



East Hampshire Landscape

Character Assessment

Landscape Character Type 7: Greensand Hills

East Hampshire District Council

Draft report

Prepared by LUC

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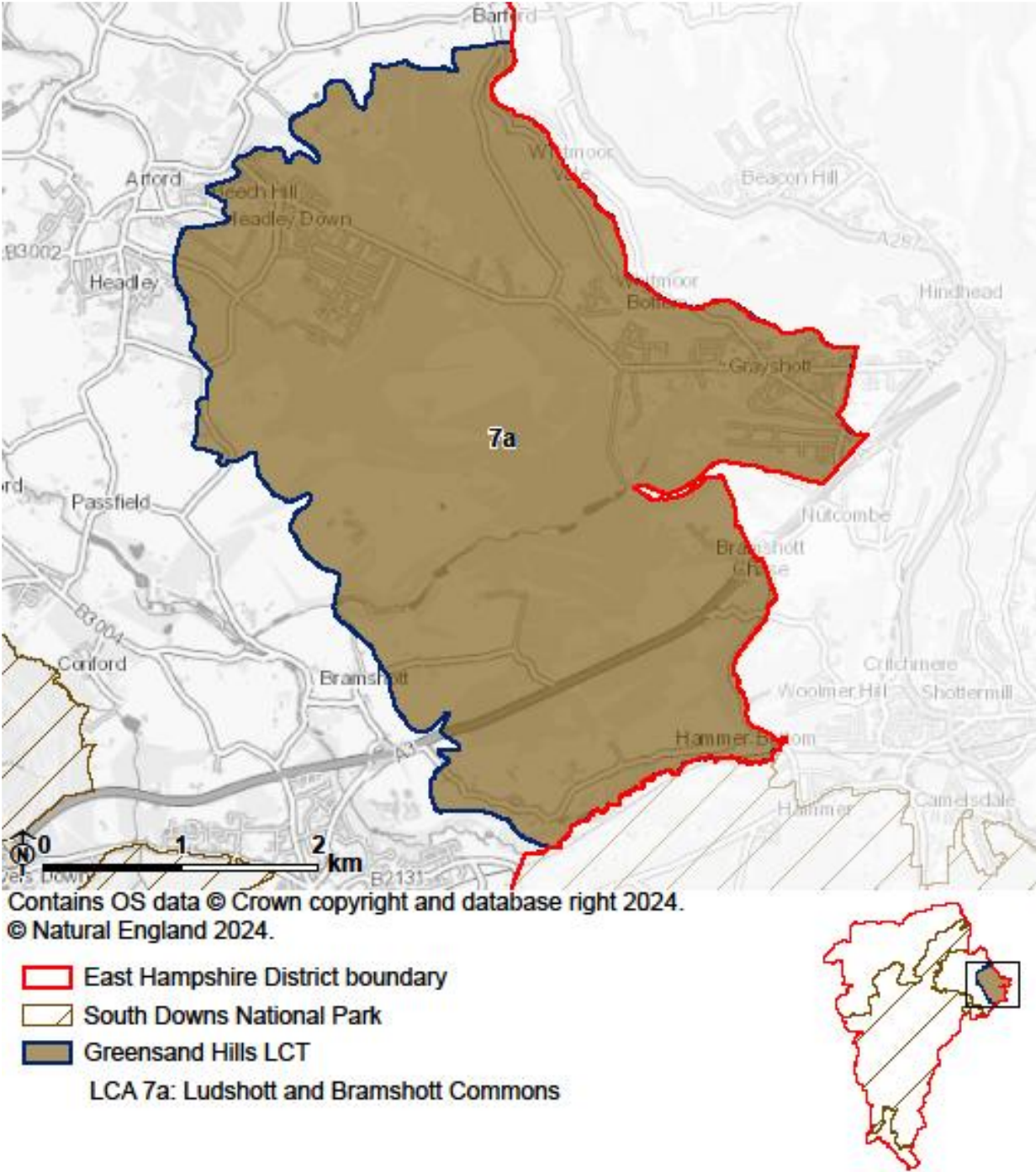
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Landscape Character Type 7: Greensand Hills

Figure 1.1: Location of the Greensand Hills LCT



Description

1.1 The Greensand Hills are steep, prominent hills formed by the resistant sandstones of the Hythe Formation. This landscape type forms part of a horseshoe-shaped escarpment which extends outside East Hampshire and into Waverley District, enclosing the Milland Basin. Although part of a larger type (which occurs across East Hampshire and into Waverley) 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

- Prominent hills formed from sandstones and cherts of the Lower Greensand group with a steep escarpment at their inner edge.
- Streams, such as Cooper's Stream, drain the hills in deep ravine-like valleys.
- Significant woodland cover including at Gentle's Copse, Bull Copse and Hogmoor Inclosure, comprising an interlocking mosaic of different woodland types and structures – oak-birch woodland, beechwoods, mixed woodland and coniferous plantations on former common land.
- Woodland clearings support heathy unenclosed commons including ecologically rich habitats – open heather heath, acid grassland, bracken, gorse, woody scrub, and oak-birch woodland.
- The irregular pattern of fields within clearings and woodland edges supports rough grazing.
- Narrow, deeply sunken lanes wind up hillsides linking isolated farmsteads.
- 20th century suburban development arranged in a distinctive grid layout at Headley, Headley Down and Grayshott.
- Presence of historic farmsteads and several former parklands such as Headley Park.

- Extensive network of public rights of way (PRoW) and unenclosed common land open to public access.
- Hammer ponds along the foot of the hills associated with the former Wealden iron industry.
- Characterised by a sense of enclosure, mystery and remoteness.

Landscape Character Areas

1.2 The Greensand Hills LCT contains one LCA:

- LCA 7a: Ludshott and Bramshott Commons

Landscape Character Area 7a: Ludshott and Bramshott Commons

Description

Location and Boundaries

1.3 The Ludshott and Bramshott Commons Landscape Character Area (LCA) lies in the east of the district. Its western boundary has been drawn along the 120m contour line; corresponding approximately with the extent of the Hythe beds of the Lower Greensand and the woodland edge. Its eastern edge is delineated by the district boundary. Steep slopes which form the valley sides of small streams define the north-eastern and southern edges of the character area. The slopes of the western edge of the LCA are gentler.

Key Characteristics

- Part of a series of hills formed from the sandstones of the Lower Greensand group.
- Elevated and undulating landform informed by the resistant sandstone of the Hythe beds. Incised by Cooper's Stream which creates more pronounced undulations.
- A mosaic of woodland supporting variation in type and structure (including sessile oak and beech woodland, coppice and mixed and coniferous plantation) with some ancient woodland on the steeper valley sides.
- Internationally important areas of unenclosed heathland common (Bramshott and Ludshott Commons SSSI), part of the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA within clearings in the woodland.

- Small regular pastoral fields occur in woodland clearings sometimes containing paddocks.
- Quiet rural lanes enclosed by woodland and in places sunk deeply into the sandstone.
- Distinctive, regular settlements of Grayshott and Headley Down are contained by woodland and well-integrated into the landscape. Strong sense of separation between Headley Down and Grayshott
- Historic parkland with pre-1800 park at Downlands House, post-1800 parkland at Ludshott Manor and Grayshott Hall.
- A large area of National Trust land (Ludshott Common, Bramshott Chase and Waggoners' or Wakeners' Wells) with occasional long views, a comprehensive footpath network, and access rights.
- A rural landscape with a sense of tranquillity, intimacy and secrecy. The corridor of the A3 in the southern part of the area is a local source of noise and disruption.

Figure 1.2: PRow through a mosaic of mixed and plantation woodland with heathland



Figure 1.3: Undulating pastoral field enclosed by dense mature tree boundaries



Natural Influences

Physical Landscape

1.4 This character area lies on the eastern edge of the Lower Greensand and is part of a series of hills which form an elliptical belt around the Wealden Clay. The resistant sandstone of the Hythe Beds, which form part of the Lower Greensand group, create the elevated and undulating topography. Cooper's Stream and the River Wey incise the landform creating pronounced undulations.

1.5 The sandstone geology gives rise to a well-drained sandy soil which is often very acidic supporting a predominantly woodland and heathland land cover. Woodland varies in both type and structure (sessile oak, beech, coniferous plantation) with some ancient and semi-natural woodland on the steeper slopes alongside Cooper's Stream, Whitmoor Bottom and Gentle's Copse. Bramshott and Ludshott Common (incorporating Bramshott Chase) form a significant extent of heathy common land. Clearings in woodland contain small regular fields of 18th-19th century enclosure supporting pasture and paddocks.

Biodiversity

1.6 This character area is of high ecological interest, supporting extensive areas of open lowland heathland, acid/neutral grassland and woodland. A range of woodland types occur, including sessile oak and beech woodland, and mixed and coniferous plantation. Woodland of ancient origin is largely restricted to the steep slopes of Whitmoor Vale and the valley sides of Cooper's Stream however there are further pockets of ancient woodland in the north and west of the LCA.

1.7 The central part of the character area is dominated by Bramshott and Ludshott Commons SSSI, an area which is also designated as part of the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA. This area is dominated by dry and moderately

dry heath communities, together with mosaics of acid grassland, bracken, gorse and birch and pine woodland. It is particularly notable for supporting an important population of smooth snake, and its diverse breeding bird assemblage that includes notable species such as Dartford warbler, woodlark, nightjar and hobby.

1.8 A number of additional woodland, heathland and grassland areas carry non-statutory SINC designation.

Cultural Influences

Historic Landscape Character

1.9 The generally low fertility and marginal character of the sandy soils is evident in a historic land-use which, for several millennia, has been dominated by woodland and heathy unenclosed commons, with earlier activity restricted to prehistoric exploitation of the woodland resources.

1.10 Extensive blocks of pre-1800 woodland are still evident within the landscape. Much of this woodland is likely to be of medieval origin involving areas of coppicing, a practice that would have continued into the modern period.

1.11 Most of the commons have, since 1800, been appropriated for plantations. These, together with the earlier blocks of ancient woodland, produce the overwhelmingly wooded character. Small islands of 18th-19th century enclosure, typified by very small fields and smallholdings, are scattered across the character area, together with blocks of post-1900 settlement at Headley Down and Grayshott.

1.12 In the south of the LCA and extending to the north-west, 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.

1.13 Key historic characteristics include:

- Absence of archaeological monuments – Bronze Age barrow cemeteries may survive within the wooded commons.
- Historic parkland – pre-1800 park at Downlands House, post-1800 parkland at Ludshott Manor and Grayshott Hall.
- Conservation areas at Grayshott (which has distinctive formal and informal public open space at its heart) and along the River Wey.
- A Canadian Memorial at Bramshott Common and associated distinctive maple planting on the A3 to the north, commemorating Canadian soldiers in the area during WWI and WWII.

Settlement Form and Built Character

1.14 Settlement is largely 20th century suburban development organised in a distinctive grid layout, (Grayshott and Headley Down) representing the growth of dormitory settlements. There are several clusters of low-density development between Headley Down and Grayshott, generally replicating the grid layout with large gardens. Woodland contains these settlements, softening and integrating their geometric edges. Isolated farmsteads are found in the rural part of the character area, mainly of 18th century or later date. These are located on the edge of woodland as at Woolmer Farm and in woodland clearings as at Bewleswood Farm. Ludshott Manor, a Tudor manor house set in parkland has been converted to flats.

1.15 Building materials include sandstone, red brick and clay tiles.

Perceptual Influences

1.16 This is a landscape of contrasting enclosure and openness associated with the respective areas of woodland and heathland. Heather, gorse, beech and birch provide a rich texture and seasonal colour. Views within and out of the character area are generally restricted by woodland and this brings an element of secrecy and intimacy to the landscape. However far-reaching channelled views are afforded from Ludshott Common towards adjacent wooded hillsides.

1.17 The character area is crossed by the A3 which introduces localised noise and movement, although views towards it are restricted by dense woodland. Otherwise, there are a number of quiet rural roads, often enclosed by woodland and in places sunk into the sandstone. Combined with the extent of heathland and woodland cover these factors contribute to a generally strong sense of tranquillity and rural character within the LCA.

1.18 The LCA includes large areas of National Trust owned land at Ludshott Common and Bramshott Chase. A comprehensive PRow network and a number of car parks ensure good access to the landscape. Waggoners' or Wakeners' Wells consist of a series of stream-fed man-made ponds which may have originally been constructed as hammer ponds for the local iron industry in the 17th-century. The ponds are an important habitat for wildlife today.

1.19 Alfred Tennyson and his family rented Grayshott Hall, the site of the old Grayshott Farm, for several months in 1867 while their own house near Haslemere was built. It is said that he wrote his short ode 'Flower in the crannied wall' while he was here. This landscape also provided inspiration to the writer Flora Thompson who lived in Grayshott in the late 1800s.

Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Sandstone hills, part of a series of hills forming an elliptical belt which are valued for their distinctive landform and occasional long views from higher ground.
- The course of Cooper's Stream and the River Wey and associated ponds including hammer ponds which are especially sensitive to change from climate change and habitat degradation.
- Wetland habitats, ponds, flowing open water and wet woodland, particularly around Cooper's Stream and the River Wey, are sensitive to change from climate change leading to increased seasonal flooding, increased temperatures and periods of drought.
- The diversity of woodland types including ancient woodland which require active management and small areas of enclosed pasture within woodland.
- Small areas of enclosed pasture within the woodland which are increasingly used as horse paddocks with changes to boundaries and pattern.
- The areas of heathy common land (which have SSSI/SPA status) support a rich biodiversity, provide a sense of time depth and offer opportunities for recreation access.
- Historic parkland at Downlands House, Ludshott Manor and Grayshott Hall which has cultural and natural heritage value.
- Sunken lanes which contribute to the experience of travelling through this landscape and are vulnerable to traffic pressures and erosion of verges and banks.
- Distinctive 20th century development which has been well integrated into the landscape but vulnerable to further development.

- The sense of separation between Headley Down and Grayshott, which could be eroded by further infill development or removal of vegetation.
- Accessible landscape with large amounts of National Trust land and a good network of PRoW.
- Long views from Ludshott Common which contrast with the prevalent enclosed, intimate character of the LCA.
- The enclosure and sense of tranquillity provided by woodland cover which creates a strong, intimate rural character.

Guidance

Landscape Strategy

1.20 The overall management objective should be to conserve the rich woodland and heathland mosaic and the diversity of habitats, and the sense of tranquillity. The landscape should continue to provide a strong rural setting for the settlements of Grayshott and Headley Down.

Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance the character of the sandstone hills, including occasional long views experienced from them.
- 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 enhance areas of wetland habitat relating to Cooper's Stream, the River Wey and associated ponds including hammer ponds
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 [\[See reference 1\]](#).

- Address potential for flooding issues with the implementation of natural flood management schemes along Cooper's Stream and the River Wey.
- Monitor water quality in the streams and seek to ensure high water quality and minimise water pollution.
- Promote appropriate management of farmland, including restoring buffer strips along field margins to minimise run off, maintain the biodiversity of wetland features including ponds and to create a wildlife-rich habitat supporting farmland birds.
- Conserve and manage woodland, including ancient woodland on steeper slopes 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.
- Ensure new trees and woodlands are planted in line with relevant guidance, including District Wide Project 6: Increase woodland cover in the East Hampshire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2019, and have suitable management and maintenance plans to ensure their successful establishment. Manage and monitor the threats posed by tree diseases and pests, and plan for climate change by researching appropriate species mixes to create robust and resilient woodlands.
- Conserve open clearings within woodland.
- Conserve, protect and expand area of pasture within woodland.
- Manage existing heathland commons to prevent encroachment of scrub and bracken and consider opportunities for further heathland creation on former commons within areas of plantation to create a suite of linked heathland sites. Consider reintroducing grazing as a traditional form of management on heathland sites.
- Conserve, restore and enhance historic parkland.

- Maintain and enhance rights of way and improve links to footpaths from settlements, 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 rights of way in the East Hampshire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2019.
- Conserve the sense of tranquillity and strong rural character.
- Encourage sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, hardstanding, jumps and other paraphernalia that are associated with horse keeping.

Development Management

- Conserve the distinctive and individual identity of settlements and retain the important sense of separation along the B3002 which links Grayshott and Headley Down. Conserve the rural setting of the road.
- Development should be carefully planned, and biodiversity considered from the outset in line with East Hampshire District Council's Biodiversity and Planning Guidance [\[See reference 3\]](#).
- Conserve the character of sunken and enclosed lanes, manage traffic pressures and resist pressure for road improvements which would alter the experience of travelling through the landscape.
- Conserve the tree and woodland cover which contains and softens the edges 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 any future changes in association with the A3 respects the rural character of the area and avoids use of excessive lighting, signage and 'suburban' features.
- Ensure that new development is integrated into and connected to the existing network of PRow.

- 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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- 1 LUC (2019) East Hampshire Green Infrastructure Study. Available online: <https://www.easthants.gov.uk/planning-services/planning-policy/local-plan/emerging-local-plan/evidence-base/environment>
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- 3 East Hampshire District Council (2021) Biodiversity and Planning Guidance. Available online: <https://www.easthants.gov.uk/media/6296/download?inline> (Accessed 22.03.2024)
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