



East Hampshire Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Type 6: Wealden
Farmland and Heath Mosaic

East Hampshire District Council

Draft report

Prepared by LUC

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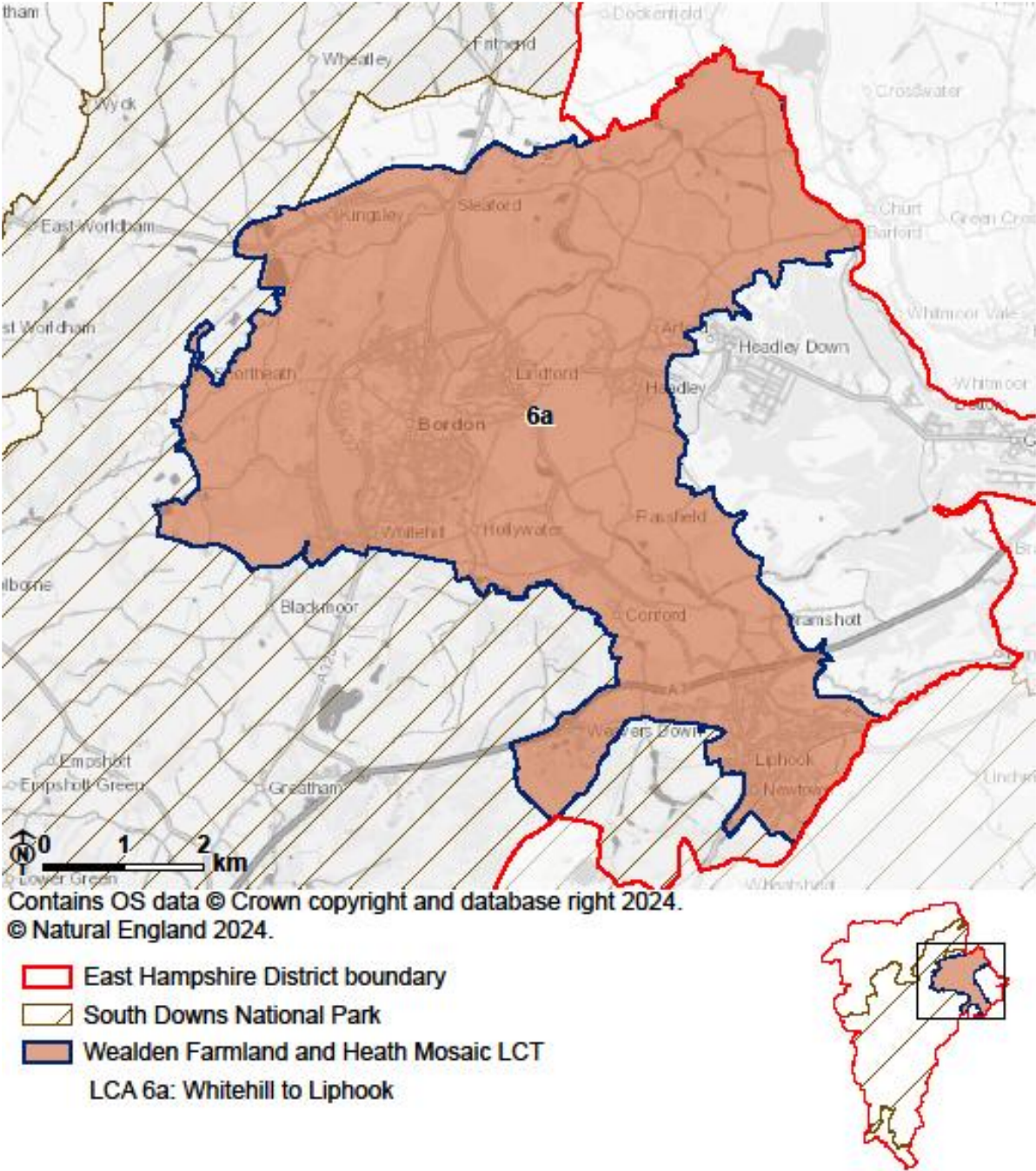
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Landscape Character Type 6: Wealden Farmland and Heath Mosaic

Figure 1.1: Location of the Wealden Farmland and Heath Mosaic LCT



Description

1.1 The Wealden Farmland and Heath Mosaic lies in the east of the district on the sandstones of the Folkestone and Sandgate Formations. The geology gives rise to a well-drained, sandy lowland landscape supporting a mosaic of oak-birch woodland, conifer plantations, open sandy heaths, and rough grazed pasture interspersed with large villages. Although part of a larger type (which occurs across East Hampshire) the LCT key characteristics are specific to the study area (i.e. the area of East Hampshire outside the South Downs National Park).

Key Characteristics

- Flat or gently undulating lowland 'plateau' landscape on outcrops of sandstones of the Folkestone and Sandgate Formations
- Cut by a network of shallow river valleys (including the River Wey) and their tributary streams.
- Ponds, mires and wet grassland in low lying areas.
- Well-drained sandy, acidic soils support a mix of nationally and internationally important heathland habitats (e.g. Broxhead and Kingsley Commons SSSI, and Woolmer Forest SSSI, both part of Wealden Heaths Phase II Special Protection Area) including open heather heathland, acid grassland, bracken, gorse, woody scrub, and oak-birch woodland.
- Small to medium sized fields of rough grazed pasture and horse paddocks bound by hedgerows with gorse and bracken and hedgerow oaks. Clusters of oak trees and Scots pine trees form visual accents.
- An irregular and intimate mix of semi-natural habitats and agriculture creating valuable foraging and over-wintering sites for a range of bird species.

- Commons (traditionally used for rough grazing or heath-cutting) often covered by woodland plantations such as Bramshott Common, but some remnant unenclosed commons providing open access such as Ludshott Common.
- Settlement is relatively late, typically comprising isolated farmsteads of 18th-19th century origin set within areas of 18th-19th century enclosure, and 'squatter' settlement on the edges of the common land. Building materials include local sandstones.
- Several large and expanding villages. There is evidence of ongoing development throughout the LCT, particularly around the larger villages of Bordon, Lindford, Headley and Liphook.
- Generally straight or gently curving lanes and tracks provide access to heathland and heath edge settlements.
- Occasional Bronze Age barrow cemeteries are signs of a prehistoric ritual landscape, particularly in the west and occasional historic parkland including Little Boarhunt south of Liphook.
- A busy rural landscape with high recreational value containing several areas of Open Access, a relatively good network of public rights of way (PRoW), National Cycle Network Route 22, several areas designated as Local Open Space and golf courses.
- Views limited by dense woodland cover.

Landscape Character Areas

1.2 The Wealden Farmland and Heath Mosaic LCT contains one LCA:

- LCA 6a: Whitehill to Liphook

Landscape Character Area 6a: Whitehill to Liphook

Description

Location and Boundaries

1.3 Located on Lower Greensand in the east of the district, the eastern boundary of the character area is defined by the 120m contour and a change in geology represented by the more resistant sandstone of the Greensand Hills (LCT 7). The western edge of the character area is defined by the transition to the lower lying clay vale of mixed farmland and woodland at the edge of the South Downs National Park.

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating landform formed on sandstone and cut by a number of watercourses (River Slea, Southern River Wey and Deadwater).
- Scattered waterbodies comprise ponds, former mineral extraction sites, reservoirs and occasional designed lakes associated with historic parkland.
- Well-drained acidic sandy soils support tracts of woodland (e.g. west of Bordon) and heathland commons of international importance (Broxhead and Kingsley Commons).
- Small to medium fields of pasture, pockets of arable, horse paddocks and rough grazing, with a framework of ancient woodlands and wood pasture.
- Areas of expanding settlement (Whitehill, Bordon, Lindford, Liphook and Headley) contained by woodland with smaller villages and farms found in the sheltered valleys.

- Parts of this LCA have been dissected by the A325 and A3, otherwise winding rural lanes and deep sunken lanes with high hedgerows are important features found throughout.
- Recreational land uses include golf courses, sports pitches on settlement edges, Open Access land and land designated as local open space, such as Hogmoor Inclosure west of Bordon.
- Remnant features relating to water management and agricultural/industrial use of the river, including mills and aqueducts (e.g. Radford Bridge and Bramshott Court – both Scheduled Monuments), the latter probably associated with medieval water meadows.
- There is a well-developed footpath network particularly in the north of the area along Oxney Stream and Oakhanger Stream with access to Kingsley and Broxhead Commons.
- A landscape of contrasts, with large, expanding villages, major roads and background noise from air traffic interspersed with winding and sunken rural lanes, woodland and common land which retail a sense of relative tranquillity and remoteness.
- Strong sense of time depth associated with archaeological features including Bronze Age barrow cemeteries and Civil War fortifications at Walldown, Bordon and military history at Bordon.

Figure 1.2: Open dry heathland enclosed by distant woodland at Broxhead Common



Figure 1.3: Horse paddocks enclosed by trees and woodland in the wider, gently sloping landscape



Natural Influences

Physical Landscape

1.4 The undulating landform of the Whitehill to Liphook Farmland and Heath Mosaic is informed by an east to west transition in the Lower Greensand geology from the Bargate to Sandgate to Folkestone formation. The Bargate sandstone represents the gentle slope down from the more resistant Hythe Beds of the Greensand Hills to the less resistant and lower landform of the Sandgate and Folkestone formations.

1.5 The narrow watercourses of the River Slea and River Wey drain the landscape along with their tributary streams including Oakhanger Stream, Kingsley Stream and Coopers Stream. A varied drift geology is associated with the water courses with head, alluvium and river terrace deposits. Ponds are a reoccurring feature in the landscape, including Spring Pond and Oxney Pool. There are also lakes associated with designed landscapes in the north-east, and with former mineral extraction in the west.

1.6 The sandstone geology gives rise to freely draining sandy soils with small to medium sized fields predominantly pasture. Small paddocks are common throughout the area and there is some rough grazing. The western part of the area encompassing Bordon lies on more acidic sandy and loamy soils supporting woodland and heathy commons.

1.7 Broxhead and Kingsley Commons are areas of SSSI heathland supporting heather, bracken and birch. Passfield Common, part of Woolmer Forest SSSI comprises wood pasture, wet grassland and dry heaths. A large area of common land also occurs to the west of Bordon incorporating The Warren, Slab and Blackmoor Golf Course. Some hanging woodland occurs on valley sides.

Biodiversity

1.8 This area supports extensive tracts of woodland and heathland habitat, including nationally and internationally important sites, such as Broxhead and Kingsley Commons SSSI, and Woolmer Forest SSSI, both part of Wealden Heaths Phase II Special Protection Area. Broxhead Common is also designated as a Local Nature Reserve. The majority of the woodland comprises secondary or plantation origin, with occasional small areas of ancient woodland. As a whole the combination of woodland and heathland, together with areas of permanent grassland and pasture, provide a landscape of high ecological value.

1.9 The LCA is dissected by a number of linear water courses and lakes, which add further to the ecological diversity. A large number of woodland, heathland, grassland and wetland sites have been designated as Sites of Interest for

Nature Conservation. Road verges along the A325 have been designated as Road Verges of Ecological Importance - supporting fragments of the type of flower-rich grassland once widespread in lowland Britain.

Cultural Influences

Historic Landscape Character

1.10 The generally low fertility and marginal character of the sandy soils is evident in a historic land-use dominated by woodland and heathy unenclosed commons. The presence of a number of Bronze Age barrow cemeteries designated as Scheduled Monuments indicates that the marginality of this landscape is largely the result of human activity. The original hazel 'wildwood' was cleared for farming, but the soils quickly became impoverished, leading to the creation of heathland.

1.11 The landscape is characterised by areas of common land, originally cleared in the prehistoric period, and utilised for centuries by communities based on more favoured soils as pasture (particularly for sheep), wood pasture and as a source of fuel. Most of the commons have, since 1800, been appropriated for plantations, many of them coniferous. These, together with a scatter of earlier blocks of ancient woodland, produce the wooded character of this large LCA. Relatively small areas of unenclosed common still survive.

1.12 This is essentially a landscape of early enclosures in the valleys of the Wey and Oakhanger Stream, with 18th-19th century planned enclosure of in the northern part of the character area and around Bramshott, Lindford and Bordon.

1.13 Historic features associated with the rivers are apparent today. The River Wey Conservation Area is indicative of the historic value of the river, its valley setting and the 18th century system of water meadows which combine to create an historic landscape. A separate Conservation Area immediately to the north at Headley Mill also emphasises the historic value of the mill and its setting by the

mill pond. Remnant features relate to water management and agricultural/industrial use of the river, including mills and aqueducts, such as Bramshott Court Scheduled Monuments, the latter probably associated with post-medieval water meadows.

1.14 Conservation areas in Headley, Headley (Arford) and Liphook, are indicative of the historic nature of these villages. There are a high number of listed buildings throughout this LCA, with noticeable concentrations around the Conservation Areas.

1.15 Little Boarhunt, a Registered Park and Garden south of Liphook, is an example of a small, designed landscape. There are also several areas of parkland such as Wishanger Manor in the north-east.

1.16 Key historic characteristics include:

- Blocks of post-1800 woodland west of Bordon, mainly 19th century heathland plantations.
- Variety of archaeological monuments – Bronze Age barrow cemeteries; Civil War fortifications at Walldown, Bordon, forming part of Royalist defence line opposing Parliamentary garrison at Farnham; undated aqueducts at Headley and Bramshott, probably part of post-medieval water meadow system (all Scheduled Monuments).
- Historic military occupation at Bordon – established as a training ground in the 1860s, with barracks built c.1900 to accommodate troops returning from the Boer War. Recently redeveloped as a residential area north of Woolmer Industrial Estate.

Settlement Form and Built Character

1.17 The area includes a concentration of settlement from modern suburban development to small villages of great charm set within the river valleys. There are in addition isolated farmsteads in the rural part of the character area, some possibly of medieval origin within areas of early enclosure.

1.18 The west of the area is dominated by the expanded settlement of Whitehill and Bordon which is contained by woodland, extending north-eastwards along the A325 to join Lindford on a site which historically accommodated Bordon Camp. Large warehouses at Woolmer Industrial Estate are set low in the landscape, which combined with the surrounding woodland means they are only occasionally glimpsed in long views.

1.19 New developments are commonplace in this character area, notably to the west and north of Liphook and north of Bordon. These new developments are generally well integrated into the landscape by woodland. These settlements are characterised by modern dwellings, with sandstone, red brick and clay tiles being the most frequent building materials.

1.20 The smaller villages of Passfield, Hollywater, Conford, Kingsley are located in the river valleys. They are generally well integrated into the landscape.

1.21 The highway network including the A3, A325 and numerous B roads and other minor roads, provides a high level of connectivity, increasing the human presence in the surrounding landscapes.

Perceptual Influences

1.22 This mosaic landscape provides varying levels of enclosure ranging from the small open pastoral fields and heathy commons, intimate river corridors and large tracts of woodland. Heather, bracken, gorse and the woodland mosaic of coniferous and deciduous trees provide rich seasonally changing texture and colour.

1.23 The busy A3 and A325 roads create local noise and visual intrusion. However, the heathland/woodland mosaic provides rural character, and a strong sense of relative tranquillity is retained along the small river and stream corridors, particularly where they are wooded, with deep sunken lanes being a distinctive feature of these areas.

1.24 In addition to the widespread areas of common land, there are a range of spaces enabling access to the countryside for recreation. There is a well-developed footpath network particularly in the north of the area along Oxney Stream and Oakhanger Stream with access to Kingsley and Broxhead Commons. National Cycle Route 22 passes through the LCA. Passfield Common is owned by the National Trust. There are golf courses at Blackmoor Golf Club (on registered common land) and Weavers Down.

1.25 Hogmoor Inclosure, developed as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), is a popular and well-maintained recreation site, creating a sense of escape and opportunities to experience nature close to nearby settlements.

Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Watercourses (River Slea, Southern River Wey and Deadwater), ponds and their associated habitats (including water meadows) and cultural value, notably within the River Wey Conservation Area.
- Mosaic of woodland and nationally and internationally important heathland commons provide a sense of time depth, a high perceived naturalness and opportunities for access.
- Rich biodiversity provided by the extensive mosaic of woodland, lowland heath, hedgerows and grassland.
- Pockets of registered and non-registered historic parkland and associated natural and cultural heritage.
- The varied field pattern including the small early enclosures which characterise the stream valleys. Use of pasture for horse paddocks and associated boundary changes can impact on the character of these areas.

- The individual character of the settlements and their rural setting which are vulnerable to further infill and expansion resulting in the linking up of settlements and perception of a much more urbanised areas (e.g. Lindford – Headley and Lindford – Bordon).
- High recreational access associated with the extensive areas of common land, open access land and PRow network.
- The winding rural lanes and sunken lanes that cut through the valleys, characterised by steep sandstone banks with exposed tree roots and distinctive vegetation, which are vulnerable to increased traffic pressures.
- Strong sense of time depth associated with military history at Bordon, scattered Scheduled Monuments including the Bronze Age barrow cemeteries and other historical features such as aqueducts associated with rivers.

Guidance

Landscape Strategy

1.26 The overall strategy should be to conserve the mosaic of woodland, heathland and pasture land cover and ensure that this area provides a strong rural setting for existing areas of development. The distinctive landscape of the incised stream valleys should be conserved.

Landscape Management

- Conserve the intimate stream corridors including the River Wey and associated habitats and historic features.
- Enhance the Southern Wey Valley in line with Site Specific Project 4: Enhance the Southern Wey Valley, in the East Hampshire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2019 [See reference 1].. Conserve and enhance

areas of wetland habitat relating to Cooper's Stream, the River Wey and associated ponds.

- Address potential for flooding issues with the implementation of natural flood management schemes along the River Slea and the River Wey.
- Monitor water quality in the streams and seek to ensure high water quality and minimise water pollution.
- Ensure a joined-up, landscape scale approach towards changes to agricultural practice through ELMS and local initiatives at a landscape scale such as Landscape Partnerships.
- Conserve and manage woodland, including ancient woodland in line with Guidance on Managing ancient and native woodland in England [See reference 2]. Ensure a diverse species and age structure by thinning, coppicing, promoting natural regeneration and replanting as necessary, in line with District Wide Project 7: Enhance access and increase active management of existing woodland in the East Hampshire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2019. This will contribute to landscape resilience and also minimise the risk of damage as a result of increased storms and high winds. Where appropriate, consider reversion of areas of coniferous plantation to heathland to create a suite of interconnected sites.
- Conserve and manage areas of unenclosed heathland commons to prevent encroachment of scrub and bracken and consider opportunities for further heathland creation on former commons to create a network of linked sites. Consider opportunities to reinstate common grazing to restore the historic and cultural character of the landscape and secure the ongoing management and conservation of the commons.
- Enhancement and management focus on the heathland habitats found within this character area would be in accordance with Site-Specific Project 2: Connect and restore heathland habitats within the East Hampshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2019).
- Promote an informal and irregular mosaic of oak-birch woodland, lowland heath, gorse and bracken scrub, and acid grassland.
- Manage, restore and connect hedgerow boundaries.

- Conserve and enhance areas of historic parkland.
- Promote appropriate management of farmland, including restoring buffer strips along field margins to minimise run off and to create a wildlife-rich habitat supporting farmland birds.
- Conserve the small pastoral field pattern.
- Conserve areas of pasture and seek to ensure good management of horse grazing, including retention of hedgerow boundaries, management of the sward and avoiding proliferation of buildings/sheds etc.
- Encourage sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, hardstanding, jumps and other paraphernalia that are associated with horse keeping.
- Manage recreational access to avoid damage to sensitive habitats and features. Maintain and enhance rights of way and improve links to the long-distance footpaths within the LCA, as well as improving links with the South Downs National Park, in line with District Wide Projects 3: Connect with the South Downs and 4: Identify and enhance strategically important PRow in the East Hampshire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2019.
- Conserve scheduled monuments including the historic Bronze Age barrow cemeteries which provide a sense of time depth and evidence of a prehistoric ritual landscape. Maintain these sites free of trees and enhance their settings. Carry out restoration and repair as necessary.

Development Management

- Avoid development in proximity to the River Wey Conservation Area.
- Consider views from the elevated Greensand Terrace to the east in relation to any change in this area.
- Where development does occur, there should be landscape led and considerate incorporation of green infrastructure into the site in line with District Wide Project 9 from East Hampshire's GI Strategy 2019. Development should be carefully planned, and biodiversity considered

from the outset in line with East Hampshire District Council's Biodiversity and Planning Guidance [See reference 3].

- Ensure heathland restoration programmes consider possible adverse visual impact resulting from the exposure of existing buildings, particularly industrial buildings.
- Ensure that developments do not impact on the relative sense of tranquillity and strong rural character of this area. This can be done by sensitively incorporating green infrastructure elements into the development (District-Wide Project 9).
- Conserve the landscape setting of settlements, particularly woodland and hedgerow which provide enclosure and containment.
- Conserve the rural setting of settlements and control development along roads and avoid the 'joining up' of settlements.
- Use sustainable and locally sourced materials, vernacular building techniques and styles, responding to the existing landscape character, to inform design and ensure integration with the surrounding landscape.
- Ensure recreational facilities do not erode the rural character of the landscape.
- Conserve the sunken lanes which characterise the stream valleys. Monitor traffic impacts and seek to protect banks and verges from damage.
- Monitor incremental development and change along the main road corridors (A325) and seek to conserve a woodland/heath setting to the road.
- Ensure any future changes in association with the A3 and A325 respect the rural character of the area and avoids use of excessive lighting, signage and 'suburban' features.
- Ensure that new development is integrated into the existing network of PRoW to provide access to the countryside.
- Avoid a negative impact on the South Downs National Park's Dark Skies Policy by preventing and positively reducing artificial light pollution in line

with the South Downs National Park Technical Advice Note Version 2
[See reference 4].

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