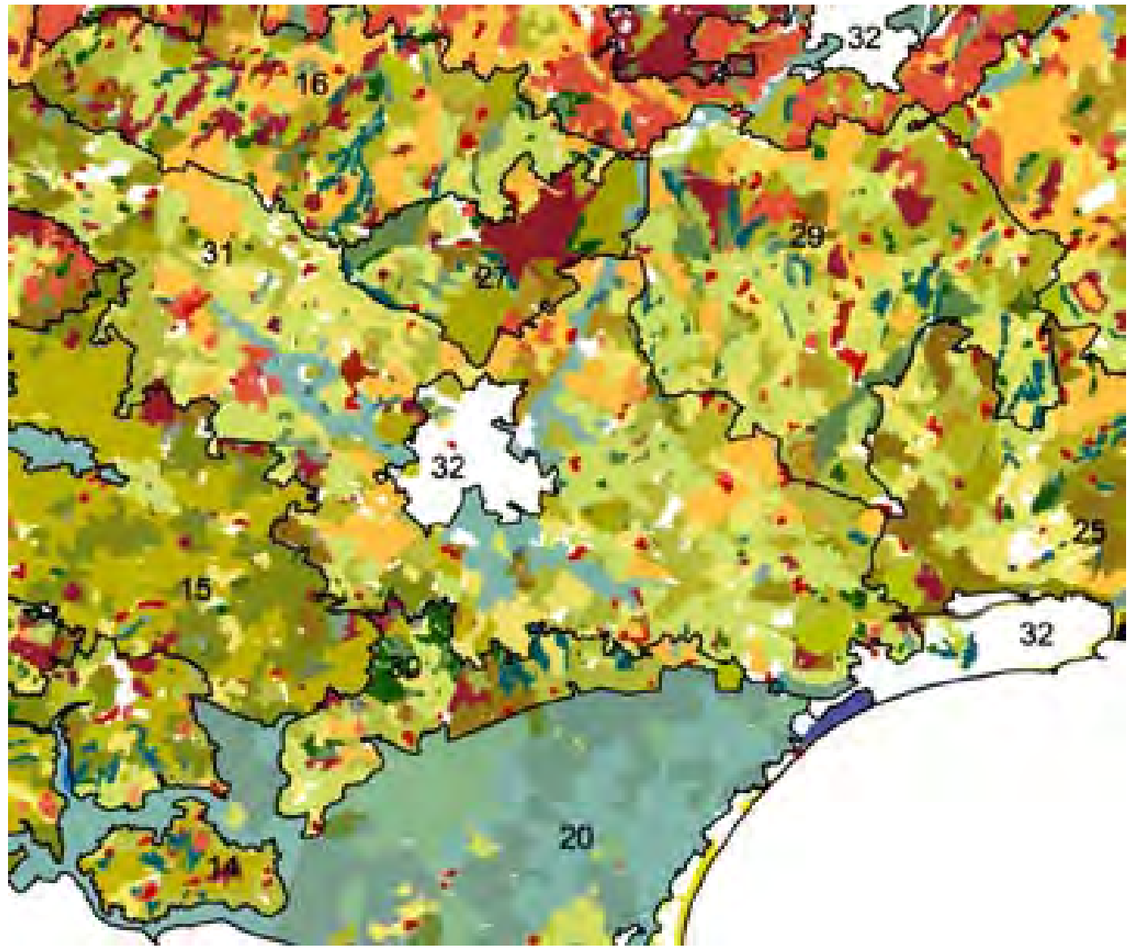
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Historic Landscapes Types

The Historic Landscape Types (HLT) applicable to this study include the following:

HLT 1: Field Patterns

Within the Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation Study there are 17 sub-types of Field Patterns of which the following 9 apply to this study:

HLT 1.6: Medium to large fields with wavy boundaries
Late medieval or 17th/18th century informal enclosures of variable size, regular shape with wavy boundaries. Typically found in open area on chalk, open clay and river valleys.

HLT 1.7: Irregular fields with straight boundaries
Small to medium fields of irregular interlocking shapes resulting from the boundary straightening of irregular fields with wavy boundaries. Found throughout the county.

HLT 1.9: Small regular fields with straight boundaries
19th/ 20th century small irregular enclosures, typically rectangular. Found in lowland areas.

HLT 1.10: Medium regular fields with straight boundaries
19th/ 20th century enclosure of downland and low lying areas generally rectangular with straight surveyed boundaries forming a regular grid like field pattern. Found throughout the county.

HLT 1.11: Large regular fields with straight boundaries
Late 18th/19th centure enclosure generally rectangular with straight surveyed boundaries forming a regular grid like field pattern. Generally located on the chalk.

HLT 1.13: 'Prairie' fields
Large enclosures created by 20th century boundary loss of 19th century or earlier enclosures. Typically found inthe northern part of the county and isolated areas in the south.

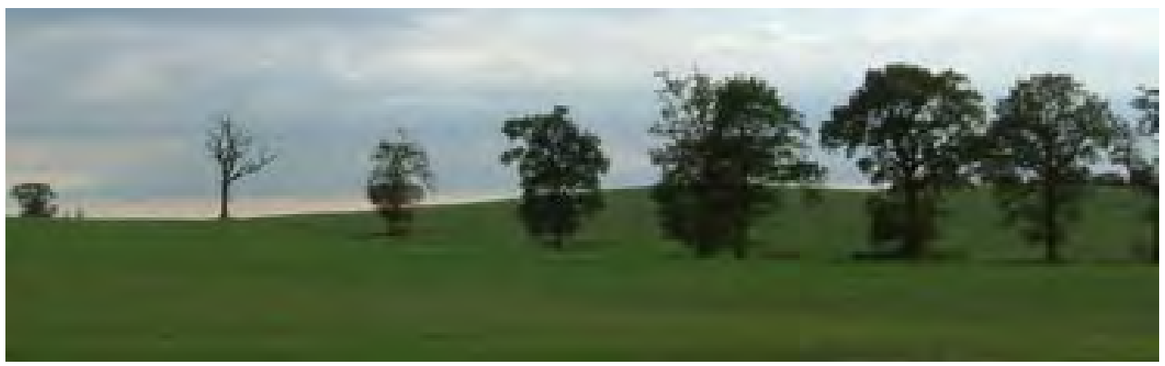
HLT 1.15: Small fields with wavy boundaries
Late medieval or 17th/18th century informal enclosure with fairly regular shape and wavy boundaries generally associated with pre-1801 small settlements and pre-1810 scattered settlements. Found throughout the county.

HLT 1.16: Small wavy bounded fields with ponds
Post medieval in origin, irregular in shape with wavy boundaries with hedges and ponds which were once marling pits. Confined to the Weald and clay soils.

HLT 1.17: Large wavy bounded fields with ponds
Enclosures resulting from loss of boundaries of HLT1.16. Irregular shape with ponds and confined to the Weald and clay soils.

Type I: the distribution of field patterns within the study area

Landscape near Stone Cross (A22 stone X.4)



Landscape near Eastwell Court (D25.1)

Historic Landscapes Types

HLT 4: Woodland

Within the Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation Study therare 11 sub-types of Woodland of which the following 6 apply to this study:

HLT 4.3: Other pre-1801 woodland
Ancient broadleaved woodlands of variable size and irregular shape.

HLT 4.4: Replanted other pre-1810 woodland
Existing prior to 1801 but have since been replanted with conifer species. Variable in size and irregular in shape.

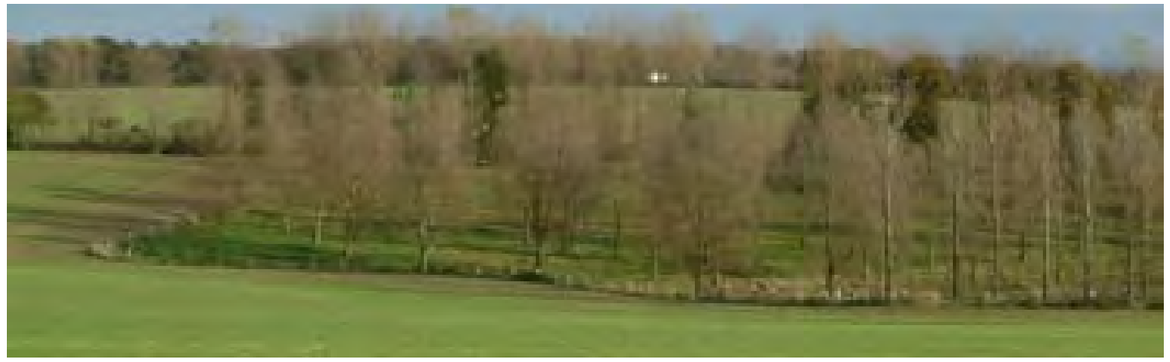
HLT 4.5: 19th century and later plantations
Post 1801, variable in size and shape with straight boundaries. Typically coniferous species and small areas of forestation in both lowland and downland areas.

HLT 4.6: Pre-1801 scarp and steep valley sided woodland
Linear woodland irregular in shape with irregular boundaries on steep slopes and marginal land which may include some replanting.

HLT 4.8: Post 1801 coppices
Variable in size and shape with straight or wavy boundaries and typically of sweet chestnut. Found throughout the county.

HLT 4.9: Pre-1801 coppices
Variable in size and shape and predominantly of one species; typically sweet chestnut but also ash, hazel and oak. Found throughout the county.

Type 4: the distribution of woodland within the study area



Podberry Wood (D 28.1)

Captain's Wood (A6.1)

Historic Landscapes Types

HLT 7: Valley floor and water management

Within the Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation Study there are 8 sub-types of Valley floor and water management of which the following 2 apply to this study:

HLT 7.1: Miscellaneous valley bottom paddocks and pastures
Small enclosures of meadows and other pastures along the valley floor. Rectangular to highly irregular in shape with wet ditches forming boundaries.

HLT 7.2: Valley floor woodlands
Wet woodlands of alder and willow which may have a history of coppicing or are recent in origin.

Type 7: the distribution of valley floor landscape in study area

Landscape near Swanton Court (A31.3)

Historic Landscapes Types

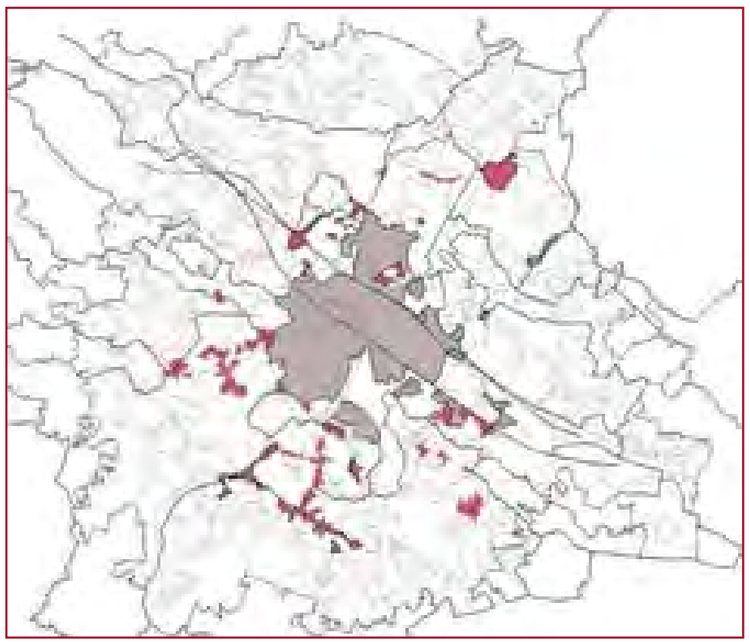
HLT 9: Settlements

Within the Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation Study there are 12 sub-types of Settlements of which the following 3 apply to this study:

HLT 9.2: Post 1801 scattered settlement
Scattered properties within a pattern of very small rectilinear field enclosures or gardens. Some areas are 'Stockbroker belt' large detached housing with substantial gardens or 19th and 20th century continuation of rural settlement.

HLT 9.6: Post 1801 settlement
Expansion of hamlets, villages, towns and cities aswell as new settlement groups.

HLT 9.7: Hamlet or village 1801 extent
Small to medium settlement often medieval in origin. Larger villages may have a church and smaller dispersed hamlets.



Type 9: the distribution of settlements within the study area

Cheeseman's Green (A9.1)

Historic Landscapes Types

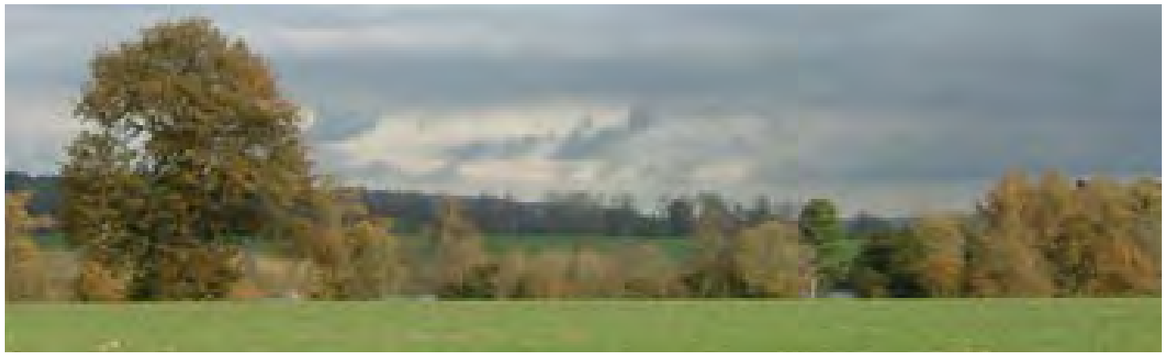
HLT 10: Parkland and designed landscape

Within the Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation Study there are 3 sub-types of Parkland and designed landscape of which the following 2 apply to this study:

HLT 10.1: Pre-1801 Parkland
A designed landscape associated with an historic house which may date back to the medieval period. Location may vary but generally found on lower ground and valley sides.

HLT 10.2: Post 1801 Parkland
A designed landscape associated with an historic house with varied location.

Type 10: the distribution of parklands within the study area



Landscape on the Eastwell Estate (D23.4)

Landscape near Kennington Hall (D17.7)

Historic Landscapes Types

HLT 11: Recreation

Within the Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation Study there are 3 sub-types of Recreation of which the following 2 apply to this study:

HLT 11.2: Golf courses
Associated with recent settlements, woodlands and heathland areas.

HLT 11.3: Major sports fields and recreational complexes
Irregular in shape with straight boundaries located near settlements.

Type 11: the distribution of recreational landscapes within the study area

Ashford Golf Course (D38.1)

Historic Landscapes Types

HLT 12: Extractive and other industry

Within the Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation Study there are 7 sub-types of Extractive and other industry of which the following 2 apply to this study:

HLT 12.2: Active and disused gravel and clay workings
20th century in origin, regular in shape but with wavy edges. When disused used as refuse tips or become artificial lakes.

HLT 12.3: Industrial complexes and factories
Large recent industrial developments found on edge of major urban areas.

Type 12: the distribution of industry within the study area

Restored gravel pits at Conningsbrook Manor(D4.4)

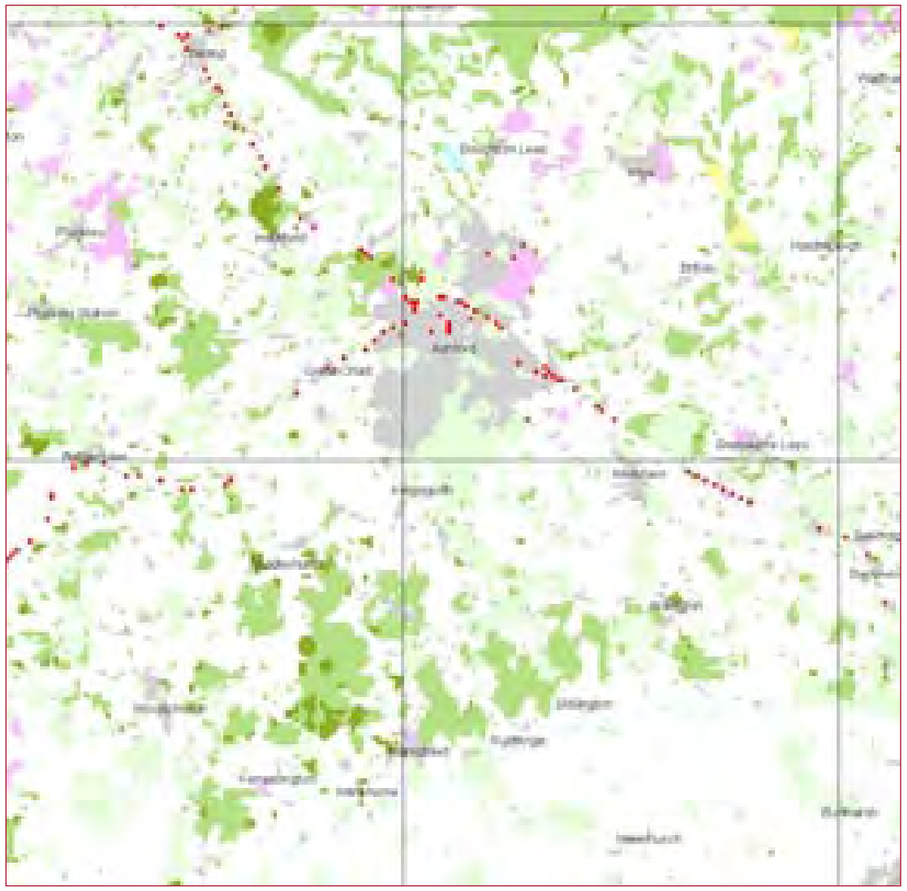
Section 7 The Working Landscape

Landcover Changes

1961

Kent is a rural county with agriculture forming over two-thirds of its land area. Within the Borough of Ashford, 73.8% of land cover consists of arable and horticultural land or improved grassland. Over 14% of the Borough consists of woodland, and only 8.6% of the land cover is built up areas and gardens, the lowest in the entire county.

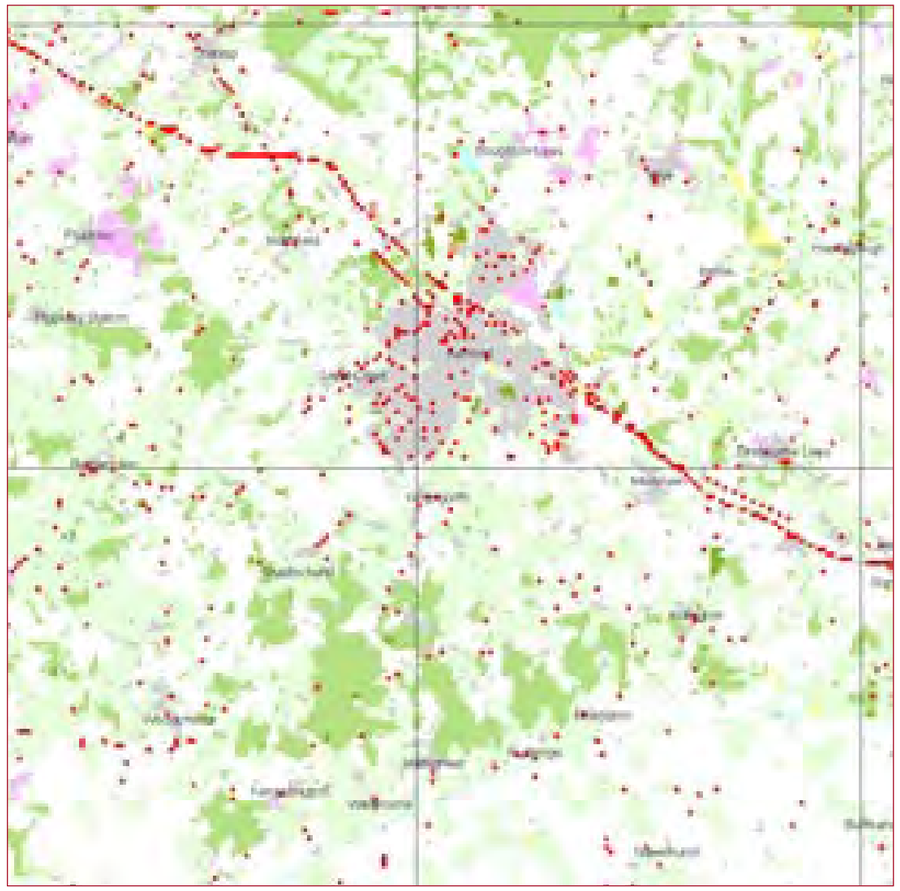
The Kent Landcover Survey was carried out by KCC and the Kent Habitat Survey.Anyone who has lived in the county over the last 40 years will be aware of the significant changes which have affected the character of the countryside, also dubbed the garden of England. The maps above illustrate the extent of the changes over the last 40 years



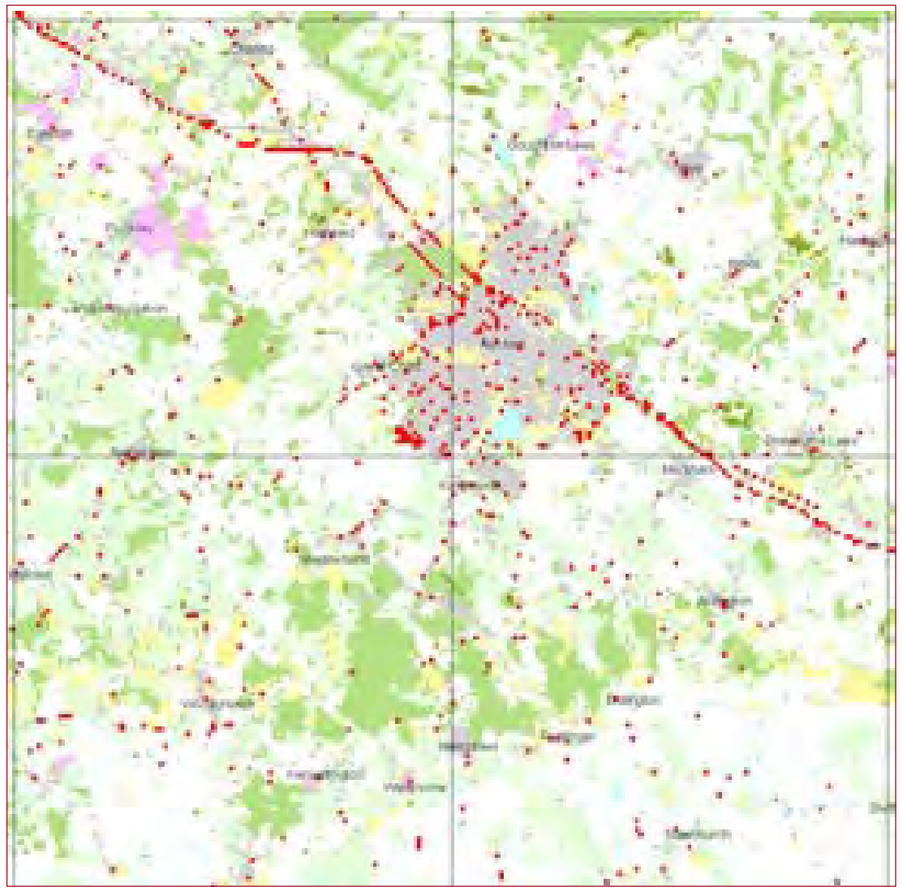
1972

There has been a significant reduction in orchards and hop gardens and with them a reduction in the high hedges that provided shelter. Many orchards were turned over to arable land in the 1970s with grant aid from Europe, at the same time fields have been enlarged to be more productive and remnants can be seen as lone trees in wheat or rape fields.

There has been a change from grazing to arable and vice versa, on balance an increase of 10% of the land going to arable. Hidden changes are in land drainage. Of course there have been increases to built development, and a major land take in road construction - notable the M2 and M20 which bisect the county.



1990



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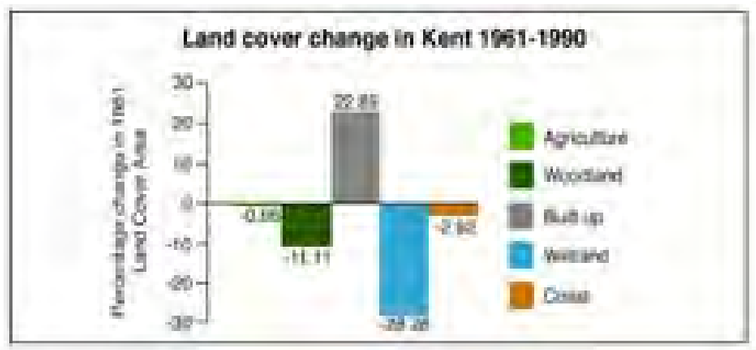


Source Kent County Council 1995
graphic: studio engleback

- Arable
- Grassland
- Grassland & Scrub
- Orchard and Hop
- Scrub
- Woodland
- Urban
- Roads
- Rivers, Standding Open Water & Wetland
- Coastline

Each square represents one hectar (100m x 100m)
Source: KCC County Landcover Survey leaflet

Tranquility Index

The countryside in Kent has evolved, but the changes in reent yeras have been rapid. the most significant pressures for change have come from agricultural intensification, a growing rural population and demand from housing.

Between 1961 and 1990, the area of developed land in kent increased by 23% from 45 988 hectares, to 56 494 hectares. The majority of this development was on ‘greenfield’ agricultural land.

In the same period, 28% of the county’s wetland, and 11% of the county’s wood;and was lost as this more marginal land was brought into agricultural production.

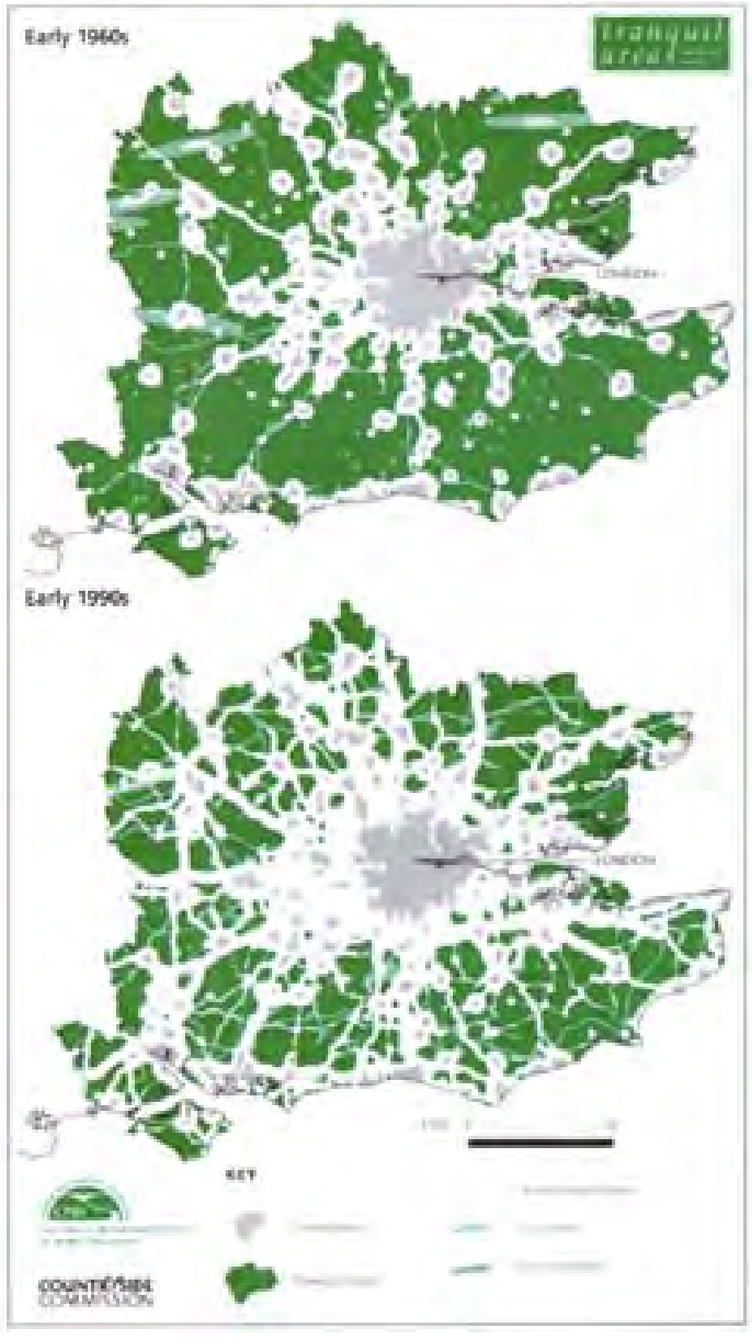
Source Kent County Council 1995

In 1995 the countryside Commission and the Council for the protection of Rural England (CPRE) carried out a study to identify tranquil areas in rural England. It revealed a significant loss of tranquility in the three decades from the early 1960s. the Countryside commission map opposite is reproduced from a KCC report ‘Kent Countryside 2000 - understanding rural change’

The definitions of a tranquil area used in the study were:

- being at least 4km from the largest power station
- being 3km from the most highly trafficked roads large towns and industrial areas
- being 2km from other motorways and major trunk roads
- being 1km from medium disturbance roads (approximately 10 000 vehicles per day) and some mainline railways

A tranquil area also lies beyond military and civil airport noise.



National Transportation Corridors

From 'Ashford's Strategic Growth'
One of the major reasons for the designation of Ashford as a Growth Area within the South East is its existing and potential transport connections. Ashford lies at the junction of five rail lines providing an important combination of public transport links. The current journey time to London is 1 hour 12 minutes and following the completion of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link to St Pancras this time will be cut to 37 minutes. This will give Ashford a unique geostrategic advantage – being both 40 minutes from London and 40 minutes from France. Rail services to Canterbury, Hastings, Folkestone, Deal, Tonbridge, Rye and Eastbourne ensure good regional connections. In addition Ashford is linked to the motorway network via junctions 9 and 10 off the M20 (London to Dover/Folkestone). Further primary road links are to Canterbury (A28), Faversham (A251), Romney Marsh (A2070), Maidstone (A20), Tenterden and Hastings (A28).

Ashford Railway (From ABC website)
Probably the greatest influence on the growth of the town was the arrival of the railway in 1842 and the decision by the South Eastern Railway Company to build the Railway Works in the town in 1846. Between 1841 and 1861 the town more than doubled in population from 3,000 to 7,000.

The railway workers developed their own community in an area originally called Alfred Town by the Railway Company. The community, which soon became known locally as The New Town and finally Newtown, had its own schools, pub, bathhouse, shops and Mechanics' Institute, which doubled up as a library and social and educational club for the workers.

The Railway Works dominated the town and nearly 1,000 locomotives were built or re-built there before the Works was closed in 1981. The Wheel Shop closed in March 1993.

Channel tunnel and railway links


The M20


The Eurostar on the CTRL near Mersham


Work on the CTRL near Beechbrook in summer 2001

Agriculture

Agricultural Land Quality
Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land is a National resource and ideally should be protected for future generations. The areas shown on the plan (left) were abstracted from the 1968 MAFF agricultural land quality map. Since that time grade 3 land has been divided in to grade 3a and 3b. Grade 3a is also considered to be a key resource. In landscape character terms, the higher quality agricultural land does not necessarily mean it has a higher visual quality as the designation reflects both fertility and flexibility of use. This tends to mean that to profit from large machinery, fields are often enormous, with many historic and natural landscape features removed to facilitate large scale arable farming. This is certainly the case in the Wye Gap where there is a concentration of grade 1 land, and the lower area south of Chilmington and to the north and south for the M20. In these area miles of hedgerows have been removed over the last 40 years and many ponds appear to have been filled in. The resulting landscape has become a shadow of its former self as a consequence.

There is scope to grow crops that are needed locally as biofuels and can assist in the UK attaining its targets for reducing carbon emissions. Crops include rape and miscanthus grown in traditional fields, and coppice wood.

Ashford District is already the most wooded part of Kent, but many of these woodlands have lost their market for timber, especially coppice wood. As a consequence the method to finance their management has also been lost. A zero carbon energy policy for Ashford could kick-start the management of these woodlands and trigger new woodland planting of, for example, osier coppice which has a faster rotation period.

The wooded element of the farmed landscape is often forgotten, especially when regular coppicing has slowed down or ceased, yet the clear felling of small woodlands for coppice every 8-9 years. This is as much a part of the longer rhythm of the Wealden countryside as the passing of the seasons. It is important to recognise these issues when considering landscape character, for this character, especially in Kent is never static. The landscape is dynamic and responsive to its current land use.

Information derived
from MAFF
ALQ Map 1968

Grade 1 Grade 2

Distribution of Grade 1 and 2 land around Ashford

Distribution of loamy/silty brown earth soils
Information derived from
'An Historical Atlas of Kent' 2004

Area under agricultural cover 1961-1990

	Area 1951 (hectares)	Area 1990 (hectares)	%change 1951-1990
Arable	132,440	137,764	+5.5
Grassland	94,061	97,804	+7.0
Orchard & Hops	37,517	21,915	-41.6

Source Kent County Council 1995
graphic: studio engleback

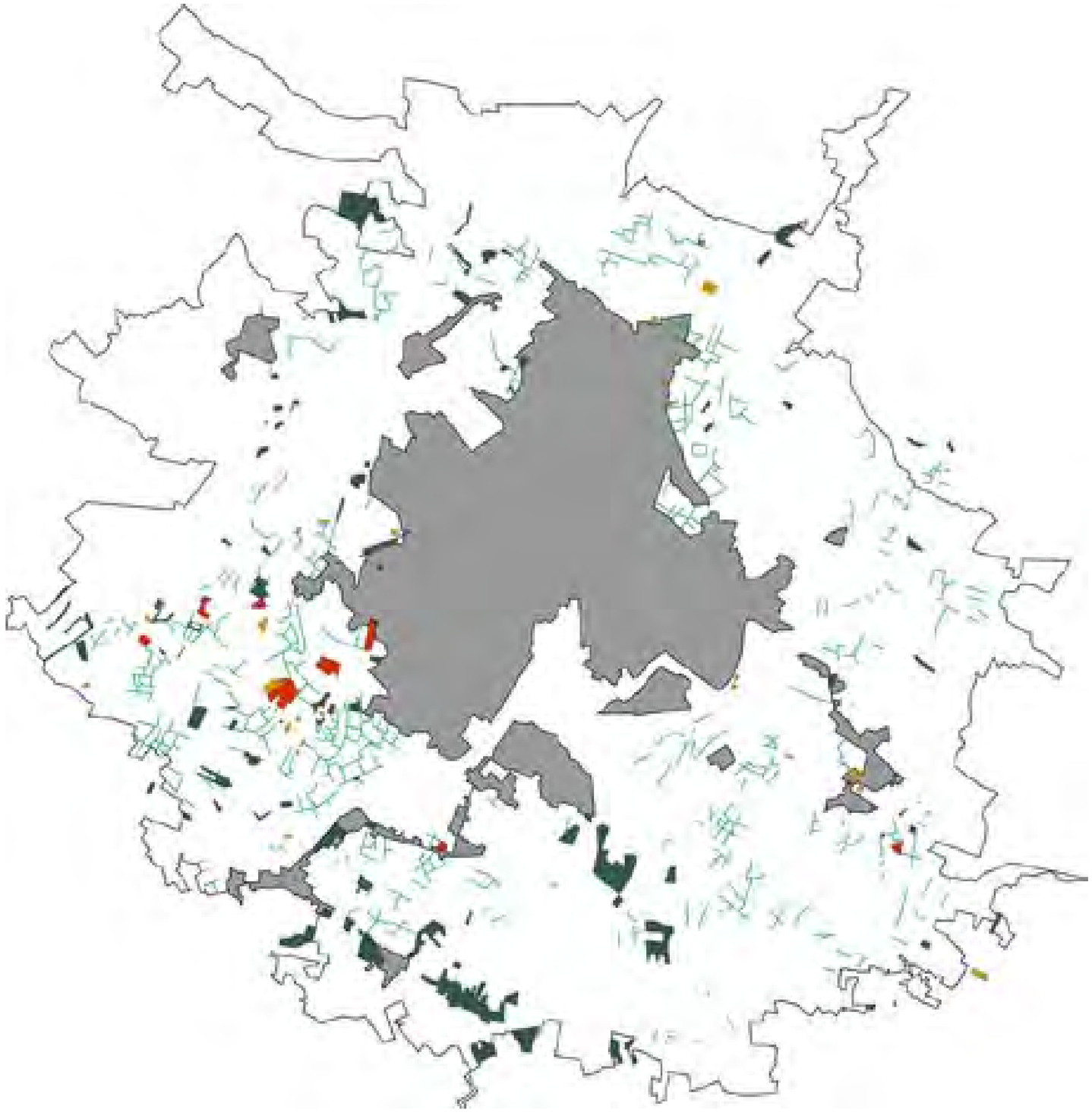
The changing agricultural scene

The agricultural scene has always evolved. In Kent there were fewer changes at the time of the enclosure acts that changed the appearance of the Midlands as Kentish farming did not require re-organising, so there were no rapid and dramatic changes introduced here at that time.

The pace of change has been extraordinarily rapid since the end of the last war and in the last 40 years in particular. Looking at the numbers of agricultural workers in Kent since 1861 (from the recently published Historical Atlas of Kent), there was a marked decline from 47 000 in 1861, to 9000 in 1951, when mechanisation in farming started to take hold. The map (left) shows the effect of mechanisation on the pattern of enclosure since the first edition OS Maps in 1971. Green areas of copses lost, red and orange areas are orchards lost.

Another factor changing the vertical element of a fairly flat landscape is Dutch Elm Disease. In little more than a decade these large hedgerow trees were lost. Elm survives in hedgerows the plan below shows that bar a few area elm is found through out the study area.

Distribution of Elm found in Hedgerows in this study



Field Divisions, Copses, Woods and Orchards lost since 1871

The changing agricultural scene

Agricutural Reform
During the agricultural revolution Kent did not undergo the dramatic change of enclosure and reorganisation on a scale experienced in other parts of the country such as the Midlands. However the rapid decline in agricultural workers during the late 19th and 20th centuries was typical of the country as a whole.

The 'Historical Atlas of Kent' suggests that in 1861 there were 47,000 agricultural labourers, whereas by 1951 this figure had dropped to only 9,000. In the early 20th century mixed farming had predominated but the threat of cheap imports of corn and meat led to a substantial growth in market gardening in the north, livestock and dairy farming in the Weald, fruit and hop growing and also poultry farming.

The farming trends across England since 1945 have been documented by Westmacott and Worthington in series of studies in 1972, 1983 and 1994. The aim of this work was to monitor and analyse the changes in farmed landscapes. A key finding was the loss of landscape character that had resulted in the increase in agricultural production and mechanisation.

Over the past half century the management of the UK countryside has been determined in the most part by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union. The CAP's historic emphasis on guaranteeing markets and prices, in addition to the high level of subsidies, encouraged widespread degradation of the countryside. Wildlife habitats were destroyed on a scale unprecendented in modern times, while the distinctive variations in landscape character have been disappearing at an accelerating rate.

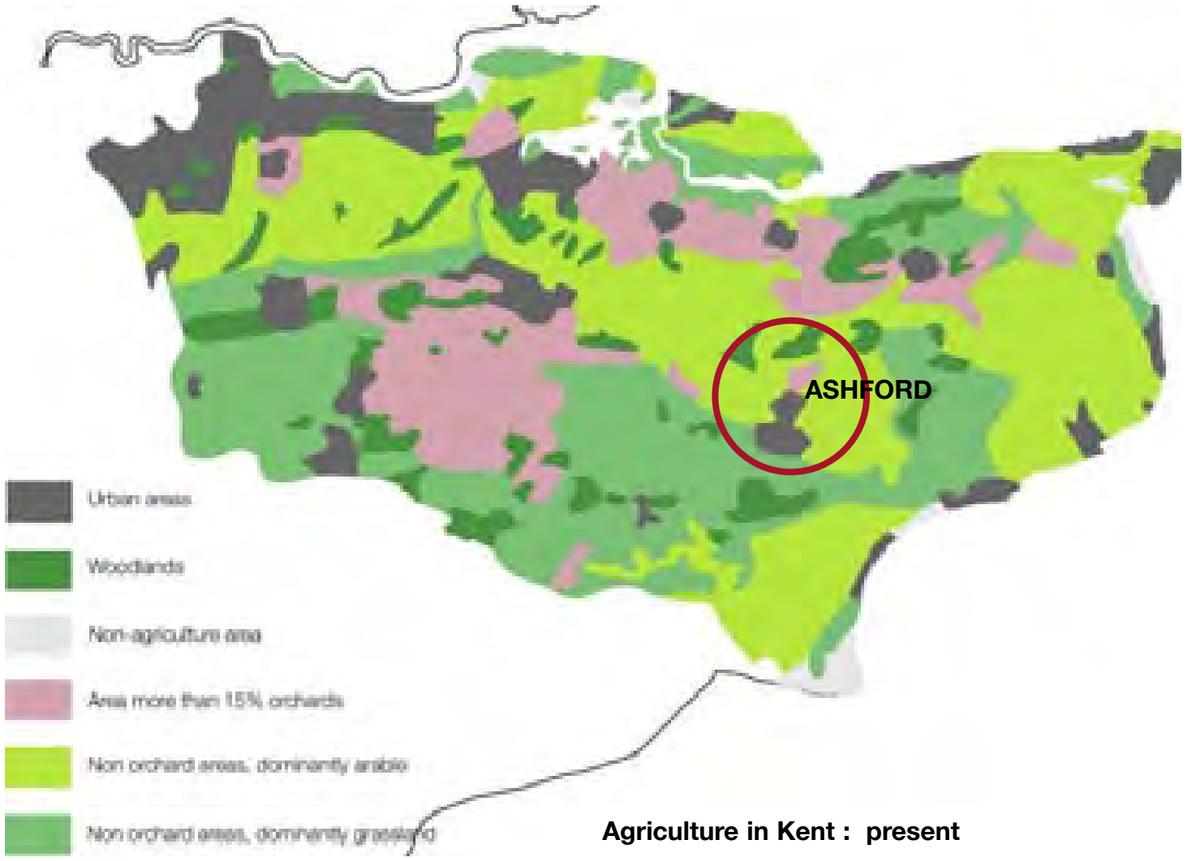
In January 2005 significant reforms to the CAP system were announced that will further transform the management of the UK countryside. The introduction of the new single farm payment scheme will see the establishment of 'environmental ground rules' that require all farmland to be kept in good agricultural and environmental condition. Should these regulations not be met then financial penalties, through the reduction of subsidies, will be levied. A key new rule is the need to maintain a 2 metre buffer zone around hedges and watercourses on fields greater than 2 hectares in size. These permanent grass buffers cannot be cultivated and must not have fertilizers or pesticides applied to them. Other environmental regulations include seasonal restrictions on the trimming of hedges to protect breeding birds, the protection of hedges and stone walls, and new measures for preserving soil quality.

Agriculture in Kent : 100 years ago
Information derived from 'An Historical Atlas of Kent'
Lawson & Killingray (eds) Pub. Phillimore 2004

By 1900 mixed farming predominated in the country. Large areas of market gardening, and increase in orchards and hop growing had mirrored the huge growth in London, railway connections and world trade. In the 1860s and 70s imports of grain from the USA and meat from Australia also had an effect on farming. As much of the Weald is poorly drained heavy soil, wheat acreages halved and permanent pasture nearly doubled in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Sheep numbers also fell by 10% but Kent still had more sheep than any other country in England.

There were three phases of development in Kentish agriculture during the last century. Up until the Second World War, world scale agricultural over-production had caused a depression. Agricultural protection started in 1932 to help cereal and grain growers and this subsidy and price guarantee system was consolidated in 1939 for the war effort, heralding a second period when mechanisation also started. During this period the rural scene started to change as small fields made way for larger areas more suited to heavy farm machinery, field drainage meant that poorly drained land that had returned to permanent pasture in the 1870s could be used for arable cropping.

The third period began with the UK entry to the EEC and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) replaced the 'Green Pound'. Changes to the CAP starting in the late 1980s weakened the protection/subsidy regime when other pressures on farm earning were also mounting leading to another depression in the agricultural scene similar to that at experienced at the turn of the 20th century, but with less underlying stability. The augmentation of the European Union last year with countries to the east, plus further changes to agricultural subsidies linked to conservation will impact the rural scene, the husbandry and management that are at the heart of landscape character. This raises questions about the viability of some traditional crops and our attitude to the rural scene in general.



Agriculture in Kent : present

Hop gardens - a distant memory depicted in a child painting

Greatest changes have been seen in the enlargement of fields, removal of many miles of hedgerows, or the fall into decline of others, filling in of ponds and removal of copses. All this is evident to a greater or lesser extend around Ashford. The floodplain and tracts of land south of Ashford have been turned into prairie style fields using massive caterpillar tracked tractors for cultivation. A resident of Chilmington remarked that he had found out that at one time there had been 5 ponds on his land that had been filled in the last 30 years.

It is not only land use that has changed, the detailing of the landscape also changes with changed use and changed methods of management. Orchards and hop gardens required high hedges to protect a delicate crop early in the season, when these crops are gone it is no longer necessary to maintain these features, so they are cut down or removed so as not to shade out arable crops. In the late 1960s the author still remembers older farm workers hedging and ditching using bill-hooks to cut the hedges around Hever in west Kent. This gave a thorn hedge a very dense slightly rounded form. By comparison, many of these hedges were ruined by crude flail cutting leaving ugly splinters, cutting the hedges lower than before to expose thick stumps but no twigs. Suddenly there was nowhere for birds to nest, and country lanes changed character from being shady tall-walled corridors with occasional bright light from recessed field entrances framing views, to a larger landscape dominated by the sky. This in turn has affected the ephemeral delights of country lanes - the type and number of birds swooping from side to side, or even the flowers in the verges affected by the changed conditions and the increased use of herbicides.

To some extend the worst excesses of rural landscape destruction funded by ‘improvement’ grants is over. New grants are being linked to conservation and countryside stewardship contracts and the agro-political landscape of Europe changes. There is now an increase in traditional (and by now very expensive) hedge laying, and ancient cultural tradition in these parts.

Husbandry patterns have changed with more arable and less livestock, especially of cattle since the 1960s and 70s. New forms of land management may yet take hold. There has been talk that the area around Ashford is highly suitable for champagne growing as the climate alters for South East England and the land around Reims suffers (Independent 15.04.04). Inter-cropping of early arable crops like rape with trees such as poplars has also been mooted. Then there is the effect of climate change with the concern of much drier soils in summer and autumn and heavy winter downpours that could lead to erosion.

Agriculture - Environmental Stewardship

Introduction

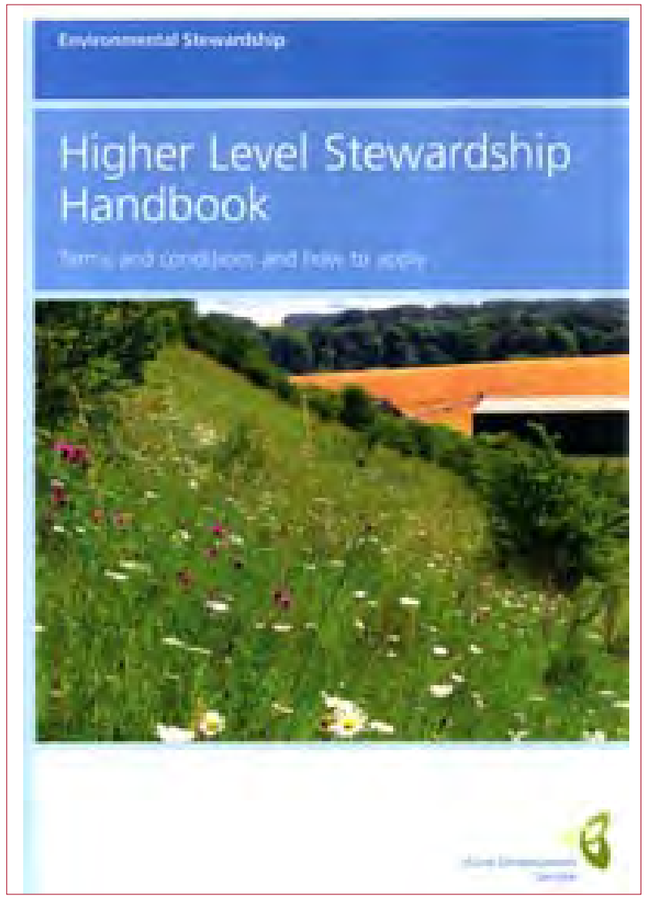
The emphasis on grant aid to increase production has altered to embrace environmental stewardship. For a while MAFF were funding measures that inpart removed landscape features, whilst at the same time the Countryside Commission was funding small scale planting schemes. In the 1980s, the Countryside Commission (now Countryside Agency) together with Local Authorities, provided grant aid for countryside tree planting. This was in an era when hedgerow had been ripped up and the full effects of the Dutch Elm Disease catastrophy had significantly denuded many rural areas of detail and delight, as well as reducing the carrying capcity for widllife. The planting schemes mainly related to some hedgerow tree planting, or saving self-sown trees in hedges from being pruned with the hedge, or planting small copses in the corners of large fields that were inaccessible to larger ploughs and harvesting machines. Some hedge planting with trees did occur in some areas but this was limited. Later Countryside Stewardship grants were introduced in which landowners received grant aid but had to sign up to a 10 year management agreement.

The Rural White Paper published in November 2000 looked into the future for the countryside. it looked at a range of issues from economy to housing. **Objective 3** was to **conserve and enhance rural landscapes and the diversity and abundance of wildlife (including the habitats on which it depends).** Three key issues for this objective were:

- **a vigourous and strong policy of protecting the countryside through redirecting new house building pressure away from the greenfield sites and maintaining the quality of valued landscapes while meeting the needs of rural communities**
- **implementing a new direction for agriculture support which takes full account of the environmental benefits which farming provides**
- **a holistic approach for assessing landscape value**

The Stationery Office issued 'Agriculture in the United Kingdom 2004' in 2005. This was a combined production by DEFRA, and corresponding agencies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its closing chapters addressed Conservation and Land Management and the Environment. It recognised initiatives by, amongst others the Environment Agency and Countryside Agency regarding water and flood management measures and of Integrated Farm management which aimed to integrate biological processes into modern farming practices. This involves the consideration in agricultural organisation and planning of :

- soil management, crop nutrition and crop protection
- pollution control and waste management
- energy efficiency
- animal husbandry
- landscape features, habitat and wildlife



Defra schemes

Environmental Stewardship Scheme

Environmental Stewardship (ES) was launched in England on 3 March 2005 to replace the existing agri-environment schemes (Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Countryside Stewardship and Organic Farming Schemes).

Environmental Stewardship is a new agri-environment scheme which provides funding to farmers and other land managers in England who deliver effective environmental management on their land. The first Environmental Stewardship (ES) agreements got underway on 1 August 2005.

The scheme is intended to build on the recognised success of the Environmental Sensitive Areas scheme and the countryside Stewardship Scheme. Its primary objectives are to:

- Conserve wildlife (biodiversity
- Maintain and enhance landscape quality and character
- Protect the historic environment and natural resources
- Promote public access and understanding of the countryside
- Natural resource protection

Within the primary objectives it also has the secondary objectives of:

- Genetic conservation
- Flood management

There are 3 levels of entry into the scheme – Entry Level Stewardship, Organic Entry Level Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship. Farmers enter into the scheme for 5 to 10 years and acquire points based on certain management options to reach a certain target and level of payment.

Entry Level Stewardship

For every hectare of land entered into the scheme a target of 30 points per hectare must be reached to receive payment of £30 per hectare. This decreases to 8 points for land parcels of 15 acres or more within the less favoured areas for which £8/hectare/year is received. Payments for capital works are not available through ELS.

Organic Entry Level Stewardship

£60/hectare/year is received for all organic land entered into the scheme providing that 60 points per hectare are acquired – 30 of these are allocated on the basis that the land is organic with the remainder coming from the various management options. Similarly organic land of parcels more than 15 hectares within less favoured areas is not eligible for OELS, and it receives a payment of £8/hectare/year. There are top up grants, in addition to the OELS payments, to convert conventionally farmed improved land and established top-fruit orchards (pears, plums, cherries and apples, excluding cider apples) to organic production. These are £175/hectare/year for 2 years for improved land and £600/hectare/year for 3 years to convert established top-fruit orchards to organic production.

Note : *Arable and horticultural land and grassland have to undergo a 24 month monitored conversion period under organic management from the date of application to the date when organic status is achieved for the land. Land with perennial crops such as fruit bushes and fruit trees must undergo a 36 month conversion period. In exceptional cases, such as where land has been under an environmental management agreement that specifically prohibits fertilisers and herbicides, a case can be made for reducing the conversion period. Additionally land intended for non-herbivores (pigs and poultry) may be eligible for a reduced conversion period of up to 12 months.*

Higher Level Stewardship

Farmers must produce a Farm Environment Plan outlining the current environmental value of the farm and its potential to deliver additional environmental benefits. Payments received depend on the management options chosen. Funding is also available for capital works.

Funding is also available to help restore traditional farm buildings for agricultural use. Grants for the conversion/ diversification of farm buildings is available through the Rural Enterprise Scheme.

Land intensively farmed at Bethersden Farmlands

Management Options of particular relevance to Ashford

Maintenance of hedgerows of very high environmental value HB12

Maintains hedgerows that support target species of farmland birds, insects or mammals, or which make a significant contribution to the local landscape character and/or are historically important boundaries. It may also be used to manage hedgerows in the local style and custom, to strengthen the local historic landscape character. The option will promote the development of a balanced tree population, where this is appropriate to the local landscape. Where required, works such as planting up gaps or establishing new hedgerow trees may be funded by a Capital Works Plan.

Ancient trees in arable fields HC5

For example between Kingsnorth and Chimington

Ancient trees in intensively managed grass fields HC6

By establishing a grass buffer around the base of the tree, these options protect ancient trees within arable or intensively managed grass fields from damage by livestock, cultivation and other agricultural activities. Management will include: establishing an unfertilised grass buffer of at least 15m radius around the base of each tree; not allowing treatments applied to the adjacent land to affect the buffer; protecting trees from damage by livestock including stock rubbing against the trees, bark stripping and soil compaction; retaining all tree limbs, including the lower limbs on the tree; retaining any standing or fallen dead wood. Capital works such as fencing to protect trees from livestock may be funded by a Capital Works Plan.

Maintenance of wood pasture and parkland HC12

Restoration of wood pasture and parkland HC13

These options maintain or restore the wildlife, historic and landscape character of wood pasture or parkland. Sites that are suitable for restoration will still support a number of ancient trees and/or parkland features. It may be that the sites are not grazed, are managed under arable cropping or have been planted with conifers or other inappropriate trees. A management plan will usually be required for all these options and parkland restoration will always require a plan. This is to ensure that the original views and important elements of the designed parkland are retained. Management will include: protection of existing and newly established trees from damage by livestock, including stock rubbing against the trees, bark stripping and soil compaction; maintenance of areas of closely grazed turf interspersed with taller tussocks by grazing; no use of fertiliser, no ploughing or other cultivation, no re-seeding, rolling or chain harrowing. Restoration such as tree planting to replace lost trees, scrub removal to prevent shading to ancient trees and restoration of ponds or water features, may be funded by a Capital Works Plan.

Creation of wood pasture HC14

This option creates wood pasture on sites that are known to have previously been wood pasture, or on sites adjacent to or linking existing areas of wood pasture.The option can also be used on appropriate sites within the National Forest and Community Woodlands. Planting will not be allowed on archaeological sites, on sites of existing wildlife value or where trees would be detrimental to the landscape. The preferred method of creation will be by careful and flexible grazing management to allow trees and shrubs to develop by natural regeneration. In some cases, it may be necessary to sow a specified grass seed mix or plant additional trees. These may be funded by a Capital Works Plan.

Maintenance of woodland HC7

Restoration of woodland HC8

These options maintain or restore woodlands to benefit wildlife and protect and strengthen the local landscape character. The options are targeted at small farm woodlands, or larger woodlands that are normally grazed as part of the farming system. Larger un-grazed woodlands will usually be more suitable for the Forestry Commissions' English Woodland Grant Scheme. Management includes: maintaining rides and glades within the woodland by grazing or cutting; high forest management; rotational coppicing. Restoration may require you to: exclude livestock; remove inappropriate species; undertake planting; protect trees from grazing damage; re-introduce a selective felling or coppicing cycle to re- structure the habitat. Capital items such as planting new trees and fencing may be funded by a Capital Works Plan.

Woods with remnant glades & Coppicing

Creation of woodland in the LFA HC9

Creation of woodland outside the LFA HC10

These options create small areas of new woodland that benefit wildlife and strengthen the local landscape. They can also be used to protect soils and watercourses. The options will be particularly valuable on sites adjacent to existing woodland. Planting will not be allowed on archaeological sites, on sites of existing wildlife value, or where trees will be detrimental to the landscape.

These options are for new woodlands that are individually less than 1 ha in size and less than 3 ha in total across your holding. If you are considering planting areas larger than 1 ha, grants may be available from the Forestry Commission under the English Woodland Grant Scheme. Woodland creation may include: site preparation; fencing the area of natural regeneration or new planting; and controlling weeds. Capital items such as trees, tree tubes and fencing may be funded by a Capital Works Plan.

Protection of soils – water retention – plant copses/wet woodland

Maintenance of successional areas and scrub HC15

Restoration of successional areas and scrub HC16

Creation of successional areas and scrub HC17

These options aim to maintain, restore or create a succession of scrub habitat for specific target species such as dormouse, song thrush or turtle dove. The options can also be used to protect soils and watercourses. Scrub creation is particularly targeted to sites where target species already occur and where the site is adjacent to existing areas of scrub or woodland. Planting will not be allowed on archaeological sites, on sites of existing wildlife value or where trees would be detrimental to the landscape. Management will be tailored to maintain or create the ideal scrub habitat conditions required by a particular target species or to protect vulnerable soils. This may include allowing scrub to develop naturally; extensive grazing on part, or all, of the site; exclusion of livestock; and coppicing.

Woodland livestock exclusion supplement HC11

This supplement supports the removal of livestock from over-grazed woodland or from areas of scrub, to encourage the establishment of trees and shrubs by natural regeneration. Following successful establishment, a grazing regime would then be re-introduced. It is only available on the restoration of woodland option HC8, and the creation or restoration of successional areas or scrub options, HC16 and HC17.

Creation of Orchards
To create an orchard you will need to establish traditional varieties by planting two year old fruit trees. A one metre diameter circle around the base of all newly planted trees should be kept free of all vegetation for the first three years after planting by mulching, the use of mulch mats, or the careful use of an approved herbicide. Formative pruning will also be required and once grazing is introduced the trees will need to be protected from livestock damage. Once the trees are established the management should follow option HC18. Capital items such as trees and protective guards may be funded by a Capital Works Plan. Plan.
Particularly relevant to the Bethersden Farmlands around Goldwell and Mock Lane, and Hothfield and Kennington.

Arable reversion by natural regeneration HD7
This option protects sub-surface archaeological features from damage due to cultivation by establishing permanent grassland on arable, set-aside or grass leys through natural regeneration. It is targeted at protecting features at risk of damage through the standard method of grassland establishment which would involve some form of cultivation such as ploughing. This option may also help to protect soils from erosion and reduce diffuse pollution.

Management will include: allowing the sward to establish by natural regeneration; managing the sward by grazing or topping during the first year or so to encourage tillering of the grasses. Once established the sward should be managed by grazing or cutting for hay. Any activities that would damage the sward must be avoided.
Relevant to the Bethersden farmlands in particular the big fields around Chilmington and in proximity to the Roman Road.

Crop establishment by direct drilling (non-rotational) HD6
This option allows annual crops to be direct drilled, to protect archaeological features just below the surface from damage by ploughing or other deep cultivation. Because of the damage caused by the deep root systems of some crops and from harvesting operations, certain crops may not be grown under this option. It is targeted at sites where the field cannot be removed from arable cropping.

Management includes: no growing of root crops, maize or energy crops; direct drilling all crops at a depth no greater than 30 mm; no cultivation, sub-soiling, deep ploughing or mole ploughing. Care must be taken to direct drill only in dry soil conditions to avoid compaction or rutting.
Relevant to the Bethersden farmlands in particular the big fields around Chilmington and in proximity to the Roman Road.

Maintaining high water levels to protect archaeology HD8
Features of archaeological interest that are protected and preserved in wetlands are vulnerable to drainage and agricultural improvement. This option maintains current high water levels to protect underlying archaeological features from desiccation. The option may also help to protect vulnerable soils from erosion, reduce diffuse pollution and maintain the
landscape character of the area.

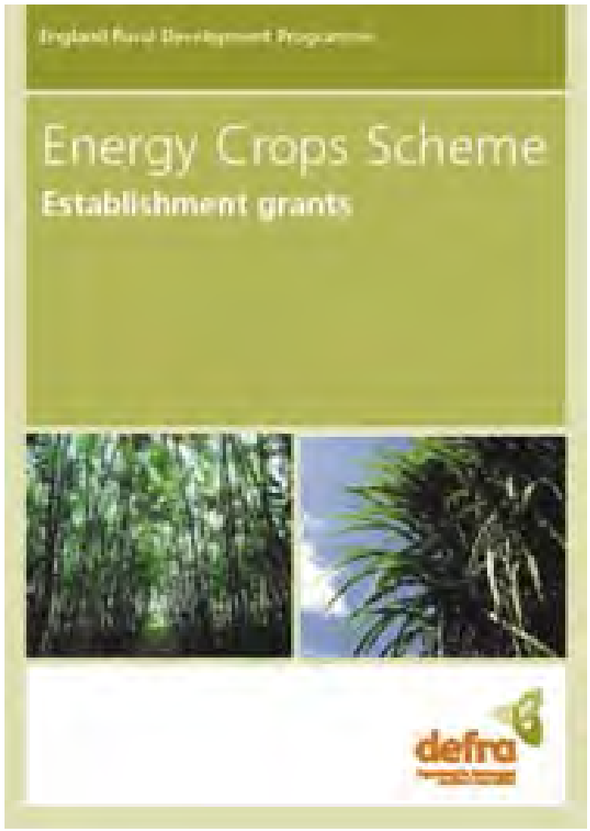
Management includes: maintaining the water levels at no more than 30 cm below the surface at all times of the year; avoiding field operations and stocking when the land is wet as this can cause compaction and damage to sub-surface features; no ploughing, sub-surface cultivation, re-seeding, chain harrowing or rolling. The development of reeds, large sedges or scrub should also be prevented. **This is relevant to Upper Stour Valley.**

Maintenance of traditional water meadows HD10
Restoration of traditional water meadows HD11
Water meadows were an important component of the distinctive historic and landscape character in parts of southern England. They also provide valuable habitats for wildlife. Water levels in traditionally managed water meadows, including catch meadows, are controlled using sluices and hatches, a process known as floating or drowning the meadow. These options maintain or restore traditional management on water meadows.

Management will include floating or drowning the water meadow for an agreed period of time each year. Gutters, carriers or channels should be maintained to encourage an even film of water approximately 25 mm deep to flow over the sward. Once the land has dried out, the meadow will be managed by grazing and/or by hay cutting. Particular care must be taken to ensure that field operations and stocking do not damage the soil structure or cause heavy poaching especially when the land is waterlogged. To restore the water meadows you may need to restore water control structures and associated gutters, carriers and other channels. Scrub clearance and coppicing of bank side trees may also be required. These works may be funded by a Capital Works Plan or may form a capital special project.
Relevant to Upper Stour Valley.

Energy Crops Scheme

http://www.defra.gov.uk
e:organic-energy@defra.gsi.gov.uk
e:industrialcrops@defra.gsi.gov.uk



Energy crops are used to produce heat and/or electricity. They are carbon-neutral and therefore, as a substitute for fossil fuels, can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase renewable energy generation. They are a new opportunity for rural areas.

Establishment grants of £1000 per hectare for short rotation coppice (willow or poplar) and £920 per hectare for miscanthus. (The enhanced rate of £1600 per hectare for short rotation coppice on ex- livestock land is under review following CAP reform.)

Applicants need to demonstrate that they have an energy end use for the crops. This could be:

- biomass plant
- a community energy scheme using combined heat and power (CHP)
- heat for small business or home

The end use must be within reasonable distance of the crops (generally 10 miles for small installations, 25 miles for power plants). Applications must be for as least 3 hectares.

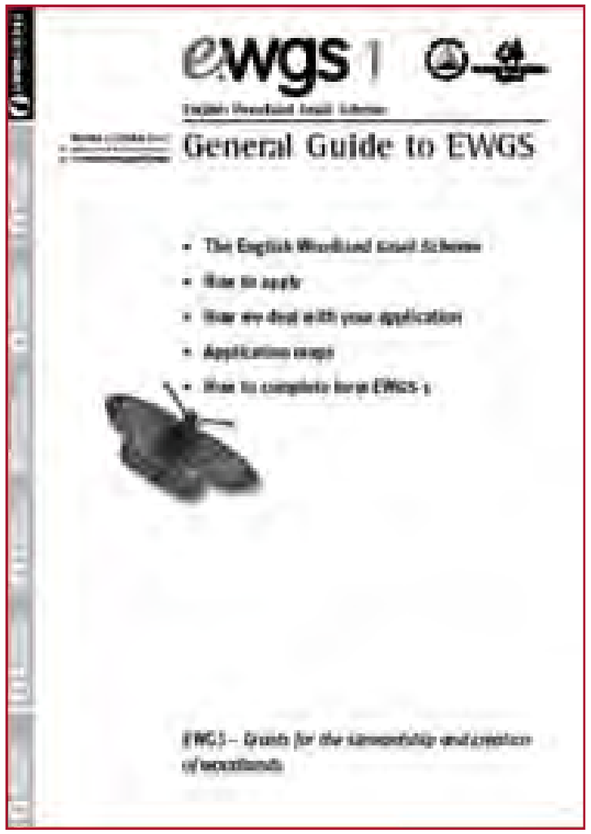
Producer groups must be legally formed by and consist of members who are growing short rotation coppice for an energy end-use. [Grant-aid for miscanthus producer groups may be available under the forthcoming Bio-energy Infrastructure Scheme – see contact below.] Up to 50% of the costs of setting up the group is available (maximum £200,000 per group).

Eligible expenditure includes:

- purchase of specialist equipment
- staff costs
- specialist fees
- office accommodation
- publicity and promotion

Grants through the Forestry Commission

http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry



The English Woodland Grant Scheme [EWGS] was launched on 18 July 2005. There are 5 grants to manage existing woodlands and the Woodland Creation Grant to establish new woodlands.

The overarching objectives for EWGS are:

- to sustain and increase the public benefits derived from existing woodlands in England
- to invest in the creation of new woodlands in England of a size, type and location that most effectively deliver public benefits.

The component grant types of EWGS have their own objectives. Some grants are focused regionally to meet the priorities of Regional Forestry Framework action plans, and the objectives are specified more closely to suit.

Applications for grants under EWGS will be considered if they deliver key targets in the areas of:

- area of woodland under certified sustainable forest management and approved management schemes
- expanding the area of woodland with public access
- bringing woodland SSSIs into favourable condition
- assisting delivery of Priority Habitat and Species Action Plans for woodlands
- improving the environment of disadvantaged urban communities
- woodland creation.

Woodland Planning Grant

Woodland Planning Grant (WPG) contributes to the costs of producing management plans for existing woodlands that meet the planning requirements of the UK Woodland Assurance (UKWA) Standard.

Aims

- To help owners to realise their own objectives, and help them access England Rural Development Programme grants and other forms of support.
- To capture a sufficiently complete picture in order that all decisions about woodland operations are efficient based on good evidence and are sustainable.
- To realise opportunities for sustaining and securing more public benefit from existing woodlands.
- To support those woodland owners who choose to seek independent certification to the UKWA Standard.

Eligibility

- We must approve the application before you start to prepare the plan.
- Only one Plan per property can be funded.
- You must include all the existing woodlands on a property, of any age. Your application will ineligible if you fail to include all of your woodland in the application.
- The total woodland area under the Plan must be 3ha or more.
- The final Plan must contain and clearly present all the information required by the Management Planning Template supplied by the FC (see below).
- You may show new planting proposals in a Plan but that area will not attract WPG. You must apply separately for WCG.

Situations not eligible for WPG

- A Forest Plan under WGS has already been completed and had grant paid. Property is currently, or has been certified to the UKWA Standard.

Grant rates

3 to 30 ha - £300 total
Over 30 ha and under 100ha - £10 per ha
Any additional area over 100ha - £5 per ha

Woodland Assessment Grant

Woodland Assessment Grant (WAG) contributes to the standard costs of undertaking specified assessments if the Forestry Commission considers that further information is required before decisions can be made about work in the woodland.

Aims

The objective is to improve the sustainable management of woodland by ensuring that management decisions are based on good knowledge of the sensitivities and needs of the woodland and the opportunities to derive benefits for the public.

Eligibility

You will normally be invited to apply for this grant but we will consider uninvited applications on their merits where funding permits. We will generally offer this grant where we think that more specific information is required about known sensitivities in the woodland when we have:

- approved an application for a Woodland Planning Grant (WPG); or
- are considering an application for a felling licence or other grant

An offer of grant will depend on the:

- Availability of the required information from other sources.
- Degree to which management decisions will rely on the required information.
- Sensitivity of the site and any special designations such as SSSI's or similar European designations, Ancient Woodland Sites or known Biodiversity Action Plan priority species and habitats.
- Visibility of the site, its proximity to dwellings and the level of usage by the public.
- Intensity, scale and significance of the proposed management and methods to be employed in activities such as harvesting and regeneration, in relation to the woodland size and sensitivities.

Situations not eligible for WAG

- If we do not need the information to ensure that we can satisfactorily discharge our statutory duties or to deliver grants.
- Non-woodland site.
- Where the information is required to comply with any legislation, regulation or other grants scheme not administered by Defra or the Forestry Commission.

Eligible Assessments

ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT In ecologically sensitive woodland (e.g. ancient or semi-natural woodland) where operations are proposed that are likely to have a significant impact.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN PLAN In sensitive/prominent landscapes, where the planned scale or type of operations could potentially have significant visual impact.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL ASSESSMENT Where there is evidence on the site of an interest that the proposals will affect, or where local partnerships have identified a value in further assessment, prior to operations taking place in the woodland.

DETERMINING STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS Where a stakeholder or community meeting needs to be held to explore likely interest or where such interest has been expressed and needs to be discussed.

Grant rates

Ecological Assessment - £5.60 / ha, minimum payment £300
Landscape Design Plan- £2.80 / ha, minimum payment £300
Historic and Cultural Assessment - £5.60 / ha, minimum payment £300
Determining Stakeholder Interests - £300 per assessment, minimum payment £300

Woodland Regeneration Grant

Purpose

When felled areas are regenerated, either by planting or by natural seeding, it offers one of the greatest opportunities to change the woodland to improve its capacity for sustainable management and delivery of benefits to the public. Woodland Regeneration Grant (WRG) contributes to the costs of making changes to the composition of woodland within the normal cycle of felling and woodland regeneration.

Aims

The objective of Woodland Regeneration Grant is to support desirable change and an increase in a woodland's capacity for sustainable management, arising from timely felling and appropriate regeneration.

Eligibility

- We must approve the application before you start any work
- You must carry out any felling or pre-clearance of the woodland area in accordance with the Felling Regulations and the good practices set out in the UK Forestry Standard and associated guidelines
- The area of broadleaved woodland must not be diminished as a result of felling and replacing of the woodland areas.

Situations not eligible for WRG

WRG may not be offered for areas:

- That have been felled illegally
- Where tree removal has been undertaken in an unsustainable or insensitive way i.e. the work is incompatible with either the status of the site or features on it.
- Where conifers or exotic shrub species have been included despite being expressly excluded by the grant requirements.

Grants available

Change from	Change to	Grant rate
Conifer plantation	Native species Broadleaved plantation Conifer plantation	£1100 £950 £360
Broadleaved plantation	Native species Broadleaved plantation Wide-spaced broad-leaved restocking	£1100 £950 £350
Conifer plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites	Native Species Broadleaved species Conifer Species	£1760 £950 £0
Broadleaved plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites	Native Species Broadleaved Species	£1760 £950
Ancient an other semi-natural woodland	Native species	£1100

Woodland Improvement Grant

Purpose

Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) funds capital investment in woodlands, over an agreed period, to create and sustain an increase in the quantity and quality of public benefits delivered. It is aligned with Defra's Agri-environment Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS).

Main criteria

- Paid as one or more contributions to the standard costs over a five-year agreement period.
- Regional discretionary grant.
- In due course, the criteria for the grant may change to meet regional priorities.
- Initial contribution rate is 50-80% of the agreed costs depending on the fund and region.
- No pre-determined eligible activities. These must be responsive to the potential of the woodland.
- Regional Forestry Frameworks (RFF) will focus WIG on projects and activities that meet National and Regional programmes and priorities.

There will be three WIG funds:
- Woodland Biodiversity Action Plan (including a specific measure for Red squirrels)
- Woodland SSSI Condition Improvement
- Woodland Access

Woodland Management Grant

Purpose

The aim of the grant is to protect and secure the delivery of existing benefits to the public and improve the capacity of the woodland to increase these. The grant will encourage and support basic management activities that promote woodland sustainability.

WMG will replace the Woodland Grant Scheme Annual Management Grant and will be available across all regions at a single rate of £30 per hectare subject to funding limits.

Eligibility

This covers:
- Eligible priority woodland areas.
- Certification and management planning requirements.
- Transitional arrangements and the priority application window for holders of existing Woodland Grant Scheme Annual Management Grant contracts that are about to finish or have recently done so.

Woodland Creation Grant

Purpose

This grant supports the establishment of new woodlands that meet national and regional priorities. The grant is available on a competitive and regional basis, using scoring systems that select applications based on best fit with the public benefit priorities.

Aim

The aim of this grant is to generate the greatest benefits by creating woodlands:
- Near to where people live, particularly within the urban fringe.
- For access, recreation and sport.
- Appropriately designed for wildlife, particularly where they can act as protective buffers and link important woodland habitats and other associated natural areas.
- Designed to enhance the landscape.
- To restore former industrial land.

This grant has three elements that can be applied for depending on the eligibility of the site and the applicant.

Woodland Creation Grant (WCG) Contributes to the costs of establishing new woodlands that deliver benefits to the public, including annual farm woodland payments to compensate for agricultural income forgone.

Additional Contributions (AC) Extra contribution towards the costs of creating new woodland in certain situations such as location, and woodland uses (e.g. as public access).

Farm Woodland Payments (FWP) Compensation for agricultural income lost when creating new woodland on agricultural land.

Minimum areas

There is no minimum size for new woodland as very small areas can be effectively added to existing woodlands. Nevertheless, the requirement is to create woodland rather than a group of trees and so planting areas will normally be no less than 0.25 ha and no narrower than 30m on average, with 15m as an absolute minimum width at any point.

Eligibility criteria
- The FC must approve the application before you start any work.
- The application must include work to be done in the next planting season, i.e. autumn 2005 to spring 2006 for applications received by 30 September 2005. N.B. This years scoring round is now closed - 06/07 scoring round to be announced in due course.
- The freeholder(s) must be party to, or in agreement with any application to plant the grant-aided trees on their land.
- Each area must meet the specification of an agreed category.
- All proposals must meet the EWGS grant and application selection criteria (scoring) in force when we consider the application.

Situations not eligible for WCG
- Land currently in receipt of public funding for other purposes or other land cover types
- Land planted without any required consent under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations
- Woodland intended for the production of Christmas trees or biomass as a fuel or other use.
- Land resumed from a tenant by means of a contested notice to quit, or subject to such action
- Land that must be planted to comply with a Felling Licence condition or Restocking Notice following conviction for an offence under the Felling Regulations of the Forestry Act 1967.
- Land excluded by regional application selection criteria and mechanisms.
- Failed planting areas approved under EWGS or other woodland grant schemes, until such time as any obligations to make good the situation have been discharged.

Grant rates	Rate per hectare broadleaves	Rate per hectare conifers
Standard, Small Standard, Native, Community Woodland	£1800	£1200
Special Broadleaved Woodland	£700	N/a

Woodland Harvesting, Processing and Marketing Grant

This grant has been introduced to improve the competitiveness of forestry businesses. This new approach is being piloted in parts of South East England, Yorkshire & The Humber and North East England.

Grant will be available to:
- Improve and rationalise the harvesting, processing and marketing of forestry products. The grant is limited to all working operations prior to industrial processing.
- Promote new outlets for the use and marketing of forestry products.
- Establish associations of forest holders that are set up in order to help their members to improve the sustainable and efficient management of their forests.

Section 8 The Landscape Characterisation Study of Kent

County Landscape Character Assessment

The Landscape Assessment of Kent (KCC and Babtie 2004) is a landscape character based study that draws together existing landscape character assessments of the county.

The study resulted in the Character Areas of England being further divided within Kent into over 100 local character areas that have broad priorities for the conservation, restoration, reinforcement and creation of the landscape. These character areas are at a strategic scale and form an important baseline for the current study.

The present urban edge of Ashford impinges on 8 zones reading clockwise from the north:

- The Stour Gap
- Brabourne Lees Mixed Farmland
- Mersham Farmlands
- Upper Stour Valley (east)
- Old Romney Shoreline Wooded Farmlands
- Bethersden Farmlands
- Upper Stour Valley (west)
- Hothfield Heathy Farmlands

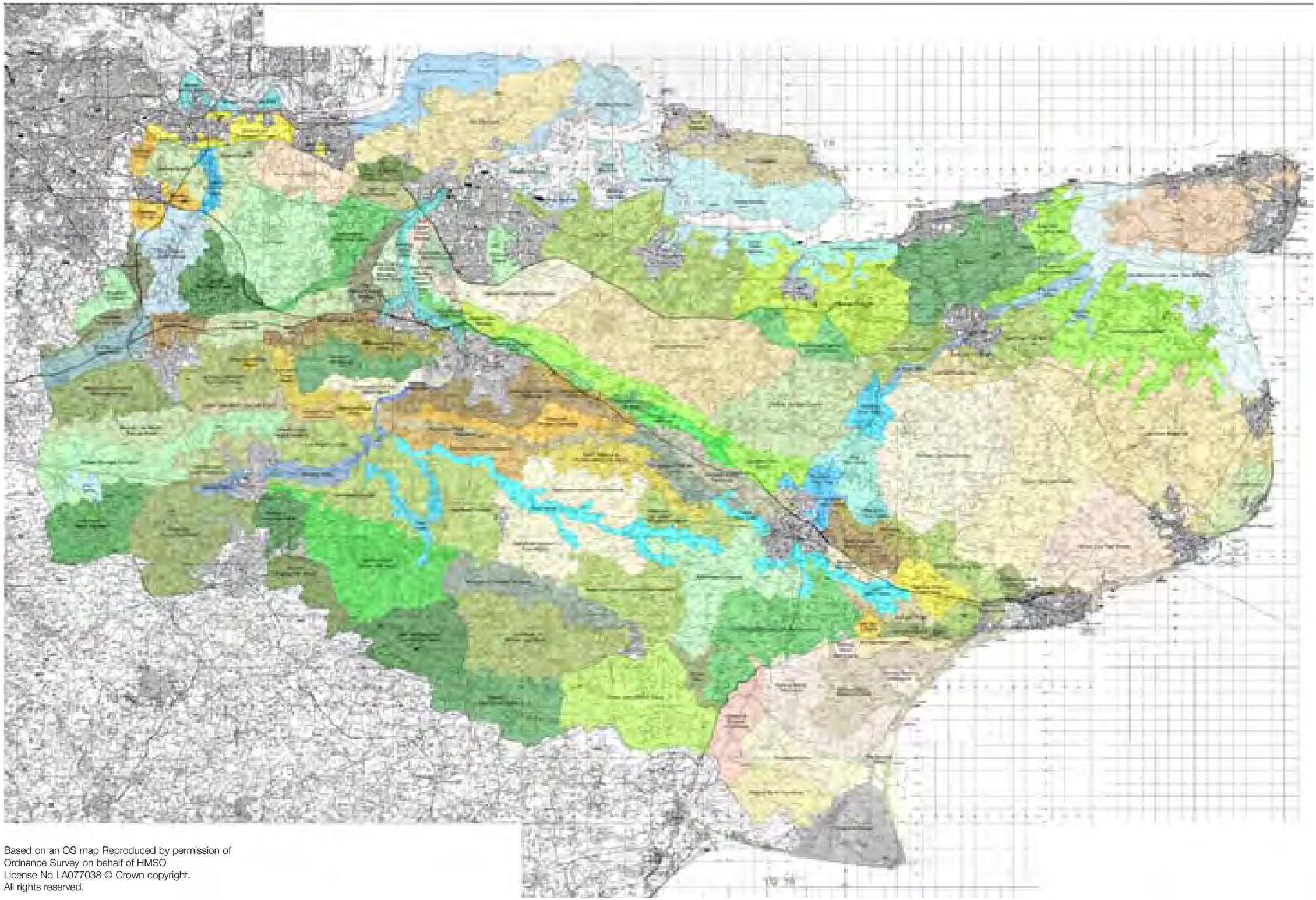
These areas are immediately relevant to the extension of Ashford and have been described in the Landscape Assessment in some detail. A synopsis is presented below.

Aside from these eight character areas a further 10 areas fall within the immediate hinterland of the town reading clockwise from the north:

- The Stour Valley
- Wye Stour Valley
- Hampton Stour Valley
- Brabourne Vale
- Aldington Ridge
- Aldington / Lympne
- The Beult Valley
- Biddenden / High Halden wooded farmlands
- Greensand fruit belt – Egerton
- Hollingbourne Vale

Immediately beyond a 5km zone from the current town limits are a further 14 landscape zones reading clockwise from the north:

- Challock Mid Kent Downs
- Chilham Stour valley
- Petham: East Kent Downs
- Stowling: Postling Vale
- Sellinge plateau farmlands
- Hythe Escarpement
- Romney Marsh: Lympne
- Romney Marsh Settlements
- Romney Marsh mixed farmlands
- Shirley Moor
- Biddenden-High Halden wooded farmlands
- Staplehurst/Headcorn pasturelands
- Sutton Valence – Puddley mixed farmlands
- Hollingbourne Vale East

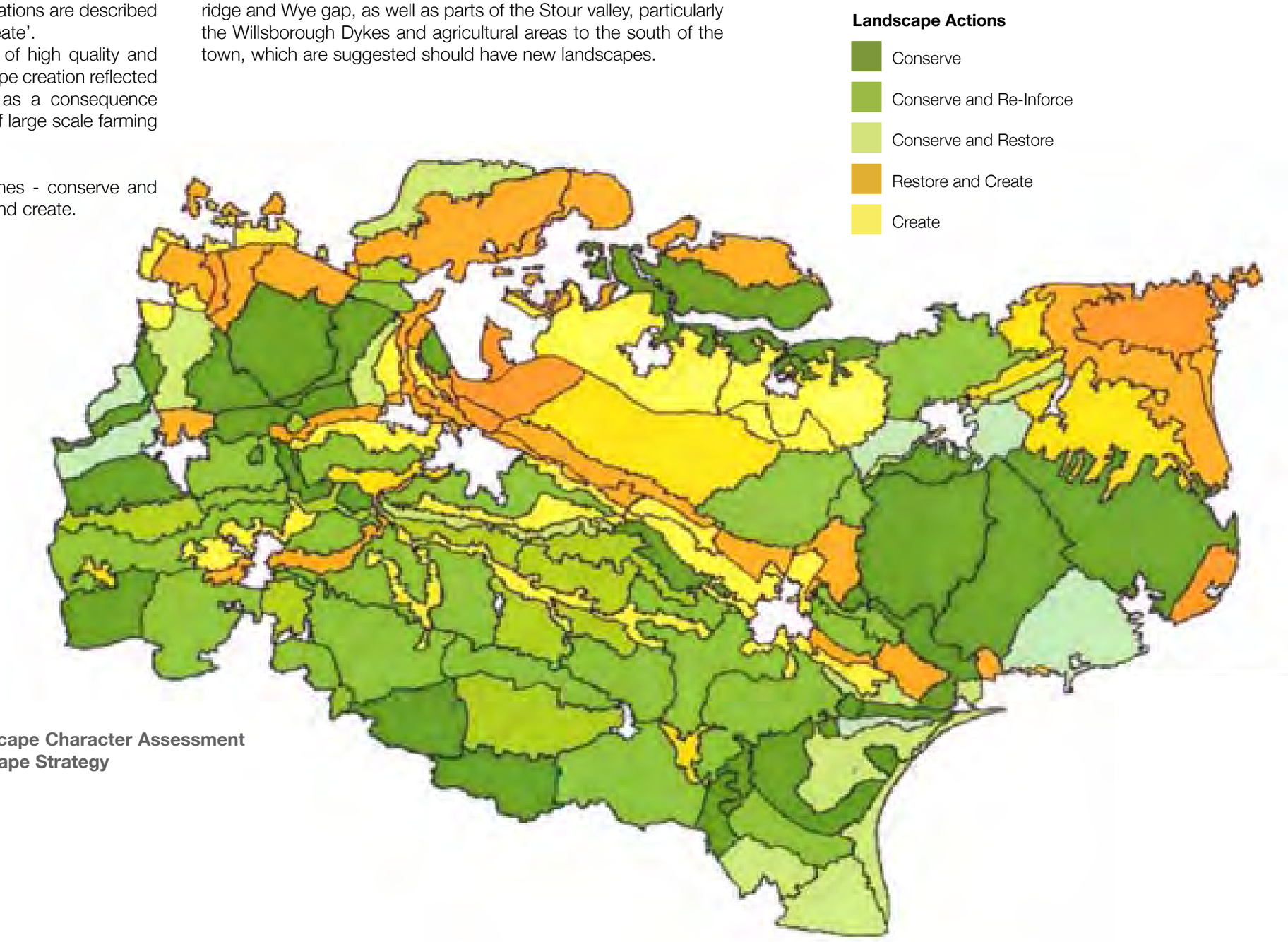


County Landscape Strategy

The Landscape Charcterisation study for the county used a grid technique for analysing the capacity for change and relative quality of each landscape character type. Five designations are described for each area ranging from ‘Conserve’, to ‘Create’.
The areas for conservation were landscapes of high quality and character, whereas those allocated for landscape creation reflected the degraded quality of the existing scene as a consequence either of the strategic transport corridors, or of large scale farming practice.

Three designations fall between these extremes - conserve and reinforce, conserve and restore, and restore and create.

Around Ashford there are large areas in the lower categories mainly associated with the M20 and CTRL rail corridors, the greensand ridge and Wye gap, as well as parts of the Stour valley, particularly the Willsborough Dykes and agricultural areas to the south of the town, which are suggested should have new landscapes.



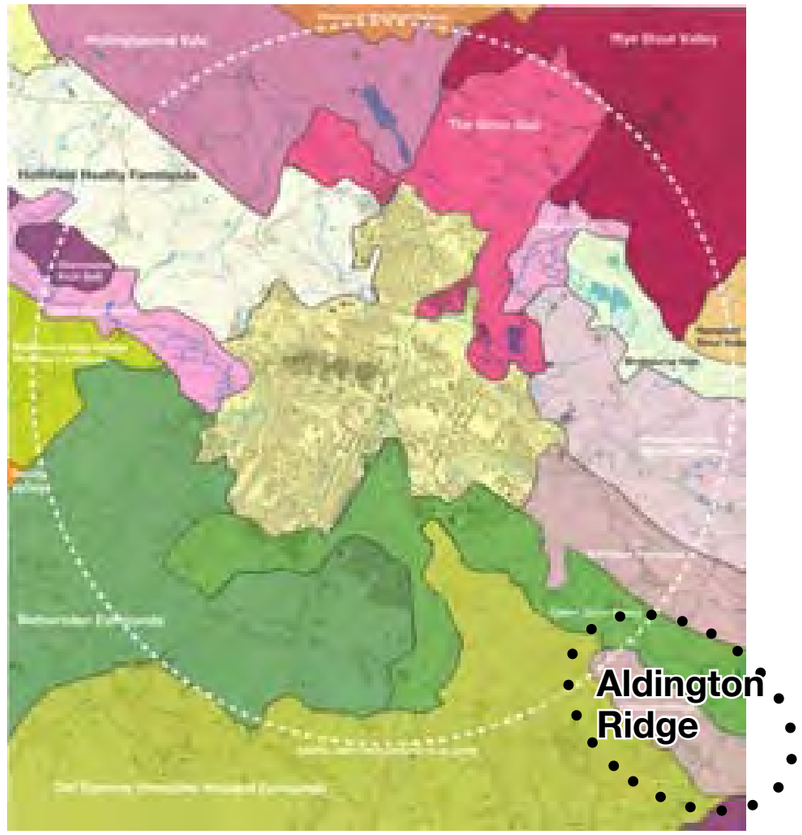
The Kent Landscape Character Assessment
Country Landscape Strategy
(KCC / Babtie 2003)

Aldington Ridge

THe Aldington Ridge is 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 Lympne and that north of Port Lympne 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 theoften 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 B2067the land falls away more gradually to the Sellindge plateau with the North Downs framing the views beyond.



View northwest from Colliers Hill towards Cheeseman's Green (A13.1)

Bethersden Farmlands

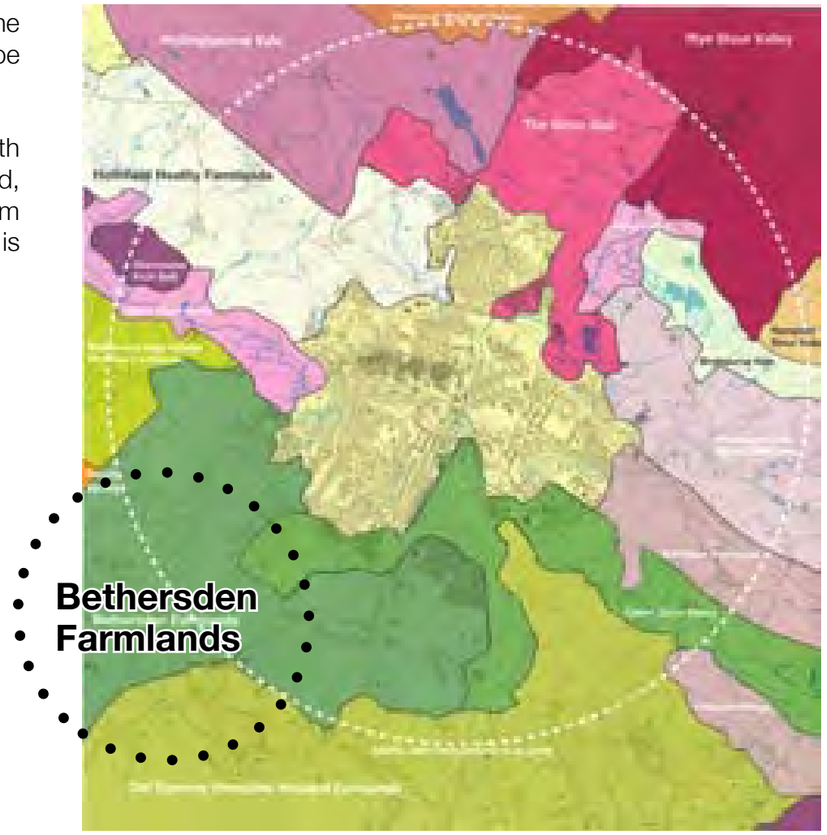
The Bethersden Farmlands is a varied landscape extending from the rise at Bethersden, through flat farmland to Great Chart and east to Kingsnorth, extending south through a more varied landform to Woodchurch on the edge of Shirley Moor. The grey, shelly Paludrina Limestone, that forms the resistant strata of the Bethersden rise, has been used in the past for church building, notably the tower of Bethersden church itself.

Ancient settlement in this landscape is evidenced by the line of Roman road to Tenterden that crosses near Shirkoak and the vernacular village centres of Bethersden and Kingsnorth. There is also dull 20th century development associated with these villages however.

Although around Bethersden and Woodchurch, the typical Wealden pattern of small fields and bushy hedgerows remains, where the and is flatter, from Great Chart, around Stubb's Cross and across to Kingsnorth, this has broken down with fields enlarged and hedgerows removed to allow mechanisation for arable farming. Where this has occurred a smooth, simple landscape has resulted, often with the garish hues and pungent odour of oilseed rape dominating in summer.

Enclosure is provided at the perimeter of the character area by the large blocks of woodland of the Old Romney Shoreline landscape that enclose these farmlands to the south.

Population pressure is focused on the flatter lands to the north where both agricultural expansion and the expansion of Ashford, notably through proposals for Chilmington Green and Park Farm are changing the established rural landscape pattern to one that is both less varied and less tranquil.



Coleman's Kitchen Wood

Coxland Wood north of Hornash lane (C29.4)

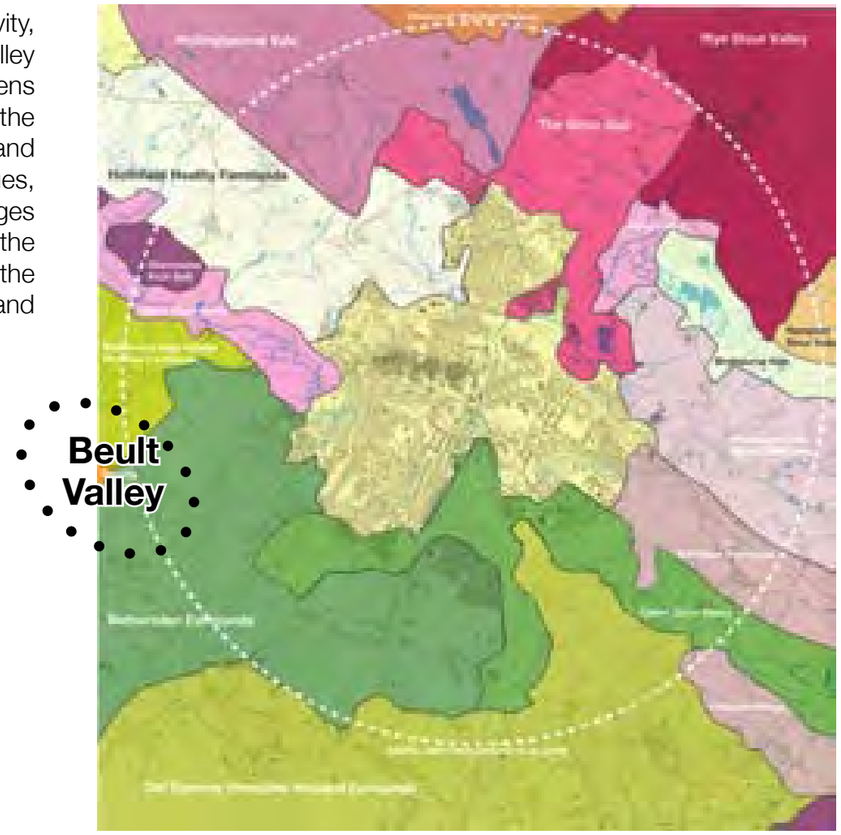
Beult Valley

This long, narrow character area extends from close to the river's two sources near Bethersden and Pluckley station to the junction with the River Medway at Yalding. The incised river channel of the Beult meanders through a floodplain fringed with well-vegetated banks and distinctive lines of willow or edged with woodland copses enclosing small pastures. Intermittently, weirs contribute to alternating pools and sections of fast flow in the channel, but generally the flow in the river is slow reflecting the low fall from Smarden to the junction with the Medway at Yalding. The upper reaches near Bethersden are distinguished by the frequency of small field ponds and the isolated feel of the landscape.

In its western reaches arable cultivation extends into this narrow river corridor from the wider floodplain beyond blurring the boundary between the poorly drained alluvial soils and the river brickearths that surround them. This effect is accentuated by some loss of hedgerows and riverside vegetation. Despite this, the river Beult from Smarden to Yalding has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its diverse clayriver fauna and flora. Indeed, the bankside vegetation is often the only visual clue to the course of the river and gives variety to the narrow channel and thence to the broader floodplain.

The landscape of arable fields is also one of sparse human activity, the presence of several large oasts at the margins of the valley being a reminder of the once busy landscape of the hop gardens in the recent past. Settlement is scattered, rarely occurring on the river alluviums themselves apart from infrequent farmsteads and manors. The river is often crossed, however, by historic bridges, many of medieval origin. In particular, those of the historic villages of Yalding and Smarden, form attractive crossing points, with the Greensand ridge providing a dramatic backdrop at Yalding to the seven-arched medieval bridge. The rich patterns of the Greensand orchards are also visible from Rabbit's Cross and Stile Bridge.

Smarden forms a picturesque feature at the tranquil eastern end of this character area being composed of many vernacular brick and tile or weatherboarded houses. The village, whose name means 'butter valley and pasture', clusters around the church of 13th century origins, set above the reach of the Beult's floodwaters.



Beault Valley (E24.7)

Biddenden High Halden Wooded Farmlands

Although similar in character to the Staplehurst-Headcorn Pasturelands, this area is distinguished by its more varied topography and frequency of small woodlands such as Pond Wood near High Halden. Generally these woods are concentrated on the hilltops with more open arable fields on the south east slopes.

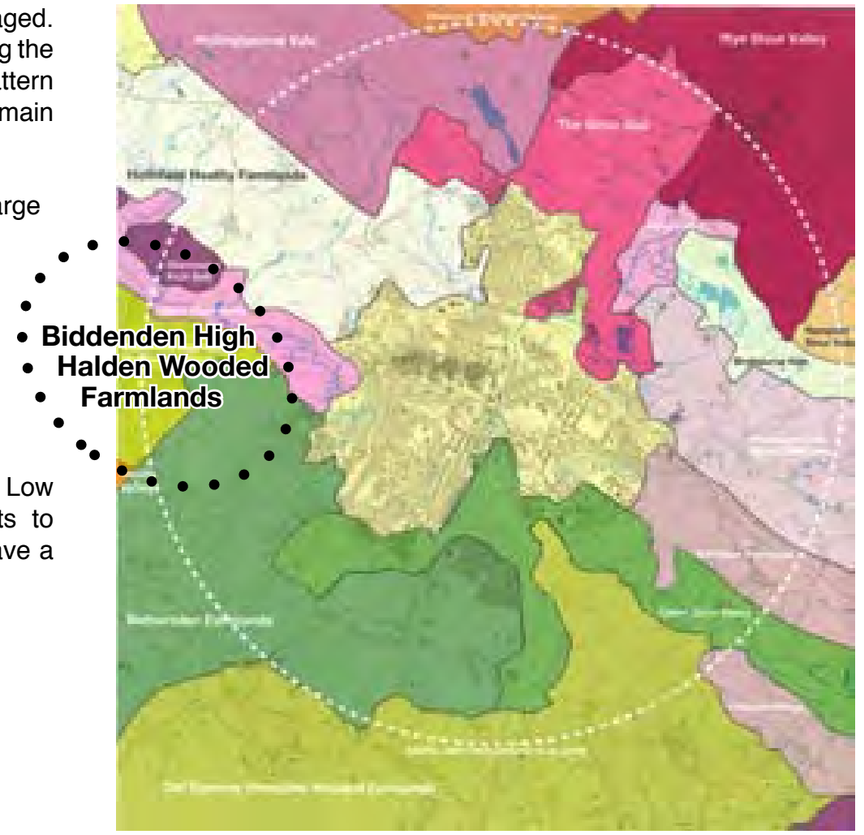
This higher, undulating land on which, for instance, High Halden with its distinctive church and the vernacular village of Frittenden are set, is on the edge of the High Weald. This elevation generally provides attractive views over either the rest of the Low Weald, or the higher ridges of the High Weald to the south. The historic village of Biddenden is sited on flatter land and here the views are back to the Greensand ridge.

The traditional pattern of small woodlands and hedged fields reflects the poor soils that led to isolation and lack of settlement until relatively recent times. Here too are found the scattering of field ponds, so characteristic of the Staplehurst-Headcorn Pasturelands, indicative of the wet clays below. Hedgerow and field oaks are not as extensive as elsewhere in the Low Weald and some have been lost through conversion of pasture to arable.

Those that remain are sometimes gappy or poorly managed. Ribbon development along the few major roads, notably along the A28 and A262 at High Halden has also broken down this pattern locally, although the structure of small woodlands that remain and the undulating landform help to contain this intrusion.

Where conversion to arable has taken place, the result is large arable fields with often fragmented unmanaged remaining hedgerows. The more monochromatic greens of improved pasture and arable crops contribute to a decrease in the visual variety of the scene. Close to High Halden, where there are increased population and traffic levels, there are some problems with rubbish in the laneside ditches, perhaps related to overuse.

The local character is also changed, as elsewhere in the Low Weald, by the conversion of redundant barns and oasts to dwellings, which saves the fabric of the building but can have a suburbanising effect in the detail used.



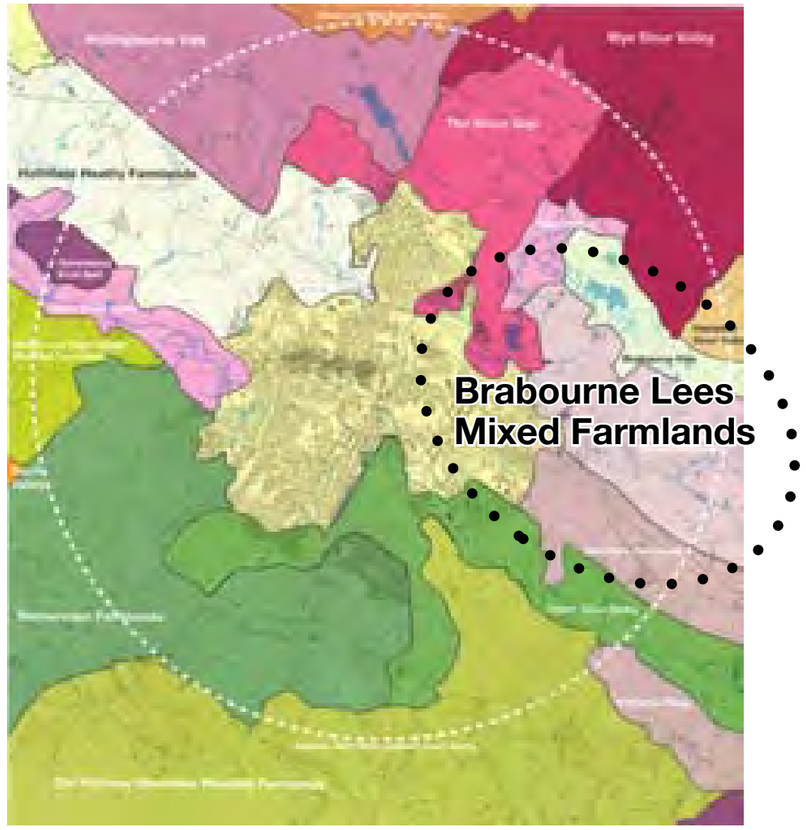
View east towards Ashford from north of railway line (E9.3)

Brabourne Lees Mixed Farmlands

The Brabourne Lees Mixed Farmlands are located 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. The remnants of a rich valley bog which can be found at Willesborough Lees, and create an interesting 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.



Landscape west of Ouseley Farm (B18.1)

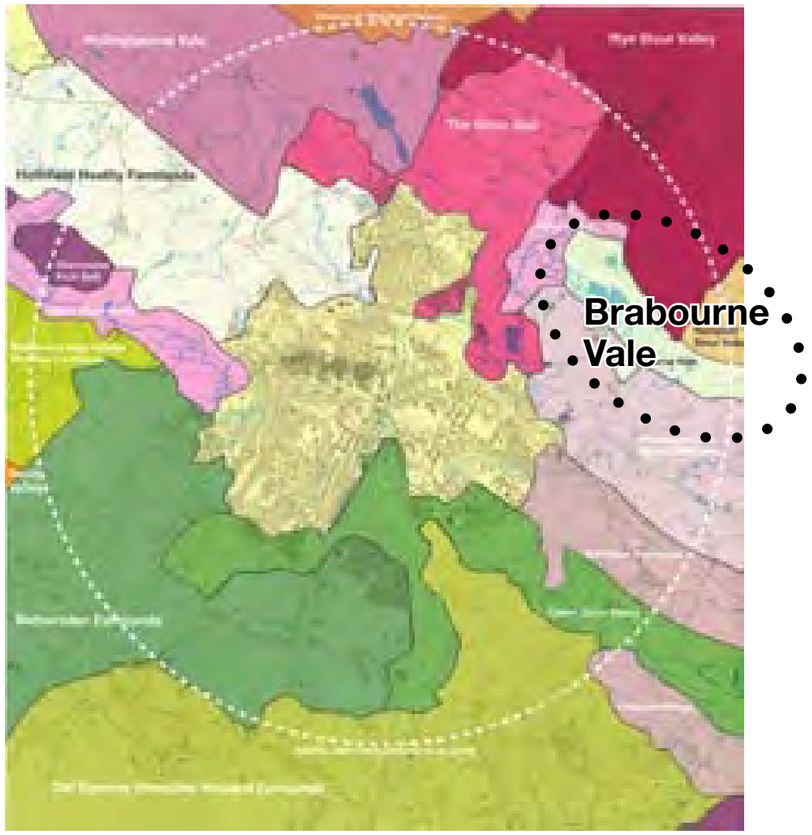
Brabourne Vale

The Brabourne Vale is a 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.



Views across Naccolt farmlands towards North Downs (F7.20)

Greensand Fruit Belt

The Greensand Fruit Belt is a small character area begins near the headwaters of the River Great Stour close to Chilston Park and extends south east to Little Chart Forstal close to where the river emerges briefly into the Low Weald before cutting back at right angles into the Greensand Belt on its journey to the sea.

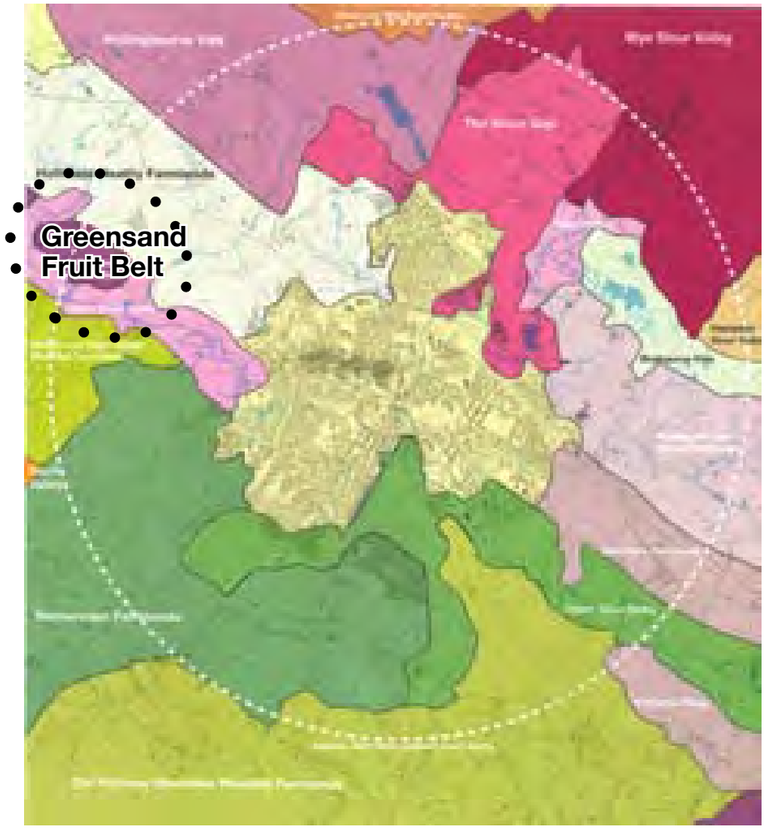
Similar to the other fruit belt areas, the hard sandy limestones and soft sands of the Hythe Beds produce fine well-drained loams on the gently undulating Greensand dip-slope. The landscape is one of mixed orchards and shelterbelts, arable and parklands with pockets of pasture and woodlands such as the acid broadleaves of Little Chart Woods with its chestnut coppice and birch. The alluvial valley of the Great Stour gives rise to poorer quality soils.

The south-west boundary of the character area is formed by the scarp face of the Greensand ridge. West of Pluckley dramatic views can be gained from the ridge over the Weald below, notably near Egerton House, where the sense of leafy openness is enormous. The 'Greensand Way' long distance footpath follows the ridge, passing through hilltop villages.

Buildings of ragstone and brick including vernacular farmsteads, oasts and villages are linked by narrow, winding, often enclosed lanes.

In the past small scale development has spread along the Greensand ridge, particularly at Pluckley, impacting on the view from the Low Weald below. The confines of the village are now contained. Egerton continues to expand to the south-east, however, beyond its vernacular centre.

The M20 impinges on the north-east boundary of the character area, at the edge of Chilston Park, Lenham and Charing Heaths. Here some large open arable fields allow extensive, bland views of the motorway and full impact to its sound. These views are contained to the north by the dramatic scarp of the Downs.



Farmland near Hall Farm to the west of Hothfield (G26.2)

Hollingbourne Vale

The steep scarp of the Downs, between Boxley and the Stour Valley, overlooks a wide, rolling landscape of mixed farmland. The Greensand Ridge to the south, although less prominent here than near Sevenoaks, forms a gentle rise before the flat, low-lying countryside associated with the River Beult and the Low Weald.

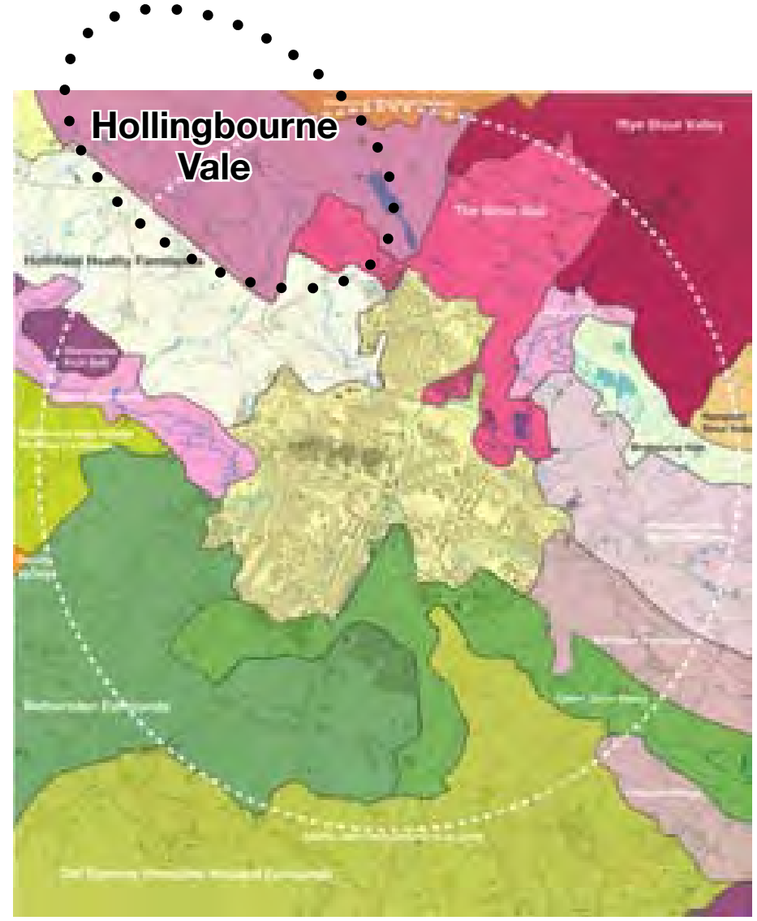
The scarp in this area of the AONB is predominantly grassland, although some parts around Thurnham have been ploughed as a result of arable cultivation in the recent past. This has exposed the highly visible white chalk beneath the shallow, unstable soils. In contrast to the dense woodlands above Boxley, there is only an intermittent fringe of woodland along the scarp top and some scattered trees along field boundaries.

The southern boundary of the AONB extends across the fertile strip of land along the scarp foot. The continual down-wash of soil from the scarp, combined with the sheltered aspect of the resulting fields, produces a belt of very productive agricultural land. For most of its length, the extent of this fertile strip is clearly evident from the single width and uniformity of the large intensively cultivated fields which divide it up. Beyond this strip, the fields are often smaller and more irregular, with more trees and woodland scattered between them.

The agricultural value of the scarp foot has long been recognised and exploited. The Ordnance Survey maps of the late 19th century show a pattern of large, regular fields similar to that of today. In recent years, however, some parts of the scarp foot have been denuded even of the few trees and hedges which formerly occurred there. This has produced vast arable 'prairies', that in places sweep up over the scarp onto the downland plateaux. The scale of these 'prairies' is inappropriate to the character of the surrounding landscape.

The scarp foot is also characterised by the string of old-established villages, such as Hollingbourne, which have grown up along the line of springs that seep out from the lower levels of the chalk. Hollingbourne Manor is a good example of Elizabethan brickwork. A number of historic parks adjoin the Pilgrim's Way and the Greenway ancient roads which pass through the area, usually marked out by thick hedges along each side.

The scarp is crossed by a considerable number of roads and footpaths, while for most of its length the North Downs Way runs along the top of the scarp and the Pilgrim's Way runs along the bottom. Its open nature, and the wide views it offers, mean that this stretch of landscape is particularly sensitive to development. The existing road and railway network, along the southern boundary, already has a considerable impact on the views and quiet enjoyment of this part of the AONB.



View near Crouchers Manor looking towards North Downs (D32.1)

Hothfield Heathy Farmlands

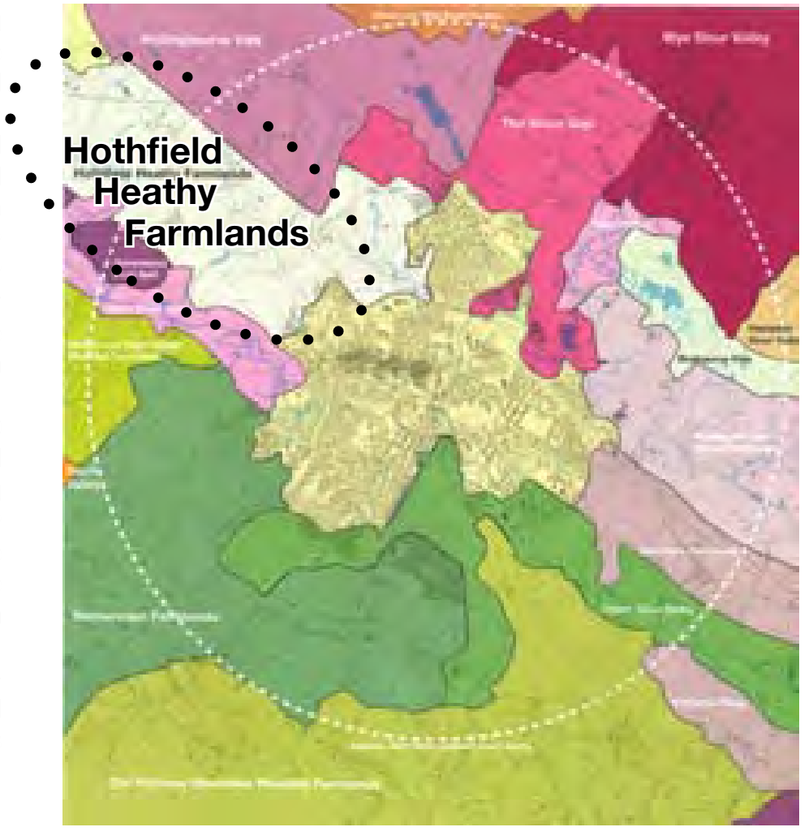
The Hothfield Heathy Farmlands extend over an undulating landscape from Sandway eastwards to the outskirts of Ashford, and are formed on a mixed geology of the Folkestone beds, the underlying Sandgate Beds and the alluvial deposits of the Great Stour. The headwaters of the Great Stour cut into the landscape, draining to the east.It differs from the landscape to the south in the inferior quality of the soils, these being generally poor and acid or subjected to seasonal waterlogging, leading to a greater frequency of grassland and cereals. On soils of better quality, mainly south of the motorway, a greater frequency of arable crops are grown in a more open landscape.

Settlement is scattered in villages such as Lenham and Charing Heaths, Tutt Hill and Hothfield, where 20th century development has enlarged but not overwhelmed the vernacular centres. These villages are connected by a winding network of tranquil lanes, often crossing north-east to south-west as in the Weald- the pattern of the old 'drove' roads which were used to take swine to the summer grazing in the wooded Weald.

A particular feature of the area are the historic parklands, including Chilston Park, Hothfield Place and Godinton. Whilst extensive broadleaf woodlands are not a feature of the landscape, small copses and plantations of chestnut coppice do occur for example at Hurst Wood and near Calehill House. Larger-scale woodland can be found, however, at Ashford Warren, Hothfield Common and Hothfield Lake. The most distinctive feature of this south east area is the heathland of Hothfield Common, a valley bog enclosed by birches formed at the junction of the sandstones and the clayey Sandgate Beds. This is just a small remnant of the once far greater extent of heathland that extended in the Greensand Belt in the past, as evidenced by many of the place names such as Lenham and Charing Heath and Hothfield.

This farmed landscape is divided for much of its length by the A20 or the M20, the latter crossing under the railway at Tutt Hill to avoid the Gault Clays. Whilst not highly visible in much of this undulating landscape, it is audible for many miles and intrudes on the tranquility of the small lanes. This transport intrusion is compounded by the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. Ashford Warren, the golf course and the coppice woodlands south of the M20, help contain the western outskirts of Ashford at the current time.

Considerable residential development is proposed to the north-west of the town, however, at Potter's Corner, Hoad's Wood and around Goats Lees that could have a tremendous impact on this end of the character area, and the nature of Ashford itself.



Landscape west of Sandyhurst Farm (D40.4)

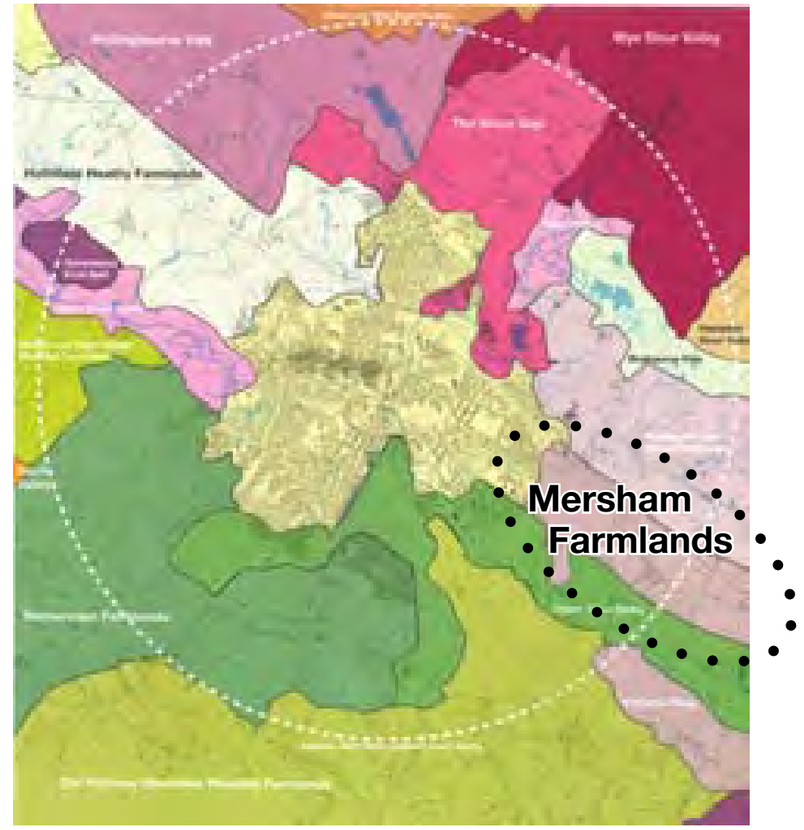
Landscape at Sandyhurst Farm(D40)

Mersham Farmlands

The Mersham Farmlands is a small character area consisting of an undulating farmed landscape on the Hythe Beds to the SE of Ashford 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 atypical of the area and have now gone. Suburban housing wraps around the village centre at Mersham with its pleasing ragstone and redbrick 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 tranquility 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.



View from Highfield Lane west to Sevington Church and Ashford (B1)

Old Romney Shoreline Wooded Farmlands

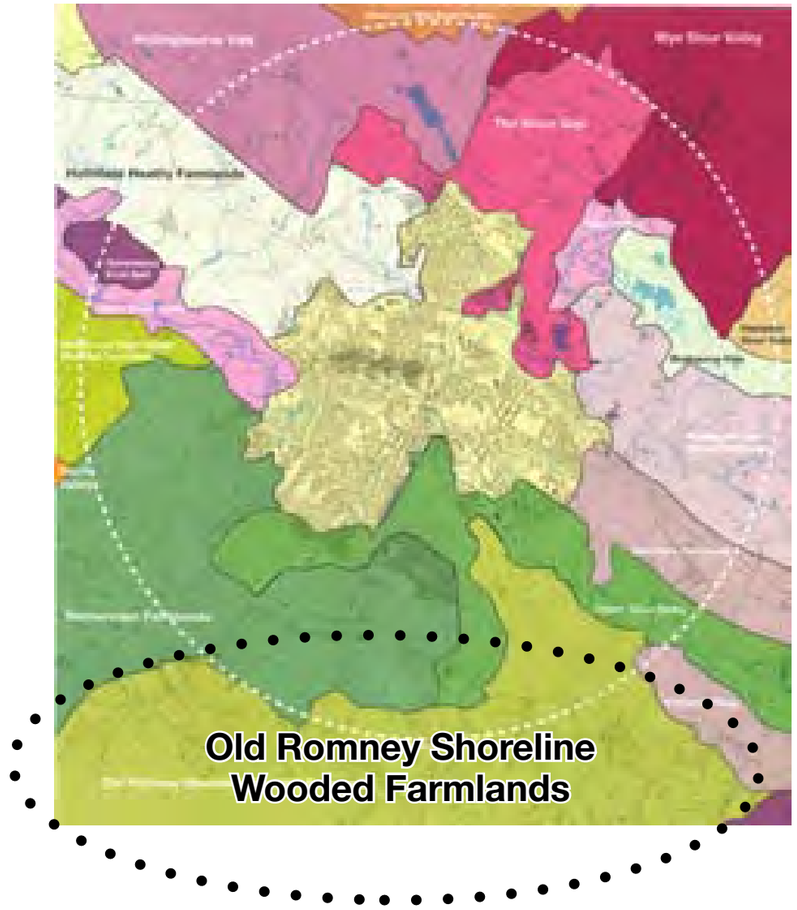
The Old Romney Shoreline Wooded Farmlands is a gently undulating landscape characterised by extensive coppiced broadleaf and mixed plantation woodlands, linked by small to medium sized fields and paddocks. Hornbeam can be dominant as the coppice layer with wood anemones carpeting the ground in spring, 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.

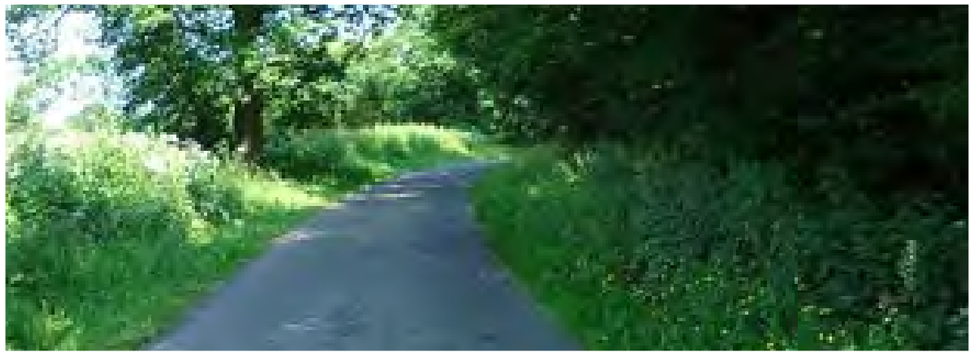
The landscape between Woodchurch, Kenardington and Appledore is more undulating with a smaller scale landscape pattern similar to the High Weald due to the underlying Tunbridge Wells sands. Settlement is scattered and consists mainly of farmsteads and small suburban-style villages such as Bromley Green 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.



Landscape north of Bliby Farm(A22 StoneX.1)

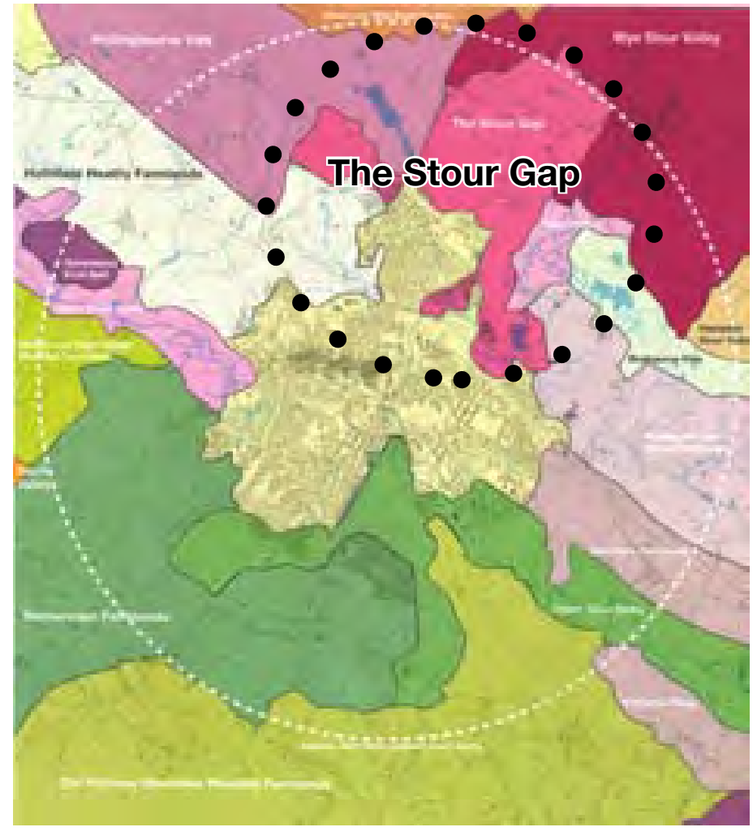


The Stour Gap

The Stour Gap is a low-lying, flat to gently undulating farmed landscape associated with the well-drained Head Brickearths west of the Great Stour to the north of Ashford. Most of the land use is a mix of cereal and field vegetables with a small percentage of orchards and grassland developed on the mainly deep high quality soils.

Generally, because of the prevalence of arable farming, the fields are large and the landscape is open as a result. This contrasts with the Stour Valley itself, which is still pastoral on the wetter soils close to the river.

Woodland is not a feature of this character area, although small copses and clumps do occur. The railway to Canterbury runs along the eastern boundary to the site but does not impinge to any great extent. From most places the presence of the North Downs encloses views over the landscape to the north-east.
Considerable development is proposed south-east of Kennington at Little Burton Farm which could have an impact on farmland to the north as well as on the Stour Valley character area to the south. The Stour Gap has changed considerably since the 1960's when well over half the land use was either pasture or orchard. What must have been then a varied landscape of small hedged fields and flowery orchards has changed to one of open monocultures of cereals and vegetables. The landscape would be enhanced if some of the characteristic valley hedgerows or shelterbelts could be restored within the existing land uses.



Landscape at Wilmington Farm, view to North Downs (D16.12)

View north of the M20 corridor (D1.2)

Stour Valley

The Stour Valley incorporates the flat-bottomed floodplain of the Great Stour and Little Stour rivers. It is a narrow character area which runs from south west of Canterbury, then through the city itself and on to Grove at the edge of the Chislet marshes. The Little Stour drains a small area fromWickhambreaux and Wingham down to its outlet on the marsh of West Stourmouth.

The valley is well contained as the fertile, well cultivated sides rise resolutely on either side of the flat valley floor. Near Canterbury, the banks are steeper and accentuated by woodland on the tops. At Chartham and Stamford Street the slopes are dramatically steep.

The course of the river winds through wet, marshy and reed fringed land which has scrub and dense riparian vegetation along the river margins. Agriculturally, it is classified as poor, the alluvial soils being generally waterlogged with some peat.

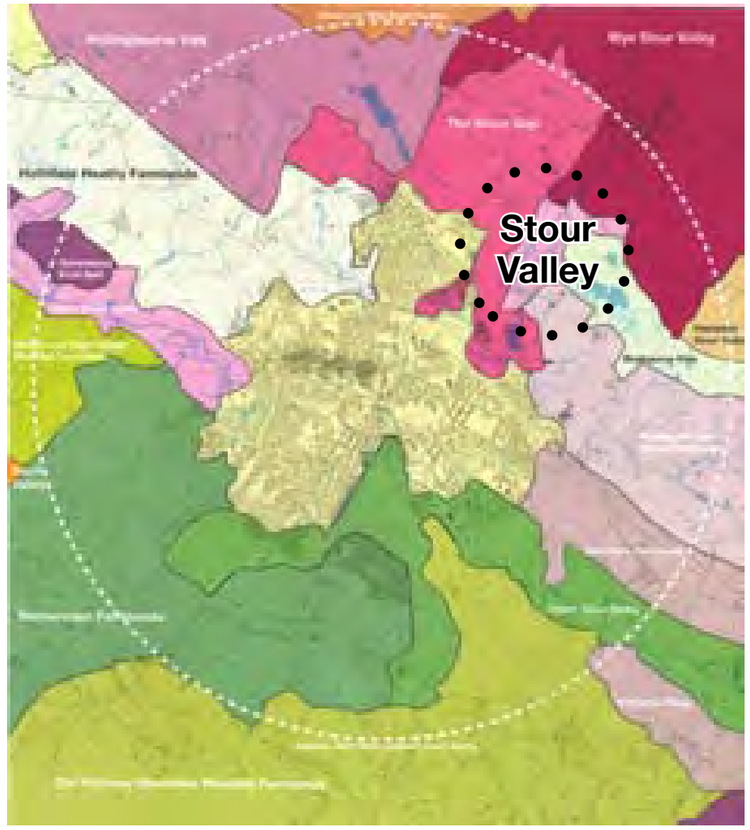
Wetland pasture is still much in evidence although larger arable fields sweep up the valley sides, such as near Trenleypark Wood. The pasture still exists in small pockets either side of the meandering river, where it is drained by a close network of regular ditches. A variety of scrub vegetation and trees, including poplars and willows, line the ditches and enclose small spaces within the valley.

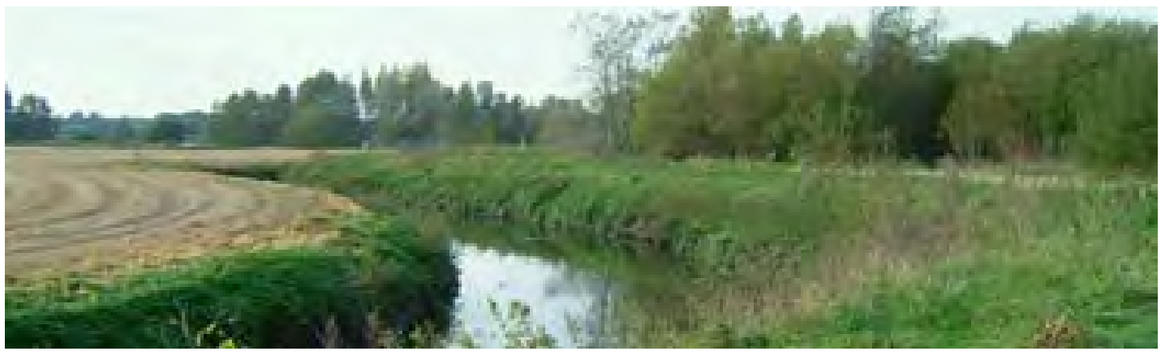
There are few routes which cross the two valleys, but busy feeder roads to the industrial units and the main routes out of Canterbury traverse the length of the Great Stour. A railway line enforces the impact of the transport corridor, and inhibits access across the valley. Near the urban areas, the valley is noisy and fragmented.

Both rivers are characterised by the old watermills which can be found along their courses. At Wickhambreaux, the tall weatherboarded mill house provides a striking feature at the edge of the picturesque village. Mill ponds and mill races are part of the watercourse, now redundant and overgrown in many cases, such as in Milner Close near Fordwich.

The much shorter course of the Little Stour runs through a banked canalised section through the tiny hamlet of Seaton. The river was diverted during the 18th century to serve a purpose-built mill and now follows a shallow depression through wetland pasture.

Gravel extraction has been a major influence on the valley landscape. Wet pits cover vast areas of the valley floor from Chilham to Upstreet. Old pits with open water, spits and islands, and the surrounding marshland, provide Kent's most extensive water and wetland habitats at Westbere Marshes, Stodmarsh and Preston Marshes.





Meandering Great Stour near gravel pits looking towards Ashford (D5.1)

Flooded gravel pits adjacent to Julie Rose stadium (D4.2)

Upper Stour Valley

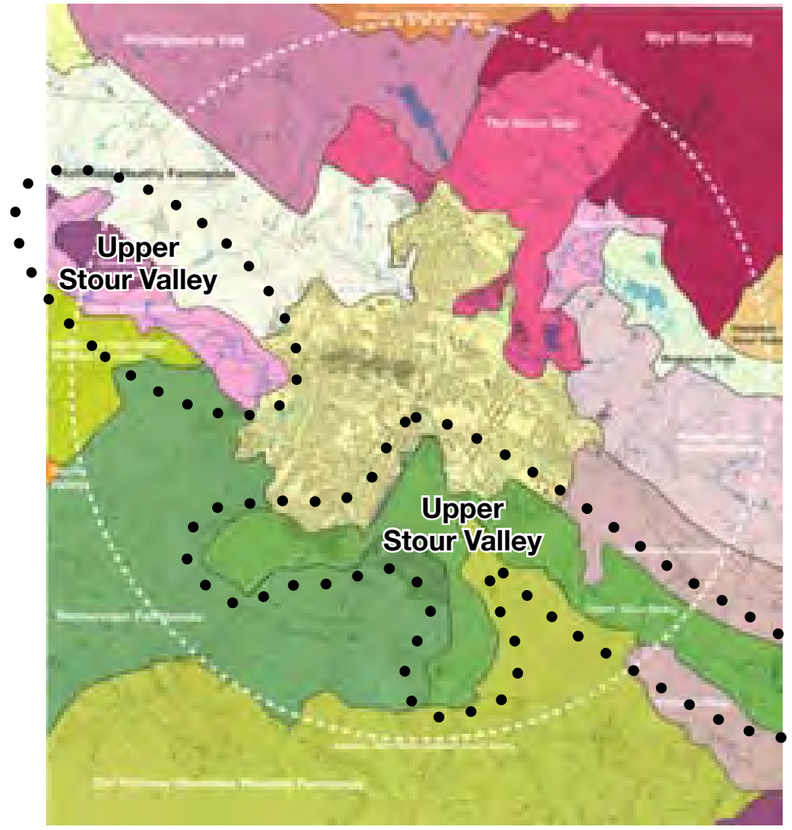
The Upper Stour Valley (east and west) are flat, generally open landscapes formed by the Great Stour and East Stour rivers. The land use is one of mixed farming with crest top woodlands, as at Godinton park, enclosing views in the middle distance. These hills are formed from Greensand outliers which 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 NE 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 as 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. 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 mechanization has allowed the 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 to 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 that may be contributing to the sense of neglect and degradation.



Stour Valley Walk east of Kennington (D8.1)

Stour Valley Walk east of Kennington (D8.3)

Wye Stour Valley

The Wye Stour Valley is around the ancient town of Wye, whose Georgian facades reflect a period of 18th century prosperity, the Stour passes through a wide, flat floodplain before cutting north into the Downs. There is little woodland here, but narrow lines of trees, or overgrown hedges around field boundaries, cast veils of light vegetation across the open landscape. Below the great expanse of Challock Forest in the west, the slopes are open, still bearing traces of ancient field systems. On the eastern scarp, however, the slopes are much steeper and more convoluted, producing a series of enclosed coombes, dominated by the rough grassland, scrub and deciduous woodland of the Wye and Crundale National Nature Reserve. These areas of 'natural' vegetation are in sharp contrast with the ornamental tree planting at Eastwell Park and Planting.

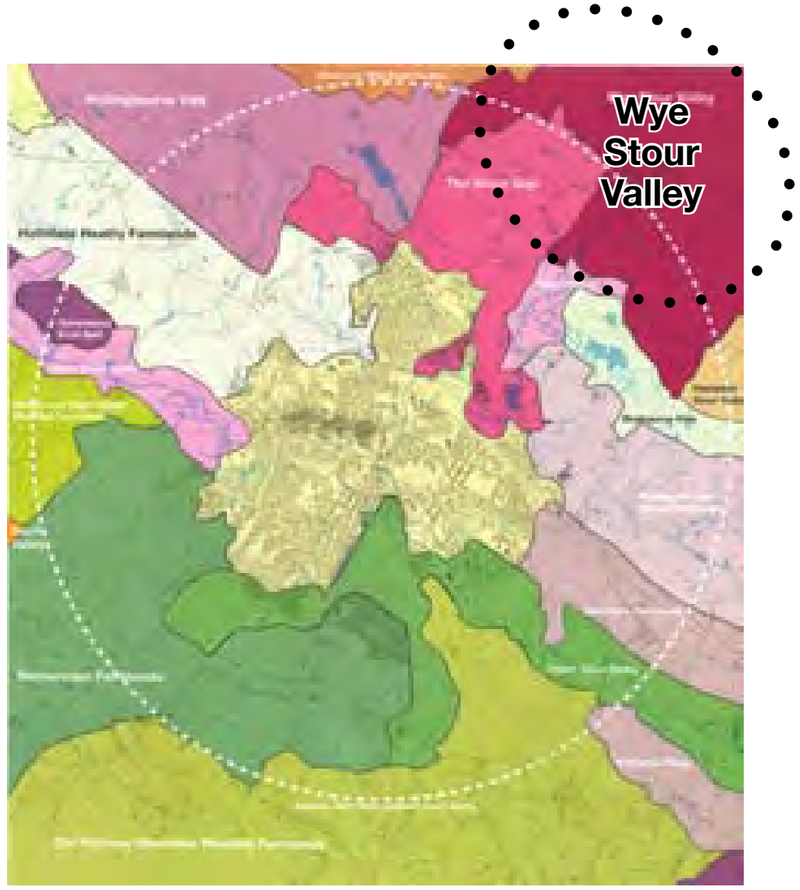
Nevertheless, there is a gradual decline in the condition and extent of the former hedgerow network. In some areas, ploughing extends right up to the riverbanks and some riverside trees have been removed. In the parks and woodlands storm damage has caused considerable damage, requiring extensive replanting and management.

Wye lies within the larger Stour Valley character area of the Kent Downs AONB.

The Great Stour is the most easterly of the three rivers cutting through the Downs. Like the Darent and the Medway, it too provided an early access route into the heart of Kent and formed an ancient focus for settlement. Today the Stour Valley is highly valued for the quality of its landscape, especially by the considerable numbers of walkers who follow the Stour Valley Walk or the North Downs Way National Trail.

Despite its proximity to both Canterbury and Ashford, the Stour Valley retains a strong rural identity. Enclosed by steep scarps on both sides, with dense woodlands on the upper slopes, the valley is dominated by intensively farmed arable fields interspersed by broad sweeps of mature parkland. Unusually, there are no electricity pylons cluttering the views across the valley. North of Bilting, the river flows through narrow, pastoral floodplain, dotted with trees such as willow and alder and drained by small ditches. To the south around Wye, however, the floodplain widens out and the pastures along the immediate riverside are surrounded by intensively cultivated arable fields on the rich, well-drained brick-earth soils. The field pattern is picked out by a network of narrow, trimmed hedges and lines of mature trees, such as poplars.

On the valley sides, many of the arable fields are surrounded by thick shaws or dense, overgrown hedges which extend down from the woodlands on the upper slopes. Hedgerow trees, in particular oak and ash, are frequent and much of the woodland along the east side of the valley is of national importance for its plant, insect and other animal communities.



The Weir near Wye (D12.8)

Wetland within the Wye Valley (D12.4)

Section 9 Ecological Influences

Kent Habitat Survey

The study was a collaboration between Kent County Council, Medway Unitary Authority, Kent's District and Borough Councils, English Nature, the Environment Agency, Kent Wildlife Trust, the Defence Estates and the Kent Downs AONB Unit. Surveys were carried out between July 2001 and July 2003. The survey data was collected using field tablets linked to GIS and a data capture tool.

A comprehensive survey of semi-natural habitats in the county has been carried out between 1990 and 1994 using the phase 1 habitat classification system. This was published by the Kent Wildlife Trust in 1995. A new partnership was set up in 2000 to re-survey the county following a scoping report by the Somerset Environmental Records Centre (Kent Wildlife Habitat Survey Update, SERC, Nov 1999).

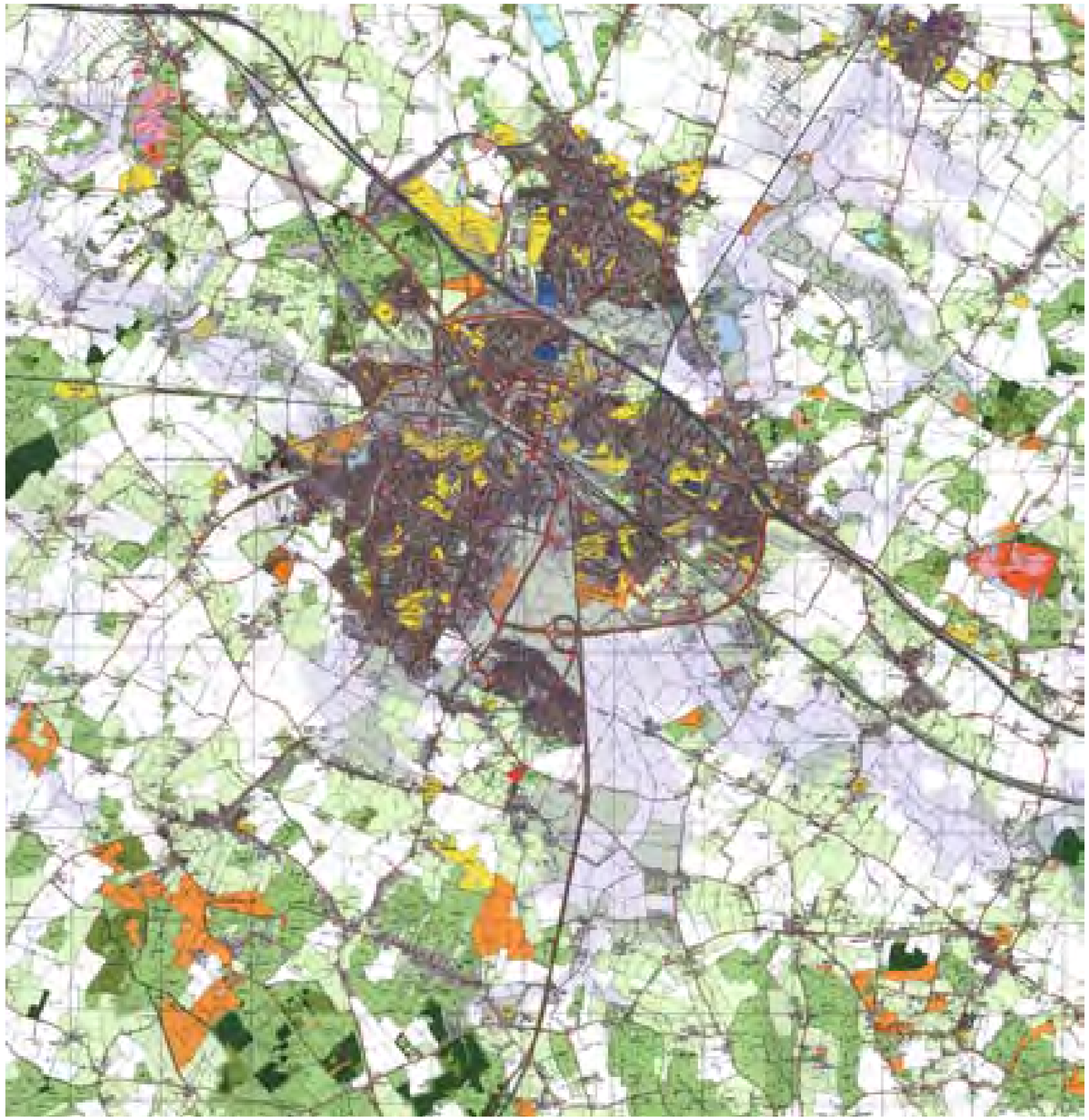
The new survey used the Integrated Habitat Classification System (HIS) developed by SERC in preference to the phase 1 classification. The HIS integrates the UK Biodivesity Action Plan (UK BAP) and the CORINE Annex 1 habitats of European importance, which is used for conservation legislation and biodiversity planning. The Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (Kent BAP) 1997 identified the need for this data so that it would inform the county biodiversity target of no net loss of Kent BAP habitats.

Information gathered for this study also fed into the update of the Kent Land Cover survey which recorded land cover change between 1961 and 1999.

There were six main purposes of the report:

1. Supporting environmental education projects for schools and the public
2. Targeting agri-environmental awards and conservation action
3. Informing environmental impact assessment for new projects and developments
4. Guiding strategic planning and development in Kent
5. Monitoring the pattern and scale of changes in land use across the county
6. Advising wildife management plans for local farmers, landowners and businesses.

Aerial photographs were used at 1:10 000 scale with 3D stereoscopes to assist in the interpretation – Aerial Photographic Interpretation (API) to guide the creation of mapping on computer. Te minimum areas mapped were 50 x 50m. Field survey sites were selected using the 1995 phase 1 survey and the API dataset. Potential chalk and acid grassland sites that had been identified



Kent Habitat Survey detail of map around Ashford + KLIS wetland potential overlaid

by the API but not previously recorded were surveys as wells as the following Priority Habitats:

- unimproved grassland & species rich grassland
- wetland and heathland
- beech and yew woodland
- wet woodland

Kent supports a very diverse range of habitats which reflect the varied geology and landform across the county. Around Ashford these come close together, so that in the north of the town there are calcareous habitats over Chalk, in the centre acid conditions over Greensand, and in the south neutral conditions on Wealden Clays. The range of topography ranges from the southern escarpment of the North Downs, the more rolling landscape and deep cut lanes of the Greensand to the more level Low Weald and the series of river valleys and flood plain associated with the River Stour system.

There are twelve UK BAP priority habitat types in Kent, five of which are related to the littoral habitats associated with the long coastline. The remaining habitats types are found or could be restored to the areas immediately around Ashford. **These are**:

- lowland beech and yew woodland
- wet woodland
- calcareous grassland
- lowland hay meadows
- lowland heathland
- lowland fens and reedbed

Of these, three are in the European Habitats Directive Annex 1 Habitat:

- Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests, Taxus baccata woods, Sellario-Capinetum oak – hornbeam forest
- European dry heath, Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix
- Residual alluvial forests

Broadleved mixed and yew woodland and scrub covers 12% of Kent, and this is one of the most wooded counties in the United Kingdom, with about 65% of that resource (28 000 ha) classified as ancient woodland.

Natural Areas
Kent covers seven Natural Areas as defined by English Nature. These areas reflect geology. Landform and associated habitats. Three of these areas are within the Ashford town hinterland, and six within the borough boundary

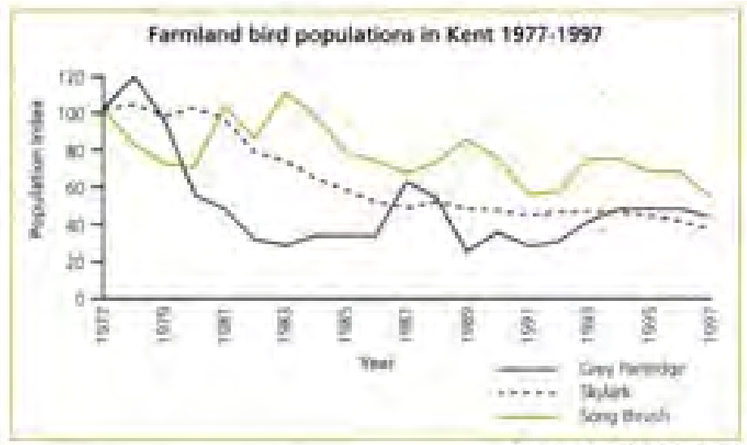
Ashford town hinterland:
- North Downs
- Wealden Greensand
- Low Weald and Pevensey

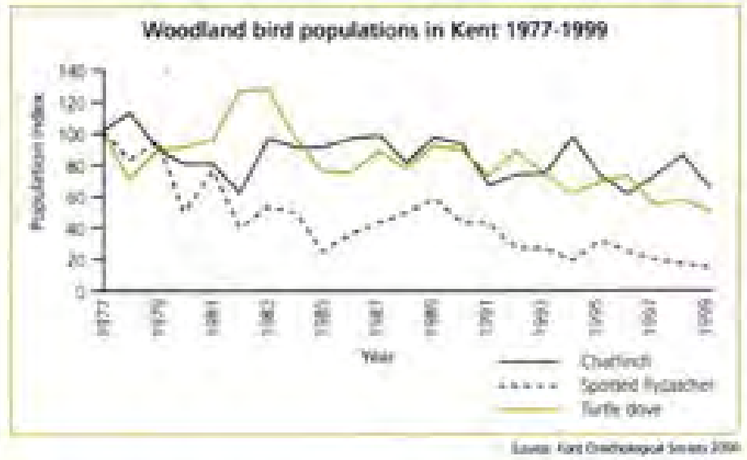
Other areas in the borough:
- North Kent Plain
- High Weald
- Romney Marshes

Habitat Extent in Ashford
After the land cover of arable and improved grassland (respectively 39.5% and 34.2% of the borough area), broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland is the dominant cover with 7505 hectares or 13% land cover of the borough, and represents 16.6% for the county resource. Together with the hedges still associated with the improved grassland with its hedgerow trees, this is one of the defining character elements for the area. The Broadleaved mixed woodland and dwarf shrub heath feature in the European habitats directive.

Fen, marsh and swamp is another small area associated with the floodplains the 22 hectares represent less than 1% o the borough land cover, with13 hectares having SSSI status and 9 hectares being noted by the UK BAP. Over the past century, much of this habitat has been drained and so lost.

Small areas of acid and calcareous grassland at less than 1% of the borough land cover are of significance in the UK BAP. The remaining acid grassland is associated with the Wealden Greensand and covers only 41 hectares of which 30 hectares are within a site if Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Key areas in or near Ashford are Hothfield Common and around Eureka Science Park. Neutral grassland accounts for little more – 956 hectares or 1.6% of the land cover, as much has been improved for agriculture.





Decline in Bird populations in Kent
source: KCC Kent Countryside 2000 - understanding rural change

Changes in agricultural practices, and the impact of development on the countryside have been important factors contributing to the decline in biodiversity in the county

Bird populations are often cited as a general indicator of biodiversity. The trend in Kent is one of continuing and long term decline. The author well remembers the sheer volume of the dawn chorus in west Kent during the nineteen sixties and early seventies, which has been very significantly attenuated since that time. Although not visual, this is very much an aspect of landscape character detail and the delight derived from the total sensory experience of landscape, an issue often absent in a pure planning assessment approach to describing landscapes.

Table 9.1 Habitat distribution in Ashford Borough

(reproduced from Kent Habitat Survey)

Broad Habitat	Area (ha)	% District	% County Resource	Within SSSI ha (%)	Within CWS ha (%)	UK BAP ha (%)	Habitats Directive ha (%)
Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland	7505	13%	16.6%	800 (10.7%)	3112 (41.5%)	130 (1.7%)	17 (<1%)
Coniferous woodland	818	1.4%	21.5%	106 (13%)	466 (57%)		
Acid grassland	41	<1%	10.8%	30 (72.7%)	3 (8%)	41 (100%)	
Calcareous grassland	120	<1%	7.3%	55 (45.8%)	30 (25%)	120 (100%)	
Neutral grassland	956	1.6%	7.3%	37 (4%)	243 (25.4%)	7 (<1%)	
Improved grassland	19940	34.3%	20.5%	255 (1.3%)	710 (3.6%)		
Bracken	41	<1%	19%	26 (63.2%)	5 (12.6%)		
Dwarf shrub heath	5	<1%	9.7%	5 (100%)			4.7 (90%)
Fen, marsh & swamp	22	<1%	2%	13 (61.3%)	4 (19.4%)	9 (41.5%)	

Table 9.2 Key habitats in and around Ashford

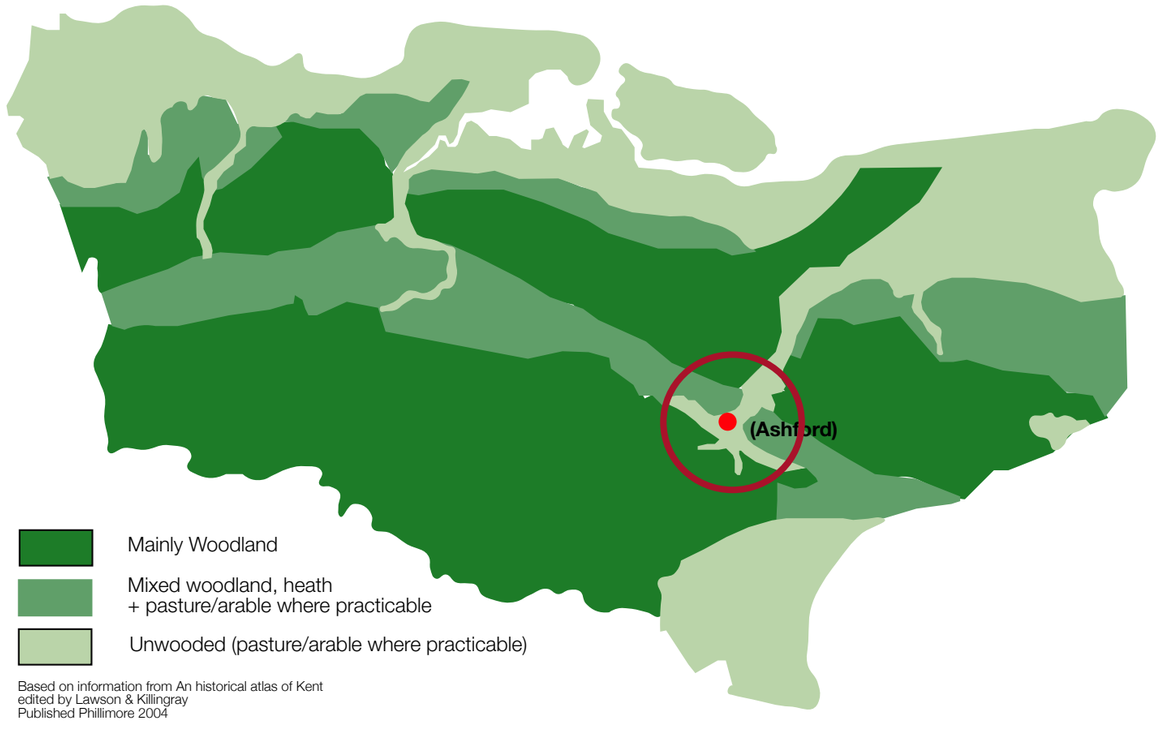
(reproduced from A Charter for Ashford's Wildlife)

Habitat Type	Designation, current and potential distribution
Acid grassland	A UK BAP priority habitat. Significant areas occur within a short distance of the current urban area. There is considerable potential for recreation on the Greensand Ridge.
Grazing marsh	A UK BAP priority habitat. Areas remain within the floodplain, most significantly at South Willesborough Dykes. There is potential for restoration and recreation of grazing marsh in association with flood risk management.
Heathland	A UK BAP priority habitat. A significant area occurs at Hothfield Common, a short distance from the current urban area. There is significant potential for recreation on the Greensand Ridge.
Neutral grassland	A UK BAP priority habitat. Some small areas of unimproved neutral grassland occur to the south and east of the existing town. There is potential for restoration or recreation of species-rich neutral grassland in association with flood risk management and built development.
Reedbed	A UK BAP priority habitat. There is potential to create new areas in association with flood risk management, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), and recreational or amenity water features.
Rivers	The Stour, and its associated tributaries and floodplain, characterise Ashford and much of the surrounding countryside. The need to deal carefully with water-related issues in the future development of Ashford presents a major opportunity to address UK and Kent BAP targets for this habitat.
Standing open water	Small ponds are characteristic of the Low Weald landscape, and occur within the Stour floodplain. Retention, recreation and enhancement of Low Weald ponds would bring landscape and nature conservation benefits.
Woodland, especially wood pasture and wet woodland	Nationally important woodland sites occur within a short distance of the existing urban area. Expansion of the town may increase pressure on these. There is potential to create new areas of wood pasture and wet woodland, both of which are UK BAP priority habitats.

Table 9.3 Key species in and around Ashford

(reproduced from A Charter for Ashford's Wildlife)

Species	Designation, current and potential distribution
Bats	A group of mammals of considerable conservation concern. One species which occurs locally, the pipistrelle, is a priority species under the UK BAP. Bats are known to make use of the Ashford Green Corridors.
Birds associated with wetland	The restoration or recreation of wetland habitats associated with the floodplain or resulting from SuDS schemes presents opportunities to create habitat for important species including snipe, redshank and reed bunting.
Great crested newt	Populations of this UK BAP priority species are known to occur around Ashford. Habitat fragmentation may be a significant threat.
Invertebrates associated with woodland, wetland and acid grassland	A number of nationally rare invertebrates are associated with these habitats in the Ashford area.
Otter	A UK BAP priority species known to occur in the Stour catchment, and which almost certainly uses the river corridor to pass through the urban part of Ashford.
Water vole	A UK BAP priority species known to occur in the Stour and its tributaries, including within the urban area.
Dormouse	A UK BAP priority species known to occur in woods around Ashford. Habitat connectivity is important for this species.
White-clawed crayfish	A UK BAP priority species known to occur in the Great Stour both upstream and downstream of Ashford, but for which the urban sections of the river may currently pose a barrier to dispersal.



Woodland cover in Kent in Roman Times

Kent is one of the most wooded counties in England with the largest number of Ancient Woodlands. Perhaps this is not surprising, given that the Great Wealden Forest which covered most of the county in Roman times has exerted a significant influence on the dispersed settlement pattern that arose in the county. Much of this forest has been cleared since Mediaeval times. Even now 16% of Ashford District's land cover is woodland. The woodland character is enhanced by small copses and majestic hedgerow trees. The Saxon coastline woodlands immediately to the south of Ashford are a major resource, but even here this is being nibbled away.

Changes in agricultural practice combined with development has seen a significant decline in this overall character in Kent. Between 1961 and 1990 more than 11% of woodlands in Kent were lost, and this does not include the removal of hedgerows to create large fields suitable for heavy farm machine husbandry. An even greater proportion of wetland has been lost in the same period- over 28% of the resource has been drained.

Together, these landscape signatures could be enhanced in the hinterland of the town as a means of absorbing development in a way that open neutral grassland cannot. The cover provided may also reinforce the song bird population who voices so enrich the rural environment.

The Warren

Woodlands around Ashford

Kent Lifescapes Study

‘The Living Landscape Project’ started with work undertaken by Steven Warnock at Reading University. He realised that there was a need to treat the countryside in a holistic manner, and recognised that only belated recognition had been given that this might be achieved ‘within a spatial framework that reflects and captures the richness and diversity of different landscapes’.

With the continuing and dramatic loss of wildlife and landscape features, there has been a realisation that the countryside cannot be protected simply by focusing on the ‘best bits’ . PPG7 reinforces the move away from a designation led approach to planing issues towards a more comprehensive, but targeted character approach. This holistic, multi-functional view of the landscape is enshrined in the Rural White Paper.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s pioneering work was done in this regard in Warwickshire, and this led to the landscape character map of England published by the Countryside Agency in 1996.

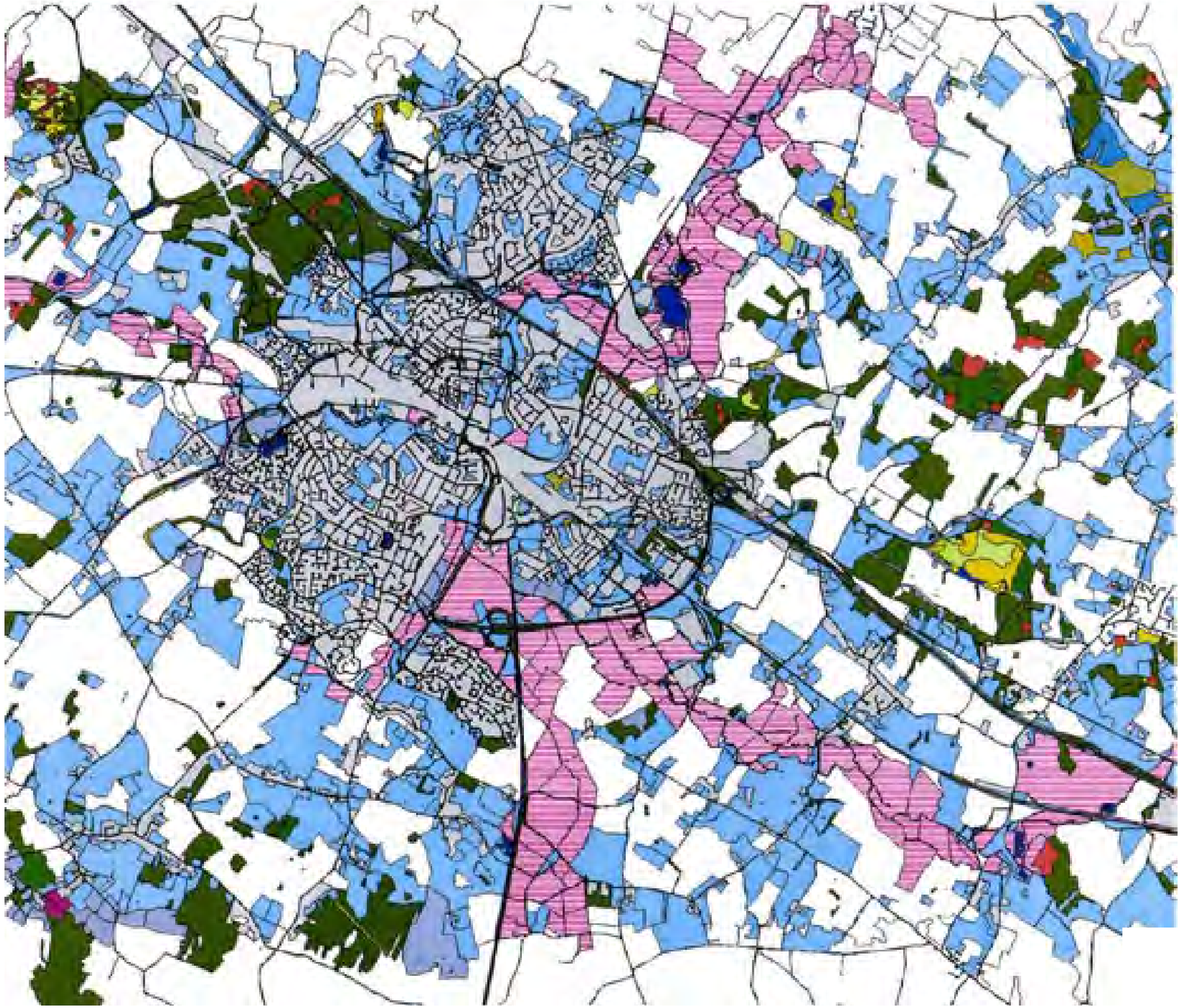
A GIS system was used as a tool to assimilate layers of information relating to different aspects of the landscape, to create landscape description units of defined character. In conjunction with the Countryside Agency a GIS based landscape character framework and associated database has been produced for the whole of England.

The Kent Lifescapes project, known as K-LIS, combined data from the Kent Habitat Survey, topography, soils and geology to map areas that could be enhanced for target habitats such as wetland, acid grassland and calcareous grassland.

One of the aims was to look at enlarging, extending or linking current habitats and so make them more robust. As habitat is so closely linked with landscape character this is an important issue for this study and for the GADF spatial planning.

The tool is fairly crude and is open to some interpretation. It is important to understand that other factors need to be considered when applying this concept to habitat creation in a town that will double in size. A common problem with many ecologists its their capacity to concentrate on narrow issues - or not being able to see the wood for looking at the trees. The Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM) recognised this so the IEEM annual conference in 2002 deliberately sought a wider view. The author presented a paper on ecourbanism at that event to illustrate this point, and it is that ethos that informs the studio engleback approach to the GADF environmental workstream.

The K-LIS tool allied to this landscape character study, which aims to find a series of ‘landscape signatures’, and the requirements of planning sustainable extensions to Ashford, will provide a strong rationale for planning the green infrastructure needed for Ashford, and the means of dealing with the transition between town and country so as to retain the essential qualities of place, or genus loci.



Section 10 Summary & Way Ahead

Summary & Way Ahead

The value of landscape is increasingly being recognised, it is a living part of our heritage, and in Kent the landscape is still heavily influenced by the Saxon clearing of the wildwood. Kent, familiarly known as the Garden of England, has always changed over time. The characteristic orchards and hop gardens, are a fairly recent phenomenon of the past 400 or so years. The distinctive oast House Kilns even more recent, the round kilns having been built mainly between 1830 and 1890, with square kilns immaediately before and after this period.

In the past 30-40 years there have been three key changes in the landscape. Hop gardens have declined massively in the last 30 years as tastes for beer have changed to largers and alcopops, and the traditional orchards often grazed by sheep, have been replaced by dwarf trees in lines. These crops have always been associated with high hedgerows for shelter, but if the shelter is not required, these elements have started to disappear and with them their characteristic wildlife.

Fields have changed to allow huge tractors to plough, and harvesters to gather in the oilseed rape, wheat and barley. These fields have been drained with grant-aided schemes, miles of hedgerows have been removed, ponds filled, and the land cover changed from a pasture land patchwork to arable ‘prairies’. A 19th century description of Ashford wrote of ‘cattle belly deep in buttercups’. This is no more.

The explosion of car ownership since the last war has seen the M20 slice the county in half and M2, further exacerbated by the new CTRL. This vital infrastructure has brought benefits to the country, but has meant that large tracts of land have suffered a loss or diminution of local character, and a corresponding decrease in tranquility.

Ashford has a unique geology of clay, sandstone and chalk underlying it, with the consequence that, with the subtle changes of topography from flood plain to low hills, each segment of the hinterland around the town has a particular flavour. Some areas can absorb new development more easily than others by virtue of the bocage and wooded landscape, other areas have lost vegetation cover which might be restored.

This study looks at the landscape in the fine grain to establish key elements that are not protected by designation, but may be significant local elements in terms of character and natural processes. In identifying these ‘signatures’ the local landscape characters can inform the character of the different expansion areas so that each has a sense of place, and that place overall is Ashford, Kent.

The study will also provide a way of understanding how best to meld town and country, to absorb development, but also to link it back into the wider landscape in visual terms. In doing this, local habitats can be made more robust as well, so that people can enjoy the ephemeral delights of wildlife that country dwellers take for granted, but are not always associated with town living.

Ashford borough has 16% of the county’s woodland, and Kent is one of the most wooded counties in the country. This is a resource that needs managing and needs a market. Looking to the need of sustainable and renewable energy supplies and for a more sustainable way of dealing with waste water using reeds or willows, the study will also help to indicate the local grain and texture of the countryside so that the planted fringe of the town can be done in a sympathetic manner that reflects the history of the settlement in this part of Kent.

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Appendix 2 LCA Precedents in Kent

Landscape Character study precedents

Landscape Character Assessments of surrounding areas

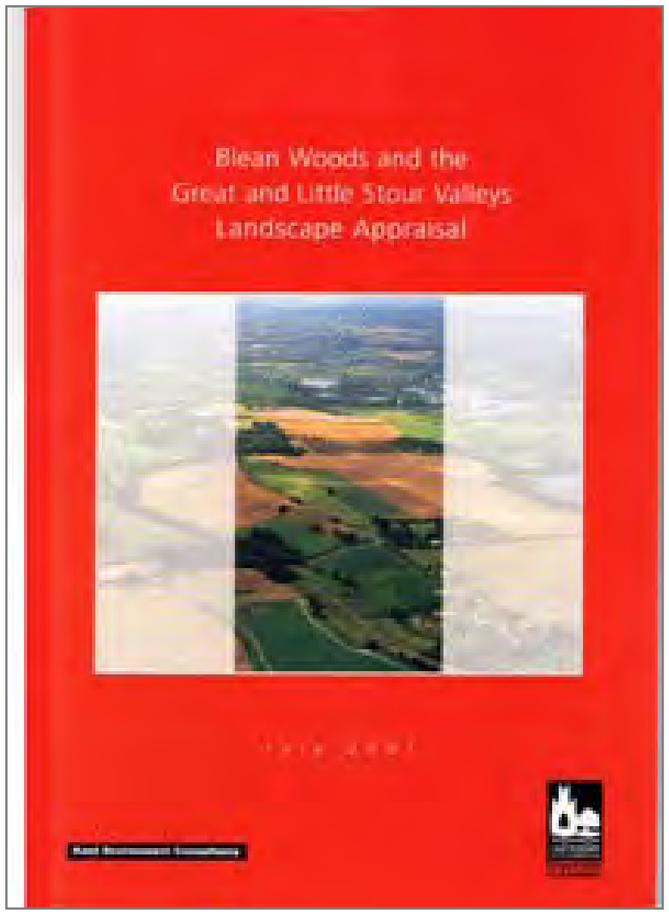
The landscape of Kent has been well documented by previous work, and in particular four landscape assessments have been completed in areas surrounding Ashford that help to contextualise the current study. The key aims and key findings of these studies are as presented below.

Blean Woods

Blean Woods and the Great and Little Stour Valleys Landcape Appraisal (Canterbury CC 2001)

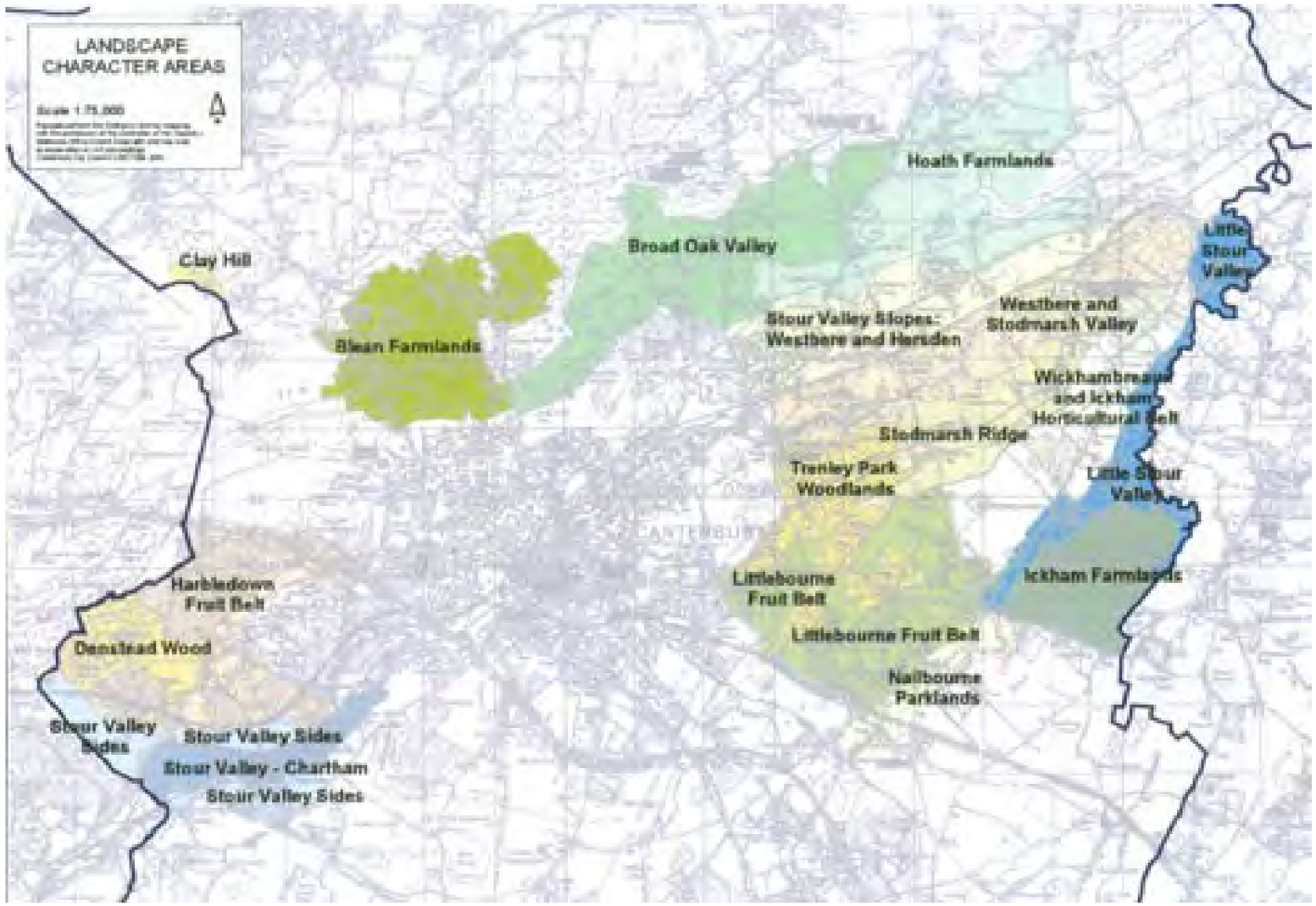
- The purpose of the study was to inform the review of the Canterbury District Local Plan and to complement the existing landscape appraisals which have been undertaken for the region

- The key objectives of the assessment were to: (i) identify and describe the local character areas; (ii) establish the sensitivity of these LCAs; and (iii) identify areas with the capacity to tolerate change and give guidance on the extent and type of change that may be appropriate



- Used the same methodology as Canterbury Landscape Appraisal

- 16 Landscape Character Areas were identified.



Canterbury

Canterbury Landscape Appraisal (Canterbury City Council, 1998)

- The Canterbury District Local Plan Public Inquiry recommended that Canterbury CC undertake a full landscape appraisal of the countryside around Canterbury. The report responds to the Inspector's recommendation to identify those areas that contribute to the valley setting of the city and to provide a boundary for a landscape designation to address this area.

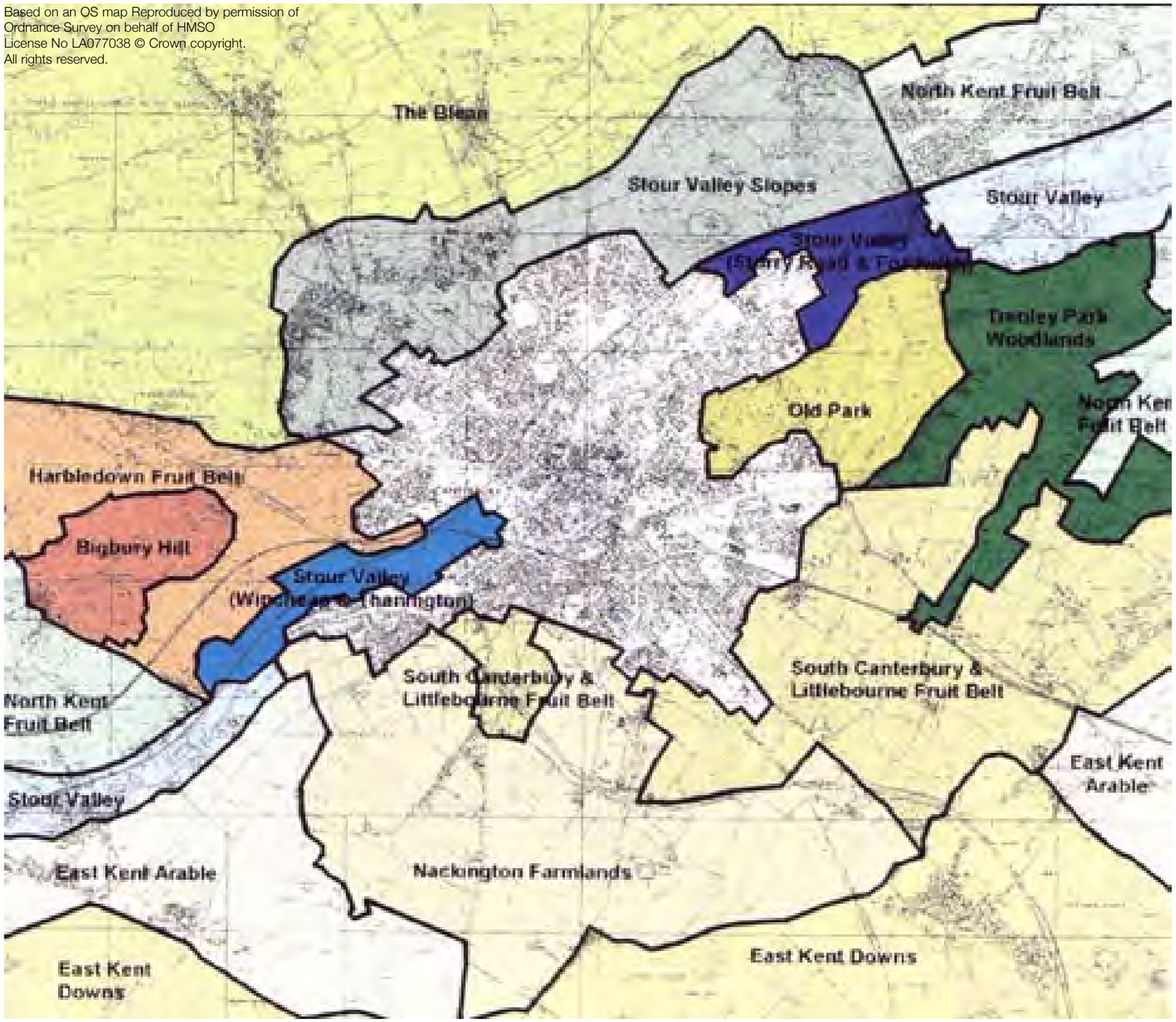
- A landscape assessment was undertaken based on the methodology promoted by the Countryside Agency (CCP423)

- In addition to the characterisation of the landscape, condition and sensitivity were analysed to generate guidance on the landscape's capacity to tolerate change

- The landscape assessment identified eight landscape character areas that directly relate to the city

- The combination of the condition and sensitivity assessments has generated appropriate actions for each character area

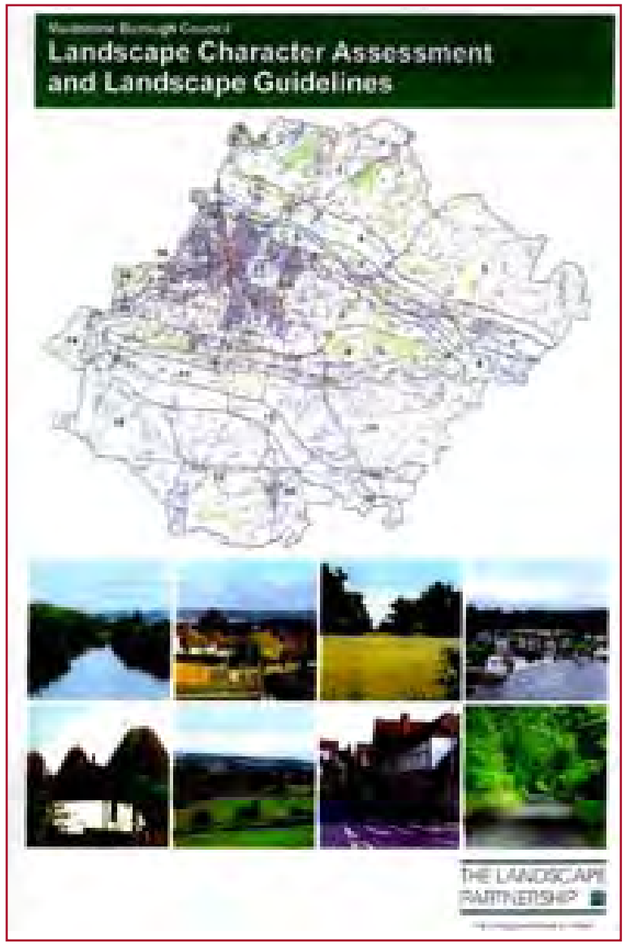
- Both of the Stour Valley landscapes were identified to be in poor condition.



Maidstone

Maidstone Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidelines (2000)

- The study aimed to undertake a description and assessment of the landscape character of Maidstone Borough
- The study was also to function as a manual of practical guidance for those proposing or regulating landscape and planting schemes within the Borough, and in particular the document was required to act as a practical manual for the purposes of the Development Control system



- The Borough was anxious to ensure that the existing character and high quality of the area's landscape should be respected and reinforced or appropriately enhanced. The study was therefore to identify the species and landscape styles characteristic of the locality and to provide practical guidance on their incorporation into new schemes
- 18 Landscape Character Areas were identified and their key features described. For each area the landscape condition was assessed by considering both the condition and robustness of the landscape. Typical planting mixes were also provided for each area.

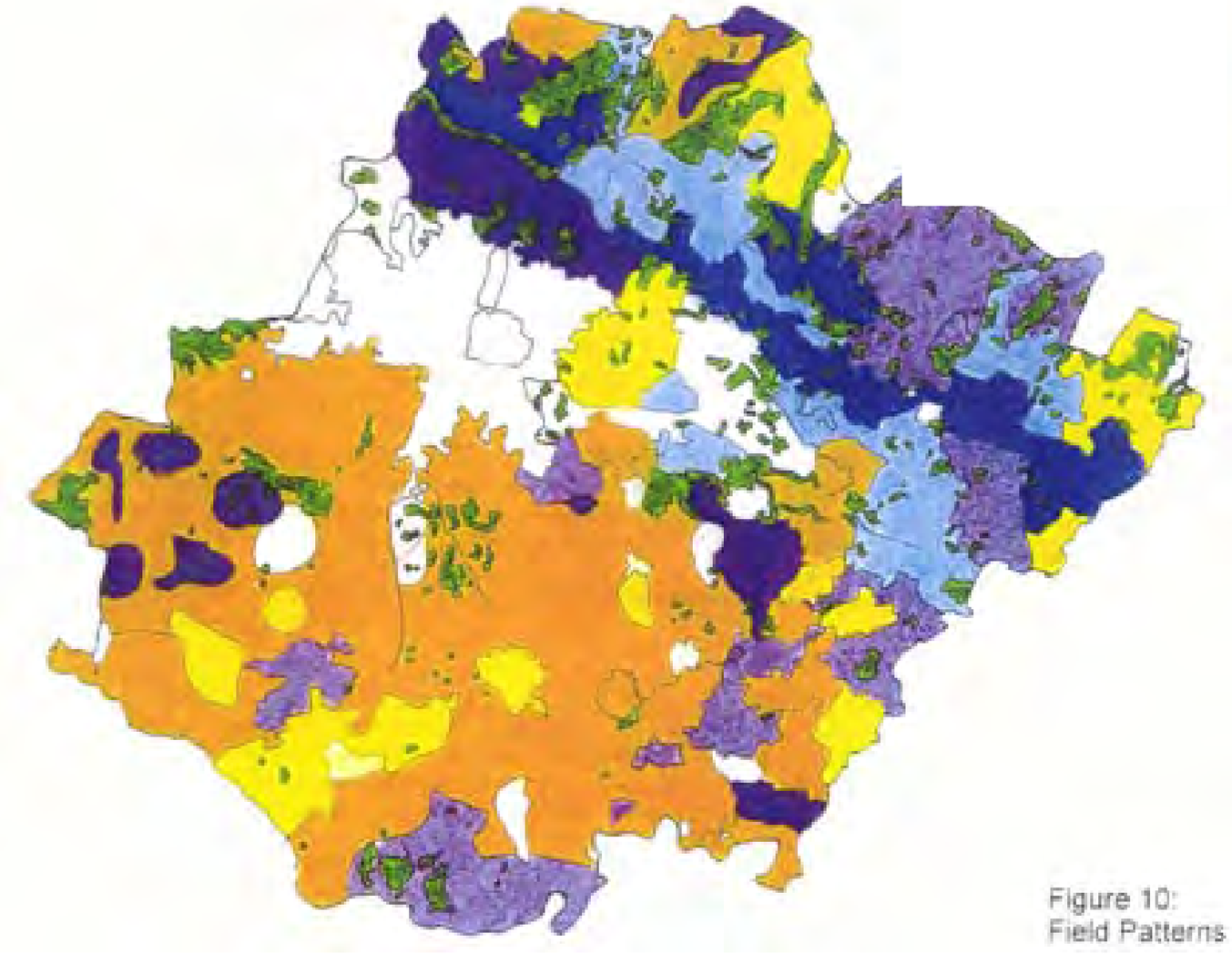


Figure 10:
Field Patterns

Medway

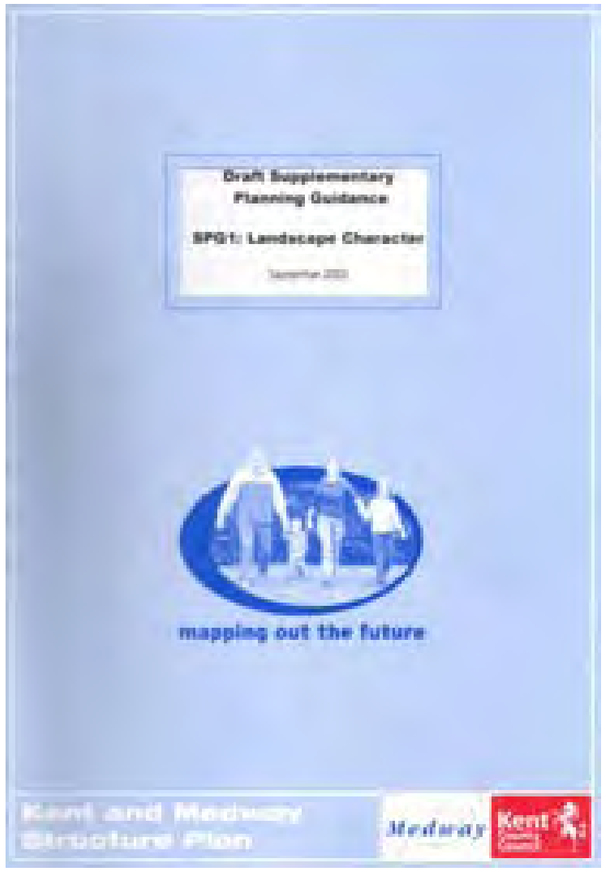
Blean Woods and the Great and Little Stour Valleys Landcape Appraisal (Canterbury CC 2001)

- The purpose of the study was to inform the review of the Canterbury District Local Plan and to complement the existing landscape appraisals which have been undertaken for the region

- The key objectives of the assessment were to: (i) identify and describe the local character areas; (ii) establish the sensitivity of these LCAs; and (iii) identify areas with the capacity to tolerate change and give guidance on the extent and type of change that may be appropriate

- Used the same methodology as Canterbury Landscape Appraisal

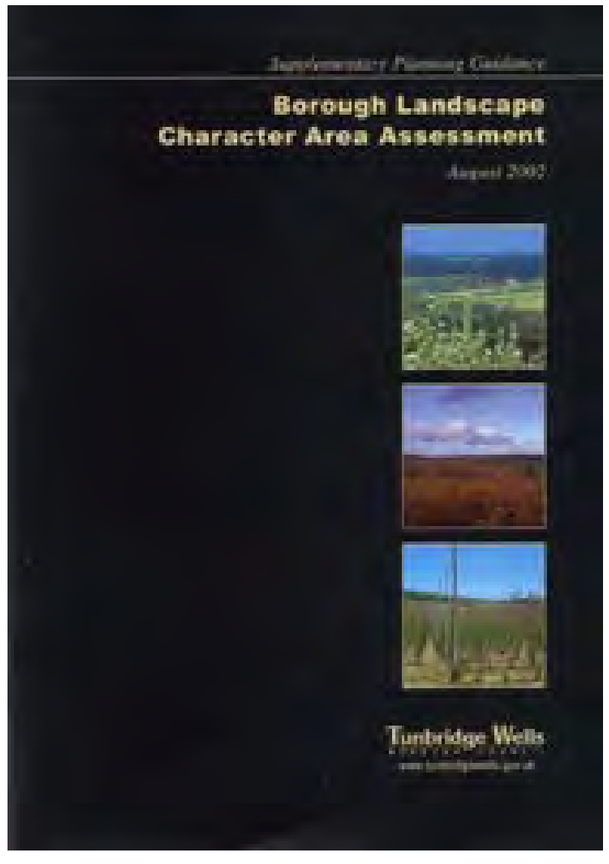
- 16 Landscape Character Areas were identified.



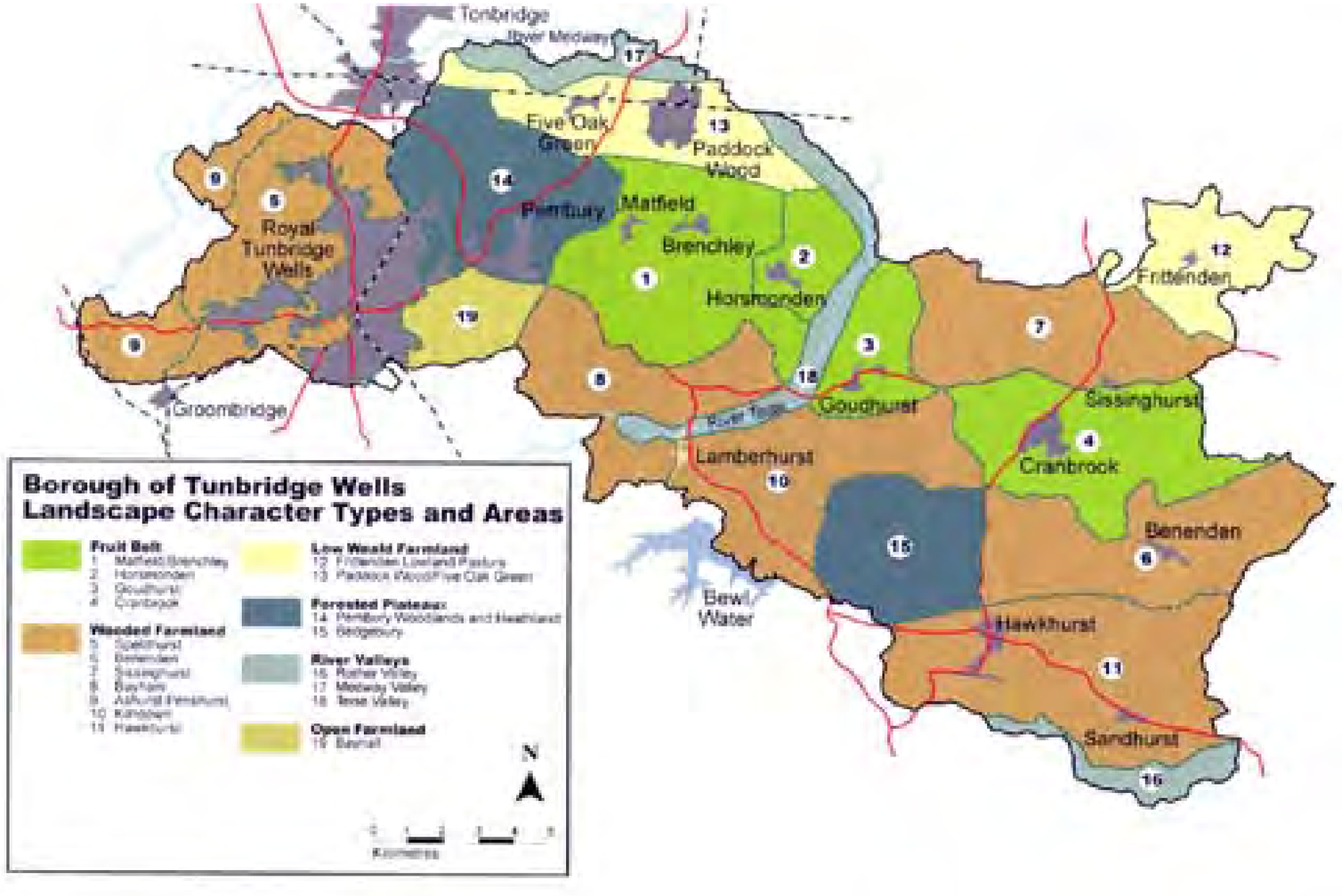
Tunbridge Wells

Tunbridge Wells Borough Landscape Character Area Assessment (2002)

- Describes the character of landscape types to be found in the Borough of Tunbridge Wells
- Divides the landscape into 19 Character Areas based on their natural characteristics and historical influences
- Aims to ensure the retention and, where possible, the enhancement of the character of the landscape for current and future generations
- The description of the landscape character types are designed to assist in assessing whether development is acceptable in a particular location and, if so, the appropriate design which would be in sympathy with the surroundings and perpetuate the valued landscape characteristics



- The document is Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), and will assist and offer best practice advice to all those involved in the development process where such development will have an impact on the rural landscape
- The SPG is consistent with the strategies and policies contained in the Kent Structure Plan and the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan. It is intended to supplement planning policies by describing the landscape character to which these policies apply
- The methodology followed that established by the Countryside Agency in their publication CCP423.



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