



APPENDIX 10.2

Extracts from Published Landscape Character Assessments

- Extract from National Character Area Profile (*No. 119 – North Downs*)
- Extracts from Regional Character Areas (*Capstone Downs, Chatham Outskirts: Mid Kent Downs*)
- Extracts from Local Landscape Character Areas (*LCA 24: Darland Banks, LCA 25: East Hill, LCA 26: Capstone Farm, LCA 27: Sharstead Farm, LCA 28 Elm Court, LCA 29 Hempstead Fringe*)

Introduction

As part of Natural England's responsibilities as set out in the Natural Environment White Paper¹, Biodiversity 2020² and the European Landscape Convention³, we are revising profiles for England's 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). These are areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.

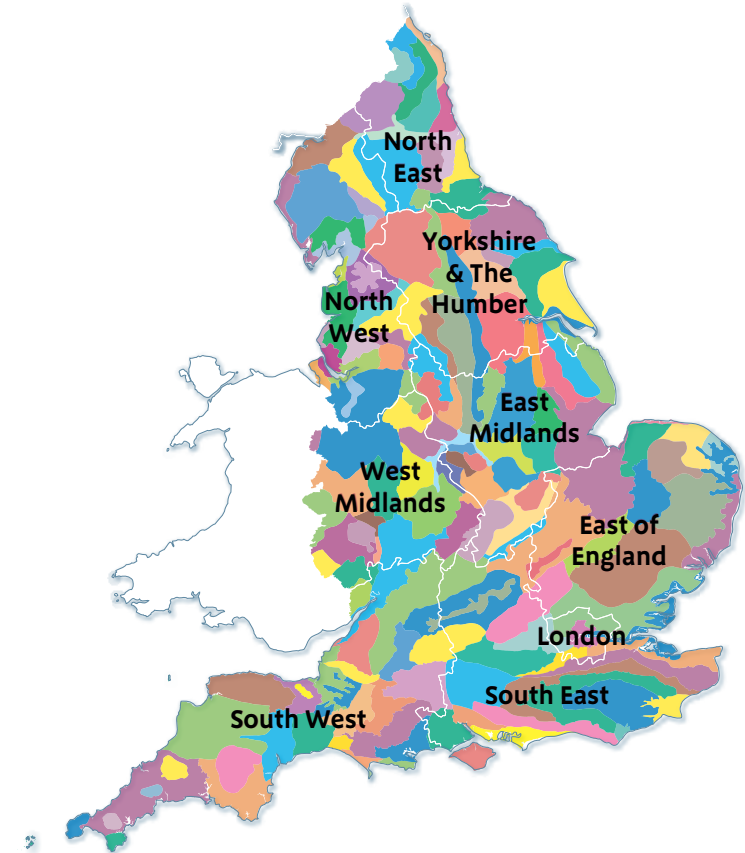
NCA profiles are guidance documents which can help communities to inform their decision-making about the places that they live in and care for. The information they contain will support the planning of conservation initiatives at a landscape scale, inform the delivery of Nature Improvement Areas and encourage broader partnership working through Local Nature Partnerships. The profiles will also help to inform choices about how land is managed and can change.

Each profile includes a description of the natural and cultural features that shape our landscapes, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics and ecosystem services. Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) are suggested, which draw on this integrated information. The SEOs offer guidance on the critical issues, which could help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future.

NCA profiles are working documents which draw on current evidence and knowledge. We will aim to refresh and update them periodically as new information becomes available to us.

We would like to hear how useful the NCA profiles are to you. You can contact the NCA team by emailing ncaprofiles@naturalengland.org.uk

National Character Areas map



¹ The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature, Defra (2011; URL: www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf)

² Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services, Defra (2011; URL: www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf)

³ European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe (2000; URL: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm>)

Summary

The North Downs National Character Area (NCA) 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 scenic qualities and natural beauty of the area.

Agriculture is an important component of the landscape, with variations in soils supporting mixed farming practices where arable, livestock and horticulture have co-existed for centuries. The woodlands, many of which are ancient, are a prominent feature of the landscape, yet their ecological value has suffered in recent years due to a reduction in active management, particularly of mixed coppice, since the 1990s. Two Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) are designated for their rare woodland compositions. Chalk grassland is particularly notable, with seven SAC designated for chalk grassland interest including outstanding assemblages of rare orchids. The chalk downland habitats support rare species, including the late spider orchid – wholly restricted to Kent – and the black-veined moth and straw belle moth which are currently found only within the North Downs.

The North Downs are cut by the valleys of the Stour, Medway, Darent, Wey and Mole with their associated wetland habitats. The chalk aquifer of the North Downs is important for supplying water within Kent and to London.

The coast is of international significance with an SAC designation due to the presence of rare maritime cliff communities found within the cliff face and on cliff-tops. Two stretches of the coast are recognised as Heritage Coast: South Foreland and Dover to Folkestone. An outstanding range of historical and geological features are found along the coast, including Dover Castle and the White Cliffs with their strong cultural associations. Other historical features, including numerous Scheduled Ancient Monuments and buildings dating from the medieval period, are scattered throughout.

[Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce.](#)

More urban-fringe influence and modern development is associated with the land fringing Croydon, Purley and south London in the western part of the downs, with Dorking, Redhill and Guildford located on the fringes of the NCA. In the east, Dover is the main settlement, but the Medway towns of Rochester and Chatham and the town of Folkestone also lie on the periphery of the NCA. Other towns, including Maidstone, Ashford and Sevenoaks,

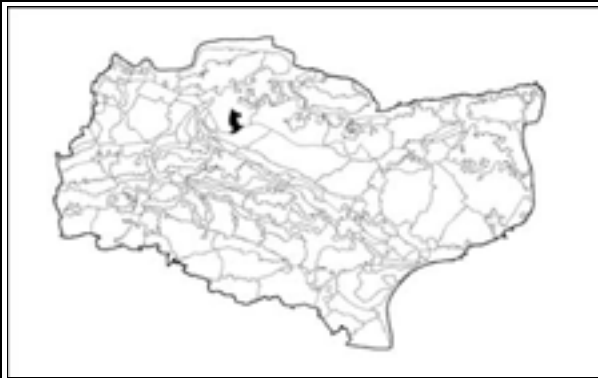
and the city of Canterbury, although within adjacent NCAs, lie close to the boundary. Views from the eastern scarp are dominated by generally undeveloped landscapes much valued by visitors, with outstanding views across the Vale of Holmesdale to the Weald and from many parts of the downs to France. These views are affected to varying degrees by the Channel Tunnel terminal development and the M25 and M20 corridors.



Development pressures and agricultural practices continue to be forces for change throughout the NCA; high-quality and well managed green infrastructure both within and surrounding the NCA could help to service the demands of a growing population, a changing climate and increased pressures on natural resources, including the chalk aquifer, critical for water provision. Opportunities to create more robust and resilient ecological networks across the agricultural landscape should be maximised, working in partnership to secure positive environmental outcomes. The natural and cultural assets of the NCA support food production, regulation of water and soils, biodiversity, recreation, tranquillity, sense of place and sense of history.

Chalk grassland is an important component of the North Downs NCA supporting a range of wildlife.

CAPSTONE DOWNS



This narrow finger of North Downs landscape falls into two distinct landscapes. Firstly, the dramatic scarp and valley forms to the north. Secondly, rolling open plateau landscape in the centre and to the south. Remnant chalk grassland on the steepest slopes to the north lead into small fields of arable and pasture then ever larger arable units in the southernmost section. Blocks of deciduous woodland are a distinct feature throughout this Local character area providing much needed containment for the open arable landscape to the south. There is a significant lack of development within the area itself but extensive urban areas are located on all but the southern boundary, this area is distinctly rural in character. However, there are definite indications of the development pressures these urban areas are putting upon this valuable and vulnerable landscape.

The alternating bands of chalk and head deposits in the northern part of this character area create a dramatic incised landscape comprising a series of ridges and valleys. The southern and central plateau is formed from clay with flints creating a softer more rolling landscape. Two of the valleys, demarcated by Shawstead Road and Lidsing Road, extend further to the south and bound this central plateau.

Land cover to some extent is governed by landform in that on the steeper scarp slopes, where true chalk soils occur, are predominantly rough pasture with encroaching scrub vegetation. Remnant chalk grassland is the natural landcover for the chalk scarps and would have been a more prevalent at one time. On the shallower slopes and the plateau landform, with its covering of clay with flints, deciduous woodland blocks of mixed species introduce variety in the form of colour and texture. Land use would have been predominantly pasture but arable cultivation has on the whole replaced this on all but the steepest slopes. The decline of grazing of these steeper slopes is resulting in invasion by chalkland scrub. These changing land use patterns threaten the unique landscape and wildlife value of these open chalk grasslands.

Amenity and other urban land uses are beginning to encroach on this character area, as well as fringe influences such as horse pasture in combination with the encroaching development of Hempstead on the eastern edge.

The majority of the existing woodland is listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory. These mixed deciduous woodlands have considerable ecological value that is not always reflected by official designation. Darland Bank is a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) with key habitats of grassland, woodland and scrub. South Wood is a candidate for LNR designation and is already designated as a SNCI for grassland as well as woodland. Ambley, Hook and Holt Woods are designated as SNCIs. Also of significant ecological value are the areas of remnant chalk grassland. However, these are in decline and are threatened by invasion of scrub vegetation.

The landscape is perhaps best remembered for its association with Dickens who set several works in and around the towns of Chatham and Rochester.

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CAPSTONE DOWNS

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Steep ridges and valleys with open plateau to south.
Woodland and pasture-scrub invasion. Remnant chalk grassland.
Arable cultivation on plateau.
Urban context and encroachment of urban edge.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

The open valley with wooded tops to the surrounding ridges is usually coherent but has many visual detractors in the form of urban and industrial development and busy traffic routes. Built development has a high negative impact on the open view. Fragments of hedged field boundaries are very occasionally visible within the areas of intense arable cultivation. Semi natural habitats are limited to wooded areas on the hilltops, often close to urban areas. The ecological integrity of the area is therefore considered to be weak and the overall condition of the landscape is very poor.

Sensitivity

There are a reasonable proportion of recent features in the landscape, including conifer shelter belts and industrial-type buildings. The roads have adopted more recent characteristics and the heritage features, such as field boundaries, have become indistinct. The wooded ridges are one of the strongest characteristic features in the view. Visibility is high as the views are open over the discernible landform. The landscape is highly sensitive due to the visibility of the marked landform.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Restore cultural and visual integrity to the area by recreating a continuous wooded edge to the ridge tops, to follow contours and minor valleys.
Restore the ecological interest to selected areas of open grassland by conservation management.
Restore hedged boundaries to the road network.
Restore the rural view by using broadleaf woodland and shaws as screening for industrial buildings.

CONTEXT

Regional: Thames Gateway

Condition

good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
	low	moderate	high

Sensitivity

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

Very Poor.

Pattern of elements: Coherent.

Detracting features: Many.

Visual Unity: Interrupted.

Cultural integrity: Poor.

Ecological integrity: Weak.

Functional Integrity: Very Weak.

Sensitivity

High.

Distinctiveness: Indistinct.

Continuity: Ancient.

Sense of Place: Moderate.

Landform: Apparent

Extent of tree cover: Open

Visibility: High.

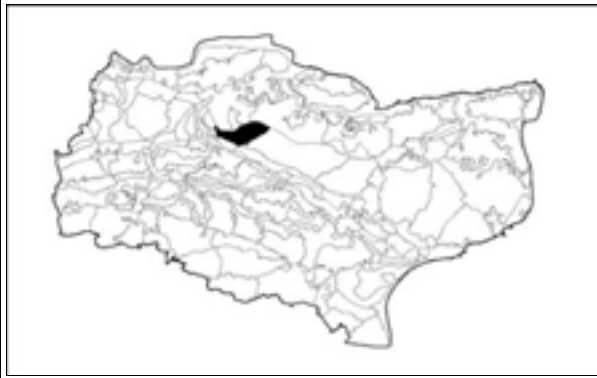
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

RESTORE.

Restore the wooded edge to ridge tops where it is currently eroded
Restore selected areas of species-rich chalk grassland
Restore hedged boundaries to roads and other highways

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CHATHAM OUTSKIRTS: MID KENT DOWNS



CHATHAM OUTSKIRTS

This landscape is a mosaic of deciduous woodland, large arable plateau and steep, rolling valleys, which support a patchwork of small pastures, neglected grassland and scrub. A number of mainly derelict orchards dot the slopes, set within a matrix of overgrown hedges and small, scrubby shaws. Fruit cultivation used to be widespread in this area. The arable plateau are intensively farmed, with few hedges, and are contained in the distance by belts of woodland.

There is a strong urban-edge influence in this area, characterised by dereliction, dumping and high security fences. Many of the hedges are in poor condition and the woodlands are scrubby and largely unmanaged.

MID KENT DOWNS

the Chatham Outskirts lie within the larger character area of the Mid Kent Downs.

The long spine of the Kent Downs in this area stretches from Chatham in the west to the Stour Valley in the east. Although there are local variations in the appearance of the landscape, there is a strong underlying pattern to the landform, which imparts an overall character to the region. 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, around Sittingbourne and Faversham.

The historical poverty of this area resulted from the stiff clay-with-flints soils, which overlie the solid chalk. Despite their striking, rich-red colour, these soils are relatively poor and difficult to cultivate, especially as they occur on the exposed upper plateau of the Downs. Edward Hasted, writing in 1798, consistently describes the area in terms such as "an unpleasant dreary country, the soil of which is very poor, being chalky, and much covered with flint-stones". In his day the land was used widely for sheep grazing, interspersed by arable on the lower slopes and large blocks of woodland. Today appreciation of the landscape has changed and the remote, undeveloped ridges and valleys, which resulted from the historical poverty of the soils, are considered one of the most beautiful features of the AONB. Although mechanised farming over the last hundred years has seen an increase of arable land, much of the original ancient woodland survives, walling in the arable plateau and enclosing the rounded, valley bottoms.

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CHATHAM OUTSKIRTS: MID KENT DOWNS

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Large arable plateau and steep, rolling valleys, scarp slopes.
Patchwork of small pastures, grass and scrub.
Derelict orchards, few hedges.
Urban-edge influence. Long views to the industrial edge.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

This is a large scale landscape with a coherent pattern, but there are many detracting features which are associated with unsympathetic land uses. Large blocks of woodland are interspersed with areas of intense arable cultivation - the latter reduces the ecological interest of the landscape area. There is a strong influence from the urban edge. The cultural integrity and the condition of heritage features is poor. Built form has a negative impact on the view.

Sensitivity

The sense of place within this landscape is strong. Key characteristics such as cross-contour and ridgeline roads, and beech/yew woodland, contribute to the strong sense of place, and also have a very strong time depth. Settlement and built form, however, do not greatly contribute to local distinctiveness.
The plateau itself has an insignificant landform, but this area also includes some of the top of the scarp and some of the steeper sided valleys. The landform is therefore considered to be apparent in the view. Enclosure by woodland is intermittent: the sensitivity of the landscape is therefore high.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

A smaller scale landscape may be restored around settlements where this is appropriate to agricultural use. This may be achieved by planting hedgerow to enclose highways, fields and settlements, and by ensuring that fields are small scale. Encourage mixed agricultural use of the farmland.
Restore broadleaf wooded areas and copses on ridgelines.
Restore woodland links into the large arable areas, forming a network with the existing woodland cover on the scarp.

CONTEXT

Regional: Kent Downs AONB

Condition

good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
	low	moderate	high

Sensitivity

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

Poor.

Pattern of elements: Coherent.
Detracting features: Some.
Visual Unity: Coherent.
Cultural integrity: Poor.
Ecological integrity: Moderate.
Functional Integrity: Weak.

Sensitivity

High.

Distinctiveness: Characteristic.
Continuity: Ancient.
Sense of Place: Strong.
Landform: Apparent.
Extent of tree cover: Intermittent.
Visibility: Moderate.

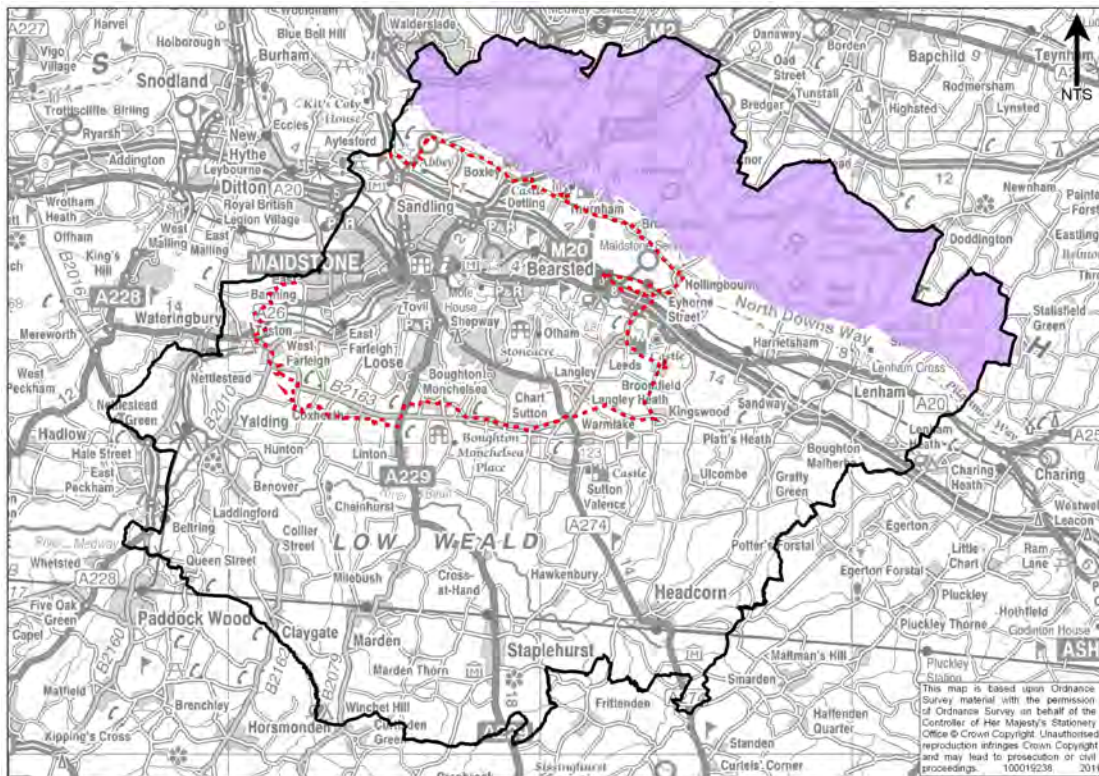
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

RESTORE.

Restore woodland links from the ridge into the large arable areas.
Restore hedgerow along selected highways and around settlements.
Restore areas of broadleaf woodland.
Restore a smaller-scale framework to the landscape around settlements.

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Dry Valleys and Downs: introduction

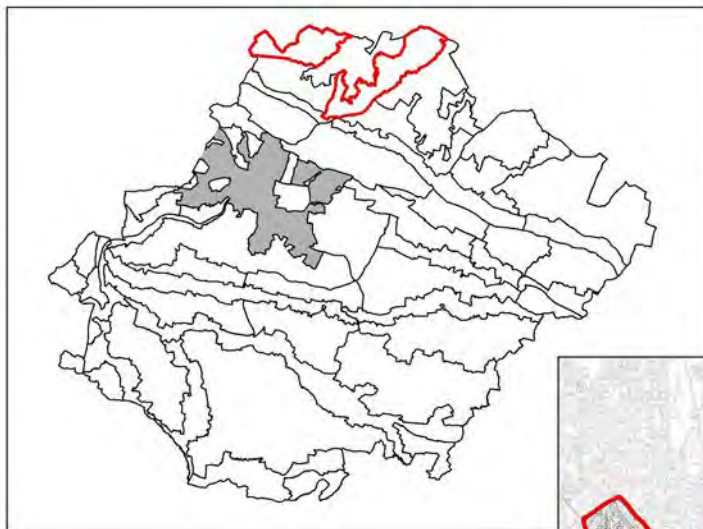


This landscape forms part of the nationally designated Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which offers a high level of development constraint. Policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. The dip slope of the North Downs is characterised by the typical open, expansive and rolling downland which gradually falls to the north. The strong landform is emphasised by ancient woodlands and shaws which cover the frequent pattern of dry valleys. Oak and ash are typical species across the upper part of the dip slope, and beech, ash and maple are found on the chalk soils of the dry valley sides. Much of the chalk grassland along the dry valley sides and bottoms is grazed, and in contrast the more level ridges are often covered with small scale cereal fields. Where the upper North Downs plateau levels off as it stretches towards the scarp, larger arable fields are more frequent. There are extensive drifts of clay with flints across the chalk geology, and subsequently flint is a common building material. The landscape is however largely isolated and undeveloped, with small villages and isolated farmsteads scattered widely. There are few roads, although narrow, winding lanes make their way along the valley bottoms and upper ridges.

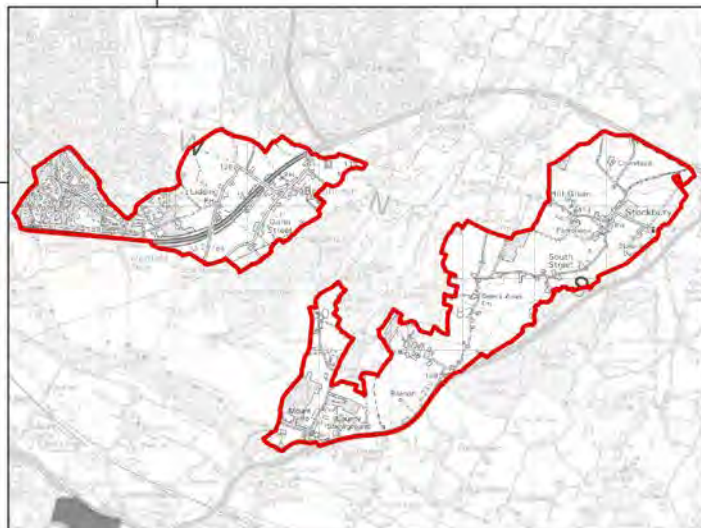
Dry Valleys and Downs: generic guidelines

- This landscape is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009–2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve the species rich hedgerow boundaries and promote enhanced species diversity within hedgerows where this has been weakened
- Avoid the use of single species hedgerows and shelterbelts within this landscape, where species rich hedgerows are so prevalent
- Many of these landscapes contain a rich diversity of valuable habitats contributing to biodiversity, including, coppice and mixed native woodlands, orchards, chalk grassland, disused chalk pits, grazing meadows and parklands that should be conserved and enhanced
- Conserve and enhance, through appropriate management, existing pockets of lowland dry acid grassland and lowland heathland. Refer to Maidstone’s Local Biodiversity Action Plan Phase 1: 2009–2014 HAP 2 Lowland Dry Acid Grassland and Heath
- Encourage the extension of lowland dry acid grassland and lowland heathland within opportunity areas identified within the Kent Living Landscapes data (Kent Wildlife Trust) and illustrated in Figure 8
- Valleys are frequently tranquil and largely undeveloped. They are distinct features of the natural landscape that should be conserved
- Encourage extensive grazing regimes that are appropriate for the long term management of chalk grassland, and to restore grassland present to semi-improved and ultimately unimproved grassland
- Encourage a reduction in the use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers to increase invertebrates and farmland bird communities
- Encourage extensive grassland and crop management by use of Entry Level and Higher Level Stewardship grants
- Agricultural intensification has led to woodland and hedgerow fragmentation. Where possible, woodland habitats should be increased and the historic hedgerow network should be reinstated. Woodlands should be linked through replacing post and wire fences with species rich hedgerows. Similarly, existing developed areas within these valleys often create demands to expand or change the nature of management on the valley sides that is detrimental to landscape character and leads to loss of species-rich chalk grassland. This should be avoided and opportunities to restore/create chalk grassland sought

1. Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- The majority of the landscape forms part of Kent Downs AONB, while the remainder forms part of the setting to the AONB
- Level to gently sloping landform of the North Downs upper plateau
- Mixture of arable fields, paddocks, remnant orchards and small to medium blocks of woodland
- Mixture of historic and recent buildings within the villages and farmsteads
- Traditional materials include yellow stock and red brick, Kent peg ties, flint and weatherboarding
- Predominantly very narrow lanes, in addition to the engineered roads within Bredhurst and the M2 motorway

Location

1.1 Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs is an area of downland located on the upper plateau of the North Downs. The majority of the area, with the exception of the north western fringe, sits within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The landscape comprises a mixture of arable fields, paddocks, remnant orchards and small blocks of woodland and is split in two by the dry wooded valleys just south east of Bredhurst village. The boundary to the south west indicates a change in field size, from small to large, while the north eastern boundary indicates the upper edge of the dry wooded valleys surrounding Hucking. Finally, the northern and north western boundary is artificial, following the boundary between Maidstone Borough and Medway Unitary Authority and Tonbridge and Malling Borough, which marks the extent of the study area rather than a change in landscape character. However there is a distinct change to the north west from the rural landscape to urban settlements.

1. Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

1.2 Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs comprise a mixture of arable fields, paddocks, remnant orchards and blocks of woodland. The fields form an irregular pattern, but are mostly small scale, with a few exceptions. There appears to be no dominant land use and the different types of fields are scattered throughout the area, with clusters of cereal fields next to remnant cherry orchards or collections of equestrian fields. The paddocks are often rectangular in shape and split up by boundaries incorporating electric fencing. Hedgerows are usually in association with lanes and are scarcer in the northern part of the area, while the eastern part also includes some hedgerows between fields. Hedgerow species include blackthorn, field maple, hawthorn, hazel, holly and sycamore. Other field boundaries are timber post and wire fencing, post and rail or barbed wire, but there are sections where there are no boundaries between the fields and lanes. The area also includes a few small to medium blocks of woodland incorporating predominantly hazel and beech. Cowstead Wood, West Wood, Four Oaks, Amber Wood and an area of woodland close to the Kent County Showground are all blocks of recorded ancient woodland.

1.3 The north-western corner of the character area includes part of Walderslade suburbs and is rather uncharacteristic of Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs, comprising relict wooded dry dip slope valleys with large blocks of suburban development in between the woodlands. Walderslade Woods include three large belts

of ancient woodland, which also forms part of a Local Wildlife Site notified in 2007. The woodlands include historical coppice, which is now unmanaged, and incorporates species such as ash, beech, hazel, hornbeam, field maple, sessile oak and sweet chestnut. The woodland understorey includes more than 30 woodland indicator plants such as early purple orchid, pignut and wood anemone. There are also areas of open clearings with grassland and scrub within the woodlands which are of value to wildlife such as dormice. Badgers and bats are also present within these woodlands.

1.4 Both Bredhurst and Stockbury Villages incorporate a mixture of both historical buildings and features, including a very distinctive village sign in Stockbury and flint and brick walls, as well as many recent buildings. In addition there are a number of farmsteads and recent buildings scattered across the area. Yellow stock brick is particularly distinctive of traditional buildings, but also red brick, Kent peg tiles and weatherboarding are characteristic building materials. The more recent buildings often feature render and red brick and there are also large scale farm-sheds built from concrete and metal. The suburban houses within Walderslade include bricks in shades of red to yellow, as well as weather boarding and hung tiles.

1.5 To the south of Lower Cox Street, Detling Aerodrome Industrial Estate is a very uncharacteristic feature of the North Downs

1. Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs



comprising a variety of industrial sheds as well as parking areas for lorries. The small industrial estate is also the site of the historic Detling Aerodrome, which was bombed by the Luftwaffe during the Second World War. Close by, the Kent County Showground is a detracting feature when it is used for shows, when large marquees are erected within the otherwise open fields.

1.6 There are also two Scheduled Monuments within the area. The remains of Binbury Castle, located to the north west of Detling Aerodrome Industrial Estate, include a wide motte and parts of a gatehouse. Behind Stockbury Church, the earthwork of the motte and bailey of Stockbury Castle remain. Both castles would have formed a defence together with Thurnham Castle, which is situated on the North Downs scarp edge.

1.7 While the roads through Bredhurst Village are engineered roads, there are many narrow and winding lanes within the area, as well as a small number of footpaths and trackways. The A249 dual carriageway runs along part of the south eastern boundary and the M2 cuts through the area to the north west, both contrasting with the rural road patterns within the area. While the M2 is visible in parts, it is deeply set as it passes Bredhurst, reducing the impact the road has on the area.

Geology, soils and topography

1.8 Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs are

positioned on the high plateau at the top of the North Downs. The underlying geology is the Upper Chalk which mostly is overlaid by drifts of predominantly clay with flints, as well as some smaller deposits of head drift. The soils above the clay is generally fine silts and fine loams with subsoils which often are slowly permeable, causing problems of slight seasonal water logging. The geology forms a level to gently sloping plateau with an area of dry valleys in the north western corner, at Walderslade. It is within these dry valleys and other gentle undulations that the head drifts are found, and the soils in these areas tend to be shallow well drained calcareous and silty.

Views

1.9 Within Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs there are views across the fields, but these are limited where there are mature remnant orchard trees or blocks of woodland. Views are also limited along parts of the lanes, where the hedgerows are taller. Because the majority of trees and hedgerow species are broadleaved and the arable crops are seasonal, the area would appear more open in the winter. There are also longer views west of Stockbury, looking towards the Isle of Grain and the Medway Estuary. These views include large industrial features.



1. Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

1.10 The villages, farmsteads, recent settlements, industrial estate, County Show Ground and fragmented arable fields, paddocks, remnant orchards and small blocks of woodland create an incoherent pattern of elements within Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs. The condition of equestrian fields is variable, mainly due to the condition of boundaries, which sometimes feature barbed wire and scrubby hedges as well as post and rail and electric fences. The remnant orchards make the landscape look neglected. There are also some detractors within the area, though these mostly tend to be detracting locally, due to screening from vegetation. The detractors include dumped rubbish and caravans in fields, large scale farm and industrial sheds, the County Show Ground when in use, as well as a stretch of electricity pylons which cuts through the western part of the area. There is not a strong network of hedgerows and woodlands within the area and the intensity of land use is variable, with higher intensity areas where there are arable fields. The mature remnant orchards trees and woodlands are, however, of greater habitat value making the overall ecological integrity moderate. The cultural integrity of the area is variable. Tree cover is intermittent, comprising small to medium size blocks of woodland, with a good age structure, and mature specimens within the remnant cherry orchards. Field boundaries are formed by hedgerows and post and rail fencing, but there are gaps in the boundaries in places. The impact of recent built development within the area is moderate, since there are few recent buildings that are in keeping with the local vernacular tradition, which in combination with the tall electricity pylons slightly weakens the sense of place within the area.

Sensitivity

1.11 The sense of place within the area is moderate. This is due to the fragmented pattern of the landscape, which consists of several distinct features, such as the historic and ancient woodlands, the narrow and winding lanes, the historic settlements and buildings, and the tall and detracting electricity pylons, as well as some indistinct features such as the hedgerows, post and wire fences and more recent settlements and buildings. Despite the recent features found within the area, the overall continuity of the landscape is historic. Tree cover in Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs is intermittent and while the landform within the area is generally not a distinctive feature, it becomes apparent that the area is positioned on high ground where there are longer views out of the area. Visibility is therefore overall moderate.



1. Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Poor	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Interrupted	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES – RESTORE AND IMPROVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Dry Valleys and Downs
- Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Improve the condition of field boundaries, through the introduction of native hedgerows and by avoiding the use of barbed wire
- Conserve the historical buildings and features that remain, including the two Scheduled Monuments
- Restore and improve the rural setting to historical settlements such as Bredhurst and Stockbury villages through delivery of appropriate architectural and landscape design, increasing native tree cover and by discouraging flytipping
- Avoid further built development which is out of context in terms of materials and design
- Conserve the blocks of ancient woodland
- Restore and improve the woodlands within the area by improving management within historical coppice and introducing greater woodland structural diversity
- Improve, manage and enhance the remnant orchards
- Improve the management of fields and land generally by reducing over-grazing, removing rubbish and caravans and discouraging fly tipping
- Restore and improve the network of hedgerows, filling in gaps where there are no boundaries and improving the management generally



25 East Hill

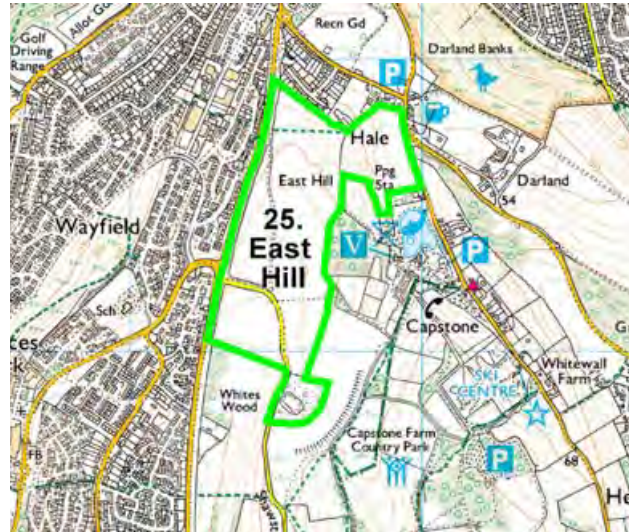
Landscape type: Rural fringe (T1)
 Sub-types: Rural fringe with urban/industrial influences (TIC)
 Forms part of Capstone Downs (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – south of Hale and west of Capstone
- Geology – Upper Chalk; pockets of clay with flint deposits
- Soils – exposed chalk and Grade 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – restricted – 1 no. east/west PROW to north; no north/south designated footpath links or access into area from dense urban area to west – complicated by topography and busy road
- Designations – ALLI; Country Park
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Large rolling arable fields with strong woodland edge to fields
- Close proximity to settlement and roads means that relative tranquillity interrupted in places by urban-rural fringe intrusions
- Inappropriately sited waste recycling site to south harms rural character and is strong detractor on surrounding local lanes; negative impacts include localised litter and fly-tipping
- Poor accessibility especially from densely populated urban areas to west



Analysis

Condition *Moderate*

Pattern of elements – Variable
 Detracting features – Some
 Visual Unity – Interrupted
 Ecological integrity – High
 Cultural integrity – Variable/Poor
 Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity *Moderate*

Distinctiveness – Distinct
 Continuity – Historic
 Sense of place – Moderate
 Landform – Apparent
 Tree cover – Intermittent
 Visibility – Moderate

Actions *Conserve and Create*

Issues

- Inappropriate siting of waste recycling plant in rural location impacts on local character; uses create neglected condition within surrounding lanes
- Loss of traditional field boundaries and roadside hedgerows
- Poor footpath network and weak pedestrian accessibility from urban areas
- Pressure for urban development extensions into countryside; leading to erosion of rural landscape character

Guidelines

- Seek to discourage fly-tipping on approach roads to tip and introduce more regular maintenance/clearance of rubbish
- Seek in long term plans for this area to relocate waste recycling plant to more appropriate location and restore landfill site as nature conservation and recreation facility
- Improve footpath and cycle network; note particularly need for improved accessibility from urban areas and safer and more accessible links across North Dane Way
- Resist development pressures from north and west and seek to reinforce and strengthen rural character – measures to include restoration of field and roadside hedgerow boundaries and review waste recycling plant location

24 Darland Banks

Landscape type: Chalk scarps and valleys (R2)
Sub-types: n/a
Forms part of Capstone Downs (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – north west/south east facing chalk ridge and valley to south side of Gillingham; stretches to south as far as Elm Court
- Geology – Upper Chalk; Head brickearth, Head and Clay with flint deposits
- Soils – exposed chalk and Grade 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – good east/west footpath links through public space; poor north/south links – fragmented by roads, development and landform; dense urban area at Luton truncates north west links through to Great Lines Park and River Medway; potential to strengthen green links through Gillingham to golf course and Grange Farm/Medway marshes
- Designations – ALLI; Protected open space; SNCI/ LNR; Ancient woodland; Rural lane
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Series of parallel narrow ridges and dry valleys creates prominent, distinctive landscape
- Land cover of rare chalk grassland, deciduous woodland and arable farmland; unified and diverse landscape with high biodiversity value; scrub invasion to chalk slopes
- Medium to large arable field network with blocks of remnant ancient woodland
- Good east-west pedestrian accessibility between urban areas at Luton and Hempstead/Wigmore; area has high recreational value

- Strong uninterrupted views of open countryside looking south from Darland Banks
- Tranquil rural lane towards Spekes Bottom and Hempstead in south east
- Urban intrusion to north west with amenity uses and built development detracts from tranquil character
- Includes narrow strip of land to south of Ski Centre with particularly strong links across to adjacent Hempstead Fringe Character Area (29)

Analysis

Condition *Moderate*

Pattern of elements – Variable

Detracting features – Some

Visual Unity – Interrupted

Ecological integrity – High

Cultural integrity – Good/Variable

Functional integrity – High

Sensitivity *High*

Distinctiveness – Distinct

Continuity – Historic

Sense of place – Strong

Landform – Dominant

Tree cover – Intermittent

Visibility – Moderate

Actions *Conserve and Restore*



Issues

- Encroaching urban elements, hard edges and land uses
- Loss of unimproved chalk grassland to agricultural use and scrub invasion
- Loss of hedges, trees and woodland to arable uses
- Trend towards arable cultivation / loss of pasture
- Pressure for infill development (housing, retail and formal amenity facilities) from urban areas to east and west
- Trend to increase of equine management uses at southern end (area adjacent to Hempstead Fringe Character Area).

Guidelines

- Conserve and manage remnant chalk grassland habitats and woodlands
- Re-establish chalk grassland on steeper slopes
- Resist development that detracts from the distinctive character of the area
- Promote woodland planting (in character with existing) to screen adverse impacts at urban edges, landfill/waste recycling site, amenity and other sites with detracting urban-rural fringe uses;
- Encourage reversion of arable to pasture
- Promote improved woodland management; strengthen hedgerow planting and biodiversity value
- Manage urban fringe activities – introduce controls on signage, fly-tipping and ensure regular litter collections
- Consider Green Spaces/KWT Darland Banks management plan in any future plans for this area
- Note guidance for adjacent character area (29) at southern end.



Historic Note

- This area contains the northern end of the Chatham ring fortress. These forts were created in the late 19th century and took the form of infantry redoubts.



26 Capstone Farm

Landscape type: Rural fringe (T1)
Sub-types: Rural fringe with amenity influences (T1D)
Forms part of Capstone Downs (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – Central part of Capstone valley between Princes Park and Hempstead; due south side of Gillingham
- Geology – Upper Chalk; Head and Clay with flint deposits
- Soils – Grade 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – good footpath network; bridleway; publicly accessible area
- Designations – ALLI; Designated Country Park
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Boundary of character area broadly coterminous with country park boundary (excludes landfill site area to west, fields immediately to south of Ski Centre; includes pumping station to north east)
- Country Park is main activity hub at centre of Capstone Valley and a significant visitor destination within Medway and surrounding area
- Principal amenity uses to north – car park, fishing lake, visitor centre, café; ski centre with parking to south west – intensification of uses and landscape treatment gives more highly managed and controlled feel
- Southern and western fringes – farmed patchwork of fields, hedgerows, shelter belts and woodland – framed views to south of more open large arable fields – provides a more rural and tranquil feel to these areas

- Steep valley slopes form backdrop to valley views, often partially cloaked in woodland and topped by lines of houses silhouetted against skyline
- Landfill site to west has adverse influence on landscape character and amenity value of area
- Good footpath network and bridleway – provides opportunity for improved links into surrounding areas

Analysis

Condition *Moderate*

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Some
Visual Unity – Interrupted
Ecological integrity – High
Cultural integrity – Good/Variable
Functional integrity – High

Sensitivity *Moderate*

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Strong
Landform – Apparent
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – Moderate

Actions *Conserve and Create*



Issues

- Medway's future plans for development of country park facility
- Managing adverse landscape character impacts of ski centre and landfill site (see issues and guidelines under East Hill landscape character area)
- Development pressure from surrounding urban areas
- Need to strengthen and reinforce rural character and resist urban fringe pressures
- Need to strengthen and improve biodiversity opportunities
- The need for improved cycle and pedestrian links from urban areas into countryside

Guidelines

- Maximise opportunity for Country Park as fully sustainable and multi-functional community facility – offering goods and services (including biodiversity, health, recreation, education, farming, etc.) for the widest possible range of end users
- Plans for Country Park improvements should seek to embed planned uses more firmly within rural and agricultural character of surrounding area and avoid tendencies towards over-controlled and over-managed amenity landscape
- Seek to manage adverse impacts of Ski Centre on landscape character and ensure tight controls over future development plans
- Resist proposals for further built development that does not respect intrinsically rural character of area
- Seek to improve biodiversity opportunities – restore chalk grassland and control scrub invasion; plant more woodland and hedgerows
- Promote woodland planting (in character with existing forms and species mixes) to screen landfill operations, amenity and other rural fringe uses with adverse visual and landscape character impacts
- Seek to improve accessibility and connections between urban areas and wider countryside
- Manage urban fringe activities – including controls on signage, fly-tipping and regular litter collections



27 Sharstead Farm

Landscape type: Chalk scarps and valleys (R2)
 Sub-types: n/a
 Forms part of Capstone Downs (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – due east of Lordswood and west of Elm Court open farmed plateau
- Geology – Upper Chalk; Head and Clay with flint deposits
- Soils – Grade 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – good footpath network – links to country park and across plateau towards Wigmore
- Designations – ALLI; Protected open space; Proposed community woodland; Proposed LNR; Ancient woodland
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Distinctive farmed dry chalk valley; traditional irregularly shaped field pattern; diverse textures
- Strong sense of enclosure and rural tranquility; wooded ridges



- Ancient woodland block to south; largely intact hedgerow network; shaws and shaves
- Distinctive traditional farm settlement to west
- Good footpath links

Analysis

Condition **Good**

Pattern of elements – Coherent
 Detracting features – Few
 Visual Unity – Intact
 Ecological integrity – High
 Cultural integrity – Good
 Functional integrity – High

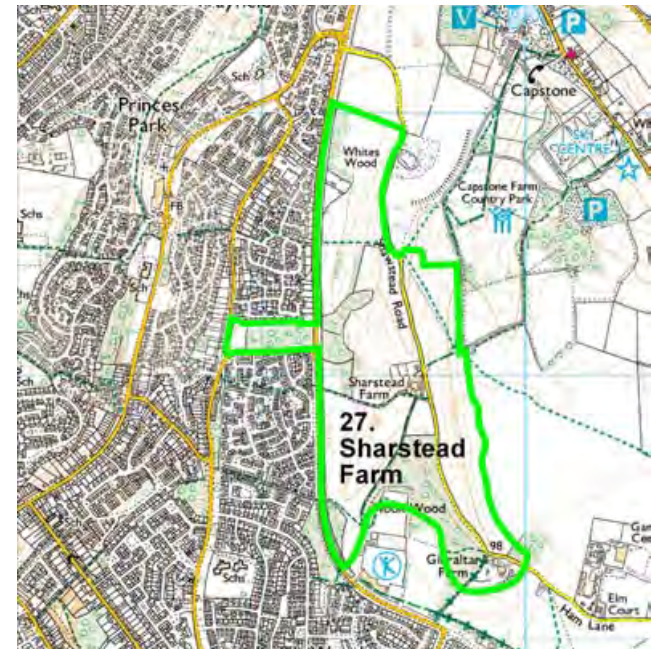
Sensitivity **High**

Distinctiveness – Very Distinct
 Continuity – Historic
 Sense of place – Strong
 Landform – Dominant
 Tree cover – Intermittent
 Visibility – Moderate

Actions **Conserve**

Issues

- Development pressure from surrounding urban areas
- Need to retain rural character and resist urban fringe pressures and activities
- Potential route for new cycle link to North Downs



Guidelines

- Resist proposals for any built development that does not fully respect or harms rural character of area
- Seek to improve biodiversity – restore chalk grassland where opportunity arises; strengthen woodland and hedgerow planting; introduce wide field margins (includes areas in Environmental Stewardship – encourage further agri-environment schemes)
- Encourage reversion of arable to pasture
- Manage urban fringe activities and seek to control traffic speeds – including controls on signage, fly-tipping and regular litter collections to local lanes
- Resist trend towards arable cultivation / loss of pasture

28 Elm Court

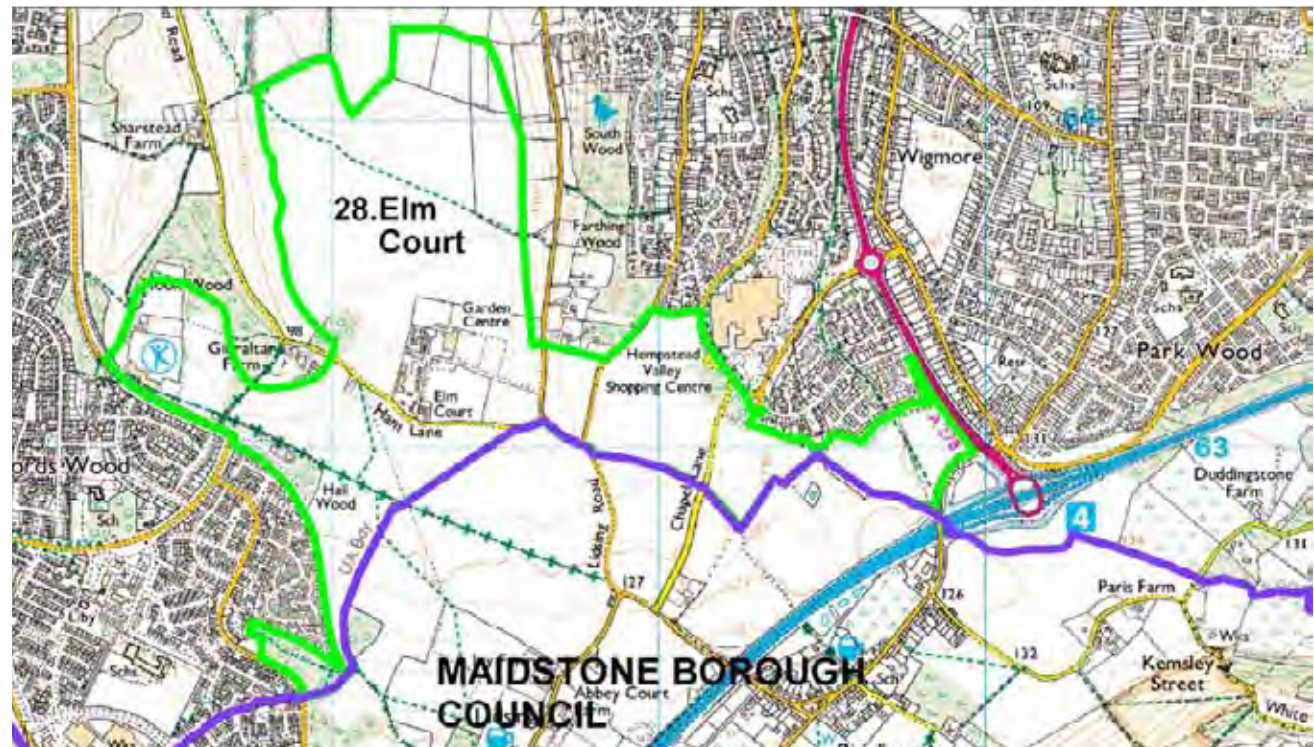
Landscape type: Flat or undulating wooded farmland (R7)
Sub-types: Arable farmland with woodland blocks (R7a)
Forms part of Capstone Downs (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – central plateau with dry valleys to west and east and country park to north
- Geology – Upper Chalk; Clay with flint deposits
- Soils – Grade 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – complex network of country lanes; north-south footpath links poor; some good east-west links including bridleway
- Designations – ALLI; Protected open space; Ancient woodland; Employment area; Proposed playing field; Rural lane
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Gently undulating open farmed arable plateau rising in south towards North Downs
- Indistinct field pattern with weak hedgerow structure
- Lack of landform containment gives large scale landscape – flattening and increasingly denuded towards M2 motorway
- Elm Court Industrial Estate with conifer boundary introduces discordant urban elements into rural landscape
- Leisure Centre and playing fields to western corner provides amenity feature at boundary



Analysis

Condition **Poor**

Pattern of elements – Coherent

Detracting features – Some

Visual Unity – Interrupted

Ecological integrity – Poor

Cultural integrity – Poor

Functional integrity – Poor

Sensitivity **High**

Distinctiveness – Indistinct

Continuity – Historic/Recent

Sense of place – Weak

Landform – Apparent

Tree cover – Open

Visibility – High

Actions **Restore**

Issues

- Elm Court complex – adverse impact
- Development, transport and urban fringe pressures
- Improvements to north-south accessibility
- Historic field boundaries eroded

Guidelines

- Resist proposals for new development that does not fully respect or is likely to harm rural character of area
- Seek to improve biodiversity and strengthen landscape structure; break up monotony of open farmland with new woodland and hedgerow planting; wide field margins
- Manage urban fringe activities and seek to control traffic speeds – including controls on signage, fly-tipping and regular litter collections to local lanes
- Introduce stronger cycleway and pedestrian links to south



29 Hempstead Fringe

Landscape type: Rural fringe (T1)
 Sub-types: Rural fringe farmland (T1a)
 Forms part of Capstone Downs (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – west of Hempstead and south of Capstone
- Geology – Upper Chalk; Clay with flint deposits
- Soils – Grade 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – poor – busy narrow north/south country lane but no north-south footpath; good east-west link into Hempstead at South Wood; includes bridleway
- Designations – ALLI; SNCI/LNR; Ancient woodland
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Steep sided chalk valley (see Darland Banks character area) but with rural fringe intrusions from horse grazed pasture and areas of degraded land
- Small scale field pattern with fencing in poor repair and other unsightly features (shacks, rubber tyres etc)
- Ancient woodland to eastern slopes at South Wood and Farthing Wood provides valuable access, recreation and biodiversity opportunities
- Busy narrow lane to west creates harsh, discordant environment; severs connectivity and restricts opportunity for north/south pedestrian/cycle links; severely restricted car parking and waiting opportunities

Analysis



Condition *Moderate*

Pattern of elements – Variable
 Detracting features – Some
 Visual Unity – Interrupted
 Ecological integrity – Moderate
 Cultural integrity – Variable
 Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity *High*

Distinctiveness – Distinct
 Continuity – Historic/Recent
 Sense of place – Moderate
 Landform – Dominant
 Tree cover – Intermittent
 Visibility – Moderate

Actions *Conserve and Restore*
Issues



- Negative impacts of equine related activities and land management
- Poor quality structures and buildings; degraded land condition
- Inappropriate and insensitive boundary treatments
- Poor north/south accessibility; negative impact of busy narrow lane to west with severed east/west connections and poor parking/waiting/passing provision

Guidelines

- Seek to restore more rural character to this dry valley
- Manage and seek to mitigate against adverse impacts from equine related activities; seek to improve condition and upkeep of boundary treatments; consider the design and impact of existing and new structures; resist the intrusion of unsightly features (including piles of car tyres)
- Seek to improve pedestrian access links with larger parking/resting/waiting areas for recreational users along Capstone Lane; review opportunities to control road traffic speeds
- Resist field boundary division (especially to scarp slopes) with loss of openness/distinctiveness of natural landscape

General Notes

- Condition varies across this area but is particularly poor alongside road on valley floor; elsewhere on slopes and particularly within woodland is in more moderate condition.