

**KENT DOWNS
AONB
LANDSCAPE
GUIDELINES**



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INTRODUCTION

In publishing these landscape guidelines, we hope to stimulate debate and enthusiasm among all those with an interest in the Kent Downs. These guidelines are intended to be the starting point for action, which can and should be built upon, in order to enhance the outstanding quality of the landscape and conserve it for the future. It is hoped that these guidelines will be followed by the preparation and adoption of a management plan, to coordinate and promote positive initiatives in the AONB to further the aims of the designation.

The landscape assessment

The AONB has been classified into 13 distinct character areas. Several of these character areas have themselves been subdivided into local character areas, to examine distinct features and pressures in more detail. These character areas are described in the accompanying landscape assessment (CCP 479).

The landscape guidelines

This document builds on the landscape assessment of the AONB, referring directly to the individual character and local character areas. It should, therefore, be read in conjunction with the landscape assessment (CCP 479) and for ease of reference kept filed in the pocket provided in the back cover of the main landscape assessment publication.

These guidelines provide overall **landscape objectives** for each character area, which outline the main areas for action but are not exclusive. These objectives are then translated into **landscape guidelines**, which suggest immediate ways of developing the objectives into practical proposals. These guidelines are intended to raise awareness of the wide range of opportunities for involvement in managing the landscape, and are aimed at everyone, not only professionals and landowners, but also for those who live in, visit or are simply interested in the Kent Downs. Not all the guidelines will be appropriate for everyone but it is hoped that they will provide a stimulus for practical action as and when the opportunity arises. They should not be read as an obligation or commitment by any one group to carry out the proposals.

DARENT VALLEY

The River Darent runs between the greensand ridge and the chalk downs in a wide valley enclosed by deciduous **scarp-top woodlands** above cultivated lower slopes. These valley-side fields still have a **strong hedgerow pattern** and support many **hedgerow trees**. The river flows through a corridor of **riverside trees**, such as willow, alder and poplar, and **pasture**. In the north, the valley sides widen out into intensively farmed **prairie fields**, with few remaining hedges. To the south, intensive cultivation takes place on the scarp foot, where there has been significant hedgerow loss. Throughout the valley, scattered **flint and brick buildings** reflect the local underlying geology.

Overall landscape objectives

To maintain, and improve where necessary, the existing hedgerow network, in particular along the scarp foot and on the northern downland prairies.

To enhance the river corridor by conserving and extending the variety of tree and grassland habitats.

To curb the gradual suburbanisation of the countryside through inappropriate development and use of materials.

West Darent landscape guidelines

Aim to:

- identify one or two hedges with a number of existing tree saplings and allow them to develop into mature trees;
- plant new mixed-species hedges, or replant gaps in remnant hedges. The scarp-foot hedges are widely spaced but striking;
- emphasise the continuity of the river's history by encouraging oak trees along its upper reaches ('Darent' comes from the Celtic for 'oak river').

North Darent landscape guidelines

Aim to:

- create a variety of open and tree-lined habitats along the river, using native trees. Willows and alder in particular have strong visual and cultural links with water;

- maintain the quality of the hedges and hedgerow trees between the river and the scarp woodlands;
- establish a few strong, linked hedges around the arable fields in the north, especially along roadsides.

Knockholt landscape guidelines

Remember that:

- ornamental conifers around paddocks are rarely appropriate field boundaries in the countryside;
- most woodlands in this area were once coppiced and will gradually decay if unmanaged for too long;
- people get much more pleasure from the sight of thick hedges festooned with wild rose, honeysuckle and blackberries along the roadside, than from barbed wire.

Vulnerable landscapes

The transport corridors

The M25 and M26 motorways cross the Darent Valley, causing significant noise and visual impact. Significant areas of land are dominated by these developments, particularly where fields have been severed and standard highway fence has been erected.

Transport corridor landscape objective

To reduce the impact of major roads by integrating them into the pattern of the landscape.

We should:

- be wary of emphasising the linear nature of a motorway by planting along its edges. Woods and hedges which straddle it, can reduce the dominance of the road;
- not accept that awkward, neglected corners of redundant fields are an inevitable consequence of road building. They should be given a new, positive role in the landscape or amalgamated into existing fields;
- remember that tree planting can sometimes highlight rather than hide development in an open landscape;
- not necessarily use the same style of fences or bridges throughout the Kent Downs. Good design should be able to reflect distinctive, local tradition.

SEVENOAKS RIDGE

The greensand ridge around Sevenoaks is characterised by **extensive coniferous and deciduous woodlands**, which conceal a network of narrow lanes. A number of **heathy commons** occur along the top of the southern scarp, from where **magnificent views** extend across the Low Weald. Between the woodlands, small pastures are divided by overgrown hedges or **lines of mature trees**. The local greensand has been used in a number of **sandstone buildings** and walls. In the east around Ightham, woodlands give way to **orchards**, surrounded by tall shelterbelt hedges, producing a highly distinctive and attractive landscape.

Overall landscape objectives

To maintain the existing overall wooded character of the Sevenoaks Ridge, encouraging deciduous woodlands and a mosaic of open heathy spaces within the scarp-top woods, and opening-up views across the Low Weald.

To maintain the intimate landscape of the orchard belt, preserving in particular the tall shelterbelt hedges, the network of small lanes and the cobnut platts.

Westerham Greensand landscape guidelines

- Could you recall a view from the scarp top that you once loved, which is now gone? Could it be opened-up again?
- Could you coppice small areas of neglected coppice woodland or buy locally-grown coppice products such as bean sticks?
- Could you use local stone when building or restoring walls and buildings?

Ightham Greensand landscape guidelines

Think about:

- promoting self-sown tree seedlings in the woodlands. Be concerned about their survival and thus help retain the wooded character of the area;
- supporting the tradition of orchard and cobnut cultivation around Plaxto1. At least buy locally grown produce;

- the pleasure of being submerged in an intimate landscape of tiny lanes, sunk between high, shelterbelt hedges. 'Improved', widened roads lose this quality.

Vulnerable landscapes

The A25 corridor

Historic parkland is characteristic of the A25 corridor between Sevenoaks and Westerham but is under threat from decay, damage and agricultural change.

A25 corridor landscape objective

To enhance the overall quality of the parklands and countryside along the A25.

We should:

- restore decaying features such as ornamental gates and fences, and phase in appropriate planting of new parkland trees and ornamental clumps;
- resist further urbanisation along the A25 road and development of the land between the existing towns, (in the context of local planning policies);
- replant some of the hedges and hedgerow trees on farmland which have been removed or replaced by wire.

Quarry sites

The greensand beds in this area provide easily accessible sandstone. However, quarries can create significant scars in the landscape if not carefully sited and screened.

Quarry sites landscape objective

To ensure that quarries are not exposed to the wider view of the landscape.

We should:

- ensure that hedges and trees are retained or planted where they could help to screen the site from view.

LOW WEALD

The Low Weald is a landscape of gentle, undulating armland, which stretches away south from the wooded scarp of the greensand ridge. The fields are predominantly pasture, surrounded by a strong pattern of trimmed hedges or by thick deciduous shaws. Hedgerow trees, especially oak, are particularly characteristic of this area, thriving on the heavy clay soils. Where hedgerow removal has taken place, some of these oaks have been left as isolated trees in the fields. Elsewhere, fences have been widely used to create new paddocks for livestock, in particular horses.

Overall landscape objective

To retain the mosaic of small, irregular fields and woodlands, within a strong network of hedges and hedgerow trees.

Western Low Weald landscape guidelines

Aim to:

maintain the strips of mature trees between fields by tagging and protecting saplings or replanting as existing trees become over-mature;
replant gaps in existing hedges as they appear. Do not let a gap become a hole and eventually a fence. Consider laying or coppicing the hedge to prevent further decline;
allow at least two new hedgerow trees to grow up in each hedge. Oak is very characteristic here.

Eastern Low Weald landscape guidelines

Remember that:

- if hedges are not suitable for your needs, there are more appropriate field boundaries than electric fences. Chestnut post-and-rail fence is characteristic of the Weald and long-lasting.
- Individual rails can be removed as needed to create new accesses;
- individual and hedgerow trees provide welcome shade and shelter for livestock;
in this area, small copses planted in field corners or thick, mixed-species hedges, allowed to develop to maturity, can all combine to provide the characteristic 'wooded' appearance of the landscape. It is not necessary to sacrifice large grazing areas.

WEST KENT DOWNS

The West Kent Downs lie between the Darent and the Medway. This is an area of ridges and valleys, where **extensive deciduous woodlands** surround **large arable fields on the plateaux** often separated by thick **shaws**. Between these plateaux, a series of **remote, enclosed dry valleys** support **small pastures on the lower slopes**. A considerable amount of bungalow development and horticulture extends into some areas and there are several **village settlements in the woodlands**. Although most of these woodlands are now unmanaged, many were once coppiced and this practice is still carried out at Shorne Wood in the north. Despite pockets of suburbanisation, this area provides an important rural buffer between the Medway towns and the villages south of Gravesend, such as Meopham.

Overall landscape objective

To retain the secluded, agricultural character of the landscape, maintaining in particular the extensive deciduous woodlands and ameliorating urban-edge pressures.

Kingsdown landscape guidelines

We should:

- carry out, and support, coppicing as a woodland management technique. Traditionally, even hedges used to be coppiced. Coppiced trees form dense, healthy woodlands, able to absorb bungalow developments, such as those in the Knatts Valley area;
- challenge the acceptability of fences made of bedsteads, old baths and lines of ornamental conifers in the countryside. Rigid uniformity is not desirable, but neither is creeping tattyiness;
- develop new landscape features in the north, such as woodlands or shaws, at an **appropriate**, large scale with the open, rolling landscape and wide views. Small-scale planting in a large-scale landscape is fussy and ineffective.

Luddesdown landscape guidelines

We should:

- carry out regular management and maintenance of the woodlands, to enhance both their ecological value and long-term health and renewal;
- consider re-establishing new, thick shaws instead of small, narrow hedges;
- value the open, emptiness of the valley-bottom fields in the same way that we value the great tracts of woodland on the plateaux. These remote, empty valleys are as important to the sense of seclusion as the woodlands.

Cobham landscape guidelines

Aim to:

- replant the ornamental clumps and parkland trees associated with Cobham Park and maintain its parkland features and buildings;
- strengthen the belts of woodland along the edge of the A2 without drawing attention to its linearity;
- continue the coppice management of the woodlands at Shorne.

KEMSING VALE

The Kemsing Vale runs along the foot of the downs, between Sevenoaks and Ryarsh. The steep scarp which rises up to the north is a patchwork of woodland and chalk grassland, offering magnificent views south. Thick hedges along the Pilgrim's Way separate the scarp from the large scarp-foot arable fields. Beyond these fields, the strong pattern of trimmed hedges which characterises the vale, is emphasised by frequent hedgerow trees. Several traditional brick and flint buildings occur in this area.

Overall landscape objective

To protect and enhance the mosaic of scarp woodlands and unimproved grasslands, while improving the quality and extent of the existing hedges and woodlands on the vale.

We should:

- aim to stop further scrub encroachment on the species-rich scarp grasslands. Grazing is the traditional way of keeping grasslands open. Is this possible here?
- value also, however, the existing areas of scrub. They support insects found nowhere else in Britain;
- continue to assess management of the scarp woodlands. New views and open glades can be an important part of the woodland environment;
- replace and repair decaying hedges. The field pattern in the vale is fundamental to its character;
- create new deciduous woodlands in the vale. These give the landscape greater depth and interest and can help to screen intrusive development;
- repair important buildings or structures in appropriate materials such as flint.

Vulnerable landscapes

The motorway corridor

The Kemsing Vale is crossed by the M26 and M20 motorways, which have considerable visual impact on the landscape. On the clay vale this takes the form of breaking up the integrity of the field pattern. On the scarp, the motorway cutting and the traffic passing through it are highly visible against the otherwise smooth slopes.

The motorway corridor landscape objective

To reduce the impact of major roads in the landscape.

Use:

- your imagination. Remember that new roads create new shapes in the landscape. Do not rely on infilling field corners with trees;
- the motorways as a starting point. The intrusion they cause can be off-set by using them as a catalyst for the creation of new landscape features;
- strong, positive elements, such as woodlands and thick hedges or shaws of local species to 'contain' the motorways within the larger context of the surrounding landscape.

MEDWAY

The AONB covers only the scarp slopes of the Medway Valley, excluding the industrialised valley bottom. This area is characterised by **wooded upper scarps and wide views** across the river and south towards the greensand ridge. The typical pattern of **large arable fields on the scarp foot**, surrounded by **trimmed remnant hedges**, occurs on both sides of the valley. Traditional **brick and flint buildings** are found here, although there are few buildings on the scarp foot itself.

Overall landscape objectives

To improve the quality of the rural landscape of the Medway Valley by conserving the scarp woodlands and by establishing a new structure of hedgerows and shaws on the slopes to balance the industrial development in the valley bottom.

To maintain and enhance the tree cover around Boxley and to preserve and increase the ecological value of the marshlands along the River Medway.

Western Scarp landscape guidelines

Aim to:

- restore hedges first, rather than replant. Even a remnant hedge has more residual ecological and historical value than a fence;
- link restored or newly planted hedges to each other. See each section as part of a larger network.

Eastern Scarp landscape guidelines

We should:

- regulate water levels in the marshes to encourage wading birds, such as redshank, to breed here again;
- establish a new large-scale network of hedges and shaws to strengthen the rural character of the valley. Some landscapes need to evolve to accommodate existing pressures.

But we should:

- try not to isolate the AONB landscape from the rest of the valley. We should acknowledge the complementary roles that the rural valley sides and the industrial valley bottom have to each other. Landscapes can be as important for their dramatic qualities as for their pastoral charm.

Boxley Vale landscape guidelines

We could:

- build on the historic nature of this area by restoring or constructing buildings and other structures using local materials such as flint and ragstone;
- positively choose to replant locally distinctive trees such as box, yew and whitebeam within the locality of the village.

Vulnerable landscapes

The valley sides

The Medway Valley forms an important rural buffer zone between Maidstone, Rochester and Chatham. Further development in this area could be particularly intrusive, since the sloping valley sides not only give extensive views across the valley, but are also themselves very exposed. This area, therefore, requires particular care and protection.

Valley sides landscape objective

To improve the quality of the rural landscape in the Medway Valley by controlling further encroachment of development into the AONB and restoring a strong structure of hedges and shaws.

It is vital to:

- put resources into the quality of the landscape along the most threatened and vulnerable areas of the AONB, such as the urban-edge;
- plant positively and boldly, rather than as a last-minute, rear-guard action against creeping decay.

HOLLINGBOURNE VALE

The Hollingbourne Vale runs between Boxley and the Stour Valley in a narrow strip including the scarp and the scarp foot. The character varies from the **yew-dominated woodlands in the west** to open, cultivated fields which extend up the scarp in the east. **Large arable scarp-foot fields** dominate the flatter landscape of the vale, bordered to the north by **thick hedges along the Pilgrim's Way**. A series of **historic springline villages**, such as Hollingbourne, occur in this area, above which **extensive views from the scarp** are available. A significant number of **hedgerow trees** dot the shallower slopes of the scarp, although many have been battered by 1987 storm damage.

Overall landscape objective

To restore a healthy hedgerow network on the scarp foot, based on the remaining field boundaries and to return cultivated areas of the scarp to species-rich grassland.

Take a fresh look:

- at the view from the A20, the M20 or the railway. This is how most people see this part of the AONB. Remember, this is a major route into England from the continent. Is this landscape a good advertisement for Kent? Is it good enough?
- from the scarp. Notice how some sections of the A20, for example, are more visibly intrusive than others. The most obvious solution — such as a single, tall hedge along the road — can sometimes be the most effective, as well as the cheapest;
- at the existing hedges between the scarp-foot fields. Many are in very poor condition. They could be gradually restored by careful infill-planting and thoughtful management;
- at the condition of individual trees on the scarp. How long will they last?

MID KENT DOWNS

The Mid Kent Downs stretch between Chatham and the Stour Valley in a series of wide ridges and dry valleys. Within this area, **tiny scattered villages** are linked by a **network of single track lanes**. **Extensive coppice woodlands**, many of which are no longer managed, stretch along the upper slopes of the valleys and there are several large **expanses of conifer woodland**. The ridge-top plateaux are dominated by **large arable fields**, many of which are undivided by hedge or fence. Elsewhere, hedges and **hedgerow trees** are more prominent. Around Chatham, Bicknor and Faversham a considerable number of **orchards and shelterbelt hedges** impose a strong geometric pattern in the landscape.

Overall landscape objectives

To concentrate resources firstly on managing, and restoring as necessary, existing hedges, trees and woodlands, especially in the valleys.

To seek to conserve the small scale of the roads and villages and the remote quality of the countryside.

To maintain the existing diversity of orchards, hop gardens, parkland and farmland and to fight the spread of dereliction and dumping, especially around the urban edges.

Nashenden Valley landscape guidelines

Ensure that:

- the strong, bold spaces and shapes within the landscape are not compromised by fussy, piecemeal development. The beauty of large-scale landscapes can be destroyed by small-scale solutions to change.

Chatham Outskirts local objectives

Take responsibility for:

- the appearance of the landscape. Dereliction encourages dumping. If nobody is seen to care about the landscape, its quality will decline;
- alerting the local authority to illegal tipping and dumping; they have a legal responsibility to clean it up, if nobody else will.

Bicknor local objectives

Consider:

- buying local produce;
- new hedge and tree planting;
- actively managing existing woodlands and seeking to re-establish new shaws of deciduous woodland.

Faversham Fruit Belt landscape guidelines

We should:

- try to retain redundant orchard windbreaks. The windbreaks are a landscape feature and a cultural link with the past;
- seek to maintain or restore the existing orchards, which are so characteristic of this area;
- phase in re-planting where appropriate, **before** the existing features decay;

Challock landscape guidelines

- Could you re-plant gappy hedges, and establish occasional hedgerow trees at appropriate intervals?
- Could you bring an area of woodland into management, perhaps with the help of grant aid or voluntary labour?
- Could you extend existing strips of woodland on the upper valley slopes? The creation of a new habitat adjoining an existing one often enables plants and animals to colonise it more quickly than if established in isolation.

STOUR

The Stour Valley cuts through the downs between Ashford and Canterbury. Deciduous **scarp-top woodlands** occur on both sides of the valley, below which is a strong pattern of mixed farmland. **Hedgerow trees** are frequent both on the slopes and on the flood plain, which is further broken up by thin **lines of deciduous trees between the fields**. Mature **parkland** extends across considerable areas of the lower valley slopes, although 1987 storm damage has depleted areas of tree cover. **Alders and willows** enhance some sections of the river, but cultivation stretches to the very edge of the riverbanks in other areas, decreasing the visual and ecological quality of the waterside.

Overall landscape objective

To restore and maintain the hedges and lines of trees which produce the characteristic field pattern and to enhance the visual and ecological quality of the river corridor.

Wye landscape guidelines

Aim to:

- establish small blocks of new woodland;
- plant riverside trees such as willow or alder, (with the approval of the National Rivers Authority) to enhance the course of the river;
- conserve valuable chalk grassland habitat and damp riverside pastures.

Hampton landscape guidelines

You could:

- lay the existing overgrown thorn hedges or encourage existing overgrown hedges to fill out at the bottom by fencing off both sides from grazing animals and trimming the hedge-top back to allow more light to the bottom;
- plant new hedgerow trees, such as oak and ash.

Chilham landscape guidelines

We should:

- consider re-pollarding existing riverside willow trees and planting new ones;
- take every opportunity to create a variety of waterside habitats by, for example, creating new cattle drinks and bays or preventing ditches and drains from choking up;
- manage roadside woodlands to allow filtered views across the valley.

EAST KENT DOWNS

The East Kent Downs includes the wide expanse of downland between the Stour Valley and the Folkestone to Dover Heritage Coast. The typical downland landform of long ridges and narrow, dry valleys is very evident here, emphasised by the **wooded upper slopes**, which divide the **open valley bottoms** from the arable ridge-top plateaux. Between the Petham and Elham valley systems there are **extensive conifer and coppice woodlands** and throughout the area thick **overgrown hedges** often extend down the valley sides. On the steepest valley slopes, there are long, narrow **uncultivated banks** or 'shaves', where ploughing is impractical, which have left 'islands' of semi-natural grassland or woodland. The church spires of tiny, **remote settlements** are often glimpsed on the ridges, connected by a network of winding, **single track lanes**.

Overall landscape objectives

To maintain the existing woodland cover, increasing the proportion of deciduous woodlands where possible, and to restore the hedgerow network where it is still an important feature in the landscape.

To maintain the remote, undeveloped qualities of the valleys, in particular by managing or restoring the semi-natural vegetation of the shaves and managing the unimproved chalk grasslands.

To conserve and enhance the wild character and vegetation of the cliff tops.

Petham landscape guidelines

Aim to:

- manage the existing woodland. Most deciduous woods in this area used to be coppiced and their rich and often rare communities of plants and animals, such as nightingales, may depend on coppice management to survive;
- prevent scrub from overwhelming the existing species-rich chalk grasslands. Some plants found here grow nowhere else in Britain;
- replant or restore remnant hedges, where they form an important link in a strong existing network. Respect the open sweeps of the valleys where the hedges have been lost;
- preserve the existing scale of the small, scattered settlements.

Elham landscape guidelines

Aim to:

- increase the amount of woodland by carrying out new planting schemes adjacent to existing woodlands. Extending the valley-side woodlands along the contours maintains the typical character of this landscape;
- maintain the diversity of trees and shrubs within the hedges by careful management. The greater the number of different species in an established hedge, the older the hedge is likely to be;
- phase in new planting in the parklands before the existing planting has started to decay.

Alkham landscape guidelines

Aim to:

- restore decaying hedges only where they form part of an existing network;
- control all forms of development on exposed sites, such as valley sides or along the cliff top, to retain the remote, rural qualities of the countryside;
- encourage grazing of the species-rich chalk grasslands;
- encourage substantial blocks of deciduous woodland along the edges of the arable plateaux in scale with the open landscape, if new planting is an option.

POSTLING VALE

The Postling Vale covers the undulating countryside between the chalk scarp above Folkestone and the Hythe escarpment above Romney Marsh. The species-rich **rough grassland on the scarp** highlights the strong, sweeping landform of the downland and is fringed by a thick **belt of scrub along the scarp foot**. Beyond this, large arable fields are edged by **remnant hedges** and several blocks of **scattered large woodlands** match the bold scale of the surrounding hills. **Magnificent views from the scarp** overlook this area, extending out to Romney Marsh and the sea. Around the outskirts of Hythe, several small valleys conceal a more intimate landscape of thick hedges and hedgerow trees.

Overall landscape objectives

To restore existing landscape features, such as hedges and shaws on the land below the scarp, which emphasise the bold scale of the surrounding landform and to make use of opportunities provided by existing development.

To maintain the open sweeps of species-rich grassland on the scarp, allowing the landform of the downs to dominate.

To restore and replace decaying hedges and hedgerow trees around the Hythe outskirts.

Folkestone Outskirts landscape guidelines

Aim to:

- re-establish some key hedges or shaws along the scarp foot to link up the fragmenting network. Ash trees are characteristic in this area;
- extend the areas of scarp grassland which are grazed. This grassland is a nationally important wildlife resource;
- use developments in the landscape as opportunities for creating new, exciting features in the landscape.

Saltwood landscape guidelines

Aim to:

- restore and replace gappy hedges. Re-establish the small-scale field pattern;
- plant new hedgerow trees. Scots Pine reflects the ornamental qualities of this landscape and could be included in new planting projects.

Stowting landscape guidelines

Use:

- existing woodlands to provide a starting point for adjacent new tree planting. This helps to shelter young plants and also has ecological advantages;
- the awkward spaces and redundant fields left between neighbouring new roads and railways to undertake substantial areas of woodland planting. Deciduous trees, such as ash, would be suitable here and could help to reduce the impact of the development;
- grazing as a long-term method of controlling scrub encroachment on the chalk grasslands. If this is impossible, is another method suitable?
- existing native hedgerow species to help inform your choice for new planting.

LYMPNE

The Lympne character area covers the Hythe escarpment and the extreme northern edge of Romney Marsh. The scrub and species-rich, **rough grassland on the scarp** give these slopes a 'wild', undisturbed character. The very large fields on the Marsh are surrounded by **fences or ditches**, rather than hedges, although **sporadic willows and thorn** frequently grow alongside, especially at the scarp foot. Some areas of deciduous woodland occur on the scarp, typically below Aldington, and **magnificent views** extend over the Marsh.

Overall landscape objectives

To retain the open, 'natural' scrub and grassland character of the scarp and to discourage further suburbanisation of properties.

To maintain and enhance the distinctive ditches and the remote, undeveloped quality of the Marsh.

Hythe Escarpment landscape guidelines

Think about:

- implementing a form of positive scrub control to prevent further loss of grassland;
- allowing improved pasture or arable fields to revert to managed, species-rich grassland and not replacing remnant hedges;
- the value of the space, peace and remoteness in the views from the scarp. These qualities are very special.

Aldington landscape guidelines

- Are there opportunities for gradually re-introducing woodland management?
- Are there local outlets for coppiced timber, which could be supplied from local woods?
- Are there more appropriate trees for providing a screen than ornamental conifers? Aim to use native, local species.

Romney Marsh landscape guidelines

- Could you restore greater ecological variety to the ditches by less frequent and intensive dredging and by controlling water levels (in consultation with the NRA)?
- Could you always bear in mind the potential effect on the view from the escarpment of an action or development in this area? Careful planning and design can prevent an eyesore.
- Could you put a price on the remote, unspoilt character of the Marsh? Landscapes do not have to be uncultivated to provide an 'escape from it all'.

SOUTH FORELAND

The South Foreland includes the white cliffs of the Dover to Kingsdown Heritage Coast and the downland behind. It is an open, exposed landscape dotted by farms and small **settlements fringed by trees**. The large, rolling arable fields are surrounded by a thin network of **remnant hedges** and there are **wide views** across the gentle valleys and out to sea. Along the cliff tops, important areas of **unimproved chalk grassland** and scrub contribute to the natural beauty of the area and are of great ecological value.

Overall landscape objective

To celebrate the spaciousness and wilder aspects of the landscape, by conserving the pockets of scrub and species-rich grassland and maintaining a minimal network of existing hedges, where appropriate.

We should:

- maintain a limited number of linked, existing hedges to a high standard, especially those running **along** the contours, and to enjoy the uninterrupted sweeps of landscape which develop between them;
- welcome grazing animals introduced onto areas of unimproved chalk grassland. They are there to keep down the scrub and rank grasses, allowing the downland flowers to flourish again;
- press for an increased strip of uncultivated grassland between the cliff-edge and the farmland. Large chunks of cliff collapse into the sea every year, reducing the areas of species-rich turf and restricting the width of the coastal footpath;
- object to the unnecessary clutter of sheds and wires which accompany radio masts and similar installations. The traditional fringe of tree and scrub which surrounds most settlements in this area will not hide such developments but if necessary it can greatly soften the local impact. Rows of quick-growing conifers will not do;
- support the development of a Heritage Coast management plan and commit resources for its implementation.

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