

Ashford Landscape Character Assessment



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Ashford
best placed in Britain

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Introduction

PPS 7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas' recognises that there are highly valued local areas of countryside which fall outside nationally designated areas. It encourages a criteria – based approach to protect these areas within emerging Local Development Documents. Landscape character assessments are considered an appropriate tool to justify this policy approach.

Ashford's adopted Core Strategy (July 2008), recognises the positive role of the Borough's countryside, and endorses national Government guidance on protecting countryside in general, particularly nationally designated areas. It also sets out that locally distinctive character areas should be protected from any adverse effects of development and highlighted the Tenterden and Rural Sites Development Plan Document (DPD) as the best vehicle to take this aspiration forward. The Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD will cover the area of the Borough that falls outside the Growth Area, which includes a large area of open countryside. Although its principal role will be to allocate sites for development, in a select number of rural settlements, it will also include several topic based planning policies that cover specific rural planning issues. A key issue which the DPD will address is the desire to protect or enhance the character of the Borough's countryside.

Jacobs were commissioned by Ashford Borough Council (ABC) in March 2009 to carry out a Review of the Landscape Assessment of Kent (LAK) published by Kent County Council in 2004. The aim of this Review was to report on the appropriateness, scale and level of detail provided by the LAK, where it covers Ashford Borough, to support forthcoming Local Development Framework (LDF) landscape policy. Policy C3 within the South East Plan (<http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/seplan.html>) identifies that,

'Landscape character assessments should be used to contribute to the framing of development policies and sustainable agri – environment, and other land management regimes.'

The Review recommended that the baseline data supporting the LAK should be revisited to re-establish whether the assumptions within Ashford Borough are still correct. It was also recommended that some of the larger LAK landscape character areas become subdivided, and that all boundaries should be revised to follow the study area boundary. The Review also recommended that landscape descriptions, landscape analysis and guidelines should be revised in order to provide an up to date assessment, which reflects the local distinctiveness of Ashford.

Based on the recommendations set out within the Review of Landscape Assessment of Kent ABC commissioned Jacobs to undertake a landscape character assessment of Ashford Borough, excluding the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the High Weald AONB and the urban fringe landscape which was covered at a local scale by the Ashford Local Development Framework Landscape Character Study (Studioengleback 2005). The landscape within the Kent Downs and High Weald AONB is excluded because it is protected by the status of a national designation. Landscape recommendations in the form of policies for the Kent Downs AONB are included within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan from 2009 – 2014 (Kent Downs AONB Unit). Similarly, recommendations in the form of policies for the High Weald AONB are included within the High Weald Management Plan 2004. The relationship between this assessment and the Ashford Local Development Framework Landscape Character Study is described under Landscape Character Areas. The assessment should provide a

robust evidence base to protect highly valued local areas of landscape within Ashford which fall outside the Kent Downs AONB and the High Weald AONB.

The objective is to ensure that the decision making process of the local authority is underpinned by a robust and widely accepted assessment of the landscape character. The challenge is to find ways of identifying the importance of the landscape within Ashford Borough which assists the process of accommodating change, where this is both desirable and practicable, whilst maintaining the links with the past and the natural environment. There is a need to retain pattern and diversity in the landscape to ensure that character and local distinctiveness are maintained. This is not necessarily about keeping the landscape as it is but is more about preventing everywhere becoming the same. We need to also ensure that landscapes are visually satisfying, and give enjoyment to those who visit them and those who live and work in them.

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

Methodology

The methodology used to undertake the landscape assessment is based on up date guidance - Scottish Natural Heritage and The Countryside Agency's '*Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland 2002*'. There are essentially two elements to the Landscape Appraisal. Firstly the characterisation of the landscape where the landscape character areas are defined, and secondly the analysis of these areas where judgements are made about these character areas.

In the first instance the assessor interrogates the geological, soil and topographical information as well as accumulating as much information as is readily available regarding historic and cultural influences, nature conservation interests and land use. An aerial photographic study of the area assists with the identification of the landscape character areas as well as assisting with the appreciation of the conclusions subsequently reached.

Having initiated the desk based research, the field work commences. Two landscape assessors working together in the field debate and define the broad character distinctions using 'Field Assessment Sheets' and taking photographic records as data.

The Field Assessment Sheets are designed to analyse the component factors of the landscape, to reach a series of decisions on the:

- Aesthetics
- Key characteristics
- Visual unity
- Ecological integrity
- Condition of heritage features
- Impact of built development

Having identified the character areas as a series of largely homogeneous units the data collected is analysed in terms of each area's **Condition** and **Sensitivity**.

Each of these words is strictly defined to avoid as far as possible any subjective interpretation which could not be justified. The objective is also to define a standard methodology which can be used by other assessors for other landscapes so that comparisons can be made and priorities set.

Condition is strongly influenced by the impact of external factors. The process seeks to measure the continuity of land use and evaluates how well the landscape functions as a habitat for wildlife. This in turn is a useful measure of land use change. Condition also addresses the issues regarding the presence of incongruous features on the unity of the landscape. Urban fringe areas are often under pressure which can frustrate other land uses. This often means that these areas are described as being in a poor condition whilst other more remote areas may still have the same basic features but be in a better condition. It is therefore practical to assume that condition may vary throughout a character area so that any conclusions should be regarded as a summary of the overall situation.

In more technical terms condition is defined by an analysis of *Visual Unity* and *Functional Integrity* and is classified on a scale ranging from very poor, through poor, moderate, good and finally to very good.

Visual Unity is the result of an analysis of the *Pattern of Elements*, for example the pattern of vegetation, enclosure, settlement etc., set against the number of *Detracting Features* in the landscape.

Functional Integrity is an assessment of how the landscape functions and considers both the influence of man (*Cultural Integrity*) and the influence of nature (*Ecological Integrity*). Ecological integrity is itself a function of habitat size, quality and connectivity across the landscape, and therefore relates to this study's analysis of existing habitats and potential habitat networks (see below).

Sensitivity is a measure of the ability of a landscape to accept change without causing irreparable damage to the essential fabric and distinctiveness of that landscape. The term change refers to both beneficial change such as a new woodland as well as 'change' that may be brought about by new land uses. Again, in more technical terms, Sensitivity is defined by an analysis of *Sense of place* and *Visibility* and is classified on a scale ranging from very low through low, moderate, high and finally to very high.

Sense of place balances *Distinctiveness* with *Continuity*. Distinctiveness is defined by the number and pattern of characteristic features in the landscape. For example in a landscape where hedgerows are characteristic if the network is intact the landscape can be described as distinct. Continuity refers to the time depth of the landscape, ranging from recent to ancient

Visibility addresses the issues of *Landform* and intercepting features such as *Tree cover*. For example an open hilltop landscape is more visible than an enclosed lowland landscape.

The conclusions reached regarding each of the character areas are expressed using a matrix which encompasses Condition and Sensitivity. This analysis gives a broad indication of each area's ability to accommodate a change in management or use without loss of overall integrity. The words in the matrix help to assist in the direction of any policy that might be applied to the land in question.

It has to be recognised that whilst the process adopts a complex but logical critique of the landscape many of the individual decisions are still based on the trained but subjective judgements of the assessors. However by simplifying the conclusions into a series of generic actions it is possible to reach informed and well supported judgments on the landscape character.

Guidelines are offered which are locally appropriate to the character area and respond to the generic actions that have been identified. Many of these guidelines are not likely to be within the remit of the Local Authority to implement directly as they are not responsible for managing the land in most cases. Such references have however been included with the view to influencing opinions,

Condition	GOOD	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	MODERATE	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	POOR	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
		Sensitivity		

generating support and guiding policy. In many instances certain forms of land management have a strong influence on the landscape character. These are often dependent on market forces and land management practices for their retention e.g. sheep grazing on marshland and fruit growing.

Geology and Soils

The solid and drift geology throughout the study area are illustrated on Figure 1. Soil types are illustrated on Figure 2, and agricultural land classification (defined by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) is illustrated on Figure 3.

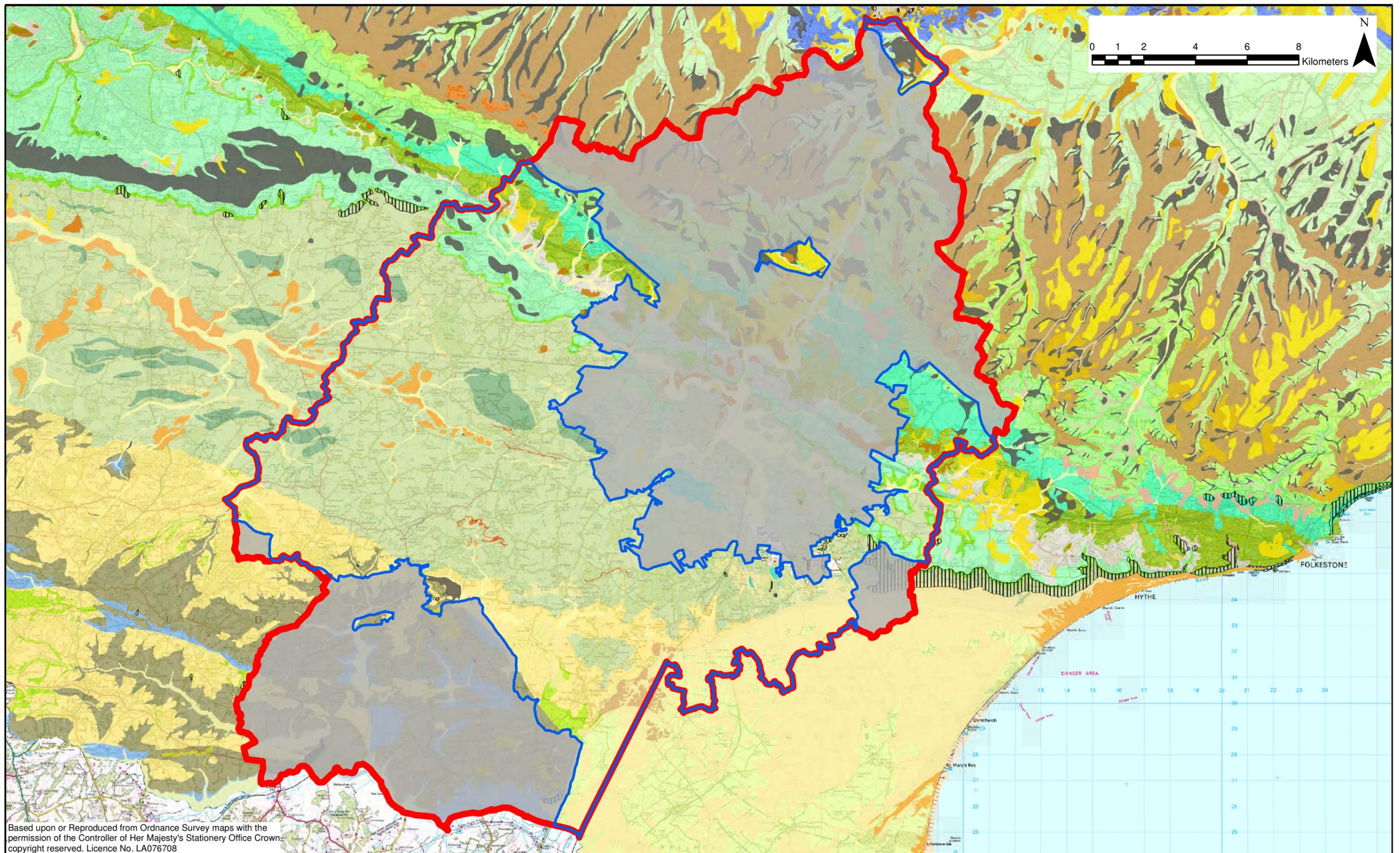
To the south of the Royal Military Canal, the flat and low lying Romney Marsh predominantly comprises Hastings Beds. Drifts of Alluvium and Marine (Estuarine) Alluvium extend along the channels across the Marsh, and swathes of Peat lie east of Appledore Heath and the Royal Military Canal. Soils across the Marsh are Clay, and are generally Agricultural Land Classification Grade 2 with an area of Grade 1 around the Highknock Channel south of Appledore and, in contrast, Grade 4 north of the B2080.

As the ground rises to the north, the old Romney Shoreline settlements of Appledore, Appledore Heath, Kenardington and Warehorne are situated on Tunbridge Wells Sand. Further east, Hamstreet, Ruckinge and Bilsington are situated on Weald Clay which extends to the north west in a broad band beneath a number of settlements located across the Weald including St. Michaels, Bethersden, Smarden and Ashford itself. Patches of Large 'Paludina' Limestone are located across higher ground north east and north west of Bethersden. The lower reaches of the River Beult valley support ribbons of drift Alluvium and 2nd Terrace River Gravels. Soils across the Weald are Loam to Clay, with Loam soils extending along the River Beult Valley. Soils across the Weald are generally Agricultural Land Classification Grade 3.

The Greensand Ridge extends in a diagonal band from the north west of Ashford to the south east and supports hilltop settlements including Pluckley and Egerton. The solid geology is composed of Hythe Beds and fringed with a southern ribbon of Atherfield Clay. Drifts of Head are scattered across the Greensand Ridge and bands of Sandgate Beds and then Lower Greensand run parallel to the north east. Soils are Loam across the Greensand Ridge, with Clay across the Sandgate Beds and Lower Greensand. The Agricultural Land Classification varies between Grades 2 and 3.

Gault Clay underlays the undulating foreground to the North Downs and, as the land rises, the solid geology comprises Chalk. Lower Chalk is situated across the lower contours of the Downs between Boughton Lees and Wye. Bands of Middle Chalk and then Upper Chalk run across the rising contours to the northern extent of the study area, beyond the Kent Downs AONB around Old Wives Lees.

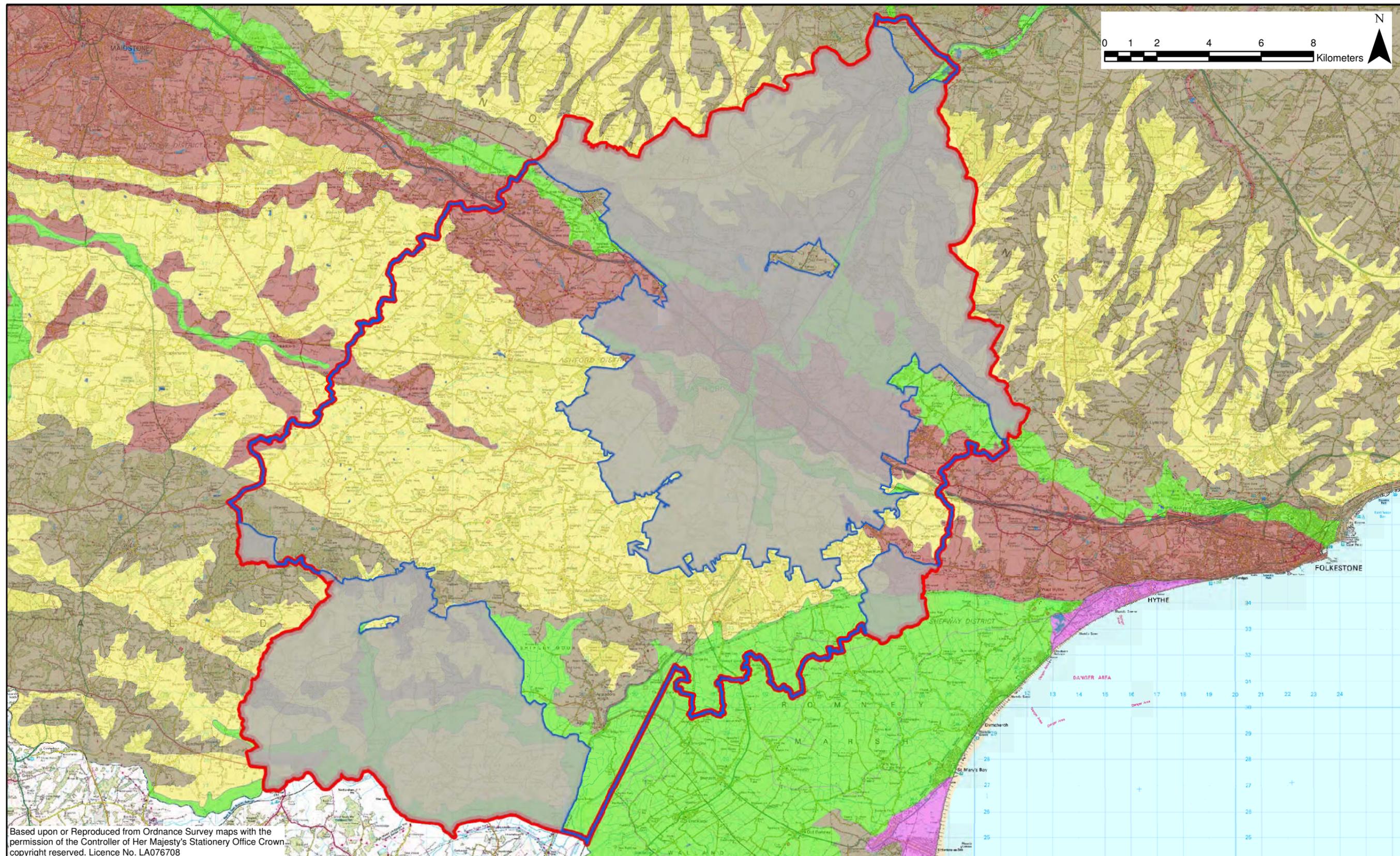
Drifts of Alluvium, Head, Head Brickearth and 3rd Terrace River Gravels follow the Great Stour valley. Soils along the valley are silty, with some Agricultural Land Classification Grade 1 soils located immediately north of Ashford. The drift geology becomes more varied and complex as the undulations of the North Downs begin to the north east of Ashford. Although largely outside the extent of the study area, drifts of Clay with Flints extend across the North Downs, with narrow ribbons of Head, Head Brickearth and Dry Valley Nailbourne Deposits running along valleys. Soils across the Downs are Loam to Clay, becoming Silty where they run along valleys. The Agricultural Land Classification across the Downs is varied, and ranges between Grade 2 and Grade 4.



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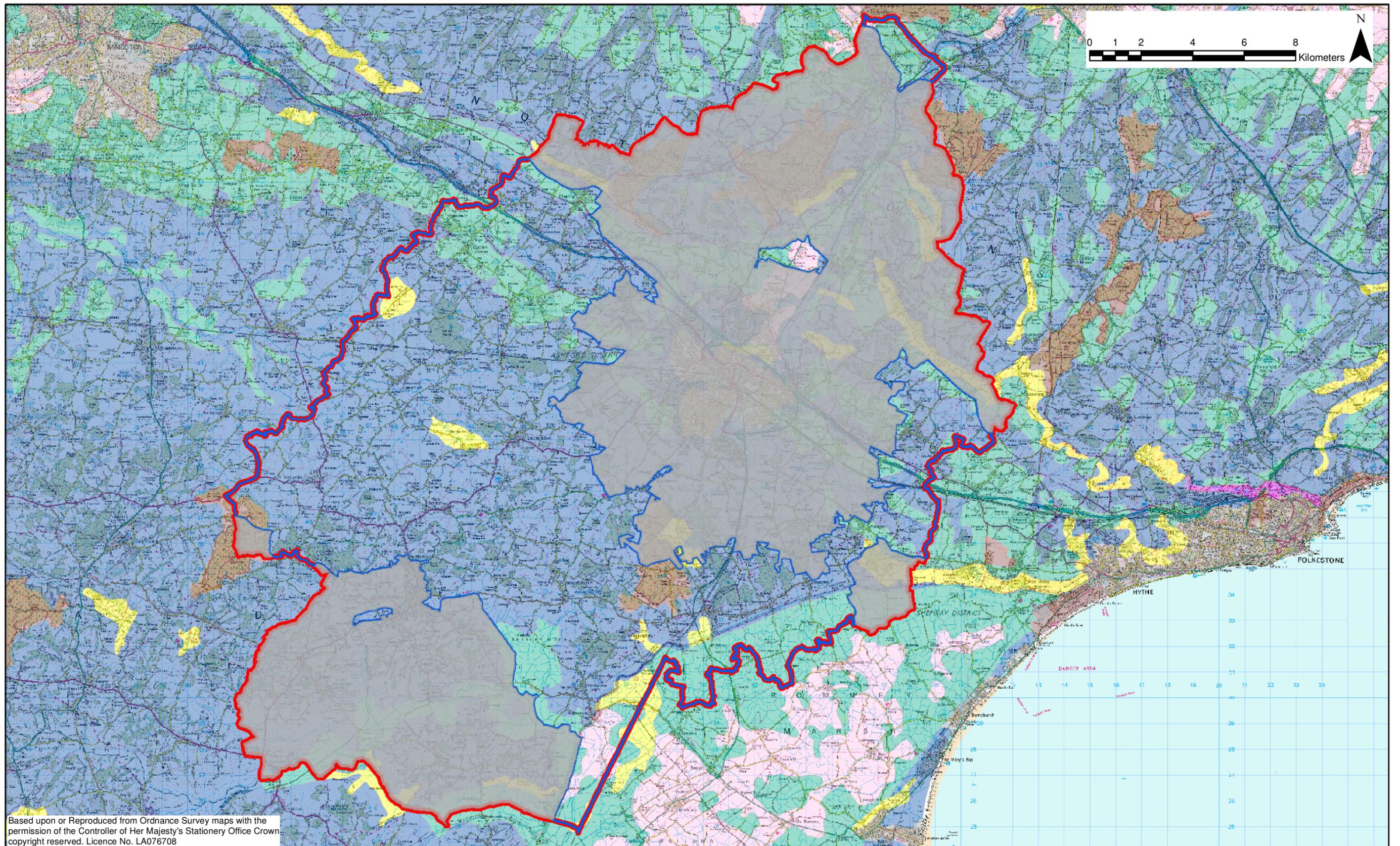
Figure 1: Geology



Legend

- | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|-------|
|  | Ashford Study Area | Soils |  | Loam |  | Silty |
|  | Ashford borough Boundary |  | Clay |  | Loam to Clay | |
|  | Non Study and Urban Areas |  | Dune Sand |  | Open Water | |

Figure 2: Soils



Legend

	Ashford Study Area		Grade 3		Non Agricultural
	Ashford Borough Boundary		Grade 1		Urban
	Non Study and Urban Areas		Grade 2		Grade 4
			Grade 5		

Figure 3: Agricultural Land Classification (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food)

Landform and Drainage

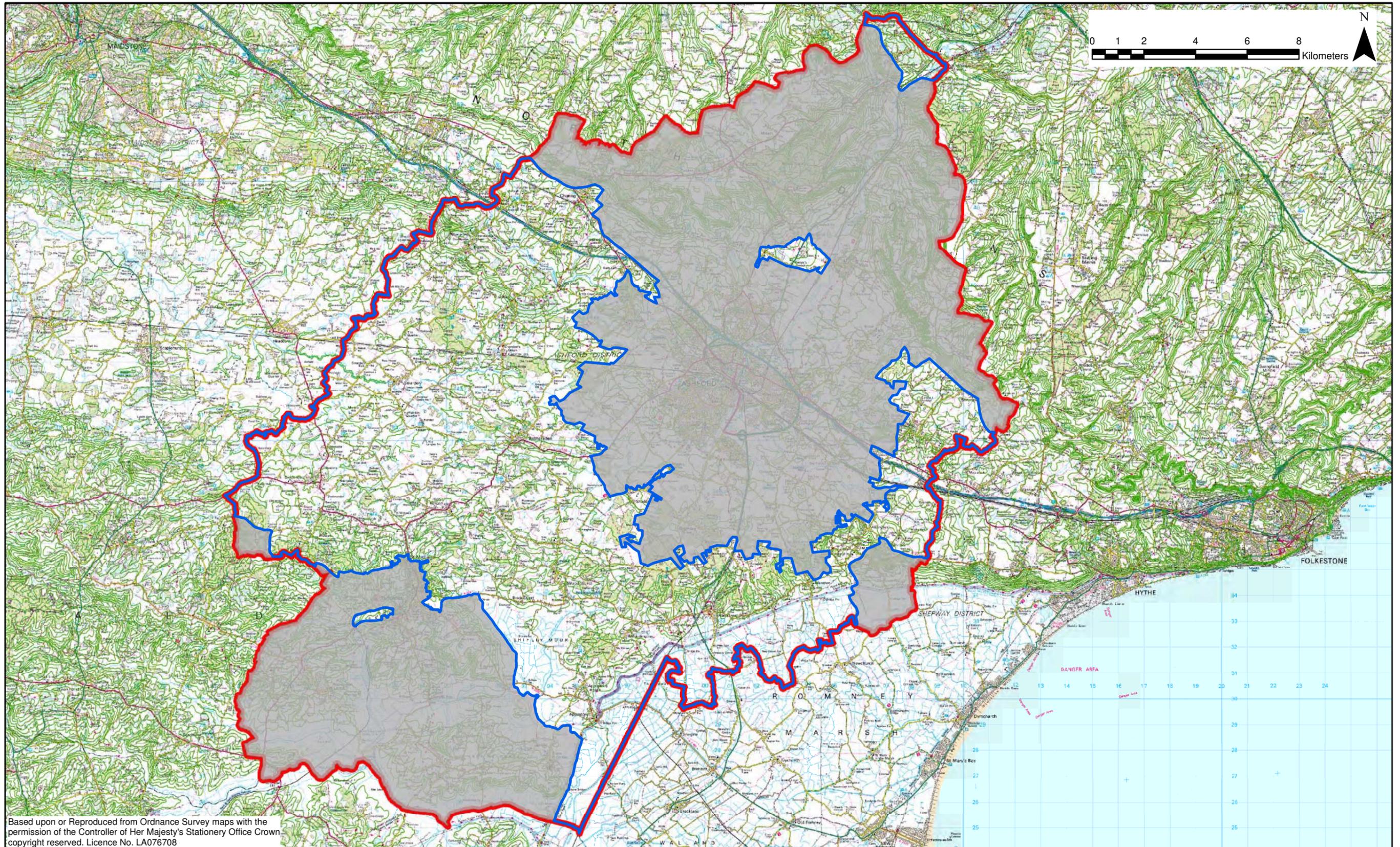
Landform is illustrated on Figure 4. To the south, the landform is flat and low lying across the northern extents of the Romney Marsh. Much of the Marsh comprises reclaimed land, therefore it falls below sea level in parts and relies on a network of channels, sewers and drainage ditches to remain dry. The Royal Military Canal flows across the Marsh and provides crucial drainage.

As the land rises to the north across the gently undulating Weald, drainage ditches and frequent small field ponds indicate the wet clays beneath. The incised channel of the River Beult meanders through a floodplain east and west of Smarden. Intermittently, weirs contribute to alternating pools and sections of fast flow in the channel, but generally the flow of the river is slow, reflecting the low fall from Smarden en route to the junction with the Medway at Yalding.

The Greensand Ridge rises to the north, running north west to south east in a diagonal band parallel with the North Downs. It forms part of a wider series of ridges running from west to east across South East England and is remnant of the Wealden dome, a denuded anticline which resulted from uplifting caused by the Alpine movements approximately 10 – 20 million years ago. The south western edge of the Ridge is formed by a scarp face, with extensive views across the lower weald to the south. The north eastern edge comprises the gently undulating Greensand dip slope.

The River Stour has Kent's second largest catchment area, upon which Ashford is situated. The Upper Great Stour flows within a valley from the north west towards Ashford, whilst the East Stour flows away from Ashford in a valley flowing south eastwards. The Great Stour runs north eastward through a flat narrow valley. The river is shallow, clear and fast moving and is characteristically well vegetated both within its channel and along its banks.

The North Downs rise to the north of Ashford in a long spine, comprising dramatic Chalk escarpments and secluded dry valleys. Although mostly outside the study area the Downs form a prominent backdrop to the undulating landscape north east of Ashford. To the north east, steep sided dry valleys carve their way down to the gentle northern dip-slope of the Downs across Old Wives Lees which forms part of a wider fruit belt.



Legend

- Ashford Study Area
- Non Study and Urban Areas
- Ashford Borough Boundary
- Contours

Figure 4: Landform

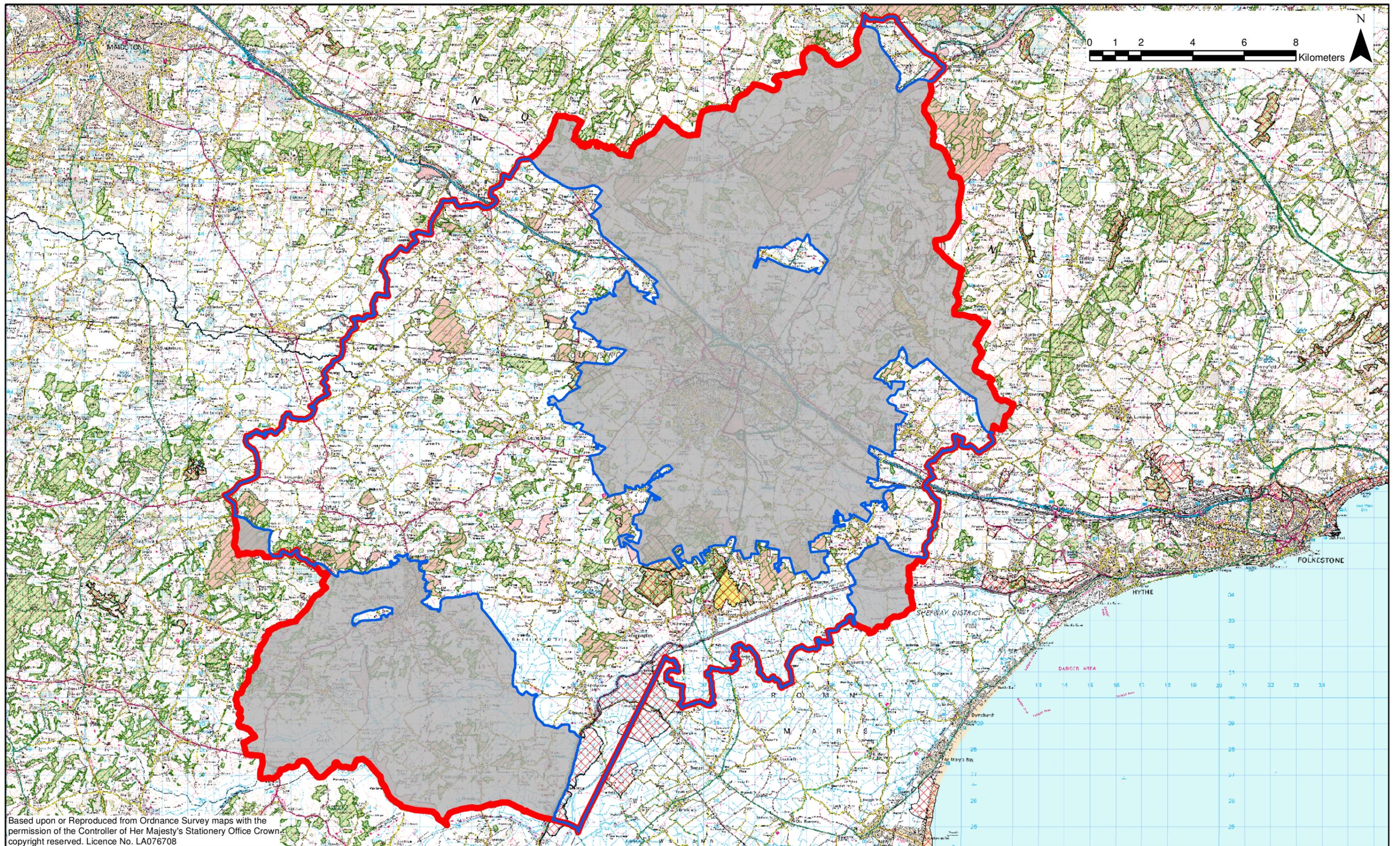
Ecological Designations

Ecological designations are illustrated on Figure 5. A significant proportion of the study area is covered by ecological designations at the, National and Local (County) level, and include:

- **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)** – A statutory UK designation under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. Designated by Natural England, these represent the very best wildlife sites in the country.
- **National Nature Reserves (NNRs)** - are almost always SSSIs thus receiving statutory protection, but are also either owned or controlled specifically for wildlife by Natural England or held by approved bodies such as Wildlife Trusts.
- **Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs)** – a non-statutory County designation, administered in Kent by the Kent Wildlife Trust and ratified by the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Partnership.
- **Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)** - are designated by local authorities for both people and wildlife. They are semi-natural places that are of special interest locally and can be managed as such. They offer people opportunities for nature study or informal enjoyment. They may include sites that have one of the other designations listed above.

Such sites are afforded protection in the planning process, either through legislation (for statutory sites such as SSSIs) or through planning policy (for local, non-statutory sites such as LWSs).

Ancient woodland throughout the study area is often highly designated with a combination of SSSIs and LWSs.



Legend

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
|  Ashford Study Area |  Site of Special Scientific Interest |  Local Wildlife Site |
|  Ashford Borough Boundary |  Ancient Woodland | |
|  Non Study and Urban Areas |  National Nature Reserve | |

Figure 5: Ecological Designations

Landscape Designations

Landscape designations are illustrated on Figure 6. The study area abuts both the Kent Downs and the High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). AONBs are a national designation, created under the same legislation as the national parks, the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The primary purpose of the AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape.

The study area abuts the Kent Downs AONB to the north of Ashford and also to the south east, east of Bonnington. The Kent Downs AONB forms the eastern half of the North Downs, which comprises a wide ridge of chalk hills which stretch for 120 miles from Farnham in Surrey to the White Cliffs of Dover in Kent. The promoted North Downs Way National Trail runs along the North Downs from Farnham to Dover. Designated in 1968, the Kent Downs AONB is described as being a diverse and vibrant landscape with its dramatic chalk escarpments, secluded dry valleys, networks of tiny lanes and historic hedgerows, ancient woodlands, traditional orchards, locally distinctive villages, unique wildlife and many sites of historic and cultural interest.

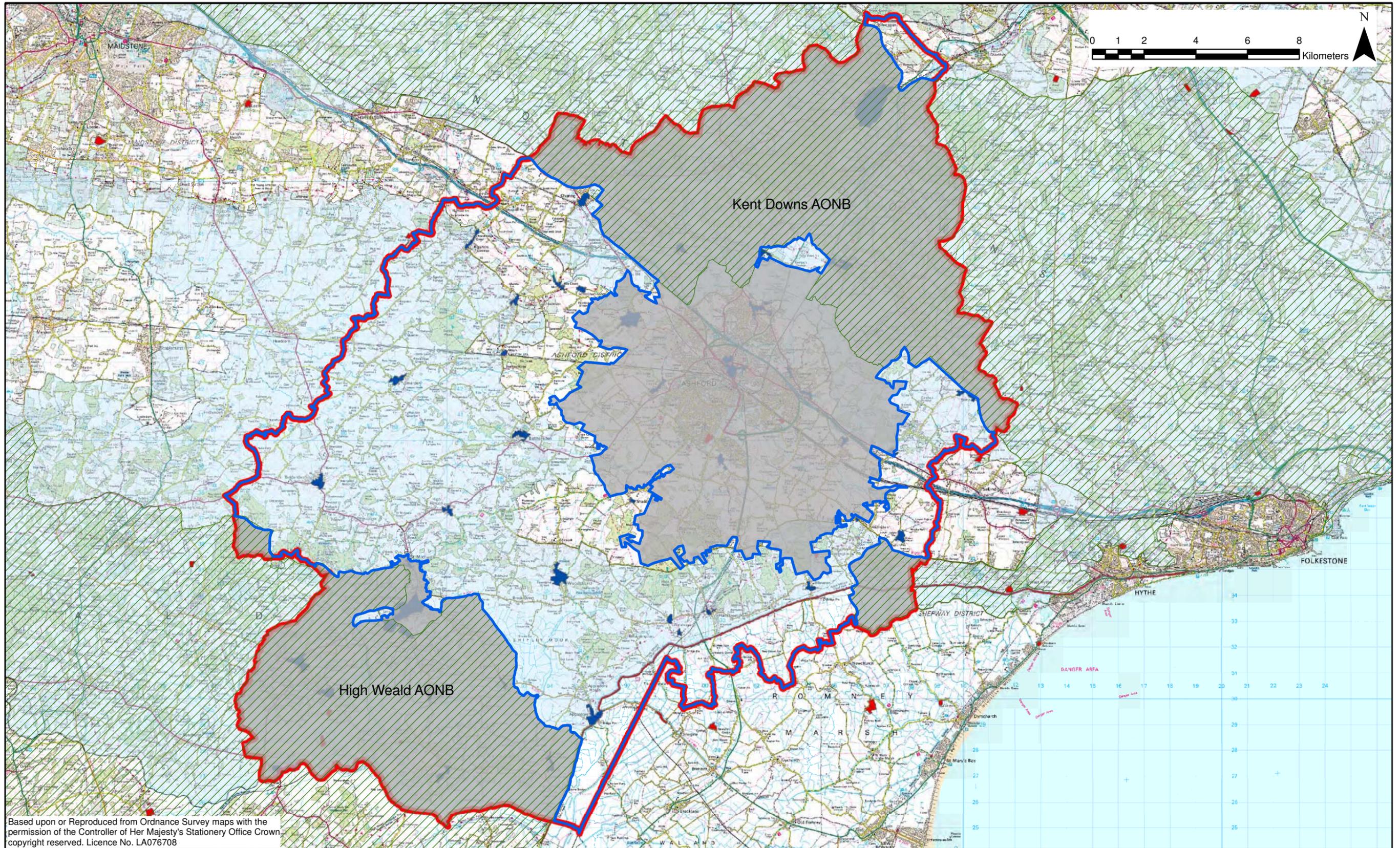
The study area abuts the High Weald AONB to the south west, lying adjacent to the flat marshland of Shirley Moor and undulating farmland around St Michaels. The area is designated for its rolling hills with sandstone outcrops and steep sided ravines, small irregular shaped fields and patches of heathland, abundant woodlands and hedges, scattered farmsteads and sunken lanes and paths.

Much of the undulating landscape within the study area immediately to the south of the Kent Downs AONB, the landscape to the south of the Borough, including the area which forms The Old Romney Shoreline and the foreground to the High Weald AONB, was designated as Special Landscape Areas (SLA).

Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) were identified under the Kent and Medway Structure Plan (KMSP 2006) and rolled forward as such in the Ashford Borough Local Plan (2000) which sought to place the protection and enhancement of these areas above other planning considerations.

However the KMSP was formally superseded by the South East Plan in May 2009 which reinforced the shift to criteria based policies, as eluded to in Planning Policy Statement 7. The SLA has therefore, in effect, been removed from the Statutory Development Plan and carries little weight in planning terms.

It is considered that the Landscape Character Assessment will provide a greater clarity and depth of detail in relation to the countryside and the key characteristics and features that lie within it. This should provide a more robust local level of detail based on each landscape character area, rather than a blanket coverage.



Legend

- Ashford Study Area
- Ashford Borough Boundary
- Non Study and Urban Areas
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Conservation Area
- Scheduled Monument
- Special Landscape Area
(Deleted on publication of the South East Plan)

Figure 6: Landscape and Heritage Designations

Cultural Heritage

Heritage Designations

Many of the settlements throughout the area are designated by ABC as Conservation Areas, for their special architectural or historic interest. There are few Scheduled Monuments within the study area, which are nationally designated archaeological sites or historic buildings. The striking ragstone and flint Archbishop's Palace, and associated buildings and walling, within Charing is a Scheduled Monument. Grade 1 listed, the Palace dates back to the 12th century. The Royal Military Canal which runs through the Romney Marsh is also designated as a Scheduled Monument. A number of listed buildings are scattered throughout the landscape, and concentrated within historic settlements.

History

Ashford is thought to have originated in the late 9th century, and became a market town around 1242. Parts of the central Parish Church of St. Mary the Virgin date back from the 13th century, although the church was substantially restored in the 15th century. By 1600 Ashford had risen to become an important market town, primarily for livestock. In 1842, the railway was built and in 1846 the railway works were constructed. Ashford had doubled in size by 1861, and the railway community had its own shops, schools, public houses and bathhouse. The present Middle Row was known as The Shambles, and provided markets for livestock, meat, fish and corn.

The River Great Stour runs through the urban centre of Ashford, on its path through the Low Weald and the Kent Downs towards Canterbury, the wetlands of Westbere and Stodmarsh, through Sandwich and out to sea at Pegwell Bay. In Ashford, the River Great Stour accommodated a water and steam mill, which was a corn mill.

The historic settlement of Charing is situated beneath the North Downs to the north west of Ashford, and is along the route of the ancient Pilgrims Way which runs along the bottom of the North Downs between Winchester and Canterbury. Thought to have evolved during the late Saxon period, much of the village history appears to be connected with the Archbishop's Palace which is adjacent to the Church of St Peter and St Paul. The Palace originally served as an important stopping off point for the archbishops travelling between the religious seats of Lambeth and Canterbury and was also visited by various royals, including King Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon. The earliest fragments of the palace - including parts of the Great Library and the private chapel – date back as far as the 12th century. The Palace is Grade 1 listed and is also a Scheduled Monument. For the past hundred years the Palace and its various buildings have been used as a farm and have fallen into disrepair, although a planning application has recently been submitted to the local authority for planning consent ahead of a proposed application for funding.

The Dering family have had an influence on the local architecture within settlements and individual historic properties along the Greensand Ridge, in particular Pluckley. The Dering family inherited Surrenden Manor to the east of Pluckley and Sir Edward Dering, the first baronet, allegedly escaped from the roundheads through a narrow, curved, round topped window at Surrenden Manor. As a consequence, all properties owned by the Dering family were fitted with round topped 'Dering' windows. The round topped windows remain a prominent, locally distinct feature within historic buildings throughout Pluckley and Egerton. Surrenden Manor, situated within a visually enclosing high brick

wall, remains privately owned and its gardens are recorded on the register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

To the south of the study area, the Romney Marsh has been built up over the centuries, partly through natural geological processes and partly through artificial land reclamation. The Romans built a wall around the northern part of the area, possibly to create salt pans and by the middle of the 13th century the land was slowly being reclaimed by local residents. Today, a significant amount of the Romney Marsh lies below sea level, and is protected by sea defences and walls throughout the area which now supports rich and fertile farmland. The promoted Saxon Shore Way National Trail/Long Distance Route follows the coastline as it was approximately 1500 years ago prior to the reclamation of the Romney Marsh.

The proximity of the Romney Marsh to the European mainland led to the sensitivity of the area to invasions. In AD 892, one such invasion was successful when a fleet of 250 Danish ships sailed into the River Rother and took the fortress at Appledore. Although once a port on the estuary of the River Rother, storms in the 13th century caused the river to change its course and the village street now leads down to the Royal Military Canal. Now situated along the northern edge of the Romney Marsh, the Royal Military Canal was constructed by hand as part of the defences against Napoleon between 1804 and 1809. The canal stretches for 28 miles, and was designed to be 19 metres wide and 3 metres deep. Napoleon never invaded and the canal was opened to navigation to cover some of the costs although it gradually fell into disrepair. Today it is crucial for drainage on the Romney Marsh and is used for public recreation.

The Rhee Wall forms a prominent ridge to the south of the study area, east of Appledore. A distinct earthwork constructed as an historic sea defence between Appledore and New Romney, the Rhee Wall was extended as a waterway in three stages in the 13th Century. Sluices controlled the flow of water, which was then released to flush silt from the harbour at New Romney. Ultimately the battle was lost; the harbour silted up and New Romney declined in importance. The Rhee kept part of the old port open until the 15th century.

In the 9th century, the Marsh became the property of the Priory of Canterbury, who granted the first tenancy on the land to a man called Baldwin approximately between 1152 and 1167. The marsh has since become covered by a dense network of drainage ditches, which are maintained and managed for sustainable water levels by the Romney Marsh Area Internal Drainage Board.

Ashford Borough Within the Broader Landscape

Ashford Borough falls within six 'Joint Character Areas' (refer to Figure 7) defined by Natural England:

- Romney Marshes
- Low Weald
- High Weald
- Wealden Greensand
- North Downs
- North Kent Plain

Profiles for these areas describe their key physical, wildlife and land use features, and outline the main issues affecting them. A summary is provided below.

Romney Marshes

The Romney Marshes comprise an area of reclaimed open marshland. The landscape is characterised by the flat, open and agricultural landscape, drainage dykes and open skies. The often treeless, low lying marshland is maintained by manmade drainage and river floodplain improvements. Agricultural fields are extensive, with some traditional open wet pasture land. Clumps of trees are often situated on higher ground around farmsteads and random tree groups and lines are scattered within the wider landscape. Whilst sheep grazing was the traditional land use in the Romney Marshes up until World War II, most of the land has been subject to widespread drainage and improvement with much arable conversion.

Low Weald

The Low Weald is described as an intimate landscape enclosed by an intricate mix of fields, small woodlands and hedgerows. The underlying geology comprises a series of broad, low lying and gently undulating clay vales. There are a number of ponds and small stream valleys and wet woodlands of alder and willow. There is a well wooded character with tall hedgerows, numerous mature trees and orchards in the east. There is a distinctly rural character with scattered farmsteads and small settlements often composed of traditional buildings.

High Weald

The High Weald is described as a well wooded landscape which rises above the Low Weald and is deeply incised in places to give a complex pattern of ridges and steep stream valleys. This is mainly a pastoral landscape, with a network of hedges and shaws linking small, irregular fields. The cultivation of fruit and hops, with distinctive hop poles and oast houses, are characteristic features. Characteristic building materials include white weather boarding, hanging tiles and local stone, and there are frequent farm building conversions.

Wealden Greensand

The large belt of Greensand is characterised by its scarp/dip-slope topography and a gentle, open aspect. Within Kent, there are many wooded commons known as 'charts'

with a predominance of oak and birch woodland. Fruit production is characteristic of the Kent Greensand. Tree lined sunken lanes are often characteristic of the area, linking small settlements which generally comprise scattered villages and hamlets. However there is a significant amount of human influence, marked by major towns including Ashford and major infrastructure routes.

North Downs

To the north of Ashford, the North Downs are characterised by the distinctive chalk geology, with a continuous steep scarp providing extensive views across Kent. The broad dip slope is incised by a number of valleys containing rivers, including the River Stour. There are large woodland and plantation blocks of conservation interest, but areas of unimproved chalk grassland are now scarce. Whilst there are pockets of traditional downland grazing, the landscape is largely dominated by arable fields. However this remains a largely rural landscape, with flint walled farm houses and large properties.

North Kent Plain

The study area includes a very small part of land to the north which falls within the North Kent Plain, and many of the key characteristics of the wider North Kent Plain are not relevant to the study area. The land, largely derived from the Tertiary deposits, includes some of the most fertile and productive farmland in South East England. The predominant land uses of the North Kent Plain are intensive arable farming and horticulture.

Landscape Assessment of Kent

At the county level, the Landscape Assessment of Kent (Kent County Council 2004) provides a more refined study. The following 24 landscape character areas (refer to Figure 8) fall wholly or partly within the study area:

- Aldington Ridge
- Bethersden Farmlands
- Beult Valley
- Biddenden – High Halden Wooded Farmlands
- Brabourne Lees Mixed Farmlands
- Brabourne Vale
- Greensand Fruit Belt – Egerton
- Highknock Channel and Dowels
- Hollingbourne Vale East
- Hothfield Heathy Farmlands
- Mersham Farmlands
- North Kent Fruit Belt
- Old Romney Shoreline Wooded Farmlands
- Romney Marsh Mixed Farmlands
- Romney Marsh Settlements
- Sellindge Plateau Farmlands
- Shirley Moor

- Sissinghurst Wooded Farmlands
- Staplehurst-Headcorn Pasturelands
- Sutton Valence to Pluckley Mixed Farmlands
- The Stour – Stour Gap
- The Stour – Stour Valley
- The Stour Valley
- Upper Stour Valley

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

Aldington Ridge

- Raised landscape with steep slopes
- Good quality loam soils
- Mixed, generally open farmland
- Dramatic views to the Low Weald, Romney Marsh and the North Downs

Bethersden Farmlands

- Flat, open arable land use
- More intimate, undulating landscape of mixed farming towards Shirley Moor
- Remote, unpopulated character
- Pastures

Beult Valley

- Flat, low lying land around incised river channel
- Small, slow flowing river of high ecological value
- Rural open landscape of mixed farmland
- Sparse but historic settlement

Biddenden – High Halden Wooded Farmlands

- Undulating topography with views over the Low Weald
- Frequent small woodlands and field ponds
- Small to medium scale field pattern
- Small woodlands and hedgerows with standard oaks

Brabourne Lees Mixed Farmlands

- Gentle undulating landscape with fine loamy soils
- Medium sized woodlands
- Mixed farmland
- Remnant heathy habitats such as valley bogs, acid grasslands and woodlands

Brabourne Vale

- Gentle sloping landform with poor quality soils subject to waterlogging
- Mixed farmlands with a large amount of grassland

- Small copses and larger woodlands, often of high nature conservation value

Greensand Fruit Belt - Egerton

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

Highknock Channel and Dowels

- Unenclosed, wide views
- Raised water channels and drainage ditches
- Pastoral, ragged grasses
- Very little development comprising few large farms

Hollingbourne Vale East

- Gently undulating landscape on heavy Clay soils
- Small streams drain east to the Great Stour
- Mixed farming of small sheep grazed pasture and larger arable fields
- Extensive loss of hedgerows and woodland to exploit good quality soils at scarp foot
- Scarp foot villages

Hothfield Heathy Farmlands

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

Mersham Farmlands

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

North Kent Fruit Belt

- Well enclosed, medium scale field pattern
- Rolling, quiet, picturesque. Traditional Kentish elements such as hops and orchards
- Well managed, simple form
- Outlying villages are quiet and rural, but with an increasing suburban influence

Old Romney Shoreline Wooded Farmlands

- Flat or gently undulating with distinctive ridges and valleys dropping down to Romney Marsh

- Large broadleaf or mixed woodlands
- Small scale pattern of pastoral fields
- Scattered settlement with historic churches along the Old Romney Shoreline

Romney Marsh Mixed Farmlands

- Flat, open, long views
- Arable land use and large agricultural buildings
- Clusters of willow and poplar around settlements
- Open, cleared ditches

Romney Marsh Settlements

- Distinctive lowland with dominant flat landform and drainage ditches
- Remnant willow pollards
- Scattered farmsteads and small villages
- Narrow, ditch lined roads

Sellindge Plateau Farmlands

- Flat to undulating farmlands across good quality soils
- Open, arable landscape with pasture on more undulating ground
- Small copses and gappy hedgerows

Shirley Moor

- Flat centre to tidal basin between gently rolling hills
- Open agricultural landscape with patchwork of fields and ditches
- Remnants of sheep farming activity, including remnant hedgerows
- Few roads, no settlement

Sissinghurst Wooded Farmlands

- Multicoloured enclosed patchwork of fields
- Well wooded
- Small scale hops and orchards, oasts and weatherboarded barns
- Long views to Greensand Ridge

Staplehurst – Headcorn Pasturelands

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

Sutton Valence to Pluckley Mixed Farmlands

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

The Stour – Stour Gap

- Low lying, flat or gently undulating landscape with good quality soils
- Open arable farmland enclosed by the North Downs to the north

The Stour – Stour Valley

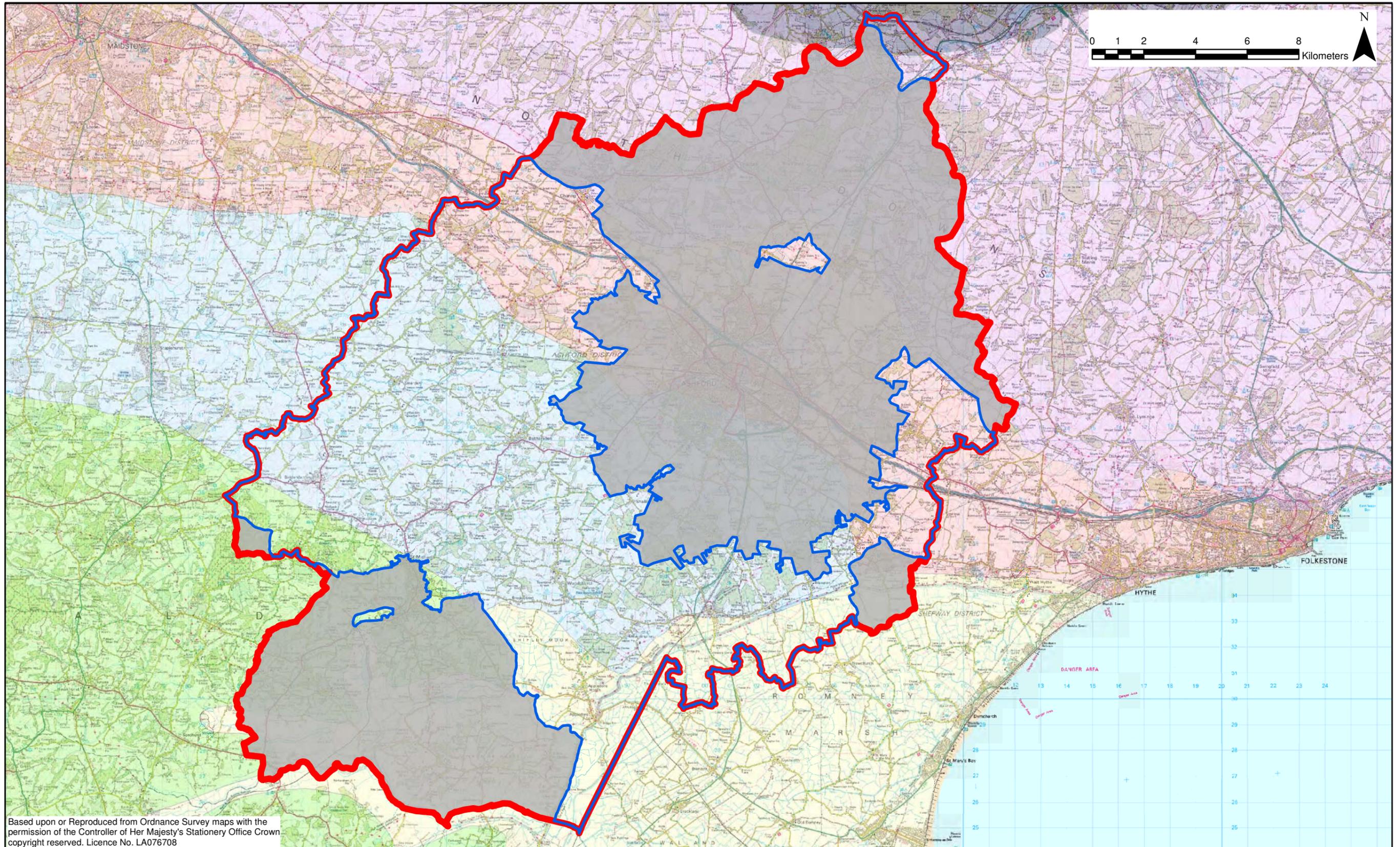
- Flat, low lying valley with alluvial soils subject to seasonal waterlogging
- Shallow, clear, fast flowing river with well vegetated banks of high nature conservation value
- Mixed farmland of irregular sheep grazed pasture and larger arable fields
- Sparse settlement
- Long views to the North Downs

The Stour Valley

- Flat valley floor, widening towards the river mouth
- Valley sides are steep, dropping in height as the valley widens
- Wetland pasture drained by well vegetated ditches and dykes; small scale, well enclosed field pattern. Marshland, colourful reeds and grasses, lakes and open water
- Settlement on river at edge of floodplain and linear settlement surrounding the valley

Upper Stour Valley

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



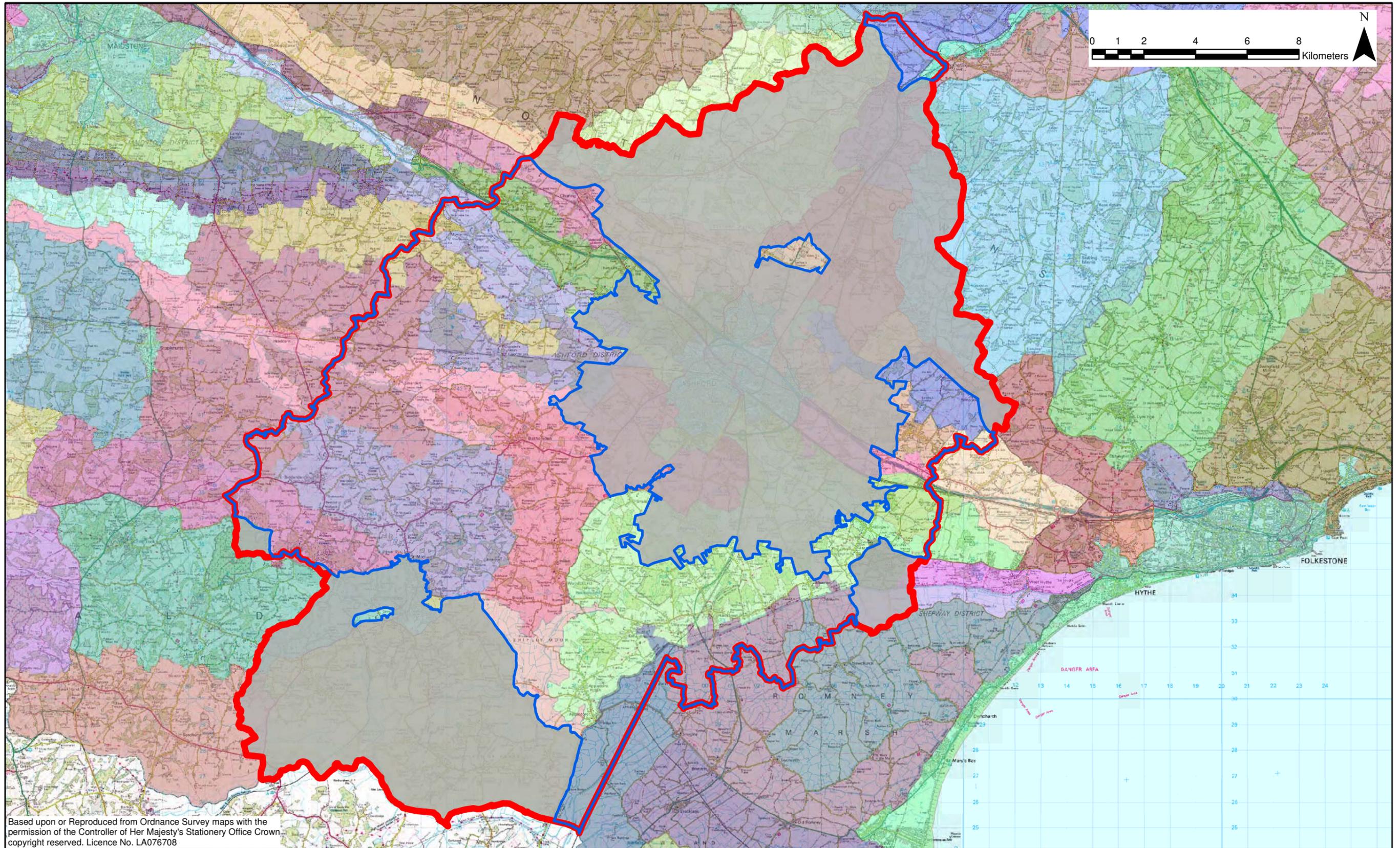
Legend

- Ashford Study Area
- Ashford Borough Boundary
- Non Study and Urban Areas

Joint Character Area

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Weald Low Weald North Kent Plain | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Downs Romney Marshes Wealden Greensand |
|---|--|

Figure 7: Joint Character Areas (Natural England)



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Legend

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Ashford Study Area | Landscape Character Areas | | | |
| Ashford Borough Boundary | Aldington Ridge | Hothfield Heathy Farmlands | Old Romney Shoreline Wooded Farmlands | The Stour - Stour Gap |
| Non Study and Urban Areas | Beult Valley | Hollingbourne Vale East | Mersham Farmlands | The Stour - Stour Valley |
| | Biddenden-High Halden Wooded Farmlands | Highknock Channel and Dowels | Sellindge Plateau Farmlands | The Stour Valley |
| | Greensand Fruit Belt - Egerton | Sissinghurst Wooded Farmlands | Shirley Moor | Upper Stour Valley |
| | Brabourne Lees Mixed Farmlands | Bethersden Farmlands | North Kent Fruit Belt | Romney Marsh Mixed Farmlands |
| | Brabourne Vale | Sutton Valence to Pluckley Mixed Farmlands | Staplehurst-Headcorn Pasturelands | Romney Marsh Settlements |

Figure 8: County Wide Landscape Character Areas (Landscape Assessment of Kent, Kent County Council 2004)

Landscape Character Areas

The field and desk study identifies 33 local landscape character areas, illustrated on Figure 9. The relationship between the 33 landscape character areas within the study area and the landscape character areas within the adjoining boroughs has been considered where they fall outside the Kent Downs and High Weald AONB. The defined character areas do not conflict with the landscape character areas within Canterbury to the north, and Tunbridge Wells to the west. To the south and east, Shepway have not published a landscape character assessment. To the north west, Maidstone Borough are in the process of updating their landscape character assessment, and the character areas within the study area are compatible with the proposed draft revised landscape character areas for Maidstone. Dover have a published landscape character assessment, although its boundary with Ashford is entirely within the Kent Downs AONB so is not therefore relevant to this assessment.

The detailed local landscape character areas defined within the Ashford Local Development Framework Landscape Character Study, produced by Studioengleback 2005, have been taken into consideration. Up to date guidance recommends that landscape character studies at different scales should 'nest' within one another:

'Ideally assessments at different scales should fit together as a nested series or a hierarchy of landscape character types and/or areas so that assessment at each level adds more detail to the one above. The analogy of Russian Dolls is often used to describe this hierarchical relationship, but the idea of a camera zooming in, from a distant broad view, to a detailed small-scale portrait, also makes the point'. (Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage and The Countryside Agency 2002).

Both the landscape character areas defined within this study and the local landscape character areas defined within the Ashford Landscape Character Study (Studioengleback 2005) are subdivisions of the larger, county scale character areas defined within the Landscape Assessment of Kent (Kent County Council 2004). As a result of both landscape character assessments within Ashford being based on the larger, county scale Landscape Assessment of Kent, as well as the consistent approach between methodologies, the landscape character area boundaries do not conflict..

Figure 10 illustrates this point, providing an overlay of the borough scale landscape character areas defined within this study, and the local landscape character areas defined within the Ashford Landscape Character Study. However, very minor amendments to the Landscape Assessment of Kent boundaries have occurred in places at the borough and local studies where the assessments have reviewed the landscape at a more detailed level. The boundaries of the landscape character areas defined within this study where they abut the area covered by the Ashford Landscape Character Study are simply defined by the edge of the study area rather than the true landscape character boundaries, which would extend into the non study area. It should be noted that the Ashford Landscape Character Study is at a more detailed scale than this borough wide study. The detailed landscape character areas defined within the Ashford Landscape Character Study would therefore form sub – divisions of the larger, borough wide, landscape character areas should they extend into the non study area towards Ashford's urban edge.

Both landscape character assessments within Ashford provide conclusions for each landscape character area, which are based on landscape condition and sensitivity (refer

to Methodology). As illustrated below, the wording of the conclusions between the two studies differs slightly. The word 'Create' has been substituted by the word 'Improve' in this study because it was considered that 'Create' could perhaps be interpreted as new landscape features or developments in an area which may not tolerate a significant amount of change. This does not disallow a direct comparison of conclusions because they are reached on the same basis.

Ashford Landscape Character Assessment

Condition	GOOD	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	MODERATE	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	POOR	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
		Sensitivity		

Ashford Landscape Character Study (Studioengleback)

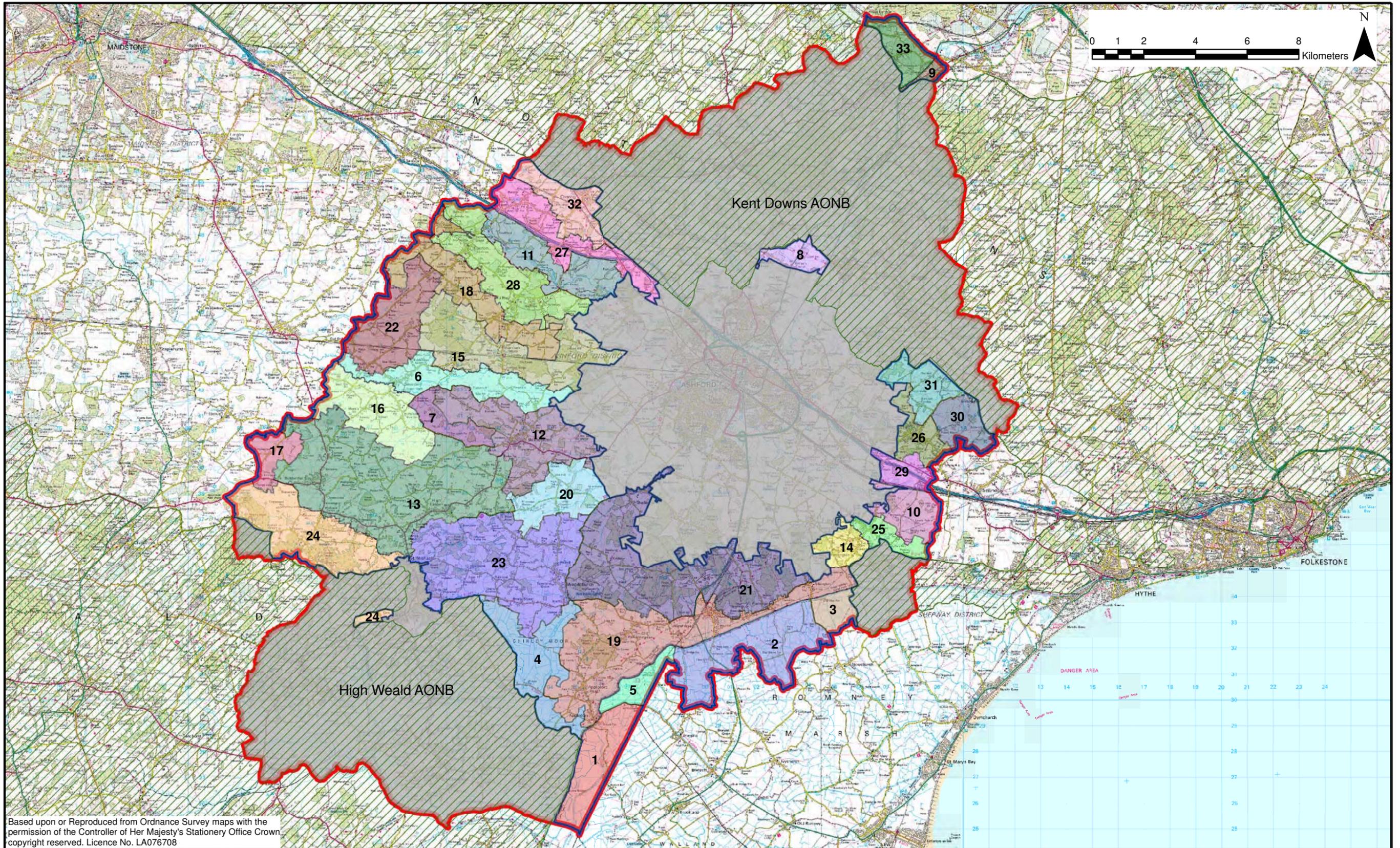
Condition	GOOD	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	MODERATE	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	POOR	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
		Sensitivity		

Figure 11 provides an illustrative comparison between the conclusions drawn within this study and the local landscape character areas defined within the Ashford Landscape Character Study (Studioengleback 2005). There are many differences between adjoining landscape character areas in terms of condition, sensitivity and the overall conclusions because the two assessments are at different scales. Throughout one borough wide landscape character area, levels of condition and sensitivity vary and the overall conclusions are therefore an average. Conversely, if the local scale landscape character areas within the Ashford Landscape Character Study were amalgamated to form borough wide landscape character areas, the conclusions would need to be an average of the varying local scale analysis.

Not all areas within a landscape character area exhibit all the characteristics of that area and it is usual to have some pockets with very few distinctive features. Often this is due to changes in land use that have resulted in the loss of landscape features, or the addition of features not naturally associated with that area. The proximity of the built environment often affects the condition of the landscape, particularly on the boundaries where pressures are greatest. The landscape character areas therefore identify common characteristics across an area rather than grouping areas that are identical. Where there are marked changes across a character area these are described and, where appropriate, different guidelines are given.

In the sections that follow, each of these areas is described and the key landscape characteristics are identified. An analysis is undertaken to identify the condition and sensitivity of the landscape and, following the methodology previously outlined, guidelines for each area are proposed. It should be noted that changes in the natural landscape are often gradual relating closely to changes in geology and soil type. It is

therefore normal to find some characteristics of one area overlapping into another. For ease of use this document groups landscape character areas into landscape types, as illustrated on Figure 12. Descriptions of landscape character areas are grouped alphabetically within the document in accordance with landscape types.



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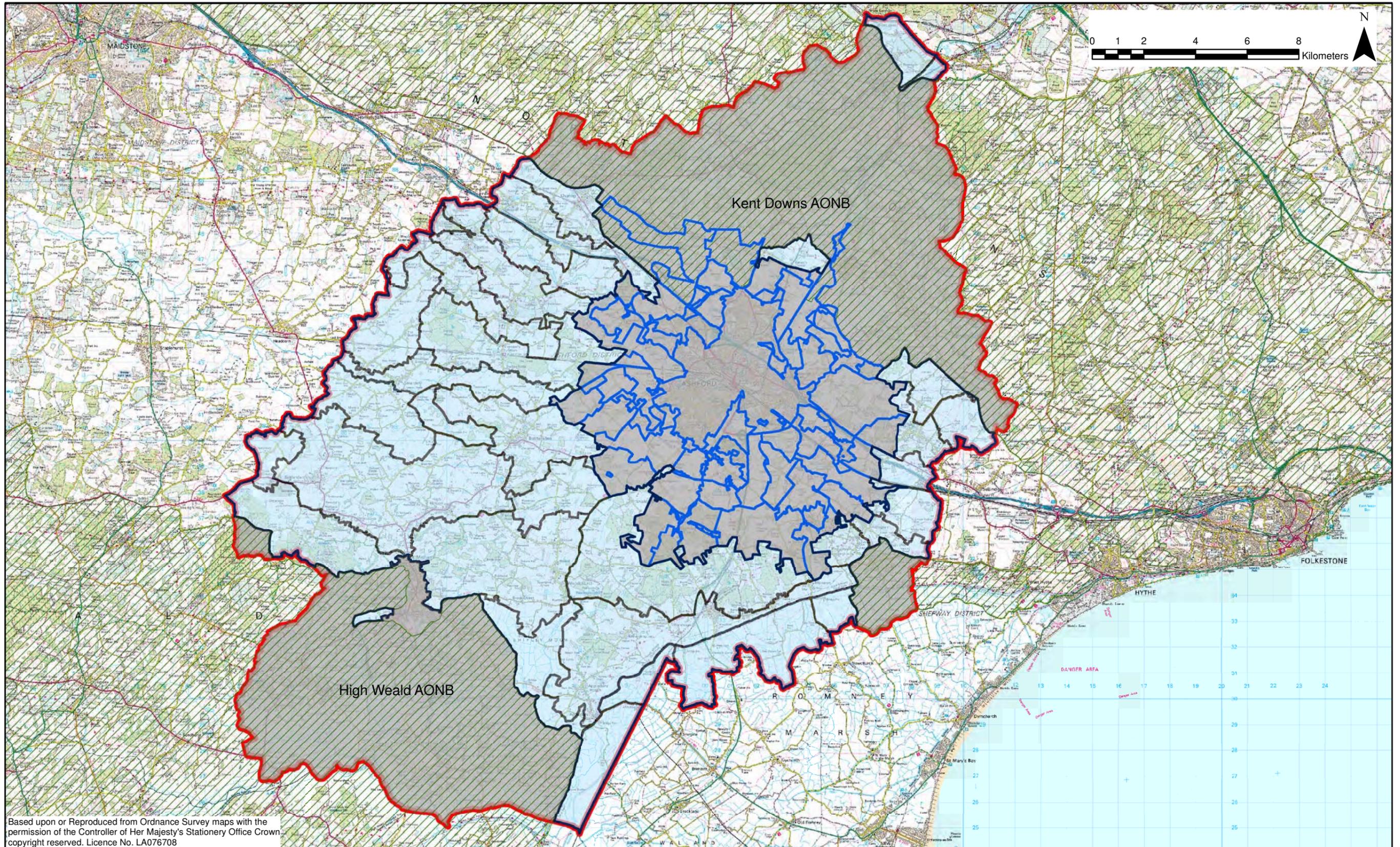
Legend

- Ashford Study Area
- Ashford Borough Boundary
- Non Study and Urban Areas
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Landscape Character Areas

- | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| 1 Highknock Arable Marshlands | 6 Beult Valley Farmlands | 11 Great Stour Valley | 16 Haffenden Quarter Farmlands | 21 Shadoxhurst Wooded Farmlands | 26 Brabourne Lees Hilly Farmlands | 31 Brabourne Farmlands |
| 2 Romney Marsh Mixed Farmlands | 7 Beult Valley Wooded Farmlands | 12 Bethersden Mixed Farmlands | 17 Hareplain Farmlands | 22 Smarden Bell Farmlands | 27 Charing Heath Farmlands | 32 Charing Farmlands |
| 3 Royal Military Marshlands | 8 Boughton Lees Horticultural Valley | 13 Biddenden and High Halden Farmlands | 18 Mundy Bois Mixed Farmlands | 23 Woodchurch Undulating Farmlands | 28 Egerton - Pluckley Greensand Fruit Belt | 33 Old Wives Lees Orchards |
| 4 Shirley Moor Arable Lands | 9 Stour Valley Shalmsford | 14 Bonnington Wooded Farmlands | 19 Old Romney Shoreline Settlements | 24 Clapper Hill Wooded Farmlands | 29 Evegate Mixed Farmlands | |
| 5 The Dowels Marshland Pasture | 10 East Stour Valley | 15 Dering Wooded Farmlands | 20 Plurrenden Arable Plateau | 25 Aldington Ridgeline | 30 Brabourne Arable Farmlands | |

Figure 9: Ashford Landscape Character Areas

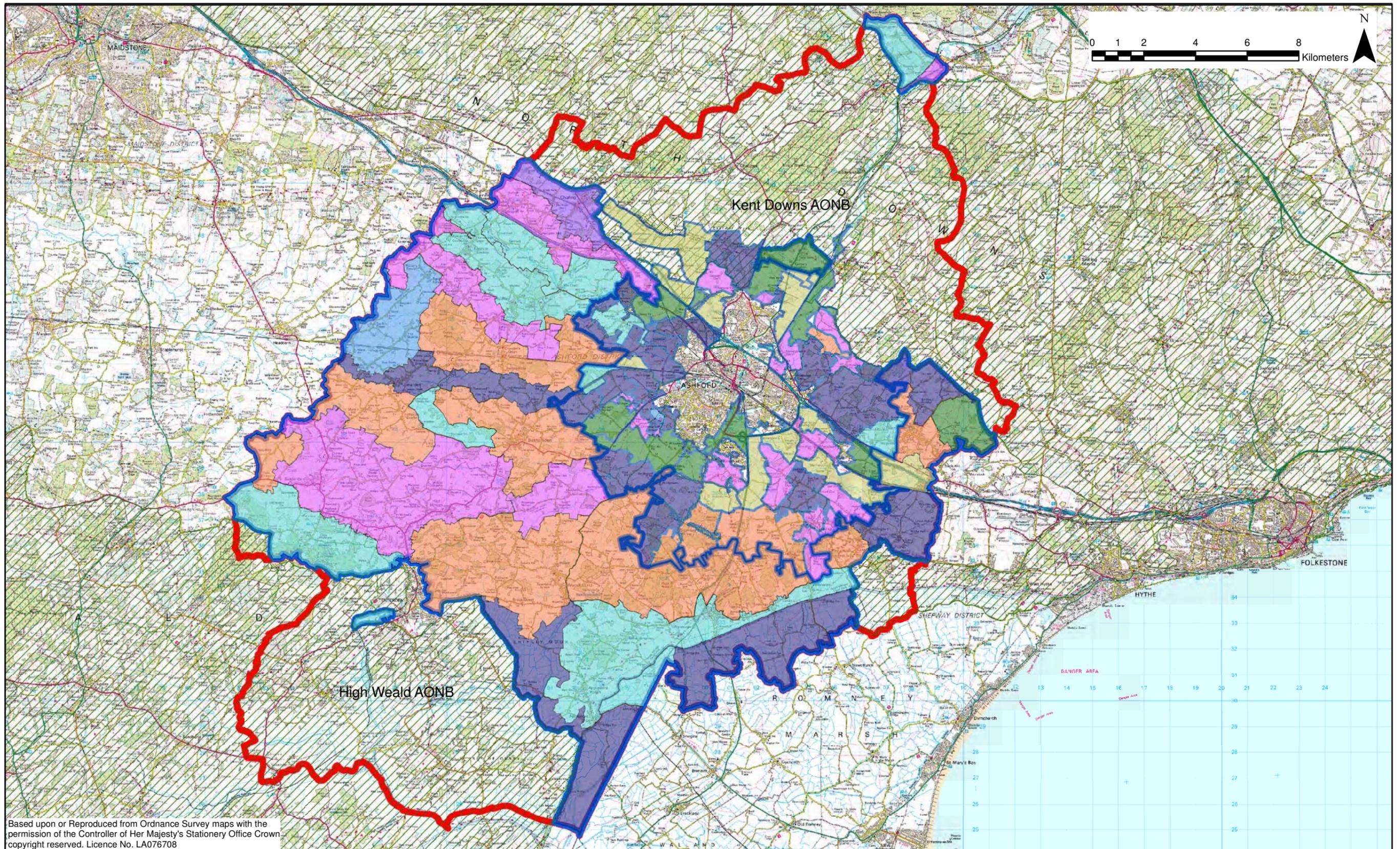


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Legend

- Ashford Study Area
- Ashford Borough Boundary
- Non Study and Urban Areas
- Ashford Landscape Character Areas
- Ashford Landscape Character Study (Studioengleback)
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Figure 10: Relationship between Ashford Landscape Character Study (Studioengleback) and Ashford Landscape Character Areas



Legend

- Ashford Study Area
- Ashford Borough Boundary
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

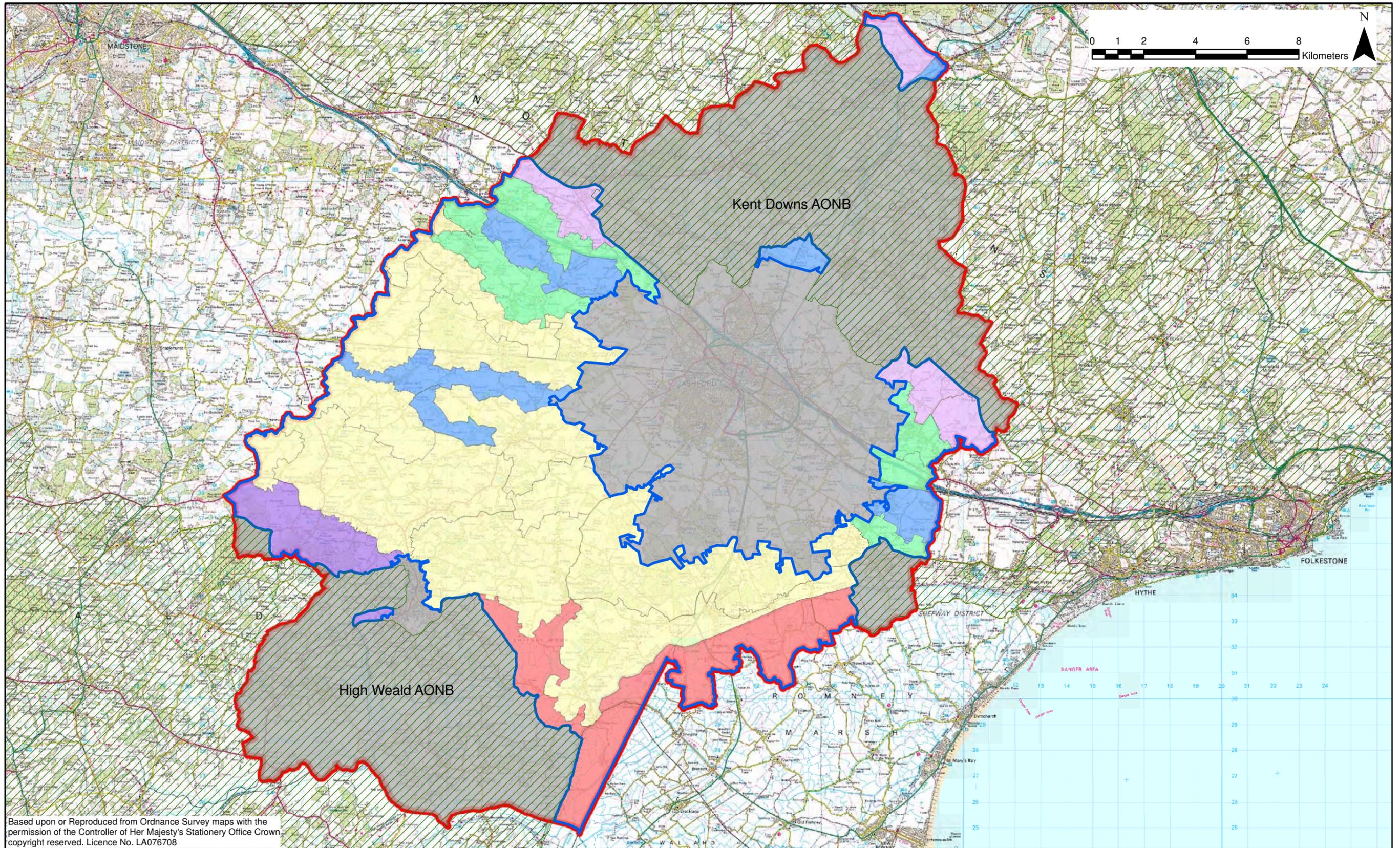
Ashford Landscape Character Study (Studioengleback)

- Conserve
- Conserve and Create
- Conserve and Reinforce
- Conserve and Restore
- Create
- Create and Reinforce
- Restore and Create

Ashford Landscape Character Assessment

- Conserve
- Conserve and Improve
- Conserve and Reinforce
- Conserve and Restore
- Improve
- Improve and Reinforce
- Reinforce
- Restore and Improve

Figure 11: Relationship between Ashford Landscape Character Study (Studioengleback) and Ashford Landscape Character Analysis



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Legend

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|------------------|
|  | Ashford Study Area | Ashford Landscape Character Types | |
|  | Ashford Borough Boundary |  | Downland Fringes |
|  | Non Study and Urban Areas |  | Greensand |
|  | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |  | High Weald |
| | |  | Low Weald |
| | |  | Romney Marsh |
| | |  | Valleys |

Figure 12: Ashford Landscape Character Types

Romney Marsh



To the south of the study area, five of the landscape character areas fall within the Romney Marsh landscape type. As part of the wider Romney Marsh, which extends southward to the south east of Ashford Borough, the landscape comprises flat low lying land which was historically reclaimed from the sea. The landscape is characterised by the remote, open and treeless landscape which is divided by distinctive drainage ditches.

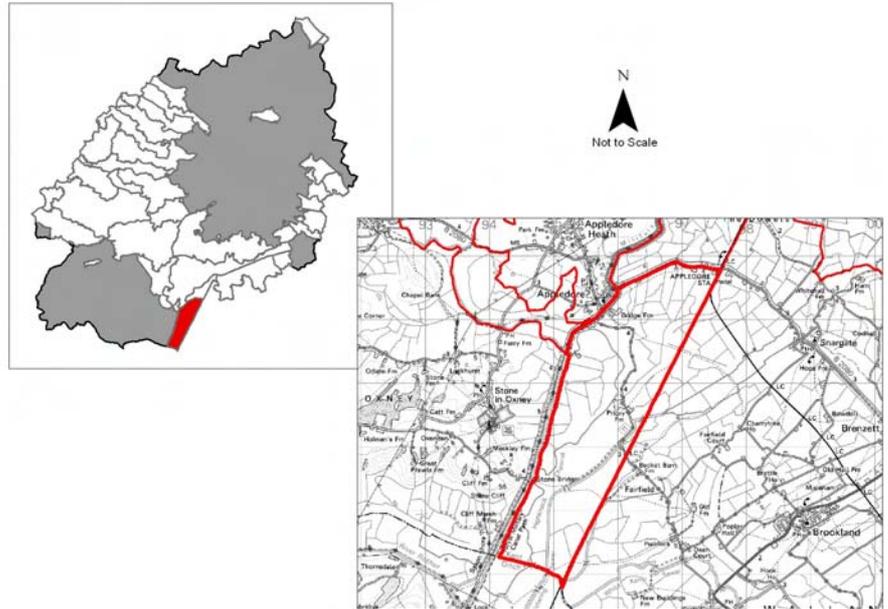


1. Highknock Arable Marshlands

Key Characteristics

- Flat and low lying marshland, which forms part of the immediate foreground to the visible rising ground of the High Weald AONB
- Arable farmland set within depressions between channels
- Large, irregularly shaped fields
- Infrequent tree and shrub vegetation
- Wide embanked drainage channels and a network of reed filled drainage ditches
- Meandering Highknock Channel runs through the plain, with parallel courses of Royal Military Canal and the Five Watering Sewer running either side
- Large agricultural buildings at isolated farms
- Recent development along the busy B2080

Landscape Description



The geology predominantly comprises Hastings Beds, with some drifts of Marine (Estuarine) Alluvium. Soils are clay. The landform is flat and low lying, and forms part of the immediate foreground to the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The landscape forms the rationalised floodplain of the Rother with wide, embanked drainage channels and farmland set within depressions between. A windfarm, which lies outside the Borough boundary, is visible to the south east. The tall white turbines provide significant landmark features within the flat and generally treeless landscape. Higher ground which forms part of the High Weald AONB is prominent to the west.

The Highknock Channel is a meandering natural water course which runs through a low lying fluvial plain, with the parallel courses of the Royal Military Canal and the Five Watering Sewer running either side. Stone bridges provide crossing points along the Five Watering Sewer for narrow roads and farm access. The land is predominantly used for arable farming, with a significant amount of wheat production, and





there is very little tree cover. Fields are often large but irregular in shape and size, dictated by the routes of a complex pattern of drainage ditches. Whilst there are some scrubby hedgerows marking the route of ditches, it is the reed heads which rise above the banks which highlight field edges.

There is very little development within the area although Bridge Farm and, in particular, Priory Farm comprise a number of very large agricultural barns which are prominent, visually dominating features within the flat landscape. Development along the busy B2080 is mostly recent, and comprises a number of dwellings and a hotel. A narrow lane runs past Priory Farm, which has open views and forms a winding route through the marsh.

Condition

The flat, open landscape has a unified pattern of elements and there are few visual detractors, comprising visually prominent large agricultural barns. Although this is not a settled area, recent farm structures have a negative impact on the view. The ditches provide a distinct and historic field pattern. The historic significance of The Royal Military Canal is illustrated through its designation as a Scheduled Monument. The intensive agricultural land use and the generally treeless character provide a limited framework for habitats. Ditches and Sewers are often lined with bright green algae as a result of fertiliser runoff from the adjacent arable production. However, both the Highknock Channel and the Royal Military Canal are designated as part of the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Hythe Bay Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Overall the landscape is in moderate condition.

Sensitivity

This is an historic landscape with unique and rare features. The field pattern, dictated by the reed filled ditches, and the open and exposed character provide a very strong sense of place. The flat landscape and the open, treeless character provide very high visibility. The location immediately within the foreground to the High Weald AONB makes this a very sensitive landscape in terms of both the setting of, and views to, the AONB. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape is high.



Guidelines

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



- Conserve and restore the largely undeveloped and rural foreground setting of the High Weald AONB
- Conserve and restore the open marshland landscape
- Conserve open views
- Avoid incongruous features within the widely visible landscape
- Restore marginal grasses and wetland flora along ditches and Sewers
- Restore water quality through agricultural management
- Manage the ditches and sewers appropriately to create a wider riparian corridor
- Conserve stone bridge detailing

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Open
Visibility:	High

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

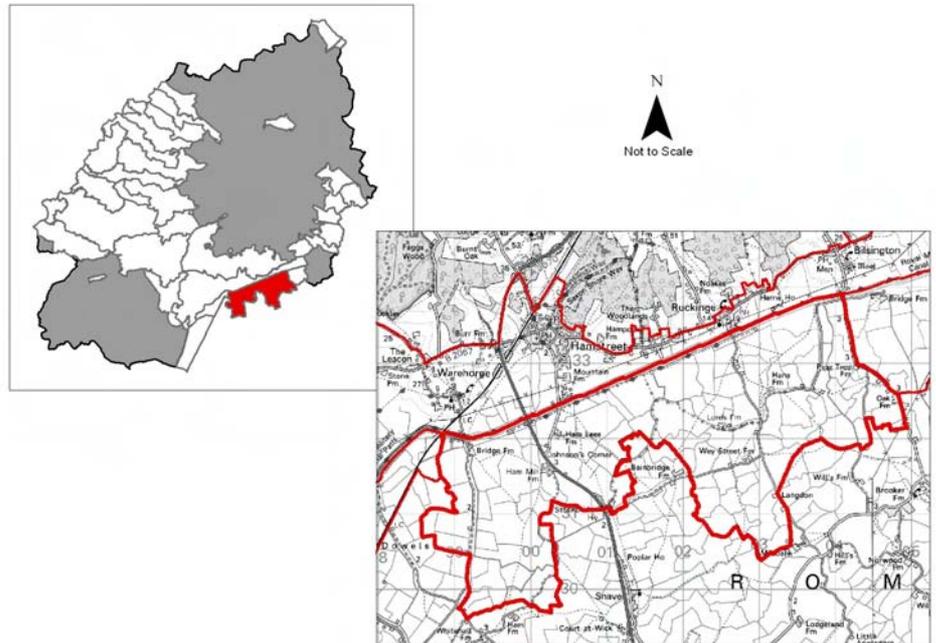
Guidelines: Conserve and Restore

2. Romney Marsh Mixed Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Flat, low lying marshland
- Extensive arable land comprising mostly oil seed rape and wheat
- Irregular field pattern informed by winding network of reed filled drainage ditches
- Pasture enclosed by a variety of fencing types, ditches and some scrubby hedgerows
- Willow groups and remnant pollard willow
- Tree clusters around buildings
- Native hedgerows occasionally line ditches and roads
- Royal Military Canal lines the northern extent of the area, often open and unvegetated
- Farmsteads dispersed across the marshland
- Recent, isolated houses along narrow, winding and ditch lined roads
- Concrete and brick pill boxes structures from World War II
- Busy A2070, which runs between Ashford and the Marsh

Landscape Description



The geology comprises Hastings Beds, with overlaying drifts of Marine (Estuarine) Alluvium. Soils are clay and the landform is flat and low lying. Views out of the character area of the former shoreline settlements of Hamstreet, Ruckinge and Warehorne are available to the north, where the land begins to rise up above the Romney Marsh. Churches provide prominent landmark features, visible on higher ground surrounding the Marsh outside the character area. Throughout the character area, views are across vast extents of oils seed rape and wheat and less exposed blocks of sheep grazing. Field patterns are irregular, informed by the winding network of drainage ditches, and have the appearance of being large due to the general lack of vegetative enclosure. Reed heads emerge above the crops, signifying the lines of ditches. Enclosure within pasture is provided by an amalgamation of fencing types including post and wire, timber, ditches and some scrubby hedgerows. Groups of willow and some remnant pollard willow, thought to have once been a more widespread feature of the ditch system, are scattered along some boundaries. Occasional clusters of trees around buildings





and within hedgerows give some increased shelter and sense of enclosure. Hedgerows occasionally line ditches and roads and become more frequent to the north around the old cliff line. The Royal Military Canal lines the northern extent of the area. Often open and unvegetated along this stretch, the Canal flows almost unnoticed. Bridges, sluices and pumping stations are regular features along the Canal and The Royal Military Canal Path, which is a promoted National Trail/Long Distance Route, lines its route.

Whilst there are no major settlements, farmsteads are dispersed across the marshland, often comprising single dwellings close to a cluster of large agricultural barns. Some isolated recent houses are situated along the roads. Although some thatched roofs are evident, these are often set upon modern brick buildings. Concrete and brick pill boxes are scattered throughout the farmland, which are remnant defence structures from World War II. Few roads run across the Marsh, those which do are narrow and tortuous and follow the tops of banks and dykes with narrow grass verges and ditches along either side. Hedgerows sometimes enclose the roads, providing a less exposed character in comparison with the surrounding open Marsh. The busy A2070, which runs between Ashford and the Marsh, bisects the area.

Condition

The consistently flat topography and the network of drainage ditches provide a coherent pattern of landscape elements. There are few visual detractors, which include large and visually prominent agricultural buildings and the amalgamation of fencing types, which is sometimes in poor condition. Whilst pill boxes provide an historic reference, these are often dilapidated. The Royal Military Canal and the drainage ditches provide a distinct and historic field pattern, and the historic significance of The Royal Military Canal is illustrated through its designation as a Scheduled Monument. The waterways, scrubby vegetation and hedgerows provide opportunities for wildlife, although extensive arable fields limit connectivity. The Canal is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Overall the landscape is in moderate condition.



Sensitivity

The field pattern, dictated by the reed filled drainage ditches and the Royal Military Canal provide a very strong sense of place. The flat landscape and the intermittent tree cover provide high visibility. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape is high.

Guidelines

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



- Conserve and restore the largely undeveloped landscape
- Conserve and appropriately manage drainage ditches and the Royal Military Canal
- Encourage marginal grasses and wetland flora along ditches and the Royal Military Canal
- Seek to rationalise fencing types within pastoral areas and restore traditional timber sheep fencing
- Avoid further arable intensification
- Avoid incongruous features within the widely visible landscape

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

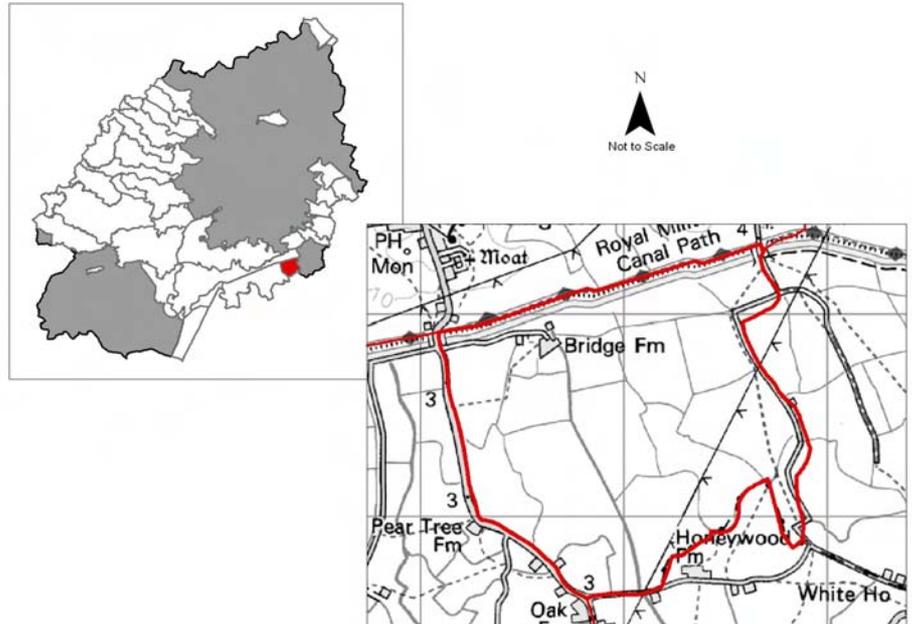
Guidelines: Conserve and Restore

3. Royal Military Marshlands

Key Characteristics

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

Landscape Description



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

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





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

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

Condition

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

Sensitivity

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



landscape is high.

Guidelines

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

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

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

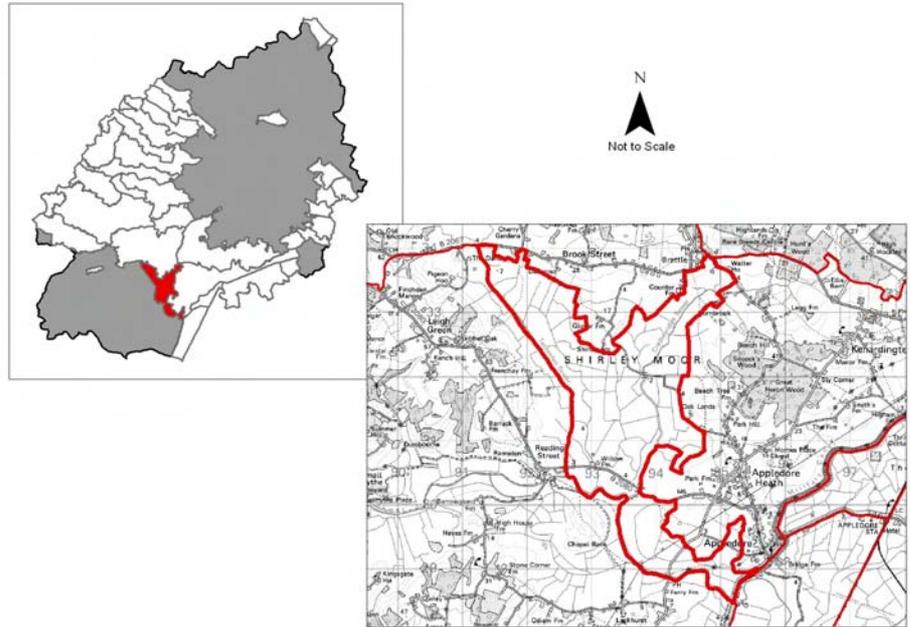
Guidelines: Conserve and Restore

4. Shirley Moor Arable Land

Key Characteristics

- Flat, open arable land
- Views extend to higher ground within the High Weald AONB to the west
- Ditch lined fields, with reed heads visible above the edge of the banks
- Varied, irregular field pattern
- Willow stands and lines of windswept willow along lanes
- Old farmsteads located on the edge of the Marsh
- Most roads skirt the edge of the plain, and those which cross the Marsh are narrow with open views out across the marshland

Landscape Description



Shirley Moor Arable Land forms part of an attached area of floodplain which lies between Tenterden and Appledore. The geology is predominantly composed of Tunbridge Wells Sands, with a band of Wadhurst Clay to the south west and Clay in Tunbridge Wells Sand to the south east. Narrow ribbons of Marine (Estuarine) Alluvium and Alluvium are located along Cradlebridge Sewer to the east and Tenterden Sewer to the west. Soils are clayey, and support intensively farmed arable land, mostly comprising wheat and oil seed rape. The landform is flat, and views extend across the flat marshland to higher ground to the east and higher ground within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to the west. Woodland and hedgerows on higher ground on top of the old shoreline, such as Great Heron Wood near Appledore, enclose the flat, ditch lined fields of the Marsh. Large farm buildings, located on higher surrounding land outside of the character area, dominate the horizon.

The Tenterden Sewer and the Cradlebridge Sewer form the two main drainage channels across the marshland, although the arable fields are dissected by a network of narrow, reed





lined ditches. Fields are large and reasonably regular in size, although the ditches provide a non linear and irregular mosaic like pattern. In comparison with marshland to the east, this is a smaller scale landscape with more trees and native hedgerows which mainly comprise hawthorn and blackthorn. Some scrubby hedgerows line ditches in places, but it is the reed heads which show above the edge of the banks which mark the routes of ditches. Whilst there are no woodlands, windswept willow trees line narrow lanes and ditches in places. Willow stands occur in patches, at road junctions and sewer crossings.

Outside the area on slightly higher ground, old farmsteads, including Shirley Farm and Glover Farm to the north, are located on the edge of the marsh, their

former pastures stretching out into the flat plain. Willow Farm, located along the B2080, provides the only built development within the area. Composed of a number of large scale agricultural barns, the farm stands out within the landscape. Most roads skirt the edge of the plain, following the edge of the surrounding higher ground. The few roads which cross the area are generally narrow with views out across the marshland, although the A2080 to the south which runs from Brenzett to Tenterden forms a wider and busier route.

Condition

The consistent arable land use and the flat landform dissected by reed lined ditches provide a coherent pattern of elements. There are few visual detractors, comprising large agricultural barns, some post and wire fencing, unsympathetic bridge detailing across sewers and a small electricity substation. This is an intensive arable landscape in which the wetland corridors are a weak basis of ecological interest. Mature willow trees along roads and ditches are limited, often over mature and considered to be vulnerable. Overall the landscape is in moderate condition.

Sensitivity

The reed filled ditches and the irregular, mosaic like arable field pattern are distinct and contribute towards the sense of place within the marshland. The lack of development and wind swept willow trees reflect the bleak, open and exposed setting of the marsh and add to the sense of place. There is high visibility across the flat landscape with intermittent tree cover. The location immediately within the foreground to the High Weald AONB makes this a very sensitive landscape in terms of both the setting of, and views to, the AONB. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape is high.



Guidelines

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



- Conserve the largely undeveloped and rural setting of the High Weald AONB
- Conserve and restore the open marshland landscape
- Avoid incongruous features within the widely visible landscape
- Conserve and restore riparian vegetation and characteristic willows
- Plant new willow standards along ditches and sewers to ensure continuity of characteristic vegetation pattern
- Allow woody vegetation to regenerate to provide corridors along the lines of ditches and sewers
- Encourage marginal grasses and wetland flora along ditches and sewers
- Manage the ditches, sewers and associated vegetation appropriately to create a wider riparian corridor
- Remove unnecessary fencing, where required replace with more sympathetic boundary treatments
- Promote sympathetic bridge detailing across sewers

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

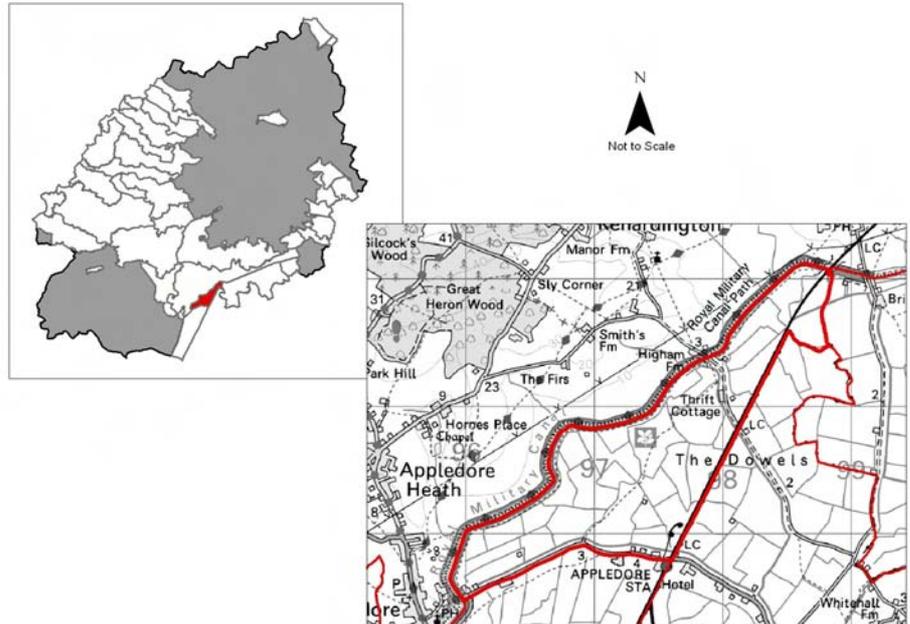
Guidelines: Conserve and Restore

5. The Dowels Marshland Pasture

Key Characteristics

- Low lying marshland
- Small scale, irregular field pattern, divided by drainage ditches
- Pastoral landscape with dark green sedges and surface water
- Traditional timber sheep fencing angled down to meet the water
- Scattered clumps of scrubby shrubs
- Royal Military Canal and roads defined by native vegetation belts
- Little development
- Rhee Wall historic earthwork adjacent to the B2080 to the south

Landscape Description



The geology predominantly comprises Hastings Beds, with some drifts of Marine (Estuarine) Alluvium. Some drifts of Alluvium and Peat overlay the solid geology, the latter of which occurs very near the surface and is known to be shrinking. Soils are clay and the landform is flat and low lying. The permanent pasture is too waterlogged to be cultivated for arable use. The landscape is visibly low lying and often waterlogged, with dark green coarse sedges emerging throughout the grazed landscape. In times of high rainfall, regular patches of pasture appear like pillows floating in watery margins. There is a small scale field pattern, divided to form an irregular pattern by the complex pattern of drainage ditches and sewers, and distinctive timber sheep fencing which is angled down to meet the water. There is limited tree and shrub vegetation throughout the pasture, although clumps of scrubby shrubs are scattered across the landscape and the routes of the Royal Military Canal and roads are defined by native vegetation belts. Well vegetated along its northern extent and lined by the Royal Military Canal Path which is a promoted National Trail/Long Distance Route, the Canal provides a distinct boundary to the marshland.





During the summer months, the Canal becomes ablaze with yellow flag iris and water lily. There is little development throughout the Marsh, although some recent properties line the busy B2080 in the south and a narrow road and railway line cross the area. A section of the Rhee Wall, a very large and distinct earthwork constructed as an historic sea defence between Appledore and New Romney, lines the northern extent of the B2080. A wide ditch on the northern side of the wall suggests that it was the source of the material for the earthwork. The sides of the bank are grassed with occasional scrub vegetation, and are high enough to afford long views over the adjacent marshlands.

Condition

The flat, open landscape has a unified pattern of elements and there are few visual detractors. The Royal Military Canal and the drainage ditches provide a distinct and historic field pattern. The historic significance of The Royal Military Canal is illustrated through its designation as a Scheduled Monument. The waterways, scrubby vegetation and the lack of intensively farmed agricultural land provide opportunities for wildlife. The Royal Military Canal and adjacent pasture are designated as part of the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Hythe Bay Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The area is of biological interest due to its ditch systems which host a wide variety of fauna, and also support large numbers of breeding and non-breeding birds. Overall the landscape is in good condition.

Sensitivity

This is an historic landscape with unique and rare features. The field pattern, dictated by the drainage ditches and traditional timber sheep fencing, and the undeveloped low lying pastoral landscape provide a very strong sense of place. The flat landscape and the open, treeless character provide high visibility. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape is high.



Guidelines

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

- Conserve the largely undeveloped pastoral landscape and avoid agricultural intensification
- Conserve and appropriately manage drainage ditches and the Royal Military Canal
- Conserve and restore traditional timber sheep fencing and avoid modern fencing types as a means of enclosure
- Encourage marginal grasses and wetland flora along ditches and the Royal Military Canal
- Conserve the Rhee Wall embankment in its grassed form
- Avoid incongruous features within the widely visible landscape

Landscape Analysis

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

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

Guidelines: Conserve

Valleys



A number of geographically dispersed valleys containing rivers, which mostly comprise numerous tributaries of the River Stour, are scattered throughout the study area. The Valley landscape type is characterised by the flat, low lying topography which contain the East Stour, Great Stour and the River Beult. Whilst the Boughton Lees Horticultural Valley does not contain a river, the landscape forms the valley side of the Great Stour River which flows outside the study area to the east.

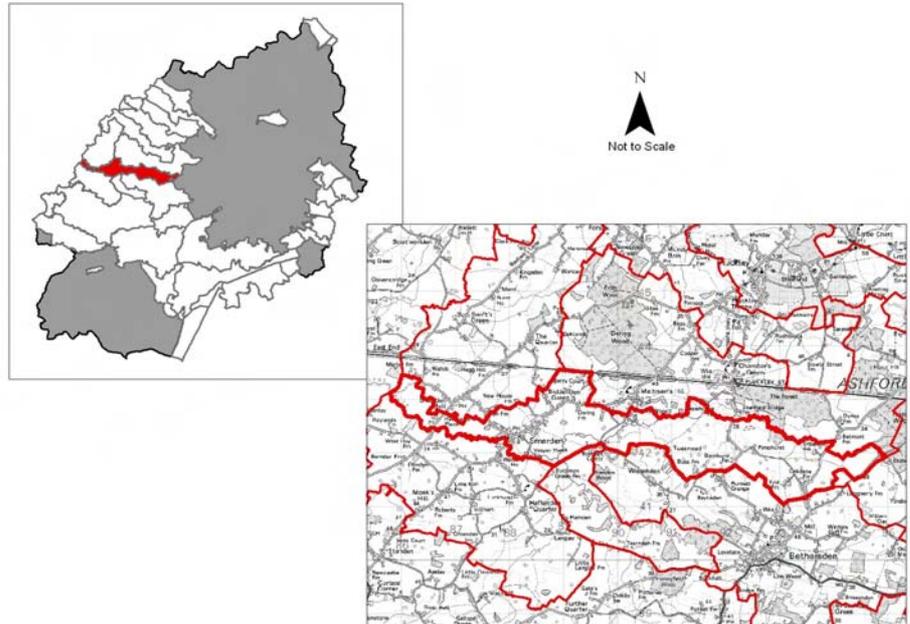


6. Beult Valley Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Flat, low lying floodplain of the River Beult
- Well vegetated river banks and distinctive lines of willow
- Numerous small field ponds
- Pastoral land use with dark patches of sedges
- Varied field pattern with shapes dictated by meandering river
- Small clusters of trees and shrubs
- Few, ditch lined, narrow roads
- Scattered settlement with some converted traditional buildings and permanent mobile homes
- Picturesque settlement of Smarden with an abundance of distinctive vernacular properties

Landscape Description



The geology is Weald Clay with an area of Large 'Paludina' Limestone surrounding Tuesnod. Ribbons of drift geology along the river comprise 2nd Terrace River Gravel and Alluvium. Soils are loamy in the west, changing to loam to clay in the east. The typical Low Weald landscape is characterised predominantly by the flat, low lying topography, which forms the floodplain of the meandering River Beult. The river channel is fringed with well vegetated banks and distinctive lines of willow, which visually define the course of the river. A number of small field ponds punctuate the landscape, and there is an isolated, tranquil character. The land use is predominantly pastoral, used as grazing for sheep, and darker patches of sedges reflect the floodplain location. Fields are often bordered by the course of the river and a series of ditches, which are often lined with tall, visually intervening vegetation belts. Further subdivision of fields has occurred, with enclosure frequently provided by post and wire fencing. The field pattern is varied, with shapes often dictated by the enclosing, meandering river.

Tree cover is limited to small





clusters of trees and shrubs, scattered around field ponds and settlements, linear vegetation belts and small woodland copses along the course of the river. Native hedgerows line the narrow lanes in places. To the south, there are some significant mixed woodland blocks. Some fields have been turned to arable cultivation, often enclosed by the woodland blocks. Roads are few and, distinctively, they are often ditch lined. Settlement is scattered, rarely occurring on the river alluviums themselves apart from infrequent but large farmsteads. Clusters of converted barns, oasts and traditional buildings, often clad with weather boarding, constructed from timber frames or roofed by thatch, are situated along the lanes. Scattered permanent mobile homes contrast with traditional buildings, and are often made prominent by additional fencing, gateways and a variety of grazing animals. Smarden forms a picturesque, tranquil settlement which clusters around the distinctive ragstone 14th century church set above the reach of the Beult's floodwaters. The church is known as the 'Barn of Kent' because of its wide scissor – beamed roof unsupported by pillars. Buildings comprise a number of vernacular brick, tile or weather boarded houses, often with distinctive leaded windows.

Condition

The flat topography and predominant pastoral land use gives rise to a coherent pattern of elements. There are, however, a number of visual detractors including the permanent mobile homes which do not respect the local vernacular and often have an adjacent amalgamation of gate and fence types including close boarded and chain link. Farms often support a number of modern large scale agricultural buildings constructed from corrugated metal. The subdivision of fields for horse grazing immediately surrounding farmsteads and properties using a variety of fencing types slightly detracts from the surrounding simplicity of field division. Fly tipping appears to be common throughout the area. The minimal amount of arable intensification, and the habitat corridor provided by the River Beult and associated vegetation, field ponds and ditches provide a strong habitat framework. West of Hadmans Bridge along Bell Lane, the River Beult is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Built development generally respects the local vernacular, and Smarden is designated as a Conservation Area with its various period houses and over 100 listed buildings. Overall the landscape is in moderate condition.

Sensitivity

The varied field pattern, often enclosed by the meandering River Beult, is distinctive. The River Beult with its well vegetated course provides strong continuity throughout the area. Whilst some recent development does not respect the local character, Smarden and the frequent traditional buildings and conversions demonstrate a strong sense of place and



a high degree of local distinctiveness. The flat valley landscape and the intermittent tree cover provide high visibility. Overall the landscape has a high sensitivity.

Guidelines



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

- Conserve the largely undeveloped character of the landscape
- Conserve the pastoral land use and resist further arabilisation
- Encourage marginal grasses and wetland flora along field and roadside drainage ditches
- Conserve the riverside vegetation and characteristic willows
- Plant new willow standards along river to ensure continuity of characteristic vegetation pattern
- Manage the drainage ditches, field ponds and associated vegetation appropriately to create a wider riparian corridor
- Resist further field division through fencing
- Conserve traditional buildings and resist modern development around the outskirts of Smarden
- Resist inappropriate modern building style and materials
- Encourage the integration of large agricultural buildings into the landscape with appropriate clumps of native planting

Landscape Analysis

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

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

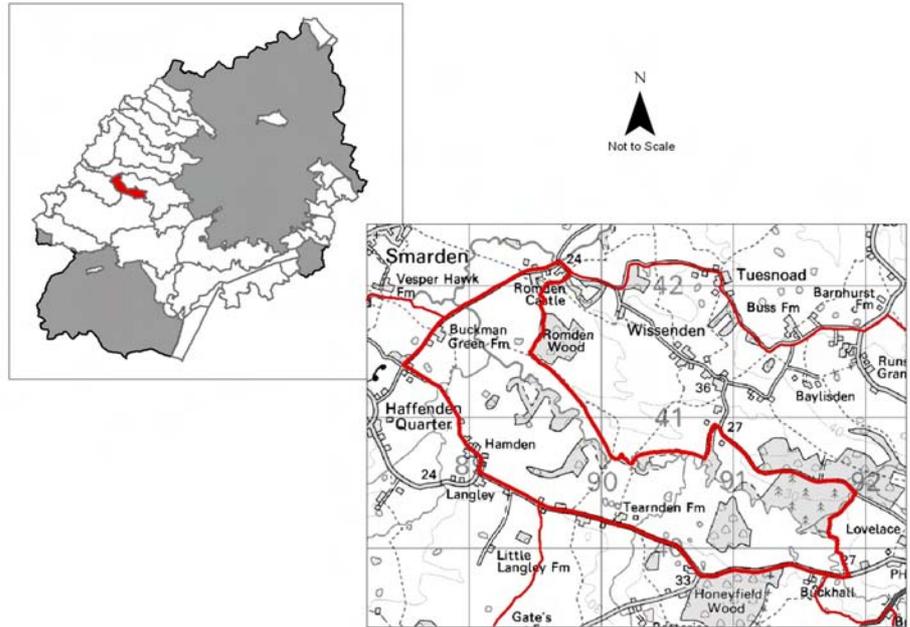
Guidelines: Conserve and Restore

7. Beult Valley Wooded Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Flat, low lying floodplain of the River Beult
- Broadleaf and coppice woodland blocks along the river corridor
- Pollard willow
- Numerous small field ponds
- Intensive arable land use
- Small area of hop production
- Varied field pattern with shapes dictated by meandering river
- Lack of built development and roads
- Narrow ditch lined roads skirt the periphery of the floodplain
- Scattered traditional buildings along peripheral lanes

Landscape Description



The geology is Weald Clay. Ribbons of drift geology along the river comprise 2nd Terrace River Gravel and Alluvium. Soils are loamy along the river channel, with loam to clay at the edges. The landscape is characterised predominantly by the flat, low lying topography, which forms the floodplain of the meandering River Beult. The river is narrow throughout this section in comparison with where it flows west of Smerden. The river channel is well wooded along its course, and the random pattern of broadleaf and coppice woodland does not therefore visually define the course of the river channel. Pollard willows form a distinctive feature along the wide verge of Romden Road to the west. The land is predominantly intensively farmed, with fields enclosed by woodland edges and fragmented by wooded field ponds. A small area of hop production to the west provides a small remnant of what would have been the major land use historically.

The landscape is characterised by the lack of development and roads. Scattered traditional buildings, including converted oast houses which would once have been used extensively for the





drying of hops, are situated along the narrow ditch lined roads which skirt the floodplain.

Condition

The flat topography and predominant arable land use gives rise to a unified pattern of elements, and there are very few visual detractors. Although weakened slightly by agricultural intensification, much of the woodland is ancient and the habitat corridor provided by the River Beult and associated vegetation, field ponds and ditches provide a strong habitat framework. Woodland to the east is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Built development around the periphery of the area generally respects the local vernacular. Overall the landscape is in good condition.

Sensitivity

The varied field pattern, often enclosed by the meandering River Beult and peppered with field ponds, is distinctive. The River Beult with its well vegetated course provides strong continuity throughout the area. The lack of development and roads provide a tranquil character and a strong sense of place. The flat valley landscape and the intermittent tree cover provide high visibility. Overall the landscape has a high sensitivity.



Guidelines

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

- Conserve the undeveloped character of the landscape
- Encourage marginal grasses and wetland flora along field and roadside drainage ditches
- Conserve the riverside vegetation and woodland blocks
- Manage the drainage ditches, field ponds and associated vegetation appropriately to create a wider riparian corridor
- Conserve and appropriately manage strong ancient woodland blocks
- Conserve traditional buildings along peripheral roads and resist further development



Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Good
Pattern of elements:	Unified
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Strong
Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

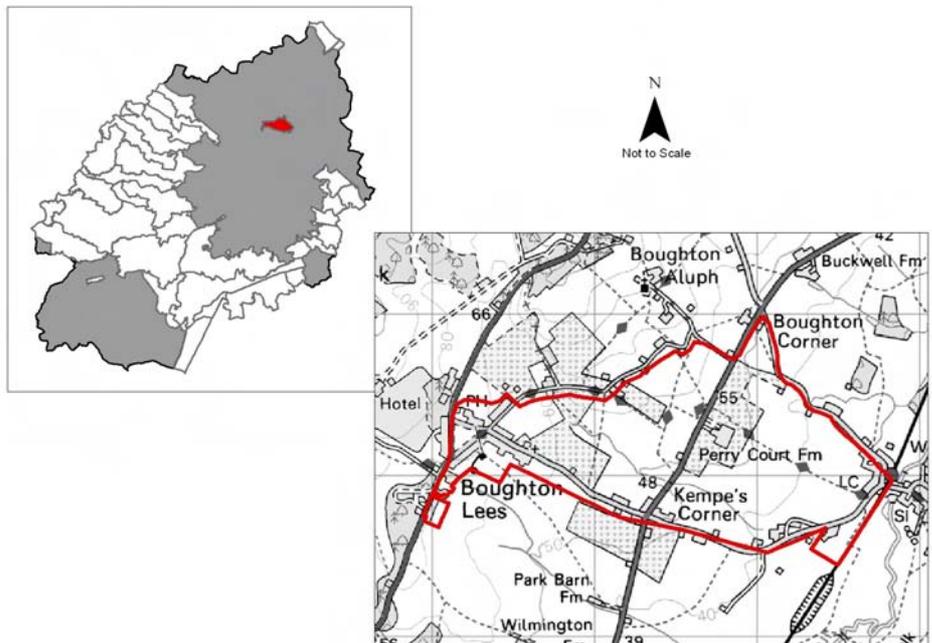
Guidelines: Conserve

8. Boughton Lees Horticultural Valley

Key Characteristics

- Sloping landscape towards the Great Stour River
- Dramatic, panoramic views out of the area of the Kent Downs AONB
- Large arable fields
- Horticultural land use with polytunnels and orchards
- Tall poplar shelter belts
- Frequent conifer belts
- Settlement of Boughton Lees situated around a cricket pitch
- Busy highways and the contrasting narrow and ancient Pilgrims Way
- Recent development extends out from Wye

Landscape Description



The geology comprises Lower Chalk, with Gault Clay forming part of the Great Stour valley to the east. There is a complex pattern of drift geology, with a ribbon of Alluvium following the drains which run across the area in a generally north west to south east direction towards the Great Stour. Swathes of 3rd Terrace River Gravel, Head and Head Brickearth are scattered across the area. Soils are silty and, although in general the area appears flat and water courses are not easily discernible within the arable landscape. The topography gently slopes towards the Great Stour River outside the character area to the east.

There are dramatic, panoramic views out of the area of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to the south west, round to the south east. To the east, the chalk crown carved into the hillside above Wye is a distinctive landmark feature, along with Boughton Aluph church which lies outside the area to the north. Extensive views within the area are across open arable land and horticultural areas of brassicas, fruit orchards and small pine plantations. Whilst there are no woodland blocks or copses, tall an often overgrown,





poplar shelter belts stand out within the flat landscape. Frequent conifer belts provide visually screening enclosure, and native hedgerows, often tall and unmaintained, line the roads. Intensive agricultural land use has resulted in extensive hedgerow loss and diminished traditional field pattern across much of the landscape. Pockets of fruit orchards provide some enclosure and an element of consistency across the area. Fragmented paddocks are located around housing, and some overgrown and disused pasture is located north of Harville Road. Boughton Lees comprises a traditional Kentish village centred on an open village green, used as a cricket pitch. Whilst some housing and The Flying Horse public house comprise traditional buildings, there has been extensive recent infill housing development around the green and along the minor

roads which radiate from the village centre.

To the east, development on the periphery of the historic settlement of Wye has extended along the roads. Housing is predominantly recent, although some traditional houses and oasts are scattered amongst the newer properties. Spring Grove School, located along Harville Road, is situated within playing fields, expanding the variation in terms of land use. Perry Court supports fruit orchards, the production of brassicas and horticultural vegetation production within polytunnels. Highways are busy, with Harville Road linking Wye with Boughton Lees and the A28, which runs between Ashford and Canterbury, bisecting the area. The ancient Pilgrims Way, which runs from Winchester to Canterbury, comprises a historic, narrow and hedge lined lane to the north. The North Downs Way National Trail/Long Distance Route crosses the landscape on its route from Farnham to Dover.

Condition

The arable land use, with pockets of orchards and horticultural production, and the consistent topography provide an element of coherency throughout the landscape. However, the landscape is fragmented by mixed land use and the busy A28 which bisects the area. There are many visual detractors including busy roads, polytunnels, mesh fencing, fly tipping, caravans, large agricultural barns and unsympathetic culverting methods. Structures in association with fruit production, and heaps of crates and palettes for fruit collection are frequent throughout the area. Hedgerows often have gaps within them, and the large agricultural fields provide limited opportunities for wildlife. Some orchards are derelict and shelter belts are often remnant and over mature. Overall, the condition of the landscape is poor.

Sensitivity

Traditional fruit orchards and shelter belts are reflective of the wider Kentish countryside and are distinct. However recent development along the busy roads does not contribute to local distinctiveness, and some fragmented land use on the periphery of the historic



settlement of Wye provides a slightly sub urban character. Nevertheless, the landscape falls within a sensitive location at the foot of the Kent Downs AONB, and there is a high level of visibility across the landscape. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape is moderate.

Guidelines

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



- Restore and improve restore the rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Restore and improve the open landscape
- Restore and improve traditional orchard plantations and shelter belts
- Restore and improve hedgerows
- Encourage sympathetic culverting of the water course
- Encourage the removal of alien conifer and replace with appropriate native planting
- Encourage the integration of large agricultural buildings and polytunnels into the landscape with appropriate clumps of native planting
- Encourage removal of derelict barns and structures, and less visually intrusive storage methods of fruit collection containers/pallettes
- Improve enclosure by aiming to rationalise fencing methods

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Poor
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
Detracting features:	Many
Visual unity:	Interrupted
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of place:	Weak
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

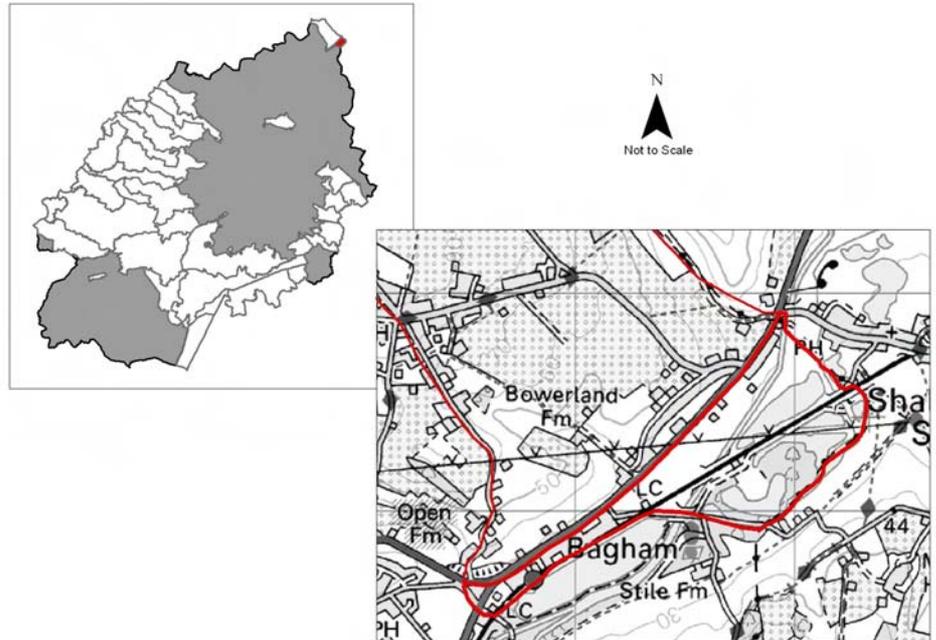
Guidelines: Restore and Improve

9. Stour Valley Shalmsford

Key Characteristics

- Flat valley landscape containing the Great Stour River
- North Downs rise to the south and to the west, visually enclosing the flat valley floor
- Grazed valley floor with isolated oak trees
- Large lakes used for fishing
- Native woodland to the south
- Equestrian grazing and facilities off the A28
- Recent housing and light industrial/commercial development along the A28
- Fragmentation caused by the A28 and railway line

Landscape Description



The geology comprises Upper Chalk to the north and Middle Chalk to the south, overlain with Alluvium and a ribbon of Head Brickearth and 2nd Terrace River Gravel to the north of the railway line. Soils are clay around areas of open water. As part of the Great Stour valley, the landform is flat and low lying. The Great Stour flows along the valley floor, lined with vegetation including a significant amount of willow. Shalmsford Bridge straddles the river to the north, constructed of ornate brickwork with detailed arches and turrets. The North Downs rise to the south and to the west, visually enclosing the flat valley floor. Adjacent to the area, the valley further to the south extends into the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and this section of the valley provides the immediate foreground to the Kent Downs AONB.

Views within the area extend along the valley floor across a grazed landscape with isolated oak trees and large extents of water used for fishing. Gravel extraction has had a major influence on the valley landscape, and wet pits cover a vast area of the valley floor. To the south, large areas of native woodland are visually





enclosing. Whilst the valley floor to the north east is generally open and unenclosed, come recent post and wire fencing along the river corridor and roads encloses sheep pasture. Some native hedgerows enclose paddocks to the south west, and tree belts define the river and the railway line. Paddocks around housing along the A28 are segregated by timber post and rail fencing and are used for grazing horses. Equestrian facilities, including stabling and exercise arenas are apparent.

Development is restricted to recent housing which aligns the A28. Houses are large and surrounding by fenced grazing paddocks which slope eastward towards the Great Stour. A single belt of tall poplar trees is remnant of the former orchards which have since been removed. At Bagham recent light commercial and industrial buildings have developed along the A28, although some very distinct historic buildings remain. The area forms an important transport corridor with the A28 running along the contours to the north west, and the railway link between Canterbury with Ashford crossing the valley floor on embankment. To the south, Picklenden Lane comprises a narrow and historic route through the surrounding enclosing woodland.

Condition

The landscape has become fragmented as a result of the railway line which bisects the valley floor, the busy A28 and recent light commercial and industrial development. Visual detractors comprise a line of pylons which run east west across the valley floor, the infrastructure routes, recent development, light commercial and industrial buildings and poor culverting details along Picklenden Lane. The river forms the basis for a strong ecological corridor, with surrounding wetlands and open water which encourage a wide variety of birdlife. Much of the area falls within The Great Stour, Ashford to Fordwich, Local Wildlife Site. The woodland to the south, hedgerows and tree belts expand the variety of wildlife opportunities. The cultural integrity of the area has been weakened through orchard removal and the fragmentation caused by transport links and recent development. Overall the landscape is in moderate condition.

Sensitivity

The prominent valley landscape, the Great Stour and vast lakes provide a distinct sense of place. However, recent development along the A28 detracts from the key characteristics of the landscape. Whilst visibility is lower to the south where the landscape is more wooded, the flat valley floor gives way to high visibility to the north. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape is moderate.



Guidelines

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



- Conserve the open and grazed valley landscape to the north east
- Conserve the woodland to the south which provides the immediate setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve the strong ecological corridor provided by the river, wetlands and lakes and improve it through sensitive management
- Conserve and improve tree belts along the Great Stour
- Conserve isolated oak trees across the valley floor
- Restrict further segregation of small grazing paddocks along the A28
- Improve the appearance of light commercial and industrial buildings and car parking along the A28 through rationalised security fencing types and appropriate planting to provide visual screening
- Encourage sympathetic conversions of traditional buildings which do not urbanise the character of the building

Landscape Analysis

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

Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of place:	Weak
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

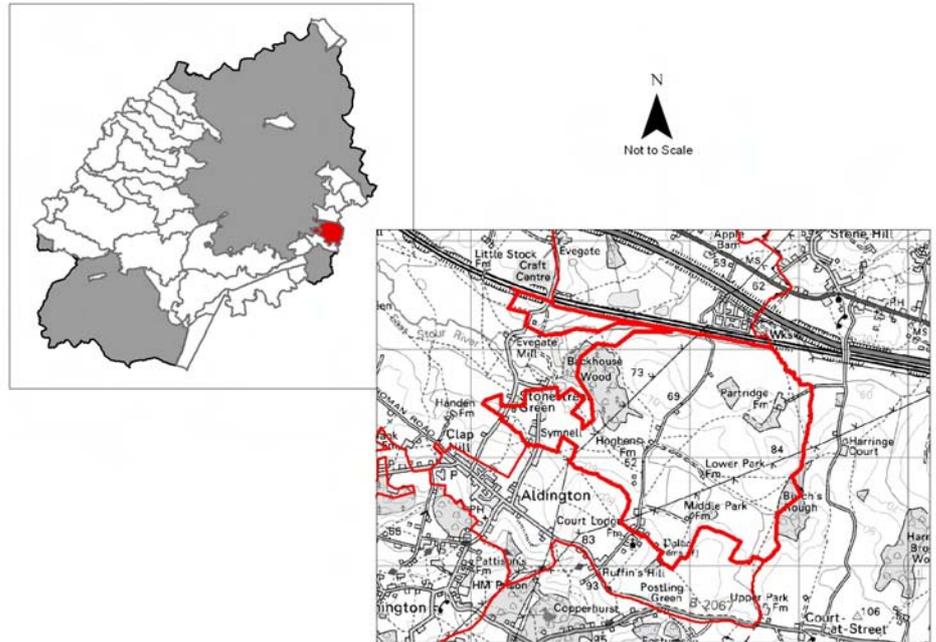
Guidelines: Conserve and Improve

10. East Stour Valley

Key Characteristics

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

Landscape Description



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

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





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

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

Condition

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

Sensitivity

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



Guidelines

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



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

Landscape Analysis

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

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

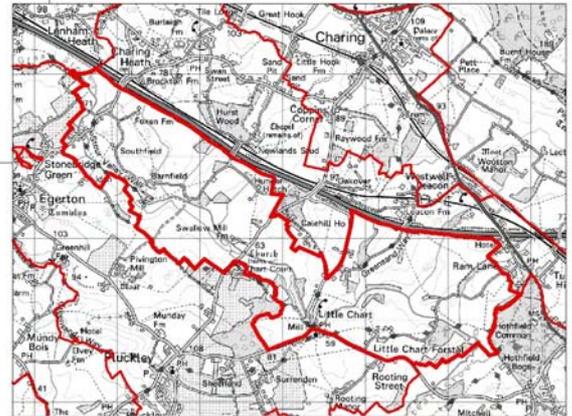
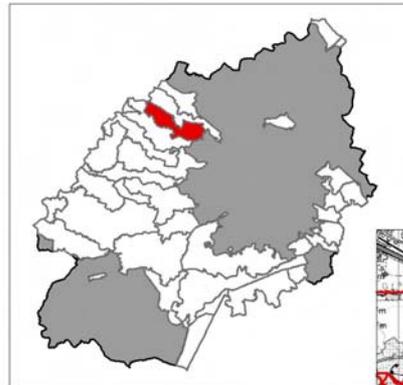
Guidelines: Conserve and Restore

11. Great Stour Valley

Key Characteristics

- Valley containing the Great Stour River
- Willows, some pollarded along river
- Mature oak trees set within hedgerows and isolated within mixed farmland
- Subtle heathland characteristics including gorse and bracken
- Narrow lanes and ragstone bridges
- Well vegetated, species rich road verges
- Pastoral land use with dark patches of sedges
- Rectilinear field pattern divided by alder shelterbelts to the east
- Ragstone and chequered brickwork
- 'Dering' windows
- Converted farm buildings
- Mills along the river

Landscape Description



Along the course of the Great Stour, the geology is Sandgate Beds overlain with Alluvium drifts. Areas of 4th Terrace River Gravel are scattered through the valley. Hythe Beds extend to the south and Lower Greensand stretches to the north. Soils are loamy, although the alluvial valley of the river gives rise to poorer quality soils. There are long views along the valley of grazed pasture, and out of the area to the opposite arable valley side. Glimpses out of the area of the North Downs are available from some locations. The proximity to the Great Stour is highly evident, with narrow road crossings over the river via ragstone bridges, ponds wet within a pastoral landscape at Barnfield to the west and mills scattered along the course of the river.

Throughout the grazed pastoral valley floor, a number of mature isolated oak trees provide a parkland character. Willows, some pollarded, are strewn along the course of the Great Stour, and sedges and rushes reflect the low lying character of the riverside pasture. Oak is a dominant species throughout the landscape, set within native hedgerows and scattered throughout the larger arable fields





as well as within the pasture. Some subtle heathland characteristics are evident, including gorse set within hedgerows and bracken integrated within road verges in places. The valley topography provides a general sense of enclosure throughout the area. To the east, there is a strong rectilinear field pattern provided by a regular formation of nursery fields set within alder shelterbelts and tall hedgerows which are predominantly hazel. Further west the sense of enclosure weakens, where arable intensification has resulted in hedgerow loss and more open views across large prairie like arable fields. Despite the extensive fields to the west there is a well treed appearance to the landscape, provided by native hedgerows, small broadleaf woodland blocks and isolated oak trees.

Settlement comprises scattered clusters of farm buildings and small hamlets. A number of buildings are converted farm buildings, although some conversions slightly urbanise the traditional fabric of the buildings. Ragstone, hanging tiles and chequered brickwork are dominant materials. Little Chart comprises a traditional settlement centred on a small village green and the river. A number of striking vernacular style buildings, including a medieval timber framed property with a jettied upper storey and traditional chequered brick buildings with 'Dering' windows, create a strong and historic character to the village. However later extensions to the village, including local authority housing and a recent brick church, slightly detract from the strength of character. Little Chart Forstal comprises a remote hamlet to the east of Little Chart, with traditional and many converted farm buildings set around a village cricket pitch. Roads are very narrow with species rich verges containing bluebells, cow parsley, buttercups and red campion. The M20, aligned by the Channel Tunnel Rail, Link to the west, defines much of the northern boundary. Whilst not widely visible, the transport corridor is audible and forms a definitive boundary on the ground.

Condition

There is a coherent pattern of elements provided by the consistent valley topography, the frequency of mature oak trees throughout the landscape and the frequency of willow trees along the river. Visual detractors include large arable barns, some of which are derelict, and equipment and fencing in association with the nursery to the east. A number of Local Wildlife Sites are focused on pockets of woodland (some of which is ancient) and small areas of the river. The river, small woodland blocks and areas of pastoral landscape provide a corridor and bases for wildlife. However, the intensely farmed landscape to the west and loss of hedgerows slightly weaken the overall ecological integrity of the area. The condition of heritage features is good, with a number of vernacular style buildings respecting the sense of place. Little Chart is designated as a Conservation Area. Whilst hedgerow removal to the west has removed the traditional field pattern, mature oak trees mark historic boundary lines even in the extensive prairie like arable fields. Overall the landscape is in good condition.



Sensitivity

A number of key characteristics are very distinct, including the frequency of oak and willow trees, the narrow lanes with species rich verges, the use of ragstone as a building material and locally distinct 'Dering' windows. The dominant valley landscape, the rising valley sides and the intermittent tree cover provide high visibility. Overall the landscape has a high sensitivity.

Guidelines

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



- Conserve the frequency of mature oak trees throughout the landscape, both within hedgerows and standing isolated within fields
- Plant new oak trees to ensure continuity of this key feature
- Conserve the riverside vegetation and characteristic willows
- Plant new willow standards along river to ensure continuity of characteristic vegetation pattern
- Conserve the rectilinear field pattern to the east and alder shelterbelts
- Conserve pastoral land use and avoid further arable intensification
- Conserve the narrow lanes with ragstone bridges and well vegetated, species rich verges
- Conserve vernacular style buildings and materials including ragstone, chequered brickwork and 'Dering' windows
- Avoid further modern development around Little Chart

Landscape Analysis

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

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

Guidelines: Conserve

Low Weald



Many of the landscape character areas which fall within the study area are situated within the Low Weald landscape type. This is a small scale, intimate landscape, enclosed by native hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees. Numerous narrow lanes traverse the Low Weald, linking dispersed farmsteads and small settlements. The Low Weald is characterised by the low lying, undulating topography, with an abundance of field ponds, small streams and wet woodlands. Many of the frequent field ponds are marl pits, which were excavated to provide marl to spread on the fields to improve the soil. Dating back to medieval times, the ponds served as convenient watering holes for livestock. Marl pits are a common feature throughout the Low and High Weald landscape, and 'marl' is often used in local place names. Similarly, hammer ponds are also found throughout the landscape and these are remnant features from ancient iron workings. Other ponds could also be from extraction for brick and tile making.

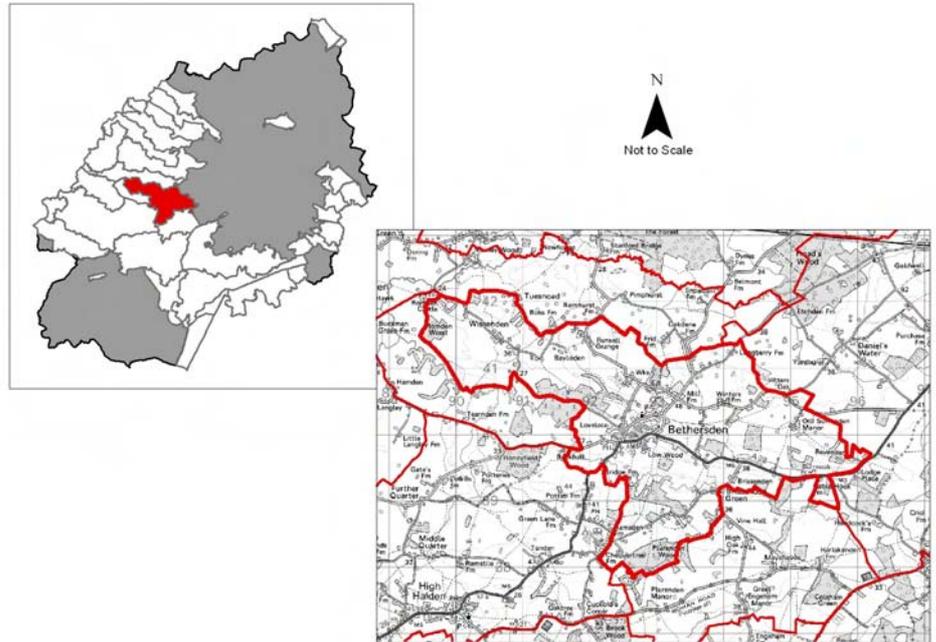


12. Bethersden Mixed Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Undulating landscape
- Wealden pattern of small pastoral fields
- Dense native hedgerows with oak hedgerow trees
- Frequent extensive broadleaf woodland blocks
- Frequent field ponds punctuate the landscape
- Strong sense of enclosure provided by well treed and undulating landscape
- Scattered farms
- Much 20th century housing development around Bethersden

Landscape Description



The solid geology comprises Weald Clay, with Alluvium drift along the stream which flows on from the River Beult. Soils are loam to clay. The landform is undulating, with the settlement of Bethersden situated on a rise. The grey, shelly Paludina Limestone, which forms the resistant strata of the Bethersden rise, has been used historically for church building, notably the tower of 15th century Bethersden church itself. Bethersden was formerly well known for marble production and was a centre of the Kentish wool trade. Views are restricted by the well treed and undulating landscape, although glimpses of the wooded Greensand Ridge to the north are available from some places.

The typical Wealden pattern of small pastoral fields, enclosed by a dense network of native hedgerows and punctuated by small field ponds, provides a distinct sense of place. Mature oak trees are located throughout the landscape, both as hedgerow trees and within woodland blocks. Native hedgerows are species rich, containing oak, beech, hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn and dogrose. Frequent broadleaf woodland blocks are extensive, with





woodland names reflecting the size of two plots as 'Twenty Acre Wood'. The abundance of trees, within woodland and hedgerows, provide both a strong sense of enclosure and strong seasonal variation.

The vernacular village centre of Bethersden is focused around the large church. Chequered brickwork and white weatherboarding are frequent building materials used on the more traditional buildings. Much 20th century development has extended out from the traditional core of Bethersden, and recent residential development spills out along the A28. Within Bethersden, traditional buildings are scattered amongst the modern infill development of red brick, hanging tiles and exposed aggregate concrete finish. Recreational facilities including playing fields, tennis courts and a cricket pitch along the busy A28 provide a slightly sub – urban character to the village. Converted oast houses and black weather boarded barns are strewn about the landscape. Scattered farmsteads and clustered traditional development at Wissenden support the wider rural character of the Wealden landscape.

A network of narrow hedgerow enclosed lanes run through the landscape, and are most concentrated around Bethersden to the north of the A28, which forms a busy route between Ashford and Tenterden.

Condition

The characteristic mosaic of pasture, enclosed by native hedgerows and broadleaf woodland blocks, provide a unified pattern of elements. Many farms support large agricultural buildings, and nursery buildings and a redundant mill also provide visual detractors. However, the well treed and undulating landscape restricts visibility of such large buildings and absorbs visually detracting features. Bethersden is designated as a Conservation Area. Whilst post and wire fencing often supports hedgerows, the density of the hedgerows restricts visibility of the fencing. The extensive hedgerow network provides corridors for wildlife, and woodland blocks and field



ponds provide strong habitat bases. Much of the woodland is ancient and west of Bethersden, Lamberden and Odiam Woodlands are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. There is very little intensive arable land use, and the extensive tree cover appears to be well maintained. Overall the landscape is in good condition.

Sensitivity

The pattern of hedgerow enclosed pasture, frequent oak trees, broadleaf woodland blocks and field ponds provide both continuity throughout the landscape and a strong sense of place. Whilst the A28 and much 20th



century development extending out from Bethersden’s traditional core slightly detract from the tranquil and rural character of the surrounding landscape, these features do not significantly weaken the strong local distinctiveness provided throughout the wider landscape. The well treed character provides low visibility. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape is moderate.

Guidelines

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

- Conserve and reinforce intimate small scale field pattern and strong sense of enclosure
- Conserve and appropriately manage strong woodland blocks
- Conserve and appropriately manage strong matrix of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Plant new hedgerow oaks to reinforce and provide continuation of this key feature
- Conserve field ponds and slow flowing streams
- Conserve traditional vernacular style buildings including oasts and Wealden timber framed houses
- Avoid agricultural intensification

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Good
Pattern of elements:	Unified
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Good
Ecological integrity:	Strong
Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Continuity:	Ancient
Sense of place:	Strong
Landform:	Insignificant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Low

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

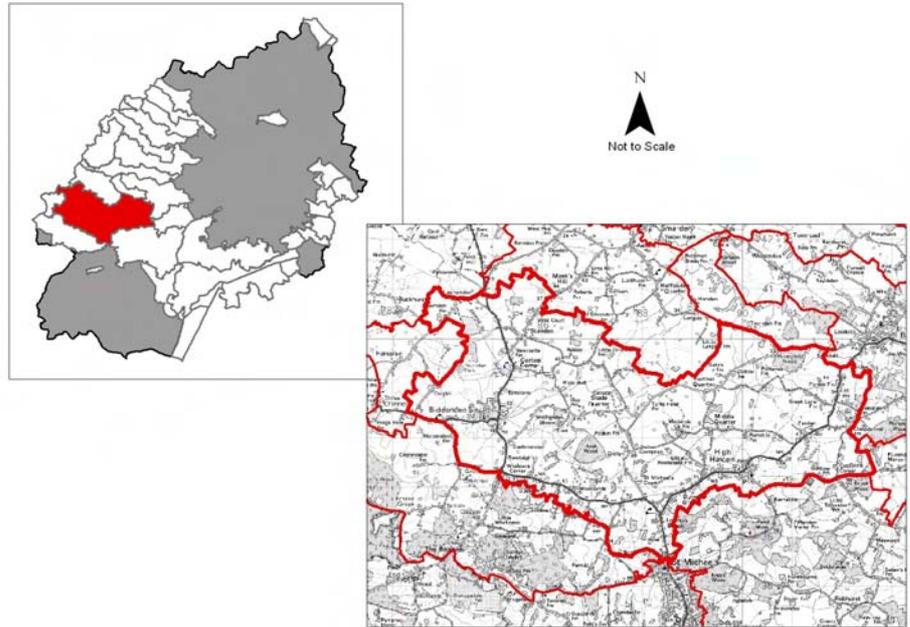
Guidelines: Conserve and Reinforce

13. Biddenden and High Halden Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Undulating landscape
- Mixed farmland with agricultural intensification providing loss of hedgerows and small scale field pattern
- Equestrian land use
- Frequent field ponds, narrow streams and sedges
- Busy A roads with ribbon development provide an urbanising effect
- Historic settlements of Biddenden and High Halden situated around distinctive churches
- Frequent scattered farms and manors

Landscape Description



The solid geology comprises Weald Clay, with drift ribbons of Cyrene Limestone and Alluvium north of Biddenden. Soils are loam to clay. The high and undulating ground is situated on the edge of the High Weald, and this elevation provides views out across the Low Weald and to the higher ridges of the High Weald to the south. Where the landform allows, there are long views across undulating farmland from the A28 east of High Halden. Views within the area are restricted by tree cover and the undulating landform. Largely, there is a traditional pattern of broadleaf and hornbeam coppice woodlands and hedgerow enclosed fields. Oak trees are frequent within woodland and as mature trees within hedgerows. A belt of trees marks the line of the dismantled Kent and East Sussex Railway, which curves from High Halden, towards Biddenden and northwards towards Headcorn. Field ponds punctuate the landscape and narrow streams thread their way across low ground, indicative of the wet clays below. North of Biddenden, Chart Hills Golf Course detracts from the landscape pattern of hedgerow enclosed fields and its smooth greens, sandpits and manmade lakes appear artificial and manicured in comparison.

Some conversion of pasture to arable land throughout the landscape has resulted in some loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and a slightly more open and less enclosed landscape in comparison with the small scale and well enclosed pattern of the wider Low Weald. Where conversion to arable has taken place, there is some fragmentation in field pattern and remaining hedgerows often appear to be unmanaged. Equestrian grazing forms a prominent land use throughout the area, often resulting in field segregation through the use of various fencing types.

High Halden, with its concentration of white weather boarded houses, is



focused around its village green and distinctive church. The historic settlement of Biddenden is sited on flatter land and is characterised by distinctive black and white timber framed buildings and Bethersden 'marble' pavements. The distinctive church, thought to have been constructed in the 1200s, was built originally from limestone, with some later additions of flint, ragstone and Bethersden 'marble'. Farms and manors are scattered frequently throughout the rural landscape, often featuring vernacular style farmhouses. Ornamental fruit orchards set within gardens, and small scale pockets of hop production, are remnant of former land use.

Busy and fast moving highways cut through the landscape, and detract from the historic character of settlements. The A28 bisects High Halden and the A262 and the A274 dominate the picturesque settlement of Biddenden. Recent linear residential and light commercial ribbon development has occurred along the major roads, providing a slightly urbanised character along these major routes. Chart Hills Golf Course, north of Biddenden, adds to the urbanising features within the landscape. Roads throughout the remainder of the area are narrow and winding, and often hedgerow enclosed.

Condition

This is a coherent landscape, with a consistent pattern of elements. However, there are a number of visual detractors including a variety of fencing types and unsightly gateways, excessive field segregation for equestrian grazing, small holdings with untidy grounds, dilapidated farm buildings and light commercial development along major roads. Whilst woodland blocks, the remaining hedgerow network and the undulating landform help to contain this intrusion, the number, scale and frequency of such detractors are inevitably changing the rural character of the landscape. Whilst there is a well developed ecological framework provided by woodland blocks, remaining hedgerows, streams and field ponds, there has been some hedgerow loss and lack of hedgerow management. Much of the woodland is ancient and there are a number of designated Local Wildlife Sites throughout the area focused on woods, meadows and ponds. Biddenden and High Halden are designated as Conservation Areas, and built development respects the local vernacular. Overall the landscape is in moderate condition.

Sensitivity

Where the traditional Wealden character remains intact, the key pattern of woodlands, oak trees, pasture and ponds provide strong local distinctiveness. However the fragmentation of traditional field pattern and increase in arable land use has resulted in some deterioration in strength of character. Whilst the vernacular centres of High Halden and Biddenden are very distinct, recent and unsympathetic development along the busy A roads detract from the historic continuity of the landscape. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape is moderate.



Guidelines

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



- Conserve long views out across the Low Weald
- Conserve and appropriately manage woodland
- Conserve and appropriately manage strong matrix of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Plant new hedgerow oaks to provide continuation of this key feature
- Conserve traditional vernacular style buildings
- Conserve intimate small scale field pattern and strong sense of enclosure
- Conserve field ponds and slow flowing streams
- Avoid further agricultural intensification
- Improve the appearance of light commercial development along the A roads through appropriate planting to provide visual screening
- Improve the style of conversions by encouraging sympathetic conversions of traditional buildings which do not urbanise the character of the building

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual unity:	Coherent
Cultural integrity:	variable
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

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

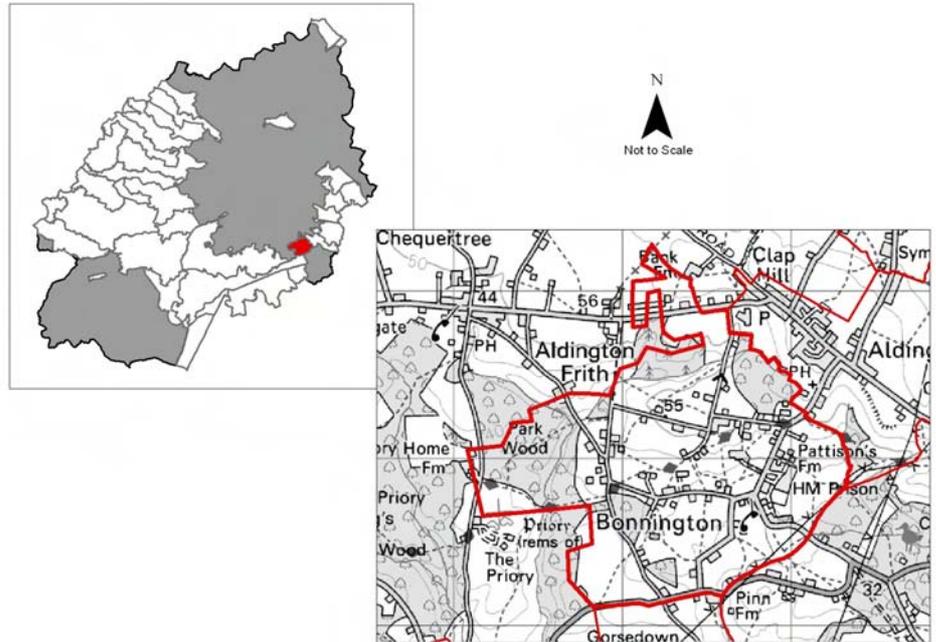
Guidelines: Conserve and Improve

14. Bonnington Wooded Farmlands

Key Characteristics

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

Landscape Description



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

Bonnington is situated along a series of narrow





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

Condition

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

Sensitivity

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



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

Guidelines

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



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

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Good
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual unity:	Coherent
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Strong
Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

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

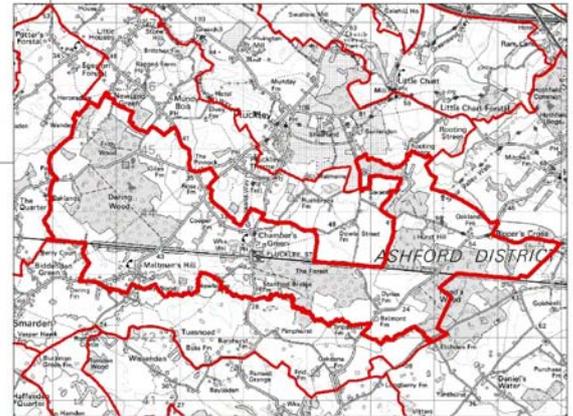
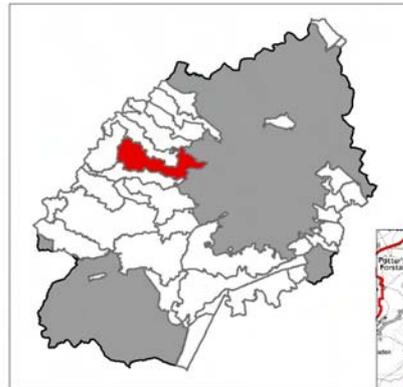
Guidelines: Conserve and Reinforce

15. Dering Wooded Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating landform
- Strong tree cover with large blocks of broadleaf, mixed and evergreen woodland
- Scatterings of chestnut coppice
- Scattered isolated oak trees
- Intensively farmed land
- Railway line cuts through the landscape but is not easily discernible within the wooded landscape
- Series of red brick hump back bridges cross the railway
- Ragstone buildings and round topped 'Dering' windows
- Converted barns and oast houses
- Evidence of mineral extraction and former land fill

Landscape Description



The geology is Weald Clay with ribbons of Sandstone, and soils are loam to clay. The landform is gently undulating and the landscape is well wooded, proving an enclosed character which limits the extent of views. Woodland comprises broadleaf, evergreen and mixed woodland, with scatterings of chestnut coppice. The evergreen pine provides a dark and dense character to the woodland, through which a network of woodland rides provide access. Dering Wood, to the west, provides reference to the Dering family, who were local to the area and allegedly founded the locally distinct round topped 'Dering' windows. The land is predominantly intensively farmed, within open and extensive fields enclosed by woodland blocks and hedgerows. Scattered isolated oak trees are located across the open fields. A smaller field pattern, used as pasture, is noticeable to the north of the area and surrounding farm buildings. The woodland blocks, hedgerows and crop production provide strong seasonal variation, whilst evergreen pine trees provide an element of continuity.

A railway line dissects the area, and although not visually prominent, is crossed via a series of distinct





red brick hump back bridges. The area is dissected by few roads which are narrow and often enclosed by woodland. Development is clustered around Pluckley train station, with distinctive ragstone buildings and local round topped 'Dering' windows. There are scattered converted timber barns and oast houses along the roads amongst more recent isolated development both strewn along the roads and clustered around road junctions. Conifer is common throughout the area, particularly around recent housing, and restricts visibility. A high concentration of farmsteads are located across open ground, characterised by clusters of large, modern agricultural barns.

Mineral extraction is apparent within the area, and evidence of land fill is provided by a series of vents across reconstructed pasture. Excavated land has also been transformed into water bodies and wetland areas, characterised by reeds and long grasses.

Condition

The large, enclosing woodland blocks and scattered farmsteads within open areas provide a coherent pattern of elements. The few visual detractors include large agricultural barns and disused works, and the intrusion of alien conifers around recent residential properties. Inappropriate fencing and gateways enclose recent properties in places. The woodland, linked by native hedgerows, provides a strong ecological framework across the landscape which appears to be in good condition. Much of the woodland is ancient and designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Hoads Wood, to the east, is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Pluckley Station is immediately surrounded by traditional buildings. However parked vehicles around the station, along with recent development, detract slightly from the strength of character. Overall the landscape is in good condition.

Sensitivity

The enclosed pattern provided by the woodland and hedgerows



provides strong local distinctiveness and continuity throughout the area. Traditional ragstone buildings and the incorporation of Dering windows around Pluckley Station are locally distinct, and the series of red brick hump back bridges which cross the railway line provide continuity and strength of character. Overall the landscape has a moderate sensitivity.

Guidelines

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



- Conserve and reinforce the rural and wooded, enclosed, character
- Conserve and reinforce the ancient woodland and the hedged framework through appropriate management
- Manage coppice appropriately to maintain/enhance condition
- Conserve the historic buildings and reinforce their impact by ensuring that any new developments respect the scale, style and local materials, such as locally sourced ragstone
- Conserve the scale, style and red brick material of railway crossings and avoid widening roads
- Plant new oak standards to ensure continuity of isolated tree cover
- Encourage removal of alien conifer species where practicable
- Encourage appropriate enclosure methods around private housing

Landscape Analysis

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

Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Continuity:	Ancient
Sense of place:	Strong
Landform:	Apparent
Extent of tree cover:	Enclosed
Visibility:	Low

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

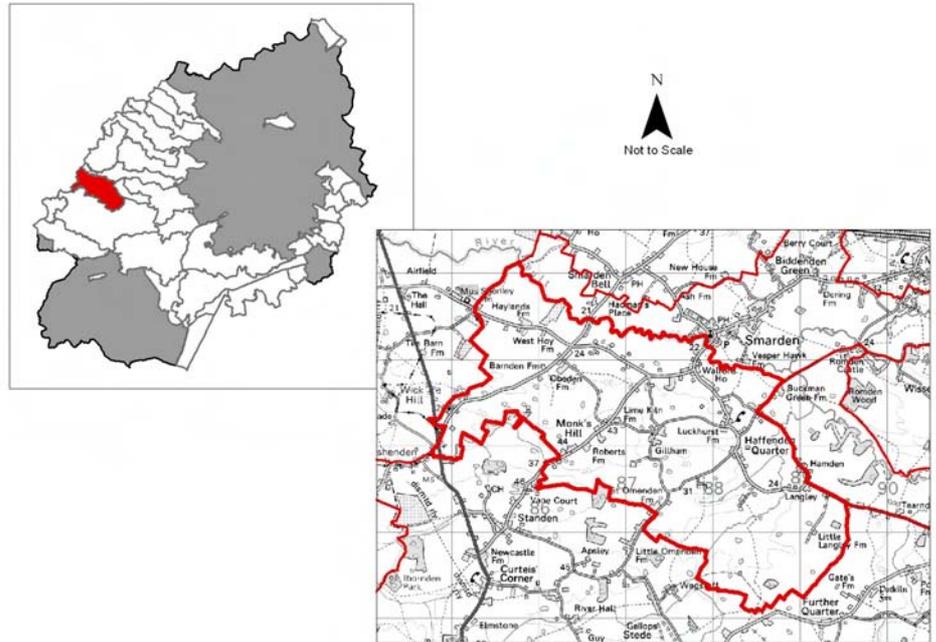
Guidelines: Conserve and Reinforce

16. Haffenden Quarter Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Flat to gently undulating landform
- Low visibility
- Mixed land use
- Varied field pattern
- Hedgerow enclosed pasture with oak hedgerow trees
- Field ponds
- Traditional timber framed buildings
- Converted farm buildings

Landscape Description



The geology predominantly comprises Weald Clay, with a small amount of Large 'Paludina' Limestone to the west and some ribbons of Sandstone in Weald Clay. Drifts of Alluvium follow the lines of narrow streams, and there are patches of 2nd Terrace River Gravel. Soils are loam to clay, becoming loamier towards the River Beult to the north. The landform is flat to gently undulating.

The land use is mixed, with smaller fields of pasture interspersed within larger arable fields. There is a strong network of native hedgerows, often supporting frequent mature hedgerow oaks. Intensive arable farming to the east has resulted in hedgerow loss and a larger field pattern. Whilst there are very few broadleaf woodland blocks, the hedgerows and hedgerow trees provide a well wooded character to the landscape. The extents of views are limited and, as a consequence, there is a definite sense of enclosure.

A striking characteristic of this area is the numerous small field ponds, often fringed with willow, found in almost every field. Narrow streams wind their way through the landscape, often open and not easy to discern within the less enclosed





arable land to the east. Built development is scattered along the narrow lanes, although isolated properties and farms often support a complex of buildings. Farms support numerous large farm buildings, and some large isolated houses include equestrian facilities, including exercise arenas, paddocks and outbuildings. Housing is more densely built along Bethersden Road, within Haffenden Quarter, to the east. Enclosed by hedgerows, roads follow a north east to south west pattern, many of which are ancient old drovers' routes leading to the High Weald.

Condition

The traditional small scale field pattern set within a regular hedgerow framework provides a degree of continuity throughout the landscape. However, agricultural intensification and associated hedgerow loss is altering the traditional Wealden pattern. There are very few visual detractors, although large barns throughout the landscape detract from the small scale Wealden landscape pattern where it remains. Whilst the hedgerows, woodland blocks, ponds and streams provide a good ecological framework, agricultural intensification weakens connectivity. Some ponds and pasture north and south of Biddenden Road are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Overall, the landscape is in good condition.

Sensitivity

Where it remains intact, the traditional field pattern, pastoral land use and hedgerow framework provides strong local distinctiveness and continuity throughout the landscape. Whilst much of the built development respects the local vernacular, recent housing and large agricultural barns detract from the sense of place. There is low visibility throughout the landscape owing to the flat to gently undulating landform and the strong framework of hedgerows, plantations and small woodland blocks. Overall the landscape has a moderate sensitivity.



Guidelines

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



- Conserve the pastoral land use
- Conserve intimate small scale field pattern and strong sense of place
- Conserve field ponds and slow flowing streams
- Conserve and reinforce strong matrix of tall hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees
- Plant new hedgerow oaks to reinforce this characteristic feature
- Resist further agricultural intensification
- Conserve vernacular timber framed and converted buildings

Landscape Analysis

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

Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Ancient
Sense of place:	Strong
Landform:	Insignificant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Low

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

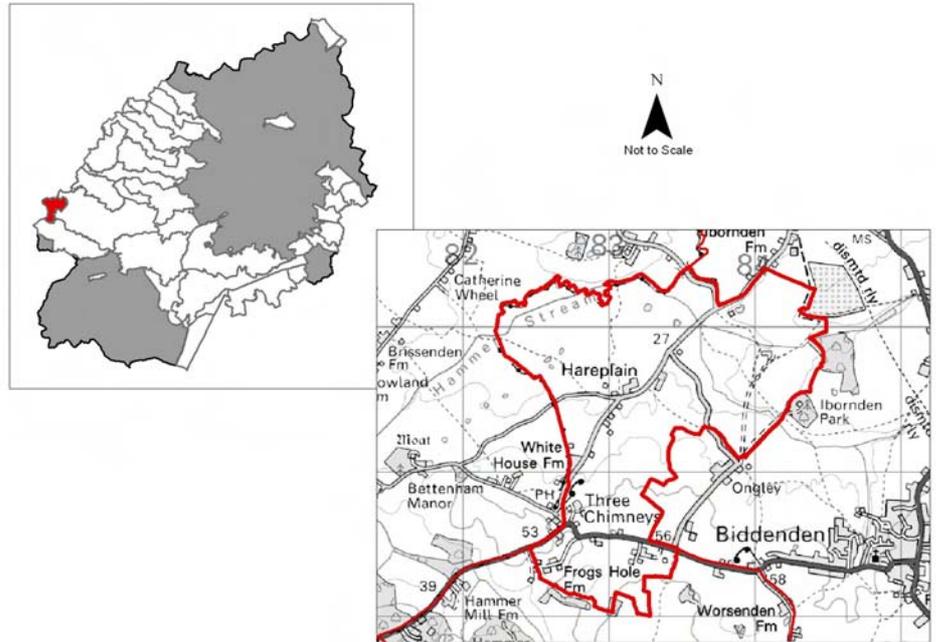
Guidelines: Conserve and Reinforce

17. Hareplain Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Flat to gently undulating landform
- Low visibility
- Small hedgerow enclosed pastoral fields
- Oak hedgerow trees
- Little arable land
- Field ponds and well vegetated Hammer Stream
- Traditional timber framed buildings
- Converted farm buildings

Landscape Description



The geology comprises Weald Clay, with the southern periphery of the area made up of Tunbridge Wells Sand. A ribbon of Alluvium follows Hammer Stream, which flows through the northern section of the area, east of Hareplain. Soils are loam to clay, becoming increasingly loamy to the north and silty to the south. The landform is flat to gently undulating. A series of wooded, organically shaped, field ponds are strewn throughout the sheep grazed pasture, and the course of 'Hammer Stream' is defined by a ribbon of vegetation.

Views throughout the area are restricted by native hedgerows and tree belts, which enclose the small scale, regular mosaic of fields used as pasture. Remnant hedgerow trees, mostly oak, are particularly important in creating a well treed character and a sense of enclosure in an area where there is little woodland. A small amount of agricultural intensification, and removal of traditional hedgerows, has led to a larger and less enclosed field pattern to the east.

Traditional converted farm buildings and large timber framed





houses are clustered along the main road through Hareplain. To the south, The Three Chimneys area takes its name from the Seven Year War (1756 – 1763). French prisoners, kept at Sissinghurst Castle outside the character area to the west, were allowed to walk up until the signpost with the three ways 'Les Trois Chemins', which the English misinterpreted as 'The Three Chimneys'. The main road through Hareplain forms a busy route, slightly wider than the few other hedgerow lined lanes which wind through the pasture.

Condition

The traditional small scale field pattern set within a regular hedgerow framework provides a unified pattern of elements, although the main road through Hareplain slightly detracts from the rural character of the landscape. The hedgerow network, Hammer Stream and ponds provide a strong ecological framework and there is little intensively farmed arable land. Built development respects local vernacular and contributes towards the sense of place. Overall, the landscape is in good condition.

Sensitivity

The traditional field pattern, pastoral land use and hedgerow framework provides strong local distinctiveness and continuity throughout the landscape. Built development is locally distinctive and contributes towards the sense of place. There is low visibility throughout the landscape owing to the flat to gently undulating landform and the strong framework of hedgerows. Overall the landscape has a moderate sensitivity.



Guidelines

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



- Conserve vernacular timber framed and converted buildings
- Conserve the pastoral land use
- Conserve intimate small scale field pattern and reinforce the strong sense of enclosure
- Conserve field ponds
- Conserve native hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Plant new hedgerow oaks to reinforce this characteristic feature
- Resist further agricultural intensification

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Good
Pattern of elements:	Unified
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Good
Ecological integrity:	Strong
Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Continuity:	Ancient
Sense of place:	Strong
Landform:	Insignificant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Low

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

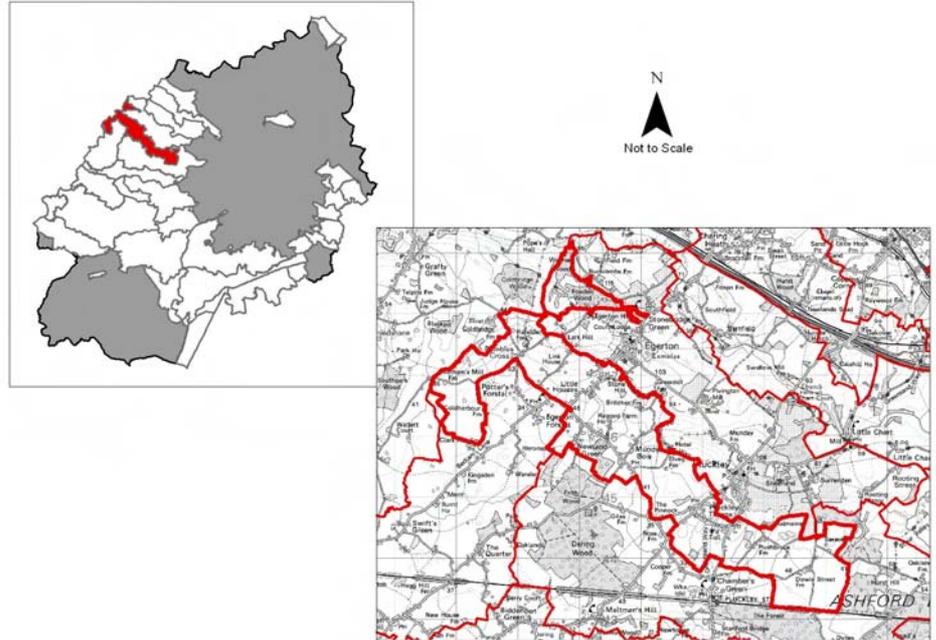
Guidelines: Conserve and Reinforce

18. Mundy Bois Mixed Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating landform which forms part of the foreground to the steep Greensand Ridge
- Fields set within a regular framework of native hedgerows
- Regular, frequently spaced hedgerow trees
- Narrow hedge and ditch lined lanes
- Large, traditional and often converted buildings scattered along lanes and clustered around junctions

Landscape Description



The geology predominantly comprises Weald Clay, although a narrow ribbon of Atherfield Clay follows the foot of the Greensand Ridge to the north. Soils are loam to clay. The landform is gently undulating and forms part of the foreground to the steep and often densely wooded Greensand Ridge to the north. Combined with the scattered broadleaf woodland blocks and the hedgerow enclosed pasture, views across the landscape are restricted. Fields are often set within a regular framework of native hedgerows and ditches and are small to medium size. Hedgerow trees, often oak, are a strong feature throughout the area, frequently and regularly spaced and sometimes ivy covered. However, some agricultural intensification has led to removal of traditional field boundaries in places, for instance around Mundy Bois. Occasionally, lines of former standards previously set within the hedgerows remain. Evidence of previous mineral extraction is apparent to the north east at Malmaims, where large lakes provide a feature within the farmed landscape.

The roads comprise narrow, hedge and ditch lined lanes, which cross the landscape in a regular north east to south west pattern. Many of the roads have evolved from





historic drove roads, used to move livestock across the Greensand Ridge. 'Stone Hill' is reflective of the ragstone retaining wall which aligns it. Large, traditional and often converted buildings, such as oast houses and barns, are scattered along the lanes and are clustered around road junctions. Recent housing is concentrated between the traditional buildings, and Pluckley Thorne is largely a recent settlement which encroaches on the ridgeline. Isolated farmsteads are scattered throughout the landscape, and more isolated properties often accommodate recent stable blocks and equestrian arenas within their grounds. Static caravans are found in some areas, often surrounded by an amalgamation of fencing types.

Condition

The regular field and road pattern promote a coherent pattern of elements. Visual detractors comprise large agricultural barns, dilapidated traditional farm buildings, inappropriate fencing types, pylons and frequent but temporary heaps of soil improvement material located across the farmland. The hedgerow network with hedgerow trees and clusters of broadleaf woodland provide corridors and clusters of wildlife opportunity. A designated Local Wildlife site is located to the west, south west of Lark Hill Farm. However, whilst hedgerows are generally intact and are well maintained, some hedgerow trees appear to be slightly over mature and are ivy clad and there is little new planting. Built development generally respects the local vernacular, although some recent development is not in keeping with the local character. Overall, the landscape is in moderate condition.

Sensitivity

The native hedgerows and regular hedgerow trees are very distinct, and contribute to the character of the



narrow lanes and regular field pattern, where it is still intact. The use of weather boarding, timber frames, ragstone, local round topped Dering windows and chequered brickwork are characteristic of the area and promote strong local distinctiveness. Overall the landscape has a moderate sensitivity.

Guidelines

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



- Conserve and Improve the rural, farmed foreground to the Greensand Ridge
- Restrict further development which encroaches on the Greensand Ridge
- Conserve the strong hedged framework through appropriate management
- Seek to reinstate hedgerows where they are in poor condition
- Plant new oak standards within hedgerows to ensure continuity of characteristic hedgerow trees
- Conserve the historic buildings and improve their impact by ensuring that any new buildings respect the scale, style and local materials, such as locally sourced ragstone, chequered brickwork, weather boarding and timber frames
- Conserve and improve the character of isolated farms by encouraging the restoration of traditional existing buildings
- Improve the integration of large agricultural buildings into the landscape by encouraging planting of appropriate clumps of native planting
- Encourage sympathetic fencing types where essential

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Coherent
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

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

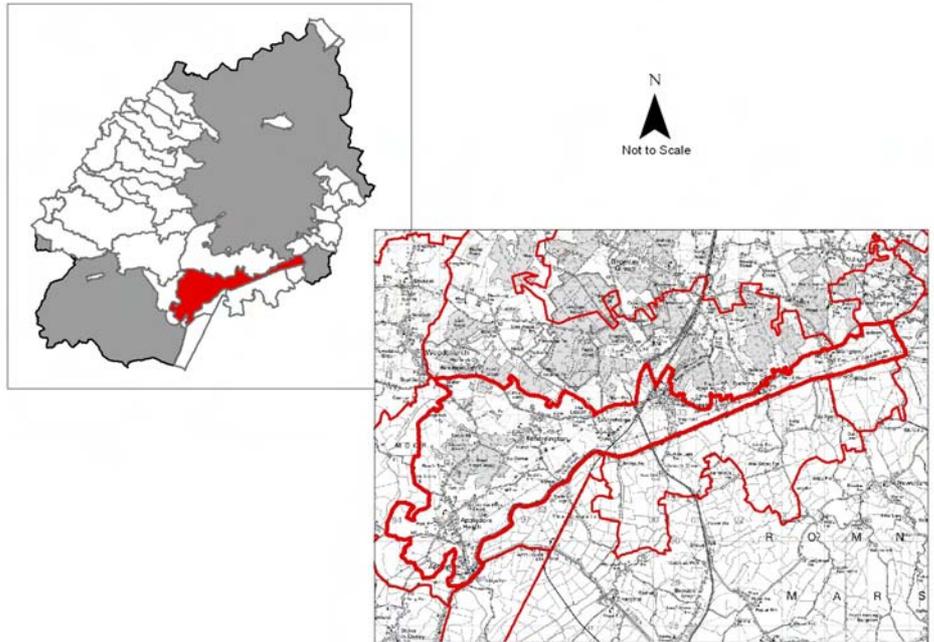
Guidelines: Conserve and Improve

19. Old Romney Shoreline Settlements

Key Characteristics

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

Landscape Description



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Condition

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



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



Sensitivity

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

Guidelines

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

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

Landscape Analysis

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

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Continuity:	Ancient
Sense of place:	Strong
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

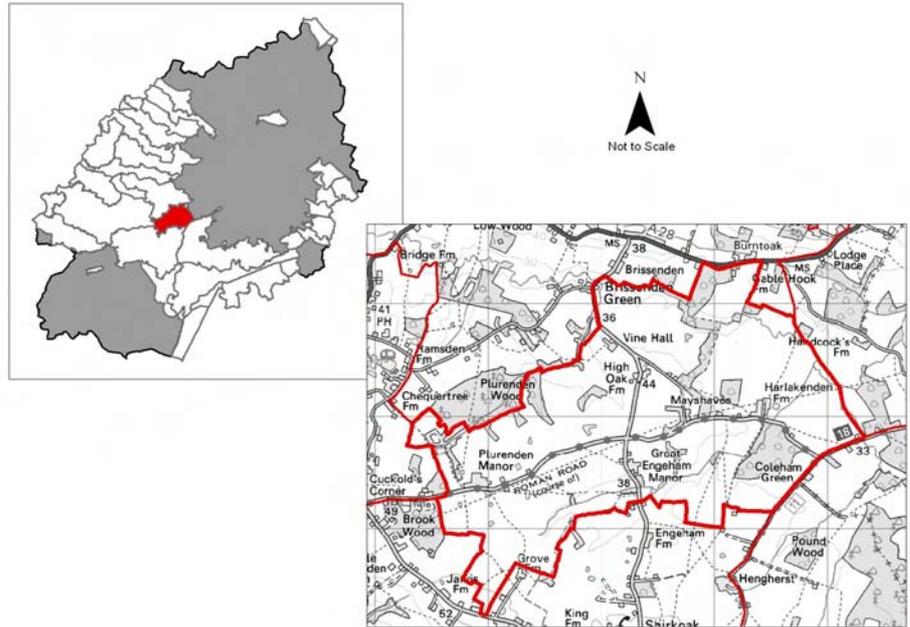
Guidelines: Conserve

20. Plurrenden Arable Plateau

Key Characteristics

- Gently sloping plateau
- Large arable fields
- Hedgerow and subsequent field pattern loss
- Small scattered blocks and belts of broadleaf woodland
- Remnant tree lines where hedgerow loss has taken place
- Small ponds scattered across the farmland
- Large vernacular style manor houses and scattered farms

Landscape Description



The solid geology comprises Weald Clay and soils are loam to clay. The land plateaus between the more undulating surrounding topography. Although it is not completely flat, the gentle slopes and the large arable fields provide the perception of a level landform. There are distant views of rising wooded rising land outside the area, and within the area views extend across large, open arable fields. Agricultural intensification has caused a significant amount of hedgerow loss and removal of historic field pattern. Post and wire fencing has replaced hedgerows in places, although boundaries have sometimes been lost altogether. Some hedgerows remain intact, however, and tree lines occasionally mark the former boundary lines. Oak is a key species found throughout the area, providing a sense of continuity with the landscape to the north and south. Small scattered blocks and belts of broadleaf woodland, with some chestnut coppice, enclose some fields. Small ponds are scattered frequently across the farmland, with two slightly larger ponds fed by a narrow stream located south of Great Engham Manor.

There is little development throughout the landscape with no major settlements. Scattered farms and two significantly sized manors provide the only significant built





development. Plurrenden Manor comprises an impressive vernacular style house enclosed by distinctive brick walling, and set within a private garden with mature horse chestnut and oak trees. The significance of Plurrenden Manor is enhanced through the road it is situated along being named 'Plurrenden Road' and woodland, outside the area to the north, being named 'Plurrenden Wood'. Extensive farm buildings, used to accommodate a large quantity of farm machinery, slightly detract from the grandeur of the property. To the south, Great Engeham Manor comprises a large timber framed property with an adjacent converted oast house. Roads are few, linking farms and running between settlements within the surrounding area. Their routes are unenclosed at times, where hedgerow removal has taken place, allowing uninterrupted views out across the arable

landscape. Plurrenden Road is situated along the course of a historic Roman road which ran between Ashford and Tenterden.

Condition

The consistent land use, topography and frequent oak trees provide a coherent landscape. Visual detractors comprise large agricultural barns and recent post and rail fencing. Whilst agricultural land use is very intense, ecological integrity is partially retained through hedgerows, where they are still intact, tree lines and woodland blocks and the frequent field ponds which punctuate the landscape. Harlakenden, Ruck and Furner broadleaf and coppice Woods to the east are ancient and are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. The water quality within ponds is, however, questionable as a result of chemical runoff from the surrounding arable landscape. Overall the landscape is in moderate condition.

Sensitivity

Remnant lines of trees along former hedgerow boundary routes provide one of the most distinctive features within the arable landscape. Plurrenden and Great Engeham Manors provide historic depth and significance to the landscape. However, the setting of Plurrenden Manor has been affected by the extent and massing of adjacent farm buildings. Throughout much of the landscape, there is little to characterise the area because of the loss of hedgerow boundaries and historic field pattern. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape is moderate.



Guidelines

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



- Conserve hedgerows and tree belts where they remain and improve by gapping up where they have deteriorated
- Conserve and appropriately manage woodland blocks
- Avoid the introduction of unnecessary fencing
- Conserve traditional vernacular style buildings and avoid detracting features within their settings

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Strong
Landform:	Insignificant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Low

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

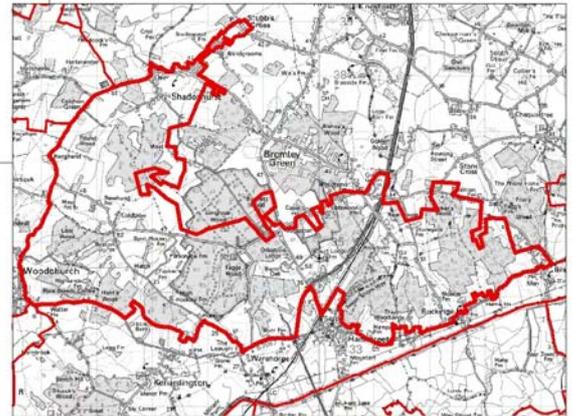
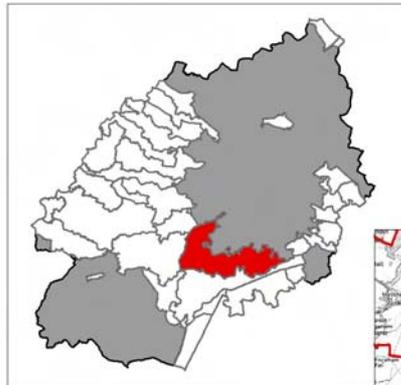
Guidelines: Conserve and Improve

21. Shadoxhurst Wooded Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Undulating landscape
- Mixed farmland with little intensive land use
- Field pattern influenced by extensive woodland framework
- Strong sense of enclosure provided by mixed woodlands and hedgerows
- Broadleaf and evergreen mixed woodland
- Field ponds and narrow stream corridors along narrow wooded valleys
- Recent development and many bungalows within Shadoxhurst and Stubbs Cross
- Trefoil windows in traditional buildings
- Narrow ditch lined roads enclosed by woodlands and hedgerows

Landscape Description



The solid geology comprises Weald Clay with some Sandstone in Weald Clay north west of Ruckinge. The landform is undulating, sloping generally southward towards the low lying marshes beyond. Long views towards the Romney Marsh, and of windfarms situated on the lower, more open, ground outside the character area are available from vantage points around the southern part of the area. From Place Lane, long views of the rising High Weald are available, and the distinctive white weather boarded windmill at Woodchurch provides a distinctive landmark feature, visible on higher ground outside the area to the west. Views within the area are limited because of the extensive tracts of woodland which cover the landscape, and the dense hedgerow network. Small to medium sized fields divided by native hedgerows, often with standard oak trees, slot between the woodland blocks. The land is used intensively for wheat and oil seed rape production, as well as for grazing livestock. Field ponds are scattered across the farmland, at times situated within the woodland. Narrow streams wind there way along lower ground, often through narrow valleys situated within woodland.





The well treed character of the area provides a strong sense of enclosure and a consistent pattern throughout the landscape. Woodland blocks are often mixed, with swathes of evergreen trees providing a dense, dark backdrop to broadleaf woodlands. Many of the woods comprise amalgamations of individual woodlands, which cover significant areas. A network of access tracks lead off narrow, dark and woodland enclosed roads, for public access and woodland management. Public access is promoted at Faggs Wood, with car parking facilities.

There is little development throughout the landscape, although farms are scattered loosely throughout the countryside. Many farmhouses and isolated properties are recent, with some scattered oast houses and traditional weather boarded buildings. Shadoxhurst and

Stubbs Cross comprise much recent development, although a few traditional stone properties are surrounded by the later complex of densely situated buildings. Many of the recent properties are bungalows, some single storey but extensive, and others with later loft conversions. Some of the more traditional properties have trefoil windows, which are distinctively shaped like clover leaves. The church at Shadoxhurst and St Mary's Church at Orlestone are distinctively small, again with trefoil windows.

There are few roads, which are generally narrow, often hedgerow lined and sometimes enclosed by the extensive tracts of woodland. Byways connect some roads, often running through woodland. The less minor A2070 and the railway line north of Hamstreet are not easily discernible where they run through wooded cuttings.

Condition

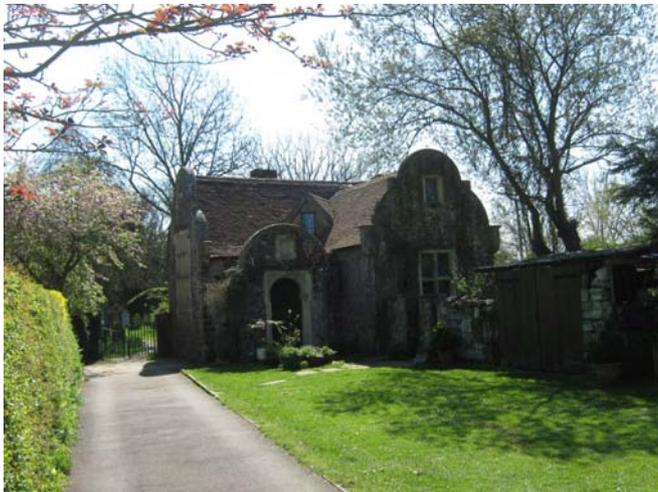
There is a unified pattern of landscape elements and there are very few visual detractors, which include large farm buildings often screened by conifers, and the busy A2070 and railway line where they are visible from the elevated location along Poundhurst Road. There is very strong ecological integrity provided by the woodlands and hedgerows, weakened slightly in areas of arable land use. Much of the woodland is ancient and some woodland blocks, and some pasture at Orlestone, are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Orlestone Forest and Hamstreet Woods are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and Hamstreet Woods are designated as a National Nature Reserve. Descending from a post Ice-age forest and a continuous oak forest which once covered the Weald, Hamstreet Woods are managed by Natural England and support a wide variety of habitats including a large number of bird and moth species. Some of the woodland in the area is managed by the Forestry Commission. The hedgerow network appears to be intact and well maintained. Whilst recent built development does not respect local vernacular and character entirely, it is not extensive and does not have a significant impact



on the landscape as a whole. Overall the landscape is in good condition.

Sensitivity

The strong woodland blocks are very distinctive in terms of their extensive and well established nature. The hedgerow network, and the distinct pattern of oak hedgerow trees, provides a strong visual framework throughout the area. Field ponds provide a frequent feature throughout the landscape, promoting continuity and strength of place. The trefoil windows located within buildings in Shadoxhurst and churches are locally distinct, although not extensively incorporated. However, recent development within Shadoxhurst and Stubbs Cross is indistinct and does not contribute to the local character. The enclosing woodland blocks provide low visibility across much of the area. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape is moderate.



Guidelines

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

- Conserve and appropriately manage strong woodland blocks
- Conserve and appropriately manage hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Plant new hedgerow oaks to reinforce this key feature
- Conserve the strong sense of enclosure and the intimate small scale field pattern
- Conserve and reinforce pastoral land use by avoiding further agricultural intensification
- Conserve the concentration of field ponds
- Conserve traditional vernacular style buildings including oast houses and timber framed buildings

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Good
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Strong
Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Continuity:	Ancient
Sense of place:	Strong
Landform:	Apparent
Extent of tree cover:	Enclosed
Visibility:	Low

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

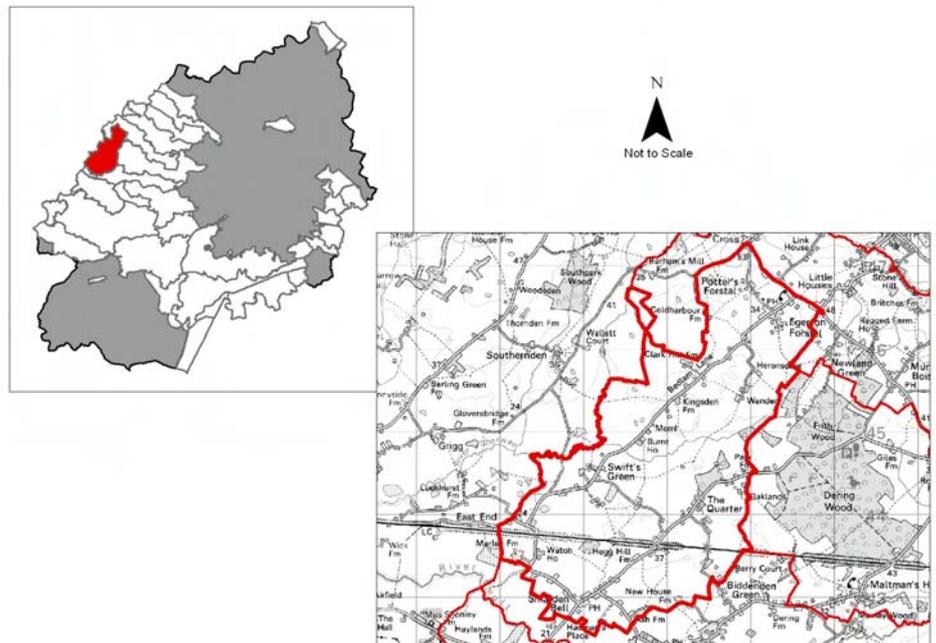
Guidelines: Conserve and Reinforce

22. Smarden Bell Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Flat to gently undulating landform
- Low visibility
- Mixed land use
- Varied field pattern
- Hedgerow enclosed pasture with oak hedgerow trees
- Remnant orchards
- Plantations
- Large arable fields
- Field ponds
- Traditional timber framed buildings
- Converted farm buildings
- Recent housing and static caravans

Landscape Description



The geology predominantly comprises Weald Clay, with some Large 'Paludina' Limestone to the north and some ribbons of Sandstone in Weald Clay. Drifts of Alluvium line the River Sherway which flows across the area, and there are scatterings of 2nd Terrace River Gravel. Soils are loam to clay. The landform is flat to gently undulating.

There is a mixture of arable land and smaller scale pasture, segregated by a regular framework of hedgerows, which provide a strong sense of enclosure. A few small broadleaf woodland blocks are scattered sparsely through the area, and a small remnant orchard is located along Rosemary Lane. Recent plantations off Bell Road add to the extent of tree cover, low visibility and sense of enclosure. Field ponds are scattered throughout the farmland, and the River Sherway winds its way across the landscape. The meandering course of the river, vegetated in some parts and open in others, creates non rectilinear field boundaries where fields stretch to its edge.

Individual properties, groups of traditional houses, converted farm buildings and farmsteads with large agricultural barns are scattered along the roads. Egerton Forstal





comprises a significant amount of densely populated, semi detached, recent housing, which is often clad with exposed aggregate concrete. Some static caravans are situated within the area, which provide contrast to the larger and more traditional buildings. Roads follow a north east to south west pattern, many of which are ancient old drovers' routes leading to the High Weald. Bell Road forms a busy route which supports some recent land use changes, including field segregation with post and wire fencing. A railway line crosses the landscape, although its wooded route is not easily discernible from the surrounding landscape.

Condition

The traditional small scale field pattern set within a regular hedgerow framework provides a degree of continuity throughout the landscape. However, some agricultural intensification and other recent developments and changes to the landscape inflict an element of fragmentation on the traditional Wealden pattern. Large barns, recent housing which does not respect the local vernacular, inappropriate and excessive fencing methods and alien conifer screening belts are visually detracting. Whilst the hedgerows, woodland blocks (many of which are ancient), ponds and the River Sherway provide a good ecological framework and some woodland and meadows are designated as Local Wildlife Sites, agricultural intensification weakens connectivity. Whilst much of the built development respects the local vernacular, recent housing and large agricultural barns detract from the sense of place. Overall, the landscape is in moderate condition.

Sensitivity

Where it remains intact, the traditional field pattern, pastoral land use and hedgerow framework provides strong local distinctiveness and continuity throughout the landscape. Whilst much of the built development respects the local vernacular, recent housing and large agricultural barns detract from the sense of place. There is low visibility throughout the landscape owing to the flat to gently undulating landform and the strong framework of hedgerows, plantations and small woodland blocks. Overall the landscape has a low sensitivity.



Guidelines

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



- Conserve the pastoral land use
- Improve and reinforce intimate small scale field pattern and strong sense of enclosure
- Conserve field ponds
- Improve and reinforce matrix of hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees
- Improve enclosure methods and avoid further excessive post and wire fencing
- Plant new hedgerow oaks to reinforce this characteristic feature
- Resist further agricultural intensification
- Conserve vernacular timber framed and converted buildings

Landscape Analysis

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

Sensitivity:	Low
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Insignificant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Low

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

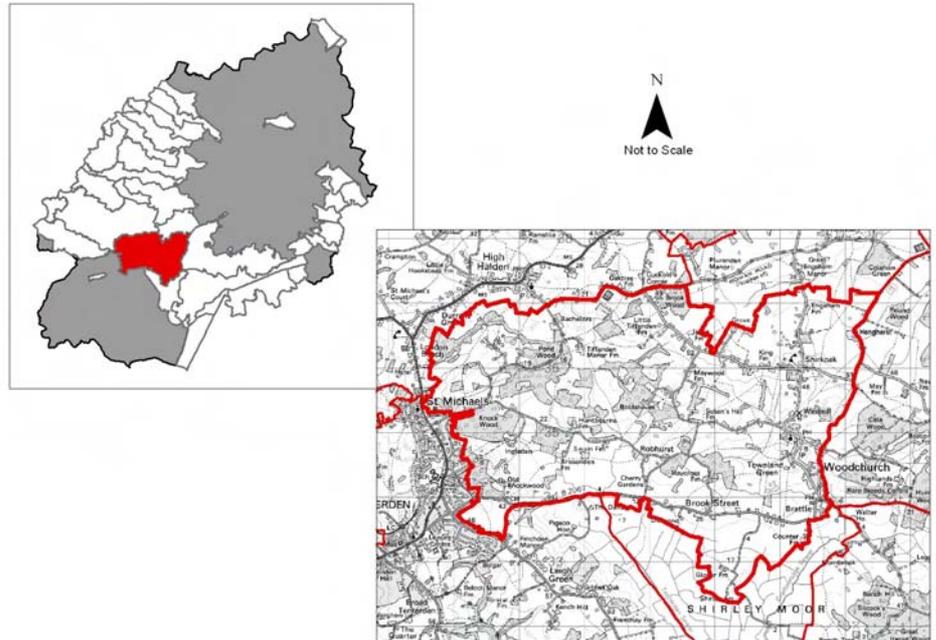
Guidelines: Improve and Reinforce

23. Woodchurch Undulating Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Undulating landscape
- Mixed farmland with little intensive land use
- Varied field pattern, with smaller fields adjoining Redbrook Street
- Strong sense of enclosure provided by mixed woodlands and hedgerows
- Broadleaf and coppice woodland with mixed ground flora
- Field ponds and narrow stream corridors
- Historic settlement of Woodchurch situated around a village green
- Traditional converted buildings
- Narrow roads enclosed by woodlands and hedgerows

Landscape Description



The geology comprises Weald Clay with some Sandstone in Weald Clay west of Woodchurch and Tunbridge Wells Sand to the south. There are some drifts of Alluvium along water courses and Head east of St. Michaels. Soils are loam to clay, becoming silty to the south. The landform is undulating and forms part of the immediate foreground to the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). There are views out of the area across the flat and low lying Shirley Moor to the south. To the west, the tower of St. Michaels Church forms a prominent landmark feature on the outskirts of the urban area of Tenterden. Views within the area are of undulating wooded farmland, set within a hedgerow framework. The field pattern is varied, although north and south of Redbrook Street fields are smaller and form a more regular pattern.

There is a strong sense of enclosure provided by the network of hedgerows and mixed broadleaf and coppice woodland blocks. Woodlands are often interconnected, across roads and between open farmland, providing a framework for the





farmland to sit within. There is a strong blanket of woodland floor ground flora, including bluebells, wood anemone and primroses, and standard oak trees are prominent within areas of coppice. Hedgerows comprise a mixture of native species, including hazel, hawthorn, dogwood, beech and blackthorn. Standard oak trees set within the hedgerows are common, emphasising the framework within which the mixed farmland is set. Field ponds are scattered across the farmland, at times situated within the woodland, and more substantial fishing lakes are situated south of Woodchurch. Narrow streams wind their way along lower ground.

To the east, Woodchurch comprises an historic settlement centred around the distinctive church and village green, typical of a Kentish village. A distinctive white weather boarded windmill is situated on the edge of the settlement, proving a distinctive landmark. There are a number of traditional buildings within Woodchurch, including much use of white weather boarding, chequered brick and timber framed buildings. Scattered across the remainder of the area, a number of oast houses, black weather board clad barns, large timber framed and chequered brick properties provide a distinctly rural character. Farmsteads are sometimes densely situated, particularly along Redbrook Street, perhaps explaining the increased field segregation in such areas. There are few roads, with significant tracts of wooded farmland uninterrupted by vehicular routes and, therefore, there are few buildings. Roads are narrow and often enclosed by woodland and hedgerows, often tall with hedgerow trees.

Condition

There is a coherent pattern of landscape elements and there are few visual detractors. These include some inappropriate fencing and gateways, and large farm buildings constructed from corrugated iron. However, the wooded character of the landscape restricts visibility of visual detractors. There is strong ecological integrity provided by the woodlands and hedgerows, weakened slightly in areas of arable land use. Much of the woodland is ancient and Knock Wood, east of St. Michaels, and ponds and pasture to the east are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Whilst largely well maintained, hedgerows have been removed in places and in others have become gappy. Built development respects local vernacular and character, and Woodchurch is designated as a Conservation Area. Overall the landscape is in good condition.

Sensitivity

Woodlands and hedgerows are very distinct, in terms of both their continuity throughout the landscape and species variety. Woodchurch, with its village green, windmill, distinctive church and numerous traditional buildings, is locally distinct and expels a strong sense of place.



The sparsely developed rural landscape, with large traditional properties and converted farm buildings, provides a consistent landscape and a strong sense of place. This landscape is sensitive in terms of its Low Weald characteristics which provide the immediate setting of the High Weald AONB. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape is moderate.



Guidelines

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

- Conserve and reinforce the rural and enclosed landscape which provides the immediate setting of the High Weald AONB
- Conserve and appropriately manage woodland
- Conserve and appropriately manage strong matrix of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Plant new hedgerow oaks to reinforce and provide continuation of this key feature
- Conserve intimate small scale field pattern
- Conserve and reinforce strong sense of enclosure
- Conserve field ponds and slow flowing streams
- Conserve traditional vernacular style buildings including oasts and timber framed Wealden houses
- Conserve the traditional small scale field pattern adjacent to Redbrook Road and avoid further agricultural intensification
- Encourage sympathetic conversions of traditional buildings which do not urbanise the character of the building

Landscape Analysis

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

Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Ancient
Sense of place:	Strong
Landform:	Apparent
Extent of tree cover:	Enclosed
Visibility:	Low

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

Guidelines: Conserve and Reinforce

High Weald



One landscape character area is situated within the High Weald landscape type, located to the south west of the study area immediately adjacent to the High Weald AONB. The High Weald within the study area is typical of the broader band of High Weald landscape the area sits within. The High Weald is a well wooded, undulating landscape which rises above the Low Weald to the north. The land is often used as pasture, with small fields divided by a strong network of native hedgerows and punctuated by frequent field ponds. The cultivation of fruit and hops are characteristic of the landscape, along with distinctive oast houses, the use of white weather boarding and local stone.

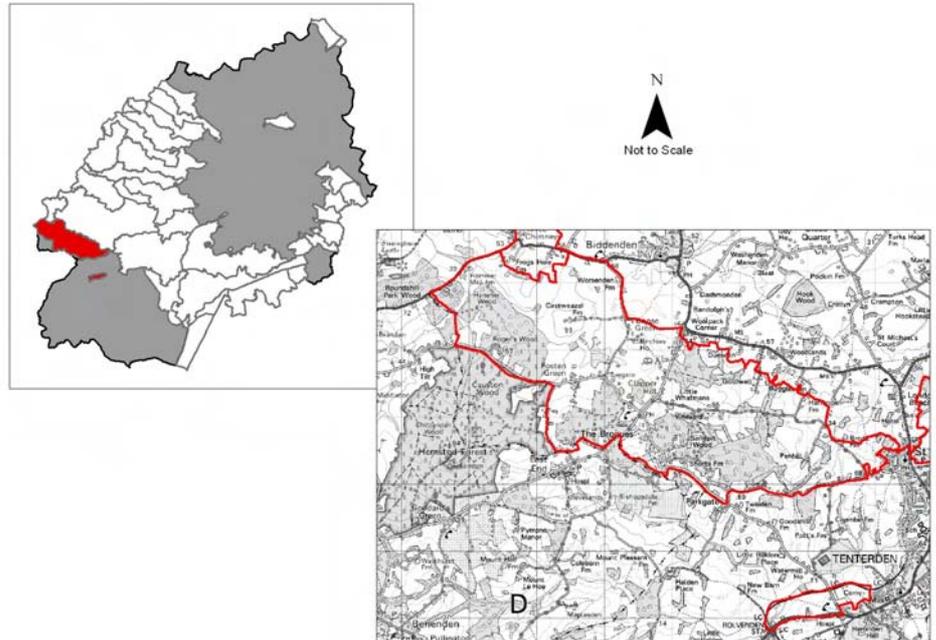


24. Clapper Hill Wooded Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Undulating topography
- Drainage ditches and numerous field ponds
- Species rich hedgerows with a large amount of holly
- Extensive tracts of broadleaf and mixed woodland across the slopes
- Pastoral land use
- Vineyard with vines and hops
- Narrow, winding, enclosed lanes
- Scattered traditional buildings and farmsteads

Landscape Description



The geology comprises Tunbridge Wells Sand and soils are silty. As part of the immediate foreground to the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the landscape is undulating, becoming increasingly hilly to the east. A small area of landscape, entirely enclosed by the High Weald AONB is situated to the south. Whilst this area forms part of the urban edge of Tenterden, the landscape shares the intrinsic landscape qualities belonging to the landscape to the north.

The sense of enclosure increases to the east, with very few long views. There are, however, glimpses out of the area from higher vantage points towards development within St. Michael's in the east. Drainage ditches and numerous characteristic field ponds, often defined by willows, are scattered within the lower reaches.

Species rich native hedgerows, which support a noticeable amount of holly, line the narrow winding lanes and enclose small fields used predominantly as pasture for livestock. Fields, which are generally small and regular in shape and size, are well enclosed by





hedgerows, woodlands and the undulating topography. Whilst post and wire fencing offers support to field boundaries, this is not highly visible against the dense and intact hedgerows. There are extensive tracts of broadleaf and mixed woodlands across the slopes, with scatterings of chestnut coppice. A large amount of silver birch, with distinctive white trunks, and holly are found throughout the woodland which is dissected by woodland rides. There is very little intensive arable land use, although Biddenden Vineyard comprises sloping fields of linear vines and hops, which grow on distinctive hop poles and wires once common throughout Kent.

Roads are narrow, winding and often enclosed by tree belts or woodlands. Although this is traditionally an area of isolated farmsteads, recent linear settlement is focused along some lanes. There are scattered traditional style individual properties, including converted oasts. Traditional materials include thatched roofs and weather boarding cladding.

Condition

This is a unified landscape, with a small scale patchwork of hedged fields combined with a heavily wooded backdrop across an undulating landform. There are few visual detractors and although prefabricated farm buildings are scattered throughout the area, they are visually integrated within the undulating landform and woodland character. Recent housing does not respect the scale and local vernacular demonstrated by the traditional buildings within the area. There is a strong ecological network provided by hedgerows, woodlands, drainage ditches and field ponds, and there is very little arable intensification. Much of the woodland is ancient and sections of woodland are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Whilst hedgerows are generally intact and woodland appears to be generally well managed, some chestnut coppice appears to be unmaintained and is in poor condition. However, overall the landscape is in good condition.



Sensitivity

The patchwork field pattern lined with native hedgerows, and the large woodland blocks provide strong local distinctiveness and continuity throughout the landscape. The narrow, winding and enclosed lanes are distinctive, and the vineyards and hop production provide a strong sense of place. This landscape is sensitive in terms of its High Weald characteristics which provide the immediate setting of the High Weald AONB. Overall the landscape has a high sensitivity.

Guidelines

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



- Conserve the rural and enclosed landscape which provides the immediate setting to the High Weald AONB
- Conserve and appropriately manage the strong ancient woodland blocks and chestnut coppice
- Conserve and appropriately manage the strong matrix of tall hedgerows
- Conserve vernacular style buildings including oasts and Wealden timber framed houses
- Conserve the strong sense of enclosure
- Conserve the intimate small scale field pattern
- Conserve the concentration of field ponds
- Conserve the character of isolated farms by encouraging the restoration of traditional existing buildings

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Good
Pattern of elements:	Unified
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Strong
Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Continuity:	Ancient
Sense of place:	Strong
Landform:	Apparent
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

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

Guidelines: Conserve

Greensand Ridge



To the north west and south east of Ashford town, the Greensand Ridge forms part of a wider belt of Greensand which is typified by its scarp/dip slope topography. Within the study area, the Greensand Ridge has a gentler and more open aspect than the wooded west. Fruit production is a characteristic feature of the Greensand Ridge, although the land is often used for mixed farming. Heathland characteristics include sandy soils and bracken, birch and gorse. The landscape is marked by the major transport routes of the M20, and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, which follow the vale below the North Downs scarp.

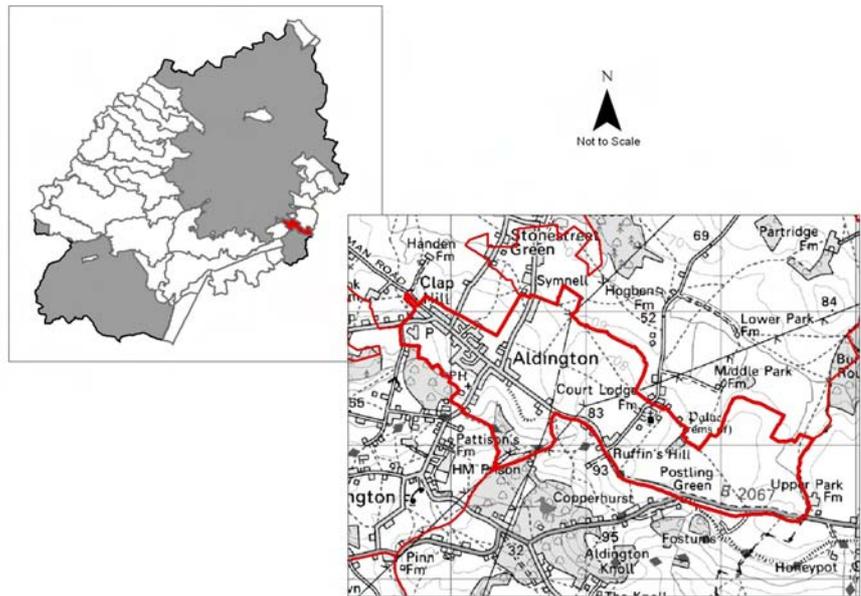


25. Aldington Ridgeline

Key Characteristics

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

Landscape Description



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

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





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

Condition

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



Sensitivity

The ragstone church and ragstone farm buildings constitute a unique element which provides continuity throughout this landscape. However the village of Aldington has spread, with much 20th century



development failing to reflect the wider sense of place. Tree cover is limited and visibility is high within this prominent ridgeline location. Overall the landscape has a high sensitivity.

Guidelines

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

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

Landscape Analysis

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

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

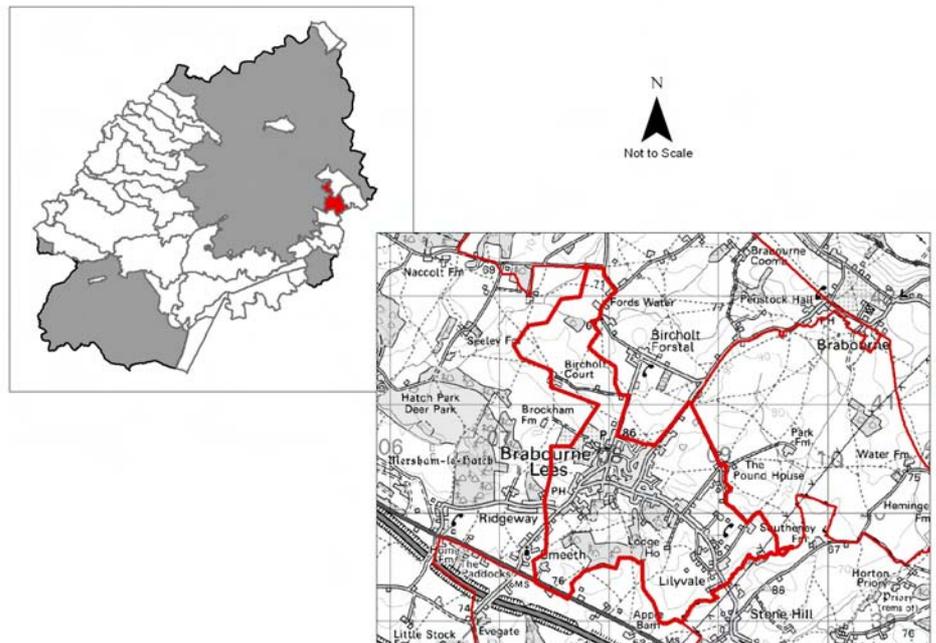
Guidelines: Conserve and Restore

26. Brabourne Lees Hilly Farmlands

Key Characteristics

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

Landscape Description



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

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





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

Condition

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

Sensitivity

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



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

Guidelines

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



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

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Good
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Coherent
Cultural integrity:	Good
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of place:	Weak
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

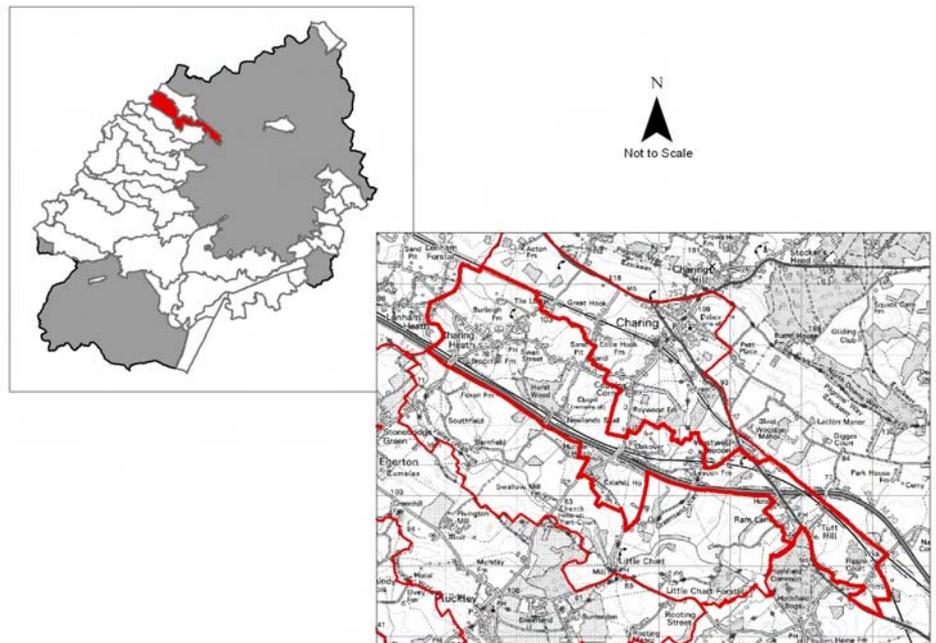
Guidelines: Conserve and Reinforce

27. Charing Heath Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Mixed farmland
- Varied field pattern
- Small woodland copses and plantations of chestnut coppice
- Pine woodland
- Mature isolated trees across pasture
- Heathland character with a significant amount of gorse and silver birch
- Sand extraction and reed filled ponds post extraction
- Major transport links

Landscape Description



The geology comprises Lower Greensand in the south, Sandgate Beds to the west and a ribbon of Gault Clay to the north. Drifts of Head Brickearth and 4th Terrace River Gravel are scattered across the landscape, and ribbons of Alluvium lay along narrow stream corridors which run towards the Great Stour River to the south. Soils are loam across an undulating topography, with a series of valleys containing streams running from north east to south west. The land is under both arable and pastoral use, with open views across the mixed farmland where topography and vegetation allow. Occasionally, the North Downs are visually prominent in the north. Fields are irregularly shaped with pockets of pasture often situated around settled areas, and larger arable fields extending across more rural areas.

Enclosure is provided by small broadleaf woodland copses and plantations of chestnut coppice which are strewn across the landscape. Native hedgerows enclose fields in places where historic field patterns are retained and mature isolated trees are frequently scattered across pasture, providing a parkland character. Scatterings of tree and shrub vegetation often define the network of streams which run throughout the area. Arable intensification has led to the removal of traditional field boundaries in some areas, and enclosure is frequently provided by post and wire fencing. Predominant species scattered throughout the landscape comprise gorse and silver birch, reflecting the heathland character of the area, which extended across the greensand historically and is evidenced by many of the place names including Charing Heath. Hurst Wood comprises a mature pine wood, and conifer is found throughout the area, providing an element of seasonal continuity. Sand extraction along Newlands Road and Hook Lane to the east of Charing



Heath emphasises the underlying geology, where areas of orange sand are revealed, and provides artificial undulations within the landscape. Where extraction has finished reed filled ponds have been developed, providing features in the landscape.

Settlement is scattered across the landscape, with a number of farms positioned along the narrow lanes. Large corrugated farm barns and machinery are located directly alongside the lanes in places, which promotes the rural character. Timber framed houses, oast houses and local round headed 'Dering' windows contribute to the local distinctiveness, although more recent infill development has occurred within Charing Heath. The landscape is dissected by the A20 to the east, which has

a number of recent large scale developments including hotels and a nursery along its route. There is also the M20 to the south, with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link lining the M20 for much of its length, increasing the width of the transport corridor. Whilst not highly visible from throughout much of the surrounding landscape, vehicular movement is extensively audible and the infrastructure intrudes on the small scale and tranquil character of the many minor lanes it runs beneath.

Condition

The regular undulating landform and the heathland character, provided by the sandy soils and frequency of gorse and silver birch, promote a coherent pattern of elements. Whilst major transport corridors run through the landscape, these are generally well incorporated into the landform. There are a number of visual detractors, comprising the major transport infrastructure where it is visible, large agricultural barns and farm equipment/facilities. Inappropriate fencing and visually intrusive storage methods in association with small businesses are also scattered throughout the area. Woodland copses and blocks, hedgerows and vegetation corridors along water channels provide an intricate ecological network. Much of the woodland is ancient and most of Hurst Wood and the adjacent wildlife area, set within the former mineral extraction site, are designated as a Local Wildlife Site. However agricultural intensification and subsequent loss of hedgerows, along with mineral extraction works and the dissection provided by the transport corridors restrict the ecological integrity. Whilst, where present, hedgerows are generally well maintained and chestnut coppice is actively managed, some mature isolated trees appear to be over mature. In contrast, however, recent development and large agricultural barns are incongruous to the surrounding landscape character. Overall, the landscape is in moderate condition.

Sensitivity

The heathland character is made prominent through the exposed areas of orange sand surrounding former mineral extraction works, and the predominance of gorse and silver birch. Much of the built development is traditional, respecting the local vernacular and creating a strong sense of place.



Traditional buildings, including timber framed houses and oast houses, and the use of consistent materials, including Kent peg tiles, chequered brickwork and local stone provide strong local distinctiveness. Round headed 'Dering' windows are found throughout the area, providing a strong sense of place. The network of narrow lanes, often running through farmyards, provides a distinctly rural and tranquil character. Overall the landscape has a moderate sensitivity.

Guidelines

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

- Conserve the foreground setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve the occasional open views of the chalk scarp to the north
- Conserve the specialised heathland character and habitats
- Conserve vernacular building styles and materials
- Improve hedged field boundaries by appropriate management and replanting
- Conserve and appropriately manage broadleaf woodland blocks and chestnut coppice
- Improve planting along water courses
- Encourage sympathetic culverting of water ways and the use of local ragstone and brick detailing
- Encourage appropriate fencing types
- Conserve isolated parkland trees amid pasture
- Conserve the pastoral landscape
- Encourage sympathetic field boundary pattern and reinstatement of historic boundary lines
- Encourage sympathetic fencing in association with transport infrastructure
- Encourage sympathetic redesign of former quarrying sites, with organically shaped water bodies and integrated vegetation which reflects surrounding semi-natural patterns

Landscape Analysis

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

Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

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

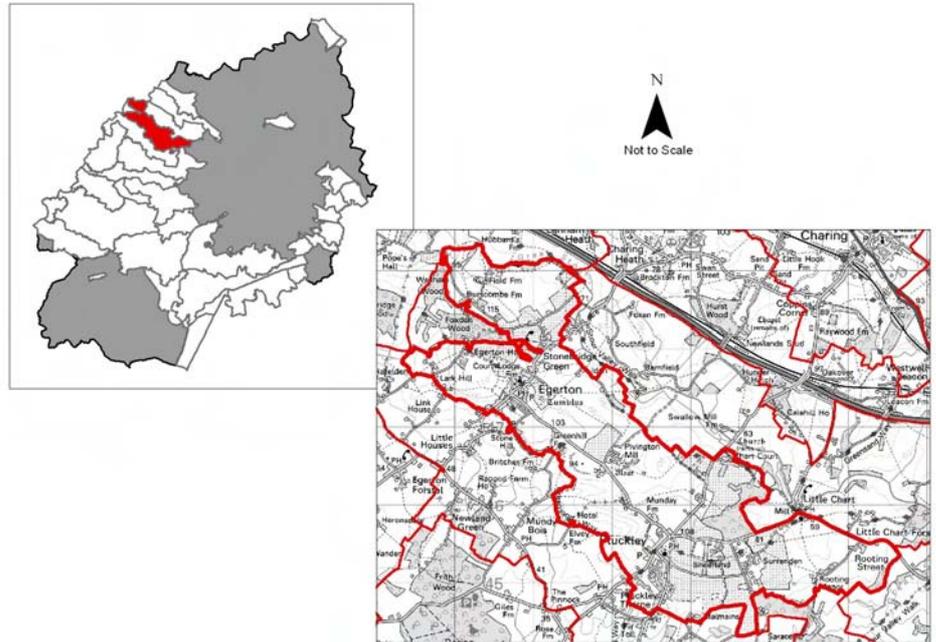
Guidelines: Conserve and Improve

28. Egerton – Pluckley Greensand Fruit belt

Key Characteristics

- Greensand Ridge
- Pasture within sheltered valleys and arable land on higher, more open ground
- Scarp face of the Greensand Ridge encloses the landscape to the south
- Mosaic field pattern with fields of different shapes and sizes
- Fruit orchards enclosed by shelterbelts within small and regular fields
- Scattered pockets of broadleaf woodland and chestnut coppice
- Historic hilltop settlements of Pluckley and Egerton centred around ragstone churches
- Distinctive architectural detailing with 'Dering' windows and chequered brickwork

Landscape Description



The geology comprises Hythe Beds with a ribbon of Atherfield Clay to the south and the periphery of the Weald Clay which extends further south. The hard sandy limestones and soft sands of the Hythe Beds produce fine, well drained loams on the gently undulating dip slope. The southern periphery of the area is formed by the scarp face of the Greensand Ridge. There is a distinct pattern of pasture situated within sheltered valleys, and arable land situated on higher more open ground. Views are often restricted by the undulating landform and intervening vegetation. West of Pluckley, however, dramatic open views can be gained from the ridge across the Low Weald below.

There is a mosaic of field shapes and sizes, influenced by the contours, and enclosed by a comprehensive network of native hedgerows. Enclosure is strengthened by the valley landscape and scattered pockets of broadleaf woodland and areas of chestnut coppice. Pockets of fruit orchards are scattered throughout the area, located within distinctive, regular, small scale fields and enclosed by shelter belts. Remnant shelter belts remain in some areas where orchards have been grubbed out. Post and wire fencing has replaced





hedgerows in places and provides support to existing hedgerows and shelter belts. A network of narrow, winding, and often enclosed roads radiate out from settled areas. The Greensand Way National Trail/Long Distance Route follows the Greensand Ridge, passing through the hilltop settlements of Pluckley and Egerton. Settlements comprise historic cores developed around churches, with more recent residential development expanding around their outskirts. The ragstone church at Egerton is largely 15th century and, with its six bell beacon tower, can be seen for miles. Stonebridge Green and Egerton support many distinctive 15th century buildings and walling which have been constructed from ragstone, and provides a distinctive character. Weather board clad converted barns and oast houses are

scattered throughout the area and locally distinct round headed 'Dering' windows and chequered brickwork are frequently used within buildings, particularly within Pluckley.

Condition

The strong pattern of landform influencing land use, with pasture set within sheltered valleys and settlements positioned along the Greensand Ridge, provides a coherent pattern of elements. Orchards, set within small, regularly shaped fields enclosed by shelterbelts, provide continuity throughout the landscape. There are few visual detractors, although orchard fencing in addition to shelter belts, equipment in association with fruit picking, polytunnels and large farm barns and industrial buildings at Pilvington Mill are visually intrusive. The shelter belts, hedgerows and woodland provide a network of ecological opportunities, although some hedgerows are in poor condition and others have been removed. Much of the woodland is ancient and has been designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Much of the settlement throughout the area is recognised for its historic and architectural significance, with Pluckley, Little Chart Forstal and Egerton designated as Conservation Areas. With particular relevance to the history and architecture of the area, Surrenden Manor to the east is enclosed by a distinctive high brick wall. Overall, the landscape is in good condition.

Sensitivity

The scattered orchards enclosed by shelterbelts are reflective of the wider fruit belt which the landscape forms part of, and provide continuity throughout the area. The historic hilltop settlements of Pluckley and Egerton are distinct in terms of both the pattern they provide within the landscape and the vernacular style buildings that have developed around the ragstone churches. Building materials are often local, and there is strong use of characteristic ragstone, chequered brickwork and weather boarding which has been painted white. Locally founded round topped 'Dering' windows provide strong local distinctiveness and a unique sense of place, and the Dering family are referenced within names, including 'Dering Wood' and the 'Dering Arms' public house. Overall the landscape has a high sensitivity.



Guidelines

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



- Conserve the rural and dramatic landscape of the Greensand Ridge and its setting, which are of high scenic quality
- Conserve the orchards, production of fruit and small scale field pattern
- Conserve and appropriately manage hedgerows and shelterbelts, encouraging reinforcement planting where necessary
- Continue to manage chestnut coppice appropriately
- Aim to minimise fencing where it is not necessary and encourage appropriate fencing types
- Avoid further agricultural intensification
- Conserve the pastoral landscape
- Conserve vernacular building styles and materials
- Avoid further enlargement of historic settlements
- Encourage the integration of large agricultural buildings into the landscape with appropriate clumps of native planting
- Avoid large scale development on the visually prominent ridge

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Good
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Good
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Strong
Landform:	Apparent
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

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

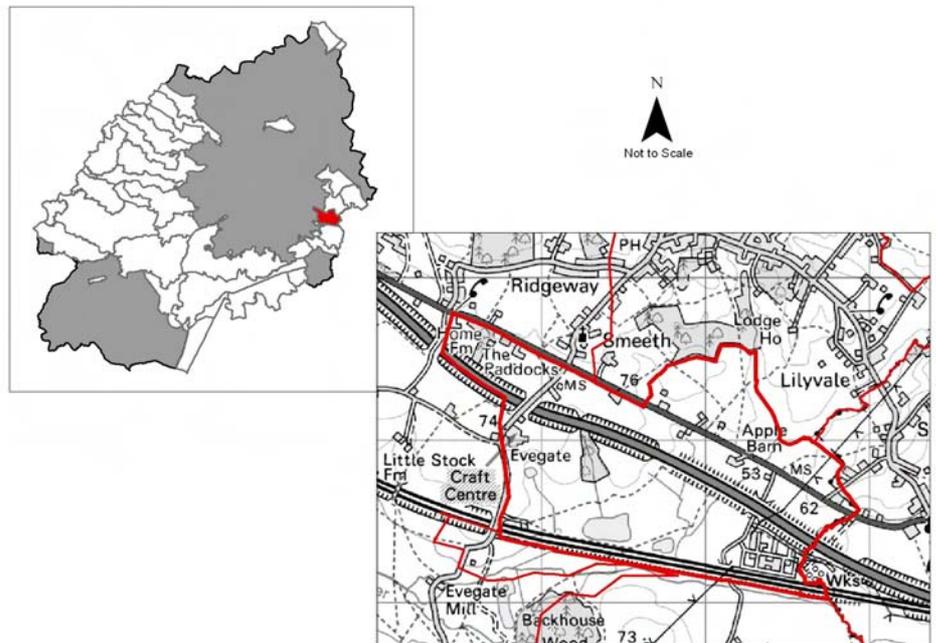
Guidelines: Conserve

29. Evegate Mixed Farmlands

Key Characteristics

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

Landscape Description



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

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





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

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

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

Condition

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



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



Sensitivity

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

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

Guidelines

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

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

Landscape Analysis

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

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

Guidelines: Improve

Downland Fringes



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

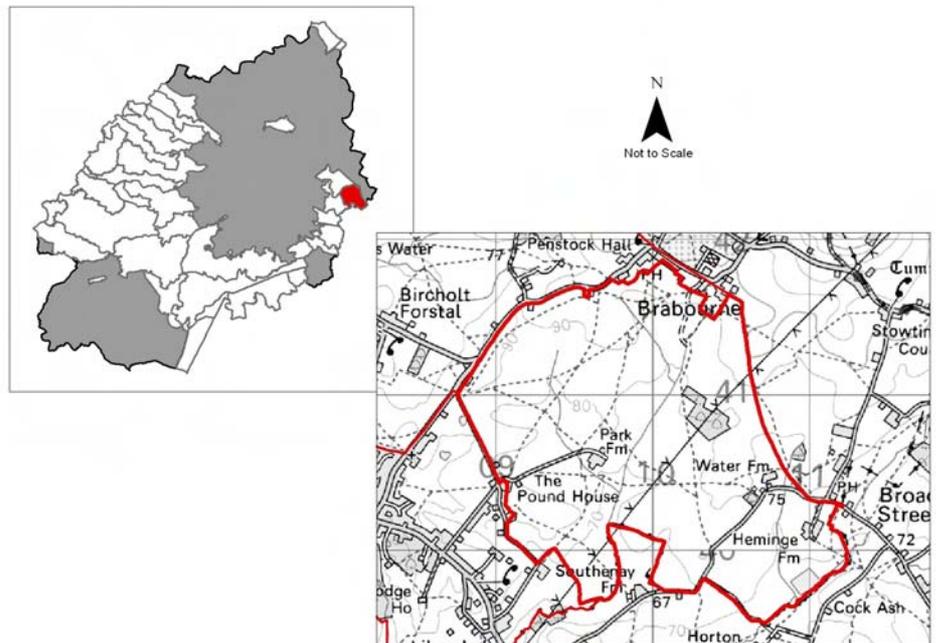


30. Brabourne Arable Farmlands

Key Characteristics

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

Landscape Description



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





horses commonly surround farmsteads.

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

There is little development within the area, although a number of isolated farmsteads are scattered across the landscape. The farms provide focal points within the arable landscape, comprising an amalgamation of large agricultural barns and some traditional buildings such as oast houses. There are few roads, although Southenay X Lane to the east forms a characteristically narrow and hedge lined route which winds past a number of farmsteads.

Condition

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

Sensitivity

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



Guidelines

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



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

Landscape Analysis

Condition:	Poor
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Many
Visual unity:	Interrupted
Cultural integrity:	Poor
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity:	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of place:	Weak
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Open
Visibility:	High

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

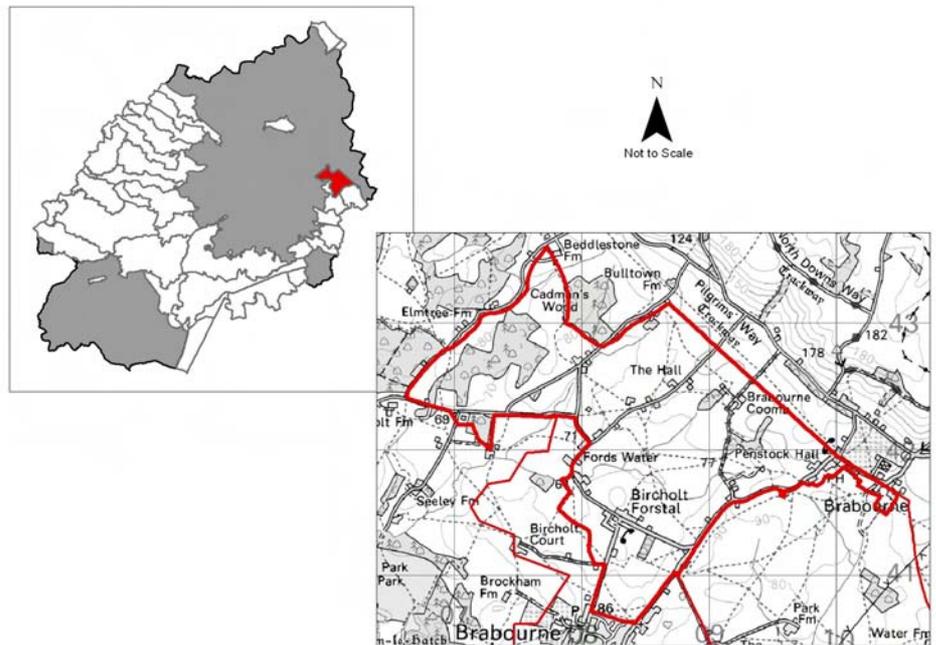
Guidelines: Restore and Improve

31. Brabourne Farmlands

Key Characteristics

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

Landscape Description



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

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





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

Condition

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

Sensitivity

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



Guidelines

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

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



Landscape Analysis

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

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

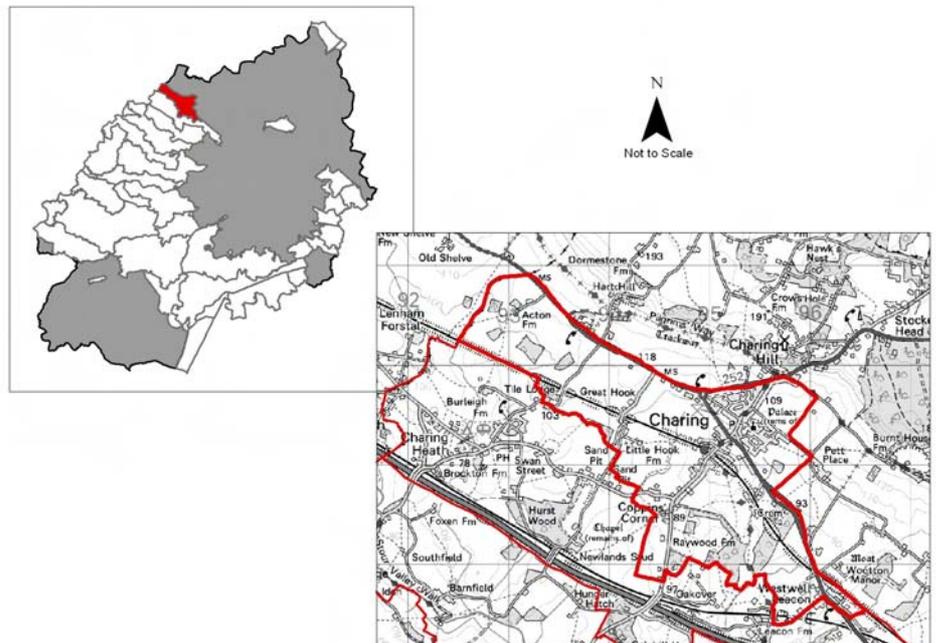
Guidelines: Conserve and Restore

32. Charing Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating landform
- Open views across arable landscape to the west with hedgerow loss
- Small woodland clumps and scattered farmsteads
- Narrow and deeply set streams, often marked by streamside native vegetation
- Railway line disturbs field pattern
- Use of local ragstone and flint within vernacular village centre of Charing
- Ragstone and flint Archbishop's Palace, and associated buildings and walling
- Recent development spreads out from the historic core of Charing
- Scattered farmsteads and large agricultural buildings
- Evidence of former quarrying activity
- Infrastructure routes of the A20 and railway line

Landscape Description



The geology predominately comprises Gault Clay, with fringes of Lower Greensand to the south and Lower Chalk along the foot of the North Downs. Ribbons of Alluvium drift follow the stream corridors and patches of Head become more frequent along higher ground to the north. Soils are clay to the south, becoming siltier across the Lower Chalk to the north. The topography is gently undulating, with panoramic views of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) visible from much of the area. Views within the area are restricted by built development within Charing and native deciduous woodland blocks to the east. To the west, views are more open across larger scale arable fields, punctuated by small woodland clumps and scattered farmsteads. Enclosure is provided by native hedgerows which line minor roads and dissect fields in places. A degree of hedgerow loss has resulted in the use of post and rail fencing in some areas, and the line of the railway has altered historic field pattern.

To the east, the pattern of the landscape is much influenced by the urban edge of Charing and the route of the A20 in terms of field pattern and land use. Public open spaces and small fields used as arable land provide the immediate setting to Charing. An area of traditionally managed meadowland with layered hedgerows is located to the east of the church. To the west the landscape predominantly comprises intensively farmed arable land, although pockets of smaller scale pastoral land surround farmsteads, divided by post and rail and post and wire fencing. Narrow and often deeply set streams flow through the landscape, often marked by streamside native vegetation. Land to the south east of Little Hook Farm appears to have been quarried, with remnant variations in topography and a small lake.



Charing comprises an ancient settlement which has developed at the scarp foot due to the line of springs that seep out from the junction of the chalk with the clay. The settlement is characterised by its vernacular buildings including timber framed houses, ornate brick gable ends and the use of local ragstone and flint within buildings and walling. The striking ragstone and flint Archbishop's Palace, and associated buildings and walling, is Grade 1 listed and dates back to the 12th century. In contrast, more recent brick housing is situated on the outskirts of the historic core of the village. Scattered farmsteads often comprise recent dwellings and large agricultural barns.

To the north, the busy A20 dissects Charing and continues along the northern edge of the character area along the foot of the Downs. The road is generally open with little highway vegetation and traffic movement is both audible and visible from the surrounding landscape. A railway line runs through the agricultural landscape, although this is not easy to discern from the surrounding landscape. However where minor roads cross its path, often via bridges constructed from red brick, the railway line and associated security fencing is evident.

Condition

The fragmentation of field pattern and land use caused by recent development on the outskirts of Charing, the A20 and the railway line and former mineral extraction to the south provide a slightly incoherent pattern of elements. Infrastructure, large agricultural barns and recent housing form visual detractors. Woodland clumps and blocks, many of which are ancient, stream corridors and hedgerows, where they remain intact, provide ecological corridors and clusters, although this is weakened by the large arable fields to the west. Vegetation corridors along stream channels appears to be unmanaged and slightly over mature in places, although there appears to be some more recent planting to the south east of Little Hook Farm, which was perhaps part of a remedial scheme in association with former



mineral extraction. To the east of Charing, a small area of woodland and fen is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Where hedgerows remain intact, they are generally well maintained, although some removal and/or replacement with fencing is evident. Charing is designated as a Conservation Area, and built development within its historic core is reflective of local materials and traditional styles, particularly demonstrated within the Archbishop's Palace which is a Scheduled Monument. However, the Palace and its buildings have fallen into disrepair in places. Overall, the landscape is in poor condition.

Sensitivity

Where they remain intact, hedgerows form distinct boundaries to the narrow lanes and divide some fields. The historic core of Charing, with its narrow streets and many vernacular buildings and use of traditional and local materials, provide strong local distinctiveness. However, more recent housing does not respect the local character and dilutes the sense of place. Narrow hedge lined lanes to the west form distinct and historic routes, running perpendicular to the raised ground across the Downs. Red brick bridges where the lanes cross the railway line provide a sense of continuity. The landscape is set within the foreground to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Charing provides a distinct settlement of historic prominence, located along the Pilgrim's Way which runs along the North Downs from Winchester to Canterbury. Overall the landscape has a high sensitivity.

Guidelines

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

- Conserve the rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve and restore vernacular building styles and materials
- Resist further expansion and development around Charing and the A20
- Conserve and appropriately manage woodland blocks
- Restore hedged field boundaries by appropriate management and replanting
- Avoid further arable intensification
- Encourage sympathetic field enclosure and restore historic boundary lines
- Encourage sympathetic fencing in association with the railway line

Landscape Analysis

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

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Strong
Landform:	Apparent
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

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

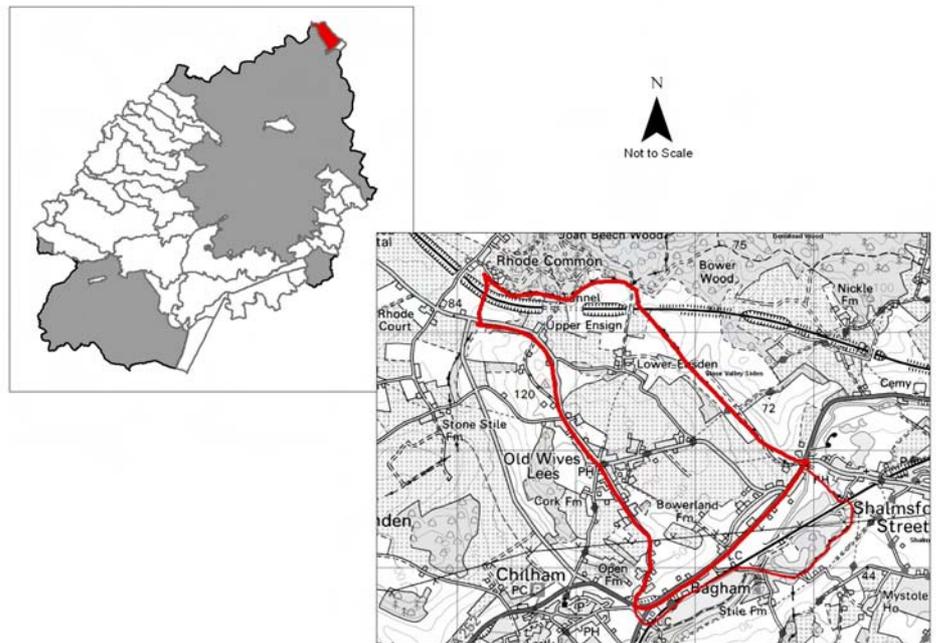
Guidelines: Restore

33. Old Wives Lees Orchards

Key Characteristics

- Very undulating landform as part of the immediate foreground to the Kent Downs AONB
- Extensive orchards, segregated into small, regular fields separated by tall poplar shelterbelts
- Traditional hop production
- Diverse species range within hedgerows and vegetation belts
- Small scattered broadleaf woodland shaws and chestnut coppice plantations
- Small hamlets and farmsteads
- Use of black weather boarding and chequered brickwork
- Recent housing development within Old Wives Lees and along Pilgrims Lane
- Lanes often enclosed by hedgerows and steep banks
- Audible but not highly visible railway line which passes through a wooded cutting and a tunnel in part

Landscape Description



The geology comprises Upper Chalk, with fringes of Thanet Beds to the north east. Soils are silty. The landform is very undulating and the landscape forms part of the immediate foreground to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which lies to the south and west. Where the undulating topography allows, there are extensive views out to the north east across rolling arable land, and to the dense and extensive Blean Woodland to the north west. From housing along Pilgrims Lane, there are views across the Great Stour valley to the opposite valley side which forms part of the Kent Downs AONB. Views within the area are limited as a result of the very undulating landform and the extensive cover of orchards, which are segregated into a small patchwork of fields by tall and visually screening shelterbelts.

Although some former orchards have been grubbed up and replaced with intensive arable crop production, fruit production remains the dominant land use. The small scale field pattern and the vertical structure provided by shelterbelts and orchards provide an unspoilt, secluded landscape with a strong sense of





enclosure. Some hop production, supported by traditional hop poles which were once common throughout Kent is evident. Small scattered broadleaf woodland shaws and chestnut coppice plantations combine with the orchards and shelterbelts to provide a significant amount of tree cover and seasonal variation. Hedgerows frequently comprise one species only, such as hawthorn or beech, although at times they are mixed with a noticeable amount of evergreen holly and ivy. Taller tree and woodland belts, isolated trees and clusters of vegetation comprise a wide variety of species, including pine, evergreen oak and silver birch.

Many of the properties which are densely situated along the narrow Pilgrims Lane, overlooking the Great Stour valley, are recent. Old Wives Lees comprises a mixture of converted oast houses, weather boarding and pebble dash clad properties, recent brick bungalows and rows of terraces. Smaller hamlets and farmsteads are scattered throughout the landscape. The hamlets of Lower Ensdon and Upper Ensign support large farm buildings, barns and oast houses. There is a strong use of black weather boarding, flint and chequered brickwork within these buildings. Some have been converted, while others are still in use and some appear to be derelict. A small disused chalk quarry at Lower Ensdon is evident, emphasising the underlying chalk geology.

Roads often follow the undulations, enclosed by high banks and aligned with hedgerows and shelterbelts. The busy A28 to the south east is audible from Pilgrims Lane, but not easily discernible due to its lower situation. A railway line passes through the northern extent of the area, but it is not widely visible because it is set within a wooded cutting and a section passes through Selling Tunnel.

Condition

The orchards and shelterbelts provide a coherent pattern of elements. There are few visual detractors, although there are some derelict farm buildings, the busy A28, pylons and recent housing which does not respect local vernacular. The extensive tree cover provides strong bases for wildlife, and the intricate network of hedgerows and shelterbelts provide a high degree of connectivity. North of the railway line, woodland is ancient and is designated as part of the wider Blean Woods South Local Wildlife Site which extends into Canterbury district. There is strong variety of plant species provided within garden planting, hedgerows, woodland belts and shelterbelts, and the condition of planting is good as a result of hedgerow and shelterbelt management and new orchard stock. Overall the landscape is in good condition.

Sensitivity

The patchwork of orchards, set within an enclosed network of shelterbelts, across a very undulating landform provide strong local distinctiveness and continuity throughout the area. Although some recent



housing does not respect the local vernacular, the oast houses and barns and the use of flint and distinctive chequered brickwork contribute significantly to the strength of place. The location immediately adjacent to the Kent Downs AONB makes this a sensitive landscape. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape is high.

Guidelines



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

- Conserve the rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Avoid development on high and visually prominent ground
- Avoid further expansion of recent settlement along Pilgrims Lane and within Old Wives Lees
- Conserve top fruit production and avoid further agricultural intensification
- Conserve shelterbelts and hedgerows and gap up where they have deteriorated
- Conserve and appropriately manage woodland blocks and shaws
- Avoid the introduction of unnecessary fencing
- Conserve isolated hamlets and avoid enlargement
- Encourage sympathetic conversions which do not urbanise the character of traditional buildings
- Conserve traditional buildings and the use of flint, chequered brickwork and weather boarding
- Conserve the narrow, enclosed winding lanes and avoid widening

Landscape Analysis

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

Sensitivity:	High
Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

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

Guidelines: Conserve

Summary and recommendations

The landscape assessment identifies 33 landscape character areas throughout the study area. Each of these areas has physical and cultural characteristics that are distinct and identifiable from the others. Some of the differences between character areas are not immediately apparent until they are broken down to their basic landscape components. The transition between the areas on the ground may be quite gradual in some places but the essential characteristics are quite distinct from each other. Some character areas appear to change quite dramatically within themselves. These changes may be due to either very local variations or more typically due to changes in condition.

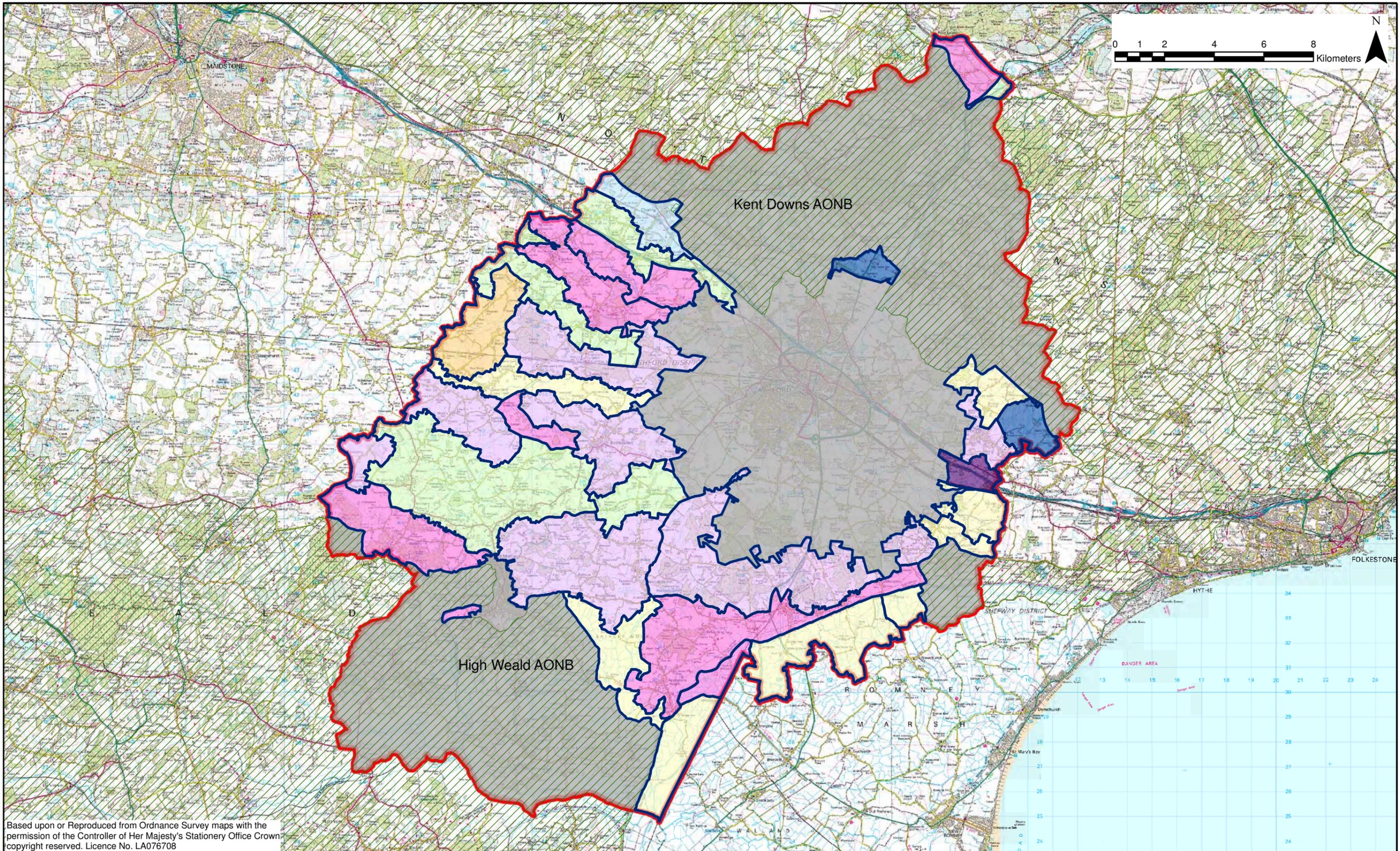
It is not appropriate to categorise landscapes merely on their condition particularly when generating guidance for their future management. The condition of a landscape needs to be balanced against its sensitivity. The combination of condition and sensitivity assessments has generated appropriate actions for each character area.

Table 1 provides a summary of landscape condition and sensitivity and the overall landscape issues and landscape guidelines for each area. Figure 13 provides an illustration of the landscape guidelines. Although conclusions have been reached for each of the character areas it is not the purpose of this study to rank one character area against another. For example some landscapes may be sensitive to change but are sensitive in different ways and different actions are appropriate. Likewise this study is not intended to identify in detail areas suitable for development. It may however offer guidance to both the local planning authority and developers when deciding the type and scale of development that may be appropriate within the study area.

Table 1: Landscape Guidelines

Landscape Character Area	Condition	Sensitivity	Guidelines
1. Highknock Arable Marshlands	Moderate	High	Conserve and Restore
2. Romney Marsh Mixed Farmlands	Moderate	High	Conserve and Restore
3. Royal Military Marshlands	Moderate	High	Conserve and Restore
4. Shirley Moor Arable Land	Moderate	High	Conserve and Restore
5. The Dowels Marshland Pasture	Good	High	Conserve
6. Beult Valley Farmlands	Moderate	High	Conserve and Restore
7. Beult Valley Wooded Farmlands	Moderate	High	Conserve and Restore
8. Boughton Lees Horticultural Valley	Poor	Moderate	Restore and Improve
9. Stour Valley Shalmsford	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
10. East Stour Valley	Moderate	High	Conserve and Restore
11. Great Stour Valley	Good	High	Conserve
12. Bethersden Mixed Farmlands	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
13. Biddenden and High Halden Farmlands	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
14. Bonnington Wooded Farmlands	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
15. Dering Wooded Farmlands	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
16. Haffenden Quarter Farmlands	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
17. Hareplain Farmlands	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
18. Mundy Bois Mixed Farmlands	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
19. Old Romney Shoreline Settlements	Good	High	Conserve
20. Plurrenden Arable Plateau	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
21. Shadoxhurst Wooded Farmlands	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
22. Smarden Bell Farmlands	Moderate	Low	Improve and Reinforce
23. Woodchurch Undulating Farmlands	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
24. Clapper Hill Wooded Farmlands	Good	High	Conserve
25. Aldington Ridgeline	Moderate	High	Conserve and Restore
26. Brabourne Lees Hilly Farmlands	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
27. Charing Heath Farmlands	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and improve

28. Egerton – Pluckley Greensand Fruit Belt	Good	High	Conserve
29. Evegata Mixed Farmlands	Poor	Low	Improve
30. Brabourne Arable Farmlands	Poor	Moderate	Restore and Improve
31. Brabourne Farmlands	Moderate	High	Conserve and Restore
32. Charing Farmlands	Poor	High	Restore
33. Old Wives Lees Orchards	Good	High	Conserve



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Legend

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Ashford Study Area | Landscape Guidelines | | |
| Ashford Borough Boundary | Conserve | Conserve and Restore | Restore |
| Non Study and Urban Areas | Conserve and Improve | Improve | Restore and Improve |
| Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty | Conserve and Reinforce | Improve and Reinforce | |

Figure 13: Ashford Landscape Guidelines