

HART DISTRICT

landscape assessment



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Final Report

Prepared for
Hart District Council
and
Hampshire County Council

by

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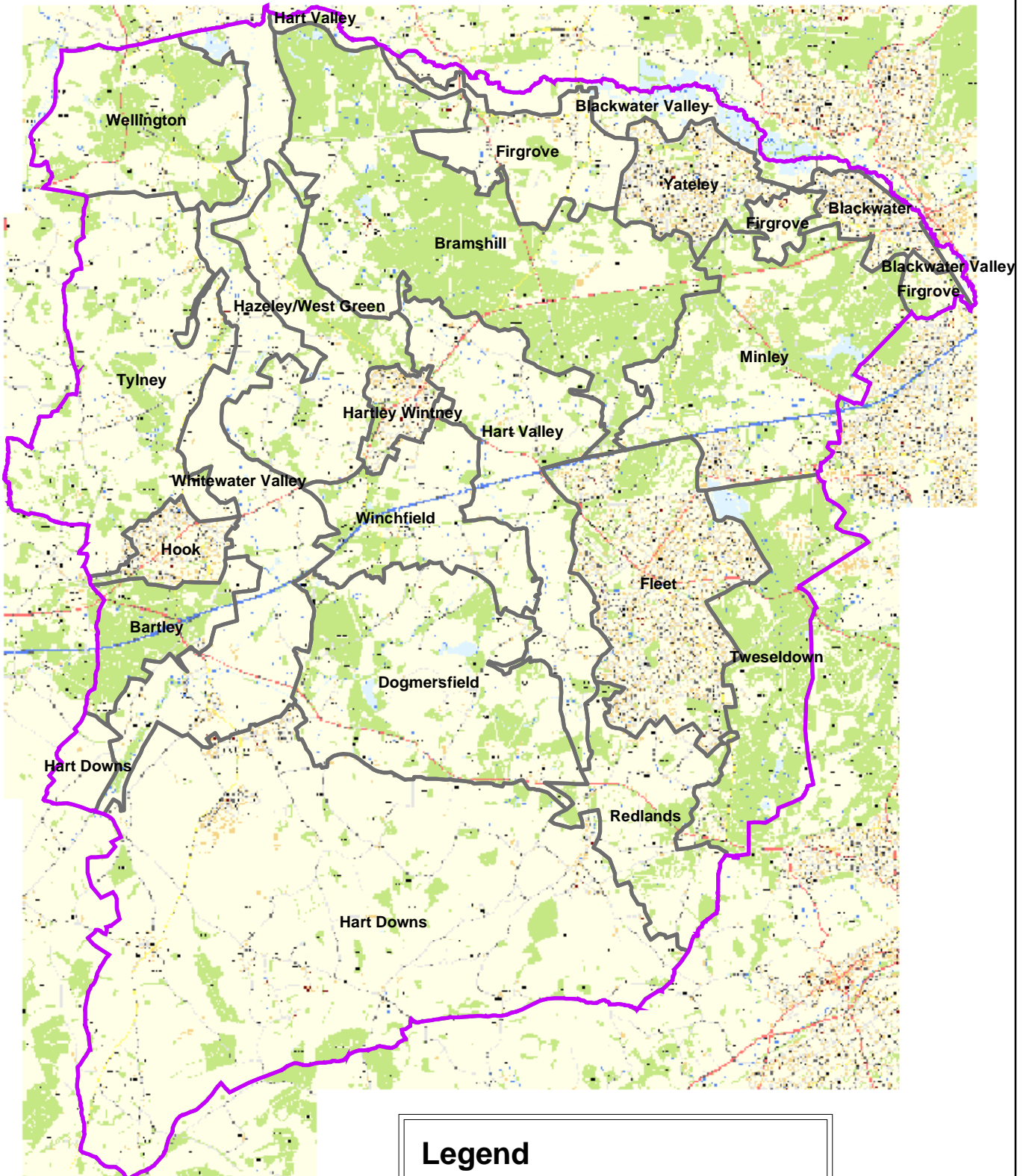
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Hart Landscape Character Areas

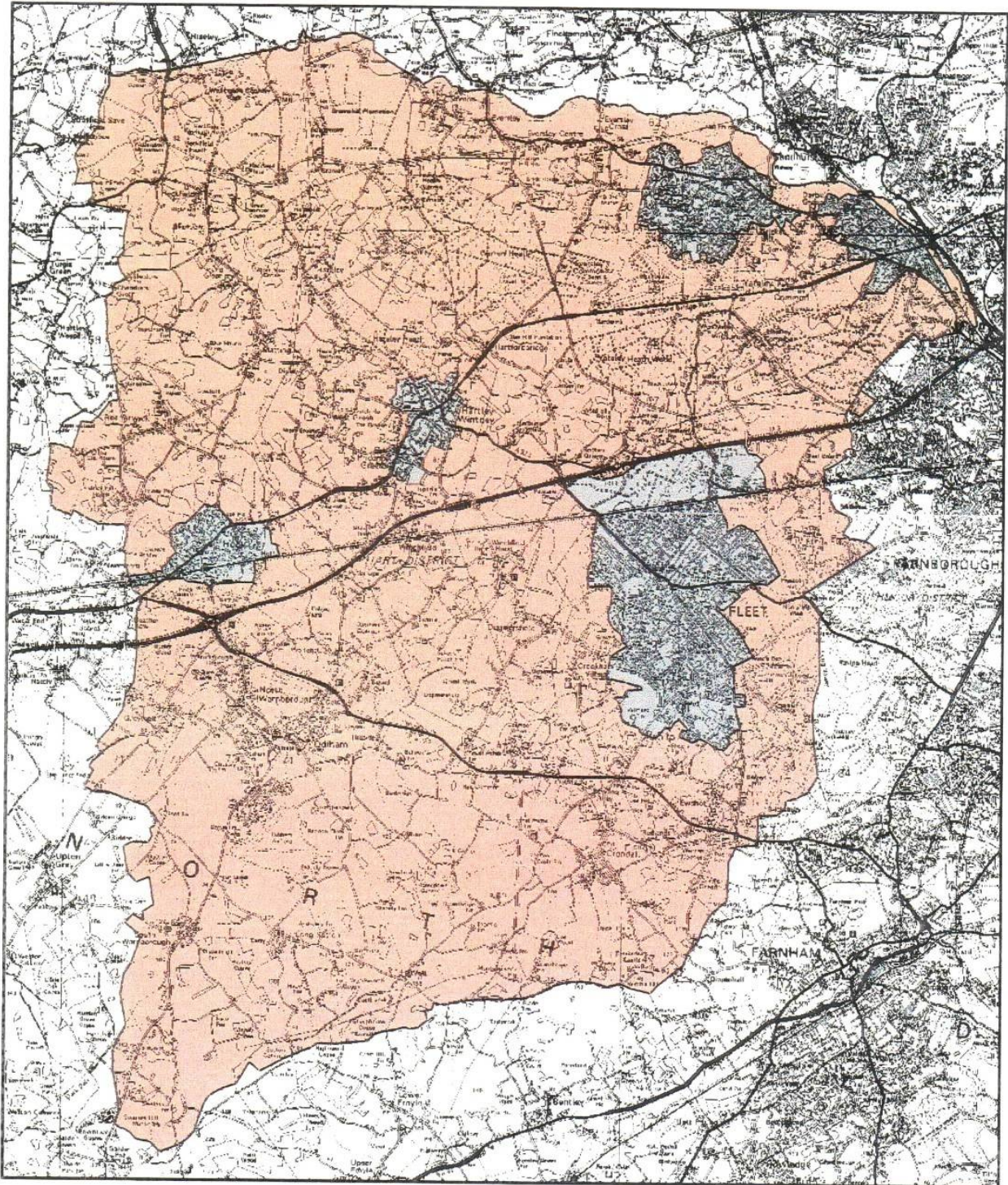


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1 *Introduction*

Background to the study

- 1.1 The aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive and definitive appraisal of the landscape resources of the Hart District which is intended to inform countryside planning and management decisions and priorities within the District. The impetus for its preparation has come from two main directions.
- 1.2 Firstly, there is a growing recognition generally of the role of landscape assessment as a basis for planning and management of environmental resources, given greater emphasis through the publication of new guidance on landscape assessment by the Countryside Commission in 1993 [1]. The Commission encourages local planning authorities to undertake landscape assessments as part of the Government's policy on sustainable development and sees their general purpose as providing informed background for policy and development control decisions and countryside management priorities and initiatives. It also states that assessments will assist in the preparation of the case for designation of landscapes at the national, county and local level.
- 1.3 Secondly, in 1993 Hampshire County Council undertook an assessment of the landscape of the whole county, presented in their publication 'The Hampshire Landscape' [2]. The study was intended to provide the basis for a landscape strategy for the county and to encourage a greater awareness of the character and pressures upon the Hampshire landscape and to stimulate debate about its future. The broad assessment of the county's landscape needs to be supported by more detailed work at a local level and thus the County Council is encouraging the preparation of district-wide landscape assessments by the local planning authorities within Hampshire.
- 1.4 Scott Wilson Resource Consultants (formerly Cobham Resource Consultants) were appointed to prepare the landscape assessment for Hart District, the brief for which included the following main requirements:
 - to provide a **characterisation** of the District's landscape based upon the landscape types already identified by Hampshire County Council and the approach recommended by the Countryside Commission in their guidance document on landscape assessment;
 - to analyse and describe the **elements** (landscape, visual, ecological and historical) that contribute to the distinctiveness of areas of different character;



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Figure 1
STUDY AREA

- to **evaluate landscape quality** across the District with a view to the identification of areas of special landscape quality;
 - to identify land use and management issues and to provide **broad management guidelines** which highlight priority areas for landscape conservation, restoration or enhancement.
- 1.5 In particular, the assessment was intended to provide an input into the Hart District Local Plan review process and, consequently, an interim report on the initial findings of the study was produced in February 1996 in order to fit in with the programme for the review. These findings have subsequently been incorporated into the Deposit Draft of the Replacement Local Plan 1996-2006 [5]. This report builds upon those initial findings and presents them in greater detail.

Approach and methodology

- 1.6 Landscape assessment, as a tool for identifying and describing the character of our landscapes, is increasingly recognised as an important first step in conserving and enhancing them. Over recent years, there has been a general trend away from quantitative systems of landscape evaluation towards an approach based on understanding the intrinsic character of a locality and its distinctive features. This approach - which has now become part of established practice - allows land-use planning and management to respond to the local landscape 'vernacular'.
- 1.7 The approach recognises that the character of the landscape relies closely on its physiography, its history and land management in addition to its scenic or visual dimension. Hence, other factors which may influence the ways in which landscape is experienced and valued, such as ecology, history and culture, should be examined although they are not in themselves to be the subject of detailed discussion.
- 1.8 Advice on principles and methods of landscape assessment was first published by the Countryside Commission in 1987 [6] but since then many assessments have been carried out and the approach has been developed and refined. New guidance, prepared by SWRC on behalf of the Countryside Commission, has subsequently been published which builds on the earlier advice but brings it up-to-date [1]. The approach to the Hart landscape assessment is based closely upon this guidance which, essentially, relies upon a mix of subjective and objective judgement, used in a systematic and iterative way.

- 1.9 The main steps in the assessment process are:
- defining the purpose
 - preliminary survey
 - desk study
 - field survey
 - analysis
 - presentation of results
- 1.10 The **purpose** of the assessment determines the detailed method to be used and the scale at which the assessment is to be presented. In this case, the assessment is intended to increase understanding of the landscape resources of the district as a whole, to assist with policy formulation and development control, and also to assist with the targeting of resources for enhancement and management. Both of these purposes required the assessment to be pitched at a level of detail which lies somewhere between the broad-brush and the field-by-field assessment.
- 1.11 The **desk study** involved the collation of a wide range of existing information from which some of the key formative influences on landscape character could be deduced. A 1:50,000 overlay mapping exercise was undertaken, analysing geology, soils, landform and drainage, landcover, woodland/parkland and sites of ecological and historical importance within the district. We also reviewed other landscape assessments, notably the county-wide assessment [2] and those for neighbouring districts, which have provided both broad context and local detail of landscape character upon which to build within the district assessment. In addition, various books, plans and reports were also examined in order to build upon our understanding of the landscape resource.
- 1.12 The purpose of the **field survey** was to identify and record the range of variation in landscape character on the ground, to help define landscape types and character areas and the elements that distinguish them. A first phase of fieldwork involved travelling extensively throughout the district, recording detailed variations in landscape character and key features onto 1:25,000 base maps. Further field survey was subsequently undertaken later in the year to provide further information on the positive and negative attributes of the landscape, its ability to accommodate change and its enhancement needs and priorities. A number of field survey forms, supported by a photographic record, were completed for representative locations in order to record such attributes.
- 1.13 Following the desk study and field survey, a process of **analysis** allowed us to define landscape types and the boundaries of fifteen character areas. It also involved an evaluation of the variation in landscape quality across the district.

- 1.14 The results of the assessment are **presented** in this report, supported by appropriate plans and illustrations. The report summarises our findings and attempts to communicate to a wide audience the highly distinctive character and special qualities of the Hart District landscape.

Structure of the report

- 1.15 The findings of the assessment are presented in five main sections, as follows:
- **Section 1** - provides the introduction and background to the study;
 - **Section 2** - describes, in broad brush terms, the factors responsible for shaping the landscape, focusing upon the **physical influences** of geology, landform, drainage and soils, and the **human influences** that have affected the area through time;
 - **Section 3** - concentrates on the present-day landscape of the district and the **variations in landscape character** that have resulted from the interaction of these various forces, describing the way in which certain landscape elements combine to produce areas of distinctively different character with a particular local identity.
 - **Section 4** - focuses on the **evaluation of landscape quality** within the District in order to clarify priorities for landscape conservation and enhancement across the District as a whole.
 - **Section 5** - contains the descriptions and analysis of the fifteen individual **Landscape Character Areas**, highlighting their distinctive characteristics and qualities, their special features and attributes and the priorities for landscape management and enhancement within each area.

2 *Formative influences*

Introduction

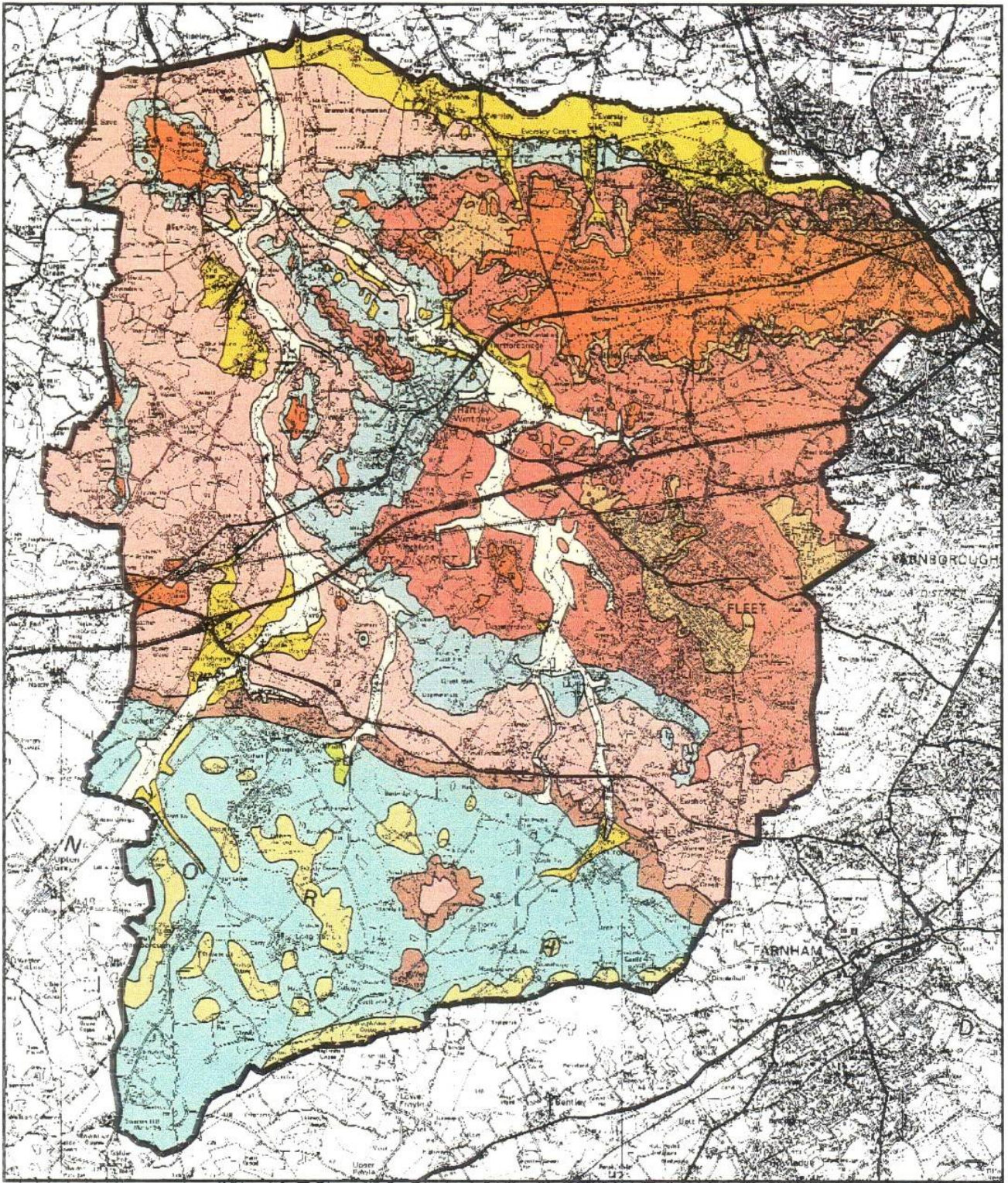
- 2.1 The District of Hart covers an area of approximately 83 square miles in the north-east corner of Hampshire, sharing boundaries with both Berkshire in the north and Surrey to the south-east. It is a predominantly rural district and embraces a wide variety of landscapes and large areas of unspoilt countryside within its boundaries. It is framed to the north by the low-lying valley of the Blackwater River and to the south by the open chalk hills of the North Downs. To the east, the district is bounded by an undulating landscape of forests and heaths interspersed by roads and built development, while to the west it is bounded by a rural landscape of wooded farmland.
- 2.2 Between these varied ‘edges’ lies a rich mosaic of rolling downland, intimate river valleys, extensive forests and heaths, wooded farmland and historic parkland, with a scattering of rural villages and larger settlements. This mixed pattern of landscape contains some notable contrasts, for example between the enclosure of the forests and the open and expansive landscapes of the North Downs.
- 2.3 This patterning results from the interaction of the physical structure of the landscape and the nature of the vegetation and land uses that clothe it. In this chapter, we aim to draw out the key physical and human influences which have been responsible for shaping the district’s landscape over time and which continue to influence the dynamics of landscape change. In chapter three, we then go on to examine in greater detail the way in which the individual components of the landscape interact to produce distinctive patterns and places within the landscape and help us to unravel and understand its overall complexity.

Physical influences



- 2.4 The basic structure of any landscape is formed by its underlying rocks and relief. Geology and the processes of weathering, erosion and deposition, influence the form of the landscape, its drainage, soils and, in turn, its patterns of vegetation and land use.

Geology and landform

- 2.5 Hart District lies across the boundary of two distinct geological formations, producing a comparatively varied geological structure that has a strong influence upon landform and landscape character (see Figures 2 and 3).
- 2.6 The southern part of the district is dominated by the deep chalk bed of the North Downs, laid down in the Cretaceous period when this part of England lay beneath a vast, shallow and warm inlet of the sea. This belt of chalk stretches right across Hampshire and its neighbouring counties of Wiltshire and Sussex, forming the distinctive downland landscapes of southern England.
- 2.7 The Upper Chalk, the youngest of the chalk series, dominates that part of the district which lies roughly to the south of a line linking Greywell, Odiham and Crondall. The land rises gently southwards to form the smoothly rolling downland, broad plateaux and shallow valleys that are distinctive features of chalk scenery. In places, the chalk geology is overlain by superficial deposits of clay with flints, laid down during the inter-glacial period. This clay cap masks the chalk geology and gives rise to different soils and surface conditions, often less suited to agriculture and typically clothed in broadleaved woodland, such as around Horsedown Common.
- 2.8 The remainder of the district lies on the south-western edge of the London Basin, where the chalk strata dip towards the north and are buried beneath the younger deposits of sands and clays laid down during the Tertiary Period during progressive periods of marine flooding. These Tertiary deposits are all comparatively soft and are easily eroded to form low-lying landscapes of subdued relief. However, their variability and sequence of outcrops has produced a complex pattern of soils, vegetation types and land use character across the district.
- 2.9 The interbedded clay, sands and pebbles of the Reading Beds occur as a thin band immediately at the edge of the chalk. However, immediately to the north of this line and to the west of the district the dominant geology is London Clay, which succeeds the Reading Beds with a sharp junction and marks the next period of cyclic marine flooding. A mosaic of pasture and woodland is typical of the clay areas, with their poorly drained and heavy soils.
- 2.10 Across the central, north and eastern parts of the district the London Clay is succeeded by a concentric series of formations comprising beds of Bagshot Sands, then Bracklesham Beds and Barton Sands, with a mix of fine sands, clays, pebbles and ironstones. The resulting mixture of acid and waterlogged ground conditions has led to the development of a mosaic of heathland and forest vegetation, generally unsuited to intensive cultivation.



Key

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
|  High-Level Terrace Deposits |  Clay-with-flints |  Loam |
|  Low-Level Terrace Deposits |  Reading Beds |  Upper Chalk |
|  Barton Beds |  Alluvium |  London Clay |
|  Bracklesham Beds |  Bagshot Beds | |



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Figure 2
SIMPLIFIED GEOLOGY

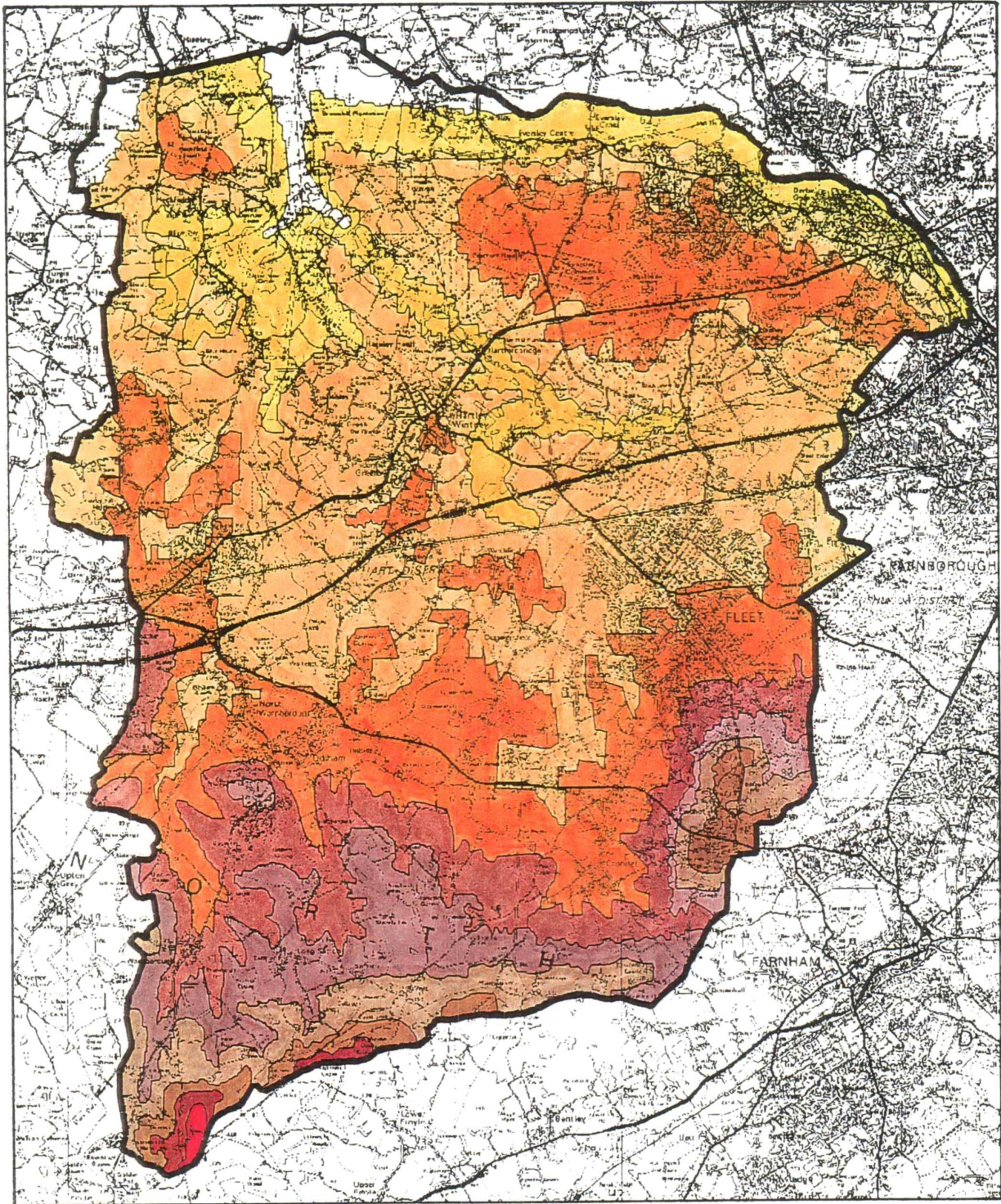
- 2.11 Later Quaternary deposits of river, valley and plateau gravels occur along the main river valleys and deposits of alluvium also follow the outlines of the complex river network. Mineral extraction is a particular feature of the Blackwater Valley, where the river gravels have been worked for the past 40 years and continue to be worked in the vicinity of Yateley and Eversley Cross. Sand and gravel extraction have also modified the landscape of the northern and eastern parts of the district and parts of the Bramshill Plateau have been identified as preferred areas for future mineral extraction.

Drainage











- 2.12 The principal rivers within the district are the Blackwater River, the Whitewater River and the River Hart, although there is a network of minor streams and rivers that feed this main system. The rivers rise in the chalk uplands and flow northwards into the London Basin, issuing from the spring-line at the junction between the water bearing strata of the chalk and the impervious deposits (e.g. London Clay) which overly it. Chalk is extremely permeable and the downs act as reservoir feeding the river systems with a slow release of hard, alkaline, clear water resulting from the dissolution of the chalk.
- 2.13 The Blackwater River flows generally north-westwards to join the River Loddon and ultimately the River Thames north-east of Reading. It defines the northern boundary of the district and its valley forms a distinctive landscape unit along this northern edge. While the river's water quality is described as 'fair' to 'poor' [7] (largely because of the impact of urbanisation and sewage effluent which forms a large part of its flow) there are some sites with good fish populations. Mineral extraction has created a number of lakes along the valley, which are of value for recreation and/or nature conservation.
- 2.14 The Whitewater River rises at the junction of the chalk near Greywell and runs northwards right through the district to join the Blackwater River at the district boundary. Its water quality is described as 'high' and, as well as a natural supply of trout, it is classified under EC Directive 78/659 as capable of supporting a salmonid fish population. The River Hart rises further to the east near Crondall and then flows northwards and north-westwards to join the Whitewater River to the west of Bramshill. There are abstractions from both rivers on the chalk outcrop near to the springs that feed them, for potable water supply. At Itchel on the River Hart, the abstraction is considered to have a significant impact on a modest spring source [7].
- 2.15 The Basingstoke Canal also runs through the south of the district along the 75 metre contour and is an important landscape feature as well as supporting good fish populations.

Soils and agricultural land capability

- 2.16 A variety of soil types occur across the district and influence the capability of the land to support agriculture. Soils on the chalk tend to be well-drained and calcareous and are dominated by brown earths on the higher ground of the downs with brown rendzinas around the head of the Whitewater River and the valley which runs to the south through South Warnborough. These soils are of good quality and are often intensively farmed but relief and soil depth are limiting factors, with the shallow soils of the steeper slopes being less suitable for cultivation and often wooded, colonised by scrub or under permanent pasture. Agricultural quality on the chalk is almost entirely Grade 3, with localised pockets of Grade 2 between Odiham and Long Sutton and near Crondall.
- 2.17 The more complex solid and drift geology of the London Basin gives rise to a similarly mixed pattern of soils and agricultural land value. Areas which are underlain by London Clay and the Reading Beds support typical stagnogley soils, which comprise seasonally waterlogged fine or coarse loamy soils over clay. These are mostly of Grade 3 quality and support a mix of pasture and arable crops but poor drainage is a limiting factor and gives rise to less productive, heavy soils that are mostly under woodland or, occasionally, lowland heath vegetation. Other gleyed soils occur along the main river valleys where the fine silty and loamy soils are variously affected by groundwater and are subject to flooding, reducing their agricultural capability to Grade 4.
- 2.18 Across the northern and eastern parts of the district, a swathe of podzolic soils support extensive areas of forest and heathland vegetation, developed on acid, unproductive and sometimes waterlogged soils. These soils are closely correlated with the Bracklesham and Barton Beds which underlie the Warren Heath, Eversley Common, Yateley Heath, Hawley Common, Tweseldown Hill, Heckfield and Hazeley Heath areas and generally comprise very acid, sandy over clayey soils with humose or peaty surface horizons. A localised area of peaty soils occurs in the Minley/Hawley area although its effects on natural vegetation character have been masked by the effects of land management.
- 2.19 Better quality typical argillic brown earth soils occur on the Bagshot Beds in the Up Green area, comprising deep well-drained fine loamy soils over gravel that are mostly of Grade 3 quality and support mixed farmland and woodland. Brown earth soils occur on the Bracklesham Beds in the central part of the district around Winchfield. These deep, fine, loamy soils generally support productive farmland but localised gleying and seasonal waterlogging is reflected in the presence of blocks of woodland and wetter heathland vegetation. The surrounding areas to the north and west overlie the Bagshot Beds and area dominated by argillic brown sands. These are deep, well-drained, sandy and coarse loamy soils which support a mosaic of heathland, woodland and farmland.



Key

 Land less than 50m	 Land between 80 and 100m	 Land between 140 and 160m	 Land over 200m
 Land between 50 and 60m	 Land between 100 and 120m	 Land between 160 and 180m	
 Land between 60 and 80m	 Land between 120 and 140m	 Land between 180 and 200m	



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Figure 3

TOPOGRAPHY

Human influences

- 2.20 Superimposed upon the basic physical structure of the landscape are shifting patterns of land use and landcover elements which are the result of man's occupation and activity over several millennia. The landscape has continued to evolve in response to changing human needs but the pace and scale of change has been very different between prehistoric, historic and recent times, with rapid and significant changes taking place within the present century and as recently as the last three to four decades. Hart District has retained a predominantly rural character but agricultural change, the infilling and expansion of settlements and transportation development and have all had an effect upon the Borough landscape over recent times. This process of landscape evolution is outlined below.

Prehistoric influences

- 2.21 The term 'prehistoric' covers thousands of years but has been divided into five distinct phases: the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. During this time, man experienced a change from a nomadic to a more settled way of life, the introduction of cereal crops, the domestication of animals and the introduction of pottery making and metal working.
- 2.22 At the beginning of the **Palaeolithic** period, some 700,000 years ago, the landscape of Hart District bore little resemblance to that of today. For long periods of time, Hampshire and other parts of southern Europe were connected to the continent, allowing passage at periods of low sea level. This was basically a time of primitive colonisation and human population would have been very sparse. Towards the end of the Palaeolithic period, a rapid rise in temperature allowed the development of soils and establishment of plants, including forest trees.
- 2.23 During the **Mesolithic** period (7000-4500 BC) the developing tree cover evolved into mixed woodland which would have clothed the whole landscape of the District. Early man began to adapt to a new way of living and began to change his environment, possibly through the use of stone tools and fire, but made a limited impression because the population was small and still made up primarily of nomadic hunter-gatherers. At the end of this period, the landscape of Hart District would probably have still been covered by a dense forest of oak, elm, lime, ash, birch, hazel and alder, though differences would exist depending upon local soils and drainage.
- 2.24 It is not until the **Neolithic** period (4500-2600 BC) when man began to make significant changes to the landscape. Hunting and gathering gave way to more settled arable and pastoral farming and, after an initial

phase of land clearance in the Neolithic period, an agriculturally-based economy was firmly established with clearance of woodland from the chalk downland areas for cultivation and grazing. Evidence of definitive settlements is sparse in both Hart District and Hampshire as a whole, but flint and pottery finds suggest that there must have been widespread occupation of the chalk where the fertile soils were most easily worked.

- 2.25 Even in the **Bronze Age** (2600-750 BC), there is still little evidence of settlements, although barrows and earthworks from this period have been recorded around Crondall and in the Eversley and Hawley areas. Forest clearances continued, however, and resulted in large areas of open country on chalkland as well as the beginnings of colonisation of lower-lying, less exposed areas. During the **Iron Age** (750 BC-AD 43), however, the development of iron, a hard metal suitable for plough shares and for tree felling, resulted in the widespread clearance of woodland cover on the heavier, more clayey soils on the lower slopes of the downs and in the river valleys. This period of prehistory, therefore, saw the greatest destruction of wood and forest cover in Hampshire and the formation of heathlands, through cultivation of the Forest Brown earths overlying the sands and gravels of Hart District. The free drainage and resultant leaching destroyed soil fertility and created impervious podsols, which in turn led to the colonisation of the area by heathland species which could tolerate the acid, infertile conditions [7].
- 2.26 At the end of the pre-historic period, therefore, the landscape of much of Hart District would have been characterised by open chalklands and a wild, barren mosaic of heath and woodland in the lowlands. However, for the first time, the landscape was divided into a series of fields for crops of wheat and barley, providing the origins of the development of a more diverse agricultural landscape within the District.
- 2.27 Other evidence of the prehistoric period is found in a number of ancient routes, or ‘ridgeways’, which crossed the chalklands within Hampshire. One of these, the Harroway, runs east-west across the county and passes through Long Sutton in the south of the district on its route towards Basingstoke and Andover. Although it is not a true ridgeway, it nevertheless avoids low ground and was an important trade route for many centuries [8].

Roman influence

- 2.28 The Romans brought new impetus to woodland clearance. By the late Roman times it was possible, and indeed necessary with an increasing population, to farm all but the heaviest soils. However, many Roman villages and farmsteads would have needed wood as a source of fuel and for their potteries, iron-smelting activities, brick industry, bath houses and central heating. The wood for kilns was obtained not only from woodland clearance but also by coppicing and it is possible that the Romans introduced sweet chestnut for this purpose.

- 2.29 The network of Roman fortified and unfortified towns, roads, villages, villas and farmsteads was laid over the irregular pattern of earlier settlements, fields and trackways and mainly occupied the lower slopes of the downs and the river valleys. Straight purpose-built roads were built to link the important Roman settlements of the county, including Silchester which is located just beyond the District boundary to the north-west. Two major Roman roads pass through the district, both radiating out from Silchester: one, the Devil's Highway, is followed in part by the northern boundary of the district; the other crosses the south-western corner of the district below South Warnborough.
- 2.30 The Romans also brought new forms of settlement to Hampshire in the form of the villa and its associated estate. A notable villa site is recorded at Lodge Farm, North Warnborough.

Anglo-saxon influence

- 2.31 The impact on the landscape during the Saxon period is not clear as there is very little archaeological evidence available but it is likely that the majority of present day villages date back to this period. The frequency of Saxon place names ending in 'ley' or 'hurst' - such as Mattingley, Hazeley, Hartley and Winchley Hurst - suggests that these settlements originated as Saxon farmsteads created by clearing the woodlands of the slopes of river valleys. As these early farms expanded, more land was cleared on the higher ground and the 'waste' (unenclosed land) was progressively cleared. This gave rise to a typically 'organic' pattern of fields organised for easy access from the farmstead, good examples of which survive along the northern edge of the heath between Yateley and Eversley and in the area between Hook and Rotherwick[7].
- 2.32 As the early farms developed and coalesced, narrow winding tracks and triangular 'greens' of unenclosed land were trapped between them, such as at Darby Green, Yateley Green, Up Green and in the Rotherwick area. Other areas on acid, infertile soils, were incapable of agricultural improvement and remained as manorial waste, subject to rights of common, such as at Bramshill Common, Lower Common, Upper Eversley Common and Yateley Common.

The influence of the Middle Ages and later

- 2.33 The Saxon passion for hunting led to the formation of extensive hunting preserves or parks ('haga') scattered throughout England and across the region. Although these forests were established by the Saxons, it was the Normans that codified their management, introducing forest law. Hart District includes part of three of the original Royal Forests of Hampshire: the Forest of Eversley (incorporating the Forest of Odiham);

the Forest of Pamber, to the west of Eversley; and a small part of the Forest of Bagshot, to the east.

- 2.34 The Royal Forests were legal devices used to define areas within which the right to take deer or other forest 'beasts' was appropriated by the King. The physical forest was usually smaller than the surrounding legal forest and did not consist of continuous woodland. For example, the Forest of Eversley enclosed large areas of farmland and settlements but was really focused around a smaller tract of unenclosed heathland and woodland where the deer lived [7]. This pattern of landscape has remained remarkably intact to this day in the area between Bramshill and Yateley. The Forest is also likely to have included the areas of Hazeley Heath and Heckfield Heath, while the area around Odiham was originally included in the Forest of Eversley but later separately recognised as Odiham Forest [7].
- 2.35 The Normans were also responsible for introducing a new concept in defence - the castle - as striking features in the landscape. Castles were not only fortified places but also the residences of kings and courtiers, such as King John's (Odiham) Castle at North Warnborough, believed to date from the thirteenth century. The castle replaced the royal palace at Odiham, an important settlement since Norman times and one which has retained much of its medieval street plan. Other important medieval buildings in the district include Powderham Castle at Crondall, Elvetham Hall, the family home of Jane Seymour (Henry VIII third wife) and Dogmersfield Park, visited by Henry IV and Henry VII.
- 2.36 The enclosure and clearance of the 'wastes' during the medieval period was delayed by the commoners rights and the poor quality of the soils. However, the early middle ages were a period of relative prosperity and rapid population growth. Villages were typically surrounded by a farming system of large open fields divided into a number of strips, all individually owned but farmed together. However, by the thirteenth and fourteenth century, the pattern of farming changed with the enclosure of fields by hedges, banks and sometimes ditches.

The influence of the early modern period

- 2.37 Parts of Hart district still retain the typical landscape pattern of 'ancient countryside', where there has been basic continuity since Saxon or medieval times, such as in the area to the north of Hook. At the turn of the eighteenth century, this process of enclosure had created the typical patchwork of small, irregular shaped fields and winding lanes and tracks. However, there were still large areas of woodland, extensive tracts of heathland to the north-east, and open and enclosed chalk downland to the south of the district.
- 2.38 The second half of the eighteenth century, however, saw great change as the result of the agricultural revolution. The most significant changes

were the virtual extinction of the common field systems, the conversion of down pasture to arable and the enclosure of some commons and heaths. In contrast to the older irregular pattern of enclosure, the new enclosures endowed the landscape with square or rectangular fields surrounded by straight hedges of hawthorn, often interspersed with oak and holly. There were also new wide roads with grass verges on either side instead of the winding lanes. The process was completed by the parliamentary enclosures of the remaining fields during the nineteenth century.

- 2.39 This period also saw the establishment of the eighteenth century country mansion set within a parkland estate, the apotheosis of the classical English landscape. Stratfield Saye house lies just outside the district but its pleasure-grounds and parkland extend into it and contain many rare trees. Many of these were planted by the first Duke of Wellington, after whom the distinctive Wellingtonias were named when introduced to England in 1853. The impressive Wellington Monument on the A33 at Heckfield Heath was erected in 1833 and is an important local landmark. Country houses and their historic parks and gardens are quite numerous across the district and include West Green House (owned by the National Trust), Heckfield House, Bramshill Park, Elvetham Park, Dogmersfield Great Park, Warbrook House, Tylney Hall and Minley Manor.
- 2.40 Other distinctive landscape features dating from the early nineteenth century are the Mildmay Oaks at Hartley Wintney, planted after the Battle of Trafalgar to provide wood for the nation's ships. With the invention of iron ships, the trees were left and are a distinctive feature of the village common.

The influence of the twentieth century

- 2.41 Although there are many surviving remnants and features of earlier landscapes within Hart District - including examples of medieval field patterns, open heathland and ancient woodland - it has nevertheless been affected by many of the same pressures that have altered the character of the Hampshire landscape during the twentieth century. These primarily include changing agricultural and forestry practice, rapid growth in population and the use of private cars, and the consequent pressures for urban expansion and new roads within the county since the last war.
- 2.42 Increased mechanisation and more sophisticated farming techniques have led to field enlargement across much of the downland to the south of the district and the conversion of pasture to arable cultivation. Parts of the downs to the south-west of Crondall and around Odiham now have a somewhat denuded and exposed character, allowing extensive views and exacerbating the intrusion of pylon lines and Odiham Airfield.

- 2.43 This process of agricultural improvement and intensification has also affected parts of the Whitewater and Hart river valleys, particularly along the valley sides, and occurs locally elsewhere. On the whole, however, much of the district's agricultural landscape has retained the rich mix of farmland and woodland that typified its past character. In recent years, the trends towards increased production have slowed as a result of agricultural surpluses, and new 'agri-environment' policies now attempt to integrate agricultural activity with wider environmental benefits. This should provide opportunities for positive landscape change to restore or enhance denuded or degraded areas of countryside.
- 2.44 Forestry practice since the last war has also focused on intensive production and has involved the planting and management of extensive commercial coniferous plantations, which have taken the place of much of the former broadleaved woodland and occupied open heathland areas. Although these plantations have altered the landscape of the north and north-east of the district, they are now part of its defining character and give it a distinctive and enclosed wooded character. More recently, the Forestry Commission have made similar efforts to provide landscape, ecological and recreational benefits within their commercial forests, by planting more broadleaves, recreating areas of open heathland and providing greater access and facilities for recreation.
- 2.45 This century has also seen the growth and expansion of the county's main towns and Hampshire continues to experience significant development pressures. Its good communication links with London and the rest of southern England have led to significant pressures for both commercial development and new housing. There has consequently been growth in the size of the district's settlements, particularly in and around the larger towns of Fleet and Yateley, and pressure for expansion of some smaller villages. Coalescence of settlements and the development of continuous urban sprawl is a real threat in some areas and separation needs to be maintained through the maintenance of important countryside 'gaps', such as the Blackwater Valley. Urban fringe areas also commonly suffer from a decline in management and unsightly land uses which detract from the setting of settlements and the character of the countryside areas which surround them.
- 2.46 On the whole, the pressures on settlements in the 'wider countryside' have been quite successfully controlled and extensive areas of the district retain a predominantly rural character. A less obvious effect of the prosperity of this area, however, is the gradual 'suburbanisation' and 'gentrification' of many of the district's villages and settlements and a gradual erosion of local distinctiveness. This effect is noticeable to some degree in most of the district's rural settlements and is the result of a general trend towards more 'urban' types of fencing, surfacing, building, lighting and highway treatments that detract from the more traditional, rural character of the village or hamlet. Some further change is inevitable but it should be carefully directed to ensure that it contributes

positively to the form, character and distinctiveness of these, often very attractive, rural settlements.

- 2.47 Since prehistoric times, the district has been crossed by some of the most important trading routes and communication links between London and the south west. However, during this century, the expansion and improvement of the road network has left a considerable impact on the landscape. In particular, the M3 motorway has carved a corridor right across the district, affecting farmland, woodland and areas of former heath. Improvements to the other main east-west routes (notably the A30 and A287) have also affected landscape resources and character, and these road corridors effectively create ‘barriers’ between land to the north and south. Much of the rural road network remains basically intact but its rural character is threatened in places by insensitive highway improvements, which can have a suburbanising and erosive effect upon local landscape character.
- 2.48 Mineral extraction has also brought about significant changes in local landscape character during the present century. Sand and gravel working in the Blackwater Valley in particular, has transformed parts of the floodplain from farmland to a network of lakes, which have subsequently developed considerable value as wildlife and amenity resources. Mineral extraction has also been a feature of the forests and heathlands in the Bramshill area since the 1960s, although the effects of quarrying are quite localised and these areas are soon to be restored to their former land uses.
- 2.49 The above summarises the main changes to the landscape of Hart District that have occurred up to the present day. In planning for future change, the main challenge will be in providing a suitable balance between the contrasting claims for housing and business expansion on the one hand and maintenance of the generally unspoilt rural qualities of the landscape on the other.

3 *Landscape character assessment*

Introduction and rationale

- 3.1 The broad processes of change described in the previous chapter help to explain the overall pattern of landscape elements and character within the District. However, this picture needs to be simplified if it is to be properly understood and used to inform planning and management policy. The sorting of landscape resources into units of distinct and recognisable character is an important way of achieving this understanding and is now common practice in landscape assessment.
- 3.2 This study examines landscape character at two levels. Firstly, it looks at the way in which particular landform and landcover elements combine to produce distinctive **landscape types**. These are generic descriptions and the types can repeat across the study area without being specifically related to geographical location.
- 3.3 Landscape types are particularly useful as a tool for understanding the detailed pattern of landscape variation that occurs across the district as a whole. However, in planning and management terms, it is often more important to understand the landscape character and qualities of particular **places** or **areas** within the study area so that appropriate policies and action can be applied at a local level. Therefore, it is common practice to define landscape **character areas**, units of landscape which may embrace areas of differing character but which in some way have a coherent and recognisable local identity or ‘sense of place’.
- 3.4 It is important to stress that the boundaries between landscape types or character areas are rarely distinct, although they may be easier to determine in some cases, such as where formal parkland occurs within an area of open farmland. Instead, as a general rule, the boundaries tend to be best approximations of a gradual but discernible change in character. It is also important to stress that landscape character rarely stops at the district boundary and will usually extend beyond into neighbouring districts.

Landscape types

- 3.5 The starting point for the definition of landscape types is the county-wide assessment produced by the County Council, which defines a range of generic landscape types for the rural areas of Hampshire divided into two broad groupings: the **chalklands** and **lowland mosaic**. The county-wide assessment identifies a total of six rural types in Hart District and these formed the basis for our initial landscape characterisation.

3.6 These types are:

Chalklands:

- open arable
- chalk and clay

Lowland mosaic:

- heathland and forest
- pasture and woodland: heath associated
- mixed farmland and woodland
- river valleys

3.7 However, further sub-divisions of these types were recognised during the course of the assessment along with a number of additional types that are too localised or small-scale to be recorded at a county-wide level. The individual landscape types identified in Hart District are shown in Figure 4 and the characteristics of each are briefly outlined below.

Chalkland types

3.8 Landscape types associated with the chalk occur in a broad sweeping band across the southern part of the District, to the south of Odiham and Crondall. These are particularly distinctive landscapes of smoothly rolling hills, large fields, mainly in arable cultivation, and scattered blocks of woodland. Within the chalklands, the main distinction in character lies in the extent of woodland or tree cover and the complexity of the landform, which affect the scale and enclosure of the landscape.

Open arable

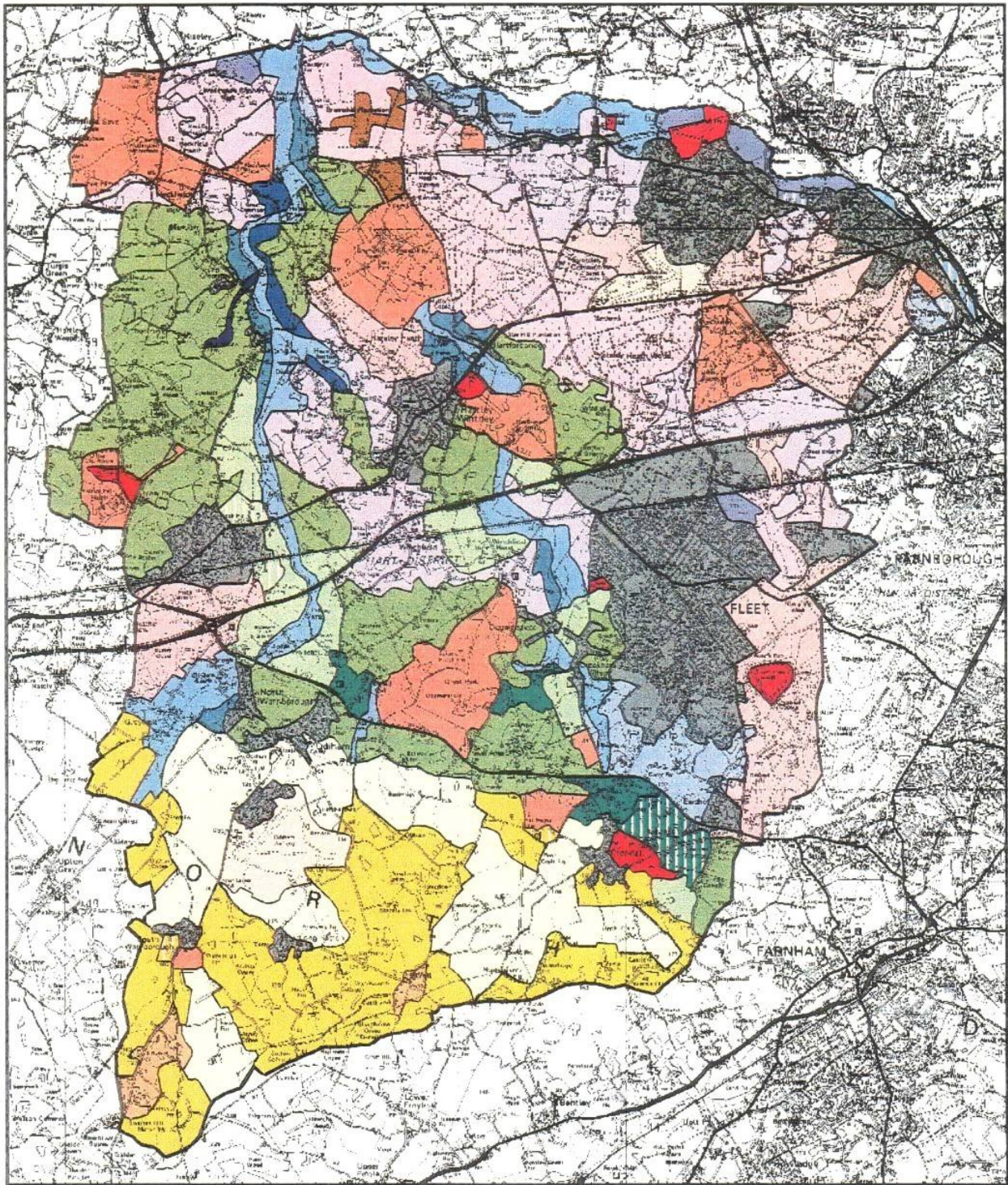
3.9 Along the fringes of the chalk and in pockets on the higher ground to the south (including around Odiham airfield) the landscape is typically open and denuded, with few woods or hedges and an exposed character. This open, rolling chalkland landscape is classified as *open arable downs* in the Hart district assessment and is typical of the **open arable** landscapes of the county-wide assessment.

Chalk and clay

3.10 Further to the south, the landform becomes more complex and woodland cover more frequent, providing a degree of enclosure and containment of views. The county-wide assessment classifies this area as **chalk and clay**. Most of this area is dominated by *enclosed arable farmland (large-scale)* with large fields and frequent woodland blocks. Within this landscape, there are two localised areas of *enclosed mixed farmland (small-scale)*, where field sizes are smaller, the hedgerow structure is stronger and there is a more mixed pattern of arable and pasture.

Table 1: Relationship between landscape types identified within the county-wide and Hart District landscape assessments

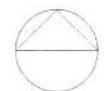
County-wide Landscape Types	Hart District Landscape Types
CHALKLANDS	
Open arable	<i>C1 Open arable downs</i>
Chalk and clay	<i>C2 Enclosed arable farmland: large-scale C3 Enclosed mixed farmland: small-scale</i>
LOWLAND MOSAIC	
Heathland and forest	<i>HF1 Extensive open heathland HF2 Mixed heathland and woodland HF3 Coniferous forest on heath HF4 Broadleaved forest on heath</i>
Pasture and woodland: heath associated	<i>PW1 Mixed pasture and woodland: large-scale PW2 Mixed pasture and woodland: small-scale PW3 Mixed pasture and woodland: fringe character</i>
Mixed farmland and woodland	<i>M1 Open arable farmland M2 Mixed farmland and woodland: large-scale M3 Mixed farmland and woodland: small-scale M4 Mixed farmland and woodland: fringe character</i>
River valley	<i>RV1 Floodplain farmland RV2 Wetlands RV3 Open valley side RV4 Enclosed valley side RV5 Small-scale minor valley</i>
(no-equivalent)	<i>O1 Parkland and estate farmland O2 Amenity landscapes O3 Airfield O4 Disturbed ground</i>
Urban	<i>O5 Urban/built land</i>



Landscape Types Key:

Chalklands

Open arable downs	Coniferous forest on heath	Mixed farmland & woodland: small-scale	Parkland or estate farmland
Enclosed arable farmland: large-scale	Broadleaved forest on heath	Floodplain farmland	Amenity landscapes
Enclosed mixed farmland: small-scale	Mixed pasture & woodland: large-scale	Wetlands	Disturbed ground
Lowland Mosaic			
Extensive open heathland	Open arable farmland	Open valley sides	Airfield
Mixed heathland and woodland	Mixed farmland & woodland: large-scale	Enclosed valley sides	Fringe character
		Small-scale minor valley	Urban/built land



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Figure 4

LANDSCAPE TYPES

Lowland mosaic types

- 3.11 Away from the chalklands, the remainder of the district's landscape is made up of a patchwork of 'lowland' landscape types which closely reflect underlying geology, soils and patterns of land use. The main distinctions are brought out in the county-wide assessment which distinguishes between landscapes associated with underlying acidic soils and former heathlands, the landscapes of the river valleys, and the remaining farmed landscapes away from the acid soils. Further distinctions have been made depending upon scale and enclosure in the landscape and particular land management factors, such the design of formal parkland landscapes.

Heathland and forest

- 3.12 Substantial areas to the north and east of the district are classified as **heathland and forest** by the county-wide assessment. These are landscapes of open heathland, enclosed woodland and forest, and a subtle mosaic of grassland, heathland and scrub. This broad category is subdivided into the following district landscape types.
- 3.13 Large tracts of *extensive open heathland* are comparatively scarce within the district with the only substantial area recorded at Yateley Common. More often, open heathland occurs as part of *mixed heathland and woodland*, an intimate mosaic of heathland, grassland, scrub and woodland. This landscape type occurs at Hazeley Heath, around Eversley, Yateley and Hawley Commons and to the east of Fleet around Tweseldown Hill. Extensive areas of dense woodland or forest have their own particular character. Although these tend to contain a mix of species, a distinction is made between the predominantly *coniferous forest on heath* (which are predominantly plantations, dark and enclosed) and the predominantly *broadleaved forest on heath* (which have a more varied character and may be semi-natural and ancient in origin).

Pasture and woodland: heath associated

- 3.14 Around and intermixed with the unenclosed forest and heath landscapes are farmed landscapes within a well-wooded setting. These are closely linked to, or have been created from, former heathland and 'heathy' characteristics, such as oak, birch, pine, gorse, broom and bracken, are conspicuous in the surrounding hedgerows, woods and verges.
- 3.15 This mosaic of pasture and woodland occurs across the north of the district, in patches to the west and south of Hartley Wintney, and around the fringes of Fleet, reflecting locally acidic soil conditions. In most cases, field sizes are quite large, creating *large-scale mixed pasture and woodland*, within which the heathy characteristics may be fairly indistinct. In some areas, notably to the south of Fleet, a more enclosed and intimate pattern of fields, hedges and woods creates *small-scale mixed pasture and woodland*.

- 3.16 Around the edges of settlements, the landscape sometimes takes on a *fringe farmland* character, typically dominated by horse-grazed pastures and other small-scale farmland with a somewhat degraded or neglected appearance but retaining an essentially rural character.

Mixed farmland and woodland

- 3.17 A large proportion of Hart District is characterised by a patchwork of farmland and woodland, similar to the pasture and woodland types above but lacking their ‘heathy’ components. Whilst the essential components of farmland (arable and pasture), hedgerows, trees and blocks of woodland, are common throughout, there are variations in scale and the degree of enclosure within this landscape type.
- 3.18 In some areas, particularly adjacent to the river valleys, *open arable farmland* predominates, characterised by large fields of mainly arable crops, a weak hedgerow structure, few trees or woods and a more expansive, open and sometimes denuded character. Elsewhere, more frequent blocks of woodland and a strong pattern of hedgerows provide a backdrop to the large fields and contain views, creating *large-scale mixed farmland and woodland*. This type predominates in western parts of the district, in patches across the centre and fringing the chalklands. In a few localised areas, *small-scale mixed farmland and woodland* occurs where field sizes are smaller and the pattern of fields, woods and hedges has a particularly intimate scale and enclosed character.
- 3.19 Around the edges of settlements, the landscape sometimes takes on a *fringe farmland* character, typically dominated by horse-grazed pastures and other small-scale farmland with a somewhat degraded or neglected appearance but retaining an essentially rural character.

River valleys

- 3.20 Hart District contains the valleys of three main river systems: the Blackwater, Whitewater and Hart. Although the river valleys themselves have a comparatively subtle relief, they nevertheless contain landscapes of distinctive character. The *floodplain farmland* of the valley floors is typically flat, low-lying pasture, which is prone to flooding and is criss-crossed with drainage ditches, typically lined with trees such as willow and alder. Gravel extraction along the Blackwater Valley has created a series of lakes and *wetlands* within the valley floor which have their own distinctive character.
- 3.21 Although the valley profile is not particularly pronounced along the rivers, there are areas where the landscape takes on a distinctive valley side character, with a close visual relationship with the landscape of the valley floor. Distinctions are made between *enclosed valley side*, with a strong landscape structure of trees, hedges and woodland, and *open valley sides*, which have a more open, exposed character. Where there is an obvious valley form but no clear distinction between valley floor and sides, a *small-scale minor valley* type has been identified.

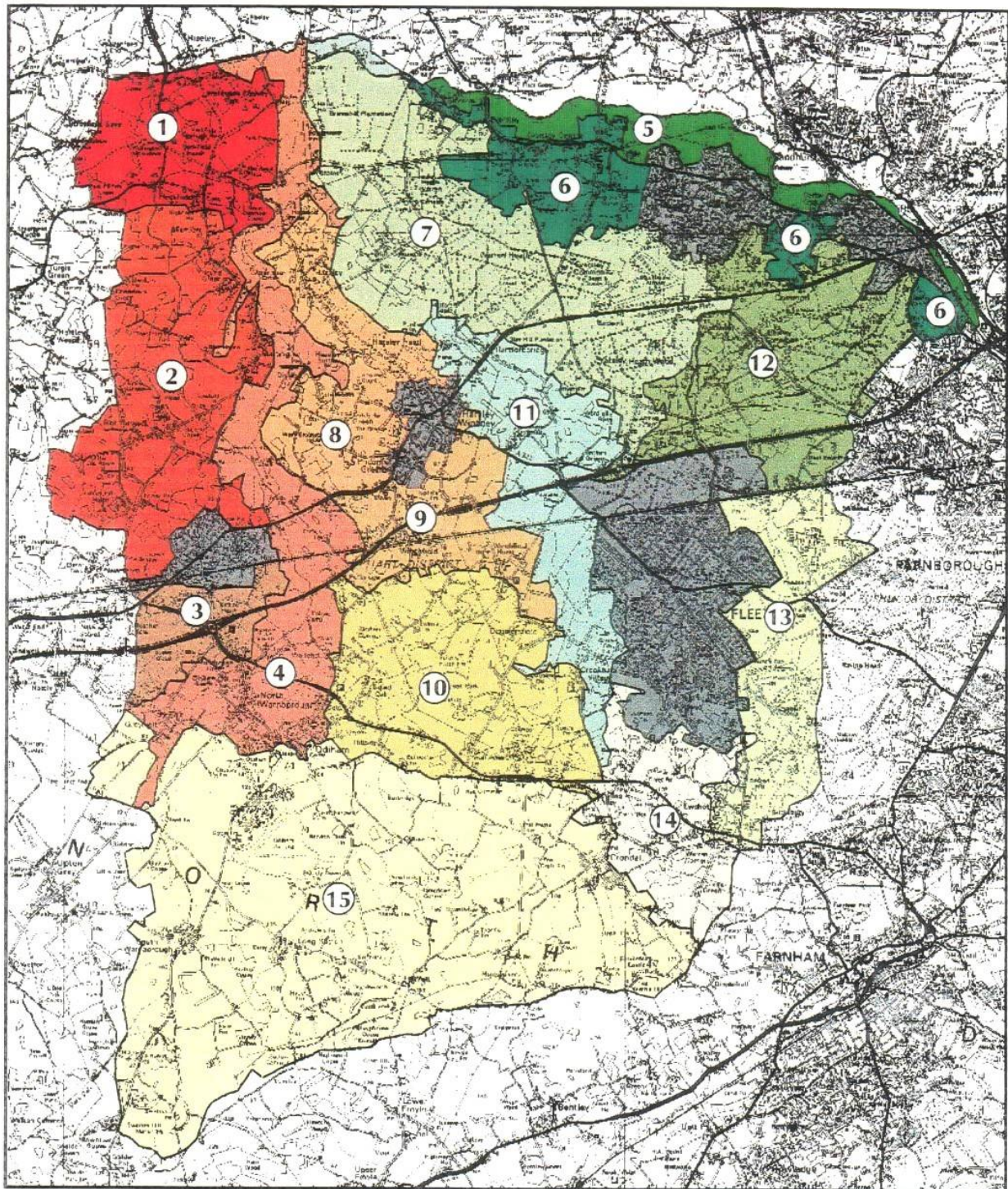
- 3.22 At the eastern end of the Blackwater Valley, the proximity of roads, urban development and power lines, for example, has a strong influence upon the adjacent farmland, giving it a somewhat degraded and urbanised *fringe* character.

Other types

- 3.23 The district assessment identifies a number of other landscape types that are too small-scale or localised to be recognised within the county-wide assessment. Firstly, areas of landscape with a formal *parkland or estate farmland* character are a significant feature in Hart District and include the large parks of Stratfield Saye, Dogmersfield, Bramshill and Minley Manor, as well as other smaller parks and estates scattered throughout the area. These are important landscape resources that have a distinctively ‘designed’, formal or managed character.
- 3.24 Other localised but distinctive landscapes are associated with *amenity* uses, such as golf courses which have a typically manicured character; *airfields*, at Odiham and Blackbushe; and *disturbed ground* associated with quarries or landfill operations. These are all landscapes that have been modified to some degree from their underlying character by specific land uses.

Landscape character areas

- 3.25 The pattern of landscape types provides a detailed impression of the range of character variation within the District and it also provides the basis for defining areas with a coherent character and particular sense of place. A total of fifteen character areas have been identified within Hart District and these are shown in Figure 5. The scale of these areas generally reflects the complexity of the study area landscape, the purpose for which the assessment is to be used and is broadly consistent with the scale of other landscape characterisations within Hampshire.
- 3.26 In broad terms, the character areas define areas of *chalk landscape* (Hart Downs); the main *river valleys* (Blackwater, Whitewater and Hart); the main areas of *forest and heath* (Bramshill, Hazeley, Bartley, Tweseldown and Minley); and the more mixed landscapes of *farmland, woodland and parkland* (Dogmersfield, Wellington, Firgrove, Redlands, West Green, Winchfield and Tilney). The essential distinguishing characteristics of the individual character areas are described in Section 5.



Key

- | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1 Wellington | 5 Blackwater Valley | 9 Winchfield | 13 Tweseldown |
| 2 Tylney | 6 Firgrove | 10 Dogmersfield | 14 Redlands |
| 3 Bartley | 7 Bramshill | 11 Hart Valley | 15 Hart Downs |
| 4 Whitewater Valley | 8 Hazeley/ West Green | 12 Minley | |



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Figure 5

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

4 *Landscape evaluation*

Purpose

- 4.1 The primary purpose of the evaluation is to identify the variations in quality that exist across the landscape of the district so that appropriate strategies for landscape conservation, management and enhancement can be defined.
- 4.2 In preparing and interpreting the evaluation, there are several important qualifications that should be borne in mind:
- it is important to stress that this evaluation is based upon an assessment of the *intrinsic quality* of the different landscape types, rather than a relative assessment of one against another, since such comparisons are generally unhelpful and highly subjective;
 - the evaluation is based upon the *existing quality* of the landscape as observed during this study and does not take into account past or potential landscape quality;
 - the evaluation of intrinsic landscape quality does *not* imply a greater or lesser ability to absorb development or change. It can, however, provide a useful guide to the most appropriate strategy for *intervention* in the landscape, either to control damaging change or to encourage positive enhancement;
 - individual areas need to be assessed on their merits but, as a general rule, it is likely that the better quality landscapes will require a higher degree of *planning intervention* (i.e. through development control and the application of design standards) and a lesser degree of *management intervention* (i.e. action intended to raise the quality of the landscape through management and enhancement), to maintain their quality. Conversely, at the opposite end of the quality spectrum, the need to raise landscape quality may result in a higher degree of *management intervention* and a more positive approach to *planning intervention* to achieve beneficial change in the landscape;
 - finally, it is also important to stress that these distinctions relate to differences observed along a *quality continuum within the context of Hart District* and should not be interpreted within a wider county or national context. It is our view that the overall quality of the landscape of Hart District is high in comparison with many other parts of the region, and therefore even those areas of inferior quality in Hart District still generally represent areas of attractive countryside in the wider context.

Approach to evaluation

4.3 As a first step in the evaluation process, a number of broad criteria were defined against which each individual landscape type was assessed. These criteria are based upon guidelines provided by the Countryside Commission [1] and criteria established by the Hampshire county and district councils for the evaluation of ‘areas of special landscape quality’ within Hampshire [9]. The evaluation was therefore based upon consideration of the following attributes:

- *scenic quality* (the degree to which the landscape is attractive with pleasing patterns and combinations of landscape features);
- *sense of place* (the extent to which the landscape has a distinctive character and sense of place);
- *unspoilt character* (the degree to which the landscape is unaffected or affected by intrusive or detracting influences);
- *landscape as a resource* (whether the landscape type represents a scarce or especially fragile landscape resource);
- *conservation interests* (whether there are other notable conservation interests that contribute to landscape value).

4.4 Each landscape type has been assessed against these criteria using the experience and judgement of the study team and has been attributed to one of three quality categories, as follows:

4.5 **Category A:**

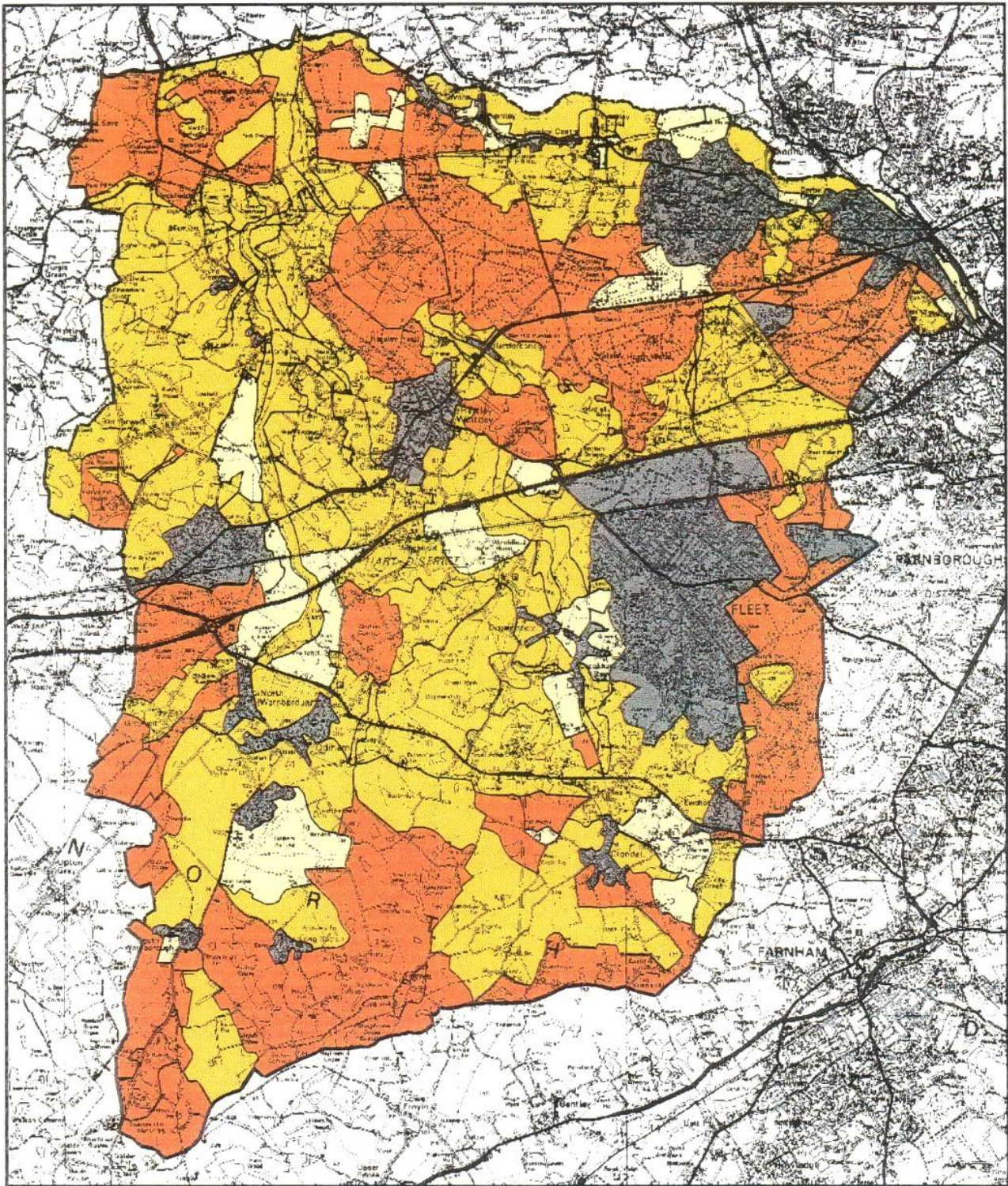
Landscapes which have a high scenic quality, a strong sense of place, are generally unspoilt and have a highly distinctive character, and often contain areas or features of ecological or cultural significance. They may also include ‘intact’ examples of rare landscape types, e.g. heathland, or representative examples of valued landscapes, e.g. chalk scenery.

4.6 In these landscapes, conservation is an overwhelming priority in order to maintain landscape quality. The need for intervention in the management sense will be comparatively modest but, nevertheless, these landscapes could still benefit from enhancement and management, such as the restoration of broadleaved woodland and heathland in areas dominated by coniferous plantations. Development is not necessarily precluded but the level of intervention in the planning sense will need to be high, in order to prevent adverse change and loss or damage to particularly valuable landscape resources.

- 4.7 **Category B:**
Landscapes which have attractive qualities and where character and sense of place are still strong but which are not ‘special’ or distinctive to the same degree as those in Category A. The landscape generally has a positive, rural character but there may be intrusive influences or signs of neglect or decline in landscape condition which compromise its quality.
- 4.8 These landscapes form the major part of the District’s landscape resource and are important to conserve. They would, however, also benefit from enhancement, to improve landscape quality, strengthen local distinctiveness and reduce the influence of negative features. Development and land use change will need to be controlled to ensure that there is no further deterioration in landscape quality or loss of local character.
- 4.9 **Category C:**
Landscapes which are further along the scale of decline and where landscape structure is substantially weakened and landscape quality and sense of place are significantly compromised by inappropriate development, poor land management or other intrusive influences, e.g. built development, airfields, pylons etc.
- 4.10 These landscapes require a substantial degree of management intervention to raise their quality and mitigate the influence of detracting land uses or features and could be the target for landscape enhancement priorities. In terms of planning intervention, the emphasis is on the encouragement of landscape improvements and restoration of a positive character as part of any future land use proposals.

Conclusions

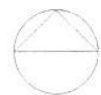
- 4.11 Figure 6 shows our classification of the district’s landscape types into these categories, from which the following conclusions can be drawn.
- 4.12 It is apparent that a high proportion of the district is blessed with attractive landscapes in good or fair condition (in either category A or B) with few degraded landscapes (Category C). As stated earlier, given this overall high quality standard, the distinctions between the three categories are comparatively subtle and even the Category C landscapes are not severely degraded.
- 4.13 The ‘best’ quality landscapes (i.e. Category A) principally comprise:
- the more *enclosed chalkland landscapes* with a higher frequency of woodland and stronger hedgerow structure (which provide a pleasing diversity and pattern of landscape elements compared to other areas of denuded chalkland landscape, which are comparatively unspoilt by intrusive influences, and which are representative of a valued landscape resource);



Landscape Evaluation Key:

-  Category A landscapes
-  Category B landscapes
-  Category C landscapes

(See text for definitions)



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Figure 6

**LANDSCAPE
EVALUATION**

- areas of *formal parkland and estate landscape* (that mostly have attractive scenic qualities and a strong sense of place, are generally unspoilt and well-managed, and also have historic landscape significance);
- the *heathland and forest landscapes* (where remnant heathland is a scarce and valued landscape and ecological resource, and which have a very strong sense of place and historic landscape significance);
- a small part of the upper *Whitewater river valley* (which has a particularly attractive character and which supports important habitats of nature conservation significance).

4.14 Large parts of the district are covered by landscapes which have an essentially rural and attractive character but are not quite as ‘special’ as those listed above. These Category B landscapes comprise:

- the majority of the *floodplain farmland* of the main river valleys and parts of the *valley sides* where there is an attractive enclosed character;
- all of the *pasture and woodland: heath associated* landscapes, which have a pleasing combination of landscape elements and contain some remnants of a scarce heathland resource;
- all of the *mixed farmland and woodland* (except for the denuded open arable farmland) which has a pleasing combination of landscape elements and a predominantly unspoilt character with only localised detracting influences;
- areas of *parkland* landscape which are showing signs of decline and neglect but which retain a generally attractive and distinctive parkland character;
- the *open arable downs* which have an attractive, rural and distinctive character but which are somewhat denuded and affected by the detracting influences of Odiham airfield and overhead power lines.

4.15 There are comparatively few landscape types that fall into Category C and, of those that have been identified, even fewer represent substantially degraded landscapes in need of significant enhancement. Therefore, although these landscapes represent the ‘poorest’ within the context of Hart District, they may rate more highly in a wider spectrum of landscape quality. The few landscape types in this category comprise:

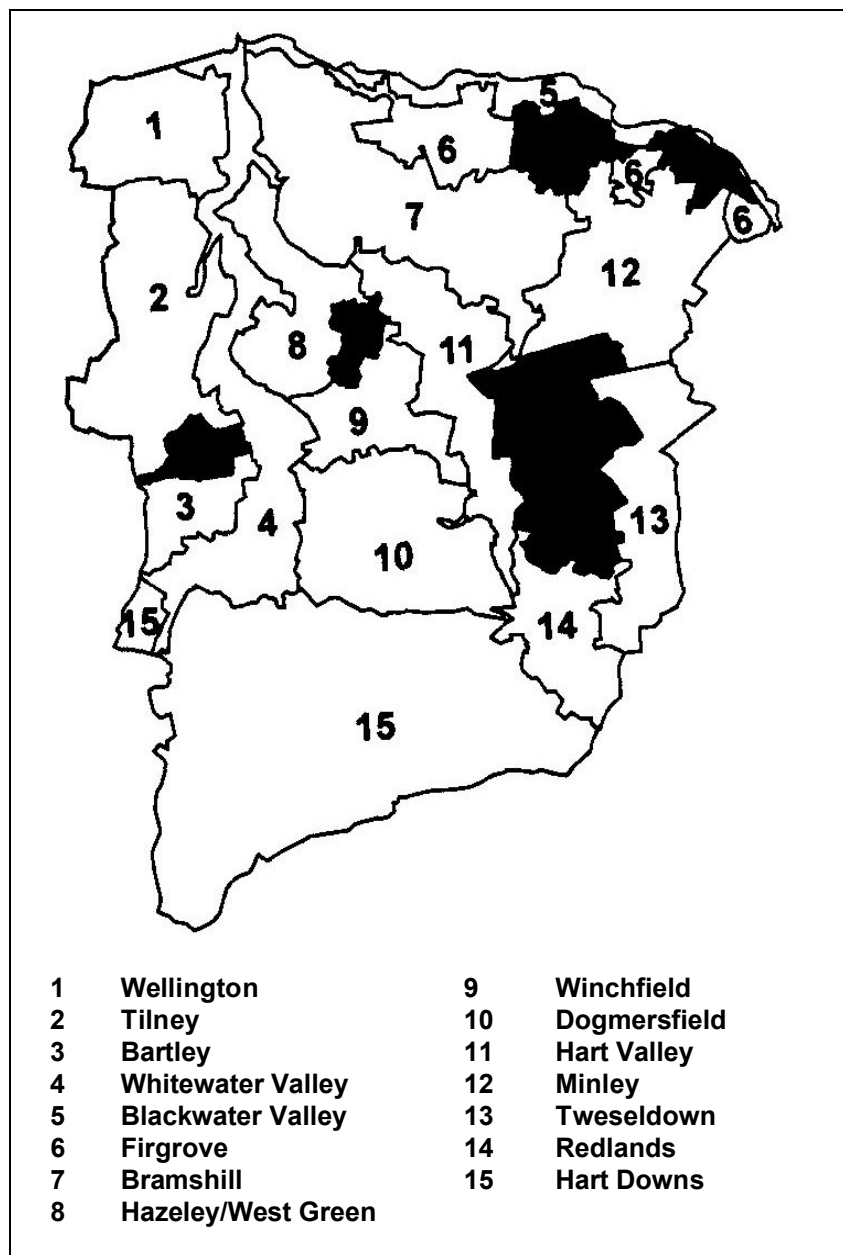
- areas of *disturbed ground*, namely quarries and landfill sites, where the basic landscape structure has been so substantially modified by these activities that it has lost its former character and a new landscape structure and character needs to be created;
- landscapes which contain ‘urban’ or non-agricultural land-uses, such as *airfields* or *amenity/recreational* uses that introduce suburbanising influences and detract from the local landscape ‘vernacular’;

- landscapes with a *fringe* character, which are significantly influenced by the proximity of urban development or intrusive elements such as power lines, or have a somewhat unkempt and neglected appearance (typical of horse paddocks and small-holdings on the edge of settlements);
 - areas of *open arable farmland* which have been significantly denuded of trees, woods and hedgerows through agricultural intensification and which have a visually exposed character and are therefore prone to the intrusion of roads, power lines and other detracting influences.
- 4.16 Details of the type of conservation or enhancement action appropriate to individual character areas is given in Section 5. However, the evaluation is intended to set this action within the context of the district as a whole, so that resources and action can be targeted to the most needy areas. It is hoped that it will provide a useful overview for all those involved in countryside planning, conservation and management within Hart District and will enable action to be undertaken in the most appropriate and beneficial way.
- 4.17 Finally, despite the comparatively detailed scale of this study, there is inevitably a limit as to how far a district-wide assessment can reflect the subtleties in landscape character and quality that exist at a very local level. There is clearly considerable scope for taking forward and augmenting the assessment process at a local parish, or even village, level.
- 4.18 For example, the Countryside Commission is particularly keen to encourage such local assessments as a means of influencing the quality of design in the countryside and is promoting the preparation of ‘Countryside Design Summaries’ or ‘Village Design Statements’ [10]. The former comprise area-wide appraisals carried out mainly by planning authorities while the latter are local appraisals led mainly by the local community. Both approaches are intended to share similar, design-related objectives including:
- defining a ‘local setting’ to which new designs should respond;
 - describing local diversity and distinctiveness;
 - providing a ‘common language’ on design accessible to all parties.
- 4.19 Such initiatives can be a valuable means of involving local communities in decisions relating to the conservation and enhancement of their local environment, as well as providing a useful input to the local plan process and informing subsequent development control decisions.

5 *The Landscape Character Areas*

Introduction

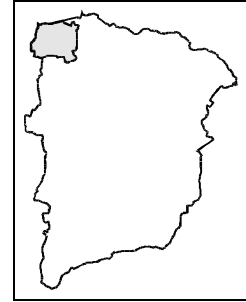
5.1 The following pages contains descriptions of the fifteen individual **Landscape Character Areas**, highlighting their distinctive characteristics and qualities, their special features and attributes and the priorities for landscape management and enhancement within each area.



5 Character Area 1: Wellington

Description

- 5.2 This character area lies to the extreme north-west of the District and is bounded to the north and west by the District boundary (although the character extends beyond) and to the east by the Whitewater Valley. Its southern boundary marks a discernible change in vegetation character.

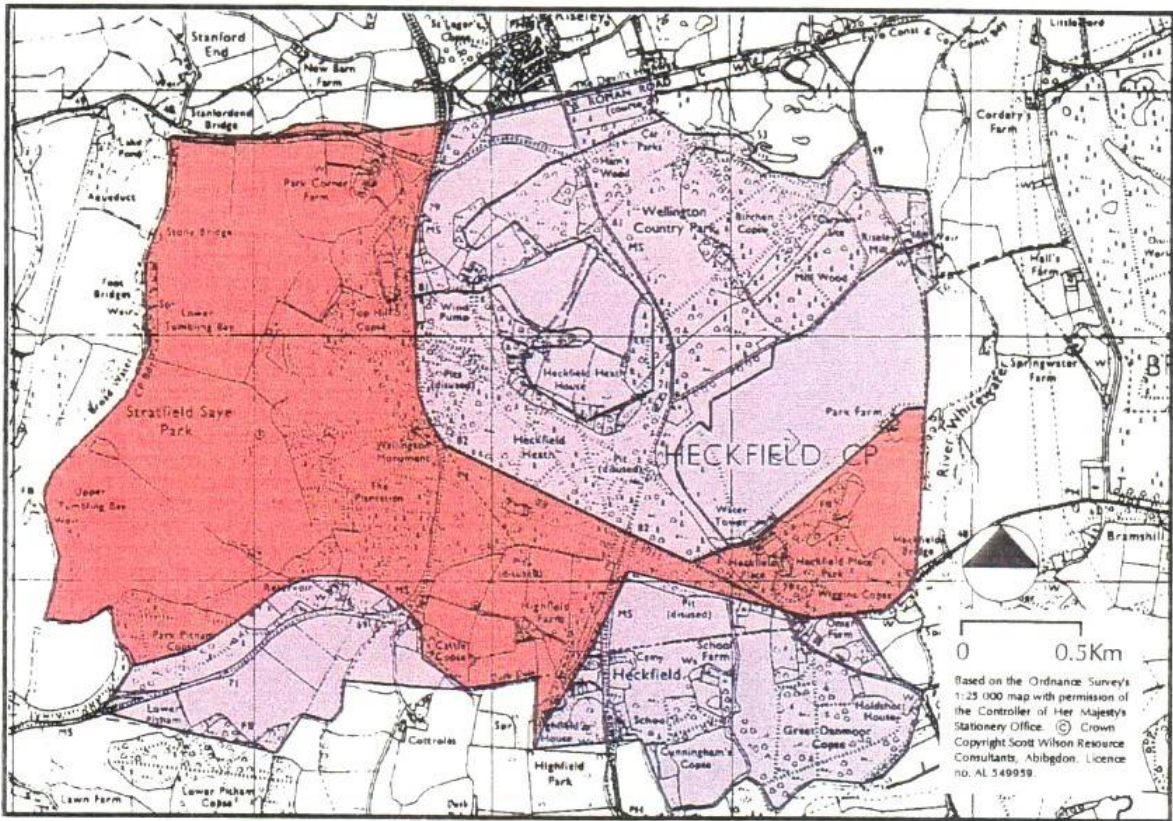


Main distinguishing features

- *the formal, historic parkland and well-managed estate character of Stratfield Saye Park, with its avenues, parkland trees (including the distinctive Wellingtonias), and the prominent Wellington monument;*
- *well-wooded character, with extensive broadleaved and mixed woodlands, forming the setting for the Wellington Country Park;*
- *a patchwork of fields (mainly under pasture) set within a woodland structure;*
- *a distinctively heathy character to the vegetation within woods, hedges and roadside verges (including pine, oak, birch, gorse, bracken and broom) reflecting former heathland and underlying acidic soils;*
- *subtle landform falling gently and almost imperceptibly to the east and west into the valleys of the Whitewater and Lyde rivers;*
- *a dispersed and sparse settlement pattern of individual farm buildings and houses with no major settlements.*

Enhancement priorities

- 5.3 In general, the landscape within this Character Area is of high quality (predominantly Category A landscapes), with an attractively wooded or parkland character, a well-managed appearance and few detracting influences. The overall priority, therefore, is for **conservation** of landscape character and quality with appropriate management to enhance key landscape resources, as follows:



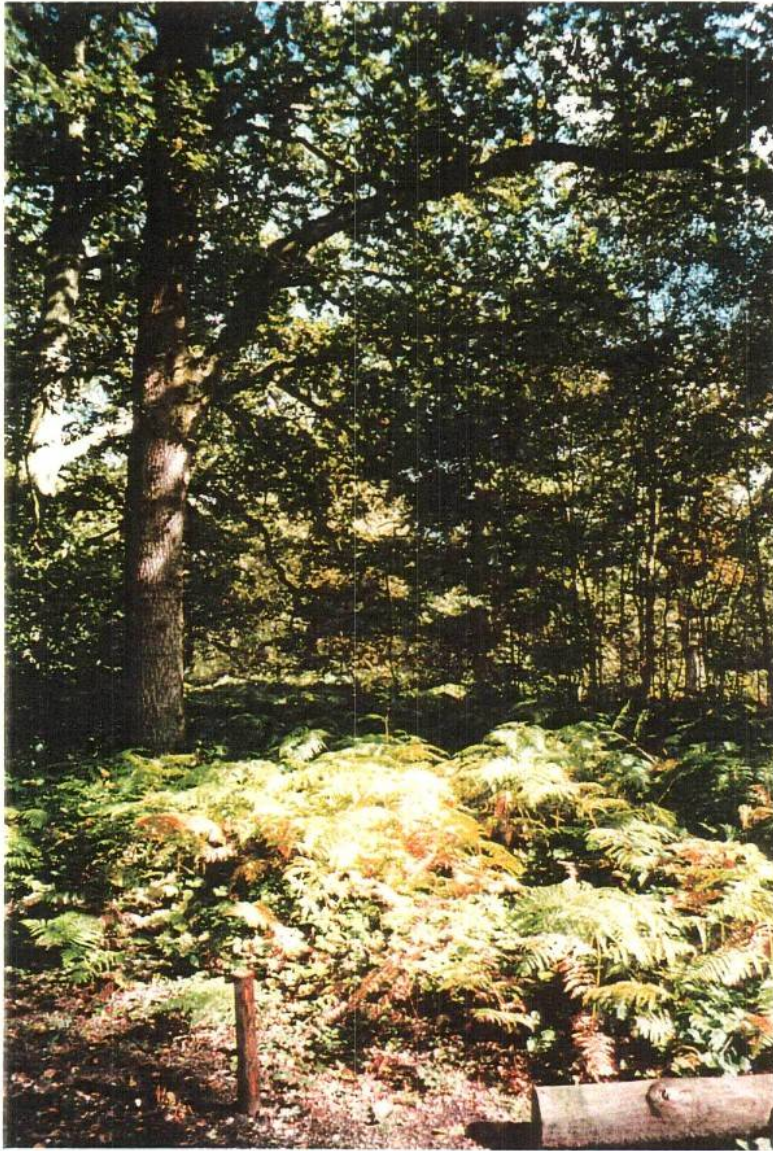
Wellington landscape types (see Figure 4 for key)



Parkland and forest landscapes at Stratfield Saye Park and Heckfield

Main enhancement priorities

- *management of historic parkland landscape at Stratfield Saye Park and Heckfield Park and historic landscape features within surrounding areas*
- *management of woodlands within Wellington Country Park to maintain their presence in the landscape and diversify woodland structure and species composition*
- *restoration of small-scale mosaic of heathland, pasture and woodland around the fringes of parklands and densely wooded areas*
- *management of road corridors to maintain essentially wooded and enclosed character, to encourage development of heathy vegetation along roadside verges and to minimise the impacts of traffic on adjacent areas.*



Forest landscape at Wellington Country Park



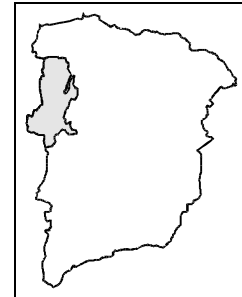
Mixed pasture and woodland near Heckfield

The Wellington Monument

5 Character Area 2: Tylney

Description

- 5.4 This character area lies to the south of Wellington and is bounded to the west by the District boundary (although its character extends beyond), to the south by the settlement of Hook and to the east by the Whitewater Valley.

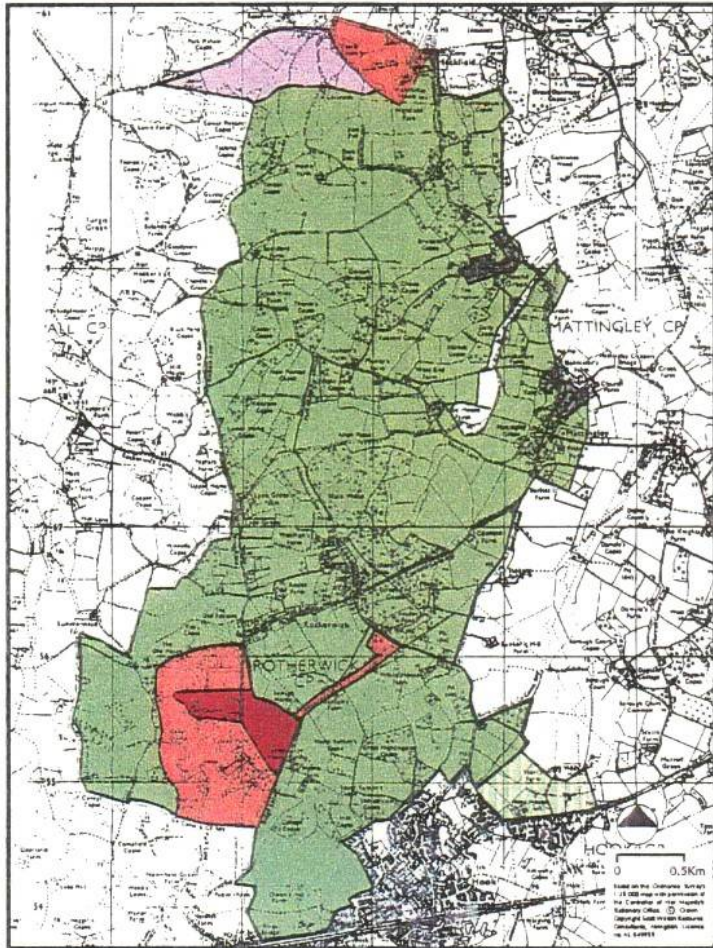


Main distinguishing features

- *a patchwork of mixed farmland and scattered blocks of woodland (including several remnant ancient semi-natural woodlands);*
- *a strong landscape structure of woods and hedgerows which provide a backdrop to open fields and contain views and a coherent landscape character;*
- *a dispersed pattern of rural settlements (the largest being Rotherwick and Mattingley) comprising small hamlets - often centred around village 'greens' - and scattered farms linked by a network of rural lanes;*
- *a comparatively remote, rural character due to the sparse road and settlement pattern and the enclosure provided by the frequent blocks of woodland;*
- *gently undulating landform which also helps to contain views and create enclosure.*

Enhancement priorities

- 5.5 Landscape quality and condition within this Character Area is generally good, with a strong structure of hedgerows, trees and blocks of woodland, much of which form remnants of formerly extensive parklands and grounds of country estates (eg. Tylney Hall). The overall priority is for **conservation** of these characteristics, while the need for intervention centres mostly upon localised **restoration** of weakened landscape structure and strengthening of particular landscape character that is in decline (eg. parkland).



Tylny landscape types (see Figure 4 for key)



Mixed farmland and woodland near Chandlers Green

5.6 There is evidence to suggest that this part of the District may have been more extensively wooded in the past. Therefore, while the characteristic mosaic of farmland and woodland should be maintained, larger-scale broadleaved woodland planting would be appropriate within this area and could make a valuable contribution to the realisation of a new 'Millennium Forest' centred around the former Forest of Eversley.

Main enhancement priorities

- *management of existing woodlands, hedgerows and trees to secure their long-term presence within the landscape*
- *new planting of broadleaved woodlands to reinforce the patchwork of wooded farmland and to restore a more heavily wooded character where appropriate*
- *management and restoration of remnant parkland and landscape features associated with country estates*
- *management and enhancement of village greens as distinctive landscape features within rural settlements*



*Mixed farmland and
woodland near
Chandlers Green*



*Village green and
traditional buildings
at Mattingley*

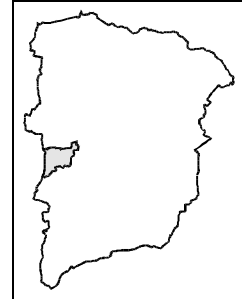


*Mixed farmland and
woodland with fringe
character near Hook*

5 Character Area 3: Bartley

Description

- 5.7 This is a small, distinctive character area which lies between the southern edge of Hook and the farmland which lies along the edge of the Whitewater Valley. It is bounded to the west by the District boundary although its character extends beyond.



Main distinguishing features

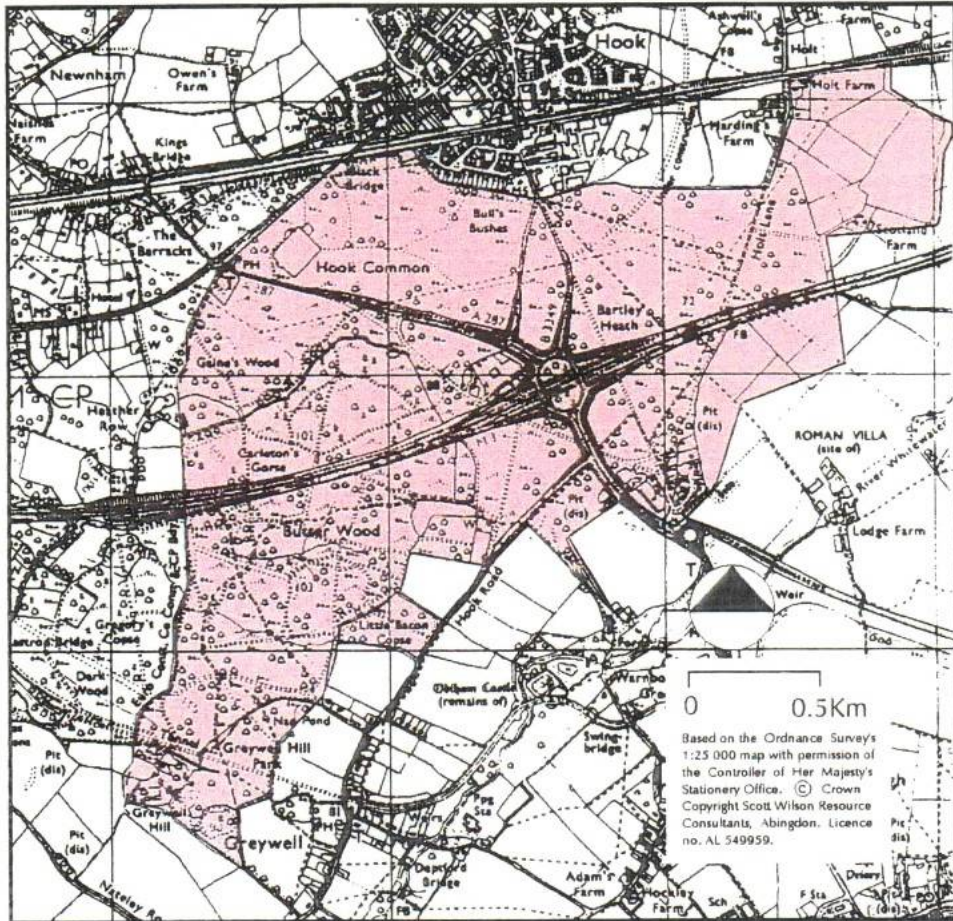
- *a predominantly wooded character, with extensive broadleaved, semi-natural woodland on areas of former heathland and an intimate and enclosed character;*
- *within the woodlands, a mosaic of scrub, grassland and open heath;*
- *no settlement but significant, localised influence of roads (including the M3 motorway and interchange with A287/B3349) and occasional built development associated with roads or the fringes of Hook.*

Enhancement priorities

- 5.8 This area has an attractive, wooded and intimate character and contains important remnants of heathland and semi-natural woodland which are worthy of **conservation**. The main priority for intervention, therefore, is to ensure that the intrusion of roads and built development are minimised and to encourage the **restoration** of a small-scale mosaic of open heathland and broadleaved woodland by opening up areas of comparatively recent woodland cover.

Main enhancement priorities

- *management of existing woodlands, hedgerows and trees to secure their long-term presence within the landscape and maximise their landscape and ecological value*
- *management of existing areas of open heath/common to prevent encroachment by scrub and woodland*



Bartley landscape types (see Figure 4 for key)



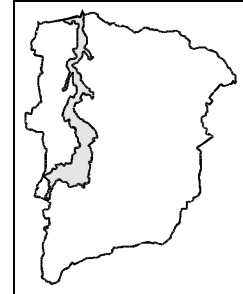
Mixed heathland and woodland at Hook Common

- *small-scale selective woodland clearance to encourage restoration of more open heathland character within woodland matrix*
- *strengthening of landscape structure along road corridors and around fringes of Hook, to minimise intrusion of built development on rural landscape character*

5 Character Area 4: Whitewater Valley

Description

- 5.9 This character area contains the channel and floodplain of the Whitewater River and its boundary is defined by the fringing farmland that clothes the valley sides or is associated with, and provides a setting for, the valley floor. The far northern and southern extremities are defined by the District boundary.

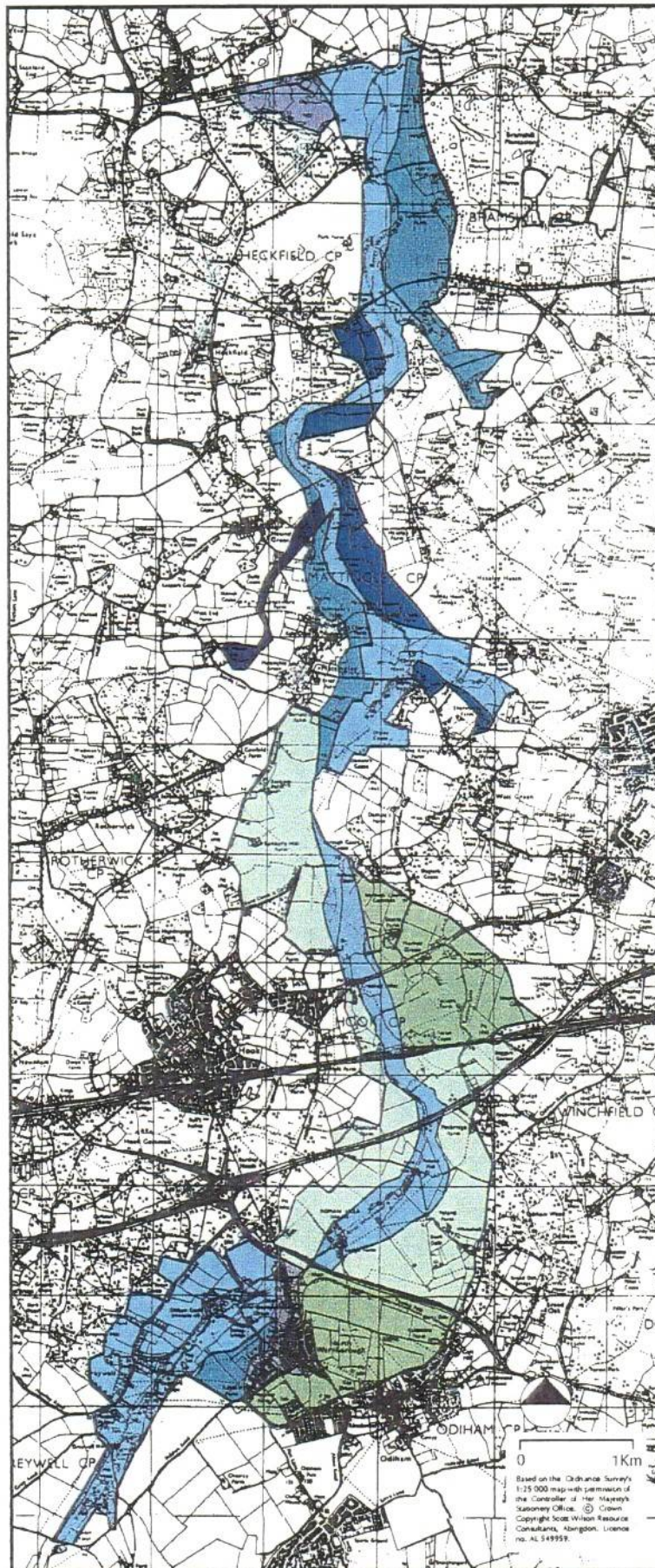


Main distinguishing features

- *the distinctively riparian character of the flat, low-lying valley floor with its riverside pastures, willow-lined watercourses, fenland vegetation and well-treed character, which creates a sense of intimacy and enclosure;*
- *gentle valley sides, often quite open or denuded in character, which form a setting for the valley floor and are commonly framed by a backdrop of woodland;*
- *sheltered, pastoral and rural character*
- *few detracting influences except for overhead power lines, which are prominent within the northern and central sections of the valley;*
- *a sparse pattern of settlement, with roads and buildings located along the higher ground of the valley sides avoiding the wet valley floor.*

Enhancement priorities

- 5.10 The Whitewater Valley contains attractive countryside of generally good quality. However, in places this quality is affected by the intrusion of overhead power lines and by the loss of woodland cover, hedgerows and trees resulting from agricultural intensification. The main enhancement priorities are to restore landscape structure along these denuded valley sides, through planting of new woods, trees and hedgerows, and to encourage the restoration of more diverse wetland habitats within the valley floor. A stronger landscape structure may also help to reduce the impact of power lines, roads and other localised intrusive features.



Whitewater Valley landscape types (see Figure 4 for key)

Main enhancement priorities

- *management of existing woodlands, hedgerows and trees to secure their long-term presence within the landscape and maximise their landscape and ecological value*
- *new planting of woods, hedgerows and trees to form a stronger landscape structure in denuded valleyside areas and where roads or power lines cross the valley*
- *planting of willows and other appropriate species alongside watercourses within the valley floor where the typically intimate, riparian character of the floodplain has been weakened*
- *where possible, creation of a more diverse range of wetland habitats within the valley floor, including wet grasslands, seasonally flooded areas, marshes and wet woodland.*



Floodplain farmland and open valley sides near Mattingley



*Floodplain farmland near
Great Danemoor Copse*



*Open valley sides near
Bramshill*



*Enclosed valley sides near
Bramshill*

5 Character Area 5: Blackwater Valley

Description

- 5.11 The Blackwater River forms the northern boundary of Hart District and this character area embraces the floodplain and fringing farmland lying to the south of the river and is defined to the south by the limit of land associated with, or providing a setting for the river valley.

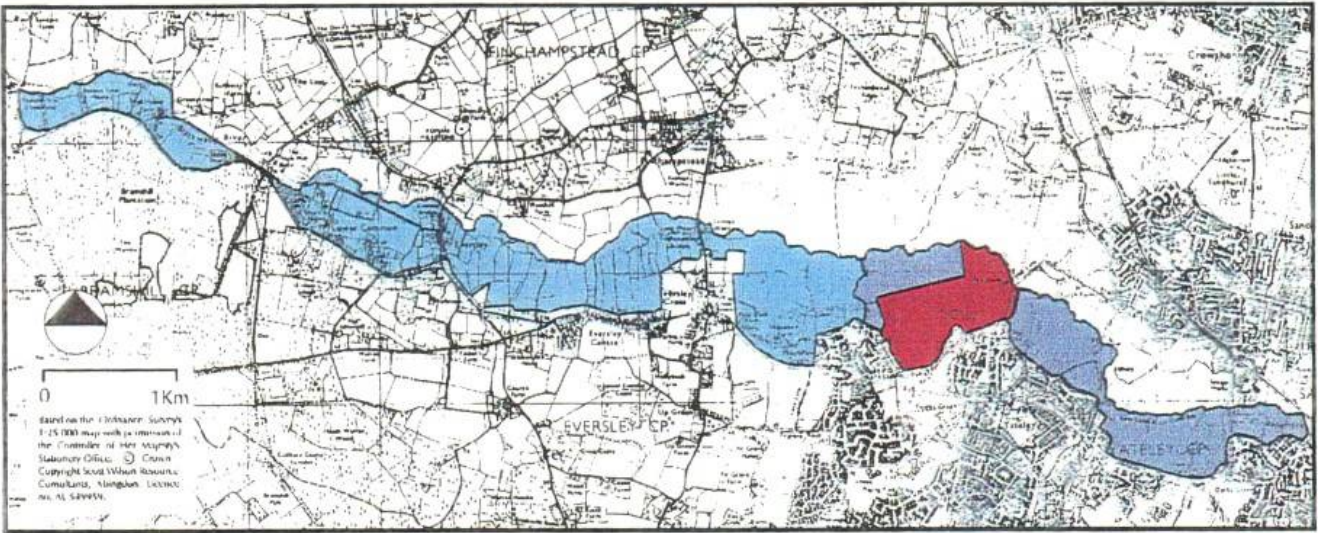


Main distinguishing features

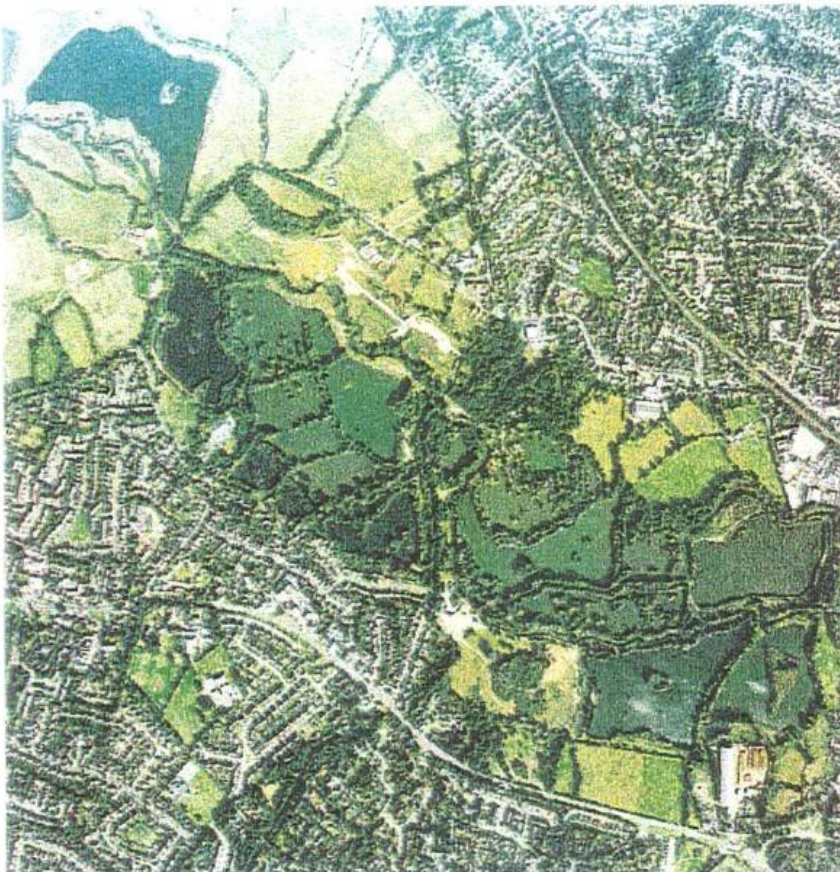
- *the distinctively riparian character of the broad, flat, low-lying valley floor with its riverside pastures, willow-lined watercourses and well-treed character;*
- *gentle valley sides, often quite open in character, which form a setting for the valley floor and are commonly framed by a backdrop of woodland;*
- *varying character from the pastoral, rural and generally unspoilt character of the western section of the valley; the dominance of open water and wetlands in the central section; and the influence of urban development, roads and railway along the easternmost section which forms a communications corridor;*
- *sparse settlement pattern to the west, with roads and buildings located along the higher ground of the valley sides avoiding the wet valley floor;*
- *dominant urban form to the east, occupying land right up to the edge of the floodplain.*

Enhancement priorities

- 5.12 The western part of the Blackwater Valley has a rural, unspoilt character and generally comprises attractive landscape of good quality. However, in its central section, mineral extraction and amenity uses have altered these qualities and, towards its eastern end, landscape quality becomes progressively influenced by urban development, including buildings, industry, roads and railway lines.



Blackwater Valley landscape types (see Figure 4 for key)



Wetlands in the Blackwater Valley near Yateley

- 5.13 The main enhancement priorities for this Character Area are to provide better integration of built development within the valley landscape by new planting and to maximise the opportunities for the development of diverse wetland habitats and landscapes in areas where mineral extraction has taken place. Elsewhere, there is a need to restore landscape structure along some of the more denuded valley sides and reinforce the intimate, pastoral character of the valley floor.

Main enhancement priorities

- *management of existing woodlands, hedgerows and trees within the river corridor, to secure their long-term presence within the landscape and maximise their landscape and ecological value*
- *new planting of woods, hedgerows and trees to form a stronger landscape structure in denuded valleyside areas and to help integrate development and communications within the river corridor*
- *planting of willows and other appropriate species alongside watercourses within the valley floor where the typically intimate, riparian character of the floodplain has been weakened*
- *where possible, creation of a more diverse range of wetland habitats within the valley floor, including wet grasslands, seasonally flooded areas, marshes and wet woodland.*



*Floodplain farmland near
Eversley Cross*



*Floodplain farmland on the
fringes of Blackwater*



Wetlands near Yateley

5 Character Area 6: Firgrove

Description

- 5.14 This character area forms a fragmented belt of farmland which lies between the edge of the Blackwater Valley, the extensive forests and heaths of Bramshill and Minley, and between the urban areas of Yateley and Blackwater.

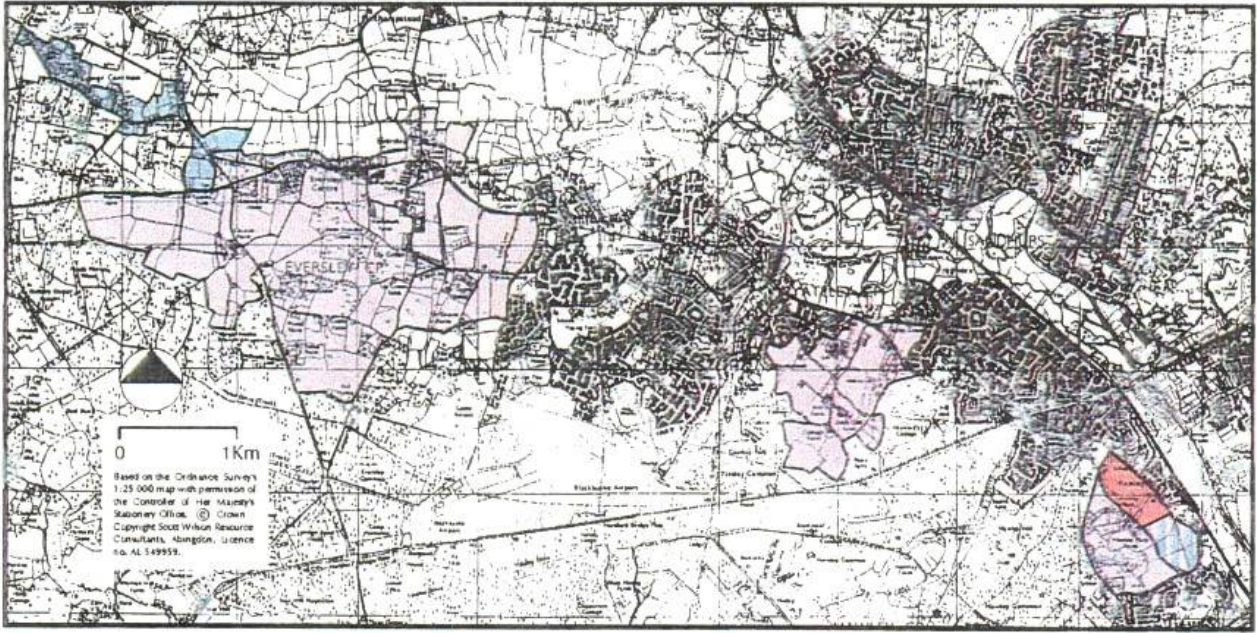


Main distinguishing features

- *a more or less consistent pattern of mixed farmland and woodland, with medium-scale fields framed by a backdrop of woodland (including remnant ancient semi-natural woodland) and a strong hedgerow structure;*
- *a distinctively heathy character to the woods, hedges and verges with oak, birch, pine, gorse and bracken as frequent components and indicators of a former heathland character;*
- *an essentially rural character but with localised suburbanising influences of roads and built development (particularly around the fringes of Yateley, Blackwater and ribbon development along the B3272) and the intrusion of overhead power lines;*
- *the attractive villages of Eversley Cross and Up Green with their vernacular dwellings, traditional village greens and nucleated form.*

Enhancement priorities

- 5.15 This area has a fairly consistent character, being predominantly classified as mixed pasture and woodland. However, its fragmented nature contributes to a variable landscape quality and, particularly, to the east, its quality is affected by the proximity of urban development. The priority for intervention in this area is, therefore, to provide better integration of built development within the landscape and to reinforce the characteristic mosaic of woods, hedgerows and pasture through new planting.



Firgrove landscape types (see Figure 4 for key)



Mixed pasture and woodland near Eversley

Main enhancement priorities

- *management of existing woodlands, hedgerows and trees within the river corridor, to secure their long-term presence within the landscape and maximise their landscape and ecological value*
- *new planting of woods, hedgerows and trees around the fringes of urban areas and settlements and along road corridors, to provide better integration of development within the landscape*
- *encourage development of heathy vegetation along roadside verges, field margins and within woods*



Broadleaved woodland near Eversley



Mixed pasture and woodland (small-scale) near Eversley



Mixed pasture and woodland (large-scale) near Up Green

5 Character Area 7: Bramshill

Description

- 5.16 This character area forms a distinctive swathe of forest and heath across the northern part of the district. Its boundaries are clearly defined by the forest edges to the north and south but to the east it embraces Bramshill Park, which contains open parkland but is intimately associated with the forest landscape. The eastern boundary marks the transition from more or less continuous forest to the more mixed heathland landscape of Yateley and Hawley Commons.

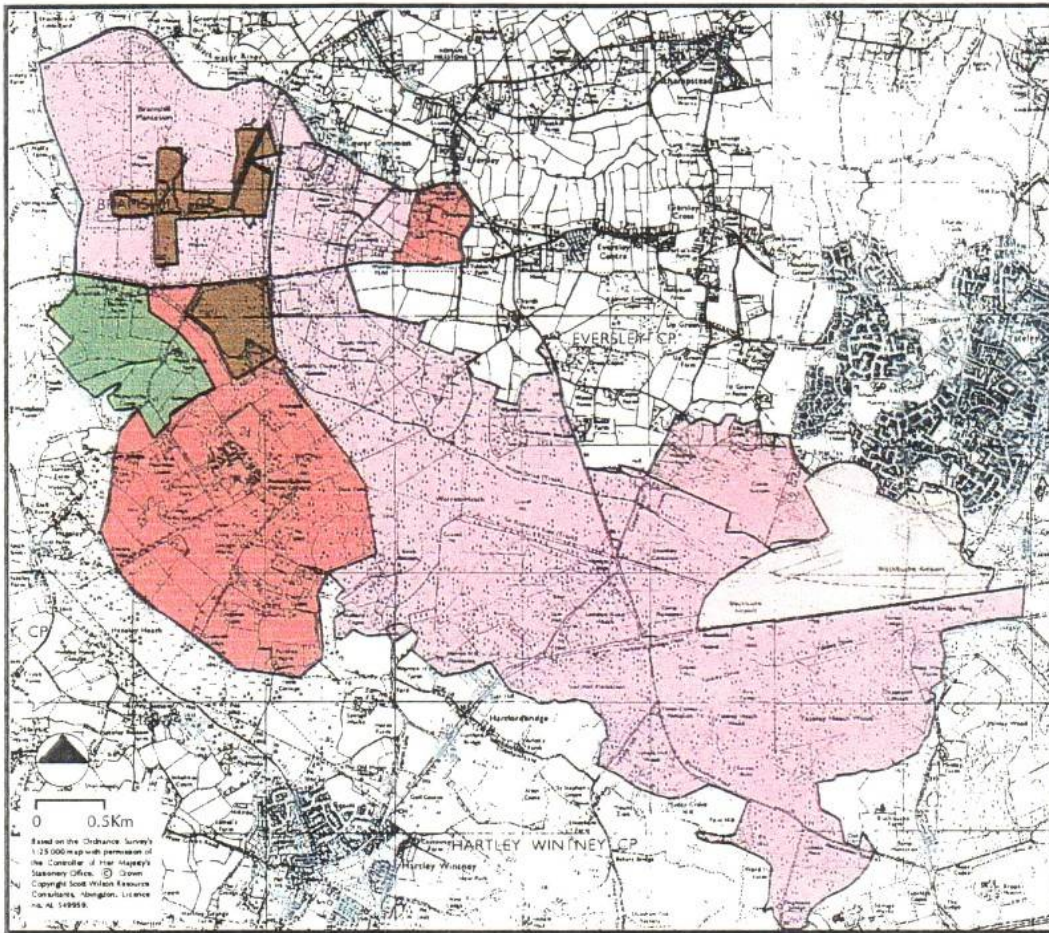


Main distinguishing features

- *extensive areas of dense woodland (mainly coniferous plantation) on former heathland creating a highly distinctive and enclosed forest landscape;*
- *evidence of former heathland character in the stands of birch and pine which fringe much of the woodland and the presence of gorse, heather, bracken and broom in cleared areas, glades, rides and forest edges;*
- *evidence of man's intervention in the landscape, in the form of commercial forestry, mineral extraction and landfill operations and the creation of formal rides, avenues and other 'designed' landscape features associated with the historic parkland at Bramshill House;*
- *a comparatively quiet and secluded character in the less accessible parts of the forest which contrast with the localised noise and activity and suburbanising influences of the major through routes, particularly the busy A30 and A327, and Blackbushe Airport;*
- *an absence of settlements and a very sparse pattern of farms around the edges of the forest area.*

Enhancement priorities

- 5.17 In general, the forest and parkland landscapes within this Character Area are of high quality (predominantly Category A) with few detracting influences, although mineral extraction and large-scale clear-felling causes localised intrusion within the forest areas. The overall



Bramshill landscape types (see Figure 4 for key)

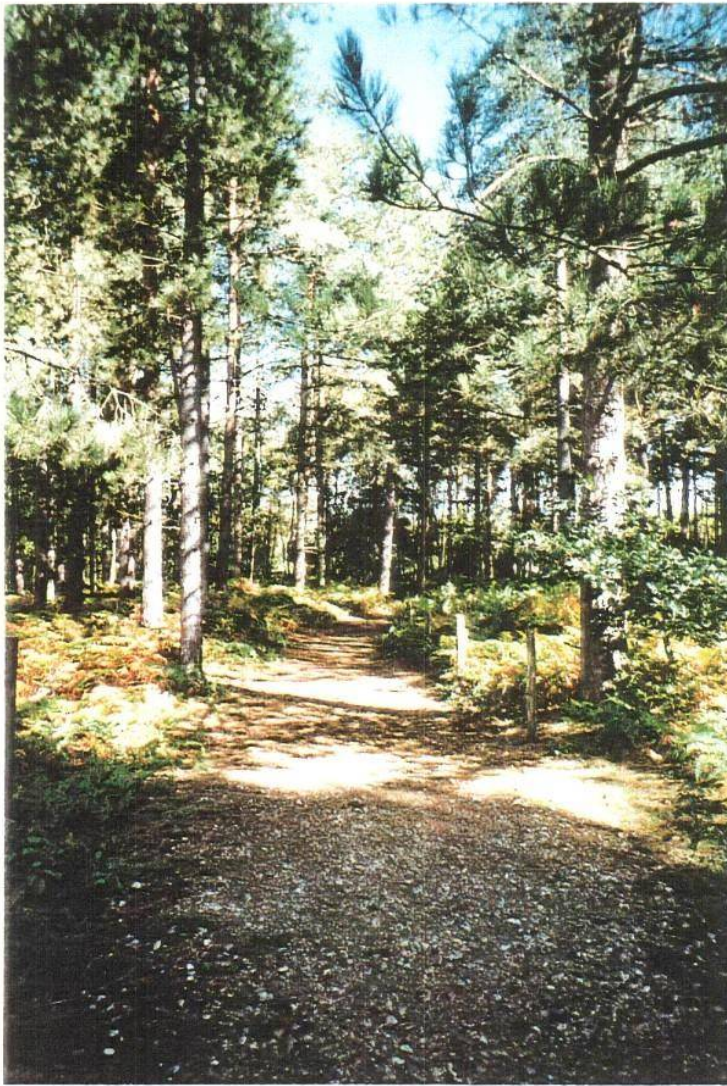


Parkland and forest landscapes near Bramshill

priority, therefore, is for **conservation** of landscape character and quality with appropriate management to enhance key landscape resources and minimise the intrusion of quarrying and road corridors.

Main enhancement priorities

- *management of historic parkland landscape at Bramshill Park and historic landscape features within surrounding areas*
- *management of existing woodlands and forest to maintain their presence in the landscape and diversify woodland structure and species composition*
- *restoration of small-scale mosaic of heathland, pasture and woodland around the fringes of parklands and densely wooded areas*
- *management of road corridors to maintain essentially wooded and enclosed character, to encourage development of heathy vegetation along roadside verges and to minimise the impacts of traffic on adjacent areas*
- *where possible, restoration of quarries to a mosaic of woodland and heathland in keeping with the character of the area*



*Coniferous forest on
heath near Eversley
Common*



*Mixed farmland and
woodland near Bramshill*



*Mineral extraction at
Heath Warren*

5 Character Area 8: Hazeley/West Green

Description

- 5.18 This character area forms a tongue of land which lies between the Whitewater Valley to the west, the Hart Valley and edge of Hartley Wintney to the east, the historic parkland of Bramshill to the north, and the A30 to the south.

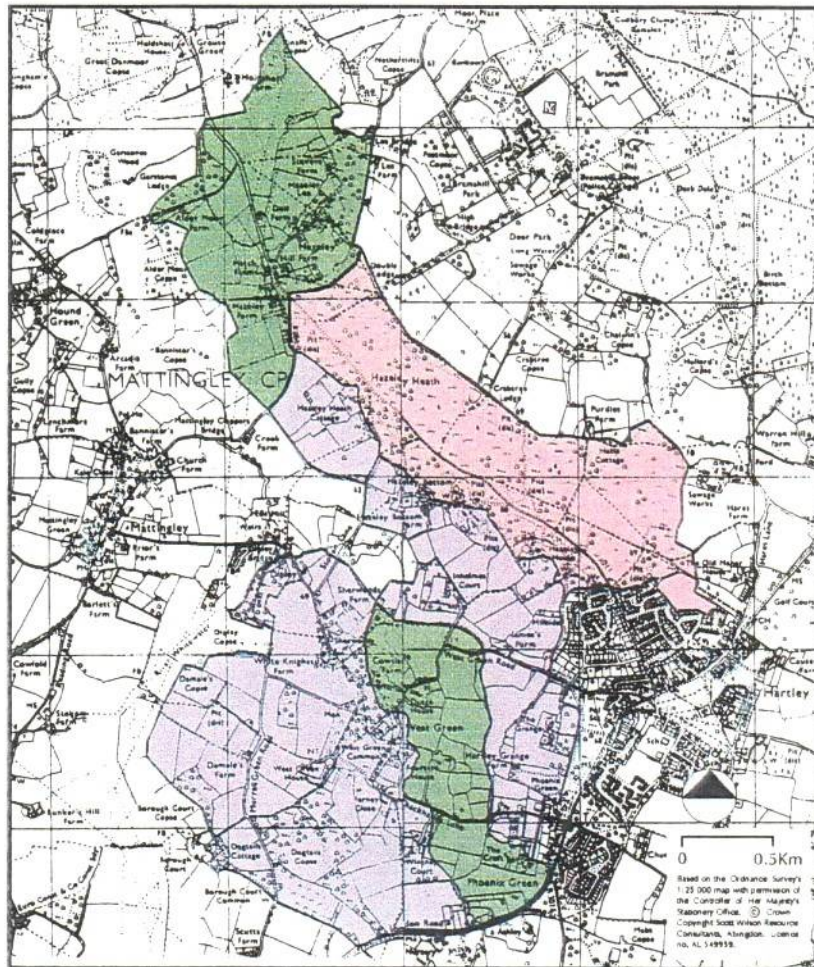


Main distinguishing features

- *the extensive and distinctive wooded heathland and open common of Hazeley Heath and a sense of elevation created by its position on a low ridge, which forms a discrete landform unit between the valleys of the Whitewater and Hart rivers;*
- *a small-scale pattern of mixed farmland and woodland with a quiet, rural character and with evidence of former heathland in the character of the vegetation;*
- *limited road access through the area apart from the B3011, which forms a central spine and has a distinctively unfenced, wooded character;*
- *a dispersed settlement pattern with individual properties strung out along the minor road network within a well-wooded setting;*
- *historic buildings and parkland at West Green House.*

Enhancement priorities

- 5.19 Landscape quality in this area is generally high, comprising heathland and wooded farmland with an attractive and generally unspoilt rural character and few detracting influences. The main priorities are to conserve and manage the most valuable landscapes of heathland, woodland and parkland at Hazeley Heath and West Green and to reinforce the pattern of wooded pasture that predominates elsewhere through new woodland, hedgerow and tree planting.



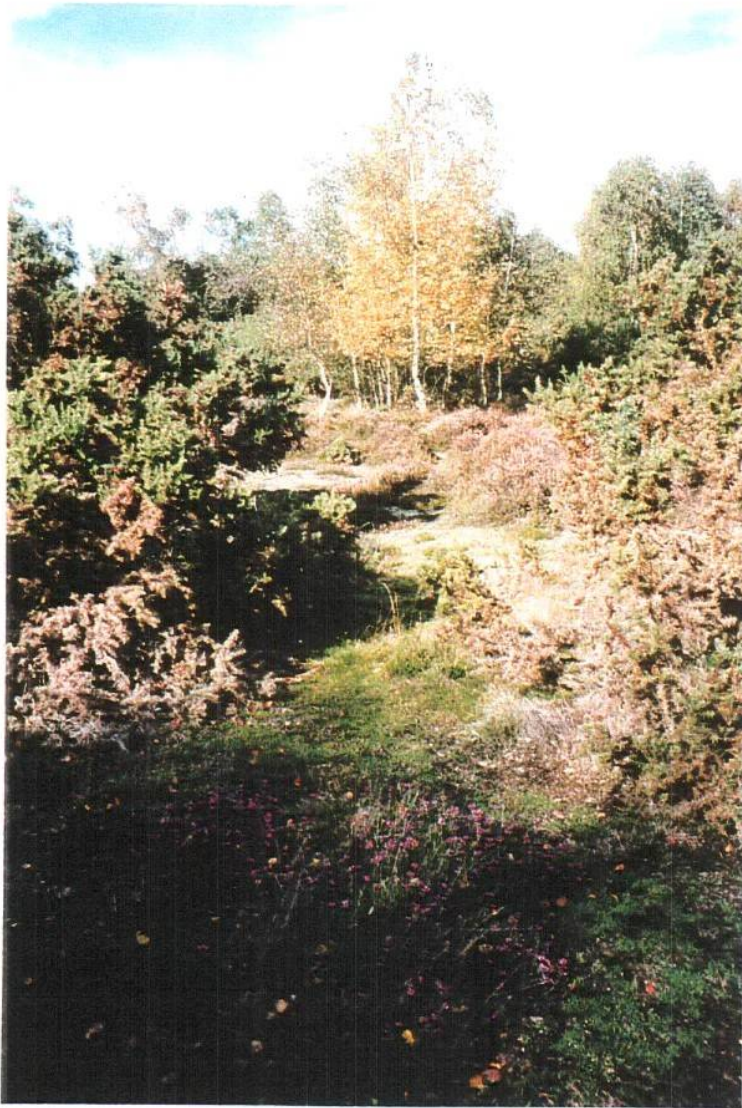
Hazeley/West Green landscape types (see Figure 4 for key)



Mixed heathland woodland landscape at Hazeley Heath

Main enhancement priorities

- *management of existing woodlands, hedgerows and trees to secure their long-term presence within the landscape and maximise their landscape and ecological value*
- *management of existing areas of open heath/common to prevent encroachment by scrub and woodland*
- *small-scale selective woodland clearance to encourage restoration of more open heathland character within wooded areas*
- *management of road corridors to maintain essentially wooded and enclosed character, to encourage development of heathy vegetation along roadside verges and to minimise the impacts of traffic on adjacent areas*
- *management of historic parkland landscape and areas of wooded common at West Green*



Mixed heathland and woodland, Hazeley Heath



Mature Oaks at West Green



Formal landscape features and parkland at West Green

5 Character Area 9: Winchfield

Description

- 5.20 This character area is bounded to the north by the edge of Hartley Wintney and to the east and west by the valleys of the rivers Hart and Whitewater. To the south, the boundary marks an approximate change in vegetation and landscape character between the predominantly 'heathy' pasture and woodland of this area and the non-heathy farmland and woodland to the south around Dogmersfield.

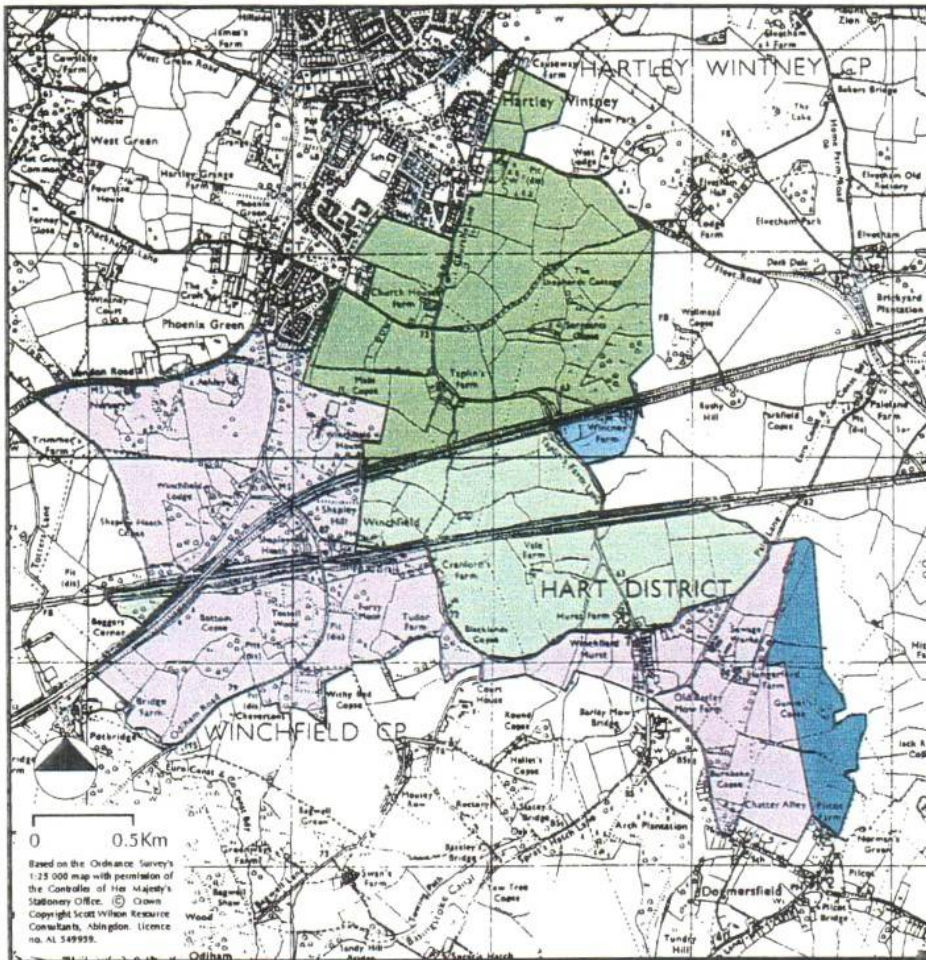


Main distinguishing features

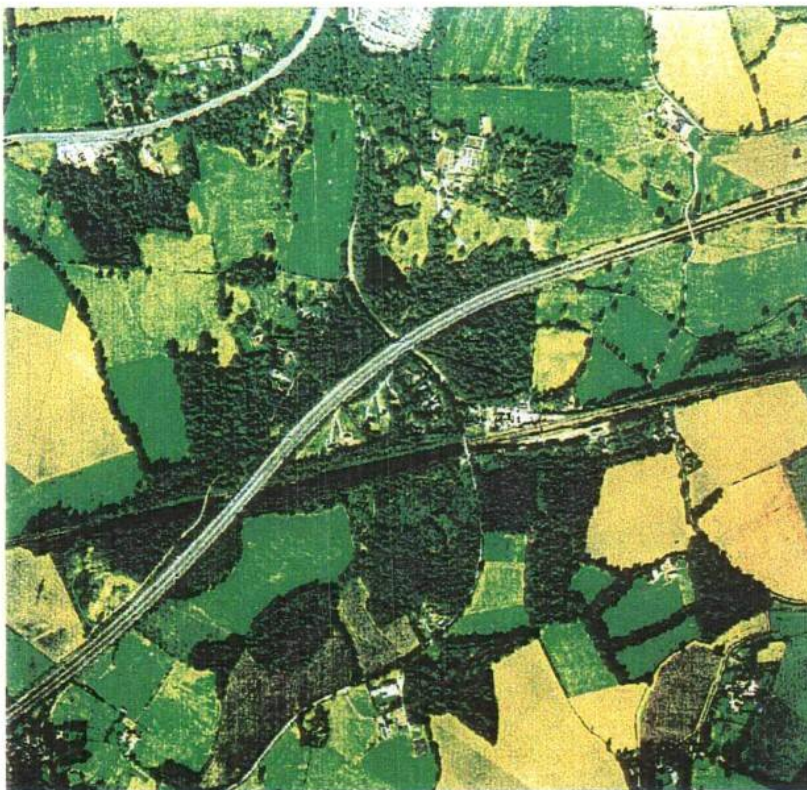
- *a mosaic of farmland and woodland which contain strong heathy characteristics (e.g. with birch, pine, bracken and gorse evident in hedgerows and woods) to the south but which are absent from farmland to the north-east;*
- *a moderately enclosed landscape except for the area to the east of Winchfield which has a denuded and exposed character;*
- *an area fragmented and bounded by roads (including the M3 motorway, the A30, the A323 and the B3016) and the railway line, which intrude upon its essentially rural character.*

Enhancement priorities

- 5.21 The quality of the mixed farmland and woodland of this area is generally good but is compromised in places by the visual intrusion and severance caused by roads and overhead power lines and by a loss of landscape features resulting from agricultural intensification. The priority for intervention therefore centres around reducing these impacts and replacing landscape structure in denuded areas.



Winchfield landscape types (see Figure 4 for key)



Mixed farmland and woodland near Winchfield

Main enhancement priorities

- *management of existing woodlands, hedgerows and trees to secure their long-term presence within the landscape and maximise their landscape and ecological value*
- *new planting of woods, hedgerows and trees around the fringes of settlements and along road corridors, to provide better integration within the landscape*
- *replacement of woods, hedgerows and trees within denuded areas of open countryside*



Mixed farmland and woodland near Winchfield



Open arable farmland near Winchfield

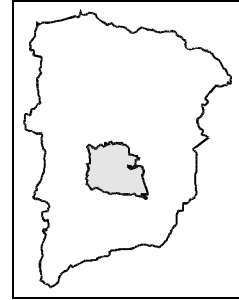


M3 motoway near Winchfield

5 Character Area 10: Dogmersfield

Description

- 5.22 This character area is located within the centre of the district and is bounded to the west and east by the valleys of the Whitewater and Hart rivers and to the south by the edge of the chalk downs.

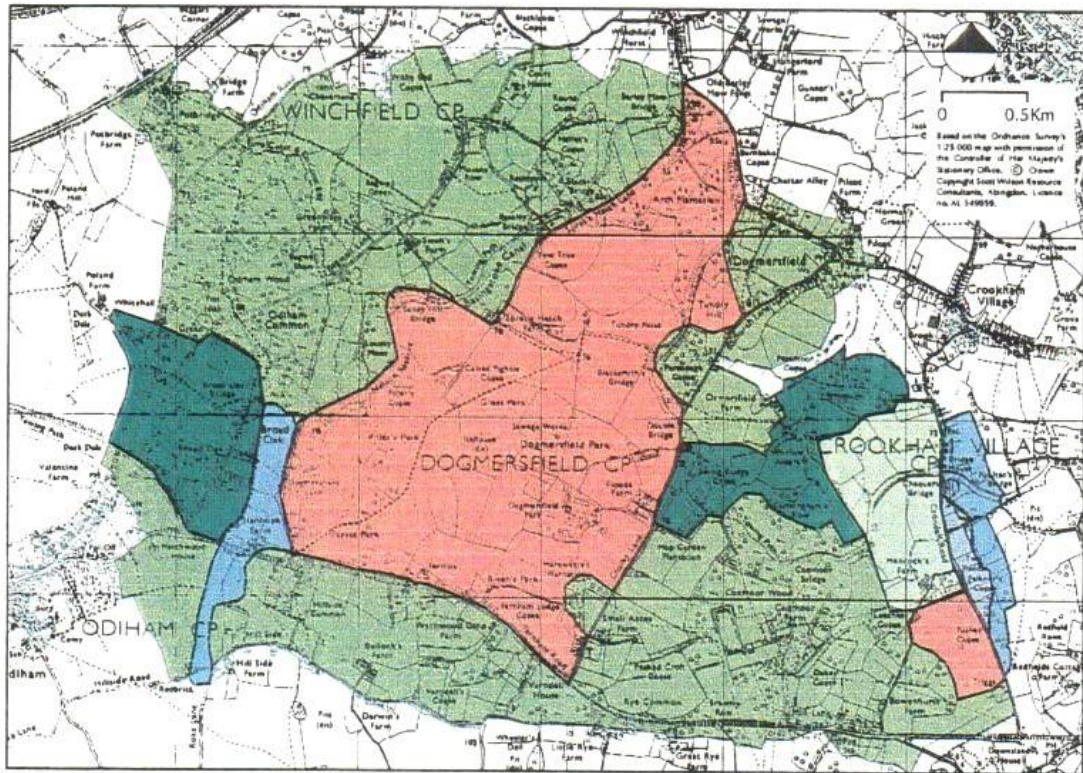


Main distinguishing features

- *the historic parkland landscape of Dogmersfield Park, with its formal gardens, lakes and woods, which occupies the core of this area and defines its overall character;*
- *the gently undulating landform which adds prominence to landscape features such as Dogmersfield House and individual blocks of woodland;*
- *a patchwork of mixed farmland and scattered blocks of woodland (including several remnants of ancient semi-natural woodland);*
- *a strong landscape structure of woods and hedgerows which provide a backdrop to open fields and contain views;*
- *the Basingstoke Canal, which winds through the area following the contours and is attractively wooded along much of its length;*
- *an essentially quiet, rural character with few, scattered settlements (primarily the village of Dogmersfield and hamlets of Chatter Alley and Pilcot) and dispersed farms;*
- *a mostly rural road network but with localised intrusion from the A287 running across the area to the south of the park;*
- *a network of overhead power lines emanating from the sub-station at Coxmoor Wood and which intrudes upon the rural, unspoilt qualities of the area.*

Enhancement priorities

- 5.23 The formal parklands, extensive woodlands, areas of remnant heathland, the canal corridor and small rural settlements, all contribute to a varied landscape of generally high quality and visual appeal.



Dogmersfield landscape types (see Figure 4 for key)



Parkland at Dogmersfield

However, some elements of the landscape are showing signs of decline, most notably Dogmersfield Park which has suffered from conversion of parkland to arable farmland and the loss or neglect of formal features, such as copses, avenues, parkland trees and boundaries. Field enlargement and loss of hedgerows and trees also affect other areas of farmland and are gradually leading to an erosion of the typically enclosed, wooded character of the landscape. Conservation and management of existing features, together with restoration of landscape structure and formal parkland character, are the priorities for intervention within this character area.

Main enhancement priorities

- *management of existing woodlands, hedgerows and trees to secure their long-term presence within the landscape*
- *management of landscape within canal corridor to retain its essentially enclosed, wooded and attractive rural character*
- *new planting of broadleaved woodlands, hedgerows and trees to reinforce the patchwork of wooded farmland and to minimise the impacts of main roads and traffic*
- *management and restoration of remnant parkland and landscape features associated with Dogmersfield Park and other areas of former parkland*
- *small-scale selective woodland clearance at Odiham Common to encourage restoration of a mosaic of open areas within woodland matrix*



*Basingstoke Canal near
Winchfield Hurst*



*Remnant parkland at
Dogmersfield*

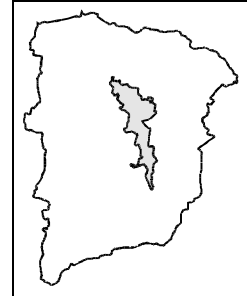


*Mixed farmland and
woodland near Coxmoor
Wood*

5 Character Area 11: Hart Valley

Description

- 5.24 This character area embraces the landscape which runs along the valley of the River Hart through the centre of the district between Bramshill Park and the edge of the chalklands to the south. Although the valley form is subtle and its landscape character is mixed, it essentially forms a broad morphological unit and the river provides a unifying thread, forming the focus for the landscapes that run along its length. Its boundaries are defined roughly as the limit of land associated with, or providing a setting for, the river valley. On its eastern side, the boundary has been drawn slightly wider to include the thin strip of land along the fringes of Fleet.

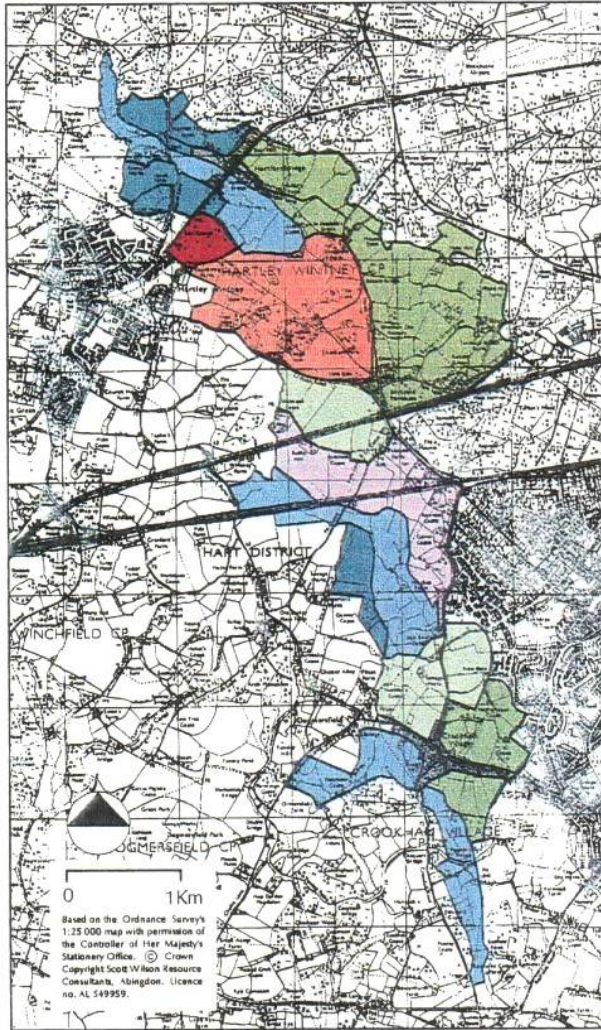


Main distinguishing features

- *a mixed landscape character which lacks overall cohesion but which has common, unifying elements, notably the river and its immediate floodplain and a general pattern of mixed farmland and woodland;*
- *the distinctively riparian character of the broad, flat, low-lying valley floor with its riverside pastures, willow-lined watercourses and well-treed character;*
- *an indistinct valley landform, with valley side landscapes recognisable only above Hartford Bridge and to the north of Dogmersfield;*
- *the parkland of Elvetham Hall which dominates the character of the river valley above its central section.*

Enhancement priorities

- 5.25 The Hart Valley contains attractive countryside which is generally of good quality. However, in places this quality is affected by the intrusion of built development on the urban fringes, by overhead power lines and by the loss of woodland cover, hedgerows and trees resulting from agricultural intensification. The main enhancement priorities are to restore landscape structure along these denuded valley sides, through planting of new woods, trees and hedgerows, and to encourage the



Hart Valley landscape types (see Figure 4 for key)



Parkland and floodplain farmland around Elvetham Hall

restoration of more diverse wetland habitats within the valley floor. A stronger landscape structure may also help to reduce the impact of power lines, roads and other localised intrusive features.

Main enhancement priorities

- *management of existing woodlands, hedgerows and trees to secure their long-term presence within the landscape and maximise their landscape and ecological value*
- *management and restoration of parkland and landscape features associated with country estates*
- *new planting of woods, hedgerows and trees to form a stronger landscape structure in denuded valley side areas, around the urban fringes and where roads or power lines cross the valley, to minimise their intrusion on the valley landscape*
- *planting of willows and other appropriate species alongside watercourses within the valley floor where the typically intimate, riparian character of the floodplain has been weakened*
- *where possible, creation of a more diverse range of wetland habitats within the valley floor, including wet grasslands, seasonally flooded areas, marshes and wet woodland.*



*Floodplain farmland near
Winchfield Hurst*



*Mixed farmland and
woodland near Hartley
Wintney*



*Open arable farmland near
Elvetham Hall*

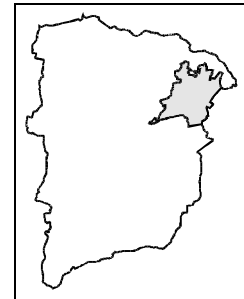


*Remnant parkland at
Elvetham Hall*

5 Character Area 12: Minley

Description

- 5.26 This character area lies to the north-east of the district and forms a wedge of land between the urban edges of Yateley and Blackwater to the north, the district boundary to the east and the edge of the dense forests of Yateley Heath Wood.



Main distinguishing features

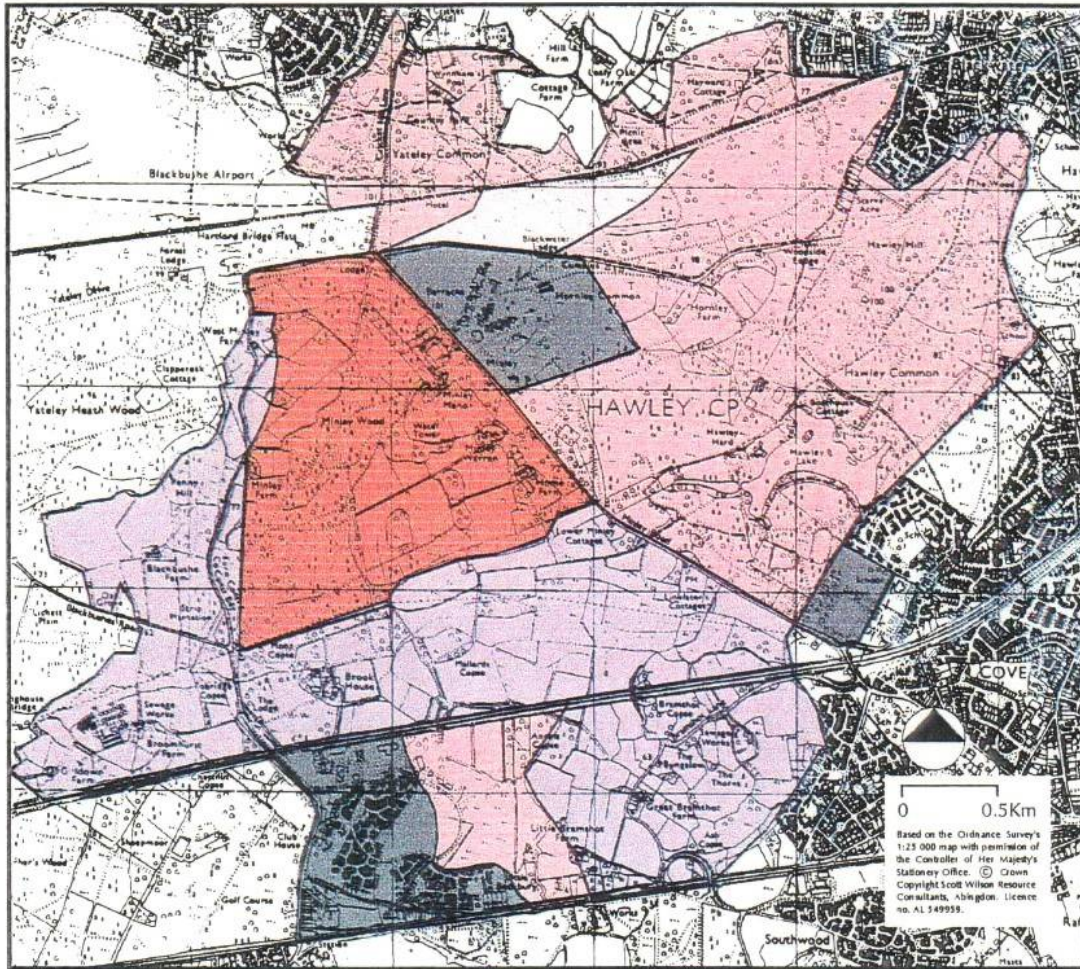
- *a diverse patchwork of farmland, open heath, woodland and parkland with a mixed, but pervasively 'heathy', character;*
- *the extensive open commons of Yateley and Hawley, heavily used as a recreational resource;*
- *a somewhat suburbanised and fragmented character created by the intrusion of roads (particularly the M3 the A327) and isolated buildings and installations, and its proximity to the urban fringes of Blackwater, Hawley and Fleet;*
- *the wooded parkland landscape of Minley Manor.*

Enhancement priorities

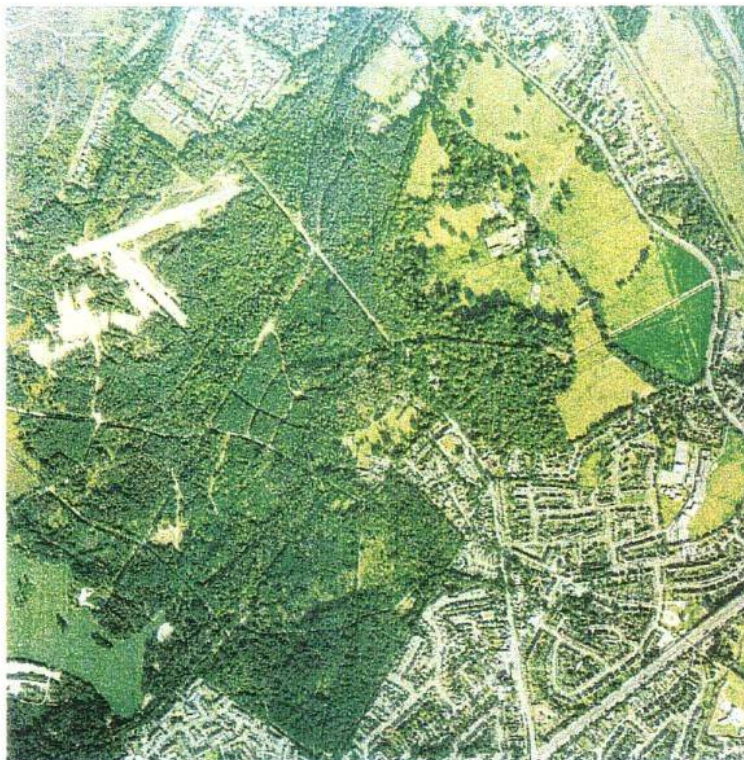
- 5.27 This area includes extensive areas of heathland, woodland and former parkland of high landscape value but it also suffers from the fragmentation and visual intrusion caused by busy roads, isolated buildings and development on the fringes of Blackwater, Hawley and Fleet. The overall priority, therefore, is to **conserve** and manage key landscape resources and minimise the intrusion of road corridors and built development.

Main enhancement priorities

- *management of existing woodlands, hedgerows and trees to secure their long-term presence within the landscape and maximise their landscape and ecological value*



Minley landscape types (see Figure 4 for key)



Forest and heath at Hawley Common

- *management of existing areas of open heath/common to prevent encroachment by scrub and woodland*
- *small-scale selective woodland clearance to encourage restoration of more open heathland character within woodland matrix*
- *new planting of woods, hedgerows and trees around the fringes of urban areas and along road corridors, to minimise intrusion of built development on landscape character*
- *encourage development of heathy vegetation along roadside verges, field margins and within woods*
- *management and restoration of remnant parkland and landscape features associated with Minley Manor*



Mixed heathland and woodland and extensive open heathland at Yateley Common



Mixed pasture and woodland near Minley Road

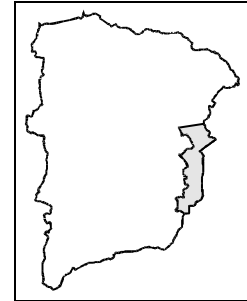


Mixed pasture and woodland showing heathy character, near Hawley

5 Character Area 13: Tweseldown

Description

- 5.28 This character area occupies the gap between the eastern edge of Fleet and the district boundary, although its character extends further eastwards. Its northern and southern boundary roughly mark the limit of dense woodland cover.

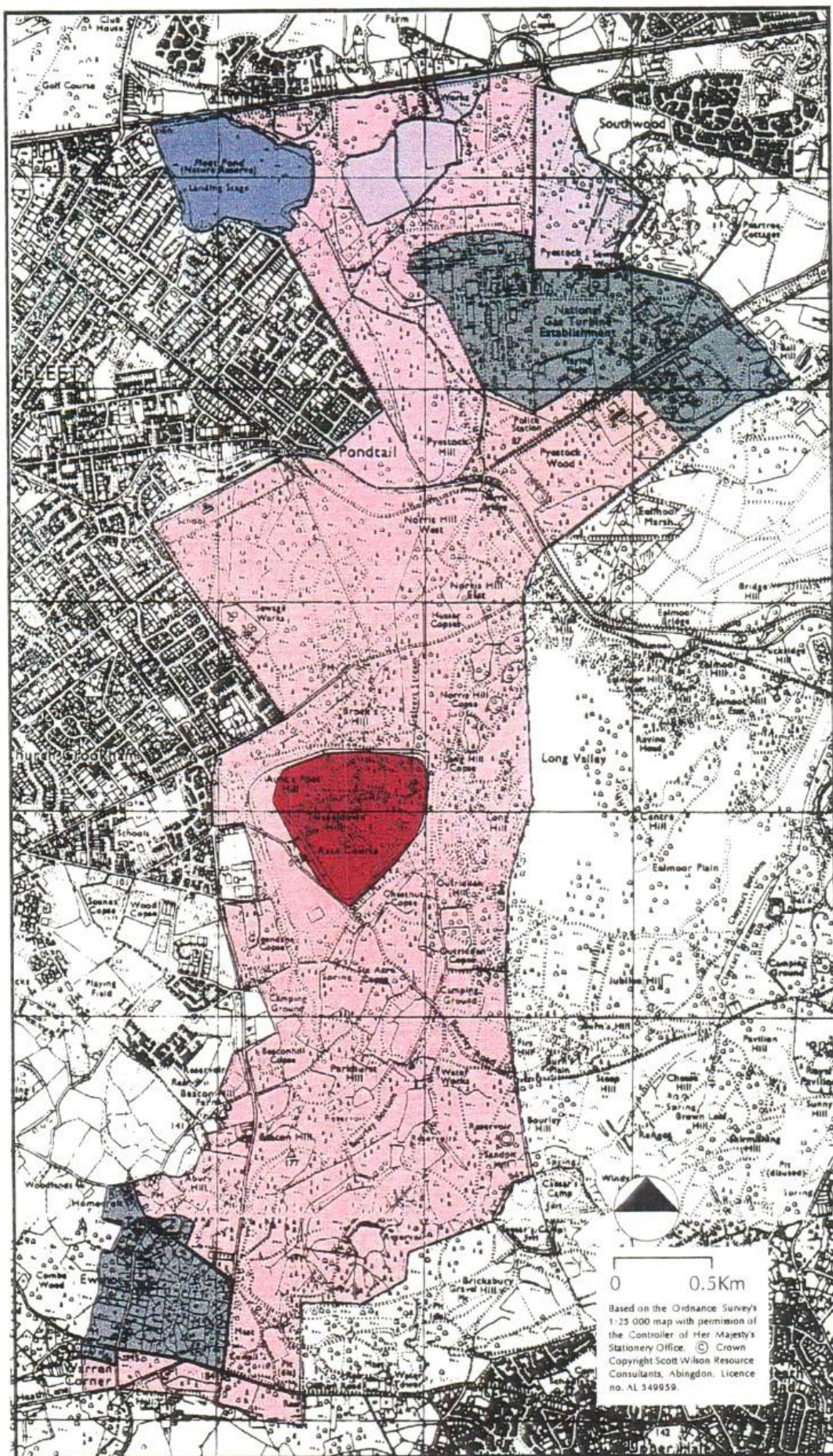


Main distinguishing features

- *extensive areas of dense woodland (mainly coniferous plantation) interspersed with areas of open heath creating a distinctive heath and forest landscape, with characteristic vegetation (including oak, birch, pine woodland, heather, gorse, broom and bracken);*
- *comparatively quiet and remote apart from the localised noise and activity associated with the A323 and A3103 and recreational activity associated with the race course;*
- *an essentially rural character but with localised suburbanising influences of urban development around the fringes of Fleet, at Ewshot and around the National Gas Turbine Establishment, the RAE airfield site at Farnborough and the main road corridors;*
- *a number of man-made wetlands, including Fleet Pond, reservoirs at Parkhurst Hill and Bricksbury Hill, and the Basingstoke Canal;*
- *complex landform towards the south of the area forming a series of hills and valleys and creating enclosure and landscape diversity.*

Enhancement priorities

- 5.29 The extensive forests and heathland which dominate this area are of high landscape quality despite their proximity to the urban fringes of Fleet. The dense tree cover reduces the visibility of intrusive development which consequently has only a localised effect on landscape quality. The over-riding priority is, therefore, to **conserve** and enhance these key landscape resources and ensure that intrusion by built development is kept to minimum.



Tweseldown landscape types (see Figure 4 for key)

Main enhancement priorities

- *management of existing woodlands and trees to secure their long-term presence within the landscape and maximise their landscape and ecological value*
- *management of existing areas of open heath/common to prevent encroachment by scrub and woodland*
- *small-scale selective woodland clearance to encourage restoration of more open heathland character within woodland matrix*
- *where necessary, strengthen planting around the fringes of urban areas, around isolated developments and along road corridors, to minimise intrusion of built development on landscape character*
- *encourage development of heathy vegetation along roadside verges, field margins and within woods*



Forest and heath around Tweseldown Hill



Wetland landscape at Fleet Pond

5 Character Area 14: Redlands

Description

- 5.30 This character area forms a wedge of land between the southern edge of Fleet and the rising ground of the chalk downs further south. It is defined to the east by the district boundary and its western boundary is roughly defined by the head of the River Hart valley.

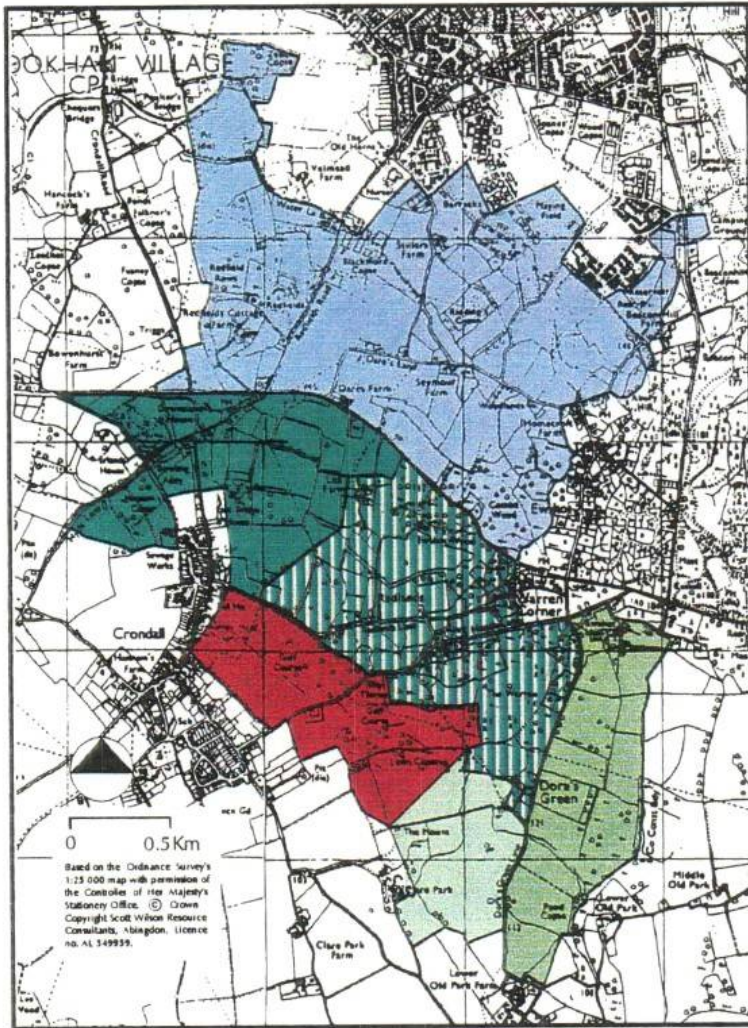


Main distinguishing features

- *complex geology at the junction of the chalk, London Clay and Bracklesham/Bagshot Beds which is reflected in varied landform (from the complex of hills and valleys around Dora's Green to the more gentle landform around the Hart river valley);*
- *a mixed and fragmented character reflecting the underlying physical conditions and also a comparatively complex network of roads and settlements;*
- *an essentially rural, farmed character but with localised suburbanising influences, including the golf course at Crondall, residential development and 'fringe' land uses around Redlands and Warren Corner, and the influence of the A287 road corridor;*
- *a well-wooded character which contains views and reduces the visual intrusion of built development and overhead power lines, roads etc.*

Enhancement priorities

- 5.31 The mixed landscape character of this area is also reflected in its quality. The attractively rolling and wooded landscape is marred by typically 'scruffy' or 'suburbanising' land uses, such as pony paddocks and golf courses, and by the intrusion of scattered development and the complex network of roads. The priority here will be to create a more coherent landscape within which these varied uses can be more effectively absorbed and integrated.



Redlands landscape types (see Figure 4 for key)



Mixed pasture and woodland around Warren Corner

Main enhancement priorities

- *management of existing woodlands, hedgerows and trees to secure their long-term presence within the landscape, diversify woodland structure and species composition, and maximise their landscape and ecological value*
- *new planting of woods, hedgerows and trees around the fringes of urban areas and settlements and along road corridors, to provide better integration of development within the landscape*
- *new planting of more extensive broadleaved woodlands to reinforce the patchwork of wooded farmland and to restore a more heavily wooded character where appropriate*
- *incorporation of locally distinctive planting character and landscape features within and around the golf course to enhance its integration within the wider landscape*



Mixed farmland and woodland with fringe character, near Ewshot



Mixed pasture and woodland (small-scale) near Ewshot



Golf course landscape at Crondall

5 Character Area 15: Hart Downs

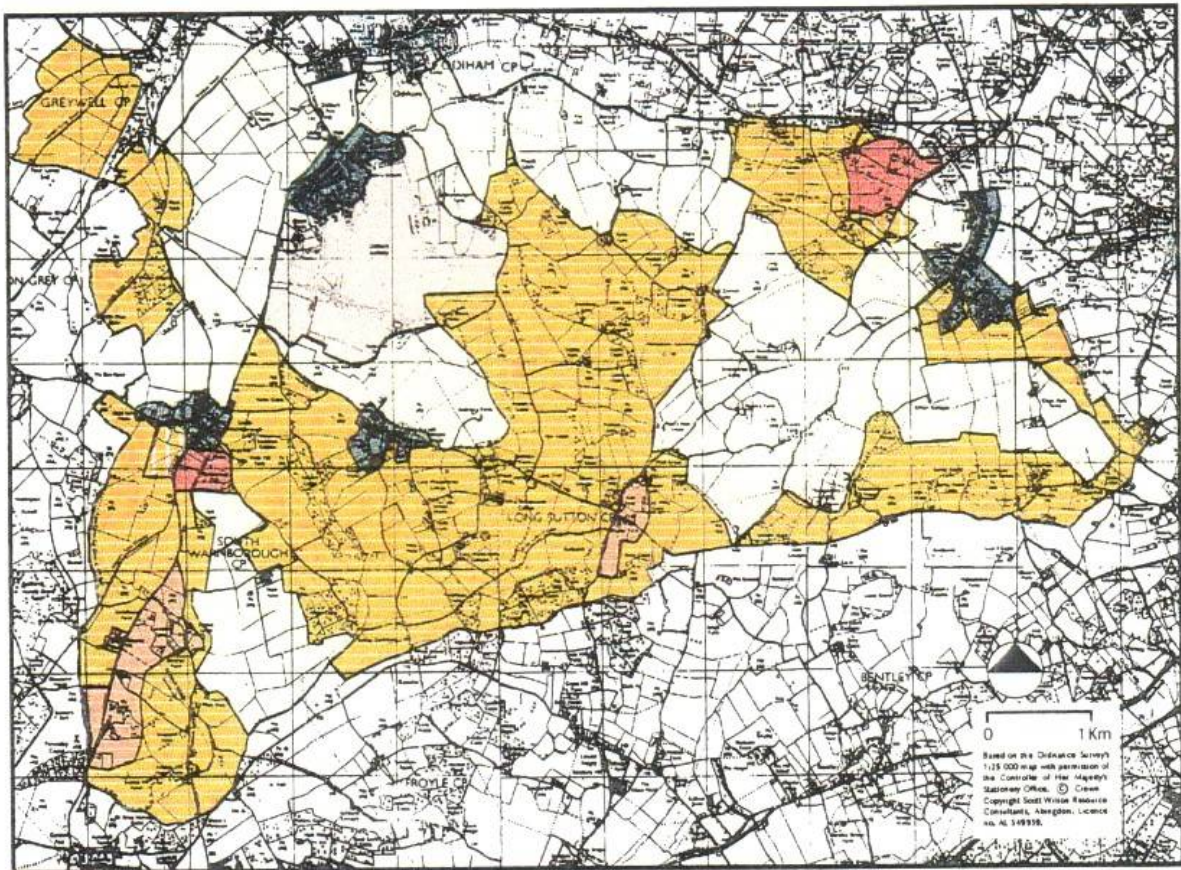
Description

- 5.32 This character area embraces the whole of the chalk landscape which sweeps across the south of the district, its overall unity of character precluding further sub-division into smaller areas. Although part of a much larger chalkland landscape, it is defined to the west, south and east by the district boundary and its northern boundary marks the approximate edge of the underlying chalk and its influence on landscape character.



Main distinguishing features

- *typical chalk scenery, with strongly rolling landforms, smoothly hilltops and dry valleys;*
- *a dominance of intensive arable cultivation and weak hedgerow structure on the flatter hilltops and shallower slopes at the edge of the chalk, which creates a large-scale, predominantly open landscape with extensive views and a sense of exposure;*
- *scattered blocks of woodland and a stronger hedgerow structure in the central and southern parts of the downs, particularly on the steeper slopes and in the valleys, which provide some shelter and contain longer-distance views;*
- *a rural character with few detracting influences, except for the buildings, lights, security fencing and activity associated with Odiham airfield, traffic along the B3349, and the prominent overhead power lines which march across the downs;*
- *a network of minor roads crossing the downs, with an unspoilt and rural character;*
- *dispersed pattern of small villages and hamlets (such as Long Sutton, Well and South Warnborough), with the larger settlements of Odiham and Crondall located on the edge of the chalklands, typically with a nucleated form and attractive streetscapes of vernacular buildings.*



Hart Downs landscape types (see Figure 4 for key)



Open arable downs near Crondall

Enhancement priorities

5.33 Overall, the open, rolling chalk scenery of the Hart Downs is of high visual quality and presents a striking contrast with the more muted lowland landscapes further north. Of particular scenic value are those areas which have retained a predominantly pastoral character and a stronger structure of hedgerows and woodland blocks, which provide shelter, visual containment and add diversity to the landscape. However, other areas have a denuded, exposed character as a result of conversion to arable farmland which has led to field enlargement, loss of hedgerows and trees and greater intrusion of power lines and development. The Odiham airfield is particularly prominent and detracts from local landscape quality. These are the priority areas for landscape enhancement activity.

Main enhancement priorities

- *management of existing woodlands, hedgerows and trees to secure their long-term presence within the landscape and maximise their landscape and ecological value*
- *new planting of blocks and belts of woodland, hedgerows and groups of trees (of appropriate species) to form a stronger landscape structure in denuded downland areas and to integrate intrusive development (eg. Odiham airfield)*
- *where possible, reversion of arable farmland to pasture or less intensively managed grassland*
- *re-creation of chalk grassland and scrub habitats in appropriate locations, such as steeper slopes or other areas of under-utilised land*



*Open arable downs near
Odiham*



*Enclosed arable farmland
near Odiham*



*Enclosed mixed farmland
(small-scale) near Well*



*Open arable farmland and the
airfield at Odiham*