

Tonbridge and Malling Landscape Character Assessment

for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council



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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction, Purpose and Policy Background

1.1.1 Enplan in association with Binnies were commissioned by Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC) in January 2025 to prepare a Landscape Character Assessment for the Borough. This includes land that is located within the Kent Downs and High Weald National Landscapes (formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)).

1.1.2 The administrative boundary of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council is shown on Figure 1.1.

1.1.3 This study provides a Borough wide assessment of land outside of settlements. It does not include the townscape assessment of the larger Tier 1 settlements of Tonbridge & Hilden Park and Medway Gap, but does include the smaller Tier 2 settlements of Kings Hill, Snodland and Borough Green.

1.1.4 The study aims to provide a comprehensive and up to date strategic scale landscape evidence to support the Local Plan and planning applications within the area. It should inform work on policy development and development management, guiding how new developments should be designed appropriately to respect the local character whilst mitigating adverse effects on landscape quality. It can provide a framework for more detailed landscape studies and sensitivity assessments, in addition to providing baseline evidence for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

1.1.5 The Landscape Character Assessment may also be used to inform land management practices and agri-environment schemes such as the Environmental Land Management Scheme and land use change to deliver net zero, such as opportunities for woodland creation and Biodiversity Net Gain.

1.1.6 Landscape character assessment also plays a crucial role in identifying opportunities to conserve strengthen and enhance those key characteristics that are intrinsic to Tonbridge & Malling's identity. It recognises that landscape is dynamic, often needing to change, seeking to assist in establishing a balance between preserving character and the management of change.

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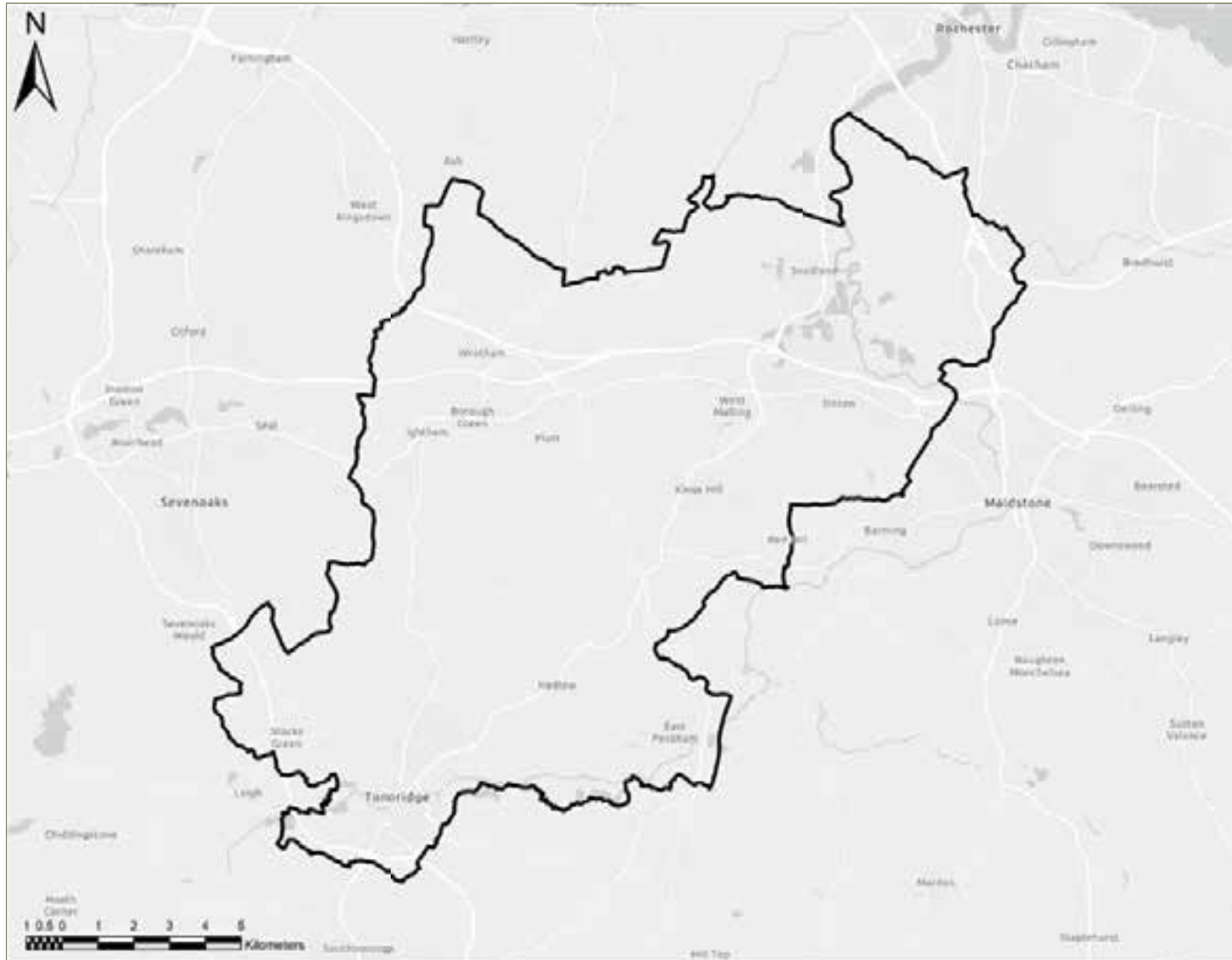


Figure 1.1. Administrative Boundary of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

1. Introduction

1.2 The Role of Landscape Character Assessment

1.2.1 Landscape character is defined in 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (Natural England, October 2014) as:

“a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse”.

1.2.2 Landscape character assessment is the process whereby variations in character across a wider landscape area are identified and described. Each landscape is made distinctive by its unique features and attributes (characteristics). The landscape is the result of the interaction between people and place, which gives an area a local identity. A combination of natural, cultural, and perceptual attributes of a landscape combine to produce character, as illustrated by the 'Landscape Wheel'.

1.2.3 This landscape character assessment aims to identify and evaluate the defining characteristics and qualities of Tonbridge & Malling's landscapes to ensure sustainable growth. An understanding of local character ensures that any change or development respects whatever is valued in or characteristic of a specific landscape. This can guide positive change that conserves, enhances, restores, reinforces or creates local distinctiveness.



Figure 1.2 The 'Landscape Wheel' (Natural England, 2014)

1. Introduction

1.3 The European Landscape Convention

1.3.1 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is an international treaty, signed by the UK government in 2006 and introduced in March 2007. It promotes the protection, management and planning of landscapes; and establishes procedures for public participation and other stakeholder involvement in the creation and implementation of landscape policies. The ELC definition of 'landscape' recognises that all landscapes have value, whether ordinary, degraded, or outstanding:

“Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”.

1.3.2 The ELC puts emphasis on the entire landscape with all its values. It recognises that landscapes are dynamic and changing.

1.3.3 This Landscape Character Assessment will take forward the following recommendations from the ELC:

- The identification and assessment of landscape; and
- Improved consideration of landscape in existing and future sectoral and spatial policy and regulation.

1.3.4 It aims to affirm the importance of the different landscapes found within Tonbridge & Malling to protect, manage and plan the landscape.

1.3.5 The process of landscape character assessment can be undertaken at a variety of scales and level of detail, ranging from national through county to local level. The Tonbridge & Malling Landscape Character Assessment is developed at a local level.

1. Introduction

1.4 National Landscape Character Areas

1.4.1 Natural England have created 159 distinct National Character Areas profiles (NCA), each representing an area of distinct and recognisable character at a national scale. Each profile includes key characteristics, context mapping, a summary of environmental opportunities and an analysis of ecosystem services.

1.4.2 The landscape within Tonbridge & Malling Borough is set within the following NCAs, shown on Figure 1.3:

- **NCA 119: North Downs** *“forms a chain of chalk hills extending from the Hog’s Back in Surrey and ending dramatically at the internationally renowned White Cliffs of Dover. The settlement pattern is characterised by traditional small, nucleated villages, scattered farms and large houses with timber framing, flint walls and Wealden brick detailing. Twisting sunken lanes, often aligned along ancient drove roads, cut across the scarp and are a feature of much of the dip slope. The Kent Downs and Surrey Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty designations are testament to the qualities and natural beauty of the area.”*
- **NCA 120: Wealden Greensand** *“a long, curved belt that runs across Kent, parallel to the North Downs, and on through Surrey. It moves south, alongside the Hampshire Downs, before curving back eastwards to run parallel with the South Downs in West Sussex. Around a quarter of the NCA is made up of extensive belts of woodland – both ancient mixed woods and more recent conifer plantations that runs across Kent, parallel to the North Downs, and on through Surrey. It moves south, alongside the Hampshire Downs,*

before curving back eastwards to run parallel with the South Downs in West Sussex. Around a quarter of the NCA is made up of extensive belts of woodland – both ancient mixed woods and more recent conifer plantations. In contrast, the area also features more open areas of heath on acidic soils, river valleys and mixed farming, including areas of fruit growing. The area has outstanding landscape, geological, historical and biodiversity interest. Some 51 per cent of the NCA is covered by the South Downs National Park, Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Surrey Hills AONB – a testament to the area’s natural beauty. The underlying geology has shaped the scarp-and-dip slope topography, with its far-reaching views, but it has also had a significant bearing on the area’s sense of place: there are clear links between vernacular architecture, industry and local geology.”

- **NCA 121: Low Weald** *“is a broad, low-lying clay vale which largely wraps around the northern, western and southern edges of the High Weald. It is predominantly agricultural, supporting mainly pastoral farming owing to heavy clay soils, with horticulture and some arable on lighter soils in the east, and has many densely wooded areas with a high proportion of ancient woodland. Around 9 percent of it falls within the adjacent designated landscapes of the Surrey Hills, Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the South Downs National Park. Around 23 per cent of the area is identified as greenbelt land.”*
- **NCA 122: High Weald** *“encompasses the ridged and faulted sandstone core of the Kent and Sussex Weald. It is an area of ancient countryside and one of the best surviving medieval landscapes*

in northern Europe. The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers 78 per cent of the NCA. The High Weald consists of a mixture of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads connected by historic routeways, tracks and paths. Wildflower meadows are now rare but prominent medieval patterns of small pasture fields enclosed by thick hedgerows and shaws (narrow woodlands) remain fundamental to the character of the landscape.”

1. Introduction

1.5 County Level

1.5.1 The Landscape Assessment of Kent was prepared for Kent County Council in 2004, drawing together and updating existing landscape character assessments of the county to conform to guidance at the time. The following 25 landscape character areas identified within the assessment are wholly or partially located within the Tonbridge & Malling Borough area and are illustrated on Figure 1.4.

- Nashden Valley: Mid Kent Downs
- The Eastern Scarp: Medway
- Chatham Outskirts: Mid Kent Downs
- Boxley Vale: Medway
- Hollingbourne: Vale West
- Medway Valley: Medway Valley Lower
- Kent Downs: Medway, Western and Eastern Scarp
- The Western Scarp: Medway
- Luddesdown: West Kent Downs
- Wrotham Heath-Ryarsh Gap
- Kemsing Vale
- Greensand Fruit Belt – Malling
- Kemsing Vale – Kent Downs
- Greensand Ridge – Plaxtol
- Igtham Greensand: Sevenoaks Ridge
- Mereworth Woodlands
- Greensand Fruit Belt – Watlingbury
- Valeside Farms and Parklands
- Low Weald Fruit Belt
- Medway Valley
- Hiddenborough – Leigh Farmlands
- Penhurst: Central High Weald
- Western Wooded Farmlands
- Pembury: Central High Weald
- Eastern Low Weald: The Low Weald

Whilst the Landscape Assessment of Kent provides a thorough overview in line with guidance at the time, and bringing together several existing studies including those concerned with the National Landscapes, the accepted methodology for landscape assessment and the landscape itself has changed since its publication in 2004.

Whilst it continues to provide a robust and useful context, the Tonbridge & Malling landscape character assessment seeks to refine and expand upon the Kent assessment at a more localised and granular level.

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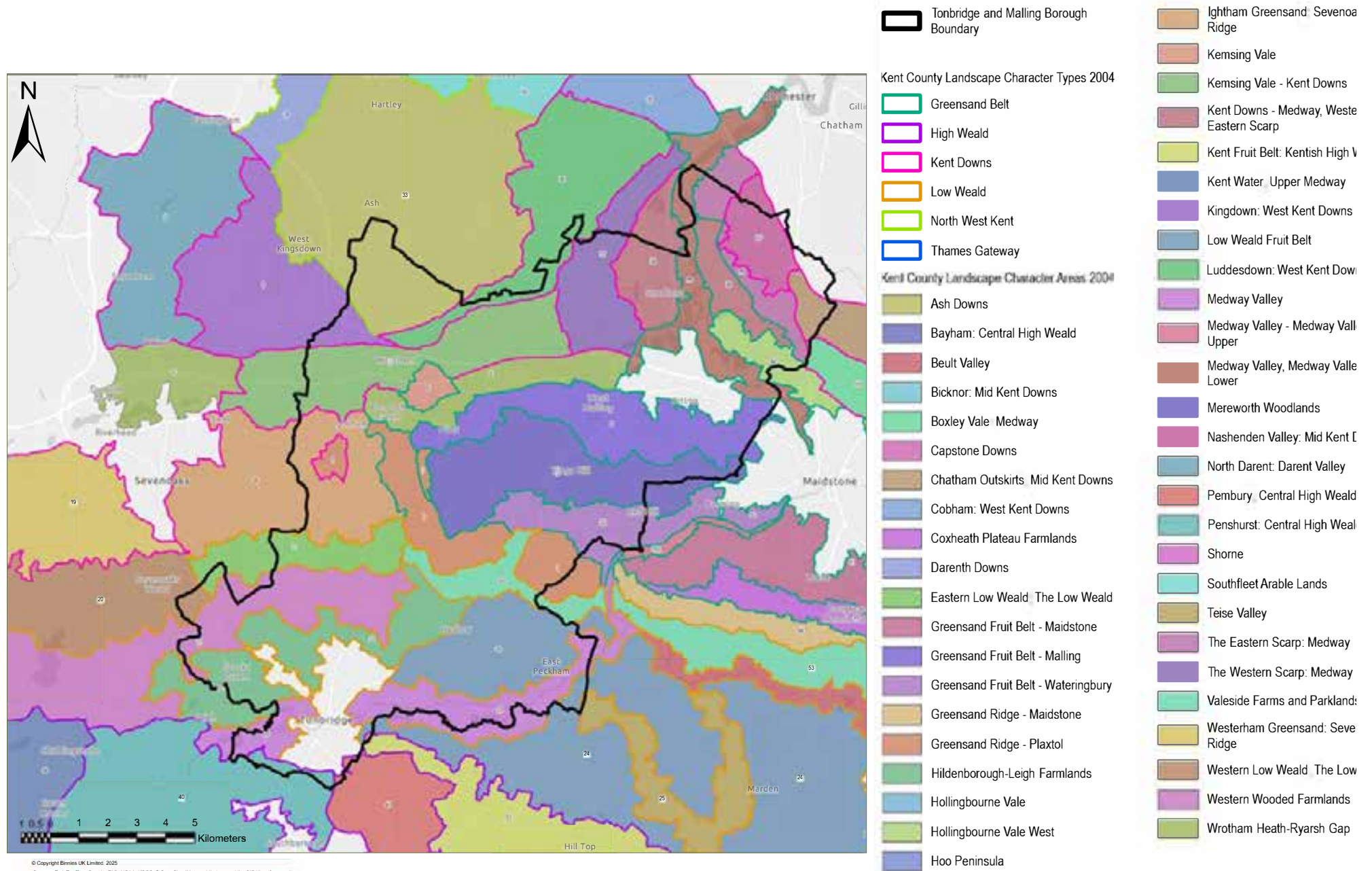


Figure 1.4 The 25 landscape character areas identified within the Kent assessment, wholly or partially located within the Tonbridge & Malling Borough area

1. Introduction

1.6 The Kent Downs and High Weald National Landscapes

1.6.1 The Kent Downs and High Weald National Landscapes extend into areas of the Borough and are considered within this assessment. Their extents are shown on Figure 1.6.

Kent Downs National Landscape

1.6.2 The landscape of the Kent Downs National Landscape is made up of landscape components with special characteristics and qualities that together, distinguish it as a landscape of national and international importance and underpin its significance and natural beauty. The special components are defined in the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 and include:

- **Dramatic landform and views; a distinctive landscape character.**

The dramatic and diverse topography of the Downs is based on its underlying geology. Key features include impressive south-facing steep slopes (scarps) of chalk and greensand; scalloped and hidden dry valleys, expansive plateaux and broad, steep-sided river valleys and breath-taking, long-distance panoramas, often across open countryside.

- **Biodiversity-rich habitats.**

The unique landscapes of the Kent Downs create and contain a rich and distinctive biodiversity, provides a home to several species that are largely or wholly confined to the Kent Downs in Britain. Habitats found in the Kent Downs include chalk grassland and chalk scrub; woodlands (ancient woodland, veteran trees and wood pasture), traditional orchards and cobnut platts and chalk cliffs. Hedgerows and trees outside woodlands are key features

of the landscape and serve an important wildlife function along with networks of linear features of shaws, flower-rich field margins and road verges.

- **Farmed landscape**

A long-established tradition of mixed farming has helped create and maintain the natural beauty of the Kent Downs and its pastoral scenery is a particularly valued part of the landscape. Locally concentrated areas of orchards, cobnut plats (nut orchards), hop gardens and increasingly widespread vineyards are also present, their regular striate form often enhancing the rise and fall of the land.

- **Woodlands and trees**

The Kent Downs is one of Britain's most wooded landscapes. Broadleaf and mixed woodland covers around 23% of the Kent Downs and frames the upper slopes of the scarp, dry valleys and plateaux tops. Almost 70% of the woodlands are ancient woodland, having been continuously present at least since at least 1600 and supporting nationally important woodland plant and animal species. Woodland is a much-valued component of the landscape, the sights, changing colours, smells and sounds adding to its perceptual qualities. Individual, hedgerow, fine and ancient trees outside woodlands are a most important, characteristic and sometimes dramatic element of the landscape.

- **A rich legacy of historic and cultural history**

Millennia of human activity have created an outstanding cultural inheritance and strong 'time depth' to the Kent Downs. There are the remains of Neolithic megalithic monuments, Bronze Age barrows, Iron Age hill-forts, Roman villas, roads and towns, medieval villages and

hamlets focused on their churches, post-medieval stately homes with their parks and gardens and historic defence structures from Norman times to the twentieth century.

Fields of varying shapes and sizes and ancient wood-banks and hedges, set within networks of droveways and sunken lanes, have produced a rich historic mosaic, which is the rural landscape of today. Architectural distinctiveness is ever present in the scattered villages and farmsteads, oast houses, barns and other characteristic agricultural buildings, churches and historic country houses. The diverse range of local materials used that include flint, chalk, ragstone, timber and brick and peg tile contribute to the character, colour, tone and texture of the countryside.

- **Geology and natural resources**

The imposing landform and special characteristics of the Kent Downs is underpinned by its geology and forms the basis for the considerable natural capital and natural resources which benefit society. This includes soil, which supports an important farming sector and can sequester carbon as well as being an important biodiversity resource in its own right. Water resources support rivers teeming with wildlife, whilst offering enchanting landscapes. Hidden below the chalk is a significant aquifer providing 75% of Kent's drinking water and feeding the much-valued chalk streams of the Downs.

Fresh, clean air is experienced across the AONB, with the vegetation patterns of the Downs being effective at removing air pollution.

- **Tranquillity and remoteness**

Much of the AONB provides surprisingly tranquil and remote countryside – offering dark night skies, space,

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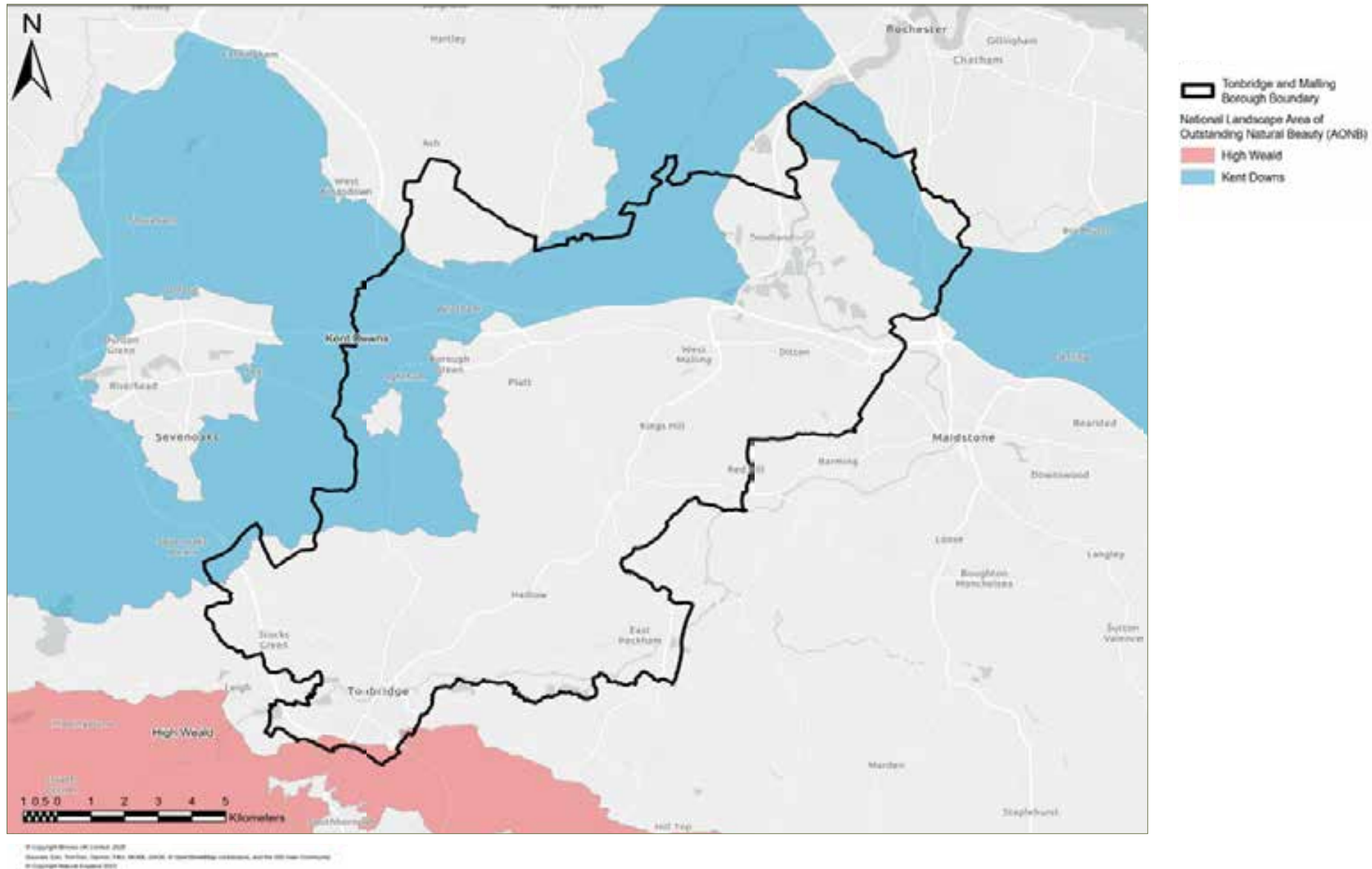


Figure 1.6 The Kent Downs and High Weald National Landscapes

1. Introduction

beauty and peace. Simply seeing a natural landscape, hearing birdsong, seeing and hearing the sea, watching stars at night or 'bathing' in woodland are important perceptual qualities of the AONB.

1.6.3 The Landscape Character Assessment of the Kent Downs National Landscape 2023 is a component part of the Kent Downs National Landscape & Management Plan 2021-2026. The following seven landscape character areas are located or partially located within Tonbridge & Malling Borough and are shown on Figure 1.7.

- **1a: West Kent Downs**

A well-wooded area, which creates an enclosed and often intimate landscape. Where it opens out there are occasional long views, including striking views along valleys. There are few views out of the area, giving it quite an insular quality and the deeply rural and historic character of much of the area is particularly remarkable given its close proximity to urban centres.

- **1b: Mid Kent Downs**

Throughout the length of the chalk ridge a series of narrow, steep-sided dry valleys carve their way down the gentle northern dip-slope of the downs to the flatter land of the north Kent fruit belt and the remote, undeveloped ridges and valleys are considered one of the most beautiful features of the AONB. The network of lanes, villages, isolated churches and scattered farms has largely been in place since the medieval period, and there is a sense of timelessness about much of the landscape.

- **2a: Kemsing Scarp and Vale**

The character of this area is shaped by the strong, linear features of the chalk scarp and scarp foot, and by the open patchwork of the vale below. The chalk scarp visually dominates the area, but there are also views along the vale, and across to the Greensand Ridge to the south. Historic routes are now followed by the North Downs Way and the Pilgrims' Way. The scarp in this area is steep and narrow, with an almost continuous blanket of woodland along the top. The large, regularly-shaped and intensively-cultivated arable fields of the fertile scarp foot are surrounded by narrow, trimmed hedges interspersed with hedgerow trees.

- **2b: Hollingbourne Scarp and Vale**

The underlying geology is fundamental to the character of the area, and consists of the dramatic chalk scarp, with clay and sand deposits in the lower vale. The steep scarp of the downs overlooks a wide, rolling landscape of mixed farmland. There are a series of splendid sweeping views from the scarp over Hollingbourne Vale towards Maidstone, the Weald and the Greensand Ridge. The presence of the scarp provides a strong sense of place and orientation both within the Landscape Character Area and in views towards it.

- **4b: Medway Valley**

The tidal River Medway, running between Maidstone and Rochester, divides the AONB into two sections. Despite the industrial/post-industrial character of the valley floor

outside the AONB, this Landscape Character Area still provides an important, attractive, rural buffer between the Medway Towns and Maidstone, and is a quiet and peaceful landscape in close proximity to large urban areas.

- **5a: Sevenoaks Greensand Ridge**

Offering spectacular panoramic views south towards the High Weald and Tonbridge, the greensand belt reaches over 245m. Its gentler north-facing dip-slope being scored by a series of deeply cut valleys formed by spring-fed streams, and with long views across to the chalk scarp. Much of the Greensand Ridge is covered by dense, mixed woodland, producing an intimate, secretive landscape, shaded by swathes of beech, oak and conifer forest.

- **6a: Eden Valley Low Weald**

The Low Weald is more open and pastoral than the extensively-wooded Greensand Ridge. However, the landscape still contains numerous small woods, trees, copses, shaws and often well treed hedgerows which combine to give the landscape a deceptively densely-wooded appearance. The heavy wet clay favours grassland and the dominant land use is irregular grazed fields, separated by hedgerows. These produce distinctive patchwork field patterns across the gentle slopes. There are also areas of estate parkland, particularly towards the east.

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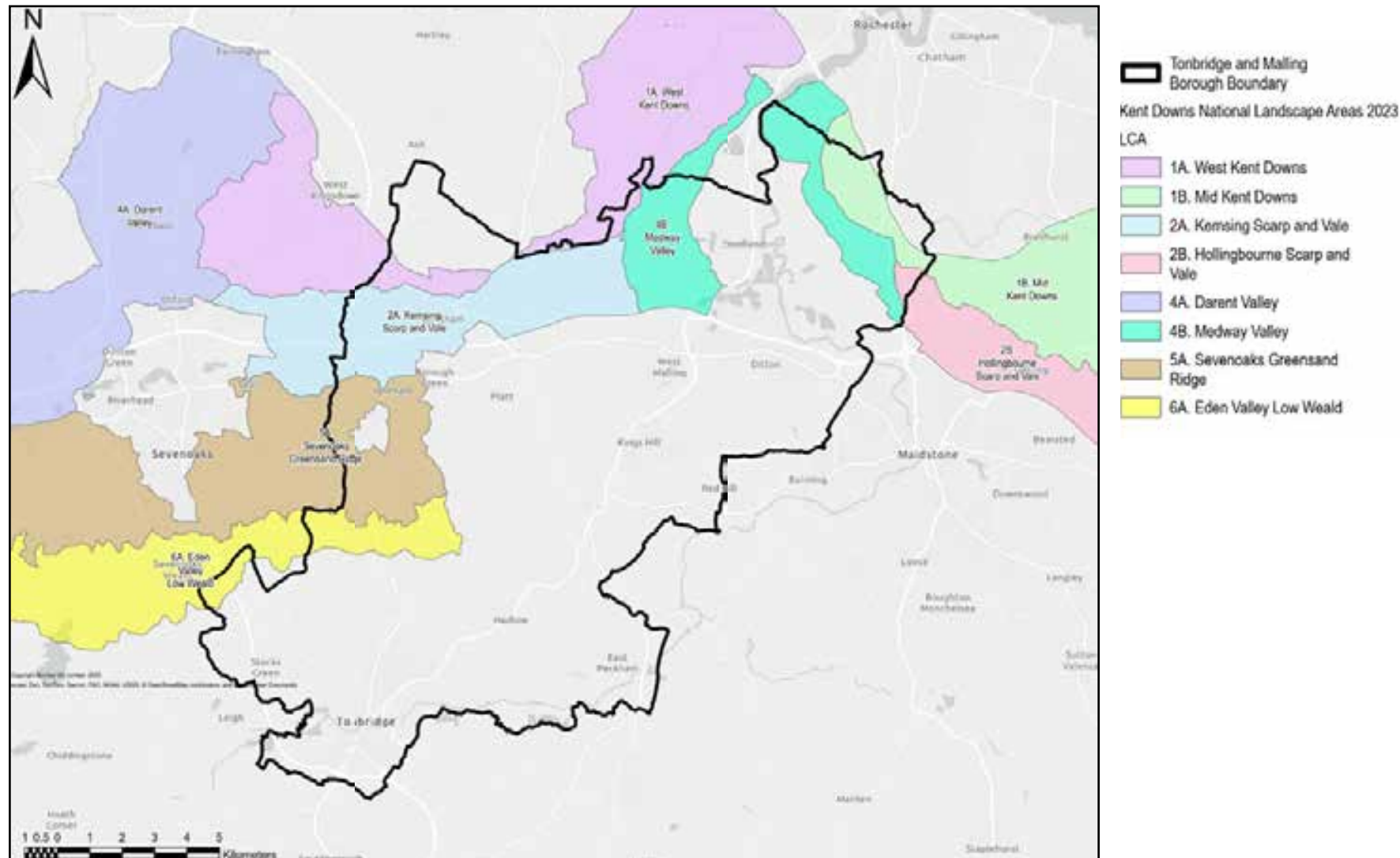


Figure 1.7 The seven Kent Downs National Landscape Character Areas (2023) located or partially located within the Tonbridge & Malling Borough

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High Weald National Landscape

1.6.4 The High Weald National Landscape AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 describes the landscape of the High Weald as:

“...an outstandingly beautiful landscape cherished by people and celebrated for its scenery, tranquillity and wildlife. Its ridges and valleys are clothed with an intricate mosaic of small fields interspersed with farmsteads and surrounded by hedges and abundant woods, all arranged around a network of historic routeways. One of the best surviving medieval landscapes in north-west Europe, the High Weald has remained a unique and recognisable area for at least the last 700 years. Covering 1461 sq. km and close to London, this extensive area offers millions of people the opportunity to experience the beauty of nature within working countryside. It was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1983, and is now known as the High Weald National Landscape.”

1.6.5 A small area of land, less than 0.07% of the total area of the High Weald National Landscape is located within Tonbridge & Malling. Whilst there is no Landscape Character Assessment specific to the High Weald, the following defined special qualities described within the Management Plan are relevant to this assessment.

- **Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate)** – a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with highly variable, relatively undisturbed soils and numerous headwaters (gill streams) functioning under an oceanic climate
- **Settlement** – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.

- **Routeways** – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).
- **Woodland** – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.
- **Fieldsapes and heath** – small, irregular and productive fields, bound by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths and inned river valleys (reclaimed marshland)
- **Dark night skies** – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.
- **Aesthetic and perceptual qualities** – arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a quintessential English pastoral landscape, intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; rurality and tranquillity; glimpsed long views; freedom to explore and make connections with the natural world, and a rich legacy of features and ideas left by writers, poets and gardeners inspired by the landscape.
- **Land-based economy and rural living** – with roots extending deep into history, and which has visibly and culturally shaped the landscape.

Duty to Seek to Further the Purposes of Protected Landscapes

1.6.6 The primary legislation relating to National Landscapes is set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act). This legislation uses the original term for National Landscapes, ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’ (AONB). The Act includes provisions on the designation of AONBs, sets out requirements for the publication of AONB Management Plans and provides that the purpose of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty is the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.

1.6.7 The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) amended section 85 of the CROW Act, places a duty on relevant authorities to “seek to further the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes”, which include National Landscapes. The duty replaces the previous requirement for relevant authorities to ‘have regard to’ their statutory purposes and is intended as a more proactive and strengthened requirement. The duty is intended to complement the statutory functions and legal obligations of relevant authorities ensuring that the purposes for which Protected Landscapes are designated for are recognised in decision-making.

1.6.8 The LURA sets out that the duty is an “active duty” for relevant authorities to take appropriate, reasonable, and proportionate steps to further the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes. This means they should be able to demonstrate with “proportionate, reasoned and documented evidence” the measures considered when seeking to further the purposes, for example including policies, strategies and reports which may be able to evidence to this end. This includes measures to align and help to deliver the objectives of the Protected Landscape’s Management Plans.

1. Introduction

Landscape setting of National Landscapes

1.6.9 The National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) make clear that land within the setting of National Landscapes often makes an important contribution to maintaining their natural beauty, where poorly located or designed development can do significant harm. The PPG states that *"This is especially the case where long views from or to the designated landscape are identified as important, or where the landscape character of land within and adjoining the designated area is complementary"*.

1.6.10 The Kent Downs National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee, within their Setting Position Statement (updated 2024) highlights locations where development and changes to the landscape in the setting of the National Landscape would be more keenly felt include views to and from the following (those in Tonbridge & Malling highlighted below):

- *Scarp of the Kent Downs to the Vale of Holmesdale - the valley that lies at the foot of the North Downs and incorporates the A20/M20 and M26 corridors.*
- *Views from the Greensand Ridge, particularly those over the Weald of Kent and towards the North Downs.*
- *High Weald National Landscape.*
- *Land which has landscape character linked to the Kent Downs such as dry valleys.*

Development likely to affect the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape

1.6.11 Scale, height, siting, use, materials and design are factors that determine whether a development could affect the natural beauty and special qualities of the National Landscape. A development might avoid direct physical effects but introduce other impacts such as increased traffic, noise and the characteristics associated with built development, or increase urban fringe pressures on land within the National Landscape. Examples include;

- *Development which would have a significant impact upon views in and out of the National Landscape.*
- *Loss of tranquillity through increases in lighting, noise or traffic movement.*
- *Abrupt change in landscape character.*
- *Loss or harm to heritage assets and the natural landscape, particularly if these are contiguous with the National Landscape.*
- *Development giving rise to increased traffic flows resulting in an erosion of the character of rural roads and lanes.*
- *Increased recreational pressure as a result of development in close proximity to the National Landscape.*

1.6.12 The Setting Position Statement also identifies that cumulative impacts can arise from multiple developments within the setting of the National Landscape where each development may not be harmful in isolation. Cumulative impacts are a particular concern in views from the scarp over the Vale of Holmesdale.

1. Introduction

1.7 Neighbouring Local Authority Level Landscape Character Assessments

1.7.1 Landscape is not confined by administrative boundaries. This assessment sits within a framework of landscape character assessments prepared for the Borough's adjacent local authorities. These are Gravesham to the north, Medway to the northeast, Maidstone to the east, Tunbridge Wells to the South and Sevenoaks to the west. These assessments have been reviewed to inform this study and to ensure consistency.

1.7.2 Within the neighbouring assessments, the following landscape character areas are located adjacent to Tonbridge & Malling boundary.

- **Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009):** *Vigo Scarp-top Woodlands; Meopham Downs*
- **Medway Landscape Character Assessment (2011):** *North Downs and Medway Valley*
- **Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment (2013):** *LCA 1: Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs; LCA 2: Westfield Sole Downs; LCA 9: Boxley Scarp; LCA 12: Sandling Vale; LCA 13: Boxley Vale; LCA 18: Barming Greensand Fruit Belt; LCA 19: Barming Heath Arable Land; LCA 20: Oaken Wood; LCA 21: Teston Valley Side; LCA 22: Nettlestead Wooded Farmlands; LCA 23: Nettlestead Valley Side; LCA 36: Nettlestead Woodlands; LCA 37: Nettlestead Green Farmlands; LCA 40: Beltringe Grasslands; LCA 52: Medway Valley – Maidstone to Watlington; LCA 53: Medway Valley Yalding*
- **Tunbridge Wells Landscape Character Assessment (2016):** *LCA 5: Speldhurst; LCA 13: Paddock Wood/Five Oak Green; LCA 14: Pembury Chapel; LCA 17: Medway Valley*
- **Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment (2017):** *1a: West Kingsdown Settled Downs; 1c: Ash-cum-Ridley Settled Downs; 3b: East Hill Wooded Downs; 5b: Kemsing Scarp; 6b: Kemsing Scarp Foot Farmland; 8b: Upper Darent Valley - East; 9b: Seal Parks and Farmlands; 10c: Sevenoaks Eastern Chart; 11a: Sevenoaks Low Weald; 11b: Leigh Low Weald; 12b: Upper Medway Valley*

2. Methodology for the Landscape Character Assessment

2.1 Approach

2.1.1 This landscape character assessment follows the guidance defined by 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (Natural England, 2014). This embodies the key principles set out by the European Landscape Convention (ELC). These are:

- *Landscape is everywhere and has a character;*
- *Landscape occurs at all scales and the process of LCA can be undertaken at any scale;*
- *The process of Landscape Character Assessment should involve an understanding of how the landscape is perceived and experienced by people;*
- *A Landscape Character Assessment can provide a landscape evidence base to inform a range of decisions and applications;*
- *A Landscape Character Assessment can provide spatial integration.*

2.2 Assessment Process

2.2.1 In accordance with Natural England's guidance the four key stages of this landscape character assessment were:

- **Stage 1: Defining the purpose and scope of the assessment and preparing a brief.**
- **Stage 2: Desk Study and Characterisation**
- **Stage 3: Field Study**
- **Stage 4: Reporting - Classification and description of Landscape Character Types and Areas**

Stage 1: Defining the purpose and scope of the assessment and preparing the brief

2.2.2 Defining the scale and extent of the study, the use and adaptation of existing landscape character assessments e.g. the Landscape Assessment of Kent, and the nature of outputs, to provide Borough wide landscape evidence.

Stage 2: Desk Study and Characterisation

2.2.3 The collation of a range of information including policy background, designations descriptions, representations including mapped information, to provide the context and evidence base to inform the development of the landscape character assessment.

2.2.4 The Desk Study and the Field Study are iterative, with the former focusing and informing the Field Study, and the Field Study highlighting questions that need to be answered by further Desk Study.

2.2.5 The initial desk study involved collating a wide range of relevant mapped information to verify the existing landscape classifications and assessments, in particular the Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004). Designations relating to cultural heritage, nature, conservation and landscape were reviewed for any significant changes and for the consideration of boundary and description updates.

2.2.6 Data collated for the desk study is shown within Table 2.1 Data Sources and References.

2.2.7 Characterisation involves dividing the landscape into areas of distinct, recognisable, and consistent common character areas and/or groupings, which include:

- **Landscape Character Types (LCTs)** *that share broad similarities in geology, topography, vegetation, and human influences in each area in which they occur. Whilst not identical, they share a common pattern of elements.*
- **Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)** – *Each landscape type is sub-divided into geographically specific character areas, which share generic characteristics with other areas of the same type, whilst maintaining their own unique identity or 'sense of place'.*

2.2.8 The landscape character areas within the Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004), located in Tonbridge & Malling were reviewed as part of the baseline assessment. Whilst Landscape Character Types broadly remained the same, some adjustments to LCA boundaries were made, reflecting changes in the landscape since 2004, and subdividing the Borough into 32 LCAs. These are detailed in Section 7 - Tonbridge & Malling Landscape Character Area Profiles.

Stage 3: Field Study

2.2.9 Field survey work provides the opportunity to observe and understand how all the factors identified as part of the desk study interact and are perceived and experienced, providing opportunity to record physical, aesthetic and perceptual aspects through written descriptions, checklists, sketches and photographs.

2. Methodology for the Landscape Character Assessment

2.2 Assessment Process

2.2.10 Field survey uses professionally informed judgments to define physical factors including scale, enclosure, diversity, texture, form, line, colour, balance, movement and pattern. Professional judgment regarding more perceptual factors acknowledged the extent of subjectivity involved, i.e. that perceptual responses to landscapes are generally influenced by the experiences of the individual. Perceptual factors can include wildness, sense of security, light quality, beauty and scenic attractiveness, including those perceived or experienced by senses other than sight, such as smell or scent, tranquillity, noise and exposure to elements.

2.2.11 Multiple day site surveys were undertaken in Spring/ Summer 2025 to review and refine the draft characterisations and descriptions. This systematic approach involved:

- Verifying the characterisation of the Landscape Character Types and confirming the boundaries of draft Landscape Character Areas;
- Checking and identifying key landscape characteristics;
- Checking and identifying aesthetic and perceptual characteristics;
- Undertaking photography to provide a visual representation of the landscape.

Stage 4: Reporting

2.2.12 The final stage of the updated study involved confirming, expanding and updating previous information with site survey observations to create the final classification and description of landscape character types and areas, their differences and use and boundary confirmations.

Reference	Source
Base OS mapping at 1:25,000 and 1:50,000	Ordnance Survey 2025 Ref: AC000084995
Landform and Drainage	
Solid and drift geology	British Geological Survey 2007
Administrative boundaries	T&MBC local datasets 2025
National Character Areas	Natural England 2024
Kent Downs National Landscape Character Areas	Kent Downs National Landscape 2023
Kent Landscape Character Assessment – Character Areas	Kent County Council 2004
Landscape Character Assessments – Neighbouring Boroughs	Gravesham, Maidstone, Medway, Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells
Open Access Land	Natural England 2025
Public Rights of Way	Kent County Council 2025
Flood Zones and Risk Areas	Environment Agency
Nature conservation designations, priority habitats and ancient woodland	Natural England (national datasets 2025) and T&MBC (local datasets 2025)
Heritage assets	Historic England (national datasets 2025) and T&MBC (local datasets)
Agricultural land classification	Natural England 2024
Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation	Historic England 2014

Table 2.1 Data Sources and References

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

3.1 Physical, Cultural and Perceptual

3.1.1 This chapter summarises the main physical, cultural and perceptual influences that have shaped the landscape of Tonbridge & Malling. The specific detailed landscape character descriptions within this report highlight the key characteristics (including assets and detractors) and valued attributes that are significant to each defined character area.

3.1.2 The landscape is a result of the interaction between the natural environment and human activities, and the landscape continues to evolve through a combination of physical and cultural influences. Landscape types and their character can be defined by physical influences such as geology and landform, as well as landcover, settlement pattern and land use.

3.1.3 The components that inform the physical landscape have a fundamental influence on its character, as these tend to be more permanent and less changeable in appearance. The underlying geology creates the foundation of the landscape, with the processes of weathering, erosion and deposition sculpting the landform, influencing hydrological patterns and soil conditions. In turn, these processes affect the species of flora and fauna that the landscape can support and ultimately, this affects the evolution of human land use, such as agriculture, settlement and industry.

3.2 Geology, Landform and Hydrology

3.2.1 Figure 3.1 shows the solid (bedrock) geology that underlies the Tonbridge & Malling Borough area, as well as the drift geology (superficial deposits) located closer to the surface.

3.2.2 Geologically, the area is dominated by Late Cretaceous Chalk (laid down around 98 to 65 million years ago) overlain by alluvial deposits of mudstone (clay), sandstone, limestone and siltstone. From north to south, the landscape is shaped by alternating bands of hard and soft rock, leading to an east-west grain and creating Tonbridge & Malling's distinctive ridge and vale topography.

3.2.3 Across the breadth of the Kent Downs the broad north dip slope rises gradually from the River Thames and English Channel towards the chalk escarpment. In Tonbridge & Malling its steep south-facing scarp drops dramatically, meeting the low-lying Vale of Holmesdale and the Gault Clay, beyond which the topography rises again up the dip slope of the Greensand Ridge. In the north-east of the Borough, the chalk escarpment is cut by the Medway Valley, one of several distinctive chalk valleys through the Kent Downs.

3.2.4 The Greensand Ridge comprises a shallow, northern dip slope and steeper, southern scarp. In Tonbridge & Malling the southern scarp is somewhat less prominent than to the east and west of the Borough, but the Greensand Ridge is still a distinct, heavily wooded escarpment for the most part, eroded by the valleys of the River Bourne and, at the eastern edge of the Borough, the River Medway. The Greensand Ridge forms the northern edge of the Weald.

3.2.5 The High and Low Weald are geologically connected parts of the eroded remains of the Weald anticline, a large dome-shaped geological formation that runs from southeast England into northern France and which extends between the parallel chalk escarpments of the North and South Downs.

3.2.6 The High Weald, just within the southern extents of the Borough is formed of harder sandstone and clay, its core creating the hills, ridges and valleys shaped over time by erosion and which underpin its distinctive landscapes. The Low Weald is formed of soft Weald Clay, creating flat fertile areas of land with heavy soils. The Vale of Kent is located between the Greensand Ridge and the High Weald. An overview of the principal landscape features of Tonbridge & Malling is shown at Figure 3.2.

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

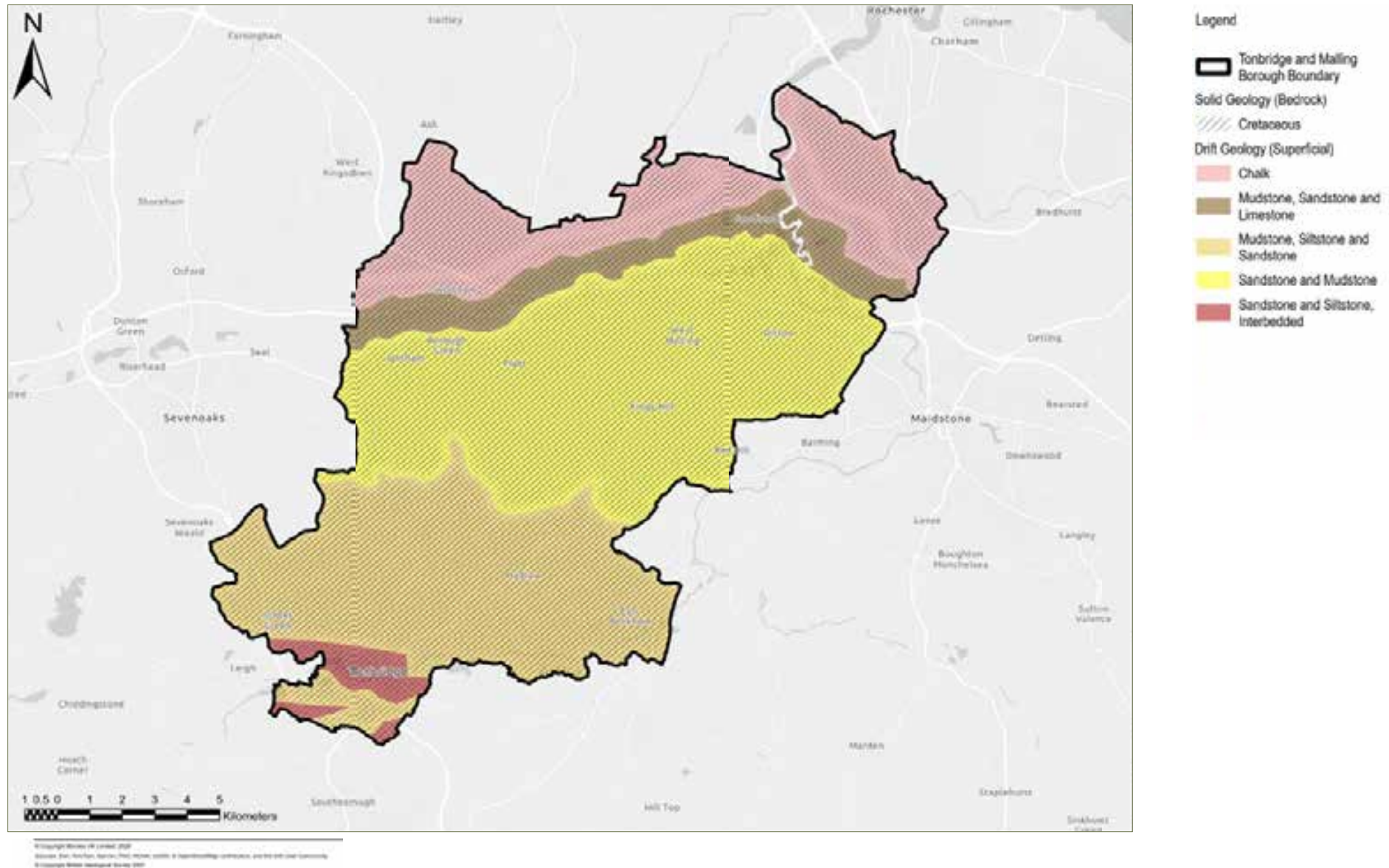


Figure 3.1 Solid and Drift Geology

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

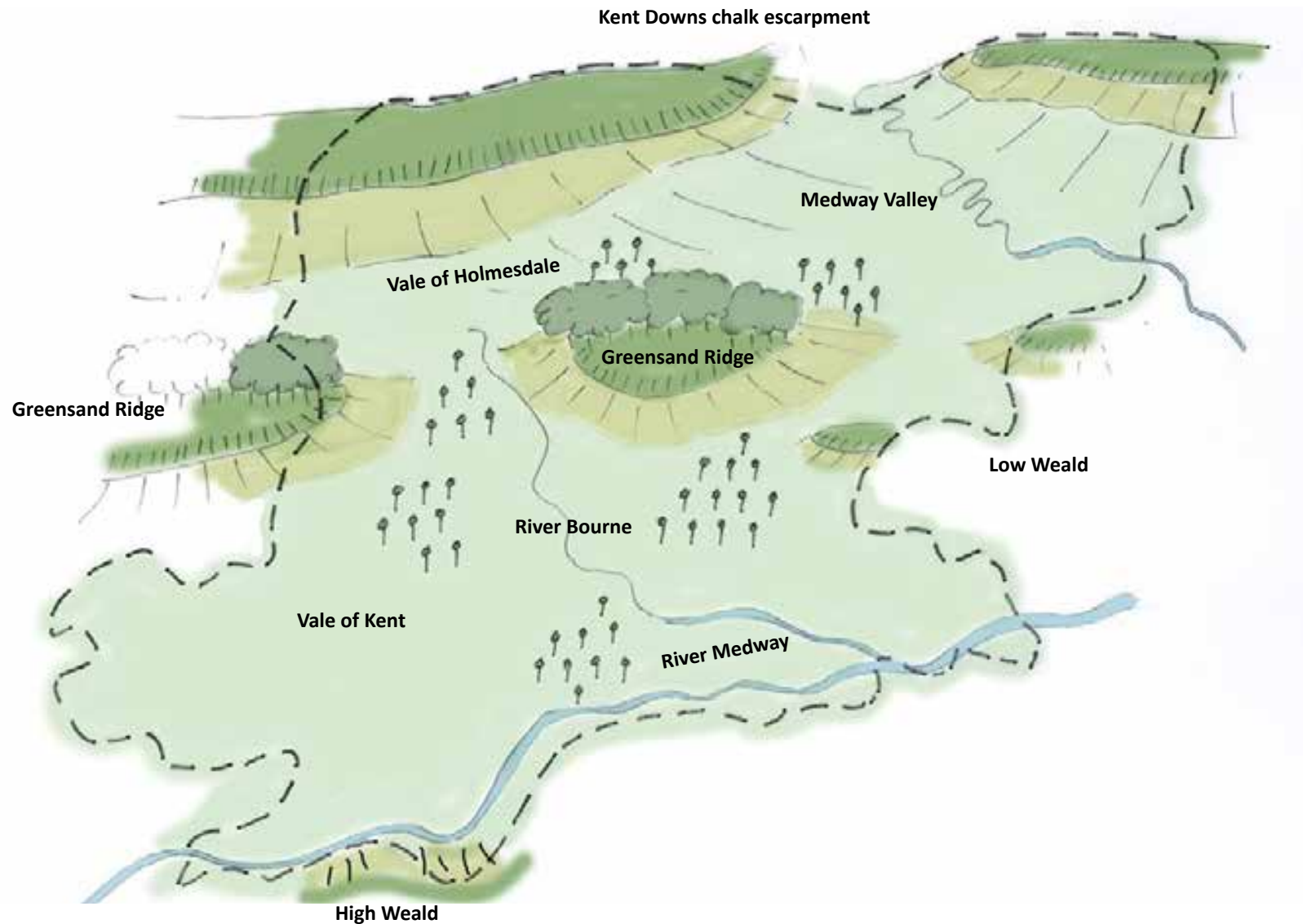


Figure 3.2 Principal landscape features of Tonbridge & Malling

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

3.2.7 Figure 3.3 provides an overview of the landform and hydrology of Tonbridge & Malling.

3.2.8 The River Medway and its tributaries have played a significant role in shaping the landscape, incising a broad, steep sided valley through the Kent Downs and the layers of sandstone of the High Weald, and flowing through the clay of the Low Weald. Over time the river and tributaries have created fertile floodplains, influencing settlement, industry and flood risk.

3.2.9 The River Medway flows north into the River Thames with the confluence of their estuaries located to the east of the Hoo Peninsula in northeast Kent.

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

3.3 Land Cover

3.3.1 Natural England provide guidance and gradings for agricultural land, known as agricultural land classification to assist in informing decisions regarding the most appropriate use of land. The grades of land are determined by a combination of climate, topography and soil characteristics and the unique way in which they interact. Figure 3.4 shows the Agricultural Land Classification for the area. Agricultural land use within the area reflects the topography and soil types.

3.3.2 Approximately half of the land in the area is classified as having Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural soils with pockets of Grade 1 (excellent) and much of the remaining area being Grade 2 (very good). There is land graded 4 (poor) towards the west of the area and visibly along the River Medway corridor and associated floodplain. Beyond the river corridor and the large areas of urban settlement, other non-agricultural land is most notable within the central area of the Borough around Mereworth Woods, where the poorer acid soils unsuited to crop production have allowed extensive areas of broadleaf coppice woodland to establish.

3.3.3 The landuse to the north and northeast is much determined by the good quality soils supporting productive arable farmland and horticultural activity, and the numerous orchards that are associated with Kent's reputation as the 'Garden of England'.

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

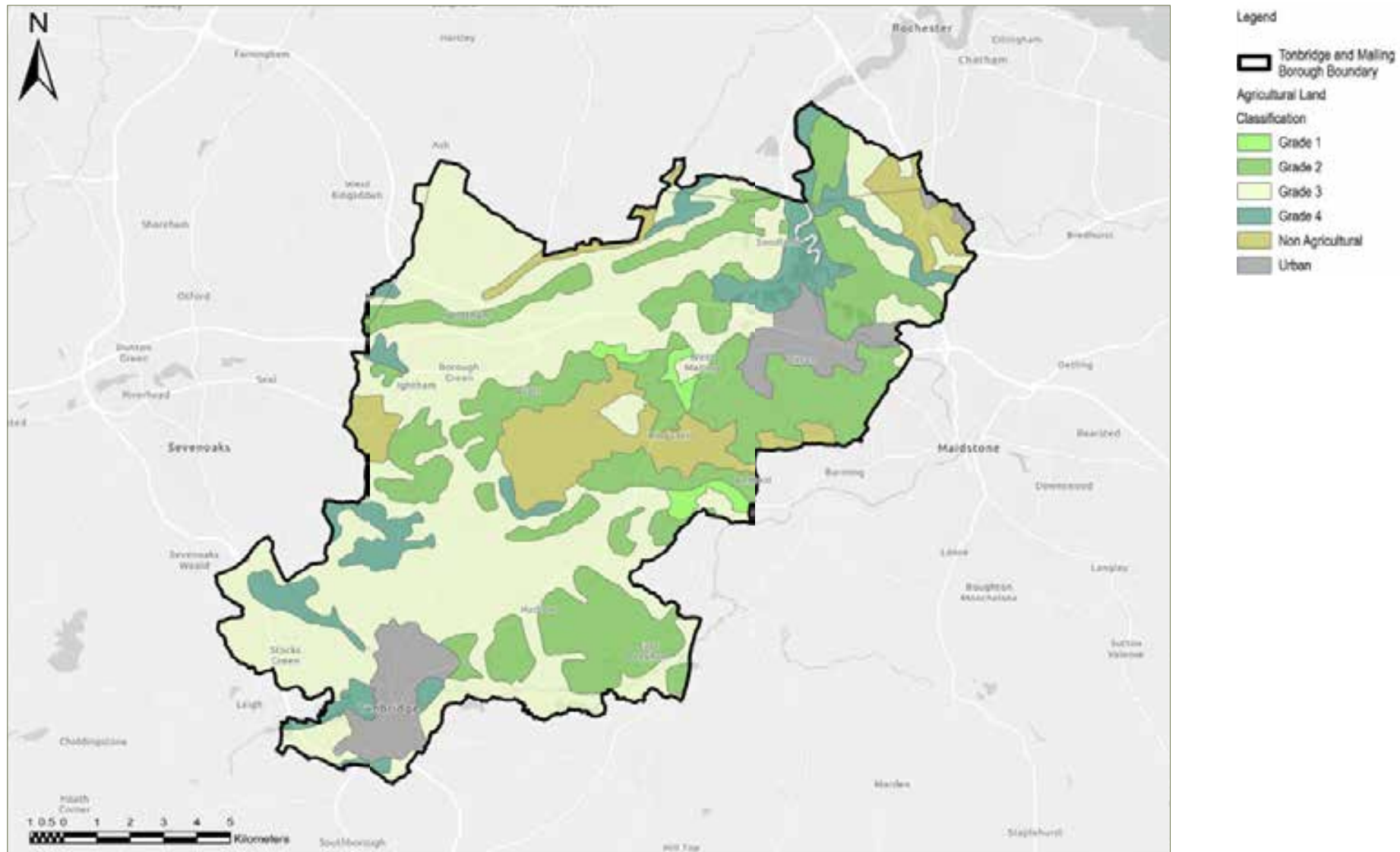


Figure 3.4 Natural England Agricultural Land Classification

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

3.4 Biodiversity

3.4.1 The Borough is rich with numerous sites designated for their biodiversity value, influenced by its geology, landform and soils. The Kent Habitat Survey 2012, initiated on behalf of Kent Biodiversity Partnership and led by Kent County Council, mapped habitats across the county, capturing their extent and composition.

3.4.2 The Kent Wildlife Trust combined data from the 2012 Kent Habitat Survey with Natural England's Provisional Inventory of Ancient Woodlands, to provide a detailed breakdown of habitat types and distributions within Kent. Within the Borough these include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites (RIGS), priority habitat, Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), Local Nature Reserves, Roadside Nature Reserves and Ancient Woodland and are shown on Figures 3.5 and 3.6.

3.4.3 Notable areas for SSSIs are within the River Medway corridor and within the Kent Downs National Landscape. Mereworth Woods is the largest area of Ancient Woodland within the Borough.

3.4.4 The area supports a range of habitats, most notably:

- *Acid, Calcareous, Neutral Grassland*
- *Arable and Horticultural*
- *Improved Grassland*
- *Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland*
- *Scrub*
- *Bracken*

3.4.5 Since the Kent Habitat Survey of 2012, Natural England have undertaken the Living England National Habitat Mapping Project to create a comprehensive and up to date map of habitats across England, to provide a consistent national baseline. Figure 3.7 shows Primary Habitats within the Borough recorded by the Living England Mapping Project, led by Natural England.

3.4.6 Informed by the Living England mapping in combination with the Kent Habitat Survey, the Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy provides a comprehensive plan to assist in the recovery and enhancement of nature across the County.

3.4.7 The strategy has identified critical areas for biodiversity, identifying the initiatives that will deliver the greatest benefits whilst improving species resilience to climate change. These areas extend into a framework across the South East of England. Further information can be found within the Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy 2020 to 2045.



Primula vulgaris - Whitehorse Wood.

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

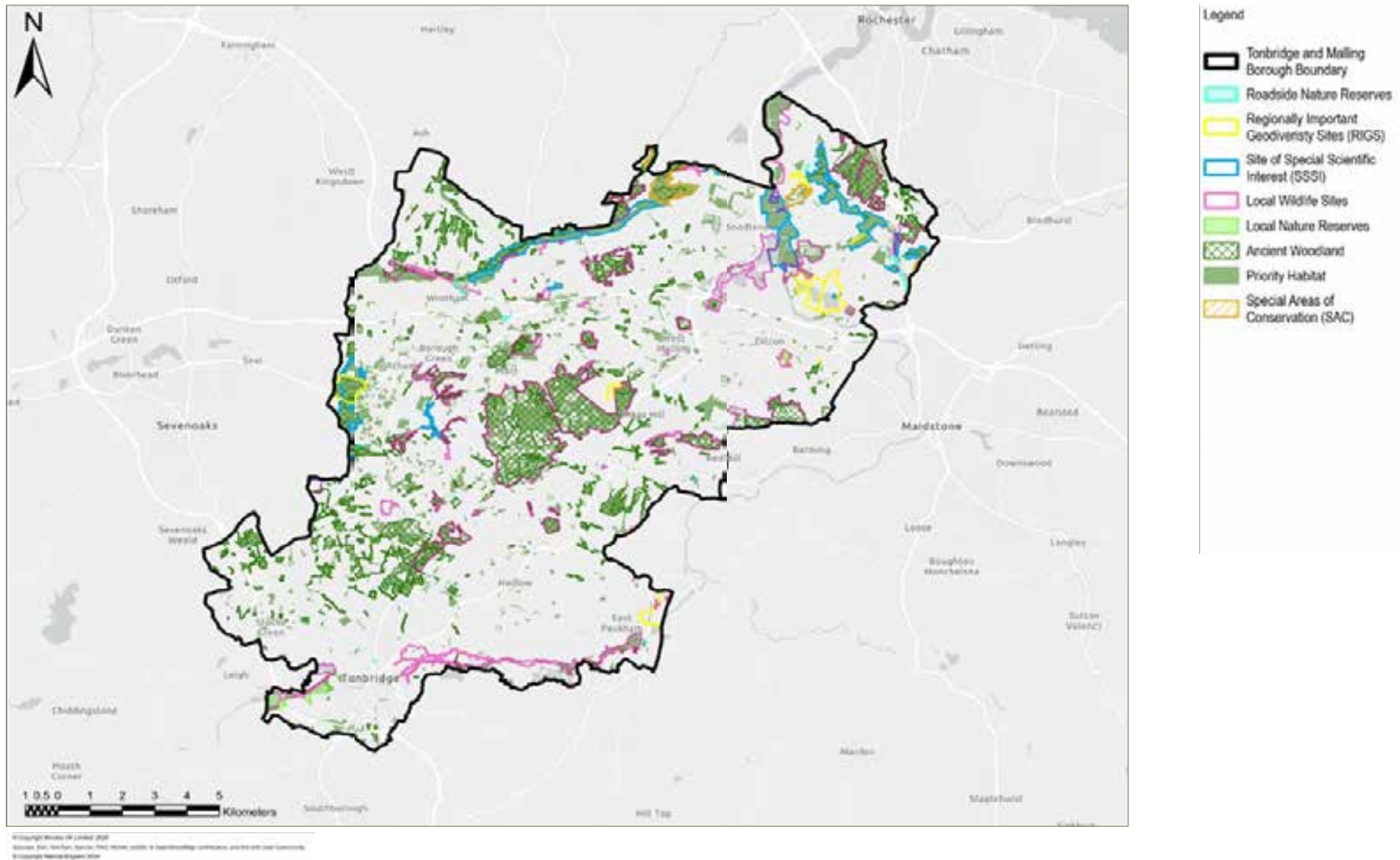


Figure 3.5 Biodiversity Designations



3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

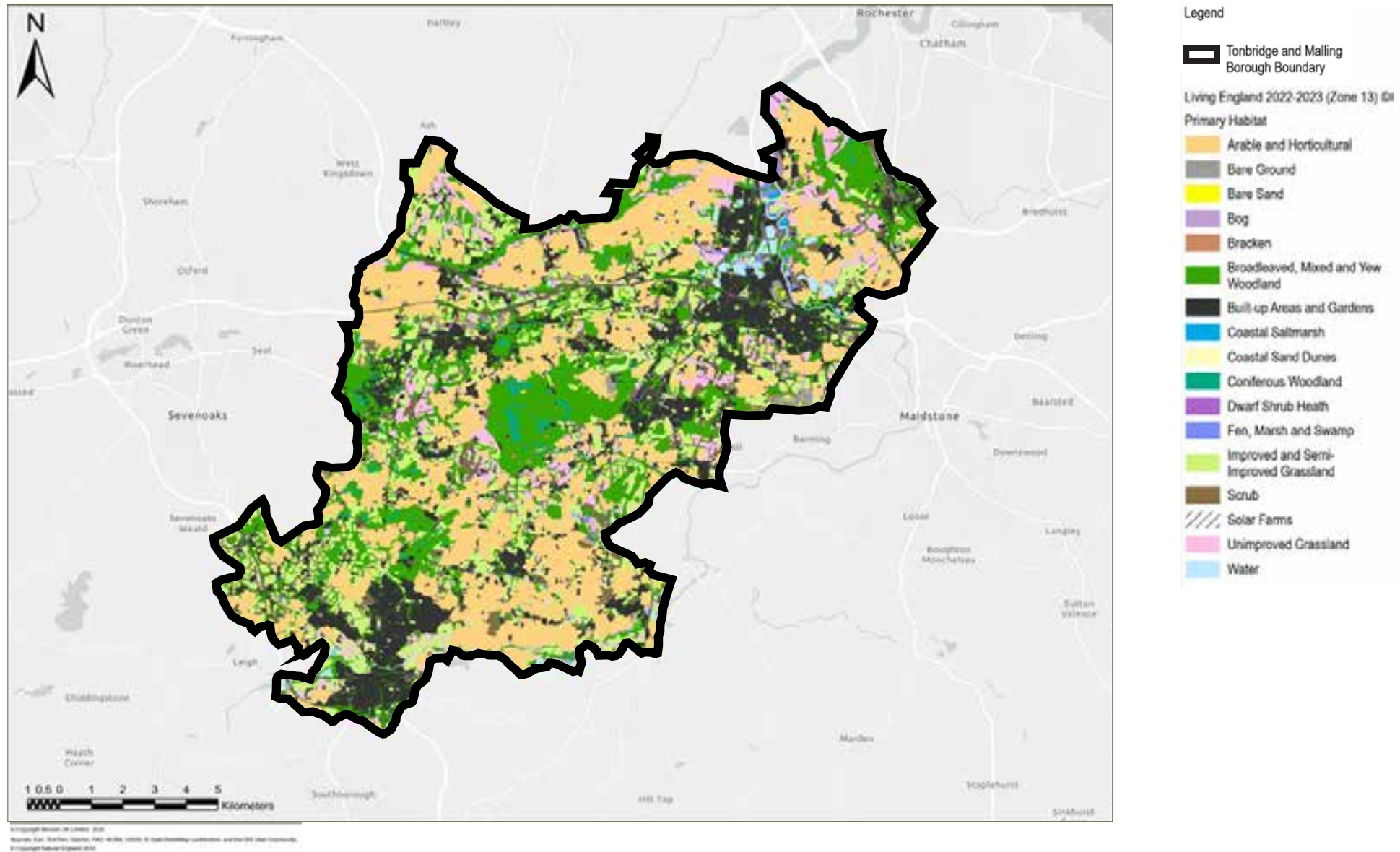


Figure 3.7 Primary Habitats - as mapped by the Living England Mapping Project led by Natural England.

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

3.5 Cultural

Historical Development

3.5.1 Kent has a long history of occupation and human activity from Palaeolithic, through the Mesolithic and Neolithic to the Bronze Age (3,300 – 1,200 BC) and Iron Age (700 BC – 500 AD), varying over time according to the environmental and climatic conditions of the period.

3.5.2 Of national importance are the Medway Megoliths, a series of notable prehistoric sites within the Borough some of which are registered by Historic England as Scheduled Monuments. They include Kit's Coty House, Little Kit's Coty and the Coldrum Longbarrow, and are thought to be the only known prehistoric megalithic group in eastern England. The remains of Kit's Coty House and Little Kit's Coty, two 'dolmen' burial chambers from the early Neolithic period are sited at the foot of the scarp of the Kent Downs with the Medway Valley spread out below them.



Kit's Coty House, William Stukeley, 1722. British Library.

3.5.3 Archaeological finds within the Borough including metal tools and weapons, combined with patterns and features within the landscape offer evidence of Bronze Age activity, with evidence of a less nomadic, more settled and structured society of farming communities. This was followed by the Iron Age with the River Medway being an attractive location for settlements, providing a water source and vantage points for defence. Within the area are the buried remains of part of the buried Iron Age enclosure and Roman villa at East Malling and the remaining above ground features of Oldbury Iron Age/Roman Hillfort near Ightham. Britain was occupied by the Romans in AD43 with local remains including a Romano-British villa adjacent to the River Medway close to Eccles, on a site that had also served as an Iron Age farmstead. Further evidence can be found throughout the Borough including Roman road construction and archaeological finds.

3.5.4 Following the withdrawal of the Romans, Anglo Saxon raiders arrived in Kent and settled. By the end of the 5th century, the Kingdom of Kent, one of the earliest of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms had been established with further settlements emerging along the River Medway, building on its value of trade and agriculture. By the late Anglo-Saxon period key rural communities within the Borough had established.

3.5.5 Tonbridge and West Malling are two of the Borough's most historic market towns. Tonbridge was one of the first main settlements within the area, its name evolving from the name Town Bridge or Tun Bridge, referencing its strategic position at and by a crossing of the River Medway.

3.5.6 Following the Norman Conquest in 1066 AD, the presence of nobility within the area intensified with much being tied to the de Clare family who, on being granted land adjacent to the River Medway, built the castle at Tonbridge. Further castles were built within the area including the probable Norman keep of St Leonard's Tower at West Malling, along with St Mary's Abbey. Ightham Mote is a timber framed moated manor house, providing a fine example of preserved medieval domestic architecture within the Borough. Other examples of Middle Ages architecture include Aylesford Priory, founded in 1242, St Michael's Church in East Peckham, with walls that date to the Mid 12th Century and St Mary's Church, West Malling, with its tower dating from the Norman Period, with restoration in the early 1300s.

3.5.7 Hop growing, introduced to the County in the 16th century also became a flourishing industry by the 19th century and the Borough's numerous surviving Oast houses, with their distinctive circular shaped buildings designed to dry hops are distinctive evidence of this land use.

3.5.8 Cobnut production, the distinctive, long, oval shaped hazelnuts that are native to Kent flourished and became widespread during the Victorian era, growing within orchards, or "plats" as they are commonly known.

3.5.9 Industrial links with the River Medway have played a significant role in the evolution of its landscape. These include brewing, with its deep historical links to hop growing and malting, with the river playing an important part in supporting barley cultivation that assisted in the area's thriving breweries during the 18th and 19th

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

centuries. A few traditional maltings remain, located at Hadlow and West Malling. The River Medway was also central to water powered mills, central since Medieval times for grinding grain for its local communities and relics of this are still visible at West Malling and East Malling in buildings and mill ponds.

3.5.10 The cement and brick industries can be traced back to the 19th century, with the area's geology of chalk and clay within the Medway Valley making it ideal for cement making and brick production. These industries prospered on the east bank of the river during the 18th and 19th Centuries, focused on the river at Wouldham for transporting raw materials and exporting the products. By the 20th Century the change to railway as a preferred form of transport led to the demise of the brick industry in the Medway Valley and the move of the cement industry to the west bank at Holborough. There are physical reminders within the Medway Valley that include chalk pits, most now naturally regenerated or redeveloped for housing, such as at Peters Village, occasional kiln and factory remains including at Snodland and Halling and remnants of infrastructure including wharves on the River Medway. The area's cement heritage is reflected in local streets, such as Cement Works Road in Halling, and the characteristic uniformed terraced housing built for the cement and brick workers at Burham and Eccles.

3.5.11 Paper making within the Borough dates to the 18th century, another industrial use supported by the waterpower of the River Medway, with the area recognised for producing high quality writing paper, and for printing banknotes and legal documents. Paper making remains an important industry within the Medway Valley today with various companies manufacturing paper and paper-based packaging at Snodland and Aylesbury.

3.5.12 Ragstone production has for centuries been undertaken within the Borough, historically being quarried near Maidstone and taken via the River Medway for construction use, such as within the Roman London Walls. It is a recognisable building product within the Borough, much used during the Medieval period for castles, churches and large houses including Tonbridge Castle. Whilst the industry continued to flourish until the 19th century, large scale quarrying began to decline. However, its legacy, visible within many of the Borough's old buildings continues with one active remaining quarry providing ragstone for use both within building restoration, and for new building construction.

3.5.13 Agricultural land use remains a thriving and vital sector within the Borough. The present appearance of much of the Borough's farmed landscape has altered during the latter 20th century through field amalgamation – with smaller fields being combined for more intensive arable farming, often resulting in a loss of hedged field boundaries. Evolving energy infrastructure has led to an increase in pylons, necessary yet detracting features, that with increased motorway and rail transport links have created significant change within the landscape fabric of the Borough.

3.5.14 Tonbridge & Malling is home to a range of Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens and Scheduled Monuments, reflecting a long history of human settlement. These heritage assets and their settings play an important role in defining the landscape character and are illustrated in Figure 3.8.

Settlement and Land Use

3.5.15 There are several main areas of residential urban development within the Borough. Tonbridge is its principal town and is an historic market town with a Norman Castle whilst West Malling, another market town includes includes St Leonard's Tower, St Mary's Abbey and many historic buildings, many of them Medieval. Snodland is located beside the River Medway in the north of the Borough and has a strong industrial heritage that include its paper mill and nearby historic chalk and Ragstone quarries.

3.5.16 Centrally located within the Borough is Kings Hill, a relatively modern new town established since the late 1980s on the site of the former West Malling Airfield. East Malling village in the eastern area of the Borough is an historic village with Anglo-Saxon roots and with strong links to the horticultural industry, being home to the East Malling Research Station, a facility that is internationally recognised as a research location for orchard management and sustainability. East Malling has a history of Ragstone quarries, evidenced by local architecture and within the landscape.

3.5.17 The Borough has several other larger settlements. These include the coalesced Medway Gap settlements, including Leybourne, Ditton and Larkfield, Borough Green and Hadlow, multiple smaller villages and hamlets. Outside of these settlements, the countryside is peppered with isolated properties and farmsteads within its more rural areas, many of which are Listed Buildings and representative of the Kent building vernacular.

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

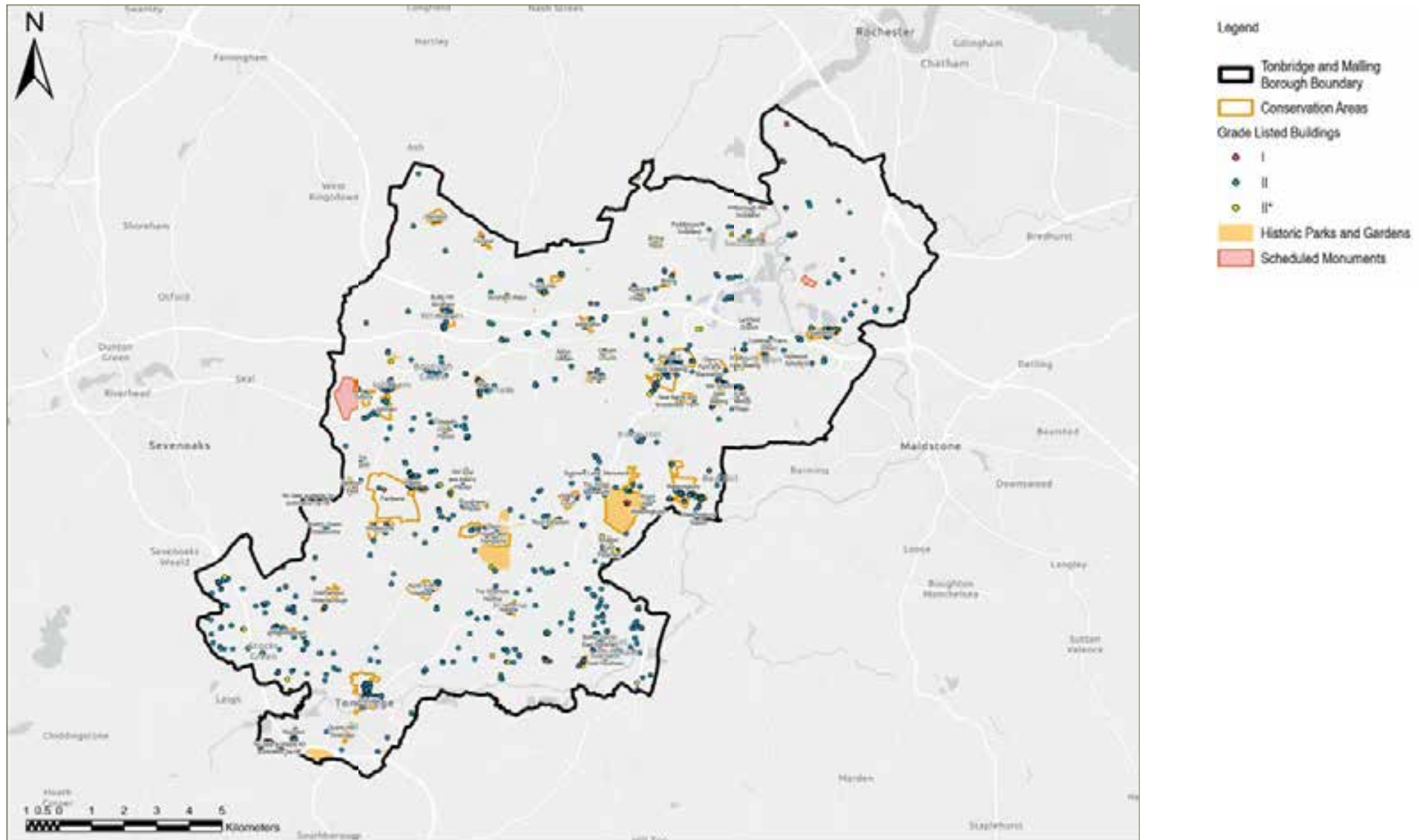


Figure 3.8 Heritage Assets

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

3.5.18 Typical early buildings from the area include oak framed structures, originally infilled with wattle and daub panels that evolved into brick. Weatherboarding, a distinctive local building material that reflects the area's plentiful woodlands.

3.5.19 Other local and recognisable styles include steeply pitched gable roofs, largely using handmade clay tiles, occasionally roofed in thatch, and incorporating dormer windows and decorative bargeboards. The building styles, combined with renovated Oast houses provide a distinctive addition to the Borough's landscape setting and its heritage of rural agricultural, quarrying and timber production.

3.5.20 Beyond settlements there is a diverse pattern of land use within the Borough that has historically been shaped by its geology and soils, and more recently its proximity to London and connectivity via its road and rail network.

3.5.21 The fertile land primarily supports agricultural and horticultural use, in particular where the fertile soils give rise to fruit orchards, hops and arable crops and the Borough has established educational and research resources specific to this, such as Hadlow College and the East Malling Research Station.

3.5.22 The decline in working quarries has resulted in the natural regeneration of many of the pits, providing both ecological and recreational benefit, such as at Leybourne Lakes Country Park. The Borough has numerous Public Rights of Way including within the Kent Downs and High Weald National Landscapes, along the River Medway corridor and within Mereworth Woods. Public Rights of Way and areas of Open Access Land (CRoW Act) are shown on Figure 3.9.

Historic Landscape Characterisation

3.5.23 Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is a process that recognises the ways in which the present physical landscape is representative of historical human influence, with respect to social, economic, technological and cultural processes.

3.5.24 Used alongside landscape character assessment it can provide greater emphasis on historic time-depth, exploring how different areas reflect varying landscape patterns and the rate of change.

3.5.25 The Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation (2001) was designed to form part of English Heritage's programme to assist local authorities in their production of Historic Landscape Characterisation. Its primary aim was to produce a digital map of historic landscape types to enhance development planning, control and conservation activities whilst also establishing a framework for future historic landscape assessment and research activities within the county. It provides a strong evidence base for understanding and reading the historic landscape of the Borough and assists in recognising, conserving and enhancing existing historic land pattern and use.

3.5.26 The Kent area is divided into 87 Historic Landscape Types defined and grouped into fourteen broad categories and used within the mapping, recognising field patterns, woodland, reclaimed marsh, downland and coastal areas. Seven Historic Landscape Characterisation Areas (HLCAs) are as follows:

- **HLCA 3: Western Gault Band** – *an area between the Downs and lower land to the south, that is composed primarily of field types associated with flatter and more productive soils. These field types include 'prairie' fields, regular fields and wavy bounded fields, which indicate prolonged agricultural activity. The M25 motorway currently dominates the area, and it is likely that this strip has served as an east-west communication route for significant periods of history.*
- **HLCA 4: Western North Downs** – *an area with a strongly linear nature, dominated by regular field types with significant elements of post-1801 settlement, woodland and fields bounded by paths and tracks. This character varies depending on topography and location.*
- **HLCA 9: Low Weald Pocket** - *this area occupies the northern hinterland of Tonbridge and in part reflects that role with its strong mix of types including a domination of regular and wavy bounded fields. There is also a significant grouping of post-1801 settlement. Its character is primarily due to the influence of the urban centre at Tonbridge and reflects the demands of that town on the surrounding countryside.*
- **HLCA 10: Medway Basin** - *an area defined as valley floor with occasional patches of horticulture and fields. Aside from valley-floor types, this river valley contains elements of horticulture, industry and urban development. It also forms part of the hinterland for the towns of Maidstone, Tonbridge and Royal Tunbridge Wells.*
- **HLCA 11: Greensand Horticultural Belt** - *an area primarily defined by its scattered horticultural HLTs. The HLCA occupies the hinterland area of Maidstone*

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

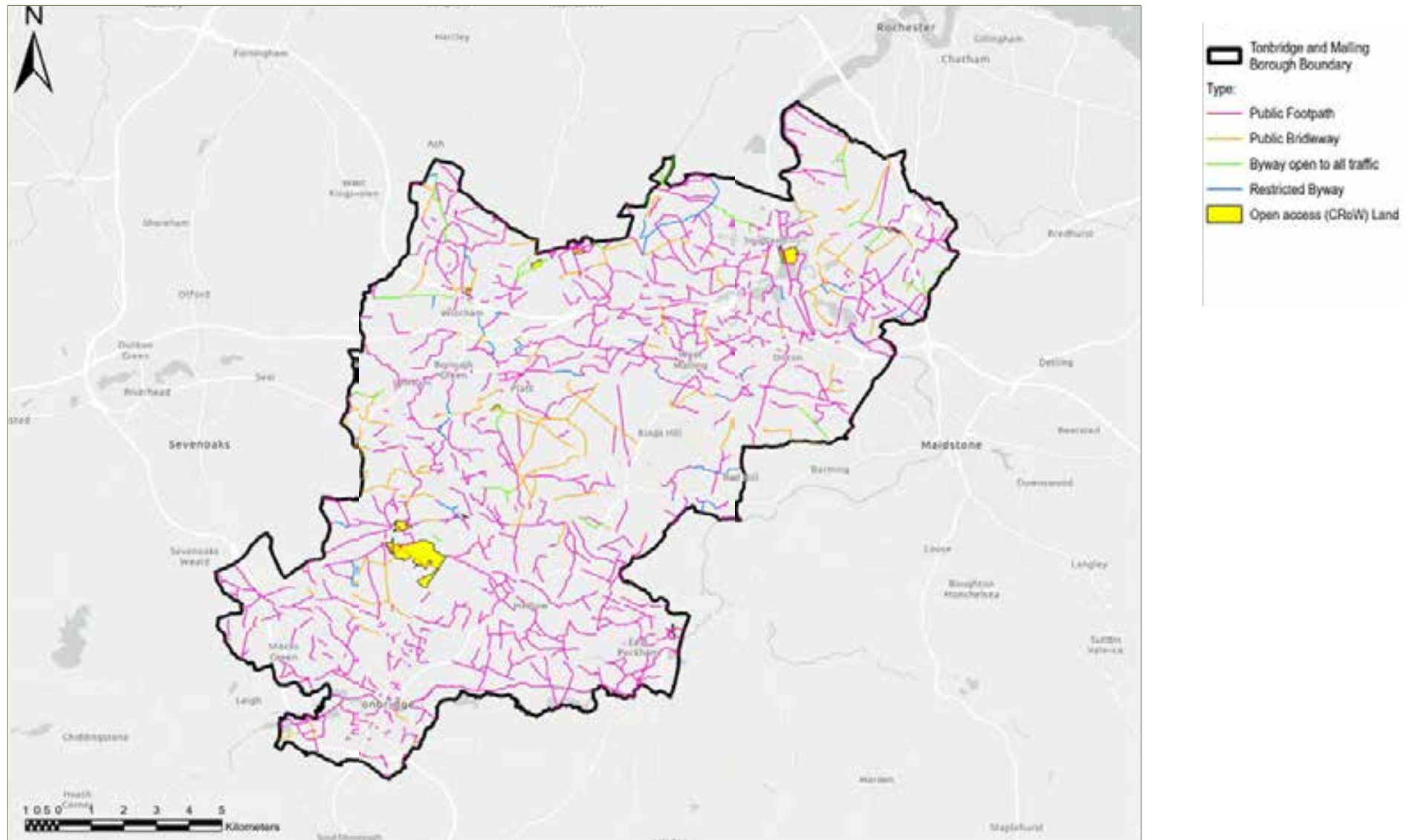


Figure 3.9 Public Rights of Way and areas of Open Access land (CROW Act)

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

and the patterning of HLTs seems to reflect that hinterland status. There is a strong presence of regular and wavy bounded fields, post-1801 settlement and coppice woodland.

- **HLCA 31: Central Valley Area** - *a relatively varied area dominated by regular and wavy bounded fields with a considerable subsidiary element of 'prairie' fields, all of which indicate extensive agricultural activity over the last 200+ years.*
- **HLCA 32: Urban Conurbation** - *an area that comprises discrete blocks of urban conurbation, including areas of industry and recreation, that have arisen since 1801 and reflect the large-scale population shift and growth in the region.*

3.5.27 The HLCAs within the Borough are shown on Figure 3.10.

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

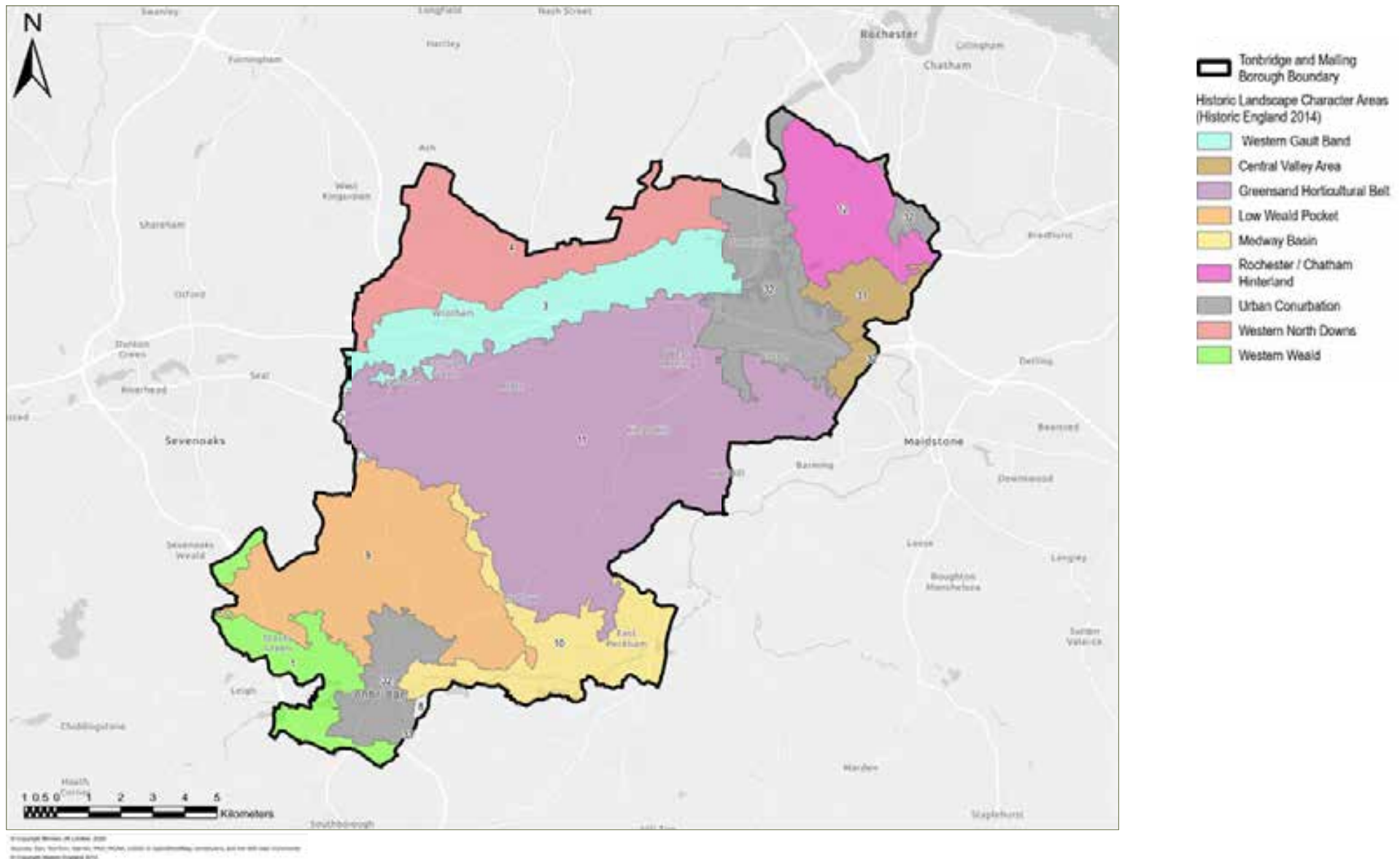


Figure 3.10 Historic Landscape Character Areas

3. Influences Shaping the Landscape

3.6 Perceptual

Tranquillity and Dark Skies

3.6.1 In the north of the Borough, the larger urban areas of the Medway Gap settlements, Snodland and Borough Green combine with the M2, M20 and M26 motorways and their junctions to reduce the sense of tranquillity across much of the area. Their presence also impacts on the relative tranquillity of the nearby Kent Downs National Landscape. In the south, Tonbridge and its adjoining settlement of Hilden Park, also reduce the sense of tranquillity in their surroundings and the nearby High Weald National Landscape. The central part of the Borough, away from larger settlements and transport corridors enjoy the greatest sense of tranquillity. Figure 3.11 shows the relative levels of tranquillity across the Borough, mapped by the Earth Observation Group, NOAA National Geophysical Data Center, Natural England 2016.

3.6.2 Beyond the influence of these key areas within the Borough and within areas of more remote countryside, noise and light pollution decreases. These darker, more tranquil areas are located in some parts of the Kent Downs National Landscape and in the central part of the Borough around Mereworth Woods, the large area of woodland located between Tonbridge and West Malling. This results in darker night skies, ecological benefits for species and a greater awareness of beauty and sense of peace. Audible birdsong and visible stars are some of the important perceptual qualities available in these more tranquil and relatively dark sky landscapes.

Cultural Associations

3.6.3 The Borough has rich cultural associations that reflect its layered history and where these cultural values and associations intertwine with the physical environment, the landscape is can become more distinctive. Landscapes can be valued for their religious, artistic, or literary significance, or for the narratives told by their inhabitants. Cultural associations demonstrate the balance of human activity, social perspectives and the natural environment.

3.6.4 The Kent Downs have been a source of inspiration to several artists, as well as scientists and leaders, poets and writers identifying their value through their work. Charles Dickens, who grew up in Rochester and Chatham to the north of the Borough, had a strong affinity with the natural beauty of the region, appreciating the wildlife and charm of rural life comparative to London. In a letter to a friend, Dickens describes Kit's Coty as a favourite spot of his to picnic and lay on the grass – “a splendid example of laziness”.

4. Summary of Issues and Changes

4.1 Forces for Change

4.1.1 The following overview addresses the main issues and forces for change themes affecting Tonbridge & Malling, that have shaped and will continue to affect its landscape both positively and negatively. These common Borough-wide themes include development and other pressures, changes in agricultural practice and climate change. Analysis of this assists in identifying landscape opportunities and broad management guidelines to assist in integrating the inevitable forces for change, within the context of green infrastructure, biodiversity and local distinctiveness. These are reinforced at a more local level within the individual character area profiles.

4.2 General Issues and Changes

4.2.1 Current and future forces for change are detailed below:

- *Rapid settlement expansions and the consequential suburbanisation of the countryside; modern 21st century building styles are often of different character to the rest of the settlement and often do not reflect the traditional vernacular.*
- *Increased quantum and scale of commercial and industrial development, including roadside facilities and associated infrastructure. Larger logistics and similar buildings, in more open landscapes, can lead to highly visually intrusive developments with far-reaching affects including on the long views to and from, and on the settings of the National Landscapes.*
- *The increasing suburban influences and the ongoing growth of larger settlements is leading to a reduction in the physical and perceived separation between*

settlements and the separate identity of smaller settlements.

- *Climate change as a threat to agricultural practices, the natural environment of habitats and species through changes to the seasons and increase in pests and diseases, and increased flood risk.*
- *Changes in agricultural practices due to technological developments, modern processes and techniques, and the need for diversification, leading to the loss of traditional land uses such as orchards and changes to field patterns.*
- *Possible increase in the demand for renewable energy schemes, such as solar farm development.*
- *Increased pressure on internationally and nationally important nature conservation designations from climate change but also from the influences of suburbanisation and direct impacts from recreational pressures, including on the National Landscapes.*

4.3 Climate Change

4.3.1 Landscapes are under threat from climate change, which is creating unpredictable weather patterns with hot dry summers and warm wet winters, more intense rainfall and long dry periods. Rising temperatures are likely to increase demands for irrigation. Agriculture will need to adapt, such as through the growth of different crops and the development of more flexible and responsive land management practices.

4.3.2 More extreme weather could alter the composition of existing species rich native woodlands and hedgerows, favouring those with lower water demand. Increased pathogens may change the species mix of woodlands, further stressed by higher temperatures and prolonged droughts, increasing the risk of wildfires. Dry summers and wet winters could change the community composition of grassland habitats with grassland landscapes being vulnerable to changing temperatures. Extreme weather events could lead to increased soil erosion, run-off and fire risk.

4.3.3 The changing seasons associated with climate change may also disturb migrating birds and invertebrates, with increased discrepancies in migration timings and the availability of food sources and affecting neutral grassland and woodland habitats.

4.3.4 Climate change may result in sea level rises and increased flood risk for the River Medway and its tributaries. Frequent flooding can lead to an increase in runoff of pollutants from the land. This can combine with the effects of hotter and drier summers leading to lower summer river flows, resulting in less water being present for dilution and an increased risk of pollution. Eutrophication and algal blooms are a further threat.

4.3.5 TMBC's Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030 recognises that "climate change is the most important environmental challenge that we face". The TMBC's plan for climate change adaption involves investing in renewables, promoting sustainable development and modes of travel, improving air quality, increasing biodiversity, minimising waste and engaging communities.

4. Summary of Issues and Changes

4.3.6 Climate change effects are likely to cause change to landscape character. The seasonal characteristics of features such as woodland, and other vegetation types including crops may slowly alter, along with a likely increase in degraded or parched land, and a potential increase in visual intrusions such as solar farms.

4.4 Changes in Agricultural Practices

4.4.1 Combined changes both in technology and the climate will lead to farmers needing to diversify their operations and change their agricultural practice. This might lead to:

- *A loss of traditional orchards, plots and field patterns with some being replaced with more modern orchard growing methods with differing planting arrangement, form, and species variety.*
- *Abandonment of land, or conversion to arable, pasture or increased equine land use around urban edges.*
- *Increased vineyards/winemaking land use leading to changing agricultural patterns within the landscape.*
- *Replacing traditional hedges and tree belts with post and wire fencing, fragmenting semi-natural habitats and reducing biodiversity*
- *Increased use of polytunnels and other visually incongruous crop protection structures*
- *Changes to the historic pattern and texture -land cover and built elements - of the landscape with field sizes increasing and boundaries straightened to accommodate intensive arable farming and machinery*

- *Changes in grazing practices leading to a loss or reduction in the diversity of chalk grassland and scrub encroachment*
- *The introduction of solar and other renewable energy developments, both within wider farm diversification and via commercial schemes*
- *Construction of large-scale agricultural processing facilities and associated support facilities (such as worker accommodation).*
- *Pressure will continue for new developments for housing, employment, renewable energy and associated infrastructure that will likely challenge existing landscape character through change.*

4.5 Development Pressure

4.5.1 Pressure will continue for new developments for housing, employment, renewable energy and associated infrastructure where landscape change will likely challenge existing landscape character.

4.5.2 Urban fringe developments create change to traditional settlement patterns and boundaries whilst increasing the potential for ribboned development. This can reduce the physical and perceived separation of settlements and lead to a coalescence and loss of separate settlement identity.

4.5.3 Where contemporary 20th and 21st century building styles and layouts do not reflect the local vernacular, there can be effects on historic landscape character.

4.5.4 Large scale and visually intrusive development can have a detracting influence, particularly when located in more open parts of the landscape.

4.5.5 Urban expansion into rural areas of landscape can likely lead to increased transport, construction traffic and noise, environmental impacts, the loss of rural farmland character and a loss in the fragile sense of tranquillity.

4.6 Other

4.6.1 Other drivers of landscape change include:

- *Increased recreational pressures and disturbance to areas of nature conservation value, such as the River Medway, Mereworth Woods, the Kent Downs and High Weald National Landscapes.*
- *Increased recreational pressure leading to demand for visitor facilities, expansion of cycle networks leading to more urbanised characteristics and increased traffic.*
- *Pests and diseases spreading due to climate change and through increased importation, including ash dieback and acute oak decline that could have a significant future impact on the coverage, character and composition of woodland in Tonbridge & Malling. There is also chance of increased spread of invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam.*

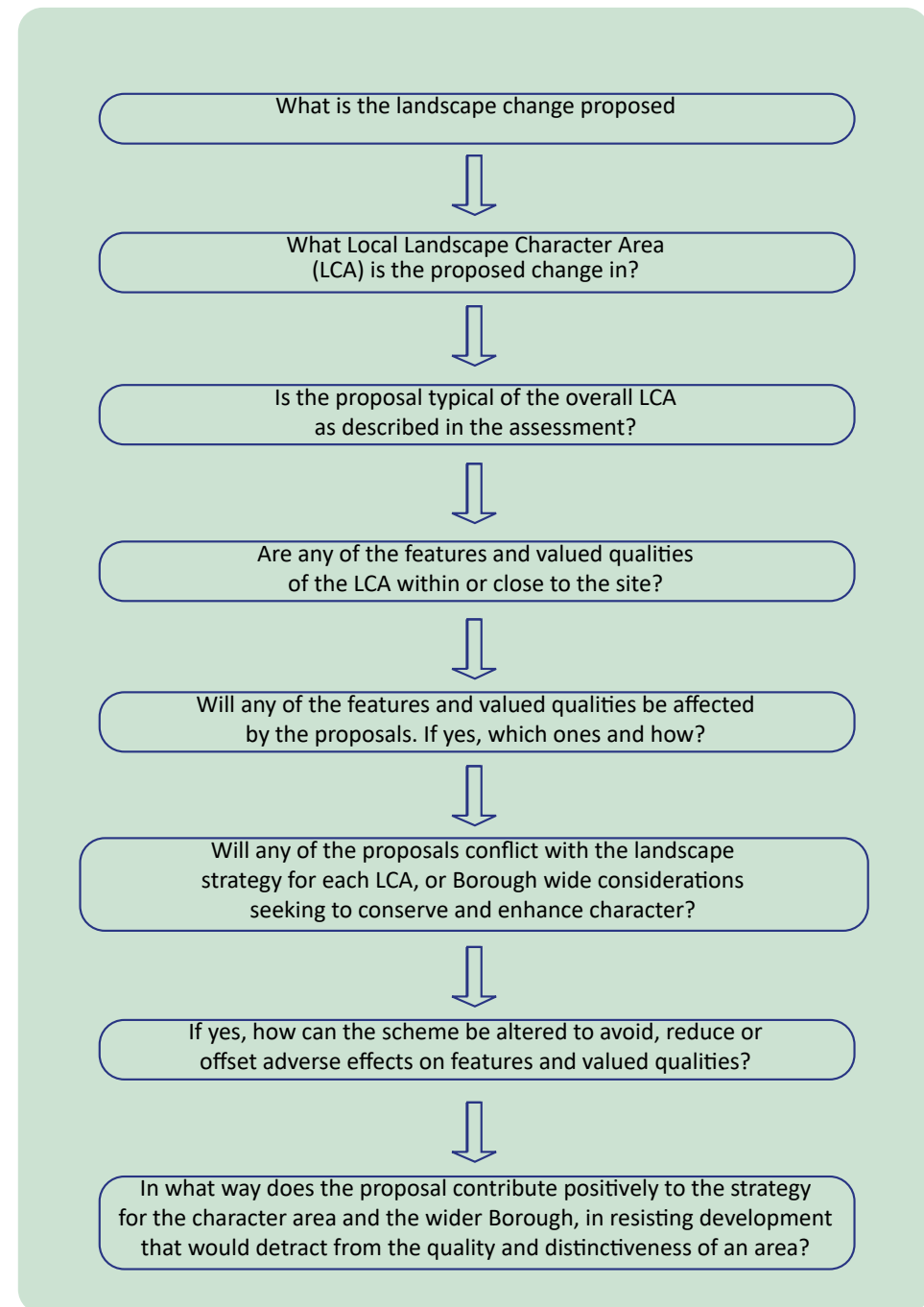
5. User Guide and Management Guidance

5.1 Guidance

5.1.1 The following guide is provided to assist decisionmakers in their consideration of change to the landscape. It is arranged in key stages, setting questions as prompts and actions and should be considered with the following management guidance to assist in design, planning and management decisions around how development is best integrated within its landscape setting.

5.1.2 With increased development pressures within the Borough, consideration of how new development can be sensitively integrated within the existing landscape is critical for preserving, reinforcing and enhancing existing landscape character, and to assist in ensuring well designed developments reinforce the qualities of the landscape.

5.1.3 The following section provides guidelines for character areas located either wholly or partially within the Kent Downs National Landscape or High Weald National Landscape, and further Borough wide landscape management and Development Management guidance applicable to all landscape character areas. Additionally guidance specific to each individual character area is provided within each profile.



5. User Guide and Management Guidance

National Landscape Guidelines

5.1.4 Several Landscape Character Areas lie within either the Kent Downs National Landscape or High Weald National Landscape, or are located within their settings.

5.1.5 The special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape include dramatic landform and views, biodiversity rich habitats, a farmed landscape, woodlands and trees, its geology and natural resources. Its tranquillity and remoteness combine with a rich, cultural history to provide a rich, characterful landscape that should be recognised, conserved and enhanced.

5.1.6 The core character components that contribute to the High Weald National Landscape's natural beauty include natural systems, settlement character, routeways, woodland, fieldscapes and heath, dark night skies. Its aesthetic and perceptual qualities combine within a rural and small-scale landscape to create a character that is rich in wildlife and cultural features.

5.1.7 The Kent Downs National Landscape Setting Position Statement identifies specific locations where development and changes to the landscape in the setting of the National Landscape would be more keenly felt. These are detailed at 1.6.11. This reinforces National Planning Policy Framework guidance, which identifies that the land within the setting of National Landscapes makes an important and complementary contribution to maintaining their natural beauty, and within which poorly located or designed development can do significant harm.

5.1.8 In order to prevent a cumulative loss of landscape features and an erosion of historic and natural characteristics, consideration should be given to the siting, scale and design of any new development within the National Landscapes and their settings. This is to prevent adverse impacts upon landscape character and any defining features, and negative affects on views both from within, and to the National Landscapes.

5.1.9 Further to this, the following design principles for new built development within both the Kent Downs and High Weald National Landscapes should be considered, to ensure the beauty, quality and distinctiveness of these landscapes are preserved and enhanced.

- Site development to ensure that buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape. Avoid intrusion onto or above sensitive ridgelines or within prominent slopes.
- Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development. If needed use advance planting of native local trees and shrubs.
- Avoid straight lines or regimented building formations on settlement edges, considering building clusters with differing roof aspects and heights. Consider massing, form, height and colour, and texture and materials of built form, seeking the use of appropriate local materials and co-ordinating building colour to secure a complementary effect between the buildings and the surrounding landscape.
- In relevant areas, ensure that the 'special components, characteristics and qualities' of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- In relevant areas, ensure that the core character components that contribute to the High Weald National Landscape's natural beauty are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the The High Weald National Landscape Management Plan 2024-2029 and the duty to further the purposes of the designated landscape.

5.1.10 For each of the Landscape Character Areas that are within or partly within the National Landscapes, specific National Landscape Guidelines have been provided.

5.1.11 In respect of setting, as the definition of whether a landscape, place or new development is within or not within the setting of a National Landscape is determined by the consideration of multiple factors, National Landscape Guidelines have not been specifically provided as these may not be relevant to the LCA.

5. User Guide and Management Guidance

5.1.12 Where there are clear setting factors that apply to LCAs outside of the National Landscape, such as there being a close relationship between landscape characteristics, the LCA descriptions highlight these.

Landscape Management Guidelines

5.1.13 Below are general guidelines that apply to all landscape character areas, and should be read in addition to the individual character area guidelines contained within the individual profiles.

- *Conserve and manage areas of Ancient Woodland and wooded sites to improve landscape character and encourage biodiversity, promote age and species diversity and structural quality, continuing to keep coppice sites in active management.*
- *Conserve and enhance hedgerows, woodland belts, shaws, copse and shelter belts through effective management, to strengthen the characteristic pattern and structure of the landscape.*
- *Seek opportunities to expand and connect existing woodland and tree cover through natural regeneration, or small-scale planting where appropriate, such as within field corners and edges, to strengthen existing landscape character and increase benefits for biodiversity, soil quality whilst reducing soil erosion.*
- *Create green corridors and networks linking important habitats (such as wider field margins and hedgerows).*
- *Forestry practices should respect the character of the landscape, promote traditional management techniques (such as coppicing), with particular consideration of the visual impacts of new planting and felling.*
- *In response to evolving changes in climatic conditions, plant suitable species and encourage natural regeneration to create climate resistant woodland.*
- *Plan and manage woodland to account for the current and future impacts of ash dieback and acute oak decline, referring to the latest Forestry Commission guidelines.*
- *Monitor potential changes in flora and/or increased pests and diseases as a result of climate change, including the spread of invasive plants and animals in water courses and woodlands.*
- *Manage chalk grassland, semi-improved grassland and pasture to enhance its biodiversity value and appearance, particularly within neglected areas.*
- *Work with natural tidal river and coastal processes, seeking to conserve and enhance distinctive features and habitats that contribute to landscape character. Consider the strategies set out within the Thames Estuary 2100 (TE2100) Plan and the Medway Estuary and Swale Flood and Erosion Risk Management Strategy (MEASS), including replacement and compensation for lost habitat, creating targets for habitat creation and seeking opportunities for promoting biodiversity and nature based solutions through partner led enhancements.*
- *Encourage catchment-sensitive land management and agricultural practices adjacent to rivers and watercourses to improve soil quality and prevent run off, ensuring no impacts on water quality.*
- *Seek to encourage traditional farming practices, including the planting and management of traditional orchards, to retain and enhance the associated sense of place whilst recognising the need to adapt to and mitigate against the effects of climate change.*
- *Promote sustainable and wildlife-friendly land management practices that provide multiple landscape and biodiversity benefits.*
- *Monitor impacts on landscape character and visual amenity from new forms of farming, including polytunnels, seeking a balanced approach.*
- *Encourage the sensitive management of equine related land uses, including screening of existing equine related activities. Promote guidelines within Managing Land for Horses – a guide to good practice in the Kent Downs National Landscape and guidelines for sustainable land use provided within the High Weald National Landscape Management Plan 2024-2029.*
- *Consider opportunities for landscape and biodiversity enhancements within restoration proposals for former industrial sites/complexes, including mineral workings and quarry sites.*
- *Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the landscape, including through the preservation and enhancement of important views and vistas.*

5. User Guide and Management Guidance

- *Draw upon the depth of historic and cultural associations within the Borough, conserving the landscape setting of historic assets including Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings, encouraging new and further interpretation and understanding of these features within the landscape.*
- *Protect, manage and seek to enhance the valued recreational use of the landscape, particularly along promoted routes such as the North Downs Way and Pilgrim's Way, seeking further opportunities for access, enjoyment and new footpath and cycle links and routes wherever possible whilst seeking to avoid or minimise disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.*
- *Avoid intrusion onto or above sensitive ridgelines or within prominent slopes.*
- *Secure and manage existing native woodland, shaws, hedgerows and trees to maintain screening to assist in the integration of new built development.*
- *Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.*
- *Conserve the local distinctiveness of rural historic buildings and hamlets by resisting inappropriate or unsympathetic development.*
- *Consider impacts on Public Rights of Way. Integrate where possible into developments to provide pedestrian links to the countryside and refer to Kent Public Rights of Way Reference Manual as a guide to standards, specifications and legislation.*
- *If needed use advance planting of native local trees and shrubs. Refer to Table 5.1.16 that provides suggestions for planting species within defined soil types, as identified within each character area profile.*
- *Avoid straight lines or regimented building formations on settlement edges, considering building clusters with differing roof aspects and heights. Consider the massing, form, height, colour, texture and materials of built form.*
- *Seek the use of appropriate local materials and co-ordinating building colour to secure a complementary effect between buildings and the surrounding landscape.*
- *Avoid the use of features such as close board fencing, suburban style walls and fast-growing conifers, particularly along boundaries and interfaces with the wider landscape and rural lanes.*
- *Ensure fencing is appropriate to its setting. Where security fencing is required use wooden posts and galvanised wire and screen with thorny hedges of native plants such as hawthorn and blackthorn.*
- *Ensure site entrances and approaches are designed at an appropriate scale for the setting, utilising discreet and appropriate signage.*

Development Management Guidelines

5.1.14 Below are general guidelines to ensure that any future change respects local character. They should be considered as part of development management, including guiding mitigation, integration of built form and landscape enhancement, and used as a tool for wider land management strategies and decisions.

5.1.15 Guidelines apply to all landscape character areas, and should be read in addition to the individual character area development management guidelines contained within the profiles, and with reference to Figure 3.12.

- *Site development to ensure that buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape*

5. User Guide and Management Guidance

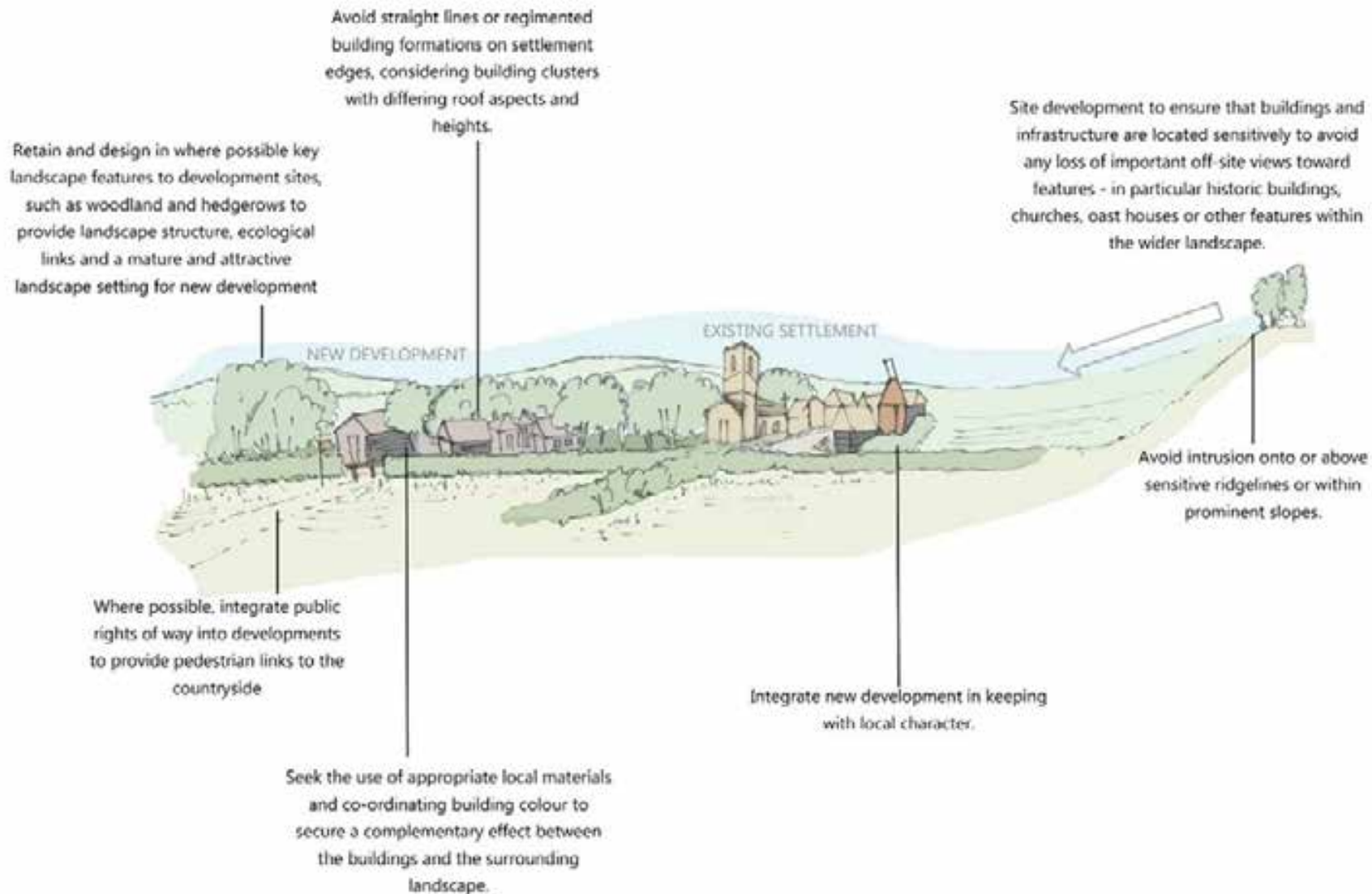


Figure 3.12 Illustration to describe how management guidance can be used to sensitively integrate new development into the landscape.

6. Tonbridge & Malling Landscape Character Area Assessments

6.1.1 Landscape character types are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character, and that share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historic land use and settlement pattern. These may occur repeatedly in a study area, or occur in just one place.

6.1.2 Landscape character areas are the unique geographic area within which landscape types occur. They share generic characteristics with other areas of the same type, but have their own particular identity and distinctive features. Landscape character areas can often be more readily recognised and identified by non-specialists – creating a sense of place that is often important to local people and visitors for example.

6.1.3 Desk top reviews of previous landscape character assessments can result in draft boundary adjustments and a revised classification of types and areas. This may be as a result of land use change or the joining up of character areas at boundaries with neighbouring character assessments. Draft adjustments are defined and justified during field work, to ensure that character area boundaries make sense on the ground.

6.1.4 The respective landscape character types defined for Tonbridge & Malling are shown within Table 6.1. The character areas are provided with reference to the associated National Character Area within which they are located. Additionally the original character area name from the Landscape Assessment of Kent County Landscape Character Assessment from which the Tonbridge & Malling assessment has been revised is detailed, with a brief description and justification for revisions to any associated boundary changes.

6.1.5 The Landscape character types and landscape character areas for Tonbridge & Malling are shown on Figure 6.1.

6. Tonbridge & Malling Landscape Character Area Assessments

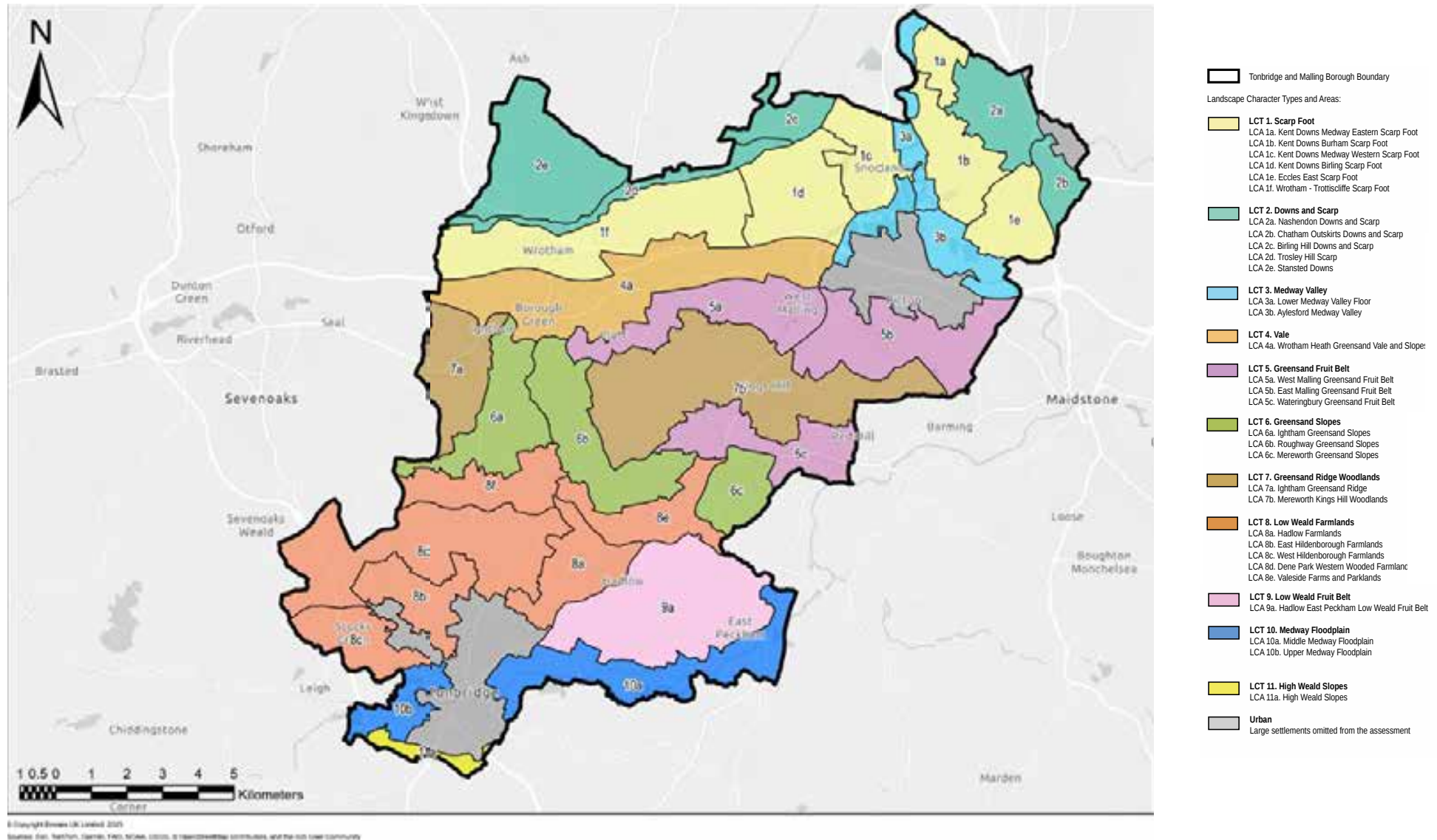


Figure 6.1 Tonbridge & Malling Landscape Character Types and Areas

6. Tonbridge & Malling Landscape Character Area Assessments

Landscape Character Type (LCT) description	T&MBC Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Relevant National Character Area (NCA) and Kent County Character Area (KCCA)	Notes on boundary changes from KCCA
1.Scarp Foot An underlying geology of layers of cretaceous chalk, cut through by the Medway River Valley. The overlying alluvial deposits on the valley floor and clay head deposits on fertile soils the lower slopes create fertile soils. The symmetrical and dramatic landform of the valley sides are strong landscape features.	1a. Kent Downs Medway Eastern Scarp Foot	NCA – North Downs KCCA - <i>Eastern Scarp - Medway</i>	Extended in discreet areas including south of School Lane to include similar land use and topography. Amended boundary to edge of Wouldham settlement and removed southern area of scarp foot – now within 1b to reflect topography settlement and land use.
	1b. Kent Downs Burham Scarp Foot	NCA – North Downs KCCA - <i>Kent Downs Medway - Eastern Scarp</i>	Amended around settlement boundaries of Wouldham, Peter's Village and Eccles so all settlement extents within same area and to include the setting of Eccles and Burham. Also included agricultural fields at base of scarp and followed the edge of the Wouldham to Detling Escarpment SSSI.
	1c. Kent Downs Medway Western Scarp Foot	NCA – Wealden Greensand KCCA - <i>Kent Downs Medway - Western Scarp</i>	Separated wooded steep scarp edge from gently sloping agricultural use of scarp. Reduced boundary on northwest of area to include agricultural fields within neighbouring area and to adjust to settlement boundary.
	1d. Kent Downs Birling Scarp Foot	NCA Wealden Greensand KCCA - <i>Western Scarp Medway - Medway (South)</i>	Separated wooded steep scarp edge from gently sloping agricultural use of scarp. Extended on northeast edge to agricultural fields with similar land use and topography. In southwest corner boundary adjusted to bring the complete settlement of Ryarsh into character area.
	1e. Eccles East Scarp Foot	NCA – North Downs KCCA - <i>Hollingbourne Vale West</i>	Area extended to include all Megoliths associated with Kit's Coty and to reflect change to a more contained nature and land use.
2.Downs	2a. Nashendon Downs	NCA – North Downs KCCA - <i>Nashendon Valley and Kent Downs</i>	Discreet change of boundary at northern edge to include field within 1a and on western edge to follow the boundary of the Wouldham to Detling Escarpment SSSI

Table 6.1 LCT and LCA Boundary Table

6. Tonbridge & Malling Landscape Character Area Assessments

An underlying geology of Cretaceous chalk overlain with clay-with-flints and occasional pockets of sand and gravel creating a dip-slope landform of dry valleys interspersed with broad undulating ridges and plateaux.	2b. Chatham Outskirts Downs	NCA – North Downs KCCA - <i>Chatham Outskirts: Mid Kent Downs</i>	Discreet change to include small adjoining character area (Boxley Vale Medway) within the Borough.
	2c. Birling Hill Downs	NCA – North Downs KCCA - <i>Western Scarp Medway - Medway (North)</i>	Reduced southern boundary to base of steep wooded scarp edge. Extended area to the west to with same characteristics of wooded plateau with pockets of farmland to edge of Borough.
	2d. Trosley Hill Downs	NCA – North Downs KCCA - <i>Luddesdown West Kent Downs</i>	Largely reduced on northern edge to Borough boundary. Reduced area in west to broadly follow the area's wooded extents and topography.
	2e. Stansted Downs	NCA – North Downs KCCA - <i>Ash Downs</i>	Discreet change to southern boundary to include like land use and topography.
	2f. Exedown Downs	NCA – North Downs KCCA - <i>Kingdown West Kent Downs</i>	Reduced area on southern boundary to include farmland within area 4b.
3. Medway Valley A flat, open landscape with areas of marsh and reedbeds and arable agricultural land. There are few settlements or roads within the floodplain due to seasonal flooding. Includes historic and contemporary bridging points integrating new development.	3a. Lower Medway Valley	NCA – Wealden Greensand KCCA - <i>Medway Valley lower (north)</i>	Divided are into two areas. 3a includes key character of open marsh.
	3b. Aylesford Medway Valley	NCA – Wealden Greensand KCCA - <i>Medway Valley lower (south)</i>	Divided are into two areas. 3b includes river and lakes with enclosed wooded edge. Minor changes around settlement boundaries.
4. Vale Head deposits of clay, sand and gravel on the valley floor include alluvial deposits and material derived from chalk weathering. A gently undulating landform interspersed with springs, streams and pools, formed of woodland blocks and arable land use.	4a. Wrotham - Trottiscliffe Vale	NCA – Wealden Greensand KCCA - <i>Kemsing Vale - Kent Downs</i>	Extended northern boundary to include areas of commercial and industrial activity aligned with other land use in the area. Discreet changes to southern boundary to align with edge of settlement and Wrotham Heath Golf Club. Exclusion of area north of M26 to align with features within area 4b.
5. Greensand Fruit Belt A flat to gently undulating landscape of	5a. West Malling Greensand Fruit Belt	NCA – Wealden Greensand KCCA - <i>Greensand Fruit Belt Malling</i>	Area split into east and west. Discreet changes to boundaries to align with settlement edges.

6. Tonbridge & Malling Landscape Character Area Assessments

Landscape interspersed with small copses that frame the landscape with long views possible to the Kent Downs and the Vale of Holmesdale to the north.		KCCA - <i>Greensand Fruit Belt Malling</i>	Southeast extents increased to include cleared area of like land use previously in 7b.
	5c. Watlingbury Greensand Fruit Belt	NCA – Wealden Greensand KCCA - <i>Greensand Fruit Belt Watlingbury & Medway Valley Upper</i>	Eastern boundary extended to include a discreet area considered insufficiently distinct or large to be a separate area.
6. Greensand Slopes The scarp slopes of the Greensand Ridge, the soils are acidic and sandy, with a mix of land use including arable fields, orchards, pastures and woodland.	6a. Ightham Greensand Slopes	NCA – Wealden Greensand KCCA – <i>Ightham Greensand: Sevenoaks & Eastern Low Weald: The Low Weald</i>	Area split due to topography and tree cover. Small section of adjacent Eastern Low Weald area included due to similar topography and land pattern.
	6b. Roughway Greensand Slopes	NCA – Wealden Greensand KCCA – <i>Greensand Ridge Plaxtol & discreet part of Ightham Greensand: Sevenoaks Ridge</i>	Small boundary change to align with edge of National Landscape and settlement edge.
	6c. Mereworth Greensand Slopes	NCA – Wealden Greensand KCCA - <i>Greensand Ridge Plaxtol East</i>	No boundary change
7. Greensand Ridge Woodlands An enclosed, flat wooded landscape with poor quality acid soils developed on the underlying geology of Cretaceous Lower Greensand, known locally as Ragstone.	7a. Ightham Greensand Ridge	NCA – Wealden Greensand KCCA – <i>Ightham Greensand: Sevenoaks Ridge & Greensand Ridge Plaxtol</i>	Area split due to topography and tree cover and boundary adjusted to incorporate settlement. Adjustment to northern boundary based on topography and land use.
	7b. Mereworth Kings Hill Woodlands	NCA – Wealden Greensand KCCA – <i>Mereworth Woodlands</i>	Discreet changes to boundaries to align with settlement and woodland edges. Eastern extents decreased to move cleared area of like land use to area 5b.
8. Low Weald Farmlands An undulating valley landscape of clay rich heavy soils, and formed of mixed farmlands, historic parklands, orchards and pastures.	8a. Hadlow Farmlands	NCA – Low Weald KCCA - <i>Hildenborough Leigh Farmlands</i>	Area split into three due to differences in land use – no further boundary change.
	8b. East Hildenborough Farmlands	NCA – Low Weald KCCA - <i>Hildenborough Leigh Farmlands</i>	Area split into three due to differences in land use – no further boundary change.

6. Tonbridge & Malling Landscape Character Area Assessments

	8c. West Hildenborough Farmlands	NCA – Low Weald KCCA - <i>Hildenborough Leigh Farmlands</i>	Area split into three due to differences in land use – no further boundary change.
	8d. Dene Park Western Wooded Farmlands	NCA – Low Weald KCCAs – <i>Western Wooded Farmlands, Hildenborough Leigh Farmlands, Eastern Low Weald: The Low Weald & Western Low Weald: The Low Weald</i>	Boundary changes to include heavily wooded areas aligned with character of area. Western Wooded Farmlands Discrete changes to western borough boundary to avoid fragmentation and with similar characteristics.
	8e. Valeside Farms and Parklands	NCA – Low Weald KCCA - <i>Valeside Farms and Parklands</i>	No boundary change.
	8f. Shipbourne Low Weald	NCA – Low Weald KCCA – <i>Eastern Low Weald: The Low Weald</i>	Change to northern boundary to rationalise topographic character. Discreet changes to boundary to incorporate settlement boundary.
9.Low Weald Fruit Belt A flat or gently undulating landscape of fruit trees, extensive open arable fields, with hops and pasture.	9a.Hadlow East Peckham Low Weald Fruit Belt	NCA – Low Weald KCCAs – <i>Low Weald Fruit Belt & Kent Fruit Belt: Kentish High Weald</i>	Discreet changes at border with Tonbridge to incorporate two small areas of landscape with similar characteristics to be rationalised into area.
10. Medway Floodplain A flat, open landscape with areas of marsh and reedbeds and arable agricultural land.	10a. Upper Medway Floodplain	NCA – Low Weald KCCA – <i>Medway Valley</i>	Divided into two areas. No further boundary change.
	10a. Middle Medway Valley	NCA – Low Weald KCCA – <i>Medway Valley</i>	Divided into two areas. Small area of KCCA Low Weald Fruit Belt at eastern Borough boundary with similar characteristics incorporated into area to avoid fragmentation.
11.High Weald Slopes A complex sandstone and clay hilly landscape of ridges and secluded valleys. Often wooded but with long views over the Low Weald to the Kent Downs.	11a. High Weald Slopes	NCA – High Weald KCCAs – <i>Penhurst Central High Weald & Pembury Central High Weald</i>	Two areas combined to rationalise topography and fragmentation.

6. Tonbridge & Malling Landscape Character Area Assessments

6.1 Structure of the Assessments

TMBC Landscape Character Area Profiles

6.1.1 Each of the TMBC landscape character area profiles is presented separately for ease of use, with each area profile providing the following.

- A location map at 1:25,000 scale showing the extents of the individual profile area, with an inset map showing its geographic relationship to other areas.
 - A summary paragraph describing its geographic context and location.
 - Representative photos to assist in describing the character of the area.
 - The Key Characteristics and Valued Qualities of the character area.
 - A detailed narrative for each area, describing its natural, cultural and perceptual influences, and with reference to:
 - landscape and heritage designations and features, historic parks and gardens, historic farmsteads, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and other features or components that contribute to the area's identity and character.
 - Detail of ecological designations including SSSIs, Ancient Woodland and Local Wildlife Sites.
 - An evaluation for each area profile providing specific issues including sensitivities, and Forces for Change.
- Guidelines for Landscape Management to ensure that any future change understands, respects and enhances area specific landscape character and to assist in Development Management, guiding site selection, mitigation and enhancement opportunities.

7. Tonbridge & Malling Landscape Character Area Profiles



Landscape Character Type - Scarp Foot

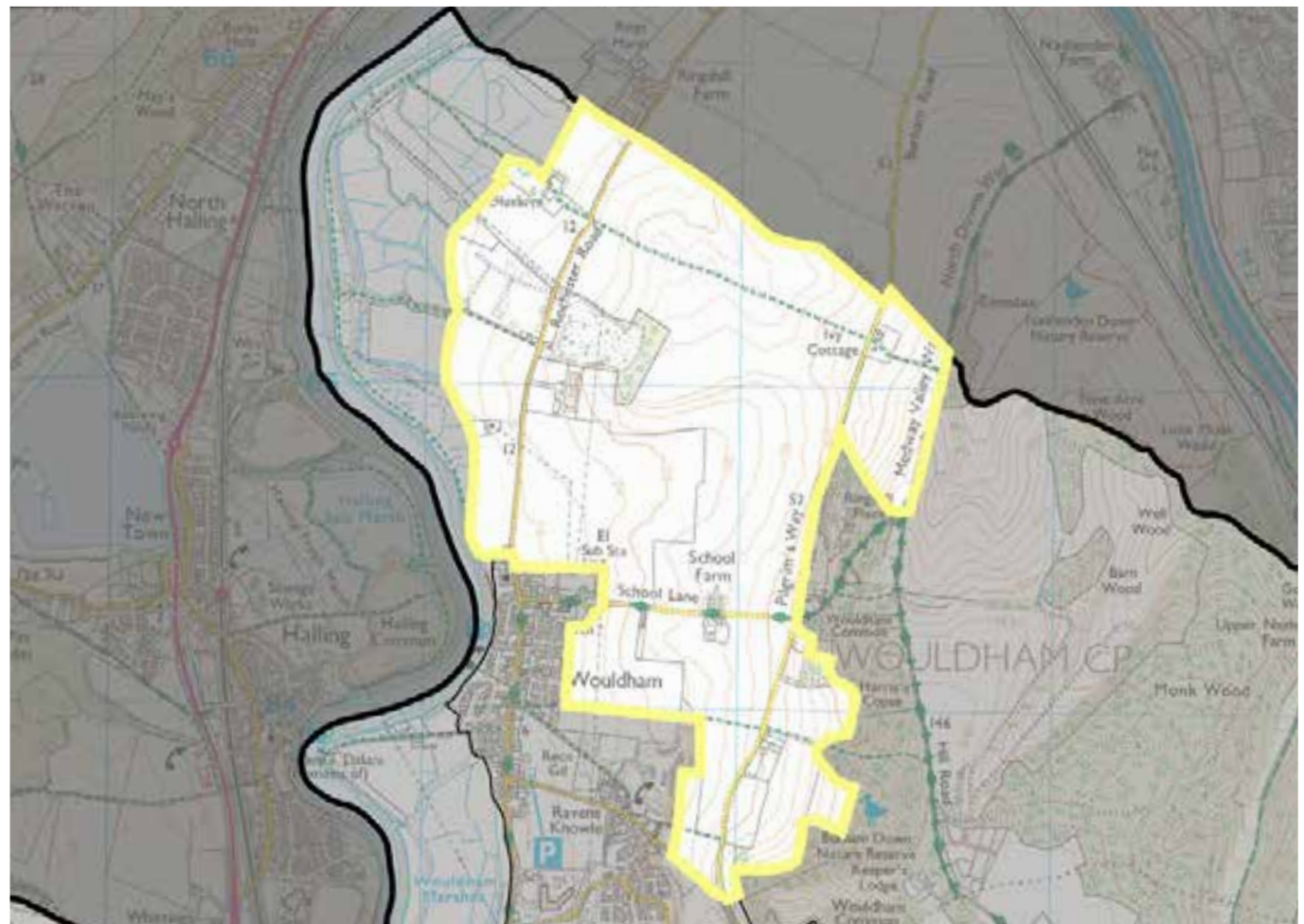
LCA 1a - Kent Downs Medway, Eastern Scarp Foot

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *The lower sloping scarp foot of the steep Kent Downs scarp, located within the Medway Valley and with much of the area being within the Kent Downs National Landscape.*
- *A coherent, quiet and in places tranquil landscape with repeated features and with a only small areas of tree cover, but with a strong hedgerow boundary network to roads.*
- *Wide views west across the Medway Valley and the backdrop of the Kent Downs west of the River Medway, with views east contained by the wooded steep scarp slopes of the eastern section of the Kent Downs.*
- *A predominantly agricultural land use, with a pattern of large and regular shaped fields little changed since the 19th Century.*
- *A robust and historic public right of way network that includes the Medway Valley Walk.*
- *A few scattered settlements consisting of farmsteads and a listed building add to the area's historic time depth.*
- *The Kent Downs scarp visually dominates the character area, the extensive wooded slopes forming much of the eastern boundary, containing the area and restricting intervisibility beyond.*

Location

The area is located on the lower sloping scarp slopes of the Kent Downs, on the northern edge of the Borough. It is bounded by the lower edge of the rising wooded scarp to the east and the River Medway floodplain to the west. The southern boundary is formed by the settlements of Wouldham and Peter's Village. To the north lies the administrative area of Medway Council.



LCA 1a - Kent Downs Medway Eastern Scarp Foot

Landscape Character Description

The east-west sloping landform curves gently from the steep scarp of the Kent Downs rising in the east, down to the River Medway on the western boundary, part of a dramatic symmetrical valley landform. The Kent Downs scarp visually dominates the character area, with the extensive wooded slopes forming much of its eastern boundary.

Fertile soils give rise to a predominantly agricultural land use, with a pattern of large and regular shaped fields little changed since the 19th Century. Many of the hedgerow boundaries are lost or fragmented. Some roads however have tall, intact hedgerow boundaries, limiting and containing views across and out of the area, whilst contributing to its rural character. There are occasional small, scattered copses of trees.

There are a few scattered farmsteads within the character area. There is however a visual connection with Wouldham, located immediately adjacent to the southwest boundary. Traditional buildings, including two Listed Buildings, are visible on the northern edge of the village and on Rochester Road is the Listed Starkey Castle, a manor house originating in the 14th Century. Starkey Castle as well as other individual farm buildings are of traditional stone construction, though more modern barns and outbuildings have been added that detract from the traditional stone-built character.

The double line of pylons converging at the electrical sub-station on the northern edge of Wouldham are a detracting feature, and there are views of the paper mill and settlements located to the west of the River Medway. There are also views of the M2 motorway and high speed rail bridges, with the built features of Borstal visible beyond.



View west from the junction of School Lane and Burham Road showing open fields with degraded field boundary hedgerows. Snodland and the Kent Downs to the west of the Medway Valley.

LCA 1a - Kent Downs Medway Eastern Scarp Foot

Whilst views towards the large bridges have a detracting quality, the rolling topography of arable fields and the backdrop of the wooded Kent Downs provide a sense of separation from these elements and the area generally feels quiet and tranquil.

There are wide views from the historic Public Rights of Way that cross the character area and from its linear roads where hedgerows allow. The North Downs Way runs along the edge of the wooded scarp that forms the eastern boundary of the character area, containing views east. The Pilgrim's Way runs along Burham Road south to Rochester Road and the Medway Valley Walk drops off the scarp and down to the river. Further footpaths lower east to west, intercepting the footpath that follows the eastern side of the River Medway.

From the higher, open ground and where hedgerows allow, there are wide panoramic views west across the Medway valley in which industry and settlement are both prominent to the west of the river, with the distinctive backdrop of the wooded scarp with the occasional, eye-catching 'gashes' of the chalk faces of former quarries.

Where the topography is lower and more contained within the west of the character area, views across the river are more limited. The rising Kent Downs however remain a feature within views both to the east and west, providing a distinctive visual connection to the wider landscape.



The wooded scarp of the Kent Downs contains views to the east.



Industrial development within the Medway Valley



Modern buildings on the edge of Wouldham



Historic rolling fields with degraded hedgerow boundaries

LCA 1a - Kent Downs Medway Eastern Scarp Foot

Issues and Forces for Change

- *Degraded hedgerows reduce the sense of intactness.*
- *Detracting features include pylons, power lines and an electrical sub-station and the industrial buildings on the east of the River Medway.*
- *New features are likely to be readily noticeable in much of the area from the Kent Downs scarp and within longer views across the Medway Valley due to the sparse nature of settlement, woodland and lack of hedgerow boundaries.*
- *Intensification of farming practices has led to the loss and degradation of hedgerows and field margins, impacting the historic and ecological integrity of the area.*
- *Whilst the detracting features of pylons, modern farm buildings, and modern development on the edge of Wouldham are not currently present on a scale that weakens the overall character of the landscape, pressure for continuing large scale development could cumulatively impact the landscape's character over time.*
- *Continuing industrial development on the opposite bank of the River Medway is prominent and detracts from the rural nature of the area.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development, including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape, retaining the integrity of the pastoral backdrop of the valley sides.
- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Ensure consideration of vernacular architecture (e.g. the use of Kentish ragstone, plain clay tiles, steeply pitched roofs, timber framing and detailing) and how building materials contribute to their landscape setting.
- Maintain the low levels of visual detractors which would commonly be associated with horse grazing and paddocks. Refer to the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Restore degraded hedgerow field boundaries through planting a mix of native species and allow a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side to improve biodiversity within field margins. Native hedgerow species appropriate for chalky soils include hawthorn, dogwood, field maple, oak, hazel, holly and wayfaring tree.

- Screen views of detracting features such as modern farm buildings through hedgerow and tree planting but retain views of traditional buildings such as the Listed All Saints Church visible on the edge of Wouldham.
- Conserve field boundaries to roads and retain views towards the Kent Downs to the east.
- Existing tree copse are small and do not filter views. The planting of additional woodland copse as screening would not appear out of place. Expand and connect via improved hedgerows to function as a habitat network, including connectivity with wooded areas in adjacent character areas.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Conserve and enhance areas of remnant heath grassland. Restore chalk grassland and semi-improved pasture.
- Restore and enhance hedgerow boundaries using native species, woodland belts, shaws, and shelter belts to reinforce the Borough's characteristic landscape structure.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries to farmland in lieu of fencing, creating species-rich hedgerows using native species and allowing a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.

LCA 1a - Kent Downs Medway Eastern Scarp Foot

- Screen detracting features such as the substation adjacent to Wouldham through hedgerow or tree planting.

Development Management Guidelines

- Retain the landscape as a visual and spatial setting for the historic buildings facing the area from the northern edge of Wouldham. Site new development on the settlement edge where outward expansion already exists whilst avoiding enclosing historic buildings with new development.
- Retain the rural nature of the landscape and sparse settlement pattern, ensuring that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Avoid intrusion onto or above sensitive ridgelines or within prominent slopes.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Encourage use of traditional building materials and techniques in built form such as flint, Ragstone and plain clay tiles.
- Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development.

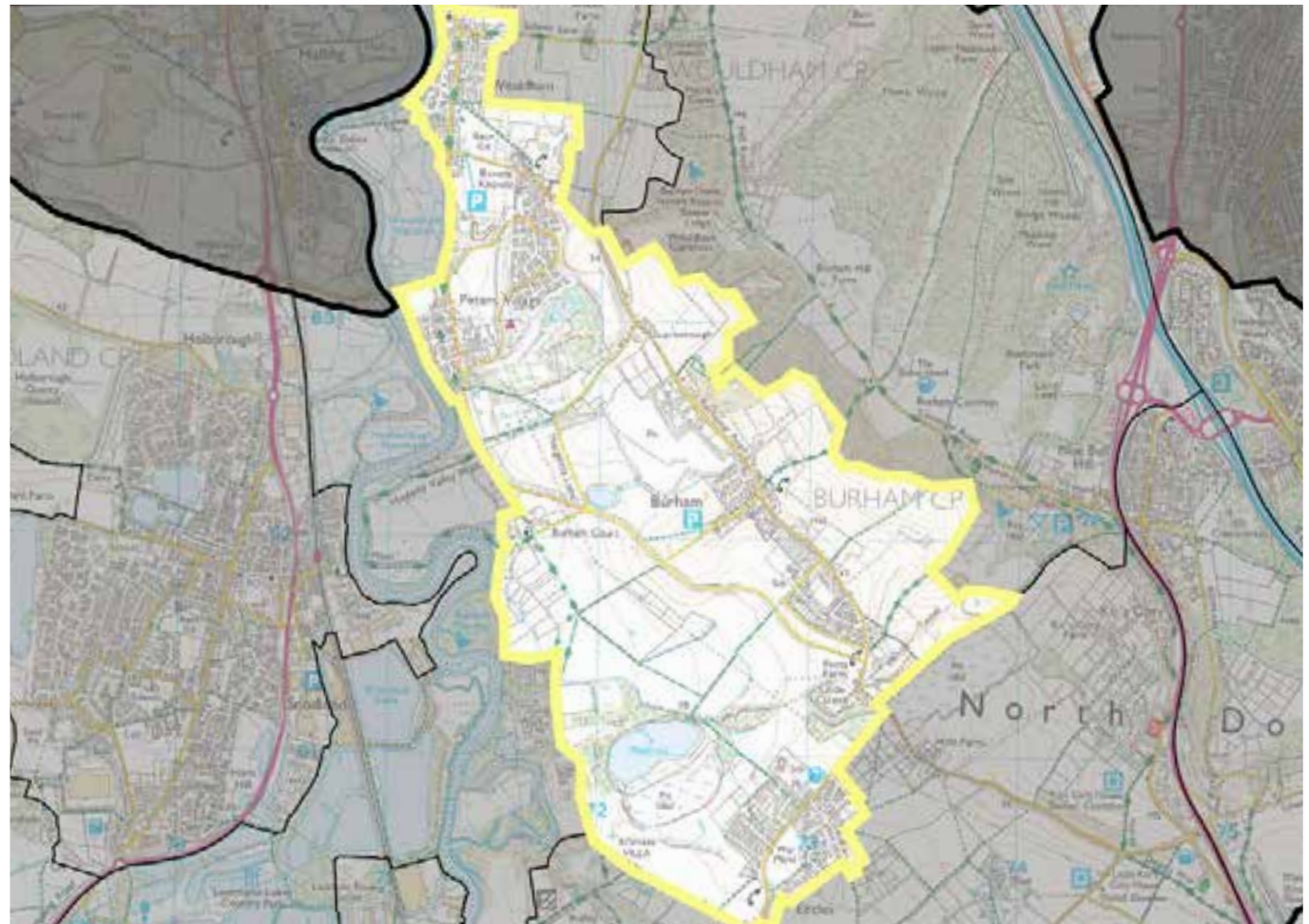
LCA 1b - Kent Downs Burham Scarp Foot

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *Large, irregular fields and scattered village settlements set within the rolling and rising scarp foot landscape between the Medway Valley and the Kent Downs scarp.*
- *Partially located within the Kent Downs National Landscape, with clear intervisibility with the Kent Downs scarp.*
- *A defined historic time depth evidenced through listed and historic buildings, scheduled monuments and the remnant chalk and clay quarries associated with the historical cement and brick making industries and their association with the River Medway.*
- *Mixed settlement types including housing linked with historic local industry and individual traditional buildings, and emerging new development including open spaces, shops and community facilities.*
- *Wide, long views to the steep wooded slopes of the Kent Downs to the east, and west across the marshes of the Medway Valley, with clear visual evidence of the distinctive symmetrical valley landform.*
- *The intermittent exposed chalk faces of the former quarries within the Kent Downs scarp.*
- *An extensive network of public rights of way and areas of public access, in particular in and around Peters Village.*
- *An ecologically sensitive area with many designations.*

Location

This area of scarp foot, partially within the Kent Downs National Landscape is located between the wooded scarp of the Kent Downs to the east, and the River Medway and marshes to the west, with both features forming distinct edges to the character area. The northern edge of Wouldham forms its northern border and its southern extents are formed by the change in land pattern around Eccles.



LCA 1b - Kent Downs Burham Scarp Foot

Landscape Character Description

The area is characterised by large, irregular fields and scattered village settlements set within a rolling and rising landscape, further emphasised by the steeply rising wooded scarp of the Kent Downs to the east and the wide views west across the Medway Valley. Agricultural fields, prevalent within the central area, are generally large and irregular in shape. Some are bounded by native hedgerows that are low-level or defunct in places, allowing for wide views over the fields. There are paddocks on the lower ground in the west towards the River Medway, that are smaller and more regular in shape than the agricultural fields, and which are generally bounded by post and wire fencing. Tree cover within the area is sparse and largely limited to those growing within hedgerow boundaries, although trees become a stronger feature toward the southern end of the area where there are occasional woodland pockets.

Within the gently rolling land that forms the foot of the Kent Downs scarp, the fields lower towards Rochester Road and the adjacent linear settlements of Burham and nearby Eccles. Occasional sections of exposed chalk are visible within the steep generally wooded scarp edge, the chalk assisting in the creation of the suitably fertile agricultural land. Eccles and Burham were historically linked with the local cement and brickmaking industries first established during the mid-1800s. During this time, many hundreds of local people were employed, with the works being central to the life of the local population who lived nearby in these emerging settlements. Today they still feel busy with traffic and associated noise, that is in marked contrast to the areas of farmland around them.



View towards fields, power lines and the wooded scarp of the Kent Downs. Wouldham Marshes, within the adjacent character area are in the foreground.

LCA 1b - Kent Downs Burham Scarp Foot

Both villages are generally formed of mixed age 19th and 20th Century properties that include Victorian terraces, constructed to provide housing for the local workforce and their families. Whilst many are now rendered and changed, a few remain intact with original distinctive, matching brick details and iron railings.

Further north is Wouldham, a small village formed of mixed aged properties. Its riverside location, ideal for the landing of raw materials and the export of products made it the focus of the local 19th and 20th Century cement and brick making industries. Varied building styles intermittently include the local vernacular of brick and timber board and these, along with a large detached farmhouse and the medieval All Saint's Church with its distinctive Lych Gate and tower on the northern boundary of the village, provide Wouldham with a recognisable core character.

Peters Village sits adjacent to the Medway, and is located between Wouldham and Burham. It is an emerging new development of homes and includes open spaces, shops and community facilities as well as an urban riverside walk. Historic remnants remain in a few older buildings to the south, some of which are Listed. Further listed buildings are scattered throughout the character area, along with the below ground buried features of a Roman Villa, a Scheduled Monument near Eccles.

There is a cluster of properties including the remote Ragstone 12th Century St Mary's Church at Burham Court, and the nearby Medway Valley Walk provides access to the riverside and wide views across reed filled marshes. Settlements are scattered and separated by the surrounding landscape but their features are a common feature within mid to long range views from most areas. Due to the separation of the villages, there is a feeling of openness despite the recurring built form.



Traditional Ragstone church at Burham Court



Traditional oast house at Burham



Modern buildings and recreation ground in Peters Village with the backdrop of the Wooded chalk scarp within the Kent Downs



Public realm at Peters Village adjacent to the River Medway



River Medway and the paper mill at Snodland



Looking east from the edge of Burham, toward the wooded scarp and setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape

LCA 1b - Kent Downs Burham Scarp Foot

The surrounding landscape is easily accessible with a road network connecting the villages on the east bank of the River Medway and an extensive network of public rights of way that circulate through the central area including the Medway Valley Walk and Pilgrims Way.

Peters Pit Nature Reserve is a former chalk quarry located on the southern boundary of Peters Village. It is a SSSI designated for its great crested newt population and part of a network of Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites located within the Medway Valley. A further former clay pit, located near Eccles is defined as Eccles Old Pits Local Wildlife Site. It is now used as a reservoir, and is surrounded by woodland and scrub that screen it from view. Further SSSIs in neighbouring character areas to the east and west, along the Kent Downs scarp and within the River Medway valley extend into the periphery of this character area, creating an important network of biodiversity.

The steep wooded slopes of the Kent Downs scarp to the east with its intermittent exposed chalk scars are a key feature of the character area and this intervisibility combined with the scattered historic buildings that include oast houses contribute strongly to its character. Whilst the River Medway is not always prevalent in views there is intervisibility at the promenade at Peters Village and at Burham Court where the river, reed beds and unimproved grassland of Wouldham Marshes, though located within the adjacent character area, contribute to the sense of wildness, with views from the public footpath extending north toward Rochester and west across the valley towards the distinctive paper recycling mill and settlement at Snodland.



All Saints Church, Wouldham

LCA 1b - Kent Downs Burham Scarp Foot

Issues and Forces for Change

- *Detracting features include a large substation on the edge of Wouldham, disused pits, a reservoir, power lines and pylons.*
- *Settlements of varying ages reduce the overall identity of the area, though this is balanced by the distinctive features of the adjacent character areas with which this area has intervisibility.*
- *Areas of open space separating settlements assist in retaining the open feel of the landscape, which could be threatened if large scale developments occurred between the existing villages, leading to coalescence and a loss of individual character.*
- *Development pressure is likely to increase with the access improvements and new bridge over the river to Peters Village.*
- *Development has led to higher levels of activity in the area, with increased traffic along main roads and within settlements, reducing tranquillity.*
- *Perceptual qualities have been influenced by development in adjacent character areas with which this area has intervisibility, notably imposing industrial development on the west bank of the River Medway at Holborough and Snodland.*
- *Over-management of hedgerows through intensive trimming and intensification of agriculture has led to a degradation of hedgerow boundaries and their biodiversity value.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development, including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape, protecting key views towards skyline features and retaining the integrity of the pastoral backdrop of the valley sides.
- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Ensure consideration of vernacular architecture (e.g. the use of Kentish ragstone, plain clay tiles, steeply pitched roofs, timber framing and detailing) and how building materials contribute to their landscape setting.
- Maintain the low levels of visual detractors which would commonly be associated with horse grazing and paddocks. Refer to the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Restore and create hedgerow boundaries to fields, creating species-rich hedgerows using native species. Adapt hedgerow management to be less intensive, allowing hedgerows to grow to >1.5m wide and have a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side.

- Manage pasture to improve its ecological integrity, considering a reduction in grazing pressure or grazing rotation, to ensure grazing does not consistently reduce the sward height to below 2.5cms. Seek to achieve grassland of higher species diversity and sward height, and reduction in bare or poached ground. Replace modern wire fencing with native hedgerows if space allows, or with timber post and rail fencing.
- Conserve field boundaries to roads and retain views towards the Kent Downs scarp to the east.
- Increase the ecological potential of farmland though setting aside field margins as buffers for wildlife.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Conserve and enhance areas of remnant heath grassland. Restore chalk grassland and semi-improved pasture.
- Restore and enhance hedgerow boundaries using native species, woodland belts, shaws, and shelter belts to reinforce the Borough's characteristic landscape structure.
- Screen detracting features such as the substation adjacent to Wouldham through hedgerow or tree planting.
- Aid interpretation of the Roman Villa Scheduled Monument, which is not apparent on the ground.

LCA 1b - Kent Downs Burham Scarp Foot

Development Management Guidelines

- Retain the landscape as a visual and spatial setting between settlements. In particular protect the open space between Wouldham and Peter's Village which is sensitive to amalgamation through sprawl.
- For development, consider field plots closer to larger settlements that are more contained and where development would not detract from the area's overall character and settlement pattern. Utilise new and improved hedge and and copse planting to reduce and filter visibility when viewed from the Kent Downs scarp.
- Enhance built form through use of traditional building materials and techniques including weather boarding as seen at Peter's Village. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls such as flint and ragstone, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of close boarded fencing and conifer hedging.
- Use advance planting of woodland buffers, copse and native hedgerows to assist in screening and settling new built form within an existing landscape setting.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Avoid intrusion onto or above sensitive ridgelines or within prominent slopes.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Consider new development within areas of former mineral working that provide flexibility for landform and restore and rewild former quarry sites where there is no development opportunity.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Avoid suburban-style boundaries, using natural materials including appropriate style fencing or native hedge screening.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Encourage interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments and draw upon cultural heritage for landscape management.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Avoid any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

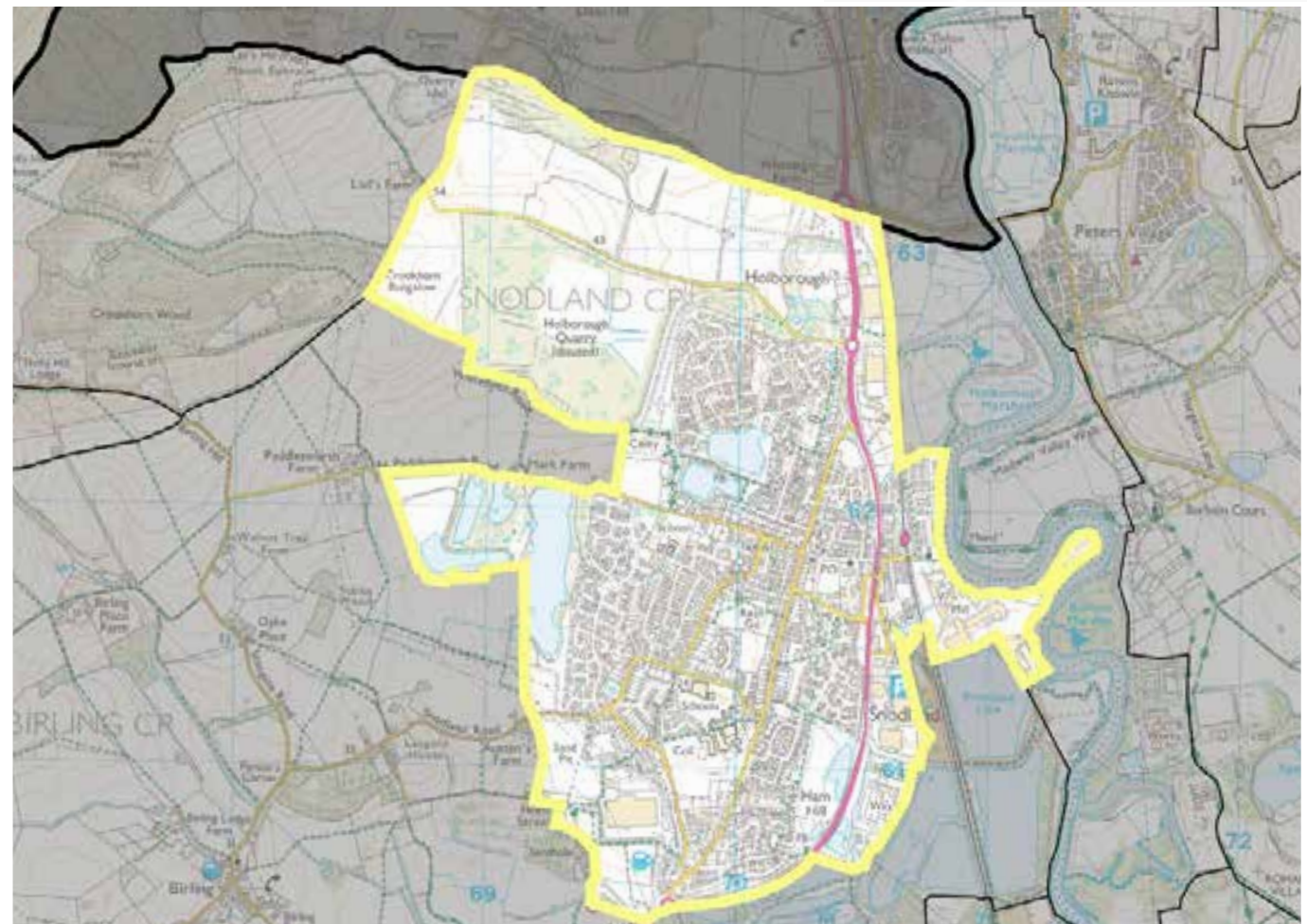
LCA 1c - Kent Downs Medway Western Scarp Foot

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *Large, irregular fields and settlement set within the rolling and rising scarp foot landscape between the Medway Valley and the Kent Downs scarp, within the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape.*
- *Wide views to the steep wooded slopes of the Kent Downs scarp to the west, and east across the Medway Valley, and the opposing distinctive symmetrical valley landform.*
- *The large settlement of Snodland and the distinctive Paper Recycling Mill are located centrally and to the east of the area, adjacent to the River Medway.*
- *The intermittent exposed chalk faces of the former quarries within the Kent Downs scarp.*
- *An extensive network of public rights of way.*
- *A defined historic time depth evidenced through listed and historic buildings, scheduled monuments and the disused chalk quarries and pits, now fishing lakes and wetlands.*
- *An ecologically sensitive area with many designations including several SSSIs and a Local Wildlife Site that borders the area.*

Location

This character area is defined by the steep wooded scarp slopes of the rising chalk ridge to the west, gently sloping across the valley to the industry and settlement adjacent to the River Medway on the eastern boundary. There is a strong intervisibility with the rising scarp of the Kent Downs to the east. The character area continues to the Borough boundary in the north with the administrative area of Medway Council.



LCA 1c - Kent Downs Medway Western Scarp Foot

Landscape Character Description

The area is formed of the gently sloping land on the western side of the River Medway valley, within the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape, the landform gently sloping towards the river. The rising scarp of the Kent Downs provides an edge and sense of enclosure to the agricultural farmland and rural lanes bounded by neat hedge banks and woodland. Disused chalk pits and quarries, remnants of the chalk quarries and mineral extraction are scattered throughout the area, several now being flooded wetlands and valuable wildlife habitats. There are wide panoramic views across the landscape across the river valley towards the eastern arm of the Kent Downs and the sections of distinctive exposed white chalk cliffs.

Where the land levels adjacent to the River Medway the larger settlements of Holborough and Snodland are located, connected by the A228. The adjacent railway line serves both towns, with a station at Snodland and a ribbon of industrial use extends along these transport corridors. The area feels organised, with land uses set into distinct areas of settlement and farming, with the more elevated and rural areas to the northwest, located within the setting and influence of the Kent Downs having a sense of remoteness and detachment from the nearby settlements in the east.

There is a moderate level of tree cover, with woodland blocks providing visual screening on the periphery of settlements and quarries. There is a strong and distinctive hedge network to the field and road boundaries and in the higher areas to the northwest hedges grow on banks along smaller lanes. The fields are generally regular in shape and are of a medium to large size. In contrast to the east, the western areas are tranquil with the settlements in the valley bottom screened effectively from the western areas by tree belts.



Views from All Saints Churchyard, Snodland across the River Medway towards the Kent Downs.

LCA 1c - Kent Downs Medway Western Scarp Foot

Much of the area is formed by settlement, and the buildings vary in age and style. Snodland has been subject to significant recent expansion, with its historic core having been added to over time with housing estates of varying, largely brick vernacular. The town includes Conservation Areas, several Listed Buildings and a Scheduled Monument. Holborough Lakes is a modern residential development on the northern edge of Snodland in the site of a former quarry and encorporates lakes, open space and trails.

The industrial estates located along the A228 road contain large warehouses of corrugated metal and to a lesser extent brick. The historic paper mill located by the River Medway is an imposing building with a tall chimney. Whilst the mill is visually contained from most of the character area by landform and buildings, it is distinctive within views from easterly locations due to the wide visibility within the river valley and the lack of intervening vegetation. Close by is the historic and Listed All Saints Church and churchyard. The striking Kentish ragstone building is positioned at the edge of the town adjacent to the wide reed filled river corridor.

Several footpaths and byways cross the area, with the roads to the west generally being rural lanes and the main roads being centred around the settlements in the east. The settlements and adjacent roads are busy with traffic noise and activity is clearly apparent. Intervisibility is limited by built form, however adjacent to the river there are wide panoramic views and overall, this character area has a strong relationship and intervisibility with the surrounding areas of River Medway valley and the Kent Downs.



Hedge boundaries to lanes



Views west to the Kent Downs



All Saints Church, Snodland



The recent Holborough Lakes Development



Clock tower in Snodland

LCA 1c - Kent Downs Medway Western Scarp Foot

Issues and Forces for Change

- *A coherent landscape, albeit with some detracting built features, largely based around industry in the valley bottom; these are generally well screened and not apparent in views from within the area.*
- *Tree planting contains settlement, and is extensive around the historic chalk quarries and pits, many of which now form wetlands and housing development.*
- *Hedge boundaries are intact and enhance the ecological network, however the agricultural fields they contain are intensively farmed without visible margins for wildlife.*
- *Change from an industrial to a post-industrial landscape with development pressure evident with outward expansion of the large settlement of Snodland and associated mixed building styles, the historic cement works being replaced with modern housing at Holborough Lakes, and commercial and industrial development along the River Medway corridor.*
- *Disused clay pits have been converted into wetlands and provide nature conservation value.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development, including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape.
- Ensure consideration of vernacular architecture (e.g. the use of Kentish ragstone, plain clay tiles, steeply pitched roofs, timber framing and detailing) and how building materials contribute to their landscape setting.
- Maintain the low levels of visual detractors which would commonly be associated with horse grazing and paddocks. Refer to the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Improve integration of industrial development along the River Medway corridor within the landscape. Consider new tree belts to assist in screening industrial built features seen from adjacent character areas.
- Increase access and views to wetlands, which are heavily screened by vegetation.

- Maintain and enhance existing tree belts and vegetation to assist in screening new and existing built features. Expand and connect woodland cover creating clearings for natural regeneration or small-scale planting to improve biodiversity, and soil quality, to reduce erosion and establish ground flora.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Conserve and enhance areas of remnant heath grassland. Restore chalk grassland and semi-improved pasture.
- Conserve the strong hedgerow network to field boundaries and roads. Adapt hedgerow management to be less intensive, allowing hedgerows to grow to >1.5m wide with a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Apply forestry practices that respect local character and visual amenity, using traditional techniques like coppicing.
- Decrease the intensity of agriculture and increase the ecological potential of farmland though setting aside field margins as buffers for wildlife.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.
- Encourage interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments and other features.

LCA 1c - Kent Downs Medway Western Scarp Foot

Development Management Guidelines

- Site new development in and around existing settlement within the Medway Valley in locations with existing landscape features such as hedges and tree belts, that will help integrate into the landscape setting whilst avoiding influencing intervisibility between the Kent Downs scarp and the west of the character area, the features of which contribute to the setting of the National Landscape.
- Use advance planting of woodland buffers, copse and native hedgerows to assist in screening and settling new built form within an existing landscape setting.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, and fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Retain views across the Medway Valley.
- Protect the setting of Snodland's Conservation Areas and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Consider further new development within areas of former mineral working that provide flexibility for landform. Continue to screen and contain, and restore and rewild where there is no development opportunity and to increase their potential to become valuable ecological niches.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Avoid suburban-style boundaries, using natural materials including appropriate style fencing or native hedge screening.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Encourage interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments and draw upon cultural heritage for landscape management.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Avoid any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

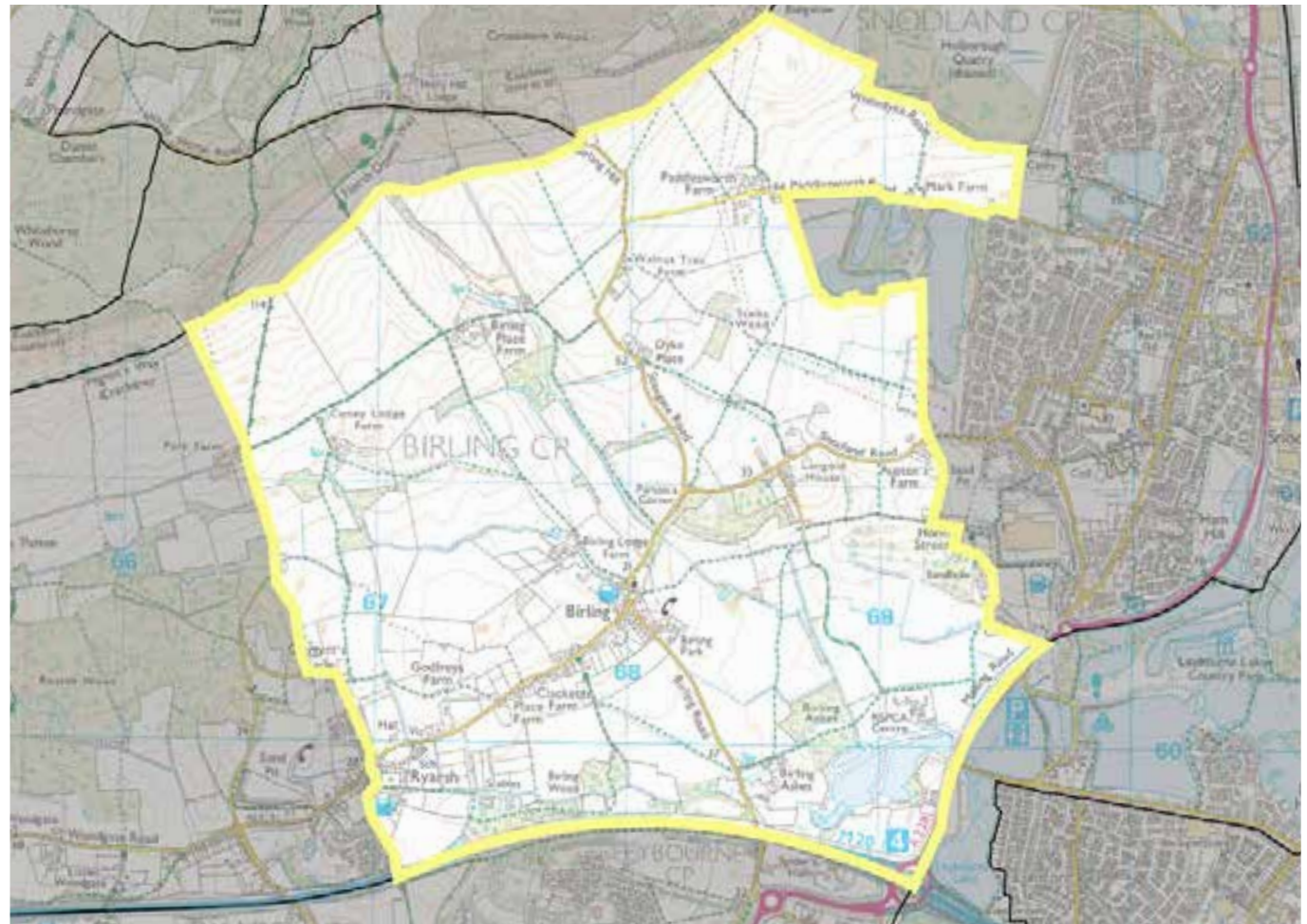
LCA 1d - Kent Downs - Birling Scarp Foot

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *A strong, repeating character of rolling agricultural fields edged by trimmed hedgerow boundaries and scattered settlement, set within the undulating scarp foot landscape between the Medway Valley and the Kent Downs scarp, within the Kent Downs National Landscape.*
- *Settlements include villages, scattered properties and farmsteads which are nestled and settled within the landscape, and not easily visible as a result of the rolling topography and small belts and areas of woodland limiting views.*
- *Wide views to the steep wooded slopes of the Kent Downs scarp to the north, and long views east across the Medway Valley, and the opposing distinctive symmetrical valley landform.*
- *A varied range of local building vernacular that includes several Listed Buildings and several Conservation Areas.*
- *An extensive public right of way network including the Pilgrim's Way ancient trackway.*
- *Historic time depth evidenced through Listed and historic buildings and Conservation Areas*

Location

Located at the foot of the steep wooded Kent Downs scarp and wholly within the Kent Downs National Landscape, the imposing rising landform creates the area's northern boundary. To the south it is bounded by the M20 motorway, with the wooded fields of Kensing Vale Kent Downs to the west, and the urban area of Snodland to the east.



LCA 1d - Kent Downs - Birling Scarp Foot

Landscape Character Description

The topography across this character area is formed of the undulating, sloping scarp foot at the base of the steep Kent Downs scarp. Landuse is primarily agricultural and comprised of medium sized fields set within an irregular angular pattern. The fields and roads are bounded by hedgerows many of which include trees, however some hedges have gaps within them or are cut very low, with the wide views across the area being accentuated by the hedgerow decline. The agricultural use is intensive, the fertile soil being assisted by chalk washed down from the adjacent Kent Downs. Tree cover is mainly limited to those within the hedgerow boundaries however there are a few small areas of copse, several of which are Ancient and Semi-Natural woodland.

Settlement is scattered throughout the area with individual properties, farms and small hamlets generally located in the north, and the larger more linear villages of Birling and Ryarsh closer to the main roads and transport network within the south of the area. The small village of Paddlesworth and its Conservation Area is a notable settlement, being situated on open, higher ground and distinctive within views. Comprising only a few properties, it nevertheless contains a varied range of local building vernacular and includes several listed buildings that include the tiny, strikingly distinct flint church of St Benedict.

Settlements are generally nestled and settled within the landscape and are not easily visible as a result of the rolling topography and the small belts and areas of woodland around them limiting views. The larger town of Snodland, located within the adjacent character area has little influence on the area's rural qualities. Birling is a quiet village with many historic buildings, stone and flint being a common building material. It boasts the Listed All Saints Church sitting in its proud position at the edge of the village. Ryarsh village also has many old stone and flint buildings, interspersed with



The Church of St Benedict at Paddlesworth.

LCA 1d - Kent Downs - Birling Scarp Foot

newer brick buildings. Conservation Areas can be found at Birling Place, Birling, and Ryarsh in addition to Paddlesworth.

Small telephone masts are visible in the open views, lining the roads and connecting to the properties scattered throughout the character area, and a double line of pylons cross from north to south. There is an extensive public right of way network including the Pilgrim's Way ancient trackway, that generally follows the break in slope at the base of the scarp and top of the scarp foot.

Generally, the area is still and quiet, though with a distant background noise from the M20 motorway, however visually the motorway is hidden from view by wooded belts. In the villages of Birling and Ryarsh there is some evidence of activity, however, the villages are not busy and remain perceptually calm. The area generally feels open with wide intervisibility and views in several locations, and with many built features being absorbed by the landscape due to their location in the folds and hollows of its landform, or where hidden by trees. There is a strong relationship with the adjacent Kent Downs, its wooded scarp distinctively rising to the north, enfolding and enclosing the area. From its ridge there are extensive views across the character area and the vale and Greensand Ridge beyond.



The Listed Church of St Benedict at Paddlesworth



Open fields surrounding Paddlesworth



Rolling agricultural fields with hedged boundaries, viewed from the Kent Downs scarp to the north.



Telegraph masts and pylons



The Listed All Saints Church and house at Birling

LCA 1d - Kent Downs - Birling Scarp Foot

Issues and Forces for Change

- *Agricultural fields are intensively cultivated, and historical enclosure has been lost through the removal of hedgerow boundaries. Many of those that remain are intensively managed or have gaps within.*
- *There are detracting built form features in the form of pylons, modern farm buildings of corrugated metal and small masts lining roads. However the area remains largely intact, with several of these features absorbed into the landscape through careful siting within landform or screening.*
- *Development pressure affecting key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape and settings of Conservation Areas.*
- *Intensification of farming practices has led to the decline of the ecological integrity of hedgerows and field margins and is weakening the structure of historic enclosure.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- The area is highly visible within panoramic views from the high ground of the adjacent Kent Downs. Site development in low undulations where it will be more readily absorbed into the landscape and refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape.
- Ensure consideration of vernacular architecture (e.g. the use of Kentish ragstone, plain clay tiles, steeply pitched roofs, timber framing and detailing) and how building materials contribute to their landscape setting.
- Maintain the low levels of visual detractors which would commonly be associated with horse grazing and paddocks. Refer to the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Conserve and manage Ancient Woodland copse, promoting age and species diversity and maintaining active coppice management. Expand and connect woodland cover creating clearings for natural regeneration or small-scale planting to improve

biodiversity, and soil quality, to reduce erosion and establish ground flora.

- Find opportunity to interconnect new and existing areas of woodland copse to create a habitat network and improve age and native species diversity within copse areas to ensure longevity. Promote natural regeneration through thinning and coppicing to allow clearings for natural regeneration of trees, shrubs and ground flora to take place.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Restore the existing enclosure pattern through restoration and creation of hedgerow boundaries in lieu of fencing, using a mix of native species appropriate for chalky soils, to reinforce the Borough's characteristic landscape structure.
- Adapt all hedgerow management to be less intensive, allowing hedgerows to grow to >1.5m wide and where possible, including a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side to improve biodiversity within agricultural field margins.
- Conserve and enhance areas of remnant heath grassland. Restore chalk grassland and semi-improved pasture.

LCA 1d - Kent Downs - Birling Scarp Foot

Development Management Guidelines

- Retain the contained nature of settlements and the relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape. Conserve the setting of Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings, avoiding use of materials and techniques which are out of place.
- The lack of hedgerow boundaries leads to wide views where development would be visible. Use advance planting of woodland buffers, copse and native hedgerows to assist in screening and settling new built form within an existing landscape setting.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Avoid intrusion onto or above sensitive ridgelines or within prominent slopes.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness, such as the use of Ragstone, flint and weatherboarding. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Avoid suburban-style boundaries, using natural materials including appropriate style fencing or native hedge screening.
- Protect the settings of Birling Place, Birling, and Ryarsh Conservation Areas and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Avoid any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

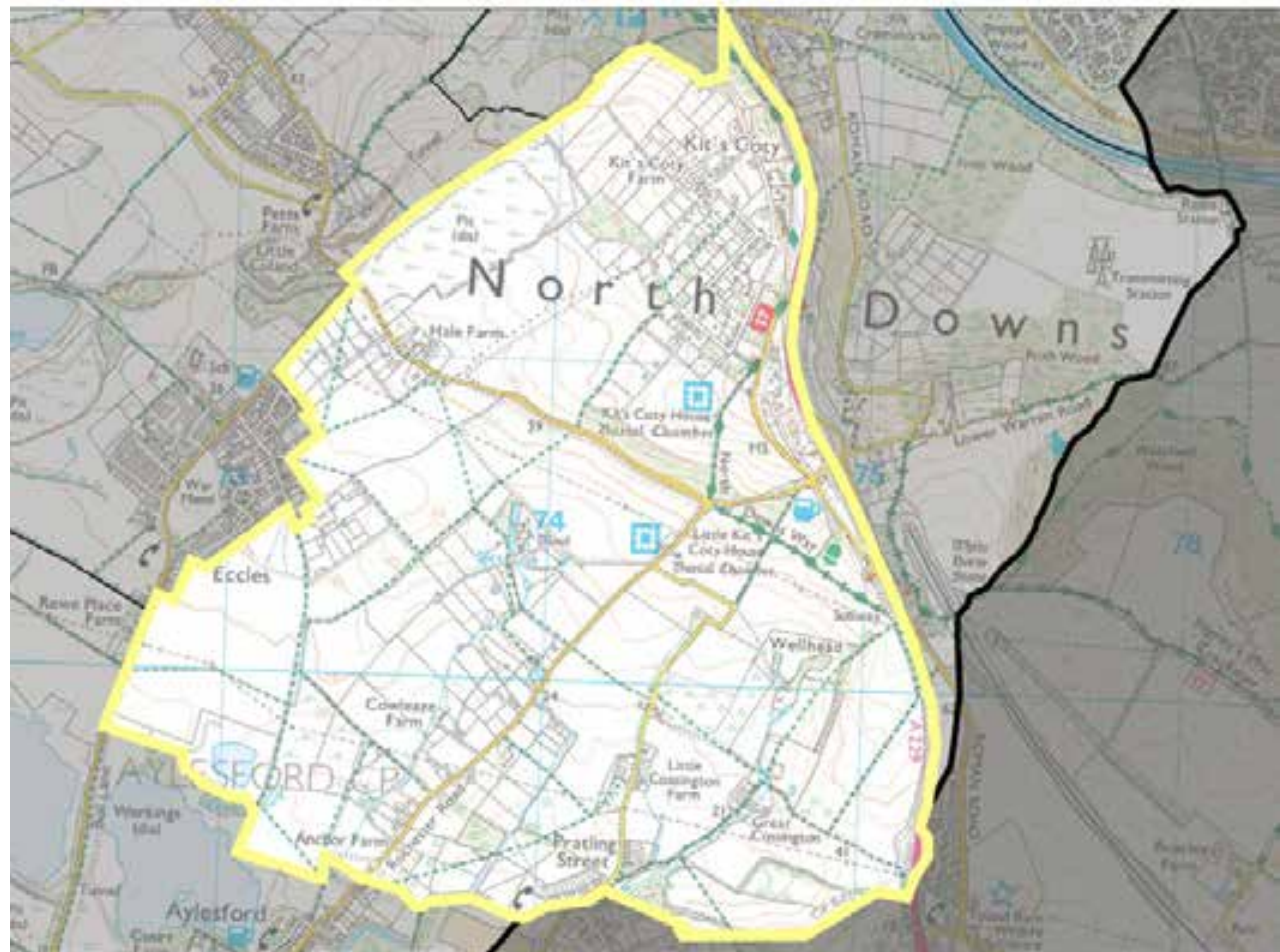
LCA 1e - Eccles East Scarp Foot

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- A landscape, partially within the Kent Downs National Landscape, that is characterised by farmland, paddocks and vineyards set within the undulating scarp foot of the Kent Downs. The robust network of hedgerows and trees provide a sense of containment.
- There is visual relationship with both the attractive and containing wooded scarp of the Kent Downs National Landscape and the settlement of Maidstone.
- Settlement has a sparse nature, with hamlets of older buildings containing traditional Kent vernacular.
- A strong sense of historic time depth provided by the remnants of Kit's Coty House and Little Kit's Coty House.
- The network of Public Right's of Way criss-cross the area and include the North Downs Way and Pilgrim's Way.

Location

The character area is located below the wooded scarp slopes of the Kent Downs, partially within the Kent Downs National Landscape and is formed of an area of scarp foot between the dramatic change in topography on its eastern boundary and the Medway Valley to the west. Differing land use and pattern, vegetation cover and built form define its northern boundary.



LCA 1e - Eccles East Scarp Foot

This undulating scarp foot landform marks the base of the wooded slopes of the Kent Downs scarp, gently easing the topography into the Medway Valley. Land use is predominantly mixed farmland, varying in use between agriculture, vineyards, rough grazing and paddocks. The paddocks, generally situated within the gently sloping areas in the south of the area are formed of smaller, more regular shaped fields bounded by post and wire fencing. Other fields are of a small to medium size with a less regular pattern and a broadly angular shape. Commonly boundaries are formed of hedgerows. Tree cover is generally limited to those growing within the largely intact network of hedgelines which within the landscape provide an impression of a more richly wooded area. Further small copses of woodland in the south of the area are designated as Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland and in the farm north of the area the Wouldham to Detling Escarpment SSSI is located with a less favourable area on the northwest boundary in a disused chalk quarry.

Kit's Coty is an enclosed settlement set within a grid pattern of small roads and contained in the gentle lower slopes of the Kent Downs scarp within the northern tip of the character area. Other settlement is limited to small clusters or scattered individual properties, including a few Listed Buildings and properties are of mixed style, size and material. There is an oast house at Great Cossington, its features visible within the surrounding landscape and buildings are generally settled and contained well by landform and tree cover.

The settlement at Pratling Street is dissimilar from others in the character area, with properties being newer in age and laid out in a linear pattern rather than the more traditional scattered arrangement typical of the character area. These properties overlook Forstal industrial estate, partially located within the Borough at its border with Maidstone.



View looking east across the gently rolling landform of the scarp foot.

LCA 1e - Eccles East Scarp Foot

There is a strong sense of historic time depth provided by the remnants of Kit's Coty House and Little Kit's Coty House, two megalithic burial chambers and Scheduled Monuments now encircled by iron railings and located in open fields. These monuments form part of the Medway Megaliths, the group of Neolithic chambered long barrows and tombs located within the Medway Valley. A strong public right of way network, predominantly footpaths that include the North Downs Way and the route of Pilgrim's Way provide good pedestrian access throughout the area and the roads are generally narrow and rural in nature with some access to properties being limited to lanes or tracks. Pilgrims Way road is distinctive with the east and west carriageways being separated due to the road's location on uncharacteristically steep land. The A229 which forms the area's eastern boundary is characterised by ecologically rich banks and verges that are designated as a Local Wildlife Site and Roadside Nature Reserve.

Views within the character area are generally limited by boundary vegetation and despite its landcover generally being of open farmland, interspersed settlement and few trees, there is perceptual impression of a more wooded landscape with contained built form. Roads are well screened by vegetation though intermittent visibility and traffic noise, albeit distant is a detracting feature, that also includes the pylons and network of telegraph poles.

The backdrop of the Kent Downs scarp is a defining feature of the area. The open landscape offers views south towards the built form of Maidstone and there is intervisibility with the wider vale and River Medway valley to the west, with the distant landscape contained by the continuing form of the Kent Downs in the distance.



Contained fields with wide views to the south



Vineyards and views of the wooded Kent Downs scarp to the north



Horse paddocks



Kit's Coty Scheduled Monument



Linear development at Kit's Coty



Building with traditional Kent features

LCA 1e - Eccles East Scarp Foot

Issues and Forces for Change

- *The sense of containment and reasonably coherent character, formed by the small angular fields sat within the gently sloping landform and robust network of hedgerows and trees, dissipates towards the south of the area.*
- *Visible commercial and industrial buildings are a detracting feature that, when combined with unmanaged features, contribute to a greater sense of an untamed landscape. This leads to a reduced sense of security in places.*
- *The sparse nature of settlement, a key characteristic of the area could be eroded through new development, therefore the scale of any new development should be a key consideration.*
- *Perceptual qualities have been influenced by development within adjacent areas and the neighbouring Borough with which this area has intervisibility, notably the industrial estate at Forstal and the settlement of Maidstone.*
- *Agricultural land use has changed, with an expanding vineyard use, although associated field patterns and hedgerow boundaries have been conserved.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Where located within the Kent Downs National Landscape, ensure that its special components, characteristics and qualities are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development, including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape.
- Ensure consideration of vernacular architecture (e.g. the use of Kentish ragstone, plain clay tiles, steeply pitched roofs, timber framing and detailing) and how building materials contribute to their landscape setting.
- Field boundaries have been lost where horse paddocks dominate, with a move to post and wire fencing. Maintain the low levels of visual detractors which would commonly be associated with horse grazing and paddocks and replace modern wire fencing with native hedgerows where space allows, or with timber post and rail fencing. Refer to the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Conserve and manage Ancient Woodland areas, promoting age and species diversity and maintaining active coppice management. Expand and connect woodland cover creating clearings for natural regeneration or small-scale planting to improve biodiversity, and soil quality, to reduce erosion and establish ground flora.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Create and restore hedgerow boundaries particularly in the south of the area, where these are more sparse. Fill gaps with locally native tree and shrub species, allowing some to develop into hedgerow trees. Manage hedgerows through cutting or laying to avoid the hedgerow becoming lines of trees and losing the sheltering function for wildlife that hedgerow bases provide. Retain a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Conserve and enhance areas of remnant heath grassland. Restore chalk grassland and manage pasture to improve its ecological integrity, considering a reduction in grazing pressure or grazing rotation, to ensure grazing does not consistently reduce the sward height to below 2.5cms. Seek to achieve grassland of higher species diversity and sward height, and reduction in bare or poached ground.

LCA 1e - Eccles East Scarp Foot

- Continue to conserve and enhance the ecological capacity of road verges through management, ensuring this is not overly intense so as to preclude diversity.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries to farmland in lieu of fencing, creating species-rich hedgerows using native species and allowing a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Enhance and create new green corridors and ecological networks.
- Improve interpretation and signage of the Kit's Coty Scheduled Monuments, which are contained within the landscape and not readily noticeable.
- Support traditional farming and land management techniques and encourage sustainable farming and horse management near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.
- Retain the sparse nature of settlement which is a key characteristic of the area, ensuring any new development respects the locally distinctive ribbon layout. Site development within contained areas where it can be absorbed into the landscape through landform or woodland screening, prioritising these locations as preferable those requiring new planting and that will take time to mature and provide sufficient screening. Where necessary, consider advance planting.
- Development may be contained more readily within areas of gently sloping land towards the south of the area. Hedgerows are less intact in this location and would require management with further infill and woodland planting to assist in containing new built form and screening within views from the National Landscape.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.

Development Management Guidelines

- Expand and connect ancient woodland blocks through planting of locally native tree and shrub species to form a woodland habitat network. Expand woodland tree cover into the north of the area through use of shelterbelts and shaws. Consider careful siting in order to retain views north towards the Kent Downs scarp within the National Landscape.
- Continue to screen any new or existing development and transport corridors through tree planting, including screening to the existing commercial and industrial edge of Forstal to the south.
- Avoid intrusion onto or above sensitive ridgelines or within prominent slopes.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Use locally appropriate building materials and styles in new development, such as Flint as seen at Great Cossington, and brick and tile hung facades.
- Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Encourage further interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments and draw upon cultural heritage for landscape management and avoid any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

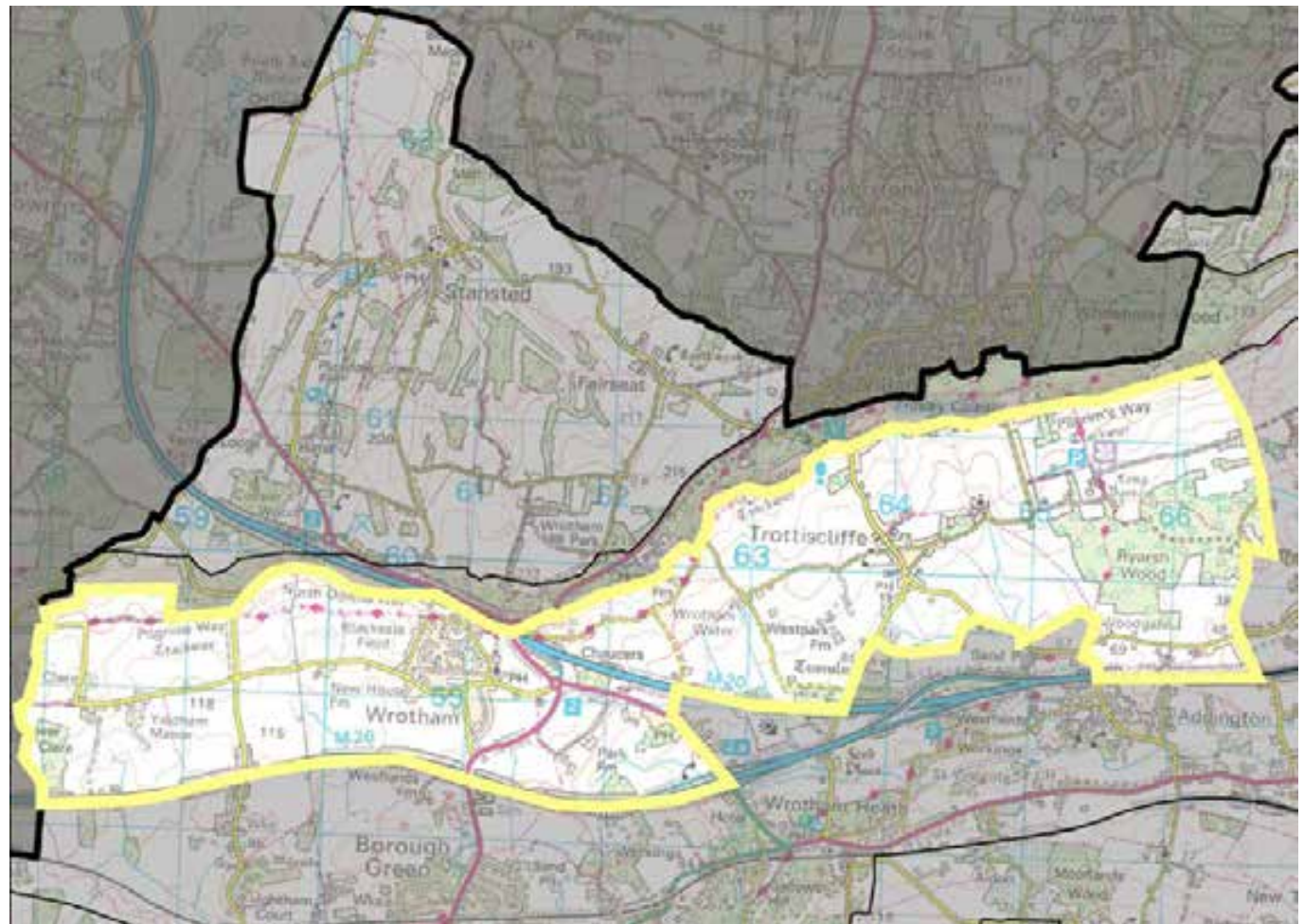
LCA 1f - Wrotham - Trottiscliffe Scarp Foot

Key Characteristics

- *A generally quiet, gently undulating landscape within the scarp foot of the Kent Downs, and within the Kent Downs National Landscape.*
- *A strong, intact character of repeated large, regular fields interspersed with scattered settlement including historic burgage plot style housing enclosures and tree cover.*
- *Settlements have retained their historic quality and characteristics, oast houses being key features. There is a visual and physical connectivity between built form and the landscape setting created by tree belts, hedgerows and other natural features.*
- *The scarp is a key feature within views and the vale landscape forms part of the long views south from the top of the Kent Downs scarp towards the Greensand Ridge beyond. When viewed from the Kent Downs scarp the trees merge and the landscape appears wooded.*
- *A strong historic time depth evidenced through Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Historic Park and Garden.*

Location

The character area, wholly located within the Kent Downs National Landscape sits within the Vale of Holmesdale, layered between the rising Kent Downs scarp that forms its northern boundary, and the vale and slopes north of the Greensand Ridge to the south. To the east lies the open farmland of the Birling Scarp Foot and the west, the Borough boundary with the district of Sevenoaks.



LCA 1f -Wrotham - Trottiscliffe Scarp Foot

Landscape Character Description

The area is formed of the gently rolling land within the scarp foot at the base of the Kent Downs scarp within the National Landscape. Scattered settlements and woodland sit within a fertile landscape that is predominantly arable farmland that is comprised of large, regularly patterned fields though both size and regularity decreases in the western tip to the south of the M26 motorway. There are small areas of long, distinctly narrow 'burgage' like plots associated with the residential dwellings at Trottiscliffe and the properties along Pinesfield Lane. Fields are bounded by hedgerows although these generally contain gaps.

There are scattered trees throughout the landscape, growing within hedgerows and forming occasional pockets of woodland. The trees filter views and absorb the pockets of built form and combined, create an appearance of a well wooded landscape when viewed from the top of the scarp. These woodland pockets separate the character of the area from the open farmland of the Kent Downs Birling Scarp to the east with much of the woodland being comprised of either Ancient and Semi-Natural or Re-planted. Ryarsh Wood at the eastern tip of the area is noticeable within the landscape as a larger woodland block and is also defined as a Local Wildlife Site. Further Local Wildlife Sites exist in the form of remnant chalk meadows at the base of the North Downs slopes near Trottiscliffe, and pockets of traditional orchard and woodland located along the M20. There are SSSIs at Oldbury and Seal Chart containing broadleaved mixed and yew woodland, and at Trottiscliffe Meadows. Springs and ponds pepper the landscape.

Settlement is scattered throughout the area, notably the larger Wrotham and Trottiscliffe villages as well as smaller settlement clusters and farmsteads that have evolved along historic spring lines.



View of Wrotham Water Farm with traditional oast house.

LCA 1f - Wrotham - Trottiscliffe Scarp Foot

Buildings are of traditional Kentish style and include flint, brick, timber frame, hung tiles and clay tiled roofs with the less traditional housing set back within tightly formed estates.

Trottiscliffe also contains several traditional buildings but is less compact, with a more sprawling nature and a central village green. Buildings generally nestle within the landscape are visually contained by the scattered woodland.

The Coldrum Megalithic Tomb located near Trottiscliffe is a scheduled monument and is one of the Medway Megaliths with clear, intact above ground features. At Oldbury Hill where the area borders Ightham Greensand Ridge are the features associated with an Iron Age hillfort, also a Scheduled Monument. There are numerous Listed Buildings which are largely centred around the settlements of Wrotham and Trottiscliffe and Conservation Areas at Wrotham, Wrotham Water, and Trottiscliffe, all of which highlight and preserve the historic depth and value of these settlements.

The area has a generous network of PRoW and country lanes, and the Pilgrim's Way long distance path, the ancient historic pilgrimage route between Winchester and Canterbury runs along the northern periphery. The M20 bisects the area and the M26 forms part of the southern boundary. The motorways are separated from their surroundings by dense swathes of peripheral tree planting and this efficiently blocks both views out from the road, and towards the motorways from within the character area. The dense vegetative screening means that the distant traffic noise does not detract from the still and peaceful quality of the area with the contained motorways feeling separate within it.



Buildings in Trottiscliffe



Trosley Court with Church



Buildings nestled in the landscape



Oast house at Wrotham



Field boundaries



Backdrop of the wooded Kent Downs scarp

LCA 1f - Wrotham - Trottiscliffe Scarp Foot

There is a strong visual relationship between the character areas within the Vale of Holmesdale as they layer from north to south toward the Greensand Ridge, and the steep rising scarp of the Kent Downs. Its dramatic form is a key feature, providing a physical sense of shelter and enclosure to the predominantly open landscape. Conversely the vale landscape forms a distinctive part of the long views looking south from the top of the Kent Downs scarp, towards the Greensand Ridge and beyond.

LCA 1f - Wrotham - Trottiscliffe Scarp Foot

Issues and Forces for Change

- *The strong, intact character of interspersed tree cover and gently rolling landform assists in screening detracting features such as the M20 and M26 motorways and industrial development south of the area.*
- *Hedgerows, often with trees, form boundaries but these are becoming overgrown with regular gaps and present a risk of losing the characteristic regular field pattern and reduction in screening function.*
- *Busy A roads and motorways bisect the area and bring an increase in traffic and associated noise which is vulnerable to increased from adjacent maturing trees and vegetation.*
- *Settlements have retained their historic quality and characteristics, and the connectivity between built form and landscape setting should continue to be protected.*
- *Consider disused mineral extraction sites as opportunity for biodiversity and landscape enhancement.*
- *Intensification of farming practices and hedgerow management has led to the decline of the ecological integrity of hedgerows and is weakening the historic field pattern.*
- *Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- The area is highly visible within panoramic views from the high ground of the adjacent Kent Downs. Site development in low undulations where it will be more readily absorbed into the landscape and refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape.
- Ensure consideration of vernacular architecture (e.g. the use of Kentish ragstone, plain clay tiles, steeply pitched roofs, timber framing and detailing) and how building materials contribute to their landscape setting.
- Maintain the low levels of visual detractors which would commonly be associated with horse grazing and paddocks. Refer to the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Conserve and manage Ancient Woodland areas, promoting age and species diversity and maintaining active coppice management. Expand and connect woodland cover creating clearings for natural regeneration or small-scale planting to improve

biodiversity, and soil quality, to reduce erosion and establish ground flora.

- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Conserve remnant chalk meadows and traditional orchards.
- Restore enclosure and habitat value through creation and improvement of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Fill hedgerow gaps with appropriate mixed native tree and shrub planting including field maple, hawthorn, holly and dog rose to create species-rich hedgerows, and protect scattered individual plants from cutting, allowing them to grow into hedgerow trees.
- Improve age, species, and structural diversity within woodlands to ensure longevity. Encourage opportunities for natural regeneration within woodlands through selective thinning and coppicing to promote natural regeneration of trees, shrubs and ground flora.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries to farmland in lieu of fencing, creating species-rich hedgerows using native species and allowing a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Enhance and create new green corridors and ecological networks.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.

LCA 1f - Wrotham - Trottiscliffe Scarp Foot

- Continue to screen and contain working pits and quarries. Restore disused pits and quarries, which have the potential to become valuable ecological niches.
- Encourage interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments which are hidden within the landscape.

Development Management Guidelines

- Site any new development in contained areas where it will be more readily absorbed into the landscape, for example through planting native hedgerows, trees and copses, and creating/ enhancing other characteristic landscape features such as ponds and ditches preserving views from and toward the adjacent Kent Downs. Use new woodland planting to screen and filter new built form, ensuring views of existing historic features are not blocked.
- Maintain the rural nature of the landscape and scattered nature of settlement pattern, ensuring that any new development on the edges of existing settlements fits with the traditional settlement form and is carefully integrated into the landscape.
- Use advance planting of woodland buffers, copse and native hedgerows to assist in screening and settling new built form within an existing landscape setting.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness, such as red brick, hung tiles, flint, weatherboarding and ragstone. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Protect the settings of Wrotham, Wrotham Water, and Trottiscliffe Conservation Areas and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Consider new development within areas of former mineral working that provide flexibility for landform and restore and rewild former quarry sites where there is no development opportunity.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Avoid suburban-style boundaries, using natural materials including appropriate style fencing or native hedge screening.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Encourage interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments and draw upon cultural heritage for landscape management.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Avoid any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible from ridge tops.

Landscape Character Type - Downs and Scarp

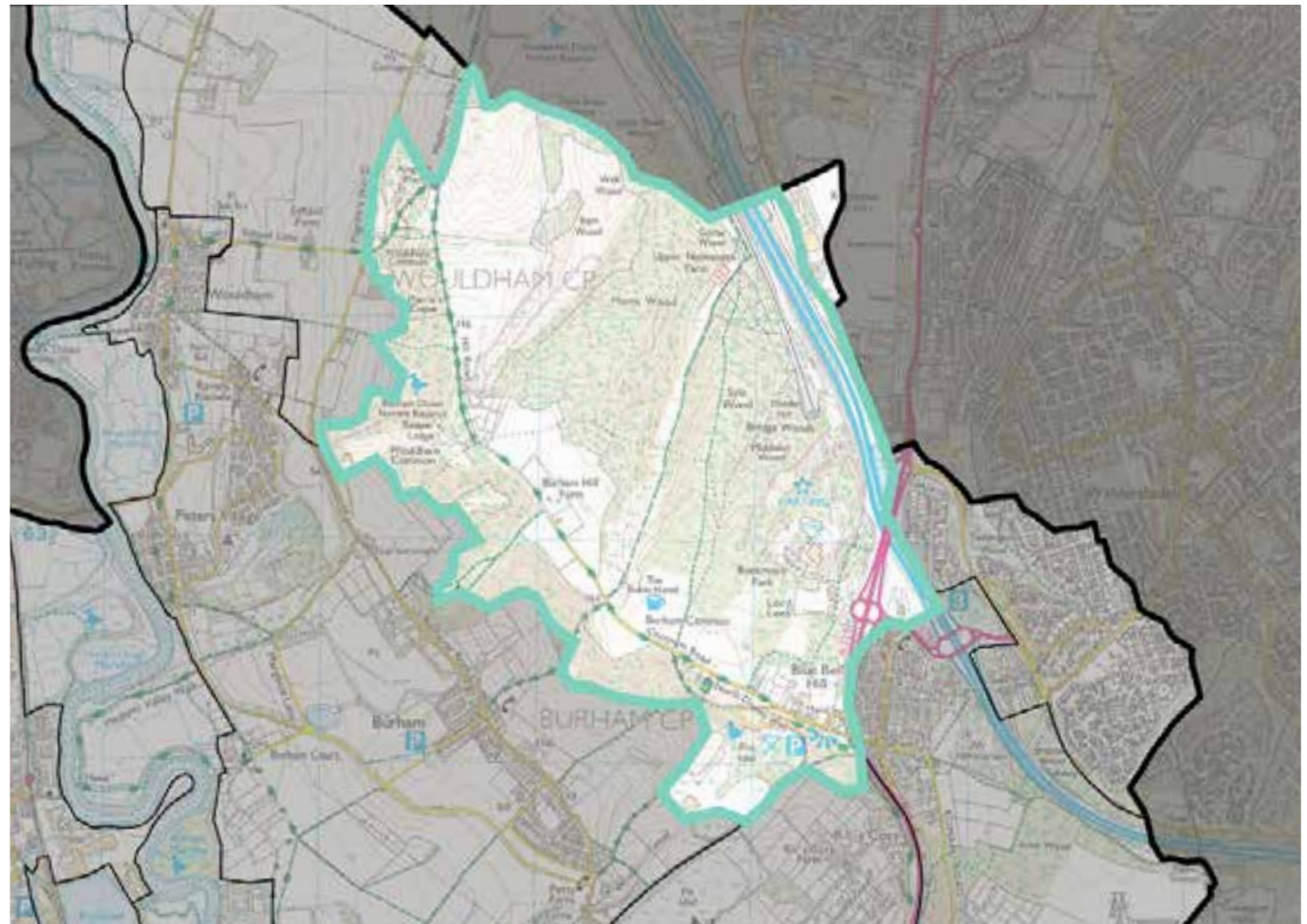
LCA 2a - Nashendon Downs and Scarp

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *Located within the Kent Downs National Landscape and formed of the steep chalk scarp to the west, where it meets the northerly grain of the undulating dip slope to the east, where it meets the northerly grain of the undulating dip slope to the east.*
- *Where views occur they are expansive and dramatic, with a broad, sweeping open character and long views south and west.*
- *A safe and harmonious character, with its elevated location giving a sense of disconnection from the surrounding landscape.*
- *Grazing, woodland and occasional properties combine to create a harmonious and enclosed environment.*
- *Sparse settlement of generally individual properties assists in creating the perception of a well-maintained landscape, with flint being distinctive within boundary walls and building detailing.*
- *The wooded scarp is a key feature within views, and the vale landscape forms part of the long views south west towards the Greensand Ridge beyond.*
- *Strong historic time depth evidenced through Listed Buildings, wooded land pattern and historic rights of way.*
- *A strong, well used Public Right of Way network including the North Downs Way.*

Location

The character area sits within the Kent Downs National Landscape at the northeast extent of the Borough, and is formed of the steep chalk scarp to the west, where it meets the northerly grain of the undulating dip slope to the east. Its north and western boundary broadly follow the foot of the steep wooded scarp slopes, with the M2 motorway and the A229 to the east and south. To the east is the Borough of Medway and the urban settlement of Chatham.



LCA 2a - Nashendon Downs and Scarp

Landscape Character Description

The steeply rising wooded scarp slopes and largely woodland covered dip slope are defining features of this landscape character area, providing a dramatic backdrop to the sloping agricultural fields and open landscape within the adjacent undulating scarp foot landscape to the west. Much of the woodland is Ancient and Semi-Natural or Ancient Replanted, particularly that located within Monk Wood, Bridge Woods and Harris's Copse. Narrow dry valleys blanketed by woodland extend down the scarp to meet the surrounding, flatter land. Burham Down Nature Reserve on the western edge of the ridge incorporates an area of chalk grassland and woodland, its location offering wide views over the Medway Valley and the vale landscape, with good accessibility via the rights of way network. Much of the wooded western edge of the ridge forms the Wouldham to Detling Escarpment Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Along the length of the chalk ridge, fields sit within the plateau within wooded clearings. These fields are irregular in shape their boundaries 'cut out' of the deciduous wooded landcover, much of it Ancient Woodland and are generally used as pasture for grazing. Historically the land has not been used for agriculture due to the poor quality of the flint-filled soil and subsequently much of the woodland has been preserved. Where the treecover thins towards the north of the area the landscape becomes more open with fields extending onto the open scarp slopes. Here, there is greater intervisibility with the M2 motorway adjacent to the area's eastern boundary however its intrusion is minimised by distance, the densely wooded areas in the east filtering its detracting influences from much of the area, in particular the rights of way and chalk ridge.



Steep scarp slopes at Blue Bell Hill, located on the route of the North Downs Way.

LCA 2a - Nashendon Downs and Scarp

There are enterprises adjacent to the motorway, located within this wooded fringe that include Buckmore Park, a long-standing motor racing circuit and a scouting campsite, though they feel contained and separated from the nearby motorway by the dense wooded location.

There is sparse settlement within the area. A few single and two-storey more contemporary properties are located ribbon-like along Common Road at its eastern end. This is the one centrally located single-carriage road that runs through the area, sharing the route with the North Downs Way long distance path - the road merging into Hill Road further north. Where the road ends on the ridge, the route of the North Downs Way continues north along more narrow tracks. Located along the road are other intermittent, generally large properties and farmsteads of varying age and building material, with flint being distinctive within boundary walls and building detailing. Listed buildings include a 17th Century barn and the Robin Hood Public House, formally a 17th Century cottage with its distinctive weatherboard exterior and clay tiled roof.

From Common Road views are contained and generally limited to the enclosed pockets of grazing located within the woodland. There is a recognised viewpoint at Blue Bell Hill with panoramic long-range views over the Medway Valley from northwest to southwest across the Medway Gap with the Greensand Ridge beyond. This location has high visitor value with a busy car park, picnic area and interpretation panels.



Views of Nashendon Down Nature Reserve



Panoramic view from Blue Bell Hill viewpoint



View towards the wooded scarp from the south west



Woodland with recreational opportunities



Occasional large properties, with flint detailing



Flatter, enclosed grazed fields within the dip slope landscape.

LCA 2a - Nashendon Downs and Scarp

There is a strong, well used Public Right of Way network throughout the area and much of it feels enclosed and quiet, without visible connectivity to the adjacent character areas. Where intervisibility does occur however it is expansive and dramatic, with a broad, sweeping open character and long views south and west.

The sloping wooded scarp edge of the character area is visible to many areas to the south and west, the distinctive and dramatic landform forming a distinctive, recognisable and enclosing landscape feature, framing the Borough boundary.

LCA 2a - Nashendon Downs and Scarp

Issues and Forces for Change

- *The wide views include built form detractors such as pylons and industry, though these appear distant and abstract and do little to reduce the overall sense of place gained within the area. The paddocks along the chalk ridge are contained and not cluttered with equine fences or horiculture features, and provide precedence for future activities.*
- *Individual properties, some of which are grand and larger scale, are interspersed through the landscape. Building finish and well tended private gardens assist in creating the perception of a well-maintained landscape.*
- *Traffic on M2 motorway affects tranquillity on the eastern side of the area.*
- *Despite expansion within the adjacent Borough settlements of Rochester and Chatham, separation and a sense of remoteness has been achieved through sensitive use of woodland screening.*
- *Commercial and leisure uses have been sited along the eastern edge despite the location within the National Landscape, including Buckmore Park karting circuit and Kingsway Christian Centre leisure facilities, a large car showroom and associated parking and roads.*
- *Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands including loss of drought*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development, including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape.
- Maintain low levels of visual detractors from horse grazing and paddocks particularly along the North Downs Way. Refer to the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Conserve and manage Ancient Woodland areas, promoting age and species diversity and maintaining active coppice management. Expand and connect woodland cover creating clearings for natural regeneration or small-scale planting to improve biodiversity, and soil quality, to reduce erosion and establish ground flora.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.

- Conserve and enhance areas of remnant heath grassland. Restore chalk grassland and semi-improved pasture.
- Restore and enhance hedgerow boundaries using native species, woodland belts, shaws, and shelter belts to reinforce the Borough's characteristic landscape structure. Encourage woodland planting to provide further screening from the adjacent M2 motorway and urban area.
- Apply forestry practices that respect local character and visual amenity, using traditional techniques like coppicing.
- Maintain the intermittent enclosed pasture that contributes to the character of the area. Promote management to improve its ecological integrity, considering a reduction in grazing pressure or grazing rotation, to ensure grazing does not consistently reduce the sward height to below 2.5cms. Seek to achieve grassland of higher species diversity and sward height, and reduction in bare or poached ground.
- Enhance and create new green corridors and ecological networks.
- Control invasive species in watercourses and woodlands, such as Himalayan balsam and signal crayfish and monitor changes in flora and fauna due to climate change, including pest outbreaks and invasive species spread.

LCA 2a - Nashendon Downs and Scarp

Development Management Guidelines

- Retain the sparse nature of settlement and associated rural character. Contain new, individual buildings within the woodland.
- Use advance planting of woodland buffers, copse and native hedgerows to assist in screening and settling new built form within an existing landscape setting.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Avoid intrusion onto or above sensitive ridgelines or within prominent slopes.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Avoid suburban-style boundaries, using natural materials including appropriate style fencing or native hedge screening.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Encourage interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments and draw upon cultural heritage for landscape management.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Avoid any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

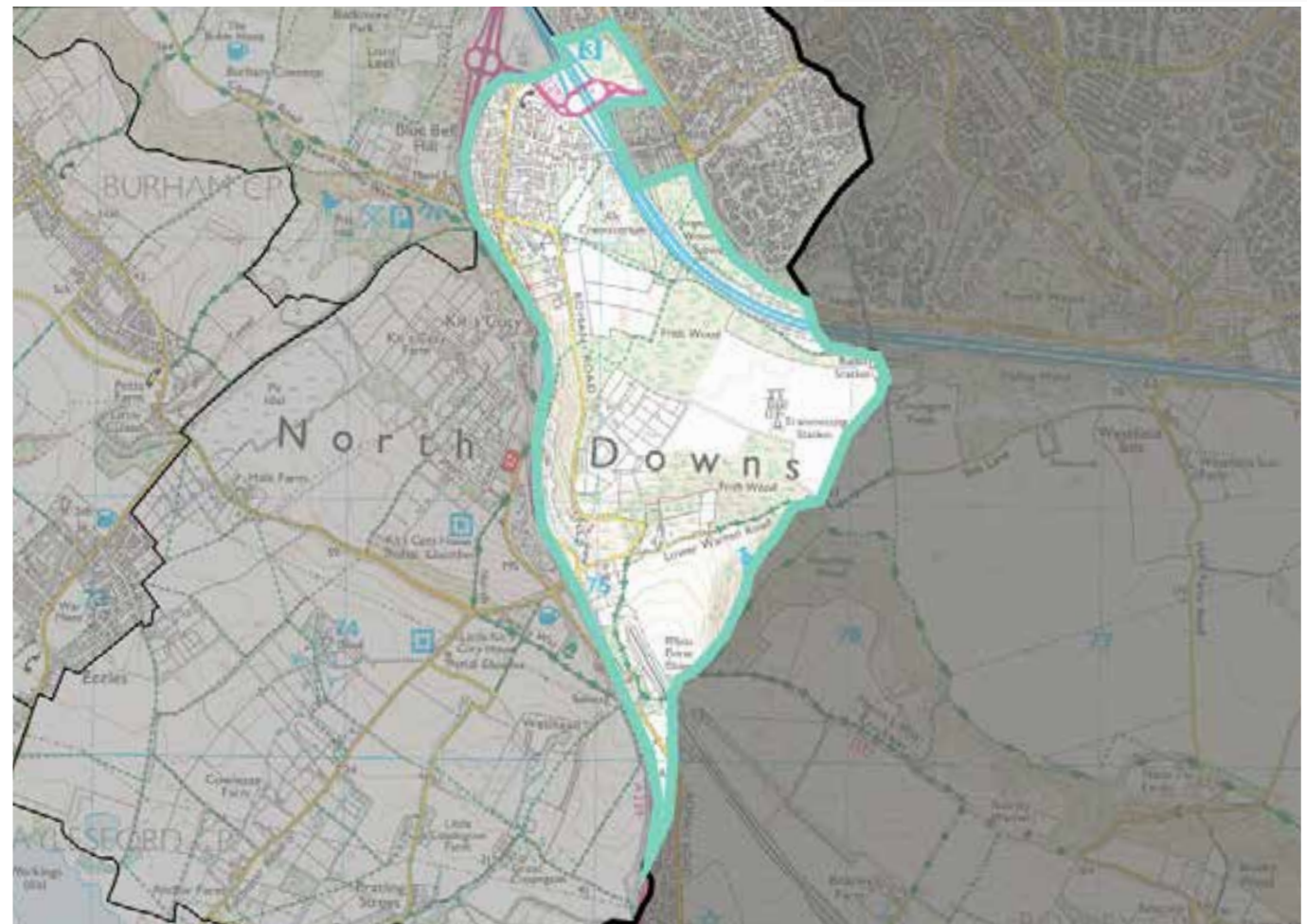
LCA 2b - Chatham Outskirts Downs and Scarp

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *Located on the Kent Downs scarp and dip slope within the Kent Downs National Landscape, with the steep scarp slope to the west.*
- *A mix of land uses and features that generally combine harmoniously, brought together by woodland that is a common feature throughout.*
- *A rural and contained character, from the containing effects of the areas of woodland and the filtering of built form and small-scale enclosure.*
- *Narrow lanes bounded by trees and a limited right of way network weaves through the area.*
- *Ecological integrity through multiple designations including SSSI and Local Wildlife Site.*
- *Historic time depth evidenced through areas of Ancient Woodland and the Medway Megaliths.*

Location

This discreet area within the Kent Downs National Landscape is located on the eastern edge of the Borough on the border with Maidston Borough. Its eastern extents are contained by the adjacent settlement of Walderslade, with the western boundary being formed by the steep scarp slope of the Kent Downs and A229 road, with the mixed farmland within the Eccles East Vale landscape character area extending beyond.



LCA 2b - Chatham Outskirts Downs and Scarp

Landscape Character Description

The character area is situated on a chalk escarpment within the Kent Downs National Landscape and is formed of the dip slope and steep scarp slopes that lower to the A229, forming the western boundary of the area.

The poor quality chalky flint-filled soil has led historically to the area being largely unfarmed and more frequently used for grazing. Today the land use is comprised of a mosaic of woodland, horse paddocks and some arable land, with settlement and telecommunications infrastructure at Blue Bell Hill. Whilst the varying land uses are scattered randomly throughout the area they are drawn together by the cohesive nature of the integrated woodland which also provides a sense of enclosure. Horse paddocks lie in the west off Warren Lane, subdivided by post and wire fencing and in the east and south, the rural character is comprised of large scale intensively farmed fields interspersed with limited hedgerows.

Large blocks of Ancient Woodland include Podkin Wood and Frith Wood, which also provide a sense of enclosure and visual screening. Some of the areas of woodland are part of the Wouldham to Detling Escarpment SSSI designation whilst the edge of the North Downs Woodlands SAC in Westerfield Wood overlaps with the edge of the character area. Another area of woodland forms part of the Frith Woods etc., Kit's Coty Local Wildlife Site. Frith Wood is a mature coppice in favourable condition and with a diverse understorey and ground flora though it has the potential to be compromised by ash dieback. Road verges are protected through Blue Bell Hill Banks and Verges Local Wildlife Site and roadside nature reserves along the A229.



View towards the wooded M2 corridor

LCA 2b - Chatham Outskirts Downs and Scarp

Whilst some buildings are of the local vernacular, this is not widespread and generally built form is not locally distinctive. The area maintains a rural feel, created by the containing effects of the areas of woodland and the filtering of built form. Property boundaries are often formed of native hedgerows rather than suburban ornamental planting or fencing. A key feature of the area is the narrow lanes bounded by trees and a limited network of rights of way weaves through the area. Dense tree and hedgerow planting along roads can screen even the closest properties from view.

The White Horse Stone Scheduled Monument is located within woodland in the southwest corner of the area, just within the Borough boundary. One of the Medway Megaliths, the large Sarsen Stone is reputed to be part of a chambered long barrow. Warren Road follows the alignment of a Roman Road and has the site of a Roman Temple adjacent to it in the southwest.

The area has a rural feel, with much of it being characterised by small-scale enclosure. Mid-range views are often limited by woodland, however this includes the screening of detracting features including the M2 motorway though whilst it is well screened visually traffic noise is audible.



Frith Wood



The steep scarp slopes at the western edge of the area



Narrow lanes bounded by trees

LCA 2b - Chatham Outskirts Downs and Scarp

Issues and Forces for Change

- *Some built form is not sympathetic to the local vernacular and there are detracting features in the form of telecommunications infrastructure, and encroachment and noise from the nearby road network and urban areas.*
- *Agricultural intensification has led to the loss and degradation of hedgerows, to the detriment of ecological and historic integrity.*
- *Traffic on surrounding major road networks decreases tranquillity.*
- *More recent development located within the south of the area is contained within the woodland.*
- *Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development, including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape, retaining the integrity of the pastoral backdrop of the valley sides.
- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Ensure consideration of vernacular architecture (e.g. the use of Kentish ragstone, plain clay tiles, steeply pitched roofs, timber framing and detailing) and how building materials contribute to their landscape setting.
- Maintain the low levels of visual detractors which would commonly be associated with horse grazing and paddocks. Refer to the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.
- Screen views of detracting features such as modern farm buildings through hedgerow and tree planting but retain views of traditional buildings such as the Listed All Saints Church visible on the edge of Wouldham.
- Conserve field boundaries to roads and retain views towards the Kent Downs to the east.
- Restore chalk grassland on the Kent Downs scarp and scarp foot
- Existing tree copse are small and do not filter views. The planting of additional woodland copse as screening would not appear out of place. Expand and connect via improved hedgerows to function as a habitat network, including connectivity with wooded areas in adjacent character areas.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Restore hedgerow boundaries to farmland in lieu of fencing, creating species-rich hedgerows using native species and allowing a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.

LCA 2b - Chatham Outskirts Downs and Scarp

Development Management Guidelines

- Site new development on settlement edges, avoiding enclosing historic buildings with new development.
- Retain the rural nature of the landscape and sparse settlement pattern, ensuring that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Avoid suburban-style boundaries, using natural materials including appropriate style fencing or native hedge screening.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development.

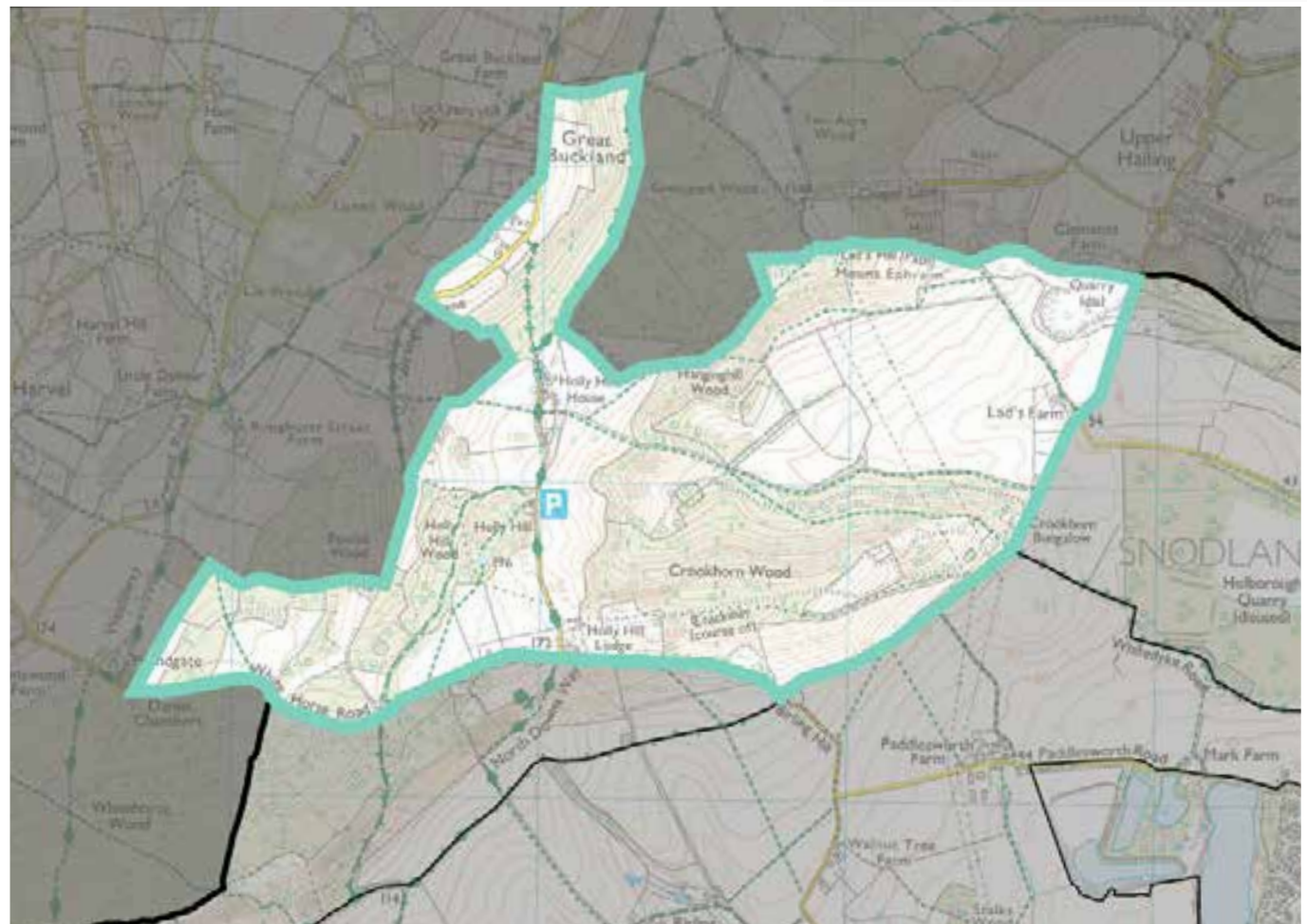
LCA 2c - Birling Hill Downs and Scarp

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *A distinctive indentation of the Kent Downs scarp and part of the dip slope, within a tranquil and quiet landscape within the Kent Downs National Landscape.*
- *A strong character, with elements that work together in harmony. The key features of ancient woodland, interspersed farmland cut from the woodland, sparse built form and tranquillity give the area its distinct character in contrast to those around it, the sense of separation furthered by the sense of containment provided by the woodland.*
- *The area is well connected by footpaths, bridleways, byways and narrow lanes.*
- *Where vegetation allows, there are views across to the Kent Downs scarp on the eastern side of the Medway Valley.*
- *Sparse settlement pattern, with built features well screened by woodland.*
- *Pastoral fields characterised by scattered mature specimen trees and areas of ecological designation.*
- *Historic time depth evidenced through Listed Building and historical features.*

Location

This area, located within the Kent Downs National Landscape lies in the north of the Borough, bordering Gravesham Borough in the west and Medway Council in the north. The southern boundary is formed by the base of the steep scarp slope and its boundary with the gently undulating scarp foot and open farmland of the wider Medway Valley landscape.



LCA 2c - Birling Hill Downs and Scarp

Landscape Character Description

The area lies on the upper scarp slopes and dip slope of the Kent Downs, characterised by woodland interspersed with fields, and with distinctive chalk scars on the eastern slopes. Much of the wooded area is Ancient and Semi Natural Woodland and is a characteristic feature of the peripheral slopes of the Kent Downs, interconnecting with woodland on the slopes of the adjacent character areas. Areas within the slopes are designated as SSSI (Halling to Trottisccliffe Escarpment) for their chalk grassland and beech woodland, although a reduction in grazing has reduced the diversity and extent of the grassland. The woodland on the eastern slopes is designated within the North Downs Woodland SAC for being one of the best examples in the UK for (Asperulo-Fagetum) beech forests and (Taxus baccata) yew woodlands, and for supporting semi-natural dry grassland. A disused pit along Pilgrim's Way is part of a further small SSSI, Houlder and Monarch Hill Pits Upper Halling. The woodland network is generally well connected, although it has become partially fragmented by the intervening fields.

Fields are medium sized, irregular though angular in shape, and with a mixed use of arable and pasture. Field boundaries are formed partly by the surrounding woodland and partly by hedgerow boundaries although these are not always intact. The pastoral fields are characterised by scattered mature specimen trees, a key feature of this area and noticeably absent within surrounding areas.

Settlement is sparse, limited to occasional scattered individual farms and individual or small clusters of dwellings of mixed ages and building styles, including some of traditional Kent vernacular. The hamlet of Great Buckland contains a small cluster of dwellings as well as the Lost Village of Dode a visitor attraction based around the site of the historic village of Dode and where a 12th Century church, Dode Church (The Church of our Lady of the Meadow), still stands.



Pasture surrounded by woodland, with distant views of the eastern Kent Downs scarp across the Medway Valley.

LCA 2c - Birling Hill Downs and Scarp

The church was greatly restored in the early 1900s and is Listed. It is the only Listed Building in the area, although there are very few buildings altogether, and the built features that are present are well screened by woodland. Pylons cross the fields in the east.

The area is well connected by footpaths that include the North Downs Way and Pilgrims Way, bridleways and byways but has a distinct lack of roads. Roads that are present are narrow lanes. A car park at Holly Hill provides access to walking routes and demonstrates the local value of the area. The area feels rural, peaceful, and whilst close to Holborough and Halling in the Medway Valley bottom, is separated from these by woodland. Whilst there are occasional views eastwards woodland largely screens the urban areas but does allow views across to the Kent Downs scarp on the eastern side of the Medway Valley, strengthening the visual relationship between the rising landform of the Kent Downs that the River Medway bisects.



Pockets of agricultural fields



Horse pasture on slopes



Dode Church



Individual buildings

LCA 2c - Birling Hill Downs and Scarp

Issues and Forces for Change

- *A largely intact character, although some loss of hedgerow boundaries and a move away from grazing pasture has weakened the sense of place.*
- *Ecological designations including SSSI, SAC and Ancient Woodland demonstrate the ecological integrity of the area and the good condition of these individual elements within the landscape.*
- *Undergrazing and scrub encroachment has led to deterioration in the condition and presence of locally distinctive chalk grassland, part of the Halling to Trottiscliffe Escarpment SSSI designation.*
- *The loss and degradation of hedgerow boundaries has weakened the historic field pattern and ecological integrity of the area.*
- *Outward urban expansion on the western edge of Halling and Snodland, currently screened effectively with woodland planting.*
- *Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development, including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape, retaining the integrity of the pastoral backdrop of the valley sides.
- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Ensure consideration of vernacular architecture (e.g. the use of Kentish ragstone, plain clay tiles, steeply pitched roofs, timber framing and detailing) and how building materials contribute to their landscape setting.
- Maintain the low levels of visual detractors which would commonly be associated with horse grazing and paddocks. Refer to the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Restore hedgerow boundaries to farmland in lieu of fencing, creating species-rich hedgerows using native species and allowing a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.

- Screen views of detracting features such as modern farm buildings through hedgerow and tree planting but retain views of traditional buildings such as the Listed All Saints Church visible on the edge of Wouldham.
- Conserve field boundaries to roads and retain views towards the Kent Downs scarp, in particular to the east across the Medway Valley.
- Restore grazing to slopes as a semi-natural grassland management technique and move away from the use of fields for agriculture.
- Conserve and manage Ancient Woodland areas promoting age and species diversity and maintaining active coppice management. Expand and connect woodland cover through natural regeneration or small-scale planting to improve biodiversity, soil quality, and reduce erosion. Avoid any planting within SSSI and SAC designated woodlands that would dilute the ecological properties for which they are designated.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.

LCA 2c - Birling Hill Downs and Scarp

Development Management Guidelines

- Retain the rural nature of the landscape and sparse settlement pattern, ensuring that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes such as Pilgrim's Way, whilst managing to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development.

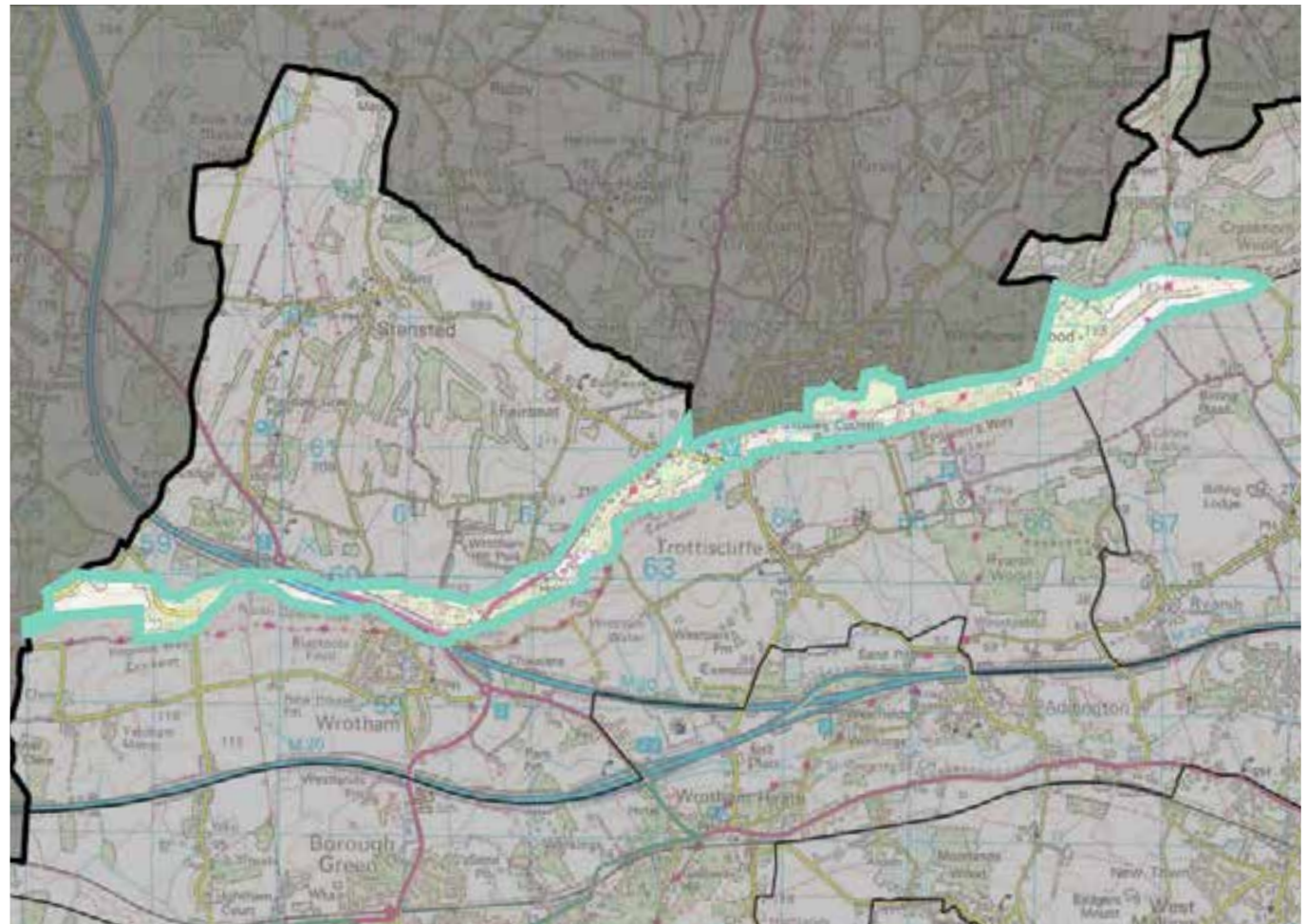
LCA 2d - Trosley Hill Scarp

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *The steeply sloping scarp, highly characteristic of the Kent Downs National Landscape within which it is located.*
- *A well defined tranquil, quiet character of steep, deciduous wooded slopes and few detracting influences.*
- *A highly accessible recreational area with both the North Downs Way long-distance trail and Pilgrim's Way historic trackway and Trosley Country Park.*
- *A high scenic quality, which where breaks in the vegetation allow, offers breathtaking panoramic views south over the landscape stretching to the far distance.*
- *Part of a SSSI designated for locally distinctive chalk grassland and beech woodland.*

Location

This LCA is situated on the steep slopes of the Kent Downs within the National Landscape, with the base of the steep wooded scarp slope forming the area's southern boundary with the open farmland in the vale. To the north and west lies the plateau farmland and the Borough boundary, and to the east the scarp and plateau overlooking the River Medway valley.



LCA 2d - Trosley Hill Scarp

Landscape Character Description

The character area is defined by its steeply sloping topography and woodland cover, much of which is Ancient and Semi Natural Woodland. Several areas of Open Access Land including Golden Nob, owned by The National Trust are located along the scarp, from which, where vegetation allows, there are breathtaking panoramic views south over the scarp foot and Vale of Holmesdale, one of the special components of the Kent Downs National Landscape. The landscape stretches to the far distance, with fields, hedgerows, scattered copses of trees and residential dwellings clearly visible below.

The scarp slope of this and the adjacent character area forms the Halling to Trottiscliffe Escarpment SSSI, designated for its locally distinctive chalk grassland and beech woodland with outstanding assemblages of plants. Ancient woodland indicators are evident in the woodland ground flora including wood anemone, dogs mercury, dog violet, lords and ladies and celandine, however the trees are of a monotonous age and species diversity.

Trosley Country Park, on the boundary with Gravesham Borough Council is situated within the woodland in the centre of the area, and its local value can be seen by the presence of facilities including a café and car parking. The park contains several public rights of way as well as permissive routes and areas of open access land.

There are some fields used as rough grazing on the lower slopes enclosed by woodland to the north and with hedgerow boundaries to the south where they meet the boundary of the adjacent character area. Scattered individual properties are interspersed along roads, in particular on the A227 Gravesend Road though these are well screened by boundary tree planting.



Panoramic view south over the Vale of Holmesdale

LCA 2d - Trosley Hill Scarp

There is intervisibility with Vigo Village, located within Gravesham Borough Council on the scarp crest immediately north of Trosley Country Park, screened by the extensive tree planting within and around it.

The area is highly accessible for walkers with a network of footpaths, with both the North Downs Way long-distance trail and Pilgrims Way historic trackway passing through the area. Views within the area are generally limited and contained by woodland and the dense tree cover also largely blocks views outwards from the character area, screening the wide views south, glimpsed through occasional gaps in the trees.

Further afield there are views toward the urban areas of Medway Gap and Maidstone, with the reflection from the scattered areas of polytunnels isolating them as detracting features. The area feels calm and tranquil, though neither secluded or wild due to the evidence of management and popularity with visitors, especially around the Country Park and whilst birdsong can be heard within the dense woodlands, so also can the distant traffic noise from the M20 motorway at the woodland edge.



Road past Vigo Village



Woodland in coppice management



Sunken Lane and the North Downs Way



Wood anemones in woodland ground flora



The breathtaking scenery within views south from the National Landscape, one of its special qualities

LCA 2d -Trosley Hill Scarp

Issues and Forces for Change

- The characteristic panoramic views from the scarp are highly vulnerable to the visual effects of new development in the scarp foot and vale landscapes to the south. Where such developments lie outside of the Kent Downs National Landscape these may still affect the setting of the National Landscape .
- Development of settlement and other built features such as pylons and polytunnels in adjacent character areas to the south can be seen from this area, detracting from its rural character.
- The introduction of visitor facilities at Trosley Country Park are a positive change to connect people with the natural environment.
- Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.

National Landscape Guidelines

- Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development, including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape.
- Protect against the affects of development within the setting of the National Landscape located in the scarp foot and vale to the south of the scarp, visible within panoramic views, referring to character area specific guidelines for integrating development to protect views and minimise affects.
- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Ensure consideration of vernacular architecture (e.g. the use of Kentish ragstone, plain clay tiles, steeply pitched roofs, timber framing and detailing) and how building materials contribute to their landscape setting.
- Maintain the low levels of visual detractors which would commonly be associated with horse grazing and paddocks. Refer to the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Maintain public access and facilities within the Country Park whilst limiting access to other wooded areas through discreet fencing and appropriate signage, to improve their biodiversity value.
- Consider targeted tree clearance to create viewpoints with panoramic views south from high ground.
- Encourage opportunities for natural regeneration within woodlands to improve age and species diversity and longevity. Avoid planting within these SSSI-designated woodlands in order not to dilute the ecological properties for which they are designated.
- Maintain the open pasture on the lower slopes, reintroducing grazing to aid restoration of the locally distinctive chalk grassland and to prevent scrub encroachment.
- Restore areas where undergrazing and scrub encroachment has led to deterioration in the condition and presence of locally distinctive chalk grassland within part of the Halling to Trottscliffe Escarpment SSSI designation for beech woodland and chalk grassland.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Restore and enhance hedgerow boundaries using native species, woodland belts, shaws, and shelter belts to reinforce the Borough's characteristic landscape structure.

LCA 2d -Trosley Hill Scarp

Development Management Guidelines

- Prevent urban edges exerting pressure on the landscape and continue to screen any development along roads with tree planting, with consideration for views both within and into the National Landscape.
- Retain the rural nature of the landscape and sparse settlement pattern, ensuring that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Avoid intrusion onto or above sensitive ridgelines or within prominent slopes.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via promoted routes such as the North Downs Way whilst managing to avoid habitat disturbance and consider new footpaths and cycle routes.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development.

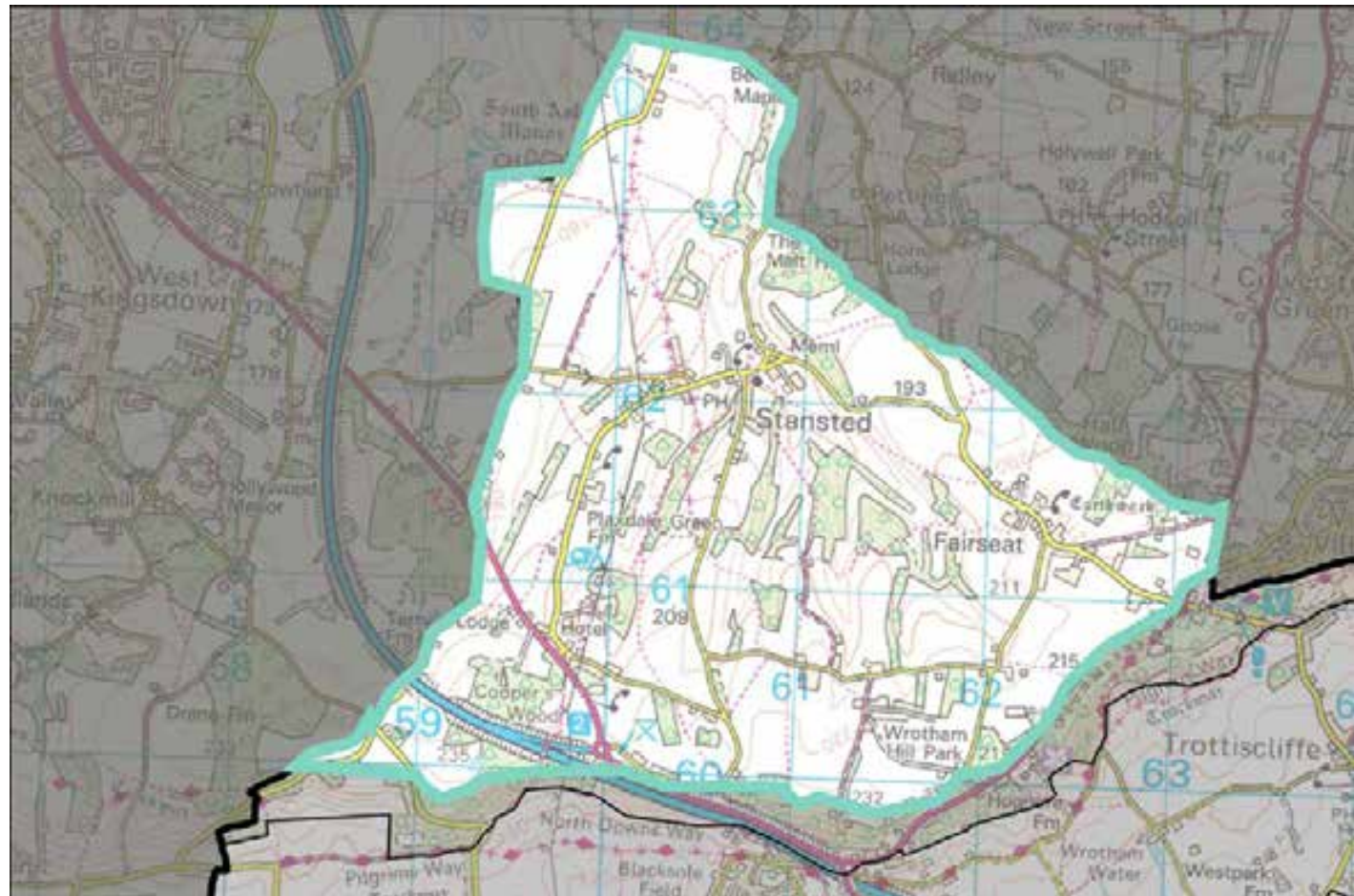
LCA 2e - Stansted Downs

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *An undulating landscape of mixed agriculture and pasture within the Kent Downs dip slope, located within the Kent Downs National Landscape.*
- *The coherent and distinctive character is formed by the consistent arrangement of irregular shaped fields and woodland blocks and shaws growing within the folds of the rolling landscape.*
- *The landscape is contained, with few views either within or out of the area, contributing to a safe, but slightly wild perceptual quality. The wooded belts provide a good network of tree cover, reinforcing habitat corridors and connectivity.*
- *Strong historic time depth evidenced through Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.*
- *A robust Public Right of way network.*
- *Generally well contained settlement screened by woodland.*

Location

Located within the northwest corner of the Borough and formed of an area of undulating dip slope at the top of the Kent Downs scarp. The southern edge of the area south of Wrotham Hill Road sits within the Kent Downs National Landscape. To the north and west is the neighbouring Sevenoaks District, with a short section of the eastern boundary bordering Gravesham Borough. The area's southern boundary borders the steep scarp slopes of the Exedown and Trosley Hill Downs character areas.



LCA 2e - Stansted Downs

Landscape Character Description

The landscape, located on the Kent Downs dip slope consists of a rolling topography formed by shallow dry valleys, and covered with a mosaic of arable fields, pasture and woodland blocks and shaws growing within the contoured folds of the landscape. Many of the wooded blocks are Ancient Woodland, connected via the shaws and hedgerows and forming a substantial network of habitat. There are also localised areas of grassland designated as priority habitats of good semi improved and lowland calcareous.

The field pattern is irregular and of varied sizes, with the edge woodland providing containment and restricting views. Within areas of flatter ground an intensification of agriculture has resulted in the amalgamation of fields, weakening the sense of place and ecological integrity as historic field patterns and hedgerows are lost.

Stansted village and Fairseat hamlet are two slightly larger settlements, both of which are largely covered by Conservation Areas and with buildings formed of materials in the local vernacular that include flint, brick and weatherboard. There are further small pockets of settlement ribboned along roads and scattered individual farmsteads that include several listed buildings including the Church of St Mary at Stansted Hill, the 16th Century Coldharbour farmhouse and South Ash Manor, a 16th Century timber framed house located on the Borough boundary. Settlement is generally well contained within the landscape and screened by woodland.



Rolling landform with pasture surrounded by tree belts.

LCA 2e - Stansted Downs

The London Golf Club extends into the character area along its northwest edge though the majority of it sits within the neighbouring Sevenoaks District. More modern development, some of which is not reflective of the local vernacular, and the camping site facilities on South Ash Road are visually prominent, as are the pylons that cross the area from north to south. The M20 crosses through the area at its southwestern corner.

Other built form includes the Wrotham transmitting station set within Coopers Wood south of London Road. The station includes a tall television mast and whilst the woodland hides its base, the tall structure is visible from a distance including from beyond the boundary of the character area. A covered reservoir is located north of Exedown Road. The reservoir has domed raised embankments that appear out of place with its linear form though it is not widely visible from within the area. The conifer planting screening the reservoir is more incongruous and visible from a wider area than the reservoir itself.

There is a strong network of public rights of way throughout the area, and the landscape is interspersed by narrow country lanes that wind through the area, generally bounded by hedgerows or contained within woodland.

Views within the area are generally short ranged, limited by the rolling landform and interspersed areas of woodland. Longer views both out of and into the area are similarly contained, reducing any perceptual or visual relationship with the surrounding areas. In the southwest there are wide views across the open, arable land, both within and beyond the character area with long distance views south over the lower land within the vale from Exedown Road. The area has a strong rural nature, feeling wild and remote beyond the larger settlements and can appear unmanaged, leading to a slightly remote and unsettling character in places.



The undulating landscape and woodland provide enclosure



Cropland and pasture divided by shaws



Scattered historical properties



Lanes enclosed by woodland and hedgerows



Historic buildings in Stansted



Pylons crossing the landscape

LCA 2e - Stansted Downs

Issues and Forces for Change

- *Some erosion to character through an intensification of farming with a weakening to the distinctive and historic sense of enclosure, loss of hedgerow boundaries and their ecological integrity and the construction of features or buildings unsympathetic to local character, such as caravan parks and commercial development.*
- *Settlement largely respects the local vernacular and is demonstrated through Conservation Areas, however more recent development has not reflected the locally distinctive vernacular of flint, brick and tile, leading to a degradation of character.*
- *Contained areas where development would be less noticeable include Ash Lane and Malthouse Road.*
- *Climate change and likely associated affects to species composition of woodlands including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development, including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape.
- Protect against the affects of development within the setting of the National Landscape located in the scarp foot and vale to the south of the scarp, visible within panoramic views, referring to character area specific guidelines for integrating development to protect views and minimise affects.
- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Ensure consideration of vernacular architecture (e.g. the use of Kentish ragstone, plain clay tiles, steeply pitched roofs, timber framing and detailing) and how building materials contribute to their landscape setting.
- Maintain the low levels of visual detractors which would commonly be associated with horse grazing and paddocks. Refer to the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Consider targeted tree clearance to create viewpoints with panoramic views south from high ground.
- Encourage opportunities for natural regeneration within woodlands to improve age and species diversity and longevity. Avoid planting within these SSSI-designated woodlands in order not to dilute the ecological properties for which they are designated.
- Maintain the open pasture on the lower slopes, reintroducing grazing to aid restoration of the locally distinctive chalk grassland and to prevent scrub encroachment.
- Restore areas where undergrazing and scrub encroachment has led to deterioration in the condition and presence of locally distinctive chalk grassland within part of the Halling to Trottiscliffe Escarpment SSSI designation for beech woodland and chalk grassland.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Restore and create hedgerow boundaries to fields where they have been eroded for agricultural intensification, creating species-rich hedgerows using appropriate native species. Allow hedgerows to grow to >1.5m wide and have a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side using native species that reinforce the Borough's characteristic landscape structure.

LCA 2e - Stansted Downs

Development Management Guidelines

- Protect the settings of Stansted and Fairseat Conservation Areas and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Prevent urban edges exerting pressure on the landscape and continue to screen any development along roads with tree planting, with consideration for views both within and into the National Landscape.
- Maintain the remote character of the area and small-scale nature of settlement, ensuring that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Avoid intrusion onto or above sensitive ridgelines or within prominent slopes.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Ensure new development respects the locally distinctive vernacular of flint, brick and hung tile. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Continue to screen development with woodland. Site development in areas where it would be contained within the landscape through topography or woodland, acknowledging that existing woodland will provide immediate screening, whilst new planting will take time to establish.
- Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via promoted routes such as the North Downs Way whilst managing to avoid habitat disturbance and consider new footpaths and cycle routes.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development.

Landscape Character Type - Medway Valley

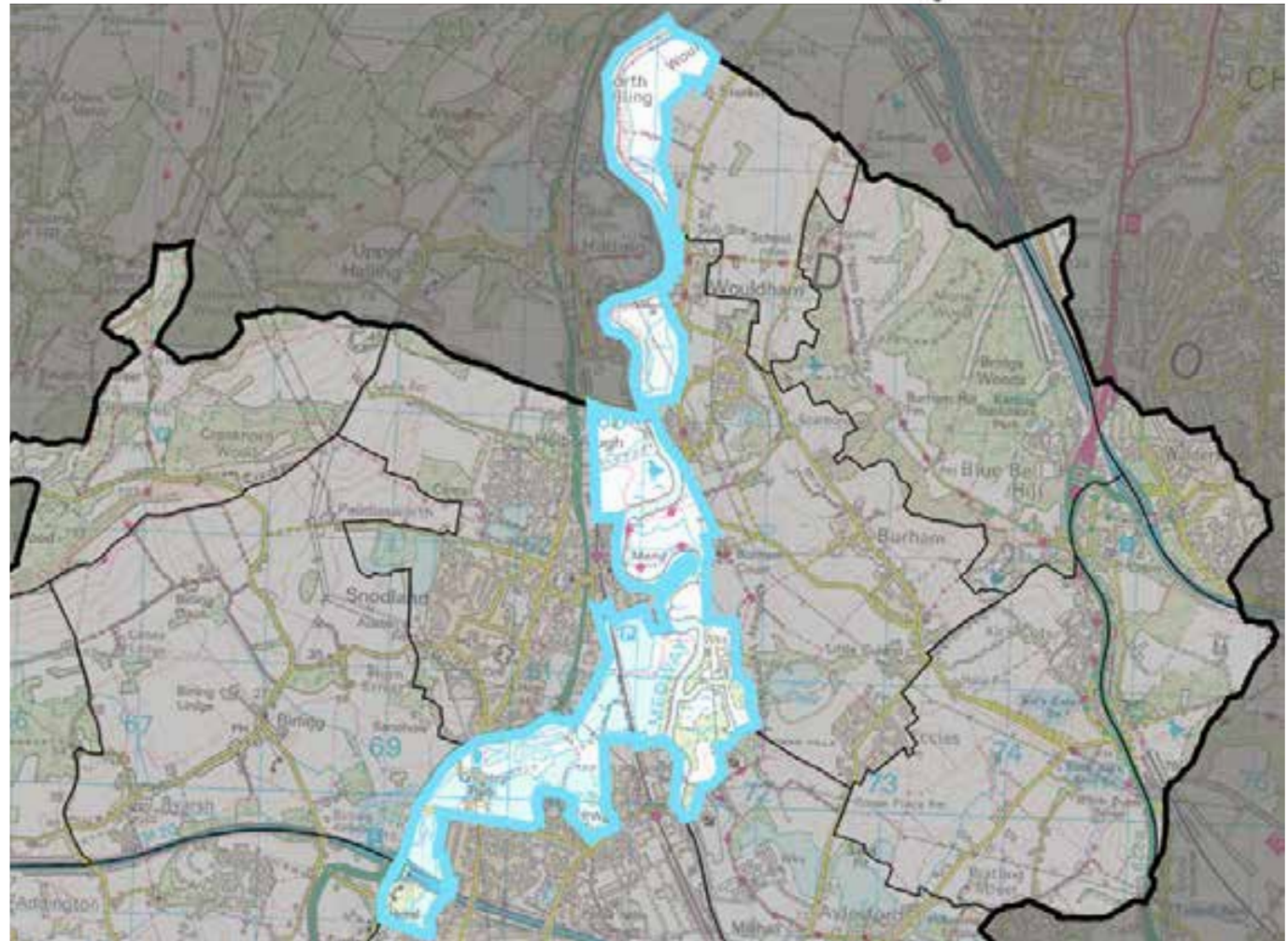
LCA 3a - Lower Medway Valley Floor

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *Regular, yet distinctively calm character of floodplain wetland mosaic formed of unimproved grassland and reed beds, that is perceptibly separate to the surrounding character areas.*
- *The sinuous river corridor within the level valley floor is extensively accessible, with footpaths along the eastern riverbank including the Medway Valley Walk linking to the wider footpath network.*
- *Scattered built features within the floodplain that include scattered properties, the new bridge crossing between Holborough and Peter's Village and pylons.*
- *Open, long-range views along the river and marsh and through the symmetrical valley to adjacent character areas.*
- *Rough pastoral fields including grazing pasture interwoven with channels and wet drainage ditches form part of the floodplain wetland mosaic associated with the river.*
- *Ecological integrity through SSSI and Local Wildlife Sites and historic time depth evidenced through Listed and historic Buildings.*

Location

The character area follows the south to north flowing River Medway from the settlement of New Hythe north to the Borough boundary. The northernmost extent (north of Wouldham) is located within the Kent Downs National Landscape.



LCA 3a - Lower Medway Valley Floor

Landscape Character Description

The River Medway winds a sinuous route through the valley, bounded by reeds, marsh and rough pasture and some areas of encroaching scrub. The reeds blur the visual boundary between the river and the surrounding landform, hiding the water's edge and merging the line between water and land. The exception to this is at Peters Village where the eastern bank has been engineered to bring the water to a designed edge within the riverside public realm environment. The surrounding rough pastoral fields interwoven with channels and wet drainage ditches form part of the floodplain wetland mosaic associated with the river, and are included within this character area.

Leybourne Lakes Country Park is an area of extensive former pits, now established as wetlands that are largely defined as a Local Wildlife Site. It is accessible with public rights of way and permissive paths weaving through the lake network and is screened and separated from the surrounding roads and residential areas by woodland planting. Eccles Old Pit north west of Eccles is also designated a local Wildlife Site.

Holborough to Burham Marshes SSSI covers the southern half of the area, and the River Medway and Marshes, Wouldham Local Wildlife Site is located to the north. The river margins throughout the area contain the priority habitats of coastal saltmarsh and mudflats, with floodplain wetland mosaic present on much of the surrounding land consisting of a mix of reedbeds, good quality semi-improved grassland and deciduous woodland in the south. The edge of the floodplain wetland mosaic and the associated change in topography as the valley starts to rise combine with changes in vegetation cover and land use and mark the edge of the area.

Rough pasture is used as grazing land and is divided by hedgerows, drainage ditches and in locations with horse paddocks, post and wire fencing.



Looking west from riverside path near Burham Court, with views of the settlement of Snodland across the river with the Kent Downs scarp behind.

LCA 3a - Lower Medway Valley Floor

There is one Listed structure, the Boundary Stone of The City of Rochester on the west bank near Burham wastewater treatment works. The treatment works, two crossing pylon lines, the new bridge crossing to Peters Village and a handful of properties on the edge of Wouldham represent the only built structures within the area.

The river corridor is extensively accessible, with footpaths along the eastern riverbank as far south as Burham Court linking to the wider footpath network to the east and settlements including Wouldham, Peters Village and Burham Court within the adjacent character area.

The flat and open nature of the valley floor means that views are far reaching, within, from and into the character area. The area is strongly connected to and influenced by the landscape either side that includes the industrial characteristics on the western bank around Snodland and Halling and the gently sloping agricultural land of the rising valley forming the base of the Kent Downs scarp to the east. The southern boundary of the character area is defined as New Hythe where the river becomes more disconnected from its surrounding landscape and the floodplain is lost. Although the character area in isolation is calm along its length, surrounding activity from adjacent character areas can be visually and audibly present, reducing its tranquillity in places.



River corridor in context of industrial development on the west bank and farmland on the east bank



Encroaching scrub



Engineered river edge at Peters Village, with the Mill at Snodland visible in the distance



Horse paddocks divided by post and wire fencing



Footpath along river embankment crest



Leybourne Lakes Country Park

LCA 3a - Lower Medway Valley Floor

Issues and Forces for Change

- *There is some detracting influence from industry and development within adjoining character areas with which the area has wide intervisibility, most notably along the west bank at Snodland and Holborough where the industrial and built features contrast with the meandering natural form of the river and assert a distinctive influence on its character.*
- *Development is easily visible across the open, flat landscape.*
- *The designation of SSSI, definition as Local Wildlife Site and the occurrence of Priority Habitats linked to the river corridor are testament to the positive condition of its vegetation features.*
- *Some evidence of scrub encroachment and degradation of floodplain wetland mosaic as a result of the land becoming drier.*
- *An increase in settlement and industry within the adjacent character areas, particularly the large scale industrial development at Snodland has affected views and tranquillity within the area.*
- *Areas of floodplain have been lost to development, for example at Peters Village.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development, including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape.
- Reduce grazing pressure in horse paddocks. Manage pasture to improve its ecological integrity, considering grazing rotation, to ensure grazing does not consistently reduce the sward height to below 2.5cms. Seek to achieve grassland of higher species diversity and sward height, and reduction in bare or poached ground. Replace modern wire fencing with native hedgerows if space allows. Refer to guidance within the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Improve the waterside vegetation along the banks of the River Medway and restore as an ecological corridor for wildlife. Conserve and manage the river and associated water bodies and habitats to protect and enhance wetland biodiversity.

- Create riparian zones of vegetation between arable fields and rivers and increase access and views to wetlands, increasing biodiversity within the floodplain and adjacent to tributaries, whilst strengthening physical and visual connections and extending the riparian landscape through management to create a more distinctive landscape character. Expand and connect woodland cover creating clearings for natural regeneration or small-scale planting to improve biodiversity, and soil quality, to reduce erosion and establish ground flora.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Encourage agricultural management that is sympathetic to the riparian environment, such as soil conservation, riparian buffers, and wetland restoration. Seek opportunity to increase water levels in drainage ditches within the floodplain grazing marsh, to improve the condition of this priority habitat.
- Restore and enhance hedgerow boundaries using native species, woodland belts, shaws, and shelter belts, whilst retaining the open nature of the landscape, avoiding woodland planting which would block open views across the floodplain and river corridor.
- Protect the floodplain and avoid development within it. Improve quality of pedestrian links along the River Medway.

LCA 3a - Lower Medway Valley Floor

- Support traditional farming techniques including the planting and management of traditional orchards, and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.
 - Enhance and create new green corridors and ecological networks.
 - Control invasive species in watercourses and woodlands, such as Himalayan Balsam and Signal Crayfish and monitor changes in flora and fauna due to climate change, including pest outbreaks and invasive species spread. Ensure the ongoing protection of listed buildings and historic landmarks, in particular those associated with the river, encouraging interpretation and signage and drawing upon cultural heritage for landscape management.
- of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Retain views across the river valley and avoid any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
 - Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
 - Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
 - Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
 - Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
 - Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes including the Medway Valley Walk whilst managing to avoid habitat disturbance. See opportunities to provide further riverside access to link existing right of way networks.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

Development Management Guidelines

- Site any small areas of new development in and around existing settlement within the valley floor in locations with existing landscape features such as hedges and tree belts, with due consideration of flood risk.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas

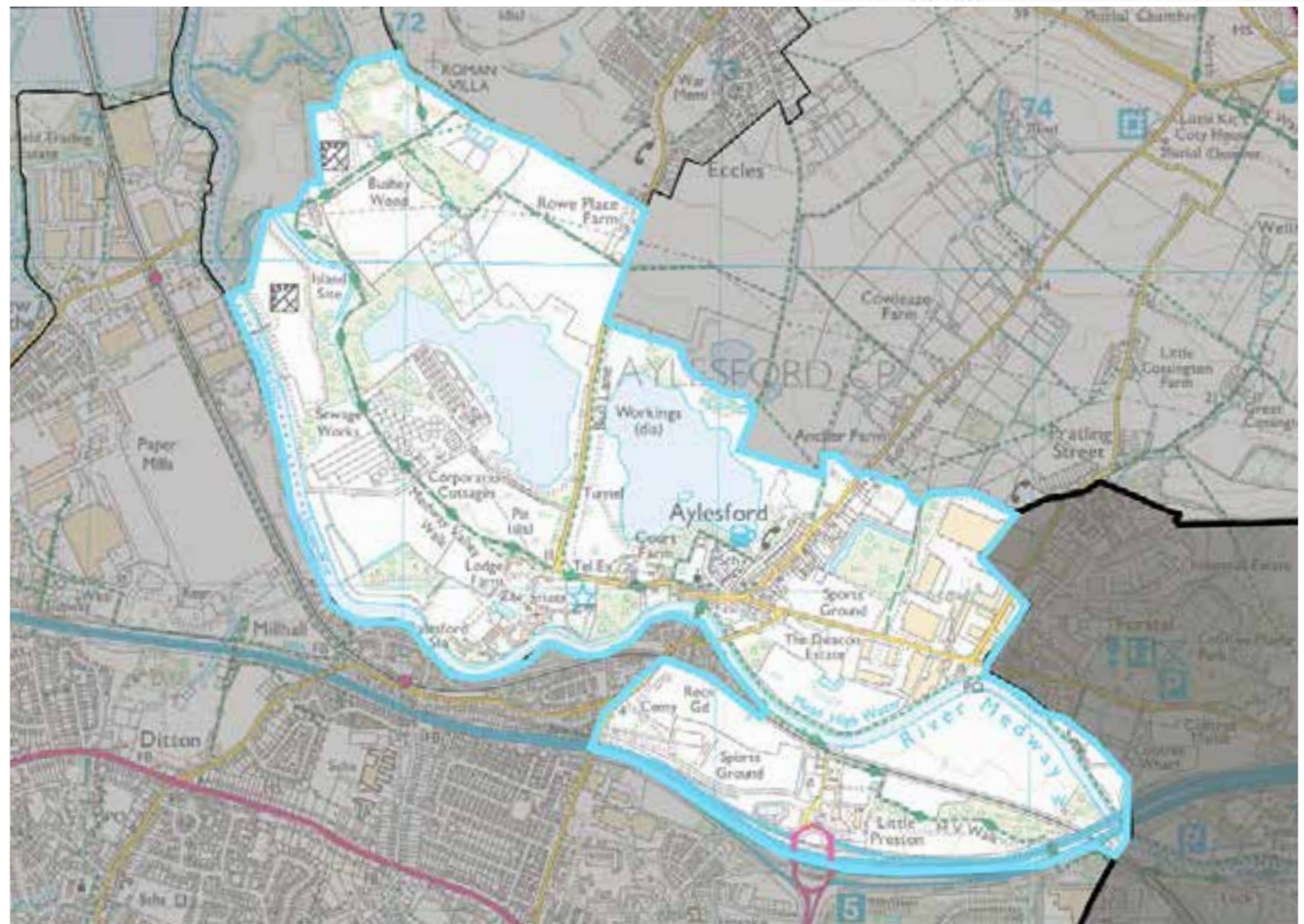
LCA 3b - Aylesford Medway Valley

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *The flat valley floor with a mix of land uses that include The Friars historic building, The historic village of Aylesford, water-filled pits formed by historic quarrying, solar farms, sewage works and industrial / commercial buildings. Human intervention is evident throughout.*
- *Public rights of way include a riverside footpath and the Medway Valley Walk.*
- *The screening effect of the heavily vegetated flat landscape reduces intervisibility between features and reduces the sense of discordance.*
- *Frequent wooded belts and copses create an attractive network of dense vegetation whilst also providing beneficial screening for some built features.*
- *The former pits provide evidence of the area's heritage and now act as wetlands, adding biodiversity value.*
- *Industrial estates feel busy and of a homogenous character, contrasting with a perceived quiet and stillness within other areas including the lakes and country park. Parts of the Medway Valley Walk adjacent to the solar farms and sewage works feel enclosed that combined with often lacking sight lines can lead to an unsettling sense of security.*

Location

The character area is located north of the settlements of Ditton and Leybourne, and southeast of Snodland. To the north and east are the farmland features of Eccles East Vale character area, with the scarp slopes of the Kent Downs rising to the northeast. The River Medway meanders along and with the lakes at Leybourne lakes Country Park forms much of the area's western boundary. The area extends to the M20 at its southern boundary and includes the settlement of Aylesford Village.



LCA 3b - Aylesford Medway Valley

Landscape Character Description

The area is formed of the flat valley floor through which the River Medway flows. Despite the historic influence on the form of the character area however, this physical link is not immediately apparent with the river obscured from view in much of the area. There are a mix of land uses with associated built features, and human intervention is evident throughout. The area includes two solar farms located within the northwest of the area, a sewage works, flooded quarries north of Aylesford, The Friars Priory, Forstal industrial estate and settlement. There are some scattered fields in agricultural or pastoral use however these are less of a defining feature within the character area than the abundance of built form and lakes. Fields are generally of varied size and irregular in shape and there is no distinct pattern of land use throughout the area.

Frequent wooded belts and copses create an attractive network of dense vegetation whilst also providing beneficial screening for some built features. Boundaries are generally formed by wooded belts or hedgerows that are often left to grow into tree lines and some built features are enclosed with metal security fencing. The high proportion of tree cover is a defining feature of the character area distinguishing it from neighbouring areas and this, in combination with the flat landform restricts intervisibility with built features being absorbed into the landscape.

The River Medway, forming much of the southern boundary of the area has been straightened by past industrial development and is now contained by embankments, tree planting and the built elements of the urban fringe of Aylesford and Ditton. Its character here, flowing through a wooded corridor contrasts with its features further north in the Lower Medway Valley where the river widens, becomes more sinuous and is surrounded by marsh and reedbeds.



Views of the Historic core of Aylesford as seen from Station Road.

LCA 3b - Aylesford Medway Valley

Aylesford lies in the east of the area and is its largest settlement. It has a mix of building styles based around an historic core, with modern buildings located on its fringes that extend and merge with the urban areas of Ditton and Larkfield south of the M20 motorway. Key historic features include the old Aylesford Bridge, almshouses on Rochester Road and St Peter & St Paul's Church built in stone, though brick is the predominant building material throughout the settlement. Aylesford Bridge is designated as a Scheduled Monument and there are striking views of this and the cluster of buildings nestled together within their riverside setting from the more contemporary bridge to the south. This historic core in Aylesford along with The Friars is defined as Aylesford Conservation Area, and both Aylesford and The Friars support numerous Listed Buildings.

The Friars, tucked away in a location adjacent to the River Medway is a large medieval priory with associated grounds - a religious residence for the Order of Carmelites and a visitor attraction. Its value is evidenced by the extensive car park, tearoom and gift shop it provides.

Forstal comprises a small linear settlement of brick terraced housing and modern apartment buildings. An ornate brick pumping station on Forstal Road is an interesting feature, but the small settlement is dwarfed and dominated by the surrounding warehouse style industrial units of corrugated metal. The ribbon of houses on Pratling Street, although within the adjacent character area share a visual connectivity with the Industrial Estate. There are a few properties in the hamlet of Little Preston immediately adjacent to the M20 motorway on the southern edge of the character area though predominantly buildings are industrial and separated from the majority of the area by the railway line. Coldharbour Lane in Little Preston hosts traditional buildings of brick, stone and tile whilst modern warehouse style buildings are situated behind and screened from view by trees.



The Friars Priory and lake



Flat land in the floodplain



Almshouses in Aylesford



Solar farm enclosed by fencing



Contained fields screened by trees

LCA 3b - Aylesford Medway Valley

The former pits provide evidence of the area's heritage and now act as wetlands. These are of importance for biodiversity with Aylesford Old Pit being designated as a Local Wildlife Site. and Aylesford Pit a Regionally Important Geodiversity Site.

A few public rights of way cross the area and include a riverside footpath and the Medway Valley Walk and the road network connects the various built features.

The area feels contained with few views in, out or within the character area as a result of the flat topography and the abundance of trees and this informs the lack of connectivity with adjacent areas. Areas of land around the solar farms and sewage works feel unmanaged, and where this combines with high fencing gives rise to an unsettling feel which is only increased by the broader sense of enclosure. In contrast areas that are more populated including those at Aylesford and at the Friars feel more settled and safer.

LCA 3b - Aylesford Medway Valley

Issues and Forces for Change

- *The landscape is filled with a mixture of built features of varying styles and uses that when blended are discordant, however the screening effect of the heavily vegetated flat landscape reduces intervisibility reducing the sense of discordance.*
- *More dominant than the built features themselves is the associated security fencing, its unaesthetic form restricting visibility and openness, in places enclosing the edges of the adjacent paths and giving rise perceptually to a more unsettling sense of security.*
- *Several landscape elements are common throughout and bind it as a single character area including the flat landform, high density of wooded tree cover, abundance of lakes and contained nature.*
- *Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*
- *Restoration of the former pits to wetlands is of ecological value, defined as Local Wildlife Sites.*
- *Development at Little Preston is contained well within the landscape, whereas Forstal Industrial estate is larger and generally not well screened. Solar farms constructed on flat land near the river are well contained and screened, and are not noticeable.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development, including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape.
- Reduce grazing pressure in horse paddocks. Manage pasture to improve its ecological integrity, considering grazing rotation, to ensure grazing does not consistently reduce the sward height to below 2.5cms. Seek to achieve grassland of higher species diversity and sward height, and reduction in bare or poached ground. Replace modern wire fencing with native hedgerows if space allows. Refer to guidance within the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Improve the waterside vegetation along the banks of the River Medway and restore as an ecological corridor for wildlife. Conserve and manage the river and associated water bodies and habitats to protect and enhance wetland biodiversity.

- Create riparian zones of vegetation between arable fields and rivers and increase access and views to wetlands, increasing biodiversity within the floodplain and adjacent to tributaries, whilst strengthening physical and visual connections and extending the riparian landscape through management to create a more distinctive landscape character. Conserve and manage Ancient Woodland areas, promoting age and species diversity and maintaining active coppice management. Expand and connect woodland cover creating clearings for natural regeneration or small-scale planting to improve biodiversity, and soil quality, to reduce erosion and establish ground flora.
- Improve age and species diversity within woodlands to ensure longevity. Encourage natural regeneration through thinning and coppicing to allow clearings for the natural regeneration of trees, shrubs and ground flora. Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Encourage agricultural management that is sympathetic to the riparian environment, such as soil conservation, riparian buffers, and wetland restoration. Seek opportunity to increase water levels in drainage ditches within the floodplain grazing marsh, to improve the condition of this priority habitat.
- Conserve the historic core of Aylesford and the Friars. Retain the historic settlement edge and its relationship with the landscape, avoiding enclosing the old settlement core within new development and whilst having regard to the Conservation Area and Management Appraisal.

LCA 3b - Aylesford Medway Valley

- Manage hedgerows through cutting to avoid degradation into tree lines, allowing individual scattered trees to remain as hedgerow trees. Avoid woodland planting that would block open views across the floodplain and river corridor.
- Protect the floodplain and avoid development within it. Improve quality of pedestrian links along the River Medway.
- Support traditional farming techniques including the planting and management of traditional orchards, and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.
- Enhance and create new green corridors and ecological networks.
- Control invasive species in watercourses and woodlands, such as Himalayan balsam and signal crayfish and monitor changes in flora and fauna due to climate change, including pest outbreaks and invasive species spread. Encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.
- Create connections with the river, with which there is limited intervisibility. Create open views of the former pits through selective tree removal to promote interpretation of the area's heritage and wildlife and to improve the perception of security.
- Ensure the ongoing protection of listed buildings and historic landmarks, in particular those associated with the river, encouraging interpretation and signage and drawing upon cultural heritage for landscape management.

Development Management Guidelines

- Whilst development potential could be restricted by the high flood risk within the area and its biodiversity value, there are opportunities for integration within the landscape if screened. There are several contained fields in the north of the area within which development would be less noticeable and with existing landscape features such as hedges and tree belts. Consider advance planting of woodland around plots.
- Enhance built form through the use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Employ use of traditional local building materials for boundary walls and plant native hedgerows within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Protect the settings of Aylesford Conservation Areas. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Retain views across the river valley and avoid any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes including the Medway Valley Walk whilst managing to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

Landscape Character Type - Vale

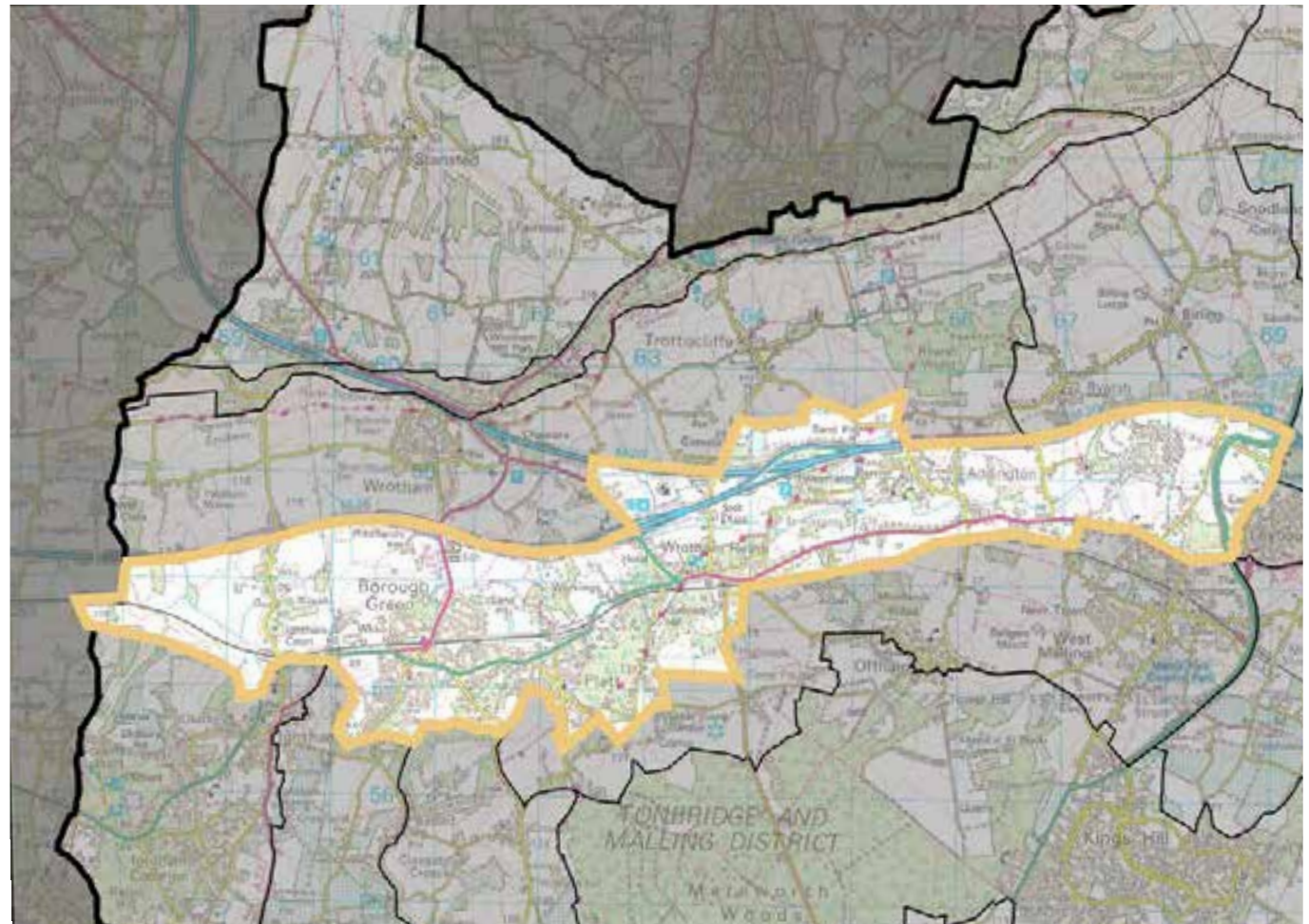
LCA 4a - Wrotham Heath Greensand Vale and Slopes

Key Characteristics and Valued Qualities

- A rolling landscape, parts of which are within the Kent Downs National Landscape, located at the base of the Vale of Holmesdale, and at the southern edge of the dip slope of the Greensand Ridge to the south.
- Formed of a coherent pattern of features tied together by woodland that provides a continuous function of screening and containment to built form.
- A mix of anthropogenic uses comprising mineral extraction, farmland, solar farm, golf courses and settlement, interspersed with woodland.
- A high proportion of settlement compared to those surrounding it, adding to and strengthening the depth of human influence within the area.
- A strong influence of transport infrastructure (M26, M20 and A25) and industry.
- The area is well connected through a network of PRowWs and smaller roads, and a train station at Borough Green.
- Whilst intermittently busy within settlements, notably the larger settlement of Borough Green there are areas of quiet but with a tamed, managed quality throughout.
- A significant historical pattern within the area evidenced through Listed Buildings, Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas.

Location

The area encompasses land within the Vale of Holmesdale to the east and west of Borough Green. It is generally surrounded by farmland to the north, south and west. The northern boundary is largely formed by the M20 and M26 motorways, and the southern boundary in part by the railway line and the change in land use to farmland. Areas in the west and north are located within the Kent Downs National Landscape.



LCA 4a - Wrotham Heath Greensand Vale and Slopes

Landscape Character Description

The gently rolling landform extending throughout the area is interspersed with areas of tree cover, limiting wider views and screening the localised development and infrastructure. Much of the land use relates to current and past industrial uses. Existing sites include the highly visible sand extraction works at Nepicar Farm however there are several extraction workings and pits within the area, some of which are now disused and in various stages of restoration, many being well screened by vegetation and water filled. The area is also characterised by its linear transport routes, with major roads and a railway line crossing the area, subdividing and separating land uses and leading to a fragmented land pattern. Despite this there are pockets of pastoral farmland, which with the woodlands and shelterbelts that include areas of Ancient Woodland, combine as a common key feature of the area, providing structure and cohesiveness and assisting in settling built form within the landscape.

Key woodland blocks are strongest at settlement boundaries and bordering former and current mineral extraction sites, where they provide a screening function and containment to the settlements. Field and land boundaries are also largely formed by a wooded edge, although there are some hedgerows and post & wire fences to pastoral farmland, and some timber fencing and ornamental hedgerows within urban areas.

The character area includes a high proportion of settlement compared to those surrounding it, adding to and strengthening the depth of human influence within the area. Settlement boundaries have expanded over time, and contain a mix of building styles and ages. Borough Green adjoins the neighbouring settlement of St Mary's Platt, a village containing many traditional buildings, several of which are Listed.



Horse paddocks and development at Leybourne Chase interspersed with woodland, with filtered views of the wooded Kent Downs scarp.

LCA 4a - Wrotham Heath Greensand Vale and Slopes

Wrotham Heath and Addington villages also contain a mix of buildings styles with some in a traditional style, including the Listed Church of St Margaret at Addington, and areas within Addington and St Mary's Platt are designated Conservation Areas.

Ightham Court in the west is a Listed historic park and garden containing an imposing mid-16th Century manor house, also Listed. The house is an interesting and imposing glimpsed feature within the landscape though its wooded surrounds screen it effectively. Further settlement can be found in the form of ribbon development along roads, notably the A20 and there is a modern development at Leybourne Chase, contained by woodland to the west, and pastoral grazing fields to the east. At its centre is Leybourne Chase with its associated clocktower and outbuildings. The distinctive development, with its main access via an historic tree lined avenue includes community kitchen gardens, grazing land, an arboretum and coppiced woodland with trails. Other scattered settlement can be seen throughout the area.

There is a significant historical pattern within the area. Addington Long Barrow and the Chestnuts Long Barrow are both Medway Megaliths, the group of early neolithic megalithic monuments grouped around the River Medway. They are located on private land near the settlement of Addington and are registered Scheduled Monuments. Another Scheduled Monument is Leybourne Castle, a private residence located in Leybourne behind St Peter and St Paul's Church. The circa 13th Century bastions are still visible within the footprint of the property. The area has many Listed Buildings scattered throughout including several church's, farmsteads and buildings clustered within villages, their distinctive features often seen in glimpses through the surrounding landscape.



The Listed Church of St Martin



Leybourne Castle



Golf course contained by woodland



Wooded lanes



Traditional building vernacular at Wrotham



Sand quarry

LCA 4a - Wrotham Heath Greensand Vale and Slopes

Other land uses include West Malling and Wrotham Heath golf courses, located north and south of the A20 road respectively. Their features contribute to the artificial and managed character of much of the area's landscape though remnant heathy grasslands are present in the roughs of the Wrotham Heath golf course, meriting it a designation as a Local Wildlife Site.

The M20 and M26 motorways are subsumed within the low-lying vale landscape with much woodland planting, but can be noisy with their junction being a significant feature. A solar farm situated between the two motorways is screened effectively by their linear wooded and scrub edges, with other similarly located business and light industry being reasonably screened by vegetation belts.

The area is well connected through a network of PRoWs and smaller roads, and a train station at Borough Green. Views are generally limited by the area's wooded character with few longer views though intermittently the ridge of the Kent Downs is visible to the north.

Generally the area does not have a strong relationship with the character areas surrounding it and its perceptual qualities are mixed. They combine the movement and functionality of the larger settlements and the area's major road infrastructure, with locations providing a relatively calm and pastoral quality. Perceptual quality however is generally influenced by features that are indicative of historic and current human intervention within the landscape.

LCA 4a - Wrotham Heath Greensand Vale and Slopes

Issues and Forces for Change

- *A defining key characteristic is a landscape that has been much influenced by human activity.*
- *Varying built elements in a chaotically arranged pattern, but with an overall character of coherence, assisted by woodland providing a continuous element, screening and containment built form.*
- *Traditionally built buildings are largely centred around Addington and St Mary's Platt, however these are far outnumbered by more modern or less traditional buildings, with a lower proportion of traditional buildings comparative surrounding landscape character areas.*
- *Settlement has continued to expand, notably at Borough Green and the modern Leybourne Chase development.*
- *Development has occurred around the M26/M20 motorway junction, including solar and expansion of employment use.*
- *Areas of restoration around former extraction sites improves ecological integrity, though are generally not visible due to woodland screening.*
- *Climate change will result in likely affects to the species composition of woodlands including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Where located within the Kent Downs National Landscape, ensure that its special components, characteristics and qualities are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development, including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape.
- Ensure consideration of vernacular architecture (e.g. the use of Kentish ragstone, plain clay tiles, steeply pitched roofs, timber framing and detailing) and how building materials contribute to their landscape setting.
- Maintain the low levels of visual detractors which would commonly be associated with horse grazing and paddocks. Refer to the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Conserve and manage Ancient Woodland areas, promoting age and species diversity and maintaining active coppice management. Expand and connect woodland cover creating clearings for natural regeneration or small-scale planting to improve biodiversity, and soil quality, to reduce erosion and establish ground flora.

- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Conserve and enhance areas of remnant heath grassland. Restore chalk grassland and semi-improved pasture.
- Restore and enhance hedgerow boundaries using native species, woodland belts, shaws, and shelter belts to reinforce the Borough's characteristic landscape structure.
- Apply forestry practices that respect local character and visual amenity, using traditional techniques like coppicing.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries to farmland in lieu of fencing, creating species-rich hedgerows using native species and allowing a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Enhance and create new green corridors and ecological networks.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.
- Continue to screen and contain working pits and quarries. Restore disused pits and quarries, which have the potential to become valuable ecological niches.
- Encourage interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments which are hidden within the landscape.

LCA 4a - Wrotham Heath Greensand Vale and Slopes

Development Management Guidelines

- Site new development where it will be contained by areas of existing woodland as a preference over requiring new woodland planting that will take time to establish.
- Use advance planting of woodland buffers, copse and native hedgerows to assist in screening and settling new built form within an existing landscape setting.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Avoid intrusion onto or above sensitive ridgelines or within prominent slopes.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Consider new development within areas of former mineral working that provide flexibility for landform and restore and rewild former quarry sites where there is no development opportunity.
- Seek opportunity for new community orchard planting within development.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Avoid suburban-style boundaries, using natural materials including appropriate style fencing or native hedge screening.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Protect the settings of Addington and St Mary's Platt Conservation Areas and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Encourage interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments and draw upon cultural heritage for landscape management.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Avoid any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

Landscape Character Type - Greensand Fruit Belt

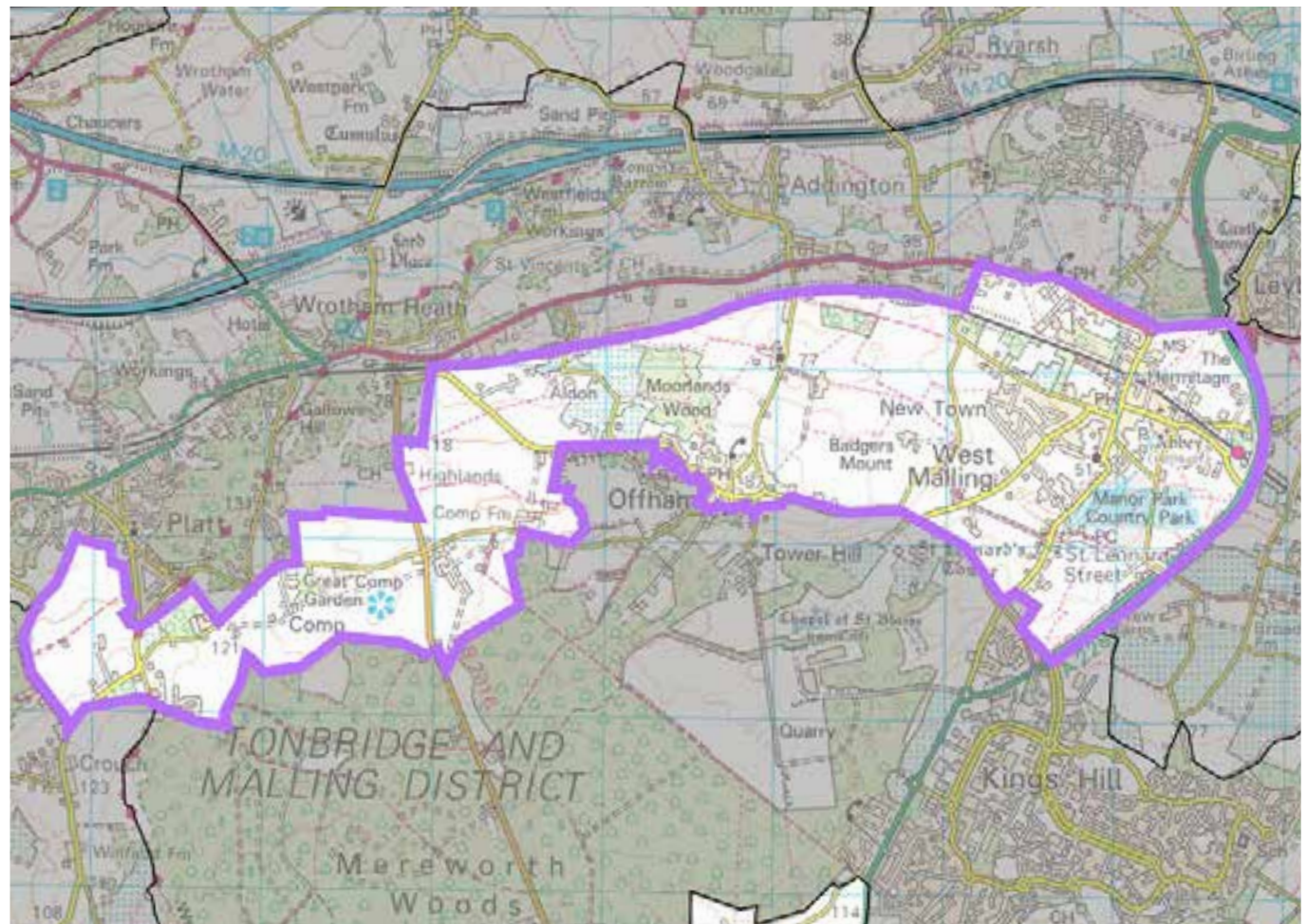
LCA 5a - West Malling Greensand Fruit Belt

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- A flat to gently undulating landform within the southern lower part of the Greensand dip slope, predominantly formed of agricultural farmland of irregular angular fields contained by a strong network of hedgerows and hedges growing on banks.
- Consistent wooded character from the narrow lanes lined by hedgerows distinctively growing on banks and interspersed trees.
- Intermittent visibility across the Vale of Holmesdale towards the rising wooded scarp of the Kent Downs.
- A network of public footpaths and bridleways including a part of the Wealdway long distance path.
- Villages and farmsteads are scattered throughout the area including the historic market town of West Malling and are supported by historic cores. Traditional built vernacular is commonplace and a notable defining key feature of the area.
- Whilst there is intermittent noise and activity within West Malling the generally quiet quality includes areas of occasional tranquillity within more rural areas and smaller settlements.
- Historic time-depth evidenced by Listed buildings, Conservation Areas and a Scheduled Monument.

Location

A linear area of open farmland sandwiched between Mereworth Woods to the south and Wrotham Greensand Slopes to the north. To the east lie the flatter, contained fields of the East Malling Greensand Fruit Belt and to the west the Plaxtol Greensand Ridge.



LCA 5a - West Malling Greensand Fruit Belt

Landscape Character Description

West Malling Fruit Belt has a gently rolling landform, a characteristic that distinctively separates it from the neighbouring more level East Malling Fruit Belt character area. Land use is predominantly agricultural farmland, formed from a mix of fruit and other crops. Polytunnels are a notable feature, standing out within the landscape and visible within distant views. The fields are medium sized and irregular in shape, with a strong network of hedgerow boundaries with interspersed trees and lines of trees planted as shelterbelts, that limit views and give the landscape a wooded appearance.

Despite this there is very little woodland in the area though much of any wooded areas is designated as Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland. This includes Moorlands Wood and Stubbersdown Wood, alongside a few smaller areas of copse. Moorlands Wood is also defined as a Local Wildlife Site, again one of very few in the area, the others being at St Mary's Churchyard in West Malling and within the fringes of Mereworth Woods on the southern edge of the character area.

Settlement is scattered throughout and includes the distinctively historic market town of West Malling, the village of Offham and several individual and clustered properties. Settlements are supported by historic cores and traditional built vernacular is commonplace and a notable defining key feature of the area. Conservation Areas at West Malling, Offham, Offham Church and Aldon Offham reinforce this characteristic, as do the multiple Listed Buildings, and the two Scheduled Monuments in West Malling - St Mary's Benedictine Abbey and St Leonard's Tower. The Quintain at Offham is also a Scheduled Monument. It is an object supported by a crosspiece on a post, thought to be Tudor that was used by Knights as a target and is described as a rare and unique monument. It is located within the small triangle of green in the centre of the village.



Settlement edge, oast houses and the wooded Kent Downs scarp.

LCA 5a - West Malling Greensand Fruit Belt

The area is criss-crossed by a network of narrow lanes lined by hedgerows distinctively growing on banks, another defining feature not commonplace within adjacent areas and which limits views out from roads.

West Malling and Offham are supported by a network of public footpaths and bridleways. There are fewer public rights of way in the less settled areas in the west, however part of the Wealdway long distance path follows along roads and tracks between Mereworth Woods and St Mary's Platt. There is intermittent visibility across the Vale of Holmesdale towards the Kent Downs, the rising form of the wooded scarp providing a containment to the wider area. There is however little relationship with other bordering character areas, any views being screened by hedgerow trees and shelterbelts.

When viewed from the Kent Downs the area looks to be heavily wooded, despite the predominance of agricultural fields, with its network of small woodlands, boundary and individual trees combining to create a distinctive canopy.



Properties visible across agricultural fields



Mixed traditional building styles in West Malling



The Quintain on the village Green, Offham



Narrow lanes



Polytunnels south of Platt

LCA 5a - West Malling Greensand Fruit Belt

Issues and Forces for Change

- *Whilst the area has a consistent wooded character and field pattern that provide a coherent form, the historical fruit growing culture has been eroded through a move to other agricultural crop types, which threatens the integrity of the area's character.*
- *The larger settlement of West Malling is close to the urban areas of Ditton, Leybourne and King's Hill. Outward urban expansion of these areas could lead to coalescence.*
- *The historic land use of fruit growing has been eroded through replacement with other arable crops.*
- *The urban areas of Ditton and Leybourne have expanded dramatically since the mid 19th Century and are very close to the boundary of West Malling in the northeast of the area. There is potential for further outward expansion both from these areas and from the newer development of King's Hill to the south. Although the Benedictine Abbey Scheduled Monument and Manor Park Country Park on the eastern edge of West Malling provide a landuse buffer, approved developments on these settlement edges could increase coalescence with the smaller settlements.*
- *Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Conserve and manage Ancient Woodland areas, promoting age and species diversity and maintaining active coppice management. Expand and connect woodland cover creating clearings for natural regeneration or small-scale planting to improve biodiversity, and soil quality, to reduce erosion and establish ground flora.
- Connect the fragmented woodland blocks to improve ecological integrity, through planting new woodland copse and shaws connected via hedgerows. Improve connectivity to wooded areas in the adjacent character areas of Mereworth Kings Hill Woodlands and Wrotham Greensand Slopes.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Restore the historical land use of fruit production where it has been eroded by conversion to other arable crops.
- Conserve the strong network of hedges on banks, hedgerows and hedgerow trees which contribute to the local character and historical and ecological integrity of the area.
- Apply forestry practices that respect local character and visual amenity, using traditional techniques like coppicing.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries to farmland in lieu of fencing, creating species-rich hedgerows using native species and allowing a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.

- Enhance and create new green corridors and ecological networks and support traditional farming techniques, encouraging sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.
- Encourage interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments where they are hidden within the landscape or townscape.

Development Management Guidelines

- Protect historic settlement edges and their relationship with the landscape by avoiding enclosure by new development, in particular within the south and eastern edges of West Malling and Offham which are defined as Conservation Areas.
- The rolling landform and appearance of strong tree cover help absorb features into the landscape. Screen new development with additional tree planting to settle within the landscape, and where possible site new development in the lower folds of the landscape where it will be more readily visually absorbed. Do not screen historic edges to settlements.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Avoid intrusion onto or above sensitive ridgelines or within prominent slopes.

LCA 5a - West Malling Greensand Fruit Belt

- Ensure new development, whether infill or on the periphery of existing settlements is mindful of the existing local vernacular, utilising appropriate materials including brick and hung tile, long pitched roofs and timber boarding to maintain historic character. Utilise traditional local building materials for boundary walls and native hedgerows both within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Protect the settings of West Malling, Offham and Offham Church Conservation Areas. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Seek opportunity for new community orchard planting within development.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Avoid suburban-style boundaries, using natural materials including appropriate style fencing or native hedge screening.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Encourage interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments including the Quintain at Offham and draw upon cultural heritage for landscape management.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Avoid any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

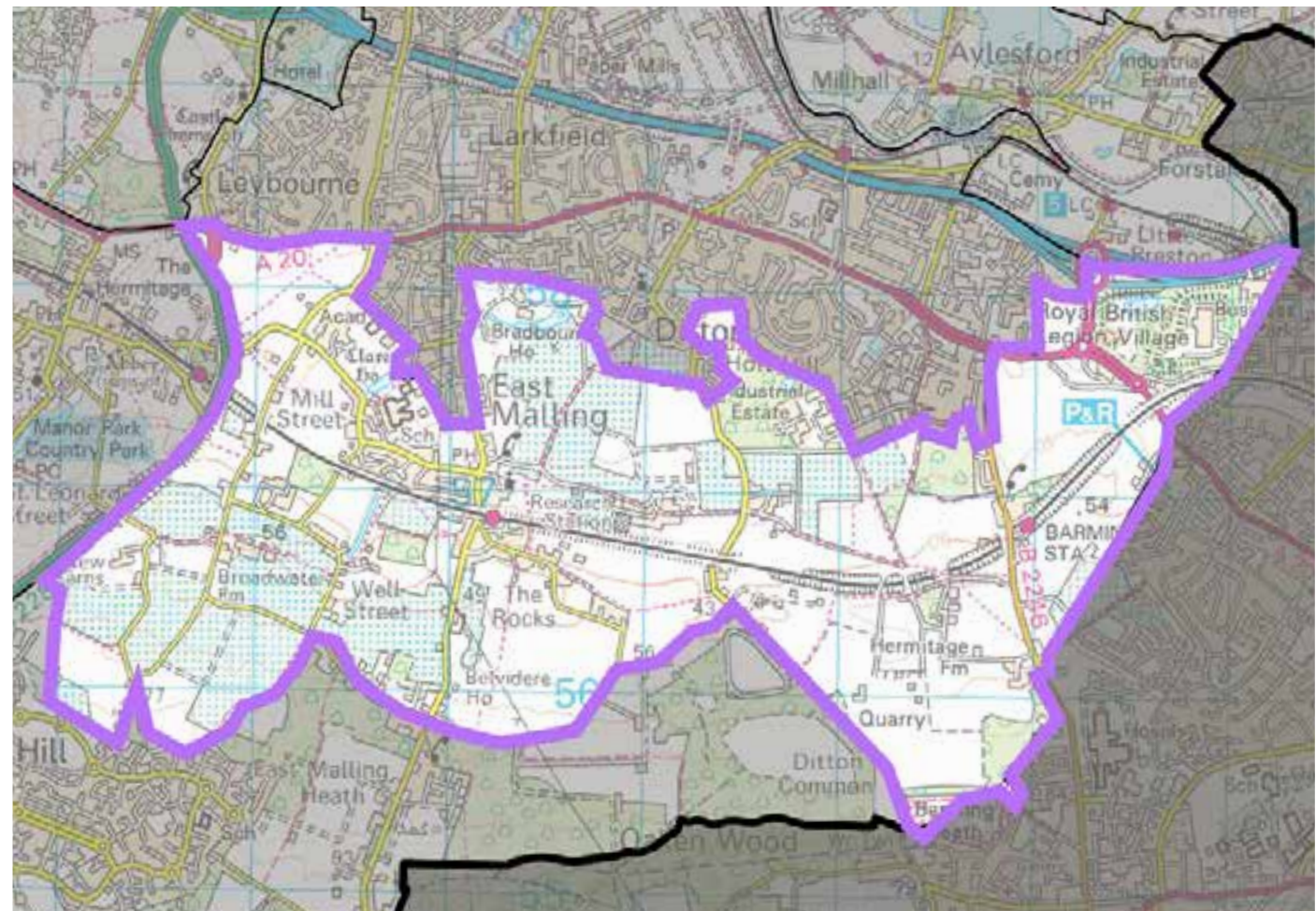
LCA 5b - East Malling Greensand Fruit Belt

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *Farmland and orchards, that contribute both character and a sense of historical time depth are set within a small scale, flat, gently undulating landform that is part of the Greensand dip slope.*
- *A distinctive network of hedgerows raised on banks and well-tended shelterbelts form boundaries, whilst small areas of woodland located on urban fringes screen and contain built form.*
- *A generally quiet quality away from the larger settlements with intermittent long views towards the wooded scarp of the Kent Downs.*
- *Several PRowWs cross the area providing access to the distinctive orchards and rural features.*
- *A strong presence of traditional built form in the local Kent vernacular within settlements including the villages of East Malling and Mill Street. Small clusters of properties and individual farmsteads are scattered throughout the area with many new residential buildings generally being of sensitive design.*
- *A distinctive historic time depth is reflected in its Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, traditional building vernacular, orchards and oast houses.*
- *Designations include a local nature reserve, Local Wildlife Site and Regionally Important Geodiversity Site.*

Location

The character area is located at the eastern edge of the Borough, with Maidstone to the east and the settlements of Ditton and Leybourne to the north. Oaken Wood located on the Greensand Ridge is located to the south, and to the west the area is bounded by the A228, with West Malling beyond.



LCA 5b - East Malling Greensand Fruit Belt

Landscape Character Description

The landform of the Greensand dip slope is gently undulating falling from south to north from the rising Greensand Ridge located to the south. Farmland and orchards are the predominant land use, set within a small scale, regular field pattern contributing both character and a sense of historical time depth to the landscape setting of East Malling. Elsewhere within the character area, the field pattern has become degraded with larger fields with a more irregular pattern emerging on the eastern and western edges. Large fields containing polytunnels are located around the East Malling Research Station which, whilst providing a visible context to the location, introduce some visual intrusiveness. The dense network of hedgerows however does much to screen and contain these features from the roads. There are other occasional remnants of agricultural fencing hidden within hedgerows and post and wire fencing is utilised in places.

There is little tree cover through the area, a defining feature distinguishing it from the surrounding areas. Where pockets of woodland occur they are generally located close to properties and around the larger settlements, providing a screening function for the built features. On the northern edge of the area, south of Ditton, part of the former Ditton Quarry is now a local nature reserve, Local Wildlife Site and Regionally Important Geodiversity Site. There are a few localised small blocks of Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland in the east at Dog Kennel Wood and Deadman's Wood and on the northern fringes of Kings Hill at Hoath Wood. The area is peppered by traditional orchards with their formal rows of fruit trees and appears well managed, with several boundaries formed by well clipped hedgerows. Dense hedges grow along banks beside the narrow sunken lanes, containing and limiting views to the wider landscape.



Orchards, with the wooded scarp of the Kent Downs in the far distance.

LCA 5b - East Malling Greensand Fruit Belt

Settlements within the area display a strong local vernacular. East Malling is the largest, with a railway station and mix of traditional and contemporary housing that is largely centred around the railway line and Mill Street. It has a distinct historic core that contains several traditional brick and hung tile houses as well as oast houses, and the Listed Saint James the Great Church. The area has two designated Conservation Areas, Mill Street East Malling and East Malling Village. The buried remains of an Iron age enclosure and minor Roman Villa are registered as a Scheduled Monument near the church buried under community allotments and residential gardens. Despite modern infill development, the village retains a locally distinctive character.

Other Conservation Areas are located at New Barns and Broadwater Farm, Clare Park and Blacklands and Bradbourne East Malling with all including several Listed Buildings. Broadwater Farm contains an impressive 19th Century oast house with five roundels and nearby 18th Century farmhouse. A distinctive development of detached houses in Clare Wood Drive has been designed around, and to echo the features of Clare House, a large 18th Century house with dome and loggias, all properties being enveloped by surrounding deciduous woodland and parkland. Bradbourne House and its associated stableblock and barns is a large country house set within a parkland setting, now functioning as a wedding venue.

Other small clusters of properties are located throughout the area that are of varying ages but are generally sympathetically designed. Particularly distinctive is the award-winning Orchard Gate development located off Kiln Barn Road, designed around a pond and retained orchards to appear as an historic Hamlet, with architectural styles representative of the local vernacular. Several oast houses can be found throughout the area, a legacy to its historic hop growing history.



Orchard Gate development with sympathetic Kent features



Oast house at East Malling



Emerging new housing



Sunken lane with hedges on banks

LCA 5b - East Malling Greensand Fruit Belt

Settlement expansion on former agricultural land between the M20 and Hermitage Lane is contributing to a coalescence of the urban areas of Maidstone and Ditton. Despite some physical intrusion from the loss of farmland, dense tree planting and pockets of deciduous woodland along both sides of Hermitage Lane reduces visual and noise intrusion from this change of land use. The railway line passes from east to west through the centre of the area, with a station at East Malling and another at Barming.

Several PRoWs cross the area providing access to the distinctive orchards and rural features, and there are intermittent glimpses from the network of narrow lanes lined with raised bank hedgerows. The combination of flat landform and the strong hedgerow network limits views, despite the scarcity of woodland within the area however longer views towards the distant Kent Downs scarp are visible in places above the hedgerow line and where gaps allow. The built features of Ditton are also visible to the north due to less tree screening than that surrounding Maidstone, and to the south the wooded features of the Greensand Ridge.

LCA 5b - East Malling Greensand Fruit Belt

Issues and Forces for Change

- *The landscape condition is reasonably coherent, despite pressure at its urban edges from outward expansion, a quality that should be retained.*
- *Some degradation has occurred within the urban fringes of the area with lost hedgerows and associated field patterns, change in crop use and through noise and visual intrusion from development.*
- *Development pressure, with the area around Barming train station being developed resulting in a coalescence of the urban areas of Ditton and Maidstone.*
- *Potential further housing developments already approved or under construction could increase coalescence with the smaller settlements.*
- *A loss of tranquillity and increasing urban influence within views from new development.*
- *A degradation of field patterns, particularly near urban areas and adjacent to transport routes.*
- *Threat to traditional orchards through agricultural intensification, neglect, and conversion to other land uses.*

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Conserve and manage Ancient Woodland areas, promoting age and species diversity and maintaining active coppice management. Expand and connect woodland cover creating clearings for natural regeneration or small-scale planting to improve biodiversity, and soil quality, to reduce erosion and establish ground flora.
- Connect the fragmented woodland blocks to improve ecological integrity, through planting new woodland copse and shaws connected via hedgerows. Improve connectivity to wooded areas in the adjacent character areas of Mereworth Kings Hill Woodlands and Wrotham Greensand Slopes.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Restore the historical land use of fruit production where it has been eroded by conversion to other arable crops.
- Conserve the strong network of hedges on banks, hedgerows and hedgerow trees which contribute to the local character and historical and ecological integrity of the area.
- Apply forestry practices that respect local character and visual amenity, using traditional techniques like coppicing.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries to farmland in lieu of fencing and the pattern of enclosure for fields that have been enlarged for intensive agriculture, through planting

of species rich native hedgerows, allowing for a buffer of undisturbed habitat including ground flora at field margins to improve biodiversity.

- Enhance and create new green corridors and ecological networks and support traditional farming techniques, encouraging sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.
- Encourage interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments where they are hidden within the landscape or townscape.

Development Management Guidelines

- Low density residential development may be contained by the strong network of hedgerows and hedges growing along banks, however taller development would be noticeable without the screening function of a more extensive network of woodland.
- Maintain the rural nature of the landscape and the scattered nature of the settlement pattern.
- The rolling landform and appearance of strong tree cover help absorb features into the landscape. Screen new development with additional tree planting to settle within the landscape, and where possible site new development in the lower folds of the landscape where it will be more readily visually absorbed. Do not screen historic edges to settlements.

LCA 5b - East Malling Greensand Fruit Belt

- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Protect historic settlement edges and their relationship with the landscape by avoiding enclosure by new development, in particular areas defined as Conservation Areas. Conserve the historic character along main thoroughfares where it is most visible.
- Ensure new development, whether infill or on the periphery of existing settlements is mindful of the existing local vernacular, utilising appropriate materials including brick and hung tile, long pitched roofs and weatherboarding to maintain historic character, looking to localised precedent such as Orchard Gate.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Protect the settings of Mill Street East Malling, East Malling Village, New Barns and Broadwater Farm, Clare Park and Blacklands and Bradbourne East Malling Conservation Areas. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Consider new development within areas of former mineral working that provide flexibility for landform and restore and rewild former quarry sites where there is no development opportunity.
- Seek opportunity for new community orchard planting within development.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Avoid suburban-style boundaries, using natural materials including appropriate style fencing or native hedge screening.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Encourage interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments including unseen buried remains, and draw upon cultural heritage for landscape management.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Avoid any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

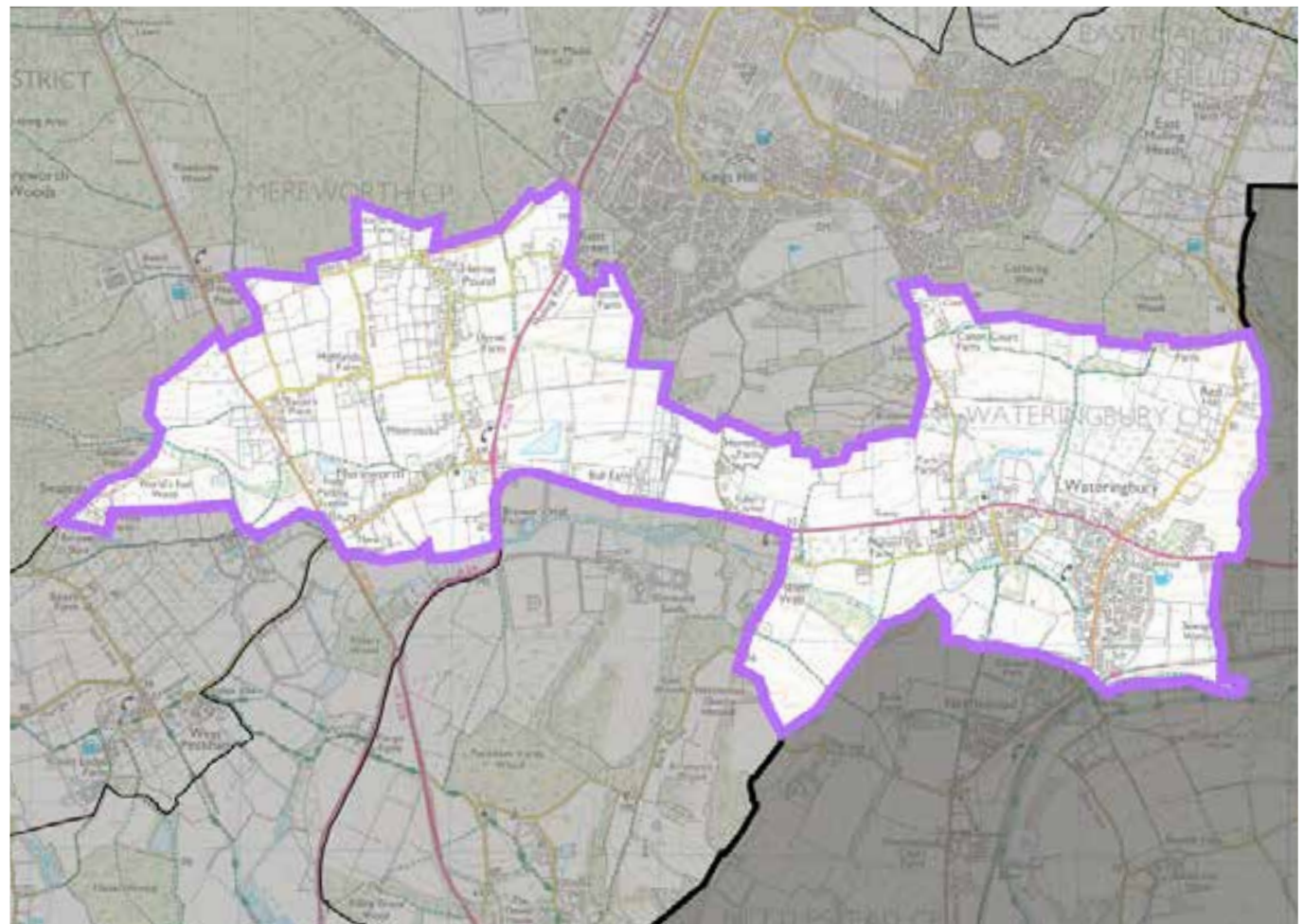
LCA 5c - Watringbury Greensand Fruit Belt

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *An unusual landform, with the Greensand Ridge to the north and higher ground to the south of the character area being also part of the Greensand Ridge, but now outlying by virtue of the erosion of the Medway's tributaries including the Watringbury Stream.*
- *The gently undulating landscape of field patterns, traditional orchards and vineyards combine with intermittent views and well managed boundaries to give a coherent, calm, organised character with a clear sense of place.*
- *Contains a network of public rights of way including a short section of towpath and water-based activities. The waterside vegetation creates a sense of calm and enclosure, reinforced by the sensory qualities of the water.*
- *Settlements are mostly villages with further scattered residences, small residential developments and multiple farmsteads that are nestled and integrated into the undulating landform and scattered pockets of deciduous woodland.*
- *A distinctive historic time depth is reflected in its Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and oast houses, a reminder of the area's hop production.*
- *Designations include Priority Habitat, Local Wildlife Site and Ancient Woodland.*

Location

This character area lies on the eastern boundary of the Borough within a shallow lined vale on the western bank of the River Medway. The Tonbridge-Maidstone railway to the south passes through the southeast edge with the Mereworth Kings Hill Woodlands within the Greensand Ridge in the adjoining northern character area.



LCA 5c - Watringbury Greensand Fruit Belt

Landscape Character Description

The gently undulating landform, combined with its elevated positions allows for intermittent views towards the Greensand Ridge including those outlying areas of Greensand to the south, and fields and woodlands to the north. The area is bisected by floodplain, and this is encapsulated by the small watercourses and ponds towards the south of the character area that in turn connect to the River Medway via the Watringbury Stream.

The land is predominantly agricultural, with smaller enclosure giving way to large arable fields, with an associated loss of traditional hedgerow boundaries. On the south facing slopes are commercial orchards, polytunnels and a vineyard, with small areas of Traditional Orchard nestled within the outskirts of Watringbury being recorded as Priority Habitat. There is a very small Local Wildlife Site at the Listed St Laurence's Church at Mereworth, its prominence a notable feature within the surrounding landscape. Small scattered areas of deciduous woodland include some Ancient Woodland that provides connectivity with the more expansive areas of woodland within the adjacent character area to the north.

Settlements are mostly villages located off the A26 road that runs as a spine west to east through the area and in the broader area there are further scattered residences, some small residential developments and multiple farmsteads. Watringbury is a large village in the east, with many services and businesses operating from it on along the A26 corridor and to the west, the small village of Mereworth. Built form is generally of a traditional and rural vernacular of brick, stone and timber with some weatherboard facades on houses.

Oast houses in Watringbury are visible from the valley slopes and provide a strong visual and historical reminder of the area's hop production. There are several Conservation Areas that include the core of Watringbury, Pizien Well, Mereworth Castle Parklands, and The Street and Butchers



View of the vale from the southern slopes, with polytunnels and oast house visible.

LCA 5c - Watringbury Greensand Fruit Belt

Lane in Mereworth. North of Watringbury on Canon Lane is the estate of the 18th Century Listed Baroque house Waterbury Place, its entrance edged by a distinctive Listed stone wall and its grounds and outbuildings and the ornate former stables with clocktower. Narrow lanes run through the area leading from the A26 generally in a north – south direction. These are bound by hedgerows that create a sense of enclosure and limiting views. Watringbury train station on the Tonbridge-Maidstone line, is in the southern tip of the area and is a designated Conservation Area. There is a network of public rights of way, with most paths also heading north or south from the A26. The area south of the railway line has a strong recreational function, with people using the river for water-based activities, such as boating, canoeing, kayaking and paddle-boarding, and the towpath for walking and cycling. The Medway Valley Walk is located to the south of the River Medway.

Topography, field patterns, intermittent views and boundary treatments combine in a coherent character and clear sense of place. The character is small scale with a sense of openness provided by the intermittent views toward the surrounding landscape. It is well-managed and organised, with a variety of visual stimuli and, beyond the fringes of the busier Watringbury feels generally tranquil and calm though with some intermittent noise, predominantly from the A26 road, a main detractor along with the junction with the A228 at Mereworth to the west. The small flat-lying area on the Borough boundary southeast of Watringbury, is within the flood zone and defined by the railway line and features of the River Medway. The towpath, moorings and marina add character with focal views along the river towards the Bowl Hill Road Bridge. Characteristic riverside vegetation, such as large Willow species, create a sense of enclosure along the riverbank, though there are glimpsed views towards the outlying areas of Greensand Ridge that rise to the south.



Field with broken tree boundary



Mereworth village with timberboard clad houses



Tree lined narrow lane on northern boundary



Boats and activity around the River Medway



Orchards north of Watringbury

LCA 5c - Waterringbury Greensand Fruit Belt

Issues and Forces for Change

- *Risk of degradation through further loss or fragmentation of traditional orchards and native hedgerows to accommodate large scale arable farming.*
- *Inappropriate species, for instance tall conifers are clearly visible in the skyline and do not fit with the traditional scale or character of the landscape.*
- *Development and further suburbanisation along the A26 have the potential to erode the definition of the historical villages and character of the area, with Conservation Areas being highly sensitive to new development.*
- *Intermittent road noise from the A26 and A228 roads make the landscape less sensitive to change than other more quiet rural areas.*
- *Loss of farmland to the golf course at King's Hill.*
- *Loss of hedgerows and historic enclosure pattern due to agricultural intensification, leading to a more open landscape.*
- *Loss of locally distinctive orchards and deterioration of the local hop growing culture to other arable crops and the expansion of polytunnels.*
- *Increasing traffic along major routes and through villages is reducing tranquillity and eroding the rural character of the landscape, exacerbated by loss of roadside hedgerows.*

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Conserve and manage Ancient Woodland areas, promoting age and species diversity and maintaining active coppice management. Expand and connect woodland cover creating clearings for natural regeneration or small-scale planting to improve biodiversity, and soil quality, to reduce erosion and establish ground flora.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Restore the historical land use of fruit production where it has been eroded by conversion to other arable crops. Create orchards on urban fringes.
- Conserve the strong network of hedges on banks, hedgerows and hedgerow trees which contribute to the local character and historical and ecological integrity of the area.
- Improve leisure and recreational opportunities for residents in Waterringbury and for visitors to the Bow Bridge Marina e.g. more seating, improved tow path condition.
- Protect and enhance wetland biodiversity along the River Medway corridor, use of local species to create a more distinctive landscape character.
- Apply forestry practices that respect local character and visual amenity, using traditional techniques like coppicing.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries to farmland in lieu of fencing and the pattern of enclosure for fields that have been enlarged for intensive agriculture, through planting of species rich native hedgerows, allowing for a buffer of undisturbed habitat including ground flora at field margins to improve biodiversity.
- Enhance and create new green corridors and ecological networks and support traditional farming techniques, encouraging sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.
- Promote the use of native hedgerow planting as opposed to conifer hedgerows. Encourage use of Ragstone or native hedgerows to urban edges, as opposed to uncharacteristic suburban-style conifer hedging or timber fencing.
- Maintain and improve existing hedgerow boundaries on fields and roads, particularly along the A228 and A26 roads to reduce road noise.

LCA 5c - Waterringbury Greensand Fruit Belt

Development Management Guidelines

- Site new development in suitable locations with existing screening elements, making use of undulating landform and vegetation to contain development.
- Maintain the rural nature of the landscape and the scattered nature of the settlement pattern through avoidance of large scale developments.
- The rolling landform and appearance of strong tree cover help absorb features into the landscape. Screen new development with additional tree planting to settle within the landscape, and where possible site new development in the lower folds of the landscape where it will be more readily visually absorbed. Do not screen historic edges to settlements.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Protect historic settlement edges and their relationship with the landscape by avoiding enclosure by new development, in particular areas defined as Conservation Areas. Conserve the historic character along main thoroughfares where it is most visible.
- Ensure new development, whether infill or on the periphery of existing settlements is mindful of the existing local vernacular, utilising appropriate materials including brick, ragstone, timber and weatherboarding to maintain historic character, looking to localised precedent.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Protect the settings of Waterringbury, Pizien Well, Mereworth Castle Parklands, The Street and Butchers Lane in Mereworth Conservation Areas. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Seek opportunity for new community orchard planting within development.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Avoid suburban-style boundaries, using natural materials including appropriate style fencing or native hedge screening.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Avoid any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

Landscape Character Type - Greensand Slopes

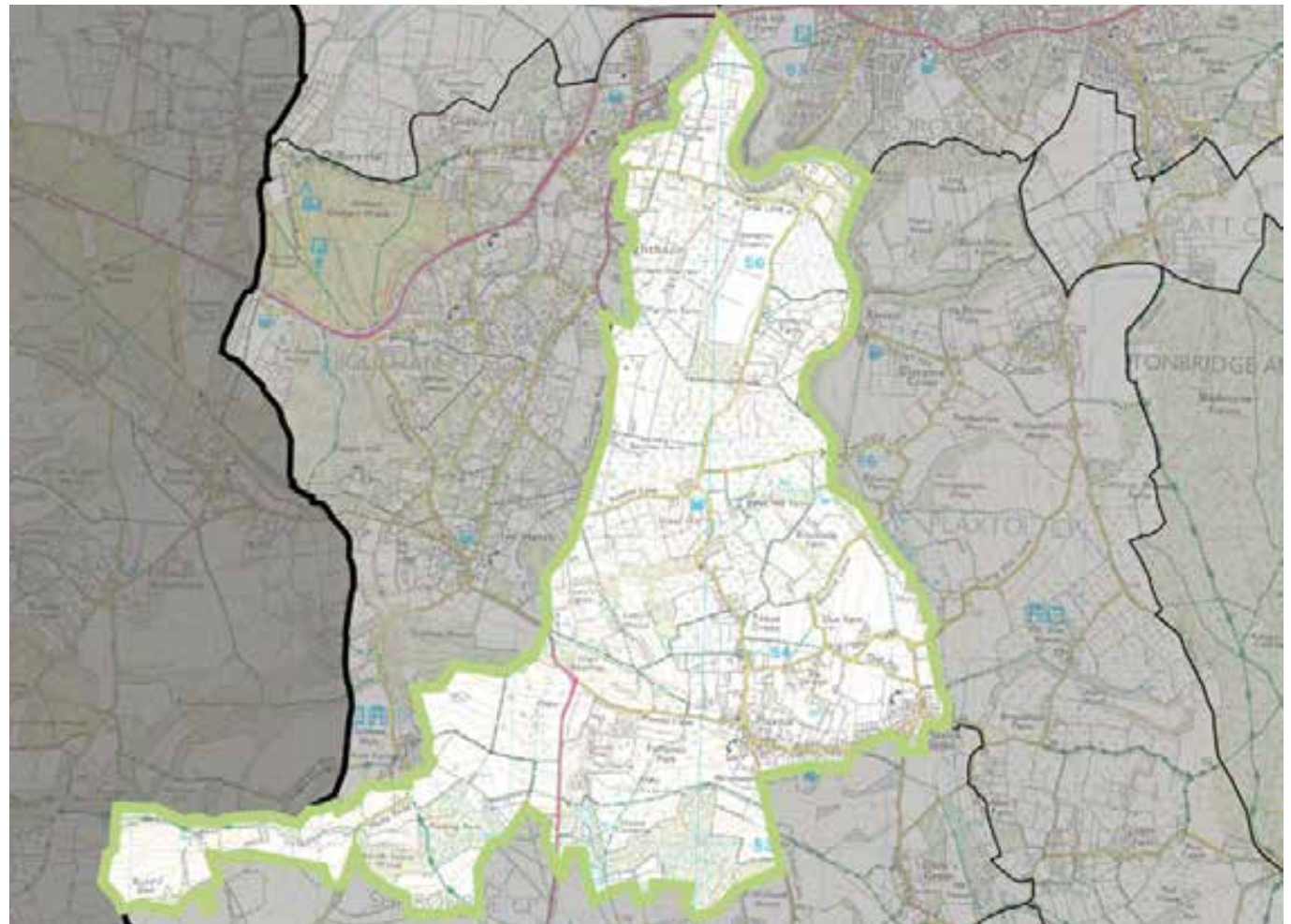
LCA 6a - Ightham Greensand Slopes

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *A rich and varied landscape, parts of which are located within the Kent Downs National Landscape, that is defined by its mixed geology of sandstone and clay and its topology of rolling hills and valleys. These are set within the undulating lower slopes of the Greensand Ridge, interspersed with springs where the River Bourne has cut through the Greensand.*
- *Land use is predominantly agricultural fields combined with an abundance of orchards that significantly contribute to character, and which combine in creating a small scale, calm and intimate mosaic of natural features that include hedgerows, woodland belts and carr woodland.*
- *The sparse settlement pattern of lanes, villages and hamlets include the linear ribboned village of Plaxtol, Yopps Green hamlet and scattered farmsteads and with a wide network of public rights of way.*
- *A calm landscape contained by the wooded belts, leading to an intimate feeling with views towards the Greensand Ridge filtered by vegetation.*
- *Orchards are a strong feature of the area and provide distinctive character and a visual reminder of the area's historical fruit growing.*
- *A strong historic time-depth evidenced by field pattern, settlement vernacular, ancient woodlands and orchards, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.*
- *Ecological designations include SSSI, Local Wildlife Sites and Ancient and Semi-Natural or Replanted Ancient Woodland.*

Location

This Landscape Character Area, located within the Kent Downs National Landscape covers the steep slopes of the Greensand Ridge as they lower into the the River Bourne valley and its boundary with the Low Weald farmlands in the Vale of Kent to the south. To the north is the vale landscape, with the western boundary of the area following the line of Ightham Road and its border with the wooded Igham Greensand Ridge to the west.



LCA 6a - Ightham Greensand Slopes

Landscape Character Description

Whilst much of the steeply undulating land within this area is used for agriculture and food production, the abundance of orchards contribute hugely to its character and combine in creating a landscape mosaic with other natural features that include irregular shaped fields, woodland belts and woodland blocks. The orchards, prevalent due to localised geological variations in the soil quality are laid out in ordered rows of intensively cultivated apple and pear trees, and often accompanied by the contrasting form of tall, sometimes strikingly pollarded poplar shelter belts. These features combine in creating a visual reminder of the area's historic depth, and its distinctive Kentish character and identity as *The Garden of England*. Field boundaries are formed by hedgerows and tree belts, with the historic irregular but angular field pattern generally intact although some erosion is becoming evident through intensification of agriculture.

Local Wildlife Sites are located on the northern boundary of the area within Bourne Valley Wood where the river forms the boundary with the neighbouring character area, and within Lady's Wood and Boot Wood north of Yopps Green. This is also designated as Ancient Woodland and there are several more small pockets of woodland located throughout the area designated as Ancient and Semi-Natural or Replanted Ancient Woodland. A network of woodland blocks can be found following the river and streams within the area. A section of the River Bourne and its environs along the eastern edge of the area is designated as Bourne Alder Carr SSSI, and upstream and downstream of the SSSI the river corridor continues to be defined as the Local Wildlife Site of Bourne Valley Woods. There is a further Local Wildlife Site, One Tree Hill, located across the Borough boundary with Sevenoaks in the far west of the character area.



Orchards near Plaxtol

LCA 6a - Ightham Greensand Slopes

The main settlement is the linear ribboned village of Plaxtol on the southern boundary, parts of which are within Conservation Areas and where houses are typically built of stone and brick. An oast house is nestled in the village and at Yopps Green there is a fine example of a traditional timber framed house. Farmsteads are scattered across the area and clusters of Listed Buildings can be found at Plaxtol and Yopps Green. The area contains many scattered properties, often built in the local vernacular of brick.

Just west of Plaxtol is the privately owned Fairlawne Estate, which includes a Listed 17th Century country house and which is itself a Conservation Area. Footpaths and bridleways cross the grounds and feed into the wider network of public rights of ways traversing the slopes.

The area's character is generally in contrast to that within Ightham Greensand Ridge, the character area to the east, being more open and less wooded. Where topography allows, there are long distance views towards the Greensand Ridge, though these are often restricted by trees and raised bank hedgerows. The landscape feels calm and contained by the wooded belts, leading to an intimate feeling.



View south across Fairlawne Estate



Timber framed houses at Yopps Green



Hedge-lined lane, with views towards the Greensand Ridge.



Plaxtol Parish Church



View looking southeast from Yopps Green Road

LCA 6a - Ightham Greensand Slopes

Issues and Forces for Change

- *Settlements have retained their historic cores and relationship with the landscape setting, with no large-scale development having taken place or been consented within the area.*
- *Potential threat to orchards and fruit production through economic pressures and viability.*
- *Localised works have stayed true to the local vernacular and design palette of the Kent Downs, for example ragstone walls used as boundary treatments.*
- *Intensification of farming practices and hedgerow management has led to a declining ecological integrity of hedgerows, weakening historic field pattern.*
- *Expansion and intensification of agricultural land use has impacted the landscape and historic field pattern. Elsewhere small field enclosures do still reinforce historic time depth.*
- *Agricultural expansion could further alter and create an associated loss of field boundaries.*
- *Settlement character, influenced by historic core characteristics and reflected through Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings, could be vulnerable to small scale or infill development.*
- *Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development, including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Conserve and manage woodland, including Ancient Woodland. Promote natural regeneration within woodlands through selective coppicing and thinning, whilst protecting mature specimens. Conserve the network of woodland, avoiding clearance which would cause fragmentation, and provide additional connections to create a more holistic network.
- Plant additional woodland copses and shaws to restore this element of historical character, and to screen any new built form. Use a mix of deciduous native species appropriate to the area's sandy acid soil type including beech, pedunculate oak, sessile oak, hornbeam and hazel.
- Improve the age, species and structural diversity of semi-natural woodland or replanted woodland not managed for forestry, to ensure longevity. Use selective thinning

and clearing to encourage natural regeneration of tree, shrub and ground flora species. Consider interplanting to improve species diversity where woodlands contain less than five native species of tree and shrub.

- Increase deciduous tree cover in areas adjacent to Red Hill Road, to assist in further integrating housing and caravan use within the contained and enclosed character of the area.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Create and restore hedgerow boundaries. Fill gaps with locally native tree and shrub species, allowing some to develop into hedgerow trees. Manage hedgerows through cutting or laying to avoid the hedgerow becoming lines of trees and losing the sheltering function for wildlife that hedgerow bases provide. Retain a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Conserve small pockets of apple and pear orchard. Encourage restoration of agricultural land to orchard use.
- Protect historic settlement cores and their wider landscape setting and protect the setting of Offham Conservation Area by limiting infill and fringe development, and continuing to protect open spaces on the edge of settlements. Conserve the historic character along main thoroughfares where it is most visible and protect wooded edges.

LCA 6a - Ightham Greensand Slopes

- Wherever possible reinforce, restore and conserve historical landscape patterns. Plant hedgerows of hawthorn and hazel to restore historic field boundaries, including hedgerow oak trees. Retain and manage the dense hedgerows along narrow lanes.
- Restore the historic character of field pattern and enclosure to the large agricultural fields to the west of Blaise Farm, through division by hedgerows and tree belts.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Retain and open up extensive and far-reaching views across the Low Weald.
- Encourage the ongoing management of traditional orchards and where viable and relevant, their reintroduction within new development.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.

Development Management Guidelines

- Expand and connect ancient woodland blocks through planting of locally native tree and shrub species to form a woodland habitat network. Expand woodland tree cover into the north of the area through use of shelterbelts and shaws. Consider careful siting in order to retain views north towards the Kent Downs scarp within the National Landscape.
- Retain the existing settlement pattern, a key characteristic of the area ensuring any new development is small in scale and respects the locally distinctive mosaic of built form and landscape features. Site within contained areas where it can be absorbed into the landscape through landform or existing woodland screening, prioritising these locations as preferable to those requiring new planting that will take time to mature and provide sufficient screening.
- Consider new advance planting to future proof wooded areas.
- Protect the setting of Oldbury, Ivy Hatch and Ightham Mote Conservation Areas and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores, historic features and the landscape, avoiding enclosing within new development.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness including Ragstone, brick, weatherboarding and tile hung.
- Continue the use of Ragstone walls and hedgerows as boundary treatments, particularly for new development, that is in keeping with the character and design principles of the National Landscape. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

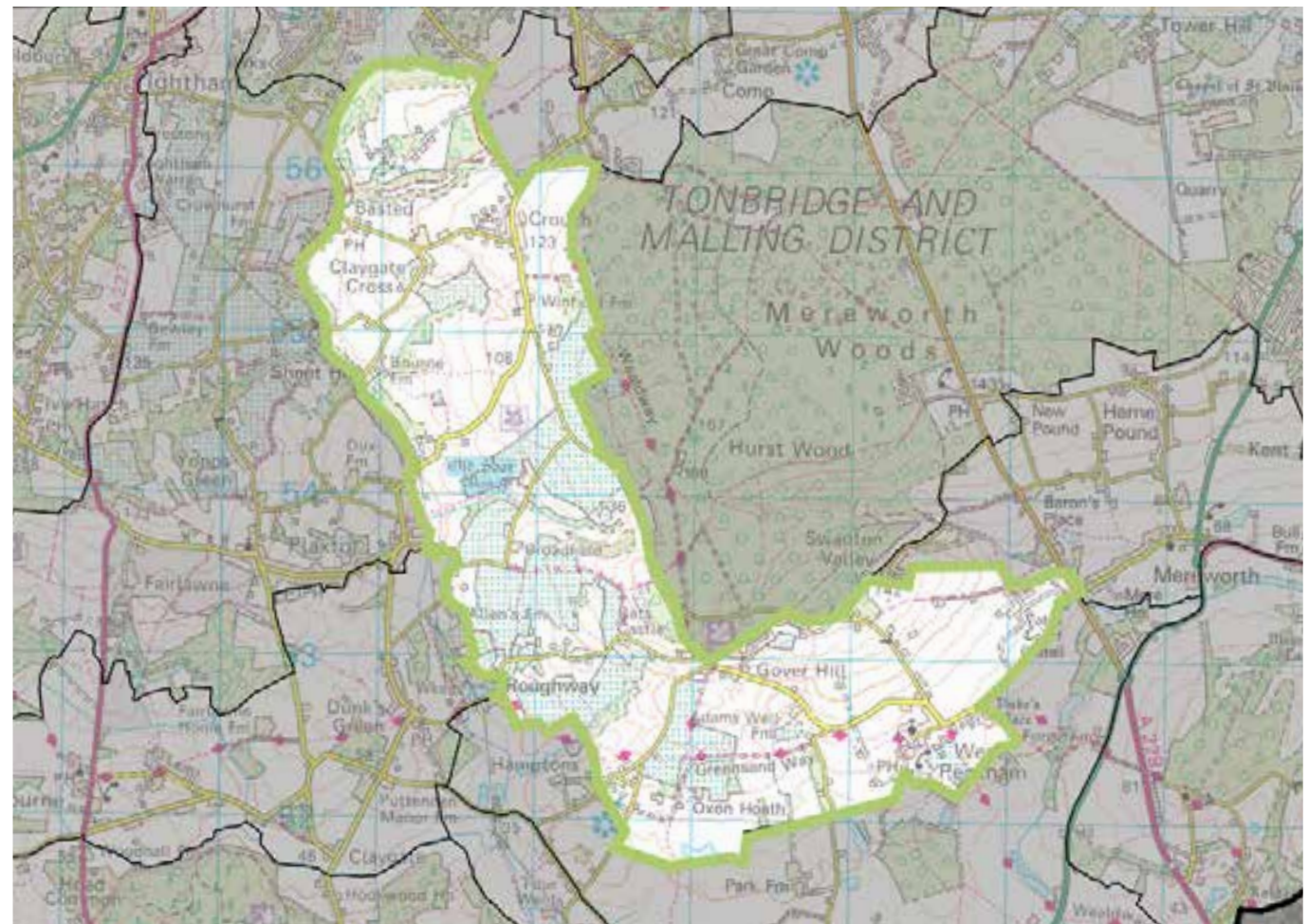
LCA 6b- Roughway Greensand Slopes

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *An elevated, tranquil and calm landscape of rolling green hills interspersed with springs where the River Bourne has cut through the Greensand.*
- *A mostly open landscape with long views and occasional intervisibility with the High Weald National Landscape and the scarp of the Kent Downs National Landscape, though with areas of visual containment within woodlands and along lanes, creating an intimate scale.*
- *The distinctive land pattern of deciduous woodland, copse and shaws is interspersed within a mosaic of irregular fields, which in places are based upon historic field patterns. These are combined with traditional orchards, cobnutt platts, vineyards and dispersed settlement.*
- *A dispersed settlement pattern that includes small hamlets and villages including West Peckham, Roughway, Crouch and Basten and scattered farmsteads, where much of the built form is of a traditional vernacular of brick and stone.*
- *A lack of major road infrastructure and the dispersed settlement contribute to the calm, rural historic feel within which weave a network of footpaths, bridleways and byways.*
- *Heritage assets such as Listed buildings, Conservation Areas and a Registered Park and Garden create a strong sense of place.*
- *Designations including SSSI, Local Wildlife Sites and Ancient and Semi-Natural or Replanted Ancient Woodland.*

Location

The character area is located on the sloping scarp of the Greensand Ridge, the wooded ridged landform forming the eastern boundary, and lowering to the River Bourne valley to the west. The northern and southern boundaries meet the vale landscapes.



LCA 6b - Roughway Greensand Slopes

Landscape Character Description

The area has distinct areas of woodland that are interspersed within a pattern of fields, orchards and dispersed settlement. Wooded areas are formed of Ancient & Semi Natural Woodland, shaws and small copse and trees growing within the native hedgerows that form field boundaries enclosing the network of narrow lanes that weave across the area. On the western boundary, the river Bourne corridor includes Bourne Alder Carr SSSI, dominated by coppiced alder trees and the Bourne Valley Local Wildlife Site that is set within the areas of Ancient Woodland near Basted.

Agricultural is a prominent land use, varying between arable and grazing and set within medium sized, well-managed field patterns. Field boundaries are generally comprised of hedgerows and shaws, but both estate and post and wire fences are visible within the landscape. A distinctive number of orchards, often hidden from view behind the dense hedges growing beside the narrow lanes, are set within the sloping south facing fields and filled with ordered lines of trees growing soft fruits. From the small settlement of Roughway, there are views into fields with rows of cobnut trees, and a substantial vineyard is located within south facing fields at Yotes Court, north of West Peckham to the east, its ordered features distinctive within the landscape. A densely packed area of polytunnels straddle either side of Ford Lane, though these are partly screened by the dense roadside hedges.



Cobnut plot

LCA 6b - Roughway Greensand Slopes

Landscape Character Description

There are several small hamlets and villages within the character area, where much of the built form is of a traditional vernacular of brick and stone. A significant number of these are listed, including Tonbridge Manor House and Hamptons, a large house north of Park Road and the nearby Hamptons Farmhouse.

Historical time depth is evidenced by Old Soar Manor, a rare 13th Century knights dwelling that is also a Scheduled Monument, located along Old Soar Road east of Plaxtol. In the south of the area is the Listed Oxen Hoath house and grounds, also a designated Registered Historic Park and Garden with impressive views from the formally laid out gardens. Conservation Areas include Yotes Court, with its Listed building, land and other buildings, West Peckham, Roughway Village and Clay Cross.

Vehicular access to the area is generally via narrow, hedgerow lined lanes and there is a network of footpaths, bridleways and byways that weave through the area, the Weald Way and Greensand Way long distance recreational routes diverging at Oxen Hoath.

The character area often feels intimate and enclosed, contained by undulations in topography in addition to dense road and field boundaries however there are contrasting wide, far-reaching views towards the High Weald National Landscape to the south and the Kent Downs to the northwest and west, with minimal built detracting influences.



Pub and green at West Peckham



Oast houses on the Greensand Way at West Peckham



Rolling hills and views south toward the High Weald National Landscape



Polytunnel construction

LCA 6b - Roughway Greensand Slopes

Issues and Forces for Change

- *Whilst a well managed landscape with few incongruous elements or detractors, the large scale polytunnels around Roughway could be considered visually intrusive, detracting from the unspoilt, rural nature of the area and visible from a distance.*
- *Limited major road infrastructure or settlement enhances the quiet, calm, rural and historic qualities of the character area. Development could put pressure on the small-scale road network and alter the area's quiet, rural feel.*
- *Potential outward expansion from larger settlements could exert pressure on the landscape and the dispersed settlement pattern.*
- *A changing historical land use of fruit production to larger scale arable production including visually prominent polytunnels etc. result in potential fragmentation of hedgerow field boundaries and a loss of intimate landscape character.*
- *Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*
- *Heritage assets, such as Listed buildings, Conservation Areas and a registered Park and Garden create a strong sense of place and are potentially sensitive to landscape change.*

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Preserve, enhance and promote long views towards the Greensand Ridge and the Kent Downs National Landscape and the potential impacts of development within these wide views.
- Improve the age, species and structural diversity of deciduous woodland to ensure longevity. Use selective thinning and clearing to encourage natural regeneration of tree, shrub and ground flora species. Consider interplanting to improve species diversity where woodlands contain less than five native species of tree and shrub.
- Establish new woodland and tree establishment through high quality multi-functional management to provide well-used places for leisure and recreation promoting health and wellbeing and habitats that are rich in characteristic wildlife. Support the productive, sustainable management of trees and woodlands.
- Consider the potential for restoration of large agricultural fields to the historic enclosure pattern through division by hedgerow planting, including hedgerow trees particularly pedunculate oak which are a distinctive feature of the area.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Protect public rights of way such as the Wealdway and Greensand Way.
- Restore the historical land use of fruit production where it has been eroded through conversion to other arable crops. Promote farm diversification e.g. winemaking.
- Protect historic settlement cores and their relationship with the wider landscape and protect the setting of the Yotes Court, West Peckham, Roughway Village and Clay Cross. Conserve the historic character and features along main thoroughfares where they are most visible.
- Reinforce hedgerow boundaries and plant additional hedgerows using a mix of deciduous native species appropriate to the area. Adapt hedgerow management to be less intensive, allowing hedgerows to grow to >1.5m wide with a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.

LCA 6b - Roughway Greensand Slopes

Development Management Guidelines

- Small scale infill development within settlements has respected the local vernacular. Site new development in areas where the rolling landform and appearance of strong tree cover will assist in absorbing features into the landscape.
- Development should be sited in visually contained areas to be less noticeable and to reduce visual impacts on the setting of existing buildings and landscape features such as parks and gardens and Conservation Areas.
- Screen new development with additional tree planting, to settle within the landscape, and where possible site new development in the lower folds of the landscape where it will be more readily visually absorbed. Do not screen historic edges to settlements.
- Ensure new development enhances the architectural quality of the Low Weald and reflects its character through considered siting, scale, layout and design and ensure that development is fully sympathetic to, and in scale with, the land use and local building style.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, and fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Protect designated and non-designated heritage assets and views of key landscape features.
- Where viable and relevant, encourage the reintroduction of traditional orchards.
- Protect the setting of Yotes Court, West Peckham, Roughway Village and Clay Cross Conservation Areas and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Be mindful of the existing local vernacular, utilising appropriate materials including brick and hung tile, long pitched roofs and weatherboarding to maintain historic character. Utilise traditional local building materials for boundary walls and native hedgerows both within and to contain settlement edges.
- Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access and design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

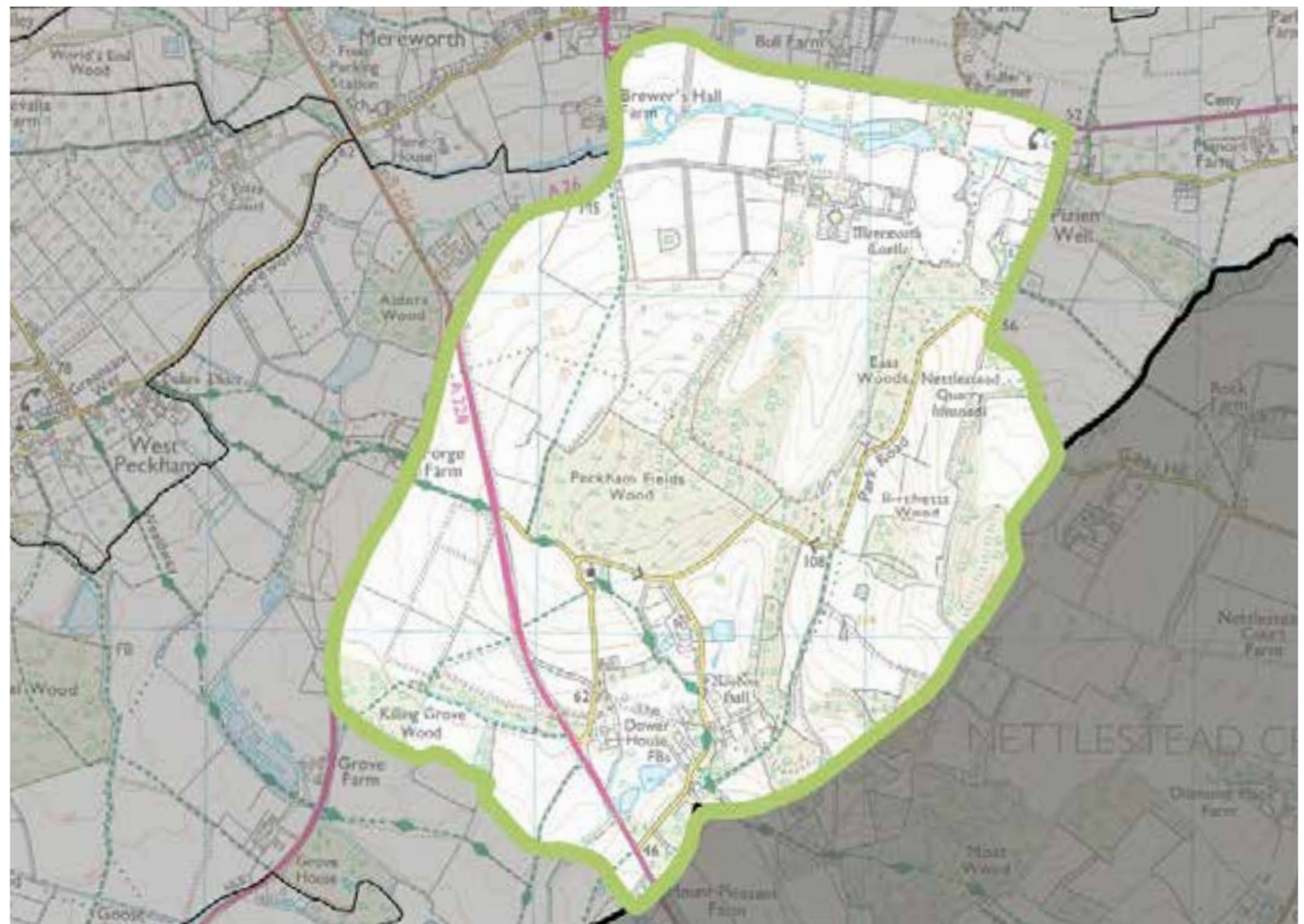
LCA 6c - Mereworth Greensand Slopes

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *The Steep scarp slopes of the Greensand Ridge are interspersed with springs where the River Bourne has cut through the Greensand.*
- *Agricultural farmland, gardens and estates blend with deciduous woodland, tree belts and parkland to create a sinuous, varied and organised landscape.*
- *A generally managed landscape with a steep topography and historical time-depth that offers interest and intimate and contained locations. The area has a discernible identity, despite the detraction of road noise.*
- *Where breaks in vegetation allow there are long views west towards the Greensand Ridge and south across the Low Weald.*
- *Very little built settlement other than scattered residential dwellings and estate buildings associated with Mereworth Castle and Roydon Hall contribute to an historic, undeveloped and intimate landscape.*
- *Polytunnels and agricultural fields contribute to the area's managed and organised character with areas of deciduous woodland providing an element of wildness.*
- *An area rich in heritage assets that include Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, the gardens and estate of Roydon Hall and Mereworth Castle.*

Location

A discreet character area located on the eastern boundary of the Borough where the scarp slopes of the Greensand Ridge descend to the Low Weald, the A26 forms the area's western and northern boundaries, with the busy A228 passing north to south through the west of the area. To the west and south the area gently slopes into the character of Farms and Parklands, whilst to the north the Greensand Fruit Belt. To the east the area meets the Borough boundary with Maidstone.



LCA 6c - Mereworth Greensand Slopes

Landscape Character Description

The area's general character is in notable contrast to the adjacent vale, created by the steeper and more undulating topography. Land use is a combination of farmland, woodland and parklands that blend to create a sinuous, varied and organised landscape.

The larger field plots located within the south, west and east wrap around the spreading areas of copse and woodland that are growing at the higher levels located in the centre and north of the area. Within the wedge-shaped area of land formed by the A26 and the A228 there are several land plots containing polytunnels and these, combined with the agricultural fields contribute to the area's managed and organised character. In contrast the areas of deciduous woodland provide an element of wildness, with much of it being Ancient Woodland. The privately owned Peckham Fields Woods dominate the higher levels of the scarp and there are further trees growing within hedgerow boundaries.

Nettlestead Green Local Wildlife Site crosses into the area in the southeast and boundaries are comprised of hedgerows, estate fencing, woodland shaws and occasional stone walls. There is very little built settlement within the character area, other than scattered residential dwellings and buildings linked to estates. The Listed St Michael's Church near East Peckham stands alone on the southern edge of Peckham Fields Wood, with expansive views to the Low Weald from its environs. The church is also located within a small Conservation Area.

There are a further two Conservation Areas within the area. One includes Mereworth Castle, a Listed Palladian house, the grounds of which are also a Registered Park and Garden. The Waterbury Stream flows through the north of the estate with its distinctive Swanton Valley Pond, a likely historic relic of a former mill. A further Conservation Area surrounds the Listed Roydon Hall, The Dower House of which now functions



Lane with hedgerow boundaries

LCA 6c - Mereworth Greensand Slopes

as a wedding venue. The area connects to the area via the A228 Seven Mile Lane and to the north from the A26. These two roads are densely vegetated which provides some visual screening, however they are the main source of noise in the area. The smaller narrow lanes, often sunken are bound by tall hedgerows and trees, reducing and containing views.

The Greensand Way is a long-distance trail that routes through the area from south of Peckham Fields Woods passing Roydon Hall before heading southwest into the neighbouring Borough. Whilst there are further public footpaths within the south of the area connectivity using public rights of way is limited, with Peckham Fields Woods being privately owned with no public access.

The mosaic of sloping hillsides and rolling fields, Ancient Woodland, historic buildings and parklands define this character area. Its scale is intimate, yet where breaks in vegetation allow it offers long range views west towards the Greensand Ridge and south across the Low Weald respectively. Reminders of the area's historic time-depth are visibly scattered and include the Mereworth Castle Gatehouse that stands raised and alone on the edge of woodland, and the cross-contour lanes following former drove roads.

There are several built form detractors polytunnels to the west, the telecoms tower standing at 114m to the southeast on open fields and the busy A228 and A26.



Mereworth Castle Gatehouse



Rolling fields and Ancient Woodland



Sunken narrow lane



St Michael's Church



Gates to The Dower House



The managed and organised character of the landscape

LCA 6c - Mereworth Greensand Slopes

Issues and Forces for Change

- *Areas of more intensive agriculture and the shift to arable production and privately owned woodland, and potentially differing management objectives have the combined potential to threaten biodiversity and historic field patterns.*
- *Ancient Woodlands require long term sustainable management – private estate aims could lead to conflict between conservation aims and economic incentive.*
- *The strong historic landscape character formed by the features of Conservation areas and a Registered Park and Garden would be sensitive to development.*
- *The outward expansion from neighbouring settlements could erode character.*
- *Increased road traffic leading to reduced tranquillity.*
- *A general local reduction in grazing and orchard use, and a subsequent increase in agricultural intensification and polytunnels, that can have detracting qualities.*
- *Climate change and the likely affects to the species composition of woodlands, including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, and vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Improve the age, species and structural diversity of deciduous woodland to ensure longevity. Use selective thinning and clearing to encourage natural regeneration of tree, shrub and ground flora species. Consider interplanting to improve species diversity where woodlands contain less than five native species of tree and shrub.
- Establish new woodland and tree establishment through high quality multi-functional management to provide well-used places for leisure and recreation promoting health and wellbeing and habitats that are rich in characteristic wildlife. Support the productive, sustainable management of trees and woodlands.
- Consider the potential for restoration of large agricultural fields to the historic enclosure pattern through division by hedgerow planting, including hedgerow trees particularly pedunculate oak which are a distinctive feature of the area.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Conserve the narrow, enclosed nature of lanes and the intimate feel of the landscape and conserve historic parklands within and on boundaries, paying particular attention to mature trees and avenue features.
- Protect public rights of way such as the Greensand Way.
- Restore the historical land use of fruit production where it has been eroded through conversion to other arable crops. Promote farm diversification e.g. winemaking.
- Protect historic settlement cores and their relationship with the wider landscape and protect the setting of the Yotes Court, West Peckham, Roughway Village, Clay Cross and St Michael's Church. Conserve the area's historic character and features including buildings and watercourses.
- Reinforce hedgerow boundaries and plant additional hedgerows using a mix of deciduous native species appropriate to the area. Adapt hedgerow management to be less intensive, allowing hedgerows to grow to >1.5m wide with a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.

LCA 6c - Mereworth Greensand Slopes

Development Management Guidelines

- Small scale infill development within settlements has respected the local vernacular. Site new development in areas where the rolling landform and appearance of strong tree cover will assist in absorbing features into the landscape.
- Development should be sited in visually contained areas to be less noticeable and to reduce visual impacts on the setting of existing buildings and landscape features such as parks and gardens and Conservation Areas.
- Screen new development with additional tree planting, to settle within the landscape, and where possible site new development in the lower folds of the landscape where it will be more readily visually absorbed. Do not screen historic edges to settlements.
- Ensure new development enhances the architectural quality of the Low Weald and reflects its character through considered siting, scale, layout and design and ensure that development is fully sympathetic to, and in scale with, the land use and local building style.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, and fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Protect key views towards the Greensand Ridge and Low Weald, and to local historic landscape features, such as Mereworth Castle and its gatehouse.
- Where viable and relevant, encourage the reintroduction of traditional orchards.
- Protect the setting of Yotes Court, West Peckham, Roughway Village, Clay Cross and St Michael's Church. Conservation Areas and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Be mindful of the existing local vernacular, utilising appropriate materials including brick and hung tile, long pitched roofs and weatherboarding to maintain historic character. Utilise traditional local building materials for boundary walls and native hedgerows both within and to contain settlement edges.
- Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access and design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

Landscape Character Type - Greensand Ridge Woodlands

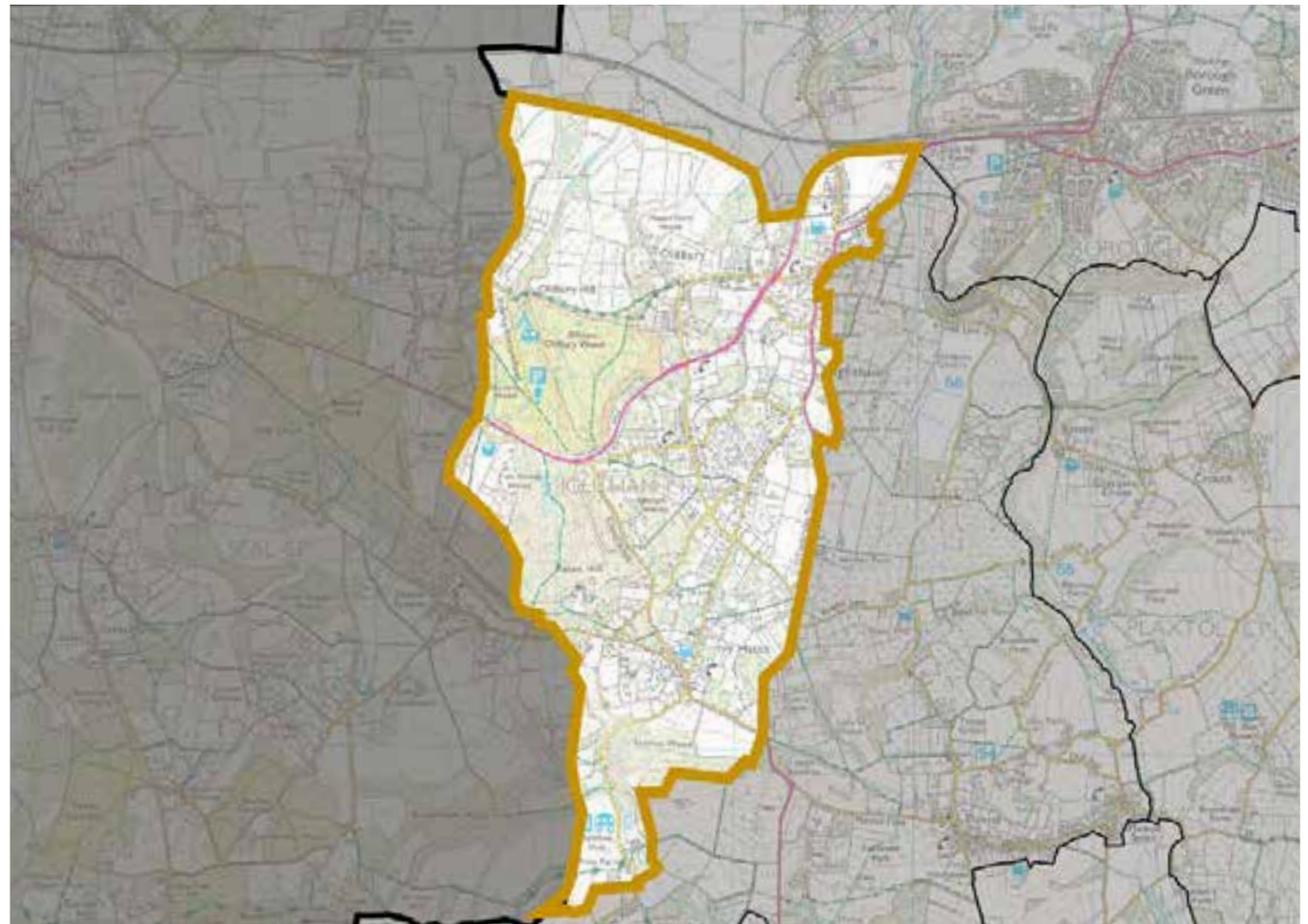
LCA 7a - Ightham Greensand Ridge

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *A characteristically varied landscape formed of part of the hilly Greensand Ridge, consisting of managed woodlands, mixed agriculture, plant nurseries, orchards patches of heathland, field hedgerows and trees, ornate parklands and cobnut plats, and partly located within the Kent Downs National Landscape.*
- *A particularly strong characteristic is the mosaic of dense mixed woodland, interspersed with irregular shaped fields, the village settlements of Ightham and Ivy Hatch and narrow, often sunken lanes that combine in creating intimacy and enclosure.*
- *The Greensand Way long distance trail passes the distinctive entrance to Ightham Mote and is in turn part of a wider network of footpaths and bridleways that weave through the character area.*
- *Whilst views within are generally contained by the network of woodland, in intermittent areas intervisibility extends outside the area, including views towards the High Weald for walkers on the footpath to Raspit Hill from Mote Lane. From settlements there are views north towards the Kent Downs.*
- *Significant historic time-depth is evidenced by Listed and feature buildings including the Medieval Ightham Mote, Conservation Areas and a Scheduled Monument.*

Location

Partially located within the Kent Downs National Landscape, Ightham Greensand Ridge is part of the Greensand Ridge dip slope that extends into Sevenoaks District to the west. The A25 Maidstone Road cuts through the area to the north, bisecting the settlement of Ightham, with Tonbridge Road passing through the area in the east. To the west lies the District of Sevenoaks.



LCA 7a - Ightham Greensand Ridge

Landscape Character Description

The character area sits on the elevated ground of the Greensand Ridge, the prominent sandstone escarpment that runs parallel to the Kent Downs in varying elevations through the Low Weald and which affords a characteristically varied landscape. Particularly strong is the dense mixed woodland, that creates intimacy and enclosure. At higher levels this dominates, but at lower levels the irregular shaped fields of the mixed agricultural use are the key feature within the landscape. Other characteristic land use includes several plant nurseries broadly located within the southeast of the area, with an extensive associated infrastructure that includes greenhouses and polytunnels.

Oldbury Hill is owned and managed by the National Trust and provides an extensive network of Public Rights of Way hidden within an expansive area of woodland covered Open Access Land. Much of it is Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland. The area is also the site of an Iron Age Hillfort, also a Scheduled Monument and together with land south of the A25, forms the Oldbury and Seal Chart SSSI. At the far north of the area is located Oldbury Hill Campsite, a small informal leisure facility with heavily wooded surrounds.

The village of Ightham is nestled within the contoured landscape, blending into Oldbury in the north and extending south to Ightham Common. The northern end of the village is a Conservation Area and the building vernacular used throughout includes decorated stone, hung tiles and clay tile roofs. The housing ages and styles are mixed. On Spring Lane, hung tile mid-century terraced houses sit alongside period properties and a new build housing estate is located between Redwell Lane and Ismays Road close to Ightham Common. Ightham contains a cluster of Listed Buildings that include the Church of St Peter, Ightham Place and Old Forge House.



Heading west on Sandy Lane through woodlands

LCA 7a - Ightham Greensand Ridge

South of Ightham is the much smaller hamlet of Ivy Hatch, with its twin oast houses, handful of Listed Buildings and Conservation Area and south of Ivy Hatch is the National Trust owned Ightham Mote, a distinctive medieval moated manor house that is also a Scheduled Monument, Conservation Area and that also includes Listed Building structures. The Greensand Way long distance trail passes the distinctive entrance to Ightham Mote and is in turn part of a wider network of footpaths and bridleways that weave through the character area. The Ightham Mote estate includes a traditional five-acre plot containing veteran cobnut trees. Whilst most of the character area is located within the Kent Downs National Landscape, there is a small area between Ightham and Ivy Hatch that lies outside.

Other than the busy A25 Maidstone Road and A227 Tonbridge Road, the area is criss-crossed by narrow, wooded and often sunken lanes bounded by hedgerows. With few built detractors beyond the A25, the telecoms cables serving the villages are noticeable within the area.

The undulating landform creates a visually interesting and varied landscape but views are again limited by tree cover, particularly at Oldbury Hill and varied views can be gained when within the villages, dependent on the location of built form. There are intermittent areas where intervisibility extends outside the area, including views towards the High Weald for walkers on the footpath to Raspit Hill from Mote Lane.



Oldbury Wood



Residential street near Ightham Common



Oast Houses at Ivy Hatch



Orchards north of Ightham



Ightham Mote



Coppiced trees on bank

LCA 7a - Ightham Greensand Ridge

Issues and Forces for Change

- *Potential threat to orchards and fruit production through economic pressures and viability.*
- *Pressure to woodland areas through over recreation.*
- *Areas of woodland are lacking in mixed age diversity.*
- *An expansion of settlements could negatively impact their intimate character and the setting of Conservation Areas.*
- *Wooded areas create small natural development parcels and provide mature visual screening.*
- *The wooded cover significantly limits views out of and through the area, and reduces the sensitivity of the area to influences from landscape change beyond its boundaries.*
- *Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands including Oak and Ash and loss of drought intolerant species such as beech that could demonstrably alter the key characteristic of the area's wooded cover and vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development, including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape.
- Reinforce use of locally distinctive and appropriate vernacular, scale and form for any development such as the decorated stone, hung tiles and clay tile roofs seen at Ightham and within the Conservation Area.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Conserve, manage and improve woodland including areas of Ancient Woodland, promoting age and species diversity and maintaining active coppice management.
- Encourage opportunities for natural regeneration. Expand and connect woodland cover through thinning and clearings for natural regeneration, or through small-scale planting to improve biodiversity and soil quality, to reduce erosion and establish ground flora.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.

- Create and restore hedgerow boundaries particularly in the south of the area, where these are more sparse. Fill gaps with locally native tree and shrub species, allowing some to develop into hedgerow trees. Manage hedgerows through cutting or laying to avoid the hedgerow becoming lines of trees and losing the sheltering function for wildlife that hedgerow bases provide. Retain a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Continue to conserve and enhance the ecological capacity of road verges through management, ensuring this is not overly intense so as to preclude diversity.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries to farmland in lieu of fencing, creating species-rich hedgerows using native species and allowing a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Enhance and create new green corridors and ecological networks.
- Enhance interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments, particularly the Hill Fort at Oldbury Hill which are contained within the landscape and not readily noticeable.
- Support traditional farming and land management techniques and encourage sustainable farming and horse management near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.

LCA 7a - Ightham Greensand Ridge

Development Management Guidelines

- Expand and connect ancient woodland blocks through planting of locally native tree and shrub species to form a woodland habitat network. Expand woodland tree cover into the north of the area through use of shelterbelts and shaws. Consider careful siting in order to retain views north towards the Kent Downs scarp within the National Landscape.
- Retain the existing settlement pattern, a key characteristic of the area ensuring any new development is small in scale and respects the locally distinctive mosaic of built form and landscape features. Site within contained areas where it can be absorbed into the landscape through landform or existing woodland screening, prioritising these locations as preferable to those requiring new planting that will take time to mature and provide sufficient screening.
- Consider new advance planting to future proof wooded areas.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Protect designated and non-designated heritage assets and views of key landscape features such as the Kent Downs scarp and High Weald.
- Encourage the ongoing management of traditional orchards and where viable and relevant, their reintroduction.
- Protect the setting of Oldbury, Ivy Hatch and Ightham Mote Conservation Areas and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores, historic features and the landscape, avoiding enclosing within new development.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Use locally appropriate building materials and styles in new development.
- Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Encourage further interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments, such as the Hill Fort at Oldbury Hill and draw upon cultural heritage for landscape management and avoid any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

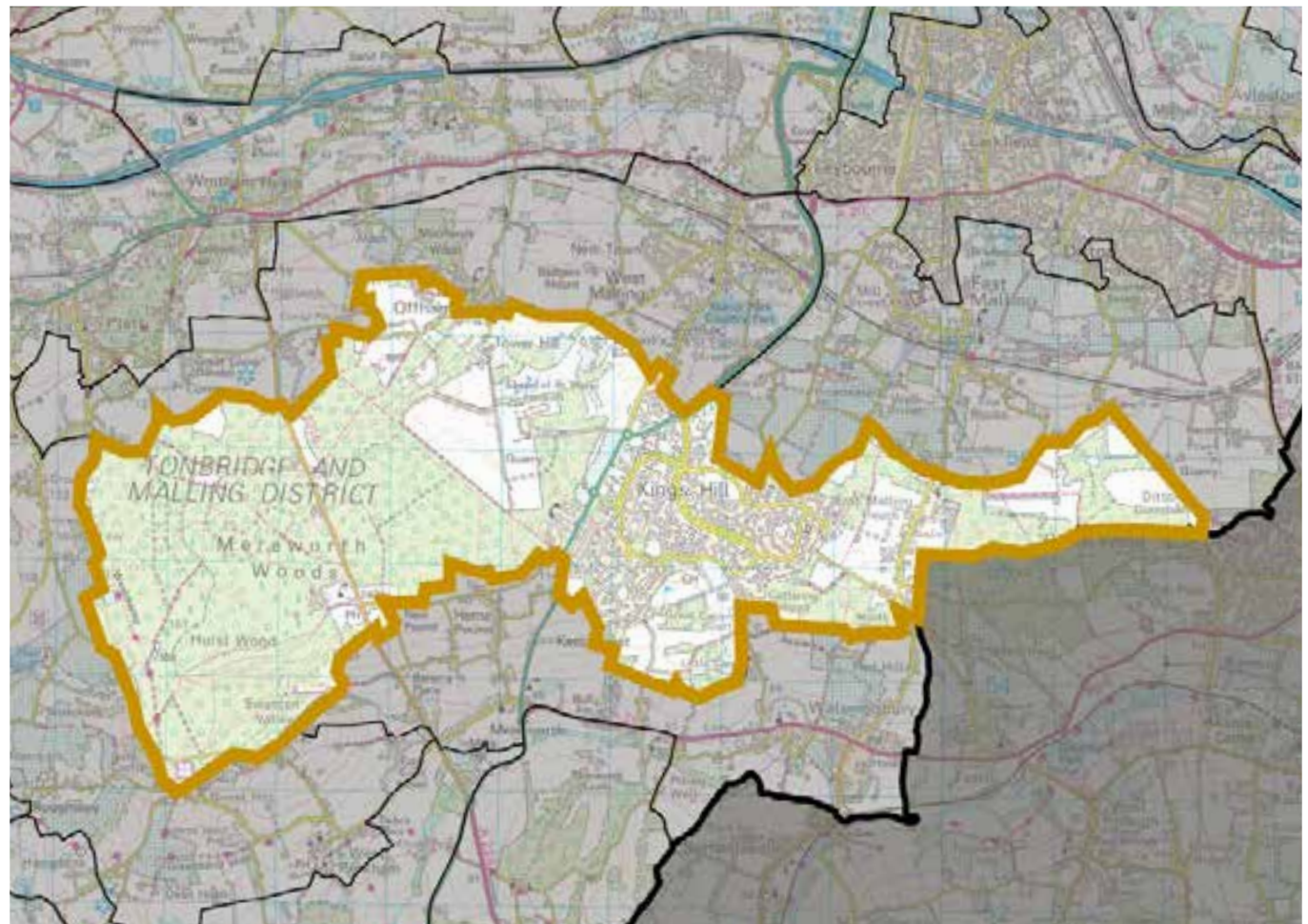
LCA 7b - Mereworth - Kings Hill Woodlands

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *A strong harmonious woodland character of mixed plantation and semi-natural woodland in which elements are harmoniously integrated through woodland containment, with its managed character evidenced by forestry and the central development of Kings Hill.*
- *Whilst being a large development Kings Hill is well integrated by the significant integrated tree planting, and areas of woodland planting on its northeastern, more open side, that further contain it when viewed from the surrounding landscape and consume it within its wooded character.*
- *A sensitively designed development that has integrated historic Scheduled Monuments and conserved the area's heritage.*
- *The western areas of woodland are supported by a network of footpaths and byways and supported by permissive routes along forestry tracks.*
- *Wide, panoramic views south over adjacent character areas to the south and west located within the Low Weald.*
- *An historic time depth that is reflected in nearby Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments.*

Location

The Mereworth - Kings Hill Woodlands character area is situated to the west of Maidstone, sitting between the fruit belts of Malling and Watlingbury to the north and south respectively and is formed of the gently rolling Greensand Ridge dip slope. The eastern edge of the area is defined by the Borough boundary with Maidstone and the adjacent extensive areas of new residential development.



LCA 7b - Mereworth - Kings Hill Woodlands

Landscape Character Description

The land within the area slopes gently down towards Maidstone in the east, though this gradual change is physically imperceptible. Hurst Woods, Mereworth Woods and Shipbourne Forest on the higher ground of the Greensand Ridge sit within a plateau, with the steep scarp lowering to the adjacent Roughway Greensand Slopes to the southwest. In the east of the area the scarp lowers more gradually, easing into the topography of the surrounding Vale of Holmesdale to the north and the Watlingbury Stream valley to the south.

Much of the area is covered by deciduous woodland including the large area occupying the scarp plateau in the west around Mereworth Woodlands. Further smaller woodland areas in the east are interspersed with farmland and settlement. The Greensand Ridge has a varied soil quality that is influenced by its underlying geology resulting in looser, lower nutrient soils and these have historically made the land unsuitable for farming, allowing woodland to establish and for timber production. Nearly all of the extensive elevated wooded areas are defined as either Ancient and Semi-Natural or Ancient Replanted Woodland. There are also areas defined as Local Wildlife Sites, highlighting their ecological importance both at the present time and in the past. Coppicing contributes significantly to the area's timber production and this in turn protects the woodland ground flora, though leads to large stands of young trees without relative mature specimens. Small areas of remnant heath are protected through the Local Wildlife Site designations.

Blocks of farmland including pasture and orchards are interspersed within the woodland towards the east and are generally subdivided by a robust network of hedgerows and trees. Similarly the roads are also bordered by hedgerows and tree belts which create narrow, contained lanes which offer limited views. The small, angular historic field pattern



Narrow lane through forestry coppice at Hurst Wood

LCA 7b - Mereworth - Kings Hill Woodlands

generally remains, with the exception of a block of large agricultural fields west of Blaise Farm near Offham that appear incongruous in the landscape. Two quarries are located within the area, the Kentish Ragstone Hermitage Quarry near Barming Heath, and Blaise Farm Quarry west of Kings Hill which also hosts a renewable biogas plant. Other built form includes a caravan park on Red Hill at East Malling Heath and whilst such features have the potential to detract from the quality of the area, they are generally contained either by woodland or hedgerows and are well screened. The area has a highly managed character, evidenced by its forestry and the visible coppice and timber piles, and the contrasting yet similarly organised central development of Kings Hill.

The Kings Hill development, so named after once being the hunting ground of Egbert King of the Angles, contains both commercial and residential areas, and was built on the former West Malling airfield. Architectural relics of this former use contribute to its character. These including a former Officer's Mess from 1939 and associated garages from 1940, and the former barracks and Airman's Institute on Churchill Square, now an office building. All are Listed, with Kings Hill Park also featuring the World War II Pickett-Hamilton Fort and Pillbox Scheduled Monument. Despite the preserved and valued historical vein, the development appears contemporary, containing a range of building styles set within a common arrangement along wide streets that boast grassed verges and plentiful street trees, designed and planted within a regular, yet sinuous pattern. The development, well designed to be contained within the surrounding woodland, is arranged so that clusters of properties or 'modern hamlets', whilst being built in close proximity to one another, are separated by a setting of intervening planting. Properties reference the local Kent vernacular and include features such as hung tiles and timber boarding, providing a visual reminder of their location.



Panoramic views south and west from the Hurst



Modern hamlets, referencing the Kent vernacular at Kings Hill



Traditional settlement



Development contained by woodland

LCA 7b - Mereworth - Kings Hill Woodlands

Settlement beyond Kings Hill is sparse and consists of small pockets of properties in the west. These include sprawling clusters of ribboned development along roads at Little Acre and East Malling Heath which are largely of a mid-20th Century style although supporting traditional local vernacular elements such as hung tiles and long pitched roofs. Further individual or contained clusters of properties lie within woodland pockets along North Pole Road and Livesey Street and include the Listed Old Cyder House Cottages and Livesey Cottages. The remains of St Blaise Hill Chapel, and the World War II Bofors Anti-aircraft gun tower, both Scheduled Monuments are contained by their surrounding woodland landscape.

These western areas of woodland are supported by a network of footpaths and byways, and supported by permissive routes along forestry tracks, however the eastern area is less well connected by public rights of way. Tranquillity is variable. Whilst woodland areas are quiet, they can have a tendency to feel remote and unsettling, with Kings Hill and the adjacent areas to the A228 being busier. The woodland limits views both within and out of the area, creating a containment and this lessened intervisibility with the surrounding broader landscape reduces any visual relationship or impact upon the character of the area. The exceptions are the wide panoramic views from elevated sections of The Hurst road on the southwest perimeter of Hurst Wood, and views from the southern ridge edge of the character area toward the orchards at Watringbury.

LCA 7b - Mereworth - Kings Hill Woodlands

Issues and Forces for Change

- *Kings Hill on the former West Malling Airfield has expanded, with a large area of employment, a small central retail centre and small areas of open space allocated and safeguarded.*
- *Some erosion of character around East Malling Heath where building design has not considered the local vernacular and development is more visible due to a lack of woodland planting.*
- *Planning applications for single dwellings in East Malling Heath and Little Acre, as in other areas of the Borough, could produce a disjointed and fractured settlement pattern.*
- *Whilst Hermitage Quarry is partially still in active minerals operation, there are permission conditions for the future restoration of mixed broadleaved woodland and agriculture.*
- *Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands including Oak and Ash and loss of drought intolerant species such as beech that could demonstrably alter the key characteristic of the area's wooded cover and vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*
- *Change in agricultural practices that have seen smaller more traditional orchards replaced with increased commercial scale orchards.*

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Continue the distinctive coppice practice within plantation woodlands managed for forestry. Improve the ecological benefit of these woodlands by protecting scattered pockets of trees in order that they may establish into mature and veteran trees and permitting some deadwood to remain as wildlife refugia.
- Conserve, manage and improve the extensive wooded areas that are defined as either Ancient and Semi-Natural or Ancient Replanted Woodland, promoting age and species diversity and maintaining active coppice management.
- Improve the age, species and structural diversity of semi-natural woodland or replanted woodland not managed for forestry, to ensure longevity. Use selective thinning and clearing to encourage natural regeneration of tree, shrub and ground flora species. Consider interplanting to improve species diversity where woodlands contain less than five native species of tree and shrub.
- Increase deciduous tree cover in areas adjacent to Red Hill Road, to assist in further integrating housing and caravan use within the contained and enclosed character of the area.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Create and restore hedgerow boundaries. Fill gaps with locally native tree and shrub species, allowing some to develop into hedgerow trees. Manage hedgerows through cutting or laying to avoid the hedgerow becoming lines of trees and losing the sheltering

function for wildlife that hedgerow bases provide. Retain a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.

- Conserve and protect small pockets of traditional orchard and remnant heath. Manage heath through scrub clearance or grazing so as not to succeed into woodland.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries to farmland in lieu of fencing, creating species-rich hedgerows using native species and allowing a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Restore the historic character of field pattern and enclosure to the large agricultural fields to the west of Blaise Farm, through division by hedgerows and tree belts.
- Continue to screen and contain working pits and quarries. Restore disused pits and quarries, which have the potential to become valuable ecological niches.
- Improve interpretation and signage of historic elements such as Scheduled Monuments which are hidden within the woodland. Orchard Park at Kings Hill can be viewed as an example of positive interpretation.

LCA 7b - Mereworth - Kings Hill Woodlands

Development Management Guidelines

- Utilise wooded areas to site new development where it provides containment and screening and add additional screening planting as required. Consider advance planting of new woodland to create a more effective and layered screen when development commences, and to provide woodland longevity.
- Retain the existing settlement pattern, a key characteristic of the area ensuring any new development is small in scale and respects the locally distinctive mosaic of built form and landscape features. Site within contained areas where it can be absorbed into the landscape through landform or existing woodland screening, prioritising these locations as preferable to those requiring new planting that will take time to mature and provide sufficient screening.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Protect designated and non-designated heritage assets and views of key landscape features such as the Kent Downs scarp and High Weald.
- Encourage the ongoing management of traditional orchards and where viable and relevant, their reintroduction.
- Protect the setting of Offham Conservation Area within the neighbouring character area and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores, historic features and the landscape, avoiding enclosing within new development.
- Use locally appropriate building materials and styles in new development, such as Ragstone to reflect Hermitage Quarry, brick and pitched hung tiles or timber boarding.
- Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- As quarries become disused, encourage restoration for wildlife benefit that are in keeping with the historic land pattern of small, regular enclosure utilising native hedgrow planting.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Encourage further interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments, such as those located within Kings Hill and draw upon cultural heritage for landscape management, avoiding any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

Landscape Character Type - Low Weald Farmlands

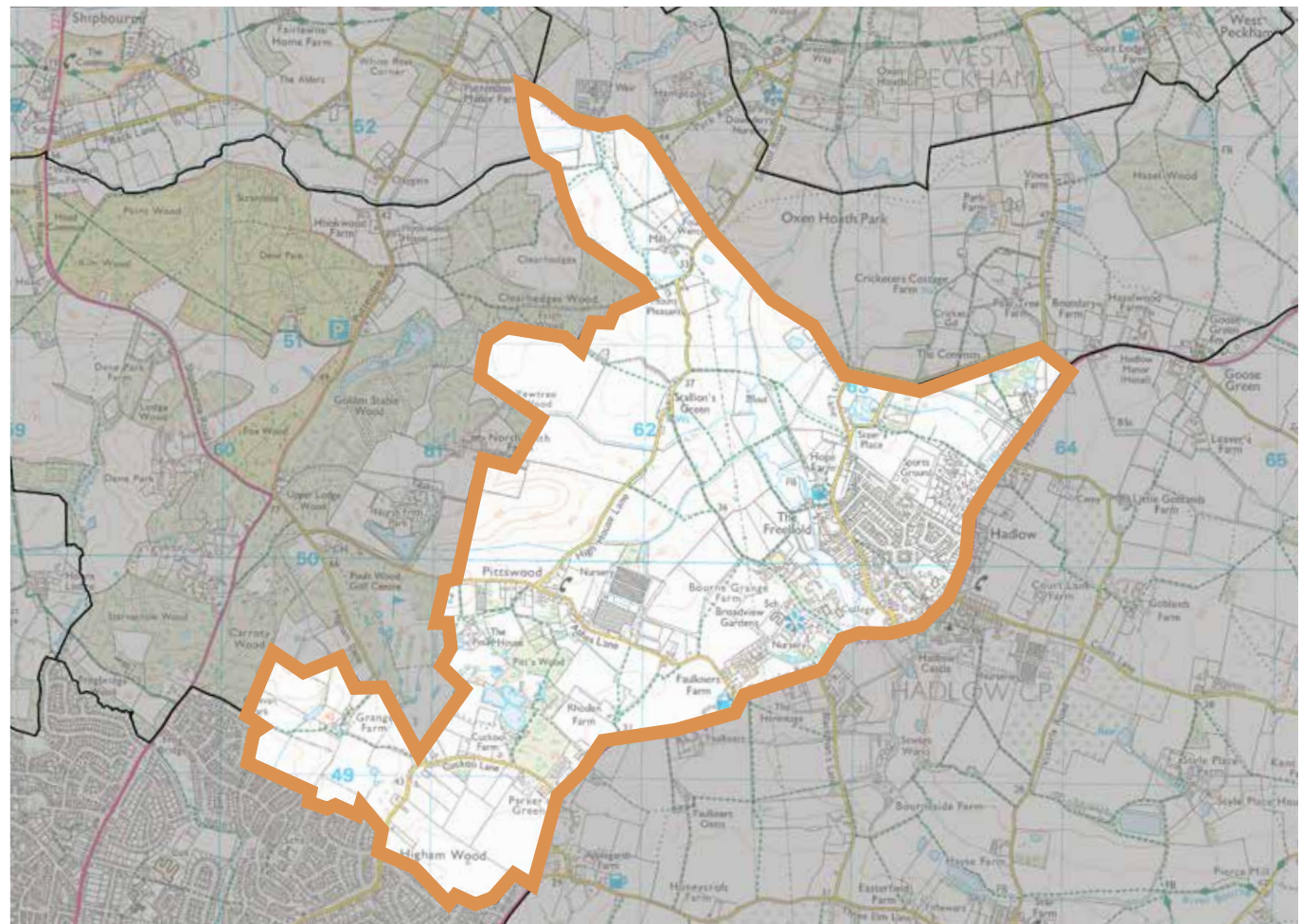
LCA 8a - Hadlow Farmlands

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *A generally flat landscape with a strong cultural influence of horticulture and agriculture, giving rise to a managed and quiet quality. Traditional orchards and glasshouses reflect the influence of fruit-growing on the local landscape.*
- *A strong, intact character of large, regular shaped fields bound by native hedgerows, and interspersed with deciduous woodland and scattered farmsteads.*
- *The mostly open landscape and flat topography allow for distinctive views through the landscape towards Hadlow Tower at Hadlow Castle, and views of the High Weald National Landscape to the south, with the Kent Downs visible to the North.*
- *A large number of public rights of way connect across the countryside.*
- *Settlement in the area dates back to the Stone Age and it retains an historic feel with traditional bricks, tiles and ragstone materials.*
- *A significant sense of historic time-depth from Listed Buildings, land use and Conservation Areas.*

Location

Hadlow Farmlands character area sits within the Low Weald and is formed of a relatively flat landscape. Its southern boundary meets the urban edge of Tonbridge and its eastern, the A26 Maidstone Road. The River Bourne flows within fields northwest to southeast, toward its convergence with the River Medway.



LCA 8a - Hadlow Farmlands

Landscape Character Description

There is a strong cultural influence on the landscape from agriculture and horticulture, with Hadlow College providing specialist education in land based subjects. Large-scale glasshouses used for growing fruit are clearly visible along Ashes Lane and are a notable feature within the long views through the landscape, and the traditional orchards south of Ashes Lane further reflect the influence of fruit-growing on the local landscape. There are further glasshouses located within the campus at Hadlow College.

This land use is reflected in the large irregular open fields that are edged with tree belts and hedgerows, some overgrown and with gaps between plants. Post and wire fences are another regular boundary feature and fields are interspersed with a network of wooded copse and plots, some of which are Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland.

Hadlow Village sits either side of the A26 road and contains two Conservation Areas. Evidence of settlement in the Hadlow area dates back to the Stone Age and it retains an historic feel with traditional weatherboarding, bricks, tiles and ragstone materials, Tudor architecture and several Listed Buildings that include St Mary's Church, constructed in the 10th Century. There is an historic moat southwest of the junction between Carpenter Lane and Common Road and Hadlow Castle, with its distinctive tower being visible from the surrounding landscape. From the early 18th Century, the area has been associated with brewing, with many of the related malthouses closing in the late 1960s to later be converted into housing.



View through the landscape, with glasshouses visible in the distance.

LCA 8a - Hadlow Farmlands

The village consists mainly of compact streets of 20th Century terraced and semi-detached houses, with the smaller Conservation Area - The Freehold located to the west off Carpenters Lane. Beyond the village in the wider area, there are scattered detached houses with grounds and farmsteads. Ashes Lane has a cluster of Listed Buildings adjacent to it that include The Poult House and Barn, Grimble Farmhouse, Old Chegs Farmhouse and the Rose Revived Public House.

The A26 provides access to Tonbridge and the wider road network. Several rural lanes pass through the area and a large number of public rights of way connect across the countryside. Hadlow Park, to the north of the village, contained by woodland and fields provides a recreational area.

The relatively flat topography and large fields allow for wide views within and beyond the character area, broken only where blocks of deciduous woodland and native hedgerow boundaries contain them. There are views of the High Weald National Landscape to the south and the Kent Downs National Landscape tipping into the northwestern extent of the area. Electricity pylons crossing the area centrally north to south are a detracting influence in places.

Perceptually this is a quiet landscape with the strong, identifiable presence of agriculture and horticulture providing a rural feel, and with the red-brick Tudor style vernacular of many of the buildings around Hadlow contributing to an historic sense of place. Despite being bounded by landscapes of varying features, there is a sense of cohesion through and beyond the character area, that is further enhanced by the small country lanes connecting to the wider area.



Field with pylons



High House Lane



Hadlow Village and Castle



Glasshouses



Traditional weatherboarded house



The distinctive tower of Hadlow Castle

LCA 8a - Hadlow Farmlands

Issues and Forces for Change

- *Glasshouses along Ashes Lane are visually dominant, however they are consistent with the area's historic and ongoing fruit growing culture and a sense of cohesion is provided by the traditional red-brick buildings styles.*
- *Field boundaries and woodland shaws have been removed to allow for intensive agricultural use, or have become fragmented or replaced with post and wire fencing leading to a more open landscape. The historic field pattern and enclosure has been eroded.*
- *Potential loss of priority habitat due to agricultural production.*
- *Settlements have retained a traditional distinctive vernacular and contain numerous traditional buildings, amplified by Listed Buildings and Conservation Area designations, the settings of which could be affected by development.*
- *New development could restrict intervisibility with the High Weald National Landscape, with limited screening being provided by existing woodland and hedgerow cover.*
- *New large scale housing development could result in a coalescence with Tonbridge, whilst altering the characteristics of the rural agricultural and horticultural landscape.*
- *Despite development pressure, The River Bourne provides some containment to the southern edge of the Hadlow settlement boundary.*

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Improve the age, species and structural diversity of deciduous woodland to ensure longevity. Use selective thinning and clearing to encourage natural regeneration of tree, shrub and ground flora species. Consider interplanting to improve species diversity where woodlands contain less than five native species of tree and shrub.
- Conserve and protect small pockets of traditional orchard south of Ashes Lane.
- Consider the potential for restoration of large agricultural fields to the historic enclosure pattern through division by hedgerow planting, including hedgerow trees particularly pedunculate oak which are a distinctive feature of the area.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Manage watercourses and ditches for wildlife, create wet woodlands which connect to the flood plain and reduce flood risk through intercepting rainfall and slowing the flow of water downstream.
- Protect traditional settlement edges, in particular of smaller settlement clusters at Golden Green and Parker's Green, avoiding expansion into localised areas of countryside.
- Protect historic settlement cores and their relationship with the wider landscape and protect the setting of the Hadlow Village Conservation Areas. Conserve the historic

character and features along main thoroughfares where they are most visible.

- Create buffers of semi-natural habitat along agricultural field margins to improve biodiversity. Conserve and reinforce hedgerow boundaries and plant additional hedgerows using a mix of deciduous native species appropriate to the area. Adapt hedgerow management to be less intensive, allowing hedgerows to grow to >1.5m wide with a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Apply forestry practices that respect local character and visual amenity, using traditional techniques like coppicing and explore the use of farmland that will enhance biodiversity and preserve historic time depth.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.

Development Management Guidelines

- Site any new development within identified contained areas where it will be more readily absorbed into the landscape, taking account of views towards the High Weald National Landscape.
- Retain the landscape features at existing settlement edges that assist in settling built form into the surrounding landscape, and incorporate into any areas of urban extension, e.g. small areas of woodland, native hedgerows, ponds and other features.

LCA 8a - Hadlow Farmlands

- Ensure new development enhances the architectural quality of the Low Weald and reflects its character through considered siting, scale, layout and design and ensure that development is fully sympathetic to, and in scale with, the land use and local building style.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, and fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Screen new development with additional tree planting, to settle within the landscape, and where possible site new development in locations where it will be more readily visually absorbed and does not screen historic edges to settlements.
- Protect key views, including those towards Hadlow Castle and views of oast houses which are a locally distinctive and characteristic feature and retain and enhance views towards the High Weald.
- Where viable and relevant, encourage the reintroduction of traditional orchards.
- Protect the setting of Hadlow Village's, Conservation Areas and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Use locally appropriate building materials and styles in any new development, such as ragstone, red-brick or weatherboarding, to protect the historic vernacular of the area. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access and design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

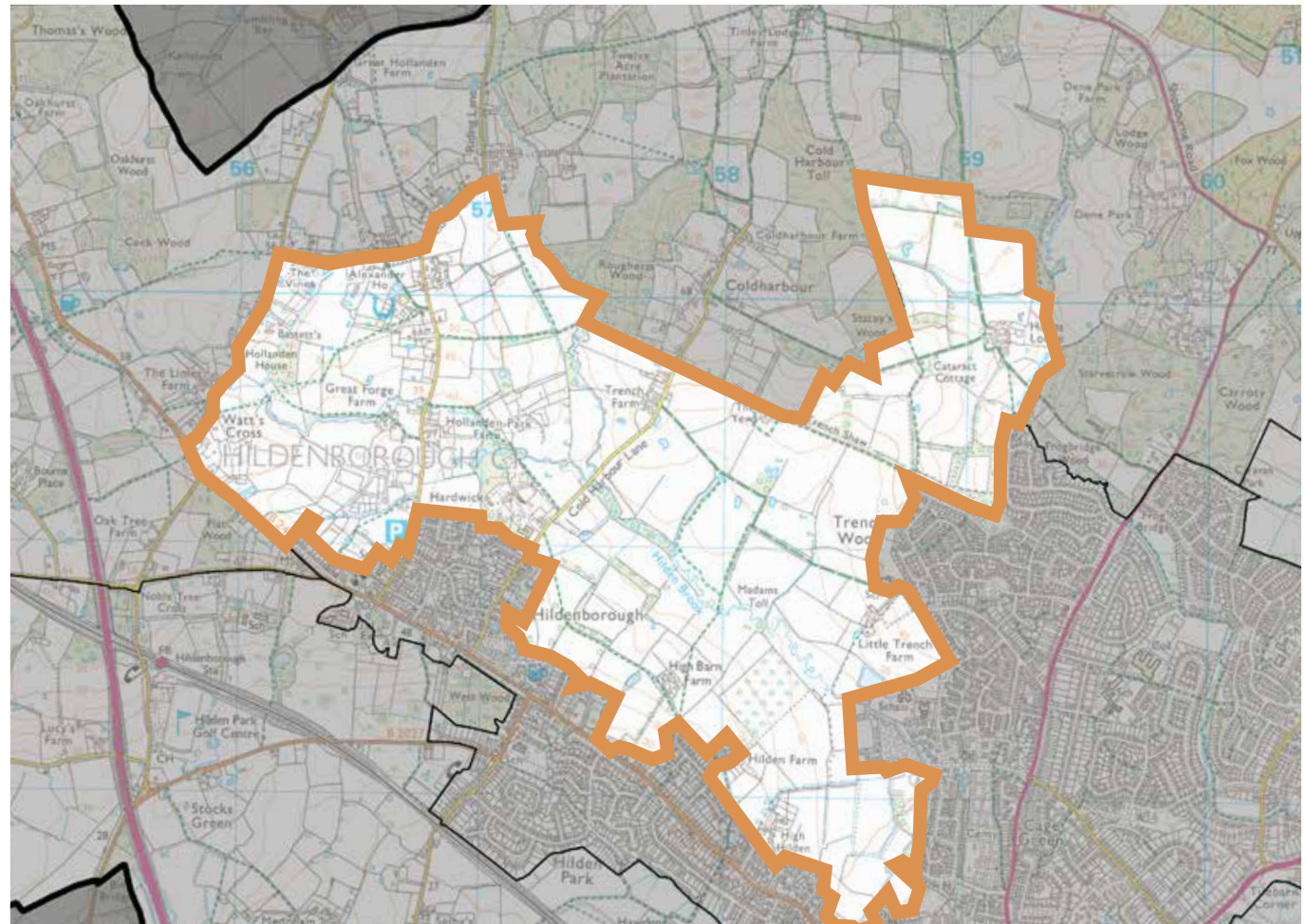
LCA 8b - East Hildenborough Farmlands

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *A gently rolling valley landscape formed of varying sized irregular fields and paddocks, interspersed with clumps and patches of deciduous woodland including pockets of Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland, and the vegetated weaving Hilden Brook.*
- *Narrow lanes are generally hedge lined and often interspersed with mature trees restricting views into the surrounding countryside.*
- *A scattered settlement pattern with houses clustered in ribbons along the small lanes and farm buildings nestled and settled within the landscape.*
- *A rural yet managed quality, influenced by its urban edges. Public rights of way provide access through the area connecting with nearby Hildenborough and Tonbridge.*
- *Heritage assets include Listed Buildings and Conservation Area. Buildings and settlements share a common vernacular style creating a strong sense of cohesion.*

Location

East Hildenborough Farmlands are located adjacent to the northwest edge of Tonbridge within the gently rolling valley landform of the meandering Hilden Brook. Its northern boundaries are formed of the roads that mark the transition into the more wooded character of the adjacent areas.



LCA 8b - East Hildenborough Farmlands

Landscape Character Description

The area is characterised by varying sized irregular fields and paddocks, its larger fields being divided by post and wire fencing. Many are contained by dense boundary vegetation consisting of native hedgerows and wooded tree belts that break up the landscape and limit wider views out of the area. Hilden Brook is enclosed for much of its route by a thick belt of trees and vegetation making its route, if not the Brook itself visible from the public rights of way that weave through the landscape. Discreet bridges along the narrow lanes provide a further visual clue to its presence.

The landscape has a scattered settlement pattern. Houses are clustered in ribbons along the small lanes that cross the area and farm buildings are nestled and settled within the landscape. The common building vernacular is red brick and tiled roof, and a cluster of houses on Coldharbour Lane are within a Conservation Area. There are several listed buildings, including The Trench at Trench Farm, a 19th Century house with striking finials and bellcote and the Victorian Hildenborough country house, now a medical centre.

There are small pockets of Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland interspersed throughout the area, and a distinctive number of wetlands and ponds scattered within the fields and woodlands. A remnant area of traditional orchard is located in the southeast near Hilden Farm, and further small patches are located on the northern boundary of Tonbridge Road.

The narrow lanes that cross the area are generally hedge lined and often interspersed with mature trees that restrict views into the surrounding countryside.



Open view of fields and wooded boundaries within the gently rolling landscape.

LCA 8b - East Hildenborough Farmlands

The road containment is eased by the intermittent roadside properties, many of which are of traditional build, and where breaks in the roadside vegetation allow there are wider views toward the settled landscape of fields, tree belts, pasture and the occasional built feature. Public rights of way provide access into the countryside, connecting with nearby Hildenborough and Tonbridge.

Whilst the thick tree belts and areas of woodland limit wider intervisibility beyond, there is less wooded cover, distinguishing the area from those adjacent.



Traditional tile fronted house on Coldharbour Lane



The hidden Hilden Brook



Silos at Trench Farm



Hedge lined narrow lanes

LCA 8b - East Hildenborough Farmlands

Issues and Forces for Change

- *The flat-lying topography and screening function of existing hedgerows limit more distant views and reduce intervisibility with other character areas. The sense of visual containment could assist in absorbing potential new development from any outward expansion of Hildenborough, Tonbridge and Hilden Park on the mainly open farmland landscape.*
- *The numerous traditional buildings, amplified by Listed Buildings and Conservation Area designations, and their settings would be sensitive to new development.*
- *Well established hedgerows along lanes and field boundaries provide a sense of enclosure, however woodland cover is limited.*
- *Opportunities should be explored for siting development within areas with established hedgerow boundaries where new built form would be better settled and absorbed into the landscape.*
- *Development pressure around Tonbridge, Hilden Park and Hildenborough is evident, and the character area serves as an important green buffer.*
- *Some field boundaries have been replaced with post and wire fencing, and shaws have been lost leading to a more open landscape.*
- *Potential decrease in orchards and fruit production through economic pressures and viability.*

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Improve age and species diversity within woodlands to ensure longevity. Encourage natural regeneration through thinning and coppicing to allow clearings for the natural regeneration of trees, shrubs and ground flora.
- Manage hedgerows through cutting to avoid degradation into tree lines, allowing individual scattered trees to remain as hedgerow trees.
- Conserve the historic core of Coldharbour Lane, protecting the historic settlement edge and its landscape setting. Avoid enclosing the old settlement core within new development.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Manage watercourses and ditches for wildlife, create wet woodlands which connect to the flood plain and reduce flood risk through intercepting rainfall and slowing the flow of water downstream.
- Protect historic settlement cores and their relationship with the wider landscape and protect the setting of the Coldharbour Lane Conservation Area. Conserve historic character and features along main thoroughfares where they are most visible.
- Create buffers of semi-natural habitat along agricultural field margins to improve biodiversity. Conserve and reinforce hedgerow boundaries and plant additional hedgerows using a mix of deciduous native species appropriate to the area. Adapt hedgerow management

to be less intensive, allowing hedgerows to grow to >1.5m wide with a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.

- Explore the use of farmland that will enhance biodiversity and preserve historic time depth.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.

Development Management Guidelines

- The gently rolling topography assists in containing potential development within the landscape. Increase woodland cover with advance planting of woodland within field corners, to divide and contain future development plots.
- Screen new development with additional tree and hedgerow planting, to settle within the landscape, and where possible site in locations where it will be more readily visually absorbed and does not screen historic edges to settlements.
- Retain the landscape features at existing settlement edges that assist in settling built form into the surrounding landscape, and incorporate into any areas of urban extension, e.g. small areas of woodland, native hedgerows, ponds and other features.
- Ensure new development enhances the architectural quality of the Low Weald and reflects its character through considered siting, scale, layout and design and ensure that development is fully sympathetic to, and in scale with, the land use and local building style.

- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, and fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Protect key views, including those towards locally distinctive and historic features and retain and enhance views towards the High Weald.
- Where viable and relevant, encourage the reintroduction of traditional orchards.
- Protect the setting of Coldharbour Lane Conservation Area and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Enhance built form through increased use of building materials and techniques that better reflect local distinctiveness including tile roof and brick, timber and hung tile walls to restore the local vernacular. Employ use of traditional local building materials for boundary walls including brick and ragstone, and plant native hedgerows for visual containment and ecological connectivity. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access and design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

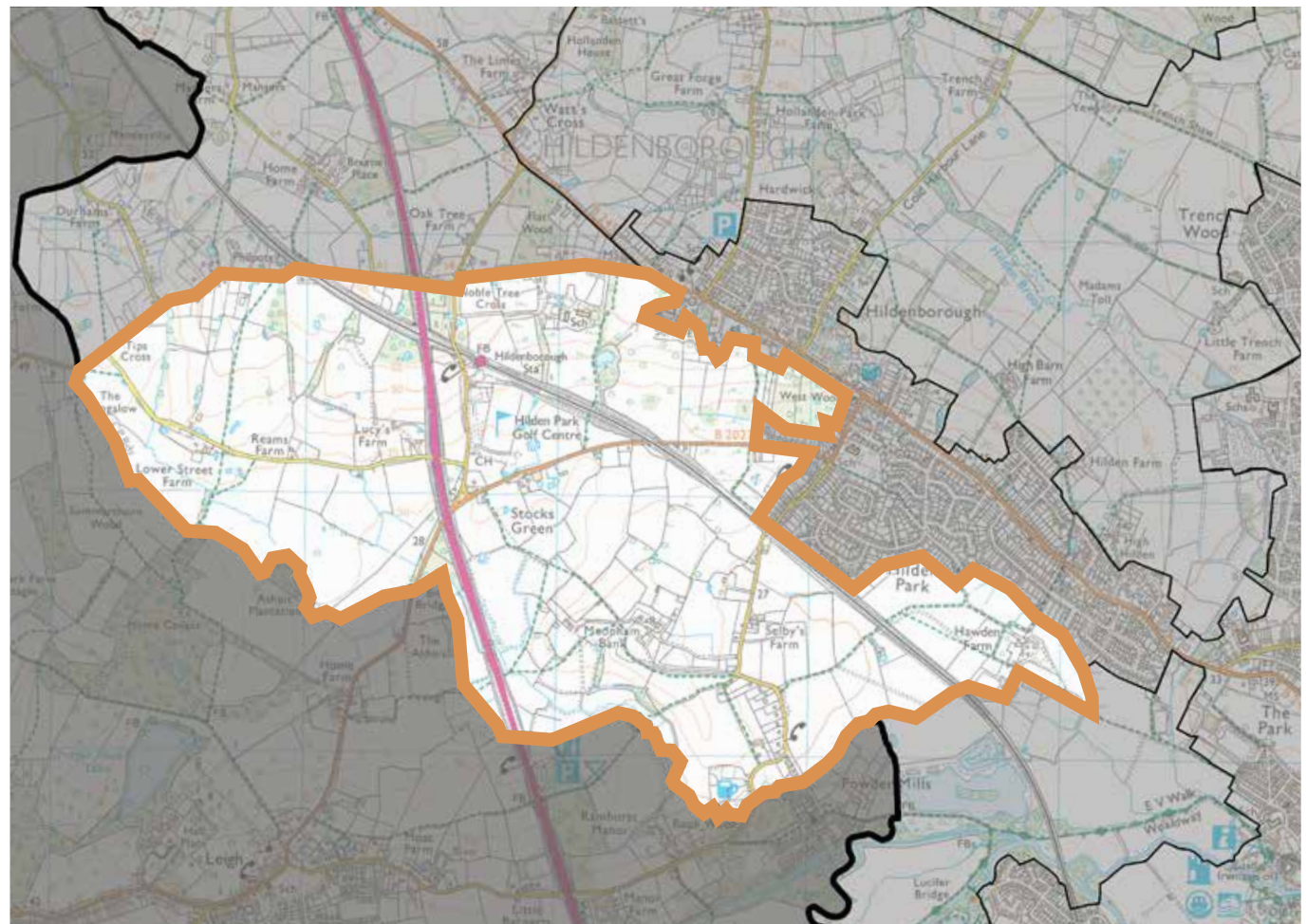
LCA 8c - West Hildenborough Farmlands

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *A relatively flat, gently undulating landform of irregular shaped fields and traditional orchards, with the influence of rail and road corridors throughout.*
- *Fields are edged by sparse tree lines and patches of woodland, with small watercourses often shaping field boundaries.*
- *Scattered settlements of generally individual dwellings or small linear hamlets, with a sense of cohesion created by common building materials such as red-brick facing and tiled roof. There is a sense of cohesion through the common use of building materials, such as red-brick facing and tiled roof.*
- *A limited rights of way network with opportunity to increase pedestrian links and access.*
- *Historic time depth and heritage assets through distinctive Listed Buildings and cultural associations.*

Location

The area is located to the south of Hildenborough, with the Borough boundary forming its southern boundary. Whilst the area shares many characteristics with the farmlands north of Tonbridge, its location south of Hildenborough and the transport infrastructure within give it a different perceptual quality.



LCA 8c - West Hildenborough Farmlands

Landscape Character Description

The area is gently undulating with small watercourses shaping field boundaries on their course to the River Medway. Land use is predominantly agricultural, with the irregular shaped fields edged by sparse tree lines and patches of woodland. In a few locations the historic field pattern has been opened up to create larger fields, however many of the historic boundaries have remained intact. Boundary treatments are varied, with many having hedgerows however wooden post and rail fences and metal railings are also in use.

Fields are interspersed by a few scattered patches of woodland, much of which is Ancient and Semi Natural and the area is scattered with small streams, ditches and ponds. Whilst public rights of way connect through the countryside the rural roads are narrow and lacking pavements, and the hedged and verged edges deter and restrict use by pedestrians.

Settlements are scattered and generally are individual dwellings or small hamlets located along, or just set back from the narrow roads and lanes that cross the area. Houses are mixed including mid 20th Century and earlier, and of varying style. Most are detached or semi-detached and often feature hung tiles.

There are several Listed buildings and these include the distinctive Reams Farmhouse, originally two timber framed houses underbuilt in brick to the north of Lower Street, a cluster of buildings at Lower Street Farm and Lucy's Farm and Laundry Cottage located on the B2027. Its ornate bargeboards and tall brick chimneys are visible from the road.



Oast House south of Stocks Green Road, formally the Old Barn Teahouse.

LCA 8c - West Hildenborough Farmlands

A distinctive 19th Century oast house is located south of Stocks Green Road, now restored after being damaged by fire and the 1987 hurricane that affected much of Kent. Other buildings nearby are listed and part of an original farmstead group, parts of which date from the 16th Century and that formed the Old Barn Tea House, popular in the 1920s and with further features added in the 1930s. The former use can still be seen painted on the kiln of the oast House 'Old Barn Tea House. Oceans of cream'.

The area is accessible by rail with a station at the western edge of Hildenborough, the railway line generally hidden within the dense canopy of trackside woodland, its unusually angled brick bridge spanning the B2027. To the north a further two, very similar large Victorian houses, both listed buildings are located south of Noble Tree Road. These are Foxbush, now forming Sackville Independent School and Mountains. The A21, Tonbridge Bypass sits within a tree lined embankment and cuts through the area but there are no connecting slip roads. Other land use includes Hilden Park Golf Centre, some small light industrial units, schools and Philpots community allotments and commuter car park.

The flat topography combined with the intermittent trees, hedges and woodlands generally contain views to within the area, with few beyond. The area in the south blends into the features of the Speldhurst Wooded Farmlands character area within Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and to the west, the Upper Medway Valley within Sevenoaks District.



Oast house



Flat topography and woodland containing views



Rural roads lacking pavements

LCA 8c - West Hildenborough Farmlands

Issues and Forces for Change

- *The broadly rural landscape is in part fragmented by the presence of major road and rail infrastructure. Noise influence from the A21 Tonbridge Bypass is a significant detractor, creating an unsettled feel in areas of the landscape that are closest.*
- *Natural habitats are weak and fragmented in places, though the well established hedgerow boundaries to lanes provide a strong degree of enclosure.*
- *The rail line provides a degree of separation between the urban edge of Hildenborough and the wider more rural landscape.*
- *Changes in farming and land patterns of cultivation have led to a monochromatic and larger scale field system, with the associated loss of shaws and woodland and a general deterioration of woodland cover leading to a loss of ecological habitat.*
- *Rural and natural features are at risk from urban land use and expansion into areas of open farm land close to Hildenborough.*
- *Housing has been added through the 20th Century but has generally respected the local vernacular and rural setting and should provide precedence for new development.*
- *Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Improve the age, species and structural diversity of deciduous woodland to ensure longevity. Use selective thinning and clearing to encourage natural regeneration of tree, shrub and ground flora species. Consider interplanting to improve species diversity where woodlands contain less than five native species of tree and shrub.
- Utilise water courses and drainage features to create riparian landscape and wetlands.
- Enhance existing and create new woodland blocks, around settlements, fields and roads. Use tree planting at settlement edges to enforce the edge and strengthen ecological networks.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Manage watercourses and ditches for wildlife, create wet woodlands which connect to the flood plain and reduce flood risk through intercepting rainfall and slowing the flow of water downstream.
- Enhance opportunities for public access to the natural landscape and pedestrian links to Hildenborough and Tonbridge to reduce heavy presence of traffic.
- Increase planting along Tonbridge Bypass as an ecological corridor and to reduce road noise.
- Protect historic settlement cores and their relationship with the wider landscape. Conserve the historic character and features along main thoroughfares where they are most visible.
- Wherever possible reinforce, restore and conserve historical landscape patterns. Plant hedgerows of hawthorn and hazel to restore historic field boundaries, including hedgerow trees of oak. Retain and manage the dense hedgerows along narrow lanes.
- Apply forestry practices that respect local character and visual amenity, using traditional techniques like coppicing and explore the use of farmland that will enhance biodiversity and preserve historic time depth.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.

LCA 8c - West Hildenborough Farmlands

Development Management Guidelines

- Site any new development within identified contained areas where it will be more readily absorbed into the landscape, taking account of views towards the High Weald National Landscape.
- Retain the landscape features at existing settlement edges that assist in settling built form into the surrounding landscape, and incorporate into any areas of urban extension, e.g. small areas of woodland, native hedgerows, ponds and other features.
- Ensure new development enhances the architectural quality of the Low Weald and reflects its character through considered siting, scale, layout and design and ensure that development is fully sympathetic to, and in scale with, the land use and local building style.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, and fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Screen new development with additional tree planting, to settle within the landscape, and where possible site new development in locations where it will be more readily visually absorbed and does not screen historic edges to settlements.
- Protect key views, including those towards historic buildings and oast houses which are a locally distinctive and characteristic feature and retain and enhance views towards the High Weald.
- Where viable and relevant, encourage the reintroduction of traditional orchards.
- Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Be mindful of the historic local vernacular. Seek opportunity to enhance character by utilising appropriate materials such as tile roof and brick and hung tiles facades. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access and design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

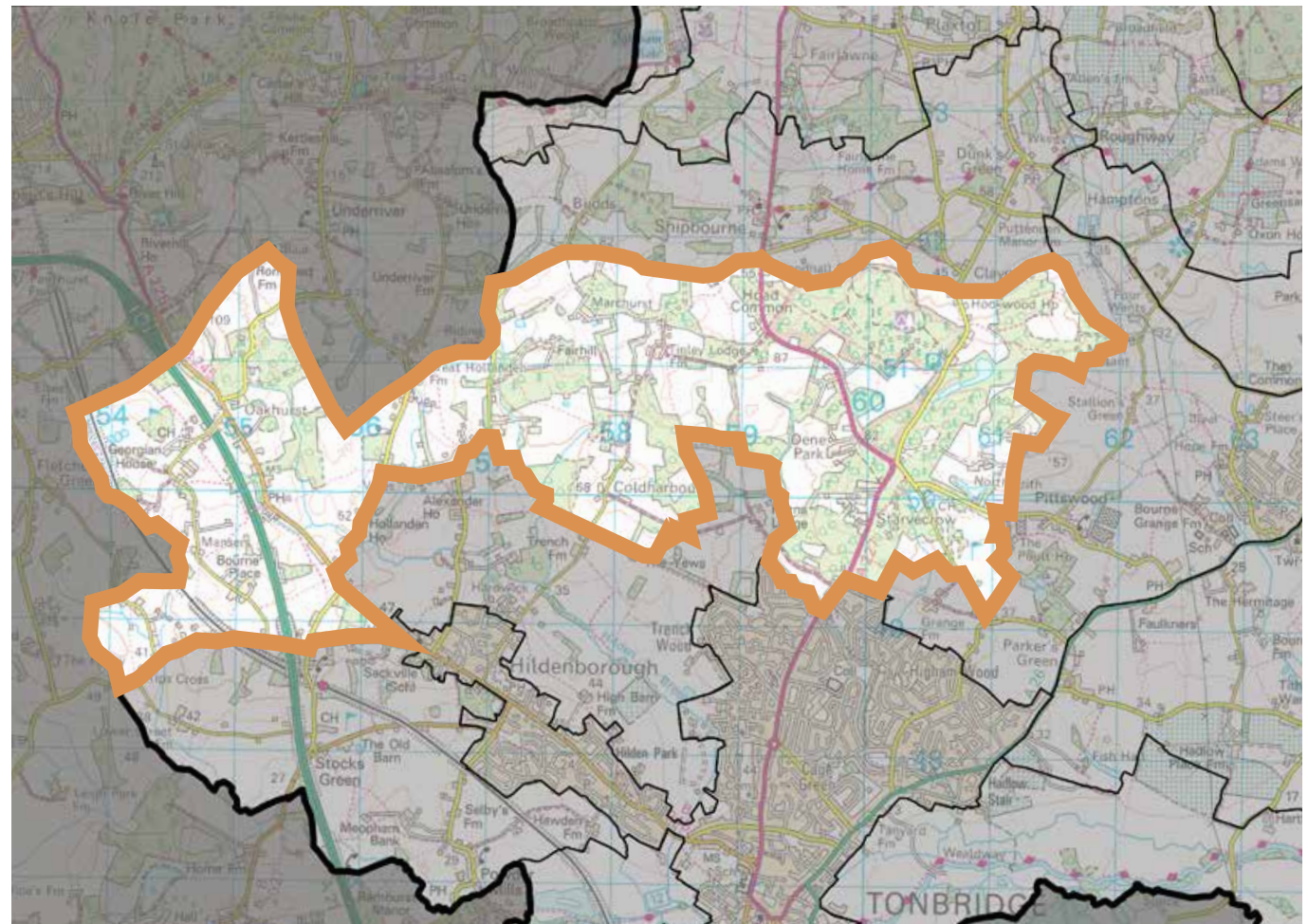
LCA 8d - Dene Park Western Wooded Farmlands

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *An undulating landscape of ridges and valleys, where extensive deciduous woodland blocks are combined with fields and pasture to create a mosaic of land use peppered with small ponds and streams flowing from the Kent Downs.*
- *A mature and managed rural landscape, with woodlands and water bodies providing ecological interest and value. Significant areas of woodland are designated Ancient and Semi Natural.*
- *Beyond the woodlands, intervisibility with the wooded Greensand Ridge, areas of open farmland and the Kent Downs National Landscape.*
- *A scattered settlement pattern of Farmsteads and individual dwellings. The strong use of the distinctive local vernacular that includes tile hung and timber framed buildings and steeply pitched tiled roofs seen within settlements adds to the area's overall character.*
- *Interspersed public rights of way, paths, streams and ponds combine in creating an intimate character that invites human exploration.*
- *Historic farmsteads, barns and other features provide historic time depth, their scattered distribution contributing to the area's rural character.*

Location

The character area is located between the edge of the Kent Downs National Landscape to the north, with the settlements of Tonbridge and Hildenbrough to the south, with the contrasting more open farmland to the south and east. The area meets the Borough boundary with Sevenoaks to the west.



LCA 8d - Dene Park Western Wooded Farmlands

Landscape Character Description

The Wooded Farmlands lie within an undulating area of the lower scarp that marks the transition from the edge of the Kent Downs National Landscape into the Low Weald. The dense network of wooded features are of varying scale, from large woodland blocks to smaller copse and shaws and much of it is designated Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland. There are some larger blocks of Replanted Ancient Woodland in the west and these combined wooded features define the area's character, distinguishing it from areas of more open farmland to the south and east.

The extensive areas of woodland combine with small to medium sized irregularly shaped arable and pasture fields to create a mosaic of land use that covers much of the area and that is peppered with small ponds and streams flowing from the Kent Downs. Field boundaries are formed in part by the woodland, with hedgerows or wire fencing providing further divisions. Farmsteads and individual dwellings are scattered throughout and include Limes Farmhouse northwest of Hildenborough, with its barn, stable and oast house, all of which are Listed. Clusters of dwellings positioned within residential closes are found on the Shipbourne Road, and in the location of the former Bourne Place school in the west. Conservation Areas are located at Coldharbour, Hildenborough and at North Frith Park. Contrasting land use includes Poult Wood golf course, situated in the southeast of the area located on both sides of the heavily vegetated Higham Lane, a vineyard tucked into the landscape near Coldharbour and a large truck dealership operating on a site adjacent to the A21 road close to the Borough boundary.

A network of A roads and winding narrow lanes create a busy road network. The A21 crosses the west of the area in a north-south direction, raised on an embankment and the A227 takes traffic from Tonbridge north towards the A25. The Tonbridge to Sevenoaks railway line on a tree-lined embankment clips the west of the LCA.



View across pasture with woodland beyond, at Coldharbour Farm.

LCA 8d - Dene Park Western Wooded Farmlands

Dene Park woodlands are managed by the Forestry Commission and offer the public a network of trails and glimpsed views to the surrounding landscape. In the east of the character area is Golden Stable Woods, a Local Wildlife Site. The Victorian mansion house, once associated with the park has now been converted into flats. There are several Listed Buildings scattered throughout the area which include Nizel's Cottage, a Wealden style house originating from the late 15th - early 16th Century.

Much of the area, with its tree lined lanes feels relatively enclosed, with a darker more dappled light in contrast to the open farmland to the south of the character area, however the density of woodlands, with interspersed public rights of way, permissive paths and streams and ponds combine in creating an intimate character that invites human exploration. Where breaks in tree cover allow, there is some intervisibility with the wooded Greensand Ridge and the scarp of the Kent Downs rising to the north, and in more elevated locations such as Coldharbour Lane toward the open farmland. The network of roads, blocks of woodland and open spaces create a mixed perceptual experience that combines both noise and calm.



View towards Dene Park



Managed woodlands at Fox Wood



Coldharbour Lane



Tree and wooded edge to a field



View looking north toward the Greensand Ridge

LCA 8d - Dene Park Western Wooded Farmlands

Issues and Forces for Change

- *The wooded character creates opportunity for screening allowing for integration of new development.*
- *Threats to woodland through loss of mature species not being replaced, including mature oaks, distinctive within the area.*
- *Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*
- *Whilst there is limited development pressure, change around settlements could weaken the strength of character formed by the local building vernacular and dilute the extent of historic influence*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current *Kent Downs AONB Management Plan* and the duty to further the purpose of the designated landscape.
- Promote use of the *High Weald Housing Design Guide* for best practice on incorporating green-ness into new developments, by including grass verges, trees and shrubs, and greenspaces, to ensure a strong sense of place and help minimise noise intrusion near major road networks.
- The character area has intervisibility with the Kent Downs National Landscape, from which development could be visible. Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development and the High Weald AONB Management Plan, that include design principles for siting, scale and design of new development ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscapes.
- Maintain the low levels of visual detractors which would commonly be associated with horse grazing and paddocks. Refer to the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance woodlands, wetlands and unfarmed natural habitats for ecological benefit. Manage woodland to increase age and species diversity

and ensure longevity, promoting natural regeneration though thinning and coppicing to allow clearings for natural regeneration of trees, shrubs and ground flora to take place. Protect mature and veteran trees.

- Improve pond habitats by discouraging fertiliser use and creating buffers of semi-natural habitat between ponds and farmland and discouraging shading of non-woodland ponds.
- Conserve the rural nature of the landscape and sparse settlement pattern. Continue to screen and contain development within deciduous woodland.
- Manage highway verges for wildlife, ensuring management is not overly intense so as to deter diversity.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Restore the historic field pattern through creation of species-rich native hedgerows. Adapt management to be less intensive, allowing hedgerows to grow to >1.5m wide and have a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Manage pasture to improve its ecological integrity, considering a reduction in grazing pressure or grazing rotation, to ensure grazing does not consistently reduce the sward height. Seek to achieve grassland of higher species diversity and sward height, and reduction in bare or poached ground. Replace modern wire fencing with native hedgerows if space allows, or with timber post and rail fencing.

LCA 8d - Dene Park Western Wooded Farmlands

- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.

Development Management Guidelines

- Seek opportunity to create additional landscape features including woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows and ponds to provide landscape structure, ecological enhancement and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Retain the landscape features at existing settlement edges that assist in settling built form into the surrounding landscape, and incorporate into any areas of urban extension, e.g. small areas of woodland, native hedgerows, ponds and other features.
- Ensure new development enhances the architectural quality of the Low Weald and reflects its character through considered siting, scale, layout and design and ensure that development is fully sympathetic to, and in scale with, the land use and local building style.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, and fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Screen new development with additional tree planting, to settle within the landscape, and where possible site new development in locations where it will be more readily visually absorbed and does not screen historic edges to settlements.
- Protect key views, of any features that are a locally distinctive and retain and enhance views towards the Kent Downs scarp and the Greensand Ridge.
- Where viable and relevant, encourage the reintroduction of traditional orchards.
- Protect the settings of Coldharbour and North Frith Conservation Areas and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain physical and visual links between the old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing historic features within new development.
- Promote the use of the distinctive local vernacular for new buildings such as the brick and hung tile seen along Coldharbour Lane. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access and design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

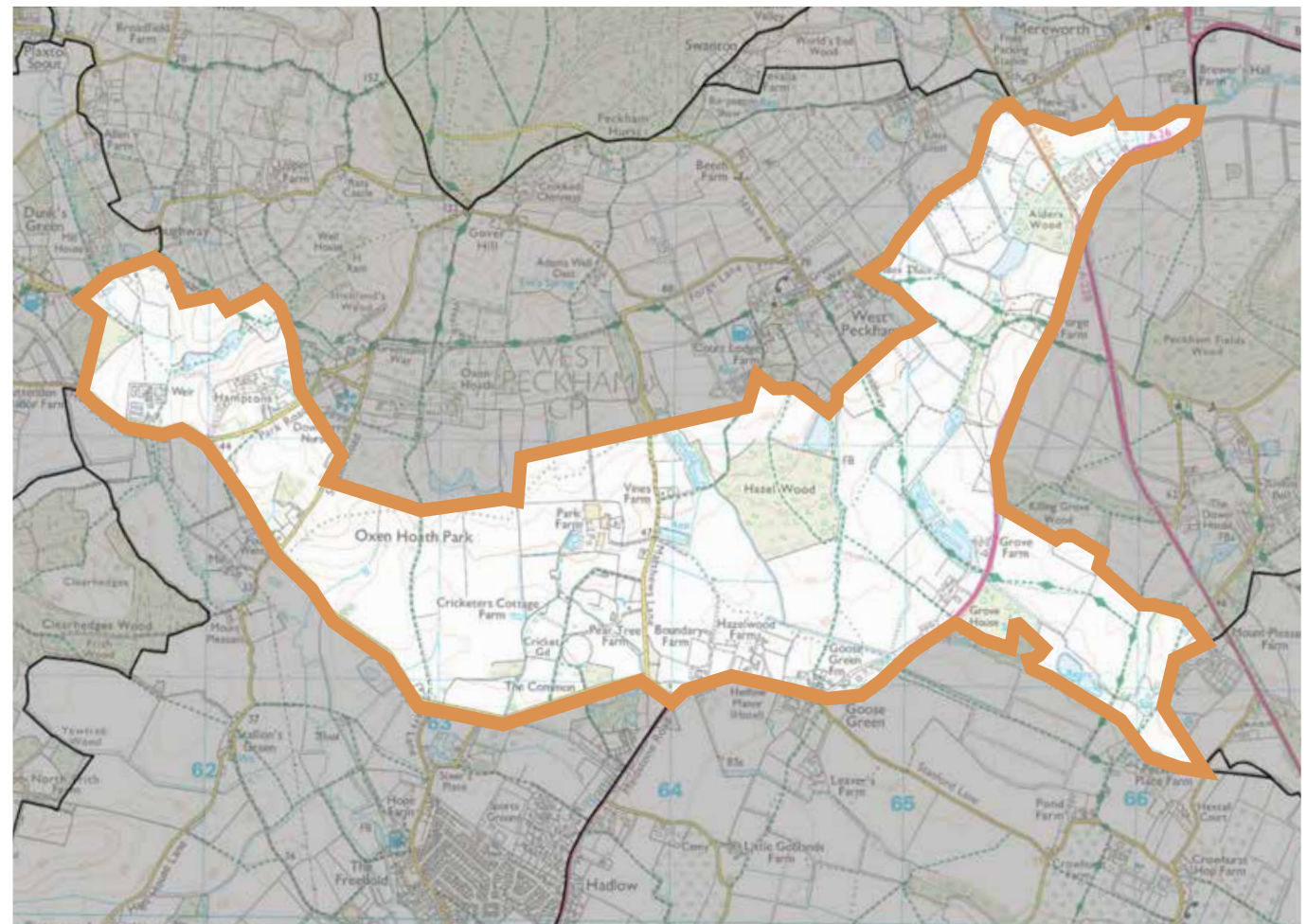
LCA 8e - Valeside Farms and Parklands

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *An undulating and managed landscape, located where the Wealden clay meets Greensand, and scattered with ponds, reservoirs and small streams lowering from the Greensand Ridge and The River Bourne in the west.*
- *The old deer park grounds of Oxen Hoath Park straddle the area with large, gently sloping fields edged by tree belts and hedgerows, pockets of woodland (some Ancient) and traditional orchards.*
- *A network of footpaths cross the arable, pastoral and parkland landscape, interspersed with isolated two-three storey detached farmsteads.*
- *An open landscape with panoramic, far reaching views towards the Kent Downs to the north and the High Weald to the south, providing a valuable visual asset.*
- *Ecological assets include Ancient Woodland and Local Wildlife Site, Hazel Wood and Paddling Brook Shaw.*

Location

The Valeside Farms and Parklands character area is located on the junction of the Low Weald and the rising form of the Greensand Ridge, its northern and eastern boundaries echoing the base of the rising landform. Its southern boundary borders the Low Weald fruitbelt and farmlands with the Greensand fruitbelt to the north.



LCA 8e - Valeside Farms and Parklands

Landscape Character Description

The undulating landscape is scattered with ponds, reservoirs and small streams lowering from the Greensand Ridge and land use is predominately agricultural, with the majority of the irregular shaped fields being used as arable. The old deer park grounds of Oxen Hoath Park straddle the area with large, gently sloping fields set within a pattern that is edged by tree belts and hedgerows, though post and wire fencing is also in use.

Hazel Wood is an area of Ancient Woodland to the south of West Peckham, and forms the Hazel Wood and Paddling Brook Shaw Local Wildlife Site, visual management coppicing and clearing areas of woodland as glades. There are further pockets of woodland throughout the area including that at Alders Wood adjacent to Seven Mile Lane and growing around the nearby small industrial estate.

Settlements are generally isolated farmsteads, often with large outbuildings that are typically concentrated along or near to the A26 road between Tonbridge and Maidstone and Matthews Lane. Lanes generally cross the area running north to south to meet Common Road and the A26, and the established native trees and hedgerows provide a strong sense of enclosure along the various minor roads. Pylons extend across the fields, detracting from the rural farmland setting and interspersed footpaths cross the area north to south, several centred from West Peckham, located just north of the area's boundary. These include two long distance recreational routes, the Wealdway and Greensands Way.



Mixed agricultural land, with Hadlow Tower visible in the distance

LCA 8e - Valeside Farms and Parklands

The Hampton's Paddock Conservation Area is representative of the distinctive and historic parkland character, and this land and the estate farms have shaped the area's landscape, the scattered mature oaks visual remnants and reminders. Whilst the area has a strong rural, agricultural and large scale open character the sound of traffic is a reminder of the wider landscape and its busy road network.



Oxon Hoath Parklands.



Pylons within fields



Gatehouse at Oxon Hoath Park



Fields edged by tree belts

LCA 8e - Valeside Farms and Parklands

Issues and Forces for Change

- *A managed and organised character, though the mixed landcover is not always coherent, in part due to the expansion of fields and the loss of hedged field boundaries that in places leaves a more fragmented landscape.*
- *A loss of field boundaries and hedgerow trees due to intensification of agriculture has led to erosion of the small-scale historical enclosure and reduction of ecological integrity. This has led to higher visibility of detracting features such as pylons.*
- *The locally traditional mixed farming of arable, pasture, hops and horticulture is giving way to large scale arable farmland, eroding the character of the landscape.*
- *Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Retain and enhance parkland characteristics and improve species diversity and woodland function.
- Conserve and enhance woodlands, wetlands and unfarmed natural habitats for ecological benefit. Manage woodland to increase age and species diversity and ensure longevity, promoting natural regeneration through thinning and coppicing to allow clearings for natural regeneration of trees, shrubs and ground flora to take place. Protect mature and veteran trees.
- Improve green infrastructure through management of water courses, and the planting of woodland copse and shaws on field boundaries.
- Programme replanting and management of veteran oaks that punctuate the landscape to retain the historic parkland character.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Restore the historic field pattern through creation of species-rich native hedgerows. Adapt management to be less intensive, allowing hedgerows to grow to >1.5m wide and have a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Manage pasture to improve its ecological integrity, considering a reduction in grazing pressure or grazing rotation, to ensure grazing does not consistently reduce the sward height. Seek to achieve grassland of higher species diversity and sward height, and reduction in bare or poached ground. Replace modern wire fencing with native hedgerows if space allows, or with timber post and rail fencing.
- Improve age and species diversity within woodlands to ensure longevity. Encourage natural regeneration through thinning and coppicing to allow clearings for the natural regeneration of trees, shrubs and ground flora.
- Protect historic settlement cores and their relationship with the wider landscape and protect the setting of the Hampton's Paddock Conservation Area. Conserve the historic character and features along main thoroughfares where they are most visible.
- Create buffers of semi-natural habitat along agricultural field margins to improve biodiversity. Conserve and reinforce hedgerow boundaries and plant additional hedgerows using a mix of deciduous native species appropriate to the area. Adapt hedgerow management to be less intensive, allowing hedgerows to grow to >1.5m wide with a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Manage hedgerows through cutting to avoid degradation into tree lines, allowing individual scattered trees to remain as hedgerow trees.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.

LCA 8e - Valeside Farms and Parklands

Development Management Guidelines

- Avoid large scale housing development within this area to retain its dispersed settlement pattern. Site pockets of new development within areas already visually contained by vegetation to avoid some of the requirement for new planting that would take time to establish.
- Retain the landscape features at existing settlement edges that assist in settling built form into the surrounding landscape, and incorporate into any areas of urban extension, e.g. small areas of woodland, native hedgerows, ponds and other features.
- Ensure new development enhances the architectural quality of the Low Weald and reflects its character through considered siting, scale, layout and design and ensure that development is fully sympathetic to, and in scale with, the land use and local building style.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, and fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Screen new development with additional tree planting, to settle within the landscape, and where possible site new development in locations where it will be more readily visually absorbed and does not screen historic edges to settlements.
- Protect long views towards the neighbouring High Weald, Greensand Ridge and Kent Downs National Landscapes.
- Where viable and relevant, encourage the reintroduction of traditional orchards.
- Protect the settings of Hampton's Paddock Conservation Area and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain physical and visual links between the old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing historic features within new development.
- Use vernacular building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness and fit with existing built features. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access and design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes such as the Wealdway and Greensand Way whilst managing to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

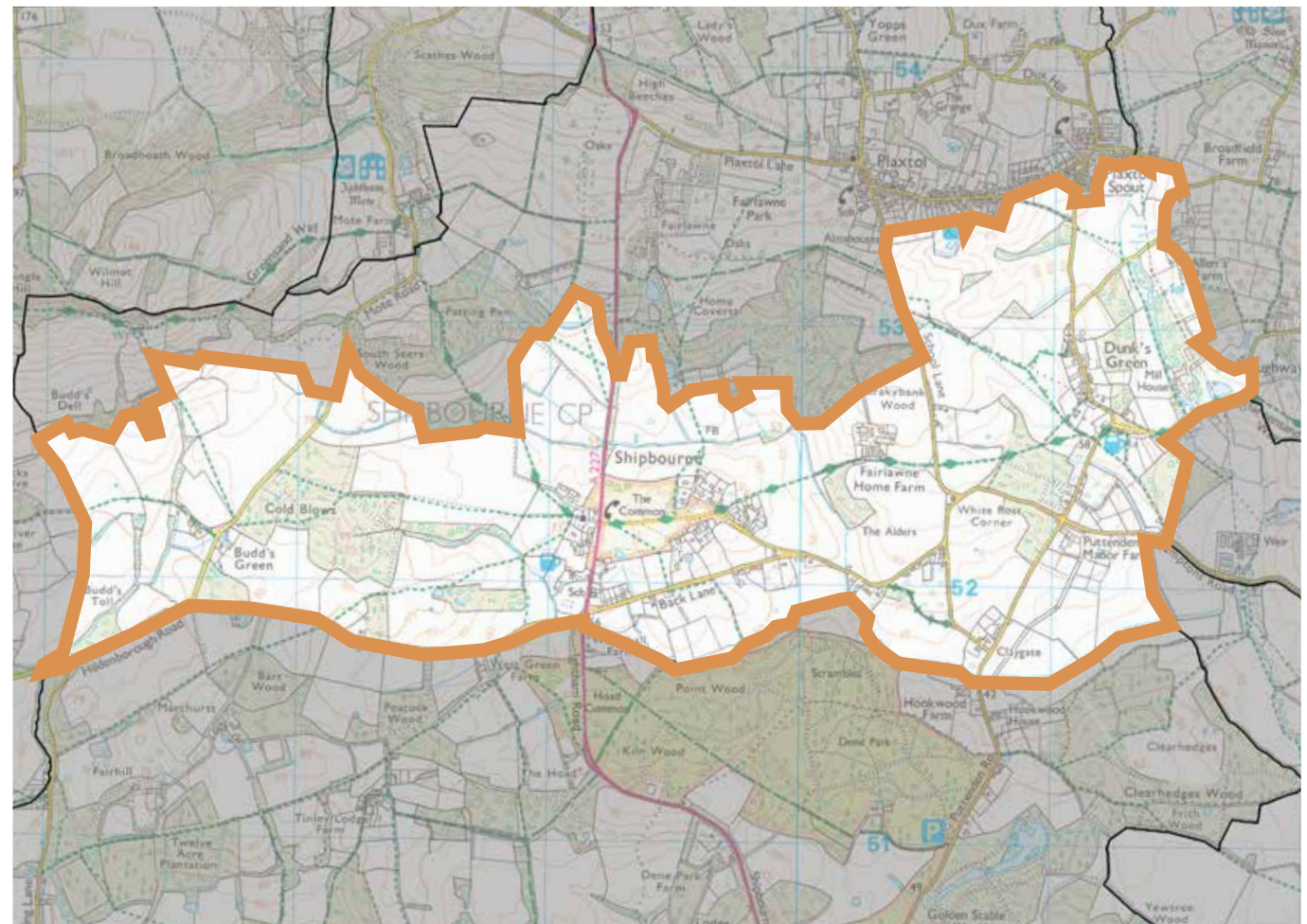
LCA 8f - Shipbourne Low Weald

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- An undulating landscape, the majority of which lies within the Kent Downs National Landscape, formed of gently rounded slopes rising through the scarp foot as the Low Weald transitions to the Greensand Ridge, and dotted with rivers, streams, springs and small waterbodies.*
- Blocks of deciduous and mixed woodlands some of which are Ancient Woodlands, with traditional orchards to the east and Local Wildlife Sites that include Shipbourne Common and Dunk's Green Woodland.*
- Views to the wooded rising scarp of the Greensand Ridge and the Kent Downs and High Weald National Landscapes. There are few detracting influences within the landscape.*
- Shipbourne combines a mixture of period and 20th Century housing, much of it set around and near Shipbourne Common offering picturesque views towards the surrounding countryside and the built features of the village. The vernacular building style creates a strong local identity.*
- Heritage assets including Conservation Areas and Listed buildings add to the area's historic time-depth.*

Location

The character area is located where the clay vale of the Low Weald meets the scarp of the Greensand Ridge, with almost all the area lying within the Kent Downs National Landscape. It is bound to the south by the Hildenborough Road and Mote Stream flowing down from the Greensand Ridge.



LCA 8f - Shipbourne Low Weald

Landscape Character Description

The gently sloping landscape is dotted with rivers, streams, springs and small waterbodies. The River Bourne flows into the area from the settlement of Plaxtol Spout to the north through areas of wet meadow, passing under the 16th Century packhorse bridge at Roughway, a Scheduled Monument before flowing out of the area.

The undulating landscape is less wooded than areas to the south, though blocks of deciduous and mixed woodlands and shaws, much of it Ancient Woodland form a mosaic land pattern amongst the irregular shaped arable and pastoral fields and farmsteads.

Shipbourne, broadly sitting on a crossroads formed of narrow lanes from the east and west and the A227 Ightham Road running north and south, combines a mixture of period and 20th Century housing, much of it set around and near Shipbourne Common, an area of Open Access Lane that offers picturesque views towards the surrounding countryside and the built features of the village. Many of the nearby houses feature a mix of local vernacular materials including hung tiles and white painted weatherboarding, and include some larger impressively built brick Victorian and Georgian houses amongst which an oast house is nestled. A Conservation Area encompasses the settlement and includes the Listed St Giles' Church, built with local ragstone. A smaller ribbon development is to be found in the east at Dunk's Green which is also a Conservation Area. The Common at Shipbourne and the woodlands southwest of Dunk's Green are Local Wildlife Sites.

The roads of the area are bound by well-maintained hedgerows and overall, it appears as well managed. Whilst the busy A227 road impacts both visually and audibly to Shipbourne there are areas of tranquillity, along the public footpaths that spread out east and west from the churchyard of St Giles in Shipbourne.



Undulating fields west of Shipbourne - looking north

LCA 8f - Shipbourne Low Weald

The Greensand Way, a long-distance path connecting Surrey and Kent enters the area from the elevated Ightham Mote within the neighbouring area, passing through Shipbourne and continuing east to Dunk's Green.

The undulating landscape creates a sense of elevation, particularly at The Common at Dunk's Green where views extend north to the wooded rising scarp of the Greensand Ridge and to the south toward the High Weald National Landscape. From the west side of St Giles' Church there are views towards the Kent Downs National Landscape and the distinctive steeple of the church is a prominent historic landscape feature visible from a distance.



Houses on The Common at Shipbourne



View through the area with the Kent Downs in the distance



Church of St Giles



Local Wildlife Site – Woods at Dunk's Green



Arable field at Dunk's Green



Undulating landscape

LCA 8f - Shipbourne Low Weald

Issues and Forces for Change

- *Whilst an organised, well managed and green landscape, the large size of the arable fields can appear bleak and barren at certain times of the year, detracting from the area's overall historic character.*
- *Noise from the A227 road has an audible influence on the Shipbourne Common Conservation Area and reduces tranquillity and the sense of remoteness.*
- *There has been some loss of hedgerow boundaries and particularly hedgerow trees as a result of agricultural intensification and the enlargement of fields. Further transitions to arable farming may result in further fragmented hedgerow boundaries.*
- *Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands and other designated areas including Local Wildlife Sites, including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Where located within the Kent Downs National Landscape and its setting, ensure that its special components, characteristics and qualities are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purpose of the designated landscapes.
- Refer to guidelines within the Kent Downs National Landscape - *Landscape Design Handbook* for new built development, including design principles for siting, scale and design of new development preserving and ensuring that there are no significant impacts upon views into and out of the National Landscape.
- Protect long views towards the Greensand Ridge and the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Improve the age, species and structural diversity of deciduous woodland to ensure longevity. Use selective thinning and clearing to encourage natural regeneration of tree, shrub and ground flora species. Consider interplanting to improve species diversity where woodlands contain less than five native species of tree and shrub.
- Establish new woodland and tree establishment through high quality multi-functional management to provide well-used places for leisure and recreation promoting health and wellbeing and habitats that are rich in characteristic wildlife. Support the productive, sustainable management of trees and woodlands.

- Consider the potential for restoration of large agricultural fields to the historic enclosure pattern through division by hedgerow planting, including hedgerow trees particularly pedunculate oak which are a distinctive feature of the area.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Protect public rights of way such as the Greensand Way, and the recreational function of the National Landscape.
- Promote coppicing where relevant within woodland for firewood and biodiversity conservation.
- Protect historic settlement cores and their relationship with the wider landscape and protect the setting of the Dunk's Green and Shipbourne Conservation Areas. Conserve the historic character and features along main thoroughfares where they are most visible.
- Conserve and improve field boundary hedgerows and trees, restore historic field patterns. Create buffers of semi-natural habitat along agricultural field margins and in fringe habitats to improve biodiversity.
- Reinforce hedgerow boundaries and plant additional hedgerows using a mix of deciduous native species appropriate to the area. Adapt hedgerow management to be less intensive, allowing hedgerows to grow to >1.5m wide with a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.

LCA 8f - Shipbourne Low Weald

- Apply forestry practices that respect local character and visual amenity, using traditional techniques like coppicing and explore the use of farmland that will enhance biodiversity and preserve historic time depth.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, and fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Screen new development with additional tree planting, to settle within the landscape, and where possible site new development in locations where it will be more readily visually absorbed and does not screen historic edges to settlements.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access and design site entrances with discreet signage.

Development Management Guidelines

- Avoid large scale housing development within this area to retain its dispersed settlement pattern. Site new development within areas already visually contained by vegetation to avoid some of the requirement for new planting that would take time to establish.
- Reduce intensive agriculture, infrastructure and building developments and pre-development tree-felling, which can lead to the loss and fragmentation of woodland and transitional habitats around woods.
- Retain the landscape features at existing settlement edges that assist in settling built form into the surrounding landscape, and incorporate into any areas of urban extension, e.g. small areas of woodland, native hedgerows, ponds and other features.
- Ensure new development enhances the architectural quality of the Low Weald and reflects its character through considered siting, scale, layout and design and ensure that development is fully sympathetic to, and in scale with, the land use and local building style.
- Protect designated and non-designated heritage assets and views of key landscape features e.g. St Giles' Church.
- Where viable and relevant, encourage the reintroduction of traditional orchards.
- Protect the setting of Dunk's Green and Shipbourne Conservation Areas and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Use locally appropriate building materials and styles in any new development, such as ragstone, red-brick or weatherboarding, to protect the historic vernacular of the area. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

Landscape Character Type - Low Weald Fruit Belt

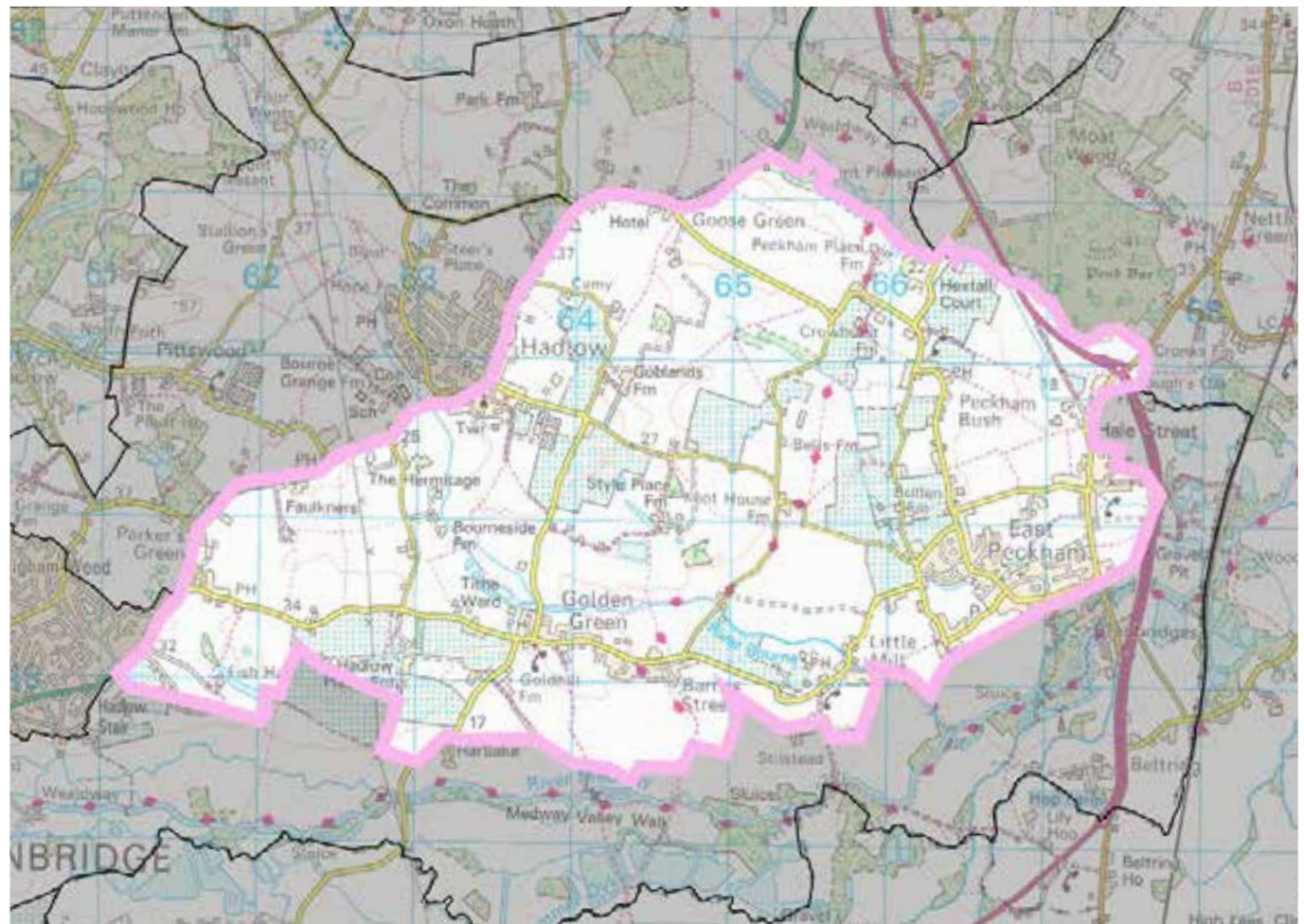
LCA 9a - Hadlow East Peckham Low Weald Fruit Belt

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *The flat floodplain landscape of the River Bourne, peppered with streams and reservoirs with ditches often forming the boundaries to fields and orchards.*
- *Open views towards the surrounding higher ground of the High Weald with glimpses and views into orchards and arable fields that provide context and a reinforcement of the area's fruit and hop growing character.*
- *Scattered hamlets and isolated farmsteads, often with historic cores and Conservation Areas. Oast houses in varying forms are a regular feature and a direct reflection of the area's hop growing past.*
- *A distinctive historic time depth is reflected in its Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, oast houses and traditional orchards.*
- *The surviving orchards and hop growing, strong vernacular and oast houses preserve the area's historic land use. It has a moderate strength of character and condition, feels organised and has few landscape detractors.*

Location

The character area is located within the flattest part of the Low Weald within the Vale of Kent. It is bound by the A26 to the west and north, and by the Medway Valley and the Borough boundary to the east. The River Bourne meanders on its course from Hadlow in the northwest toward its convergence with the River Medway south of East Peckham.



LCA 9a - Hadlow East Peckham Low Weald Fruit Belt

Landscape Character Description

Much of the south of the area is floodplain, and the landscape is threaded with streams and reservoirs with ditches often forming the boundaries to fields and orchards. Land use is predominantly agricultural with land cover being a mix of arable fields, and commercial orchards, with their distinctive long straight rows of fruit trees. Some smaller enclosures remain but over time fields have been opened out and merged for arable farming.

Hadlow Cemetery is located south of the road along Cemetery Lane, its ordered yew trees and hedges and historic built features sitting peacefully within its rural setting, with long views over the countryside. Other land use includes hop fields, areas with polytunnels and plant nurseries associated with the nearby Hadlow College. There is some contained light industry at Little Mill on the site of a former tannery. Little Mill was a location where the power of the River Bourne was harnessed in the past for milling and has a Conservation Area. A water treatment works is located to the west of the River Bourne.

Comparative to neighbouring character areas located on higher ground there is little woodland, with only a few small areas being mapped as Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland and with no Ancient Woodland identified. Whilst small shaws and hedgerows serve as field boundaries this is not universal and in some locations, conifers have been introduced as windbreaks. Evidencing the area's history of fruit growing, there are small areas of Traditional Orchard, also designated as Priority Habitat close to settlements.



Orchards east of Golden Green

LCA 9a - Hadlow East Peckham Low Weald Fruit Belt

The Hadlow village Conservation Area sits at the edge of the area to the west and includes the Listed Hadlow Castle with its distinctive Hadlow Tower, clearly visible across much of the flat landscape. The large village of East Peckham to the east of the area also has a Conservation Area at Bullen Corner, with dwellings exhibiting the historical vernacular of weatherboard, hung tiles, clay roof tiles and brick. The rest of the village is a mix of period and 20th Century houses though vernacular materials have been utilised on the facades of the latter. There are scattered hamlets throughout, including Golden Green and Parker's Green and many isolated farmsteads, often including large residential buildings. Oast houses in varying forms are a regular feature, and a direct reflection of the area's hop growing past. A notable example is the Listed Kent House Farmhouse with its multiple oast towers.



Kent House Farmhouse, with multiple oast towers



Views framed by woodland copse and shaws

The road network is largely comprised of country lanes. Views from the main arterial routes such as the A228 and A26 are limited due to dense hedgerow and tree lined boundaries and often views from within the network of country lanes are also limited due to high and dense hedgerow boundaries. In locations without the dense boundaries there are glimpses and views into orchards and arable fields that provide context and a reinforcement of the area's fruit and hop growing character.



Holy Trinity Church, East Peckham



Little Mill Bridge road crossing of the River Bourne

Views out toward the higher ground of surrounding character areas are framed by their features of deciduous woodlands, copse and shaws. Views within and through the area are mid-range and generally dominated by field boundaries, longer views often being limited by the flat landscape.

LCA 9a - Hadlow East Peckham Low Weald Fruit Belt

Topography, medium scale field patterns and the organised arrangement of boundaries contribute to an open character and away from the main roads the area is tranquil with only intermittent noise.

There are limited built form detractors to landscape character, that include overhead cables and occasional utilitarian structures, and less aesthetic boundaries associated with agriculture. The area appears managed and ordered and whilst rural, has little perception of wilderness, its flat and fruit growing features combining to distinguish it from its neighbouring areas.



Barnes Street

LCA 9a - Hadlow East Peckham Low Weald Fruit Belt

Issues and Forces for Change

- *The character of the area has weakened over time with a gradual transition from fruit and hop growing to an intensification of arable farming, with the development of large fields leading to a loss of hedgerows and historic field pattern and a diminishing of the characteristic hop and fruit growing culture of this historic land use.*
- *There is evidence of hedgerow regeneration, however the mix of tree species and the introduction of conifers have potential to be detrimental to character.*
- *The loss of existing hedgerows, hedgerow trees and shaws to accommodate arable farming have reduced character and ecological integrity.*
- *Development pressure has led to locally distinctive oast houses being surrounded by development, lessening their visual prominence in the landscape.*
- *A risk of outward expansion of villages and hamlets into the surrounding area, and the subsequent loss of traditional settlement boundaries.*

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Conserve, manage and replant deciduous trees to ensure a mature stock and increase biodiversity value in a landscape that has been degraded for agriculture.
- Restore the historic enclosure pattern through hedgerow planting, including hedgerow trees particularly pedunculate oak which are a distinctive feature of the area.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Manage watercourses and ditches for wildlife, create wet woodlands which connect to the flood plain and reduce flood risk through intercepting rainfall and slowing the flow of water downstream.
- Conserve the tranquil and rural character of settlements by restoring hedgerows, trees and copse surrounding them.
- Protect traditional settlement edges, in particular of smaller settlement clusters at Golden Green and Parker's Green, avoiding expansion into localised areas of countryside.
- Protect the setting of historic settlement cores and Conservation Areas and their relationship with the landscape, avoiding enclosing them within new development.
- Conserve and reinforce hedgerow boundaries and reestablish historic field boundaries. Plant additional

hedgerows using a mix of deciduous native species appropriate to the area. Adapt hedgerow management to be less intensive, allowing hedgerows to grow to >1.5m wide with a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.

- Apply forestry practices that respect local character and visual amenity, using traditional techniques like coppicing and explore the use of farmland that will enhance biodiversity and preserve historic time depth.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.

Development Management Guidelines

- Retain and promote the rural patterns and vernacular details in farmsteads and other dwellings. Seek the use of sympathetic buildings materials including clay tiled hipped roofs and hung tiled facades.
- Maintain the dispersed nature of settlement pattern. Avoid increasing ribboned development expanding from existing settlements to prevent coalescence and retain the historic landscape setting.
- Ensure new development enhances the architectural quality of the Low Weald and reflects its character through considered siting, scale, layout and design and ensure that development is fully sympathetic to, and in scale with, the land use and local building style.

LCA 9a - Hadlow East Peckham Low Weald Fruit Belt

- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, and fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Screen new development with additional tree planting, to settle within the landscape, and where possible site new development in locations where it will be more readily visually absorbed and does not screen historic edges to settlements.
- Protect key views, including those towards Hadlow Castle and views of oast houses which are a locally distinctive and characteristic feature and retain and enhance views towards the High Weald.
- Where viable and relevant, encourage the reintroduction of traditional orchards.
- Protect the setting of Hadlow, East Peckham and Bullen Corner Conservation Areas and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access and design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

Landscape Character Type - Medway Valley Floodplain

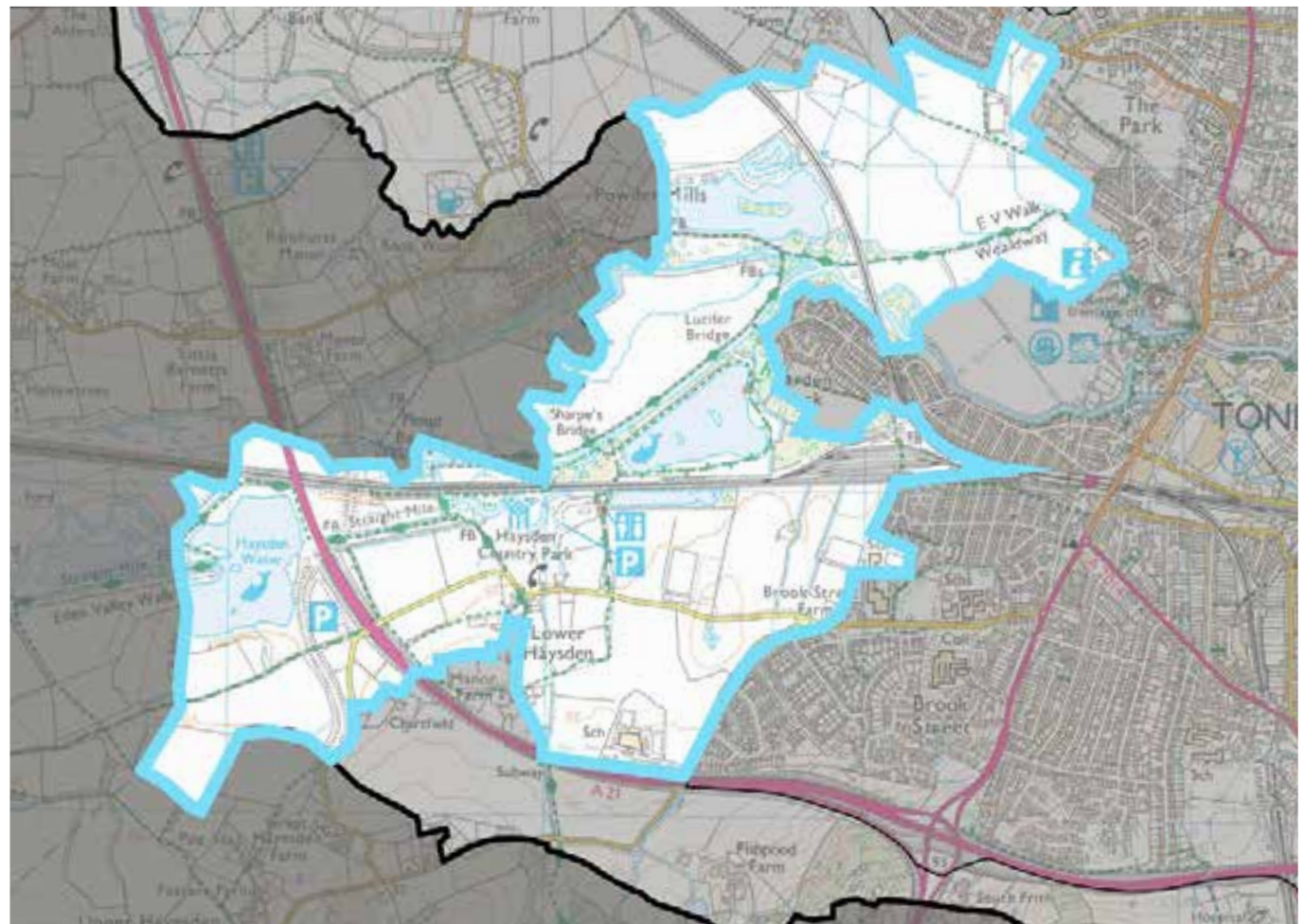
LCA 10a - Upper Medway Valley Floodplain

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *A sometimes disjointed character that is much influenced by its location raised above the flat valley floodplain and the features of the River Medway corridor, with the eroded valley geology reflected in its landform of gentle undulations.*
- *The area is formed of a mosaic of transport infrastructure (including the raised A21 road on its embankment), irregular shaped fields, waterbodies and woodland.*
- *Limited scattered settlement is generally confined to the northern extents of Lower Haysden, much of which is a Conservation Area.*
- *Whilst intervisibility is limited, long views to the High Weald National Landscape from the surrounding areas of the Low Weald are a valued element of its landscape setting.*
- *Mixed landuse, with Haysden Country Park offers woodland and riverside walks and other visitor facilities, with the Eden Valley Walk and Wealdway recreational routes.*
- *A defined historic time depth evidenced through listed buildings and Conservation Area.*

Location

Located immediately adjacent to the southwest edge of Tonbridge, the area sits on the Borough boundary with Sevenoaks and provides a transition between the rural vale landscape located between the High and Low Weald, to the continuing low lying valley bottom to the west, and the urban features of Tonbridge to the east.



LCA 10a - Upper Medway Valley Floodplain

Landscape Character Description

The area is located within the flat valley floor of the River Medway raised above the floodplain. The eroded geology of the valley is reflected in its landform, creating gentle undulations. Much of the north of the area is at high risk of flooding. Its character is much influenced by the features of the River Medway and the further water bodies located through the area that include fishing lakes and drainage ditches. All are enclosed by established areas of deciduous woodland with both Haysden Water and Barden Lake being former gravel extraction sites.

Whilst agriculture is a prominent land use, the network of fields transition into the playing fields and sports pitches of the two schools located within the urban edge of Tonbridge. Settlement is confined to the northern extents of Lower Haysden, much of which is a Conservation Area. There are several listed buildings that include Smeed's Cottages, two restored timber framed timber and tile hung cottages with varying intact features. The hamlet is located on the boundary with the neighbouring character area of the High Weald Slopes.

Much of the area is publicly accessible. Haysden Country Park offers woodland, riverside walks and other visitor facilities including angling, with the Eden Valley Walk and Wealdway recreational routes and other public rights of way crossing the area. Both the river corridor and the country park are Local Wildlife Sites, emphasising the area's ecological value.



View along the River Medway corridor.

LCA 10a - Upper Medway Valley Floodplain

The elevated A21 cuts through the landscape in the southwest of the area, though it is generally visually contained within a wooded corridor, and the railway line from Tonbridge runs in both an east-west and north-south direction, meeting in the southeast corner where the extensive railway sidings are located.

The generally level topography combined with the deciduous woodland growing along the elevated transport corridors contains views within the area, however there is intervisibility with the steep semi-wooded slopes of the High Weald National Landscape to the southeast. Overall, the mosaic of riparian landscape, agricultural fields, railway and dual carriageway combined with the proximity of the urban edge, whilst balanced in places, generally creates a landscape that can feel fragmented, discordant and lacking in distinct character.



Haysden Lake and Tonbridge Sailing Club



Sports pitches



The wooded corridor of the elevated A21



*Angling at
Haysden Country Park*

LCA 10a - Upper Medway Valley Floodplain

Issues and Forces for Change

- *The mixed elements of the River Medway, Haysden Country Park, river edge vegetation and the field boundaries of hedgerow and mature trees contribute positively to the overall condition of the landscape both visually and ecologically and should not be weakened.*
- *The low density settlement at Lower Haysden creates a rural character that could be susceptible to change through increased development.*
- *The A21 and the railways are substantial and permanent built form detractors.*
- *Land use within the floodplain has been modified by human intervention to mainly consist of arable land instead of traditional floodplain wet meadow. The river corridor and associated drainage ditches and wetland habitats are ecologically important and much of the floodplain area is within flood zone 2 or 3.*
- *Climate change and likely affects to species composition of woodlands including loss of drought intolerant species such as beech, vulnerability to more frequent storm events and warmer temperatures increasing pests and disease.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities of the High Weald National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current High Weald AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Promote use of the *High Weald Housing Design Guide* for best practice on incorporating green-ness into new developments, by including grass verges, trees and shrubs, and greenspaces, to ensure a strong sense of place and help minimise noise intrusion near major road networks.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Conserve and manage the river and associated water bodies and habitats for biodiversity and restore and create areas for increasing biodiversity within the floodplain and adjacent to tributaries to create a more distinctive landscape character.
- Retain the views along and across the river valley.
- Increase planting along the railway line and sidings as a buffer for noise and use this feature as a linear wildlife corridor.
- Increase access and views to wetlands, which are heavily screened by vegetation and strengthen physical and visual connections with the river, extending the riparian landscape through management.

- Encourage agricultural management that is sympathetic to the riparian environment, such as soil conservation, riparian buffers, and wetland restoration.
- Protect and enhance wetland biodiversity along the River Medway corridor, use of local species
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Continue the improvement of hedgerows enhancing connectivity, interconnecting with areas of woodland. Adapt hedgerow management to be less intensive, allowing growth to >1.5m wide with a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Decrease the intensity of agriculture and increase the ecological potential of farmland though setting aside field margins as buffers for wildlife.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.

LCA 10a - Upper Medway Valley Floodplain

Development Management Guidelines

- Site new development in and around existing settlement in locations with existing landscape features such as hedges and tree belts with consideration of flood risk.
- Ensure new development enhances the architectural quality of the High Weald and reflects its character through considered siting, scale, layout and design and ensure that development is fully sympathetic to, and in scale with, the land use and local building style.
- Retain views across the Medway valley and avoid any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
- Protect the setting of Lower Haysden's Conservation Areas and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes including the Eden Valley Walk and Wealdway whilst managing to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

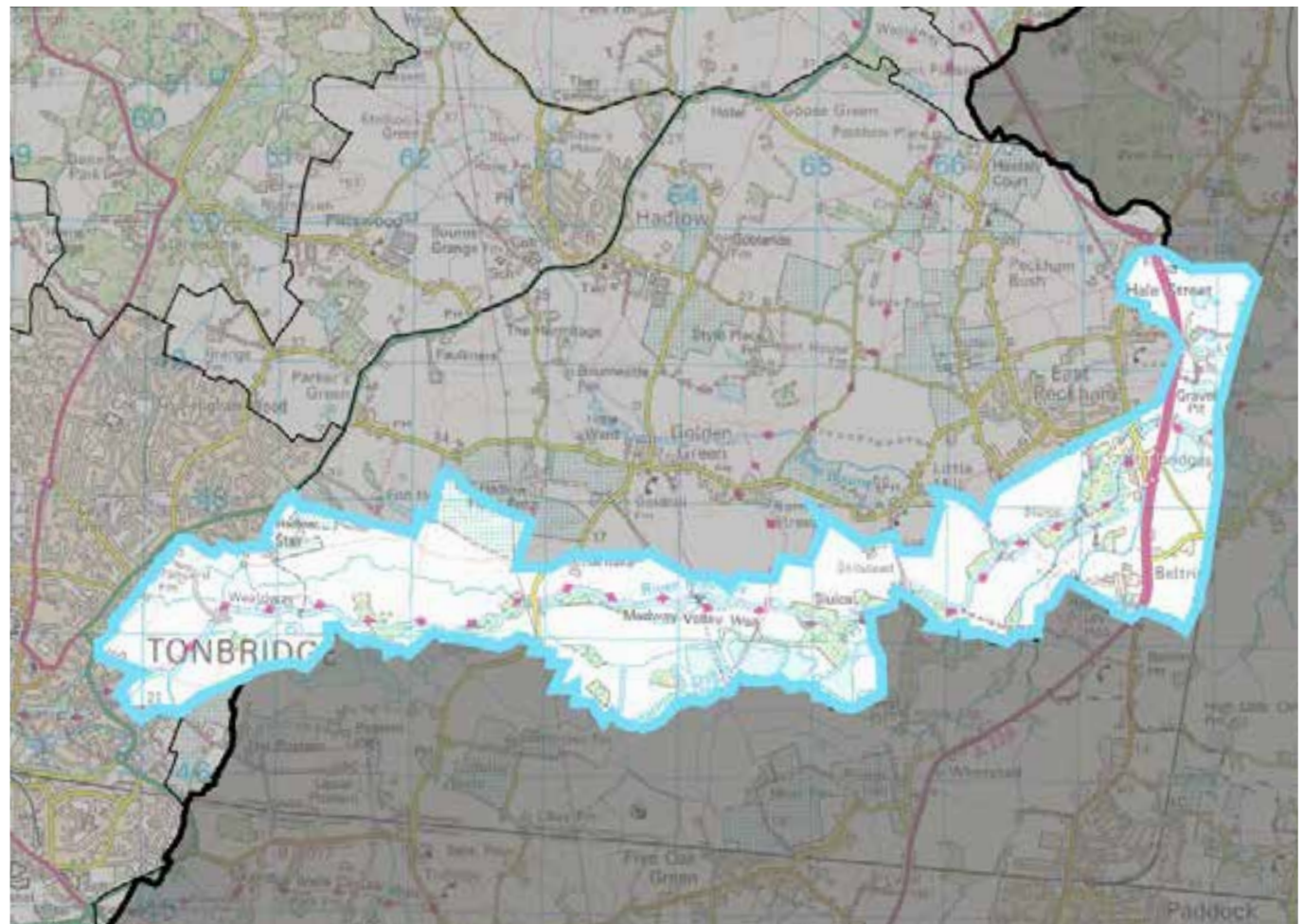
LCA 10b - Middle Medway Valley Floodplain

Key Characteristics & Valued Qualities

- *A flat and open character of irregular and sinuous field patterns shaped by the complex network of streams and ditches.*
- *Views are generally contained by the river corridor, though with some intervisibility with the High Weald National Landscape and Greensand Ridge.*
- *The wetland meadows, riparian vegetation and woodland could be further enhanced along the river corridor to benefit biodiversity.*
- *Settlement is historically sparse, with only a few isolated cottages and farmsteads reflecting the vulnerability of the area to flooding.*
- *A network of public rights of way cross the area including the Medway Valley Walk, that utilises the historic tow paths along the river.*
- *A defined historic time depth evidenced through listed and historic buildings and historic river features including locks, tow paths, sluices and bridges.*

Location

This character area is broadly defined by the route of the River Medway corridor through the vale between the eastern edge of Tonbridge and East Peckham, with its southern extent following the Borough boundary. The floodplain landscape and the River Medway, with its steep banks and various tributaries are the defining features of the area. The eastern edge of the area is formed of the Tonbridge Ashford railway line



LCA 10b - Middle Medway Valley Floodplain

Landscape Character Description

The area is formed of the river floodplain and its bordering open landscape. Much is used for arable farming within irregular, often sinuous shaped fields that echo the routes of the interspersed and complex network of ditches and mill streams that have little changed for centuries, key features of the historic floodplain landscape. These ditches, with their associated vegetation features divide the network of large fields, the lines of willow and hedgerows adding character to the landscape. Hedges also enclose the areas of traditional orchard located within the higher ground at the northern and southern edges of the area however roadside hedges are often missing, which provides long views through an expansive landscape that includes areas of tranquility and remoteness. Patches of deciduous woodland further emphasise the landscape's curving nature, growing into its sinuous features, with small pockets of Ancient and Semi-Natural woodland growing along the river corridor, much of which is also designated a Local Wildlife Site.

Various lakes and linear waterbodies are located to the south of the river, evidence of old, historic sand and gravel extraction and are a Regionally Important Geodiversity Site (RIGS) for gravel and sand. The restoration of these historic quarries is evident, with the maturing wooded lakeside vegetation screening them from the surrounding areas. A further operational sand and gravel quarry is located nearby with live consents for further extraction.

The few roads offer wide exposed views over the floodplain landscape, the sinewy features of ditch and stream vegetation highlighting the network of water and drainage. The busy A228 dual carriageway passes north to south through the east of the area and is much enclosed visually by its wooded edge. Whilst road noise is apparent it is contained within the more urban and industrial setting and does not detract from the otherwise quiet floodplain landscape to the west.



Wide view across the Medway Valley Floodplain

LCA 10b - Middle Medway Valley Floodplain

Settlement is historically sparse, reflecting the area's regular and extensive flooding. Hartlake oast house and Roundels and Hartlake Barn, all Listed Buildings, are located on the northern edge of the area, the roundel features of the oast house distinctively visible across the landscape. A small memorial is located close to the indistinct Hartlake Bridge to commemorate the loss of Hop Pickers drowned in the River Medway in the 19th Century.

The Hop Farm Village and events venue, formerly Whitbreads Hop Farm is located in the east of the area within the pocket of land between Tudeley Brook and the A228. A farm since the 16th Century it hosts the world's largest collection of Victorian oast houses and many of the oast houses and granaries are Listed Buildings. There are a range of facilities within the village including a camping venue, leisure facilities and some light industrial use. The landscape has further leisure use at the western end of the area with a golfing facility and the Swanmead Sports Ground including cricket pitch.

Despite its flat and open character, views within the area are generally contained by the riverside and stream-side vegetation, though there is intervisibility within the wider area with the High Weald National Landscape and Greensand Ridge. Towards the west towards Tonbridge the area has a more urban fringe character. A network of public rights of way cross the area including the Medway Valley Walk, that utilises the historic tow paths along the river with intermittent sections enclosed by trees. Built features include Oak Weir Lock and East Lock and these features, the further rights of way linking through the area, watercraft passing on the river and the adjacent pastoral water meadows combine in creating a rural riparian landscape.



The River Medway and the Medway Valley Walk



The River Medway from Hartlake Bridge

LCA 10b - Middle Medway Valley Floodplain

The area's landscape character is derived from its topography and the river valley and in places there is a sense of calm and tranquillity associated with this however there are locations that feel less preserved and more incoherent. In the eastern parts of the area road noise from the A228 is a significant detractor.

The river corridor leaves the Borough to the east and re-enters it further north. Located within the valley floor it is bordered each side by Low Weald Fruit Belt Character Type areas with their predominant land use of fruit production.



Orchards near Postern Heath Farm



View across the floodplain landscape towards the High Weald

LCA 10b - Middle Medway Valley Floodplain

Issues and Forces for Change

- *The condition of the area is low to fair, with much of the floodplain appearing as a flat arable landscape with open views with an historic loss of wet meadow floodplain and field boundaries to intensify arable production. Flood risk is present along the river corridor.*
- *Vegetation appears patchy and unmanaged with potential for further loss of vegetation and fragmentation of field boundaries for arable production.*
- *The landscape is well maintained for visitors around the Hop Farm Country Park, though cohesion is lacking between this historic landmark and the wider area.*
- *Sensitivity to landscape change including expansion of industrial areas or mineral works and the associated construction vehicles and noise. Where quarried land has been restored, the condition of the landscape has improved with benefits to biodiversity.*
- *Road noise is a detractor in the east, though is visually well screened with much of the area having a calm, naturalised feel due to the absence of settlement or roads.*
- *There has been outward urban expansion from Tonbridge and East Peckham into the area and recent employment development in the east adjacent to the A228, though development is generally restricted due to the area being within the flood zone.*

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Improve the waterside vegetation along the banks of the River Medway and restore as an ecological corridor for wildlife. Conserve and manage the river and associated water bodies and habitats to protect and enhance wetland biodiversity.
- Create riparian zones of vegetation between arable fields and rivers and increase access and views to wetlands, increasing biodiversity within the floodplain and adjacent to tributaries, whilst strengthening physical and visual connections and extending the riparian landscape through management to create a more distinctive landscape character.
- Retain views towards High Weald National Landscape and the Greensand Ridge and along and across the river valley.
- Improve quality of pedestrian links along the River Medway and links to Tonbridge.
- Conserve and manage Ancient Woodland copse, promoting age and species diversity and maintaining active coppice management. Expand and connect woodland cover creating clearings for natural regeneration or small-scale planting to improve biodiversity, and soil quality, to reduce erosion and establish ground flora.
- Improve field boundaries, filling in gaps in hedgerows to restore a more cohesive land use.
- Encourage agricultural management that is sympathetic to the riparian environment, such as soil conservation, riparian buffers, and wetland restoration.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Continue the improvement of hedgerows enhancing connectivity, interconnecting with areas of woodland. Adapt hedgerow management to be less intensive, allowing growth to >1.5m wide with a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Decrease the intensity of agriculture and increase the ecological potential of farmland though setting aside field margins as buffers for wildlife.
- Support traditional farming techniques including the planting and management of traditional orchards, and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.
- Ensure the ongoing protection of listed buildings and historic landmarks, in particular those associated with the river, encouraging interpretation and signage and drawing upon cultural heritage for landscape management.

LCA 10b - Middle Medway Valley Floodplain

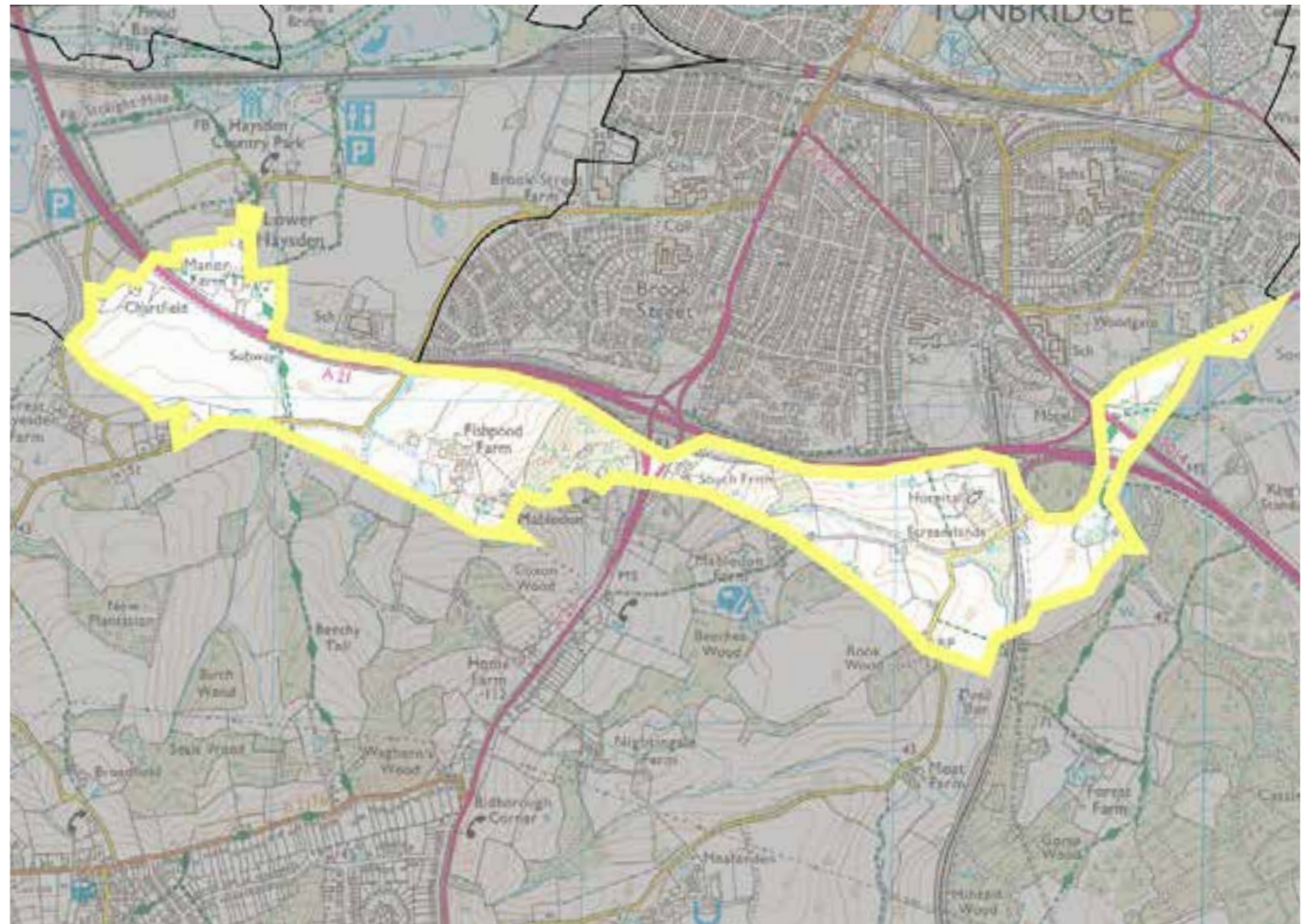
Development Management Guidelines

- Site new development in and around existing settlement within the river valley in locations with existing landscape features such as hedges and tree belts, with due consideration of flood risk.
- Ensure new development enhances the architectural quality of the High Weald and reflects its character through considered siting, scale, layout and design and ensure that development is fully sympathetic to, and in scale with, the land use and local building style.
- Promote the use of the *High Weald Housing Design Guide* and historic landscape characterisation to guide settlement planning and to help avoid generic approaches to layout and design of new development.
- Retain views across the Medway valley and avoid any loss of valued views towards historic or architectural features.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access. Design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Seek opportunity for new community orchard planting within development.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes including the Eden Valley Walk and Wealdway whilst managing to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

LCA 11a - High Weald Slopes

Location

- The High Weald Slopes character area is located to the south of Tonbridge, much of its northern boundary being defined by the A21 road, south of Tonbridge. It is located within the northern area of the High Weald National Landscape and is bound to the south by the Borough boundary with Tunbridge Wells. Much of the character area sits within the High Weald National Landscape or its setting.



LCA 11a - High Weald Slopes

Landscape Character Description

The High Weald Slopes form the lower scarp slopes of the High Weald ridges, valleys and steep sided ghylls as they merge into the Vale of Kent and the Medway River Valley. Intervisibility between the two is greatest in the south of the area where there is less vegetation cover.

Land use is predominantly agricultural with several farms located through the area. The irregularly shaped fields combined with the undulating topography give the area a sinuous character and this is further emphasised by the vegetation pattern that incorporates networks of woodland, copse and smaller clumps of deciduous woodland, all growing within the folds of the landscape. There are areas of denser woodland located towards the road interchanges.

The arable and grazing fields are generally edged by hedgerows, wooded shaws and occasional post and wire timber fencing and these retained boundary features contribute to the landscape's pastoral quality and little changed historical features. Much of the wooded area is Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland, and Vauxhall Lane Woods on the southern edge of the area is also a Local Wildlife Site.

Historic landscape character is reinforced by the distinctive landscape features of the two Registered Parks and Gardens, Mabledon and Somerhill. The elevated site of Mabledon, an 18th Century Listed house with associated gardens and parkland are located 2km southeast of Tonbridge. The various features of the sloping gardens provide panoramic views to the west. An area of woodland in the northeast corner of the estate, Quarry Hill Wood includes walks and drives. The listed house at Somerhill is now an independent school, and its associated areas of parkland, lawns woodland and lake remain.



View south toward the High Weald National Landscape

LCA 11a - High Weald Slopes

The scattered settlement pattern adds to the area's quiet, settled character despite its proximity to Tonbridge and the nearby dual carriageway. Dwellings are mostly individual cottages, farm buildings and a cluster of historic buildings in the hamlet of Lower Haysden, much of which is designated as a Conservation Area. These include several Listed buildings, including the distinctive Manor Farm oast house with its three conical roof and cowls.

Other land use includes pockets of small-scale industry and Tonbridge Cottage Hospital, nestled in a setting of woodlands and fields. The heavily vegetated railway line runs south from Tonbridge bisecting the eastern edge of the area.

Telegraph posts and wires cross the area and with the A-roads, are the only significant detracting built influences within the quiet and calm character of the area, with the main roads providing access to the area's narrow lanes. In areas adjacent to roads the traffic is audible, though the wooded nature of the landscape largely screens views of the carriageways themselves.

The Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk public right of way passes through the western half of the area and reemerges through Somerhill Park, and there is a public footpath connecting the Community Hospital to Tonbridge north of the A21.

The area is much characterised through much of it being within the High Weald National Landscape. It has a wooded agricultural character and, despite its proximity to town and transport infrastructure, has calm and tranquil qualities.



Land at Fishpond Farm



Road leading to hospital through deciduous woodland.



View north towards the A21 corridor

LCA 11a - High Weald Slopes

Issues and Forces for Change

- *The Tonbridge bypass A21 has reduced tranquillity though this is mitigated in part by woodland buffer planting, which also screens the outward expansion of development at Tonbridge. Much of the character area is in proximity to busy roads and interchanges with their visual and audible influences.*
- *Changes to agricultural practices are increasing field sizes and intensity.*
- *Predicted increase in tree diseases such as ash dieback and spruce bark beetle, partly through imported stock or soil, and continued damage from invasive species.*
- *Damage to paths and tracks and diversions from historic routes.*
- *In areas influenced by and bordering the A21 road, the stronger characteristics of the High Weald National Landscape weaken. Careful integration and design of development will assist in preserving the special qualities of the National Landscape setting.*
- *Loss of historic roadside character through development and erosion from motor vehicles and wide agricultural machinery, particularly in wet conditions.*
- *A loss of green fields to development and infrastructure, or conversion to other land uses such as woodland.*
- *Insensitive highway engineering including passing bays, deep visibility splays to entrances, and urbanising features such as roundabouts, signage and lighting.*

National Landscape Guidelines

- Ensure that the special components, characteristics and qualities of the High Weald National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current High Weald AONB Management Plan and the duty to seek to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Promote use of the *High Weald Housing Design Guide* for best practice on incorporating green-ness into new developments, by including grass verges, trees and shrubs, and greenspaces, to ensure a strong sense of place and help minimise noise intrusion near major road networks.
- Ensure consideration of vernacular architecture and how building materials contribute to their landscape setting.
- Maintain the low levels of visual detractors which would commonly be associated with horse grazing and paddocks. Refer to the National Landscape's *Guide to Good Practice for Managing Land for Horses*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Conserve the Ancient and deciduous woodland cover including copse, clumps and shaws to retain historic woodland. Manage woodland through promoting natural regeneration through selective coppicing and thinning, whilst protecting mature specimens.

- Conserve the network of woodland, avoiding clearance which would cause fragmentation, and provide additional connections to create a more holistic ecological network. Maintain and enhance existing tree belts and vegetation to assist in screening new and existing built features.
- Plan for climate-resilient woodland by selecting suitable species and encouraging natural regeneration. Monitor and manage ash dieback and other tree diseases.
- Conserve and reinforce hedgerow boundaries and reestablish historic field boundaries. Plant additional hedgerows using a mix of deciduous native species appropriate to the area. Adapt hedgerow management to be less intensive, allowing hedgerows to grow to >1.5m wide with a buffer of undisturbed ground flora either side where possible.
- Apply forestry practices that respect local character and visual amenity, using traditional techniques like coppicing.
- Support traditional farming techniques and encourage sustainable farming near rivers to minimise negative environmental effects on watercourses.

LCA 11a - High Weald Slopes

Development Management Guidelines

- Retain and promote the rural patterns and vernacular details in farmsteads and other dwellings. Seek the use of sympathetic buildings materials including clay tiled hipped roofs and hung tiled facades.
- Maintain the calm nature of the landscape and the dispersed nature of settlement pattern. Avoid increasing ribboned development expanding from existing settlements to prevent coalescence and retain the historic landscape setting.
- Ensure new development enhances the architectural quality of the High Weald and reflects its character through considered siting, scale, layout and design and ensure that development is fully sympathetic to, and in scale with, the land use and local building style.
- Promote the use of the *High Weald Housing Design Guide* and historic landscape characterisation to guide settlement planning and to help avoid generic approaches to layout and design of new development.
- Ensure that new buildings and infrastructure are located so as to avoid any loss of important off-site views towards features, in particular historic buildings including churches, and fine buildings or features within the wider landscape.
- Retain and enhance existing views across the High Weald.
- Protect the setting of Lower Haysden's Conservation Areas and refer to Conservation Area guidance. Maintain a relationship between old settlement cores and the landscape, avoiding enclosing old settlement cores within new development.
- Enhance built form through use of building materials and techniques that reflect local distinctiveness. Employ use of traditional local building materials for walls, and native hedgerows as boundary treatments within and to contain settlement edges. Avoid the use of modern suburban-style open development gateways and boundary treatments such as fencing and conifer hedging.
- Integrate new development in keeping with local character. Retain and design in wherever possible key landscape features to development sites, such as areas of woodland, woodland shaws and belts, hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds to provide landscape structure and a mature landscape setting for new development.
- Avoid regimented layouts, reflect local character and village / hamlet clusters through consideration of building layouts, roof aspects etc. and integrate open spaces and existing rights of way.
- Design highway upgrades to retain rural character and wherever possible use existing tracks for site access and design site entrances with discreet signage.
- Assess the cumulative impacts on key characteristics and valued qualities within the landscape, from inappropriate developments and landscape change.
- Encourage interpretation and signage of Scheduled Monuments and draw upon cultural heritage for landscape management.
- Enhance access to the countryside via further promotion of routes whilst managing recreational routes to avoid habitat disturbance.
- Seek sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. When possible minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, effectively using shielding and sensors to direct lighting downwards in relation to development, particularly where visible on ridge tops.

Glossary

Glossary	Definition
Burgage	An area of land or property in which can be used in return for rent
Shelterbelt	A row or line of trees which protects an area from weather conditions
Anthropogenic	Pollution caused predominantly by human activity
PROWs	Public Right of Way
Ancient Woodland	Woodland that has developed naturally and has been wooded continuously for over 400 years
Arable	Land used for growing crops
Carr Woodland	Woodland that is waterlogged for parts of the year, including species such as willow and alder
Cobnut platts	Specific to Kent downs, a type of cultivated hazelnut
Copse	A mix of trees and shrubs growing in a relatively small dense area
Dip slope	Land surface that slopes in the same direction as the dip or angle of the underlying rock layers, usually forming the gentle side of a ridge or escarpment
Eutrophication	Excessively enriching a body of water with nutrients
Forces for Change	Positive and negative factors that have the potential to have effect on the landscape, including such as changing climate and policy and development pressures.
Geodiversity	The variety of geological and physical materials that make up the earth
Glasshouse	A building made of glass, often used in a commercial setting in which plants grow faster than outside, with the glass trapping heat from the sun to boost the growth rate of plants.
Historic Time-Depth	The way a landscape reflects and embodies a long and layered human history
Horticulture	The practice of growing garden crops and ornamental plants
Juxtaposition	Two things being seen or placed close together to create a contrasting effect
Mill Pond	A man-made body of water to enable the operation of a mill or machinery.
Oast house	A building designed for drying hops as part of the brewing process
Perceptual	A person's awareness though interpretation and senses
Polytunnel	An elongated polythene-covered frame under which seedlings or other plants are grown outdoors.
Scarp	A steep slope
Scheduled Monument	A nationally important archaeological site or historic building
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest – ecological designation
Striate	Having long thin lines, marks or strips of colour
Sward	An area covered by grass
Topography	The arrangement of natural and artificial physical features of an area
Woodland Shaw	An area of woodland between 5-15 meters wide



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