

Volume 1 *Main Document*

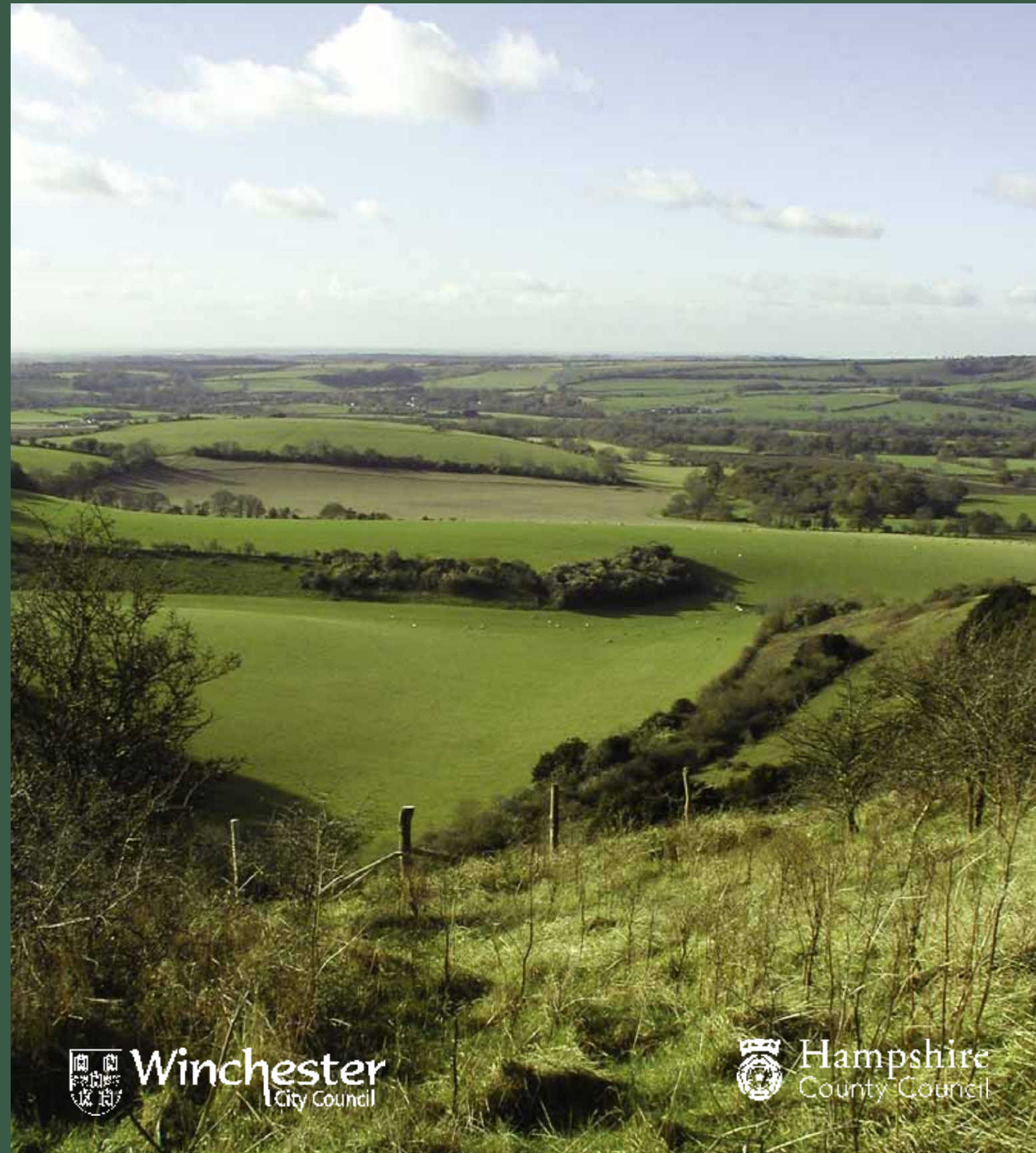
# *Landscape Character Assessment*

W I N C H E S T E R   D I S T R I C T

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*Landscape Character Assessment*

Volume 1 *Main Document*



M A R C H   2 0 0 4

# *Main Document*

W I N C H E S T E R   D I S T R I C T

## *Landscape Character Assessment*

VOLUME 1



M A R C H   2 0 0 4



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# Chapter One | INTRODUCTION

## 1.0 Introduction

In August 2000, Winchester City Council carried out a pilot study and policy review to assess the need to revise the Council's landscape designations and Local Plan policy, in line with the Countryside Agency's Interim Landscape Character Assessment Guidance (1999) and the Hampshire County Structure Plan Review (2000). This highlighted the need for an assessment to be carried out of the whole district, to guide Local Plan policy and to replace the 'Areas of Special Landscape Quality' (ASLQ) designations. A full Landscape Character Assessment of the District was therefore initiated in August 2001 by Winchester City Council, together with ecological consultants Ecological Planning and Research and historic landscape consultants, Oxford Archaeology. The study was also guided and part-funded by Hampshire County Council Environment Group.

The need for a Landscape Character Assessment reflects the importance of Winchester's landscape both locally and nationally, and the pressures that are being placed upon it. A large part of Winchester District is designated as an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' and proposals are being discussed for designating an extended area as the South Downs National Park. Development pressures in Hampshire, meanwhile, are great, resulting in the need for greenfield Major Development Areas, for example, as well as threatening piecemeal erosion of the landscape character surrounding settlements. It is therefore hoped that this document can help to protect and enhance the strong identity of Winchester's landscape, whilst accommodating necessary development and change.

## 1.1 Policy Background

Since the mid-1990s there has been a shift away from policies that protect designated areas towards an emphasis on maintaining and enhancing the distinctive character of the whole countryside. This has been reflected in Government planning policy guidance and supported by recent work by bodies such as English Nature, English Heritage and the Countryside Agency.

The importance of enriching the quality and character of all of the landscape, not just designated areas, is promoted by PPG7, *The Countryside: Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development* (DoE, 1997). It recommends "a systematic assessment of landscape character and non-statutory rural strategies" (para 1.14) to inform the preparation of development plans. Similarly, PPG1, *General Policy and Principles* (DoE, 1997) states that "policies should be based on a proper assessment of the character of

the surrounding built and natural environment and should take account of the defining characteristics of each local area." In addition, PPG15 *Planning and the Historic Environment* (DoE & DoNH, 1994) emphasises the importance of protecting elements of our cultural heritage, which sustains "the sense of local distinctiveness which is so important an aspect of the character and appearance of our towns, villages and countryside," noting that much of the value of the countryside "lies in its complexity, regional diversity and local distinctiveness."

In 1996 the Countryside Agency (formerly the Countryside Commission) launched its 'Countryside Character Initiative', producing the 'Character of England' map which subdivides the country into 159 Landscape Character Areas. This was followed in 1999 by the publication of detailed descriptions of the areas and the influences determining their character and the pressures for change. This initiative aims to maintain and enhance local distinctiveness by providing a framework for more detailed assessments at county and district level. To provide information on methods and techniques on Landscape Character Assessments, the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage have also produced *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance* (2002), preceded by 'Interim' Guidance' in 1999. These have provided the basis for the methodology of this assessment (see Section 1.3 and Appendix One for further details).

This change in approach to landscape policy has been reflected in the Hampshire County Structure Plan (Review) (HCC, 2000). Landscape character assessment has formed an integral part of the review and is fundamental to the formation of policy guidance. Unlike the 1994 Structure Plan, the new Structure Plan no longer has policies that use local landscape designations, such as Areas of Special Landscape Quality (ASLQs). Policies refer to the need to protect landscape character and respect sense of place, scenic quality, sense of remoteness, historic landscapes, and the setting of settlements. In particular, Policy E6 covers landscape character, stating that:

*"To ensure that development maintains and enhances areas of distinctive landscape character, local planning policies will pay particular regard to:*

- *the need to respect scenic quality, sense of remoteness and historic landscapes*
- *the sense of place, including the local character of buildings and settlements; and*
- *the setting of settlements;*

*in the whole countryside."*



To support this approach to policy, Hampshire County Council has produced a Landscape Character Assessment of the County, *The Hampshire Landscape: A Strategy for the Future* (HCC, 2000). This supports and complements the Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan (Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership, 1998). The Strategy describes and maps 11 'Character Areas', based on those identified by the 'Character of England' map, as well as mapping 20 different 'Landscape Types,' based on 'The Hampshire Landscape' (HCC, 1993). By using such an approach, the Strategy is able to provide guidelines for the protection and management of the landscape, according to the character of different areas of the County.

Hampshire County Council has also produced the *Hampshire Historic Landscape Assessment*, an analysis of the field patterns, woodlands and other historic land uses visible in the present-day landscape. This subdivides the entire landscape of the district into a series of Landscape Types, thus highlighting important historic landscape features and patterns.

In response to the recommended approach to landscape character in PPG7 and the Hampshire County Structure Plan (Review), Winchester City Council carried out a review of its landscape policies in 2000. It concluded that ASLQs should be replaced by a landscape character assessment of the District accompanied by an appropriate policy in the Local Plan Review to protect and enhance landscape character. Although a Landscape Assessment of the District had been undertaken in 1995, this excluded the large area falling within the East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It also focussed on the ASLQs rather than local landscape character for the whole District. There was therefore a need to undertake a new character-based assessment that could also take advantage of the new guidance produced by the Countryside Agency.

To support this change in approach an amended landscape policy, Proposal C6, for the Winchester District Local Plan Review Deposit 2001 was agreed. This policy will replace Proposal C7 of the Winchester District Local Plan (1998) which is concerned with the protection of ASLQs. Instead, Proposal C6 focuses on the need to protect the Key Characteristics of each Landscape Character Area, and to be consistent with the Landscape and Built Form Strategies, as detailed in an Appendix to the Plan. This Landscape Character Assessment provides additional information on these Key Characteristics and Strategies and has been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Assessment

The aims of this assessment are to enable the planning system to help conserve, restore and enhance the character of the District's landscape and the settings of its settlements. It also aims to highlight trends and issues that are threatening the character of the landscape, and to provide strategies for improvements and land management.

In particular, its main objectives are:

- To outline how the landscape of the District has evolved, in terms of physical forces and human influences;
- To classify the landscape of the District into distinct 'Landscape Types' summarising the characteristics of the landscape and the key issues affecting each type;
- To classify the settlements of the District into distinct 'Settlement Types' summarising the characteristics of their form and building types and their setting within the landscape;
- To map and describe the current landscape of the District into distinct 'Landscape Character Areas', identifying their key characteristics for incorporation into the Winchester District Local Plan Review;
- To refine the *Hampshire Historic Landscape Assessment* and map and describe 'Historic Landscape Character Areas'
- To clarify and explain the evidence for time-depth within the landscape and the process of historic change.
- To identify changes taking place in the landscape and anticipated threats.
- To suggest strategies for the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and built form for each Landscape Character Area, for incorporation into the Winchester District Local Plan Review;
- To characterise the historic townscape of Alresford, Bishops Waltham, Wickham and Denmead

## 1.3 Approach and Methodology

The landscape character assessment uses a systematic approach in line with the latest Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage guidance (1999,2002). This methodology is detailed in Appendix One.

The main stages are:

- Desk-based familiarisation of the District, including a review of relevant reports, data and mapped information and use of map overlays to assist in the identification of 'landscape types'.
- Predominantly desk-based assessment of the historic landscape character of the District by consultants, Oxford Archaeology, providing maps and descriptions of 69 'historic landscape types' and 19 'historic landscape character areas.'
- Field surveys to test and refine the draft 'landscape types' and inform the mapping of draft 'landscape character areas.'
- Field surveys to test and refine the draft landscape character areas and inform written descriptions of their character to identify aesthetic and perceptual qualities which are unlikely to be evident from desk information and to identify the current condition of landscape elements.

- Assessments of areas of ecological importance and vulnerability by consultants, Ecological Planning and Research.
- Community participation to draw upon local knowledge and perceptions of the landscape and the setting of settlements.
- Report preparation, including the provision of strategies for the conservation and enhancement of the character of landscape and built form and guidance on how to achieve them.

#### **1.4 Statement of Public Consultation**

The Landscape Character Assessment has been the subject of formal and informal consultations carried out by the City Council since July 2002. Details of the consultations and stakeholder workshop are described in Appendix 1 of the Landscape Character Assessment and reports on the progress of this work were presented to the relevant Council Committee at the appropriate time.

The draft Landscape Character Assessment was published on 9th May 2003 with a six week period of consultation that concluded on the 23rd June 2003. The 'Key Characteristics' and 'Landscape and Built Form Strategies' were appended to the Revised Deposit Local Plan Review and were therefore subject to formal consultation as part of the Local Plan process. During this period the council sought the views of Parish Councils, WCC Councillors, GOSE, Neighbouring Authorities and the Winchester Landscape Alliance, to whom copies of the Landscape Character Assessment were sent. In addition Hampshire County Council, National bodies, other Hampshire bodies and Local Organisations were sent copies of the Revised Deposit Local Plan Background Documents CD, including the Landscape Assessment. All those on the Local Plan Newsletter mailing list (nearly 3,000) were informed of the publication of the Landscape Character Assessment through the April 2003 Newsletter and notified that comments were to be invited.

In response to the consultation, the City Council received two representations relating to the Landscape Character Assessment and a number of representations relating to Appendix 2 of the Local Plan (containing extracts from the Landscape Character Assessment). A detailed summary of the responses and the changes made as a result can be found on the City Council web site and within Committee report WDLP 37 dated 20th November 2003.

On 7th January 2004 the Council adopted the Landscape Character Assessment as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Winchester District Local Plan 1998 (Proposals C.1, C.2, C.7, EN.5, EN.7, EN.10) at a meeting of the full Council, and as a background document to the Revised Deposit Winchester District Local Plan.

#### **1.5 Format of the Assessment**

This report consists of five sections, as follows:

##### *Chapter 1: Introduction*

##### *Chapter 2: Formative Influences on the Winchester Landscape:*

This section describes the principal forces that have shaped the landscape in the District. This includes descriptions and mapping of the physical characteristics of the District, such as its geology, drainage, and landform, as well as its historic and cultural developments

##### *Chapter 3: Landscape and Settlement Types: Descriptions, Boundaries and Issues*

This section identifies and describes the characteristics of the landscape and settlement types that can be found throughout the District. It also describes issues that particularly affect each landscape type.

##### *Chapter 4: Landscape Character Areas: Descriptions, Boundaries and Strategies*

This section divides the landscape into different local 'Landscape Character Areas' and highlights the key characteristics of the landscapes and settlements in each area, as well as providing a more detailed description of the landscape and settlement character and their formative influences. It also recommends strategies for the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and built form of each character area.

##### *Chapter 5: Managing Change in the Landscape:*

This section outlines the key factors that pose a threat to the District's landscape and provides guidelines for achieving the strategies that have been set out in Chapter Four.

In addition to the main report there are Appendices with supplementary information:

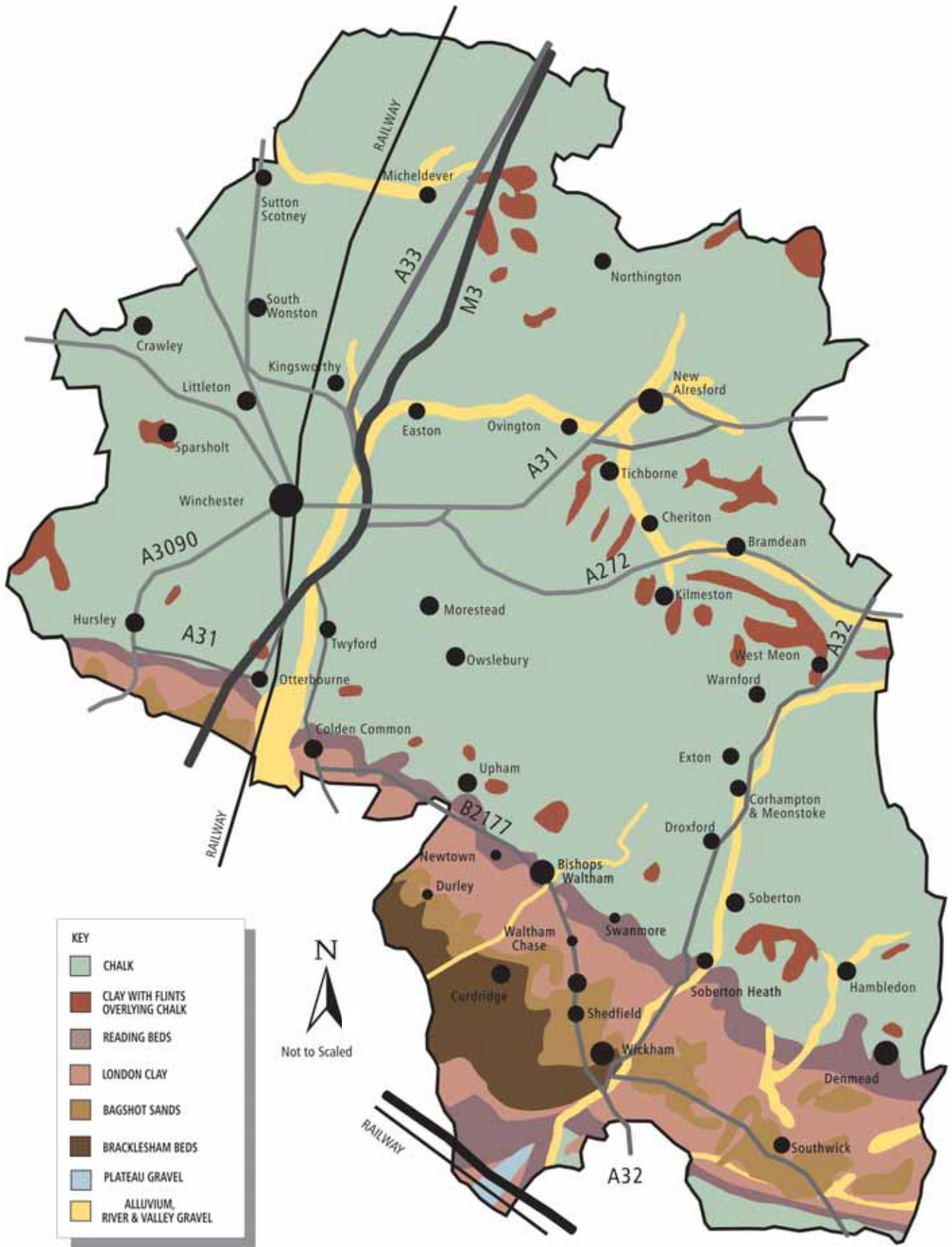
*Appendix One: Methodology*

*Appendix Two: Sample Landscape Type Survey Sheets*

*Appendix Four: Historical Landscape Assessment*

*Appendix Five: Ecological Assessment*

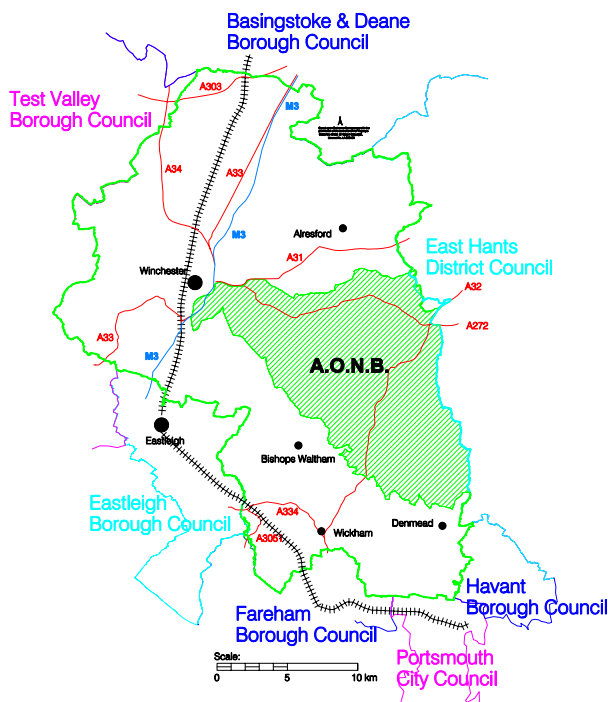
Figure 2.2 Simplified Geology of the Winchester District





## 2.0 Introduction

Winchester District lies centrally within Hampshire, extending towards Basingstoke in the north and Portsmouth in the south (see Fig 2.1). It is a predominantly rural district, covering over 250 square miles of diverse countryside, including chalk downs, large arable fields, extensive woodland, river valleys, heath remnants, historic parks and clay lowland pastures. The District also contains over 50 rural settlements as well as the city of Winchester itself. These settlements also tend to have strong, distinctive characters, based on their landscape setting, form and vernacular architecture and materials, which include flint, thatch, timber frame, brick and clay tiles.



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Figure 2.1 Winchester District Council Context

According to the Countryside Agency's 'Character of England' map, the landscape of the District can be broadly divided into three distinct areas. The majority of the District is strongly influenced by the underlying chalk, giving rise to two different areas of downland. The 'Hampshire Downs' landscape character area, lying to the north and east of Winchester is a broad belt of strongly rolling chalk downs with scarps, hilltops and valleys, with an overall exposed character. The 'South Downs' landscape character area, running through the centre of the District is associated with

the east-west chalk ridge running towards Eastbourne. This is a more elevated landscape, combining rolling arable fields interspersed with scattered settlements, parkland and woodlands. To the south of the district meanwhile, the varied clays and gravels of the 'South Hampshire Basin' provide a contrastingly diverse enclosed and small-scale landscape, consisting of lower lying mixed farmland and woodland.

This chapter gives a broad description of the physical and human influences that have contributed to these variations in the District's landscape.

## 2.1 Physical Influences

### 2.1.1 Geology

The different strata of bedrock underlying the District have had an important influence on the evolution of the indigenous vegetation and subsequent agricultural use. See Fig 2.2 for a simplified map of the geology of the Winchester District. The geology of the District has also influenced where settlements have evolved and the types of building materials used. The geological range is sedimentary and the deposits are generally younger towards the south of the District.

The northern part of the District is dominated by the chalk series of the Cretaceous period and forms part of the Hampshire Downlands. Upper Chalk is the youngest of the series and is the most common outcrop. Middle and Lower Chalk emerge to the south east of Winchester, through St Catherine's Hill, Magdalen Hill and towards Farley Down. The other main area of Middle and Lower Chalk occurs to the east of the District around Meonstoke, Warnford and Old Winchester Hill. Many areas of the chalk are thinly covered by clay.

Some significant areas of superficial deposits mask the solid geology. In particular, clay-with-flints can be found overlying the chalk in some areas. This is a product of the decomposition of the chalk and the disintegration of overlying Eocene deposits. These can be found in a belt from West Stratton in the north, south through the Upper Itchen Valley, Tichbourne, Cheriton, Hinton Ampner and West Meon.

In the Lower Hampshire Basin, to the south of the District, the geological structure is a combination of sands, silts and clay deposits of the Tertiary period and form the Reading Beds, London Clay, Bagshot Sands and Bracklesham Beds. Portsdown Hill to the far south however, represents an outcrop of Upper Chalk and the northern part of the sandy clay trench. Further areas of clay-with-flint deposits can be found in the chalk running parallel to the Reading Beds.



### 2.1.2 Soils and Agricultural Land Quality

The existing geological materials influence the formation and characteristics of the main soil types within the District, which in turn influence the capability of the land to support agriculture and woodland. The soils on chalk tend to be shallow and well drained and are generally Grade 3 agricultural land. Within these general soil characteristics, the three different chalk series have different soil types. Upper Chalk has Brown Rendzina soil that is often intensively farmed, while Middle Chalk has Grey Rendzinas, and Lower Chalk has Brown Calcareous Earth.

Where drift deposits accumulate over chalk, such as the areas of clay-with-flints, the soil type is Brown Earths. Here the deeper soils are more fertile and tend to give rise to woodland, especially oak woods.

To the south of the District there are areas of Grade 2 agricultural land which generally coincide with areas of Bagshot Sands, giving rise to areas of fertile horticultural land. Generally however the superficial sands and gravels over Tertiary Clay result in surface water gleys varying in fertility, reducing agricultural capacity to Grade 4 and 5, and resulting in some seasonal waterlogging. Landscape characteristics of these areas vary but typically include woodland and wet lowland heath. Where river valleys intercept the District, alkaline, earthy peat soils prevail.

### 2.1.3 Landform and Hydrology

The topography of the district has been directly influenced by the resistance of the underlying geology and by climatic change. The resultant landform and drainage pattern are illustrated in *Fig 2.3* and *Fig 2.4* respectively.

Although the ice advances during the glacial periods of the Ice Age never reached the southern part of the country, the severe climates meant that most of the ground in this region was permanently frozen. Glacial material (loess) from the north was blown over much of the chalk in the region. As the climate warmed during the interglacial periods, large amounts of water were released from the previously frozen ground. Subsequent erosion dramatically sculpted the topography of the chalk upland plateau, to produce the characteristic rolling downland. Steep valleys and scarp hangers were formed, and the erosion of the loess created dry valleys.

The porous nature of chalk results in a landscape that has very little surface water, although it has important water storing qualities. There are three principal rivers within the district, the Dever, the Itchen and the Meon. These all rise in the chalk uplands and eventually flow south, their valleys dissecting the chalk plateau, before entering the clay lowland area and eventually the Solent. The River Itchen and its tributaries; the Candover Stream, the River Arle and the Cheriton Stream; is the most dominant river system in the District, as well as the most populated, although the Meon valley has also had an important

impact on the topography to the east of the District. The Hamble and Wallington and their tributaries are also important in the south of the District.

The characteristic hard, alkaline, clear water of the streams results from the slow dissolution of the chalk. It provides an important source of drinking water as well as supporting fishing and watercress farms, particularly in the upper reaches. The floodplains of loamy alluvium, peat and laminated gravel support a mosaic of habitats, including water meadows, unimproved grassland, fen carr and wet woodland.

Large amounts of water also collect in underground aquifers and springs emerge where the chalk meets an impervious layer of clay. These feed the lowland rivers such as the Hamble and settlements, such as Bishop's Waltham, have arisen around such spring line locations. Boreholes also provide domestic and commercial water supplies for much of south Hampshire. High demand and prolonged dry seasons have led to a lowering of the water table, causing many springs to dry up.

### 2.1.4 Climate

Given its location near the south coast of England, maritime influences have contributed to the District's temperate climate. Consequently a wide range of temperate plants are able to grow in the area. Extreme weather conditions are rare, but have been destructive in the past. The gales of 1987 and 1990 for example, destroyed a substantial amount of tree cover, although much of this was over-mature or poorly developed, and highlighted poor management.

A series of microclimates can be found throughout the area, with the elevated areas of the chalk downlands to the north being exposed and often windy due to their topography and lack of hedgerow and tree cover. This contributes to the problem of soil erosion. To the south of the District however, where clay soils prevail, additional tree cover and lower altitudes provide a more sheltered microclimate, making such areas more suitable for less hardy crops and pasture.

### 2.1.5 Ecology and Vegetation

The indigenous vegetation and associated habitats of the District have evolved since the last Ice Age, having been influenced by soils, aspect and changing climate. Whilst the chalk downs have pockets of important species-rich calcareous grassland, areas where clay predominates are more likely to be wooded. The clear spring water of the rivers provides another important habitat, together with associated pasture and wet woodland. All of these important ecological features have been threatened over recent centuries by development, agriculture and forestry. Woodland has been cleared to create arable and pasture fields for example and open downland grazing has been converted to arable cultivation.

In response to these threats, many areas of the District's landscape have now been recognised through international, national or local designations, including a candidate Special Area of Conservation,

Figure 2.3 Topography of the Winchester District

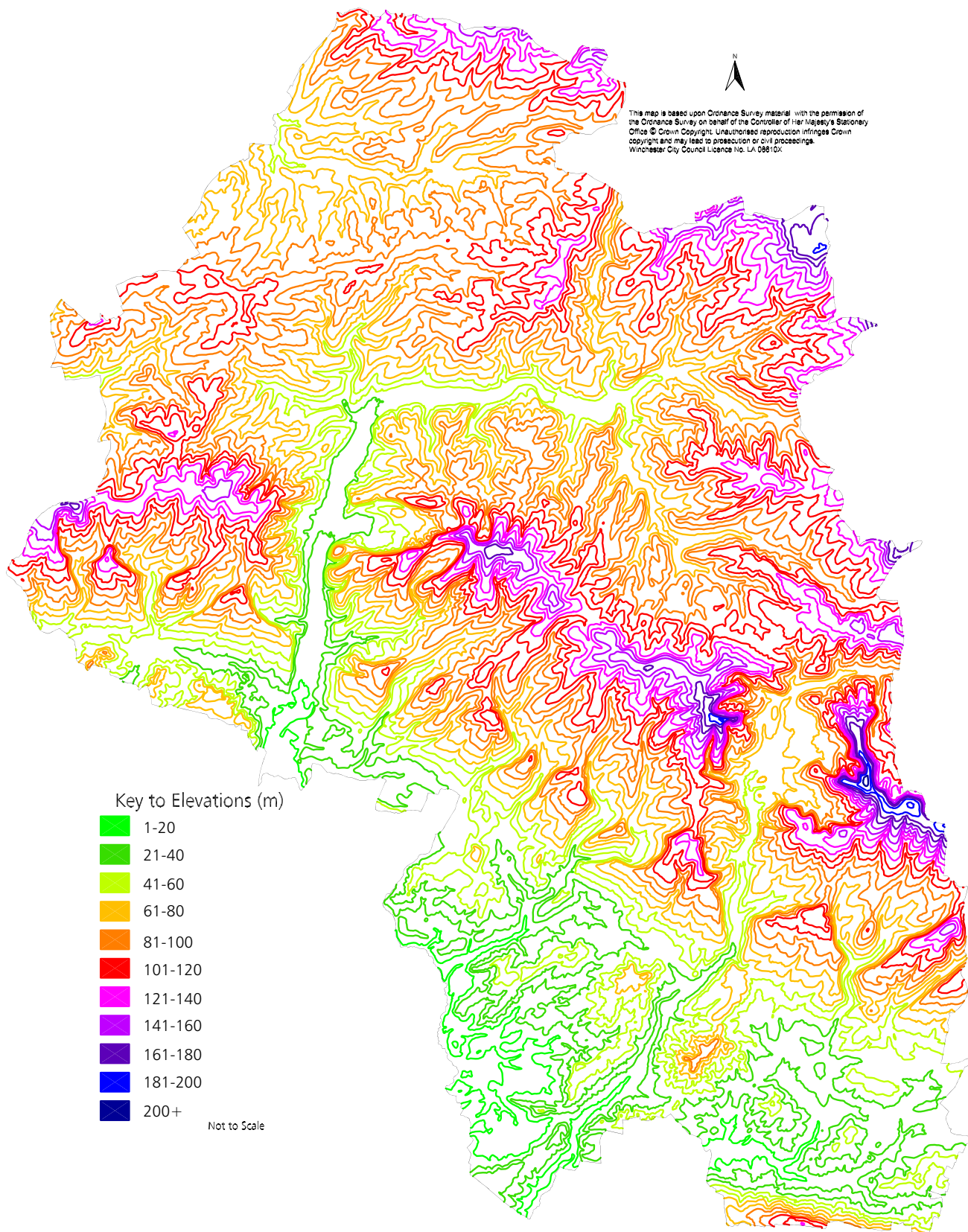
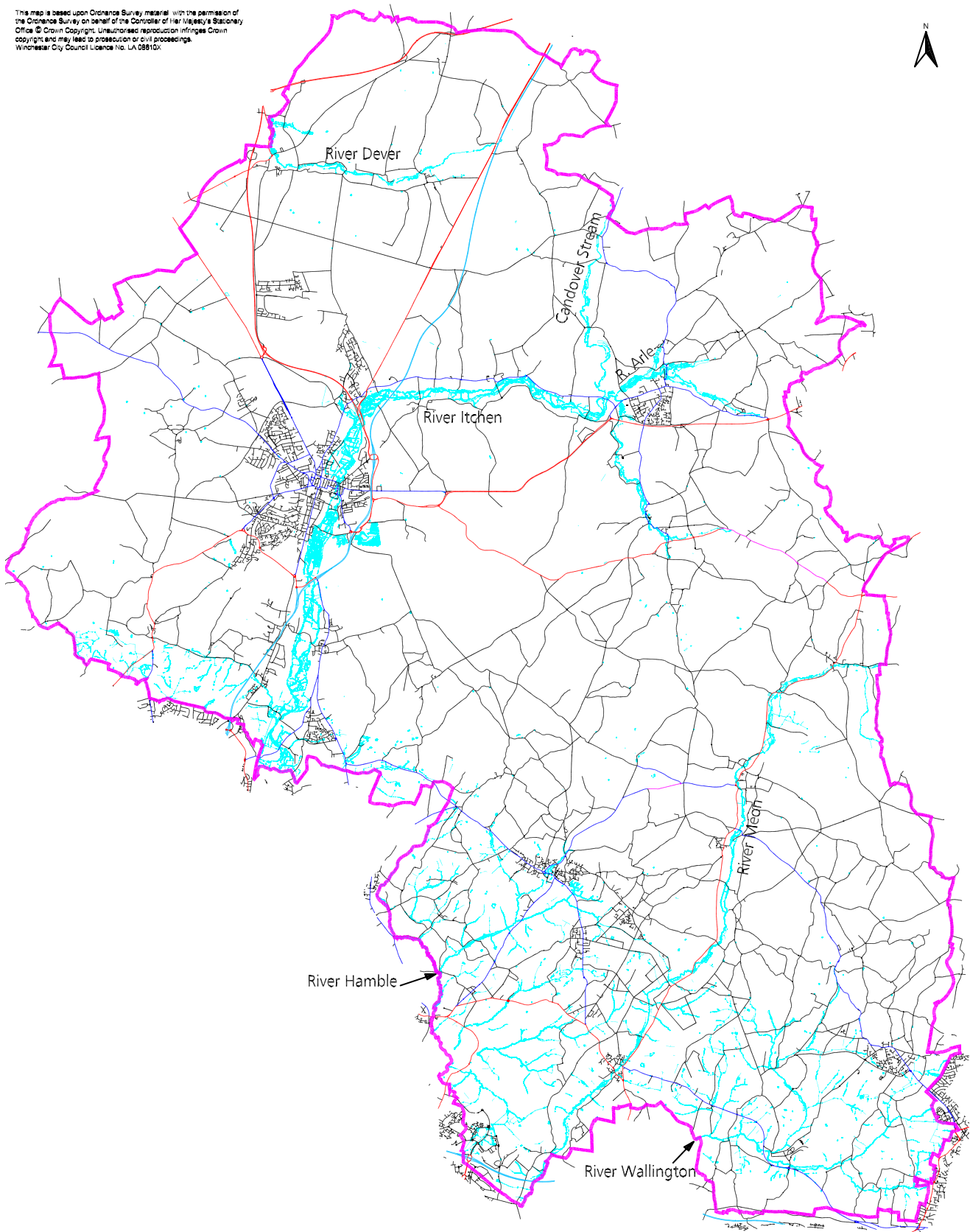


Figure 2.4 Hydrology of the Winchester District

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Environmentally Sensitive Areas, National Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and Local Nature Reserves. These designations are explained in Section 2.3.

An ecological input to the Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment has been provided by consultants, Ecological Planning and Research. This gives detailed listings of ecological designations for each Landscape Character Area (see Appendix Four). The consultants also highlighted ecological change and threats, and suggested ecological strategies for each area. This information is provided within the individual Landscape Character Area descriptions (see Chapter 4).

### 2.1.6 Woodland

Trees first colonised Hampshire about 12,000 years ago. This natural forest survives only in very small pockets where it has always been too difficult to farm, such as steep slopes. This primary woodland is very rare, but secondary ancient woodland which developed before 1700 AD on previously cleared land, occurs more frequently (see Fig 2.5). Unfortunately ancient woodland has been lost at an alarming rate over the past century due to both clearance and neglect. The future of ancient woodland is dependant on good husbandry, in particular the Hampshire tradition of coppicing most species, which ensures a diverse ground flora.

The Winchester District is particularly fortunate in having 16% woodland cover, more than double the national average, and much of this is ancient in origin. In particular, ancient woodland and replanted ancient woodland can be found to the north of the District, in the parish of Micheldever, where clayey soils over the chalk coincide with woodland such as Black Wood, Micheldever Wood and Shroner Wood for example. Similarly to the far south of the District, the clayey soils

associated with the Hampshire Basin have resulted in many areas of ancient woodland, associated with the Forest of Bere, including West Walk and Botley Wood. Elsewhere, areas of the chalk downs are associated with pockets of ancient woodlands, including Dur Wood and Cheriton Wood.

The underlying soil of an area is also an important influence on the types of species as well as the predominance of woodland and this is summarised in the table below:

Plantations, often planted with non-indigenous conifers, are a feature of limited areas of the District. These are relatively recent in origin, being mainly for timber production and game cover. Due to their monoculture character and dense evergreen canopies, these areas of forest offer comparatively little wildlife value. Their harsh lines often seem in conflict with the rolling nature of most of the District's countryside and given that they ultimately are the subject of clear felling, their loss also has a very sudden impact upon the environment.

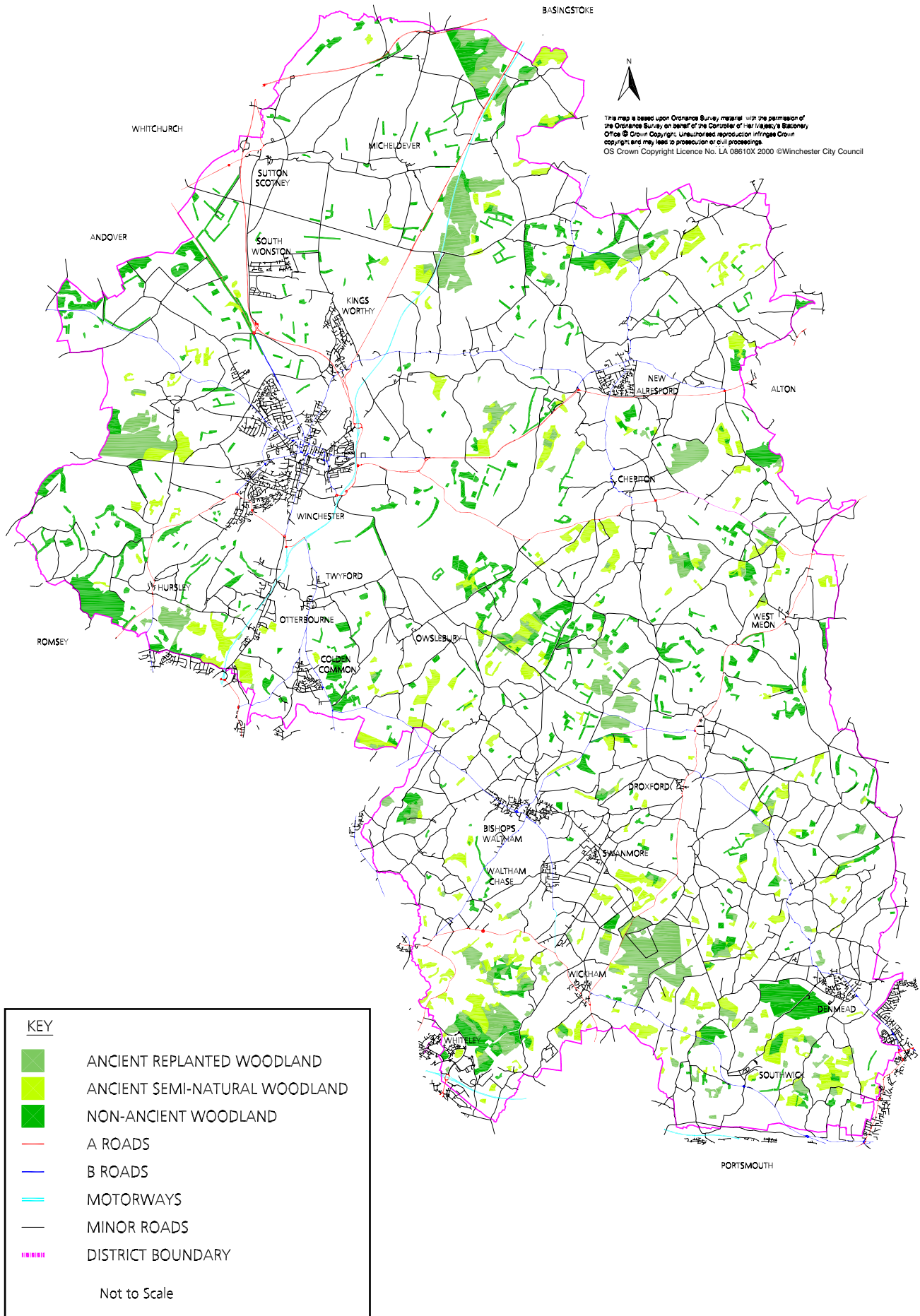
### 2.1.7 Hedgerows

The structure and pattern of hedgerows has a strong visual influence on the landscape as well as providing invaluable wildlife habitats and corridors. Many hedgerows have been lost over the past century due to increased farm mechanisation. However, many of those remaining date back to Anglo-Saxon boundary charters. These older hedges traditionally contain timber trees, pollards and old coppice stools as well as a greater variety of species, which can be used as a broad indicator of antiquity. These ancient hedges, with their wavy, unsurveyed boundaries are especially found to the south of the District, where woodlands were assarted to provide fields. In areas that were subject to later, parliamentary type enclosure, on the chalk downs and around the heath-associated villages of Waltham Chase, Shirrell Heath and Curdridge for

Species	Soil	Notes
Ash, Maple, Wych Elm	chalk	Conserved by coppicing
Beech	chalk	Clumps on the summit of the downs are the result of Victorian planting
Yew, Whitebeam, Wild Cherry	chalk	Subdominant species
Ash, Hazel, Oak	both chalk and clay	The most common woodland throughout the District but are the most threatened as they occur on the best soils.
Hazel	both chalk and clay	Most important understorey shrub. Coppiced.
Lime	rare	Some of best surviving examples are in the Meon Valley (Holywell), Waltham Chase (Swanmore and the Bishop's Enclosure) and the Forest of Bere (Hipleyp Copse)



Figure 2.5 Woodland in Winchester District



example, hedgerows tend to be straighter and often clipped, predominantly consisting of thorn species.

### 2.1.8 Chalk Downland

The chalk downs were the first areas to be cleared by humans, beginning around 6000 years ago, as they were the easiest to tackle using primitive tools. These areas were developed as sheepwalks from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> Centuries and retained an open structure with few hedges. The grazing by sheep and later rabbits (introduced by the Normans) removed the potential for recolonisation by scrub and woodland and resulted in a close cropped sward of very diverse flora. This pasture can be very colourful, being rich in flowers, and providing a habitat for a range of invertebrates including rare species of butterflies.

Comparatively small areas of this downland are now left, as they have been cultivated or are succumbing to scrub invasion due to lack of management. Erosion is also a problem, as these areas are popular for recreational purposes including walking, motor bike scrambling, hangliding and golf. The District retains some good examples of downland within its boundaries, at Farley Mount, Old Winchester Hill and Beacon Hill for example.

*Indicators of such ancient grassland include:*

- *Colour differences: Brownish-green in winter and dull green in summer (modern grasslands are bright green for much of the year)*
- *Lack of uniformity. Lack of modern treatments mean that there is a variation in sward height, wetness, topography, colour, vegetation*
- *The presence of anthills, which haven't been destroyed by tractors or long vegetation. The more numerous and larger in size, the older the grassland.*
- *Numerous colourful flowers in spring and summer, especially with pink and yellow flowers. (unless they are heavily grazed or cut for hay)*

*(from Colebourne & Gibbons, 1990)*

### 2.1.9 Heathland

Heathland evolved following the clearance of woodland in the Bronze Age on agriculturally impoverished land in the south of the District. It is important for the range of plants, animals and insects which it supports but it is vulnerable to scrub and woodland invasion (usually birch, pine and oak) unless managed. Very little heathland now remains in the District, although there are examples of species-rich heathland at Shedfield and Wickham Commons. At Farley Mount there is also an example of rare chalk heathland, where acid clay directly overlies chalk, resulting in typical chalk vegetation mixed with heath and dwarf gorse.

## 2.2 Human Influences

Although the physical structure of the landscape is important in defining its characteristics, the influence

of humans is also significant. Through time, patterns of land use, including agriculture, settlements and routes, have evolved and elements are preserved in the modern landscape. The technique of analysing evidence for these historic events and processes in the landscape is known as *time depth analysis*.

*Fig 2.6* shows three time-depth maps of the District, based on the *Hampshire Historic Landscape Assessment* (HCC, 1999). These illustrate the successive layers of historic development across the District; the white areas indicate areas where recent land use has obscured the historic landscape pattern beneath. These indicate that the oldest landscapes of the District are to be found in the wooded southern Hampshire Basin area. Much of the South Downs area has changed little since the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, by which time many of the existing field patterns had been formed through assarting and informal enclosure. The chalk downs to the north of the District changed significantly in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when they were enclosed predominantly by formal agreement. Few areas of the District have seen significant landscape change in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

This time-depth analysis was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology as part of an *Historic Landscape Character Assessment of Winchester District*, that was carried out in parallel with the *Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment*. The objectives of this historic landscape assessment were to identify any necessary amendments or refinements of the Historic Landscape Type boundaries in the *Hampshire Historic Landscape Assessment* (1999); to produce an historic landscape character assessment of the District; to characterise the townscape of the larger rural settlements; to clarify and explain the evidence for time-depth within the landscape; and to contribute to the identification and description of significant threats or opportunities for vulnerable areas of the historic landscape. The full *Winchester District Historic Landscape Character Assessment* is presented in Appendix Three.

### 2.2.1 The Prehistoric Landscape (up to 43 AD)

The earliest inhabitants of the District would have existed during the *Palaeolithic period*, although probably in low numbers given the harsh climate of the Ice Age. There is no lasting evidence in the landscape of their existence. As the climate warmed and the ice retreated, there would have been a gradual spread of forest throughout the area.

During the *Mesolithic period* (10,000BC - 4,000 BC) the landscape would have been covered by wild wood, which was hardly affected by the nomadic lifestyle of the inhabitants, whose only means of clearance were stone tools and fire. Although individually the forest clearings made by Mesolithic people were small, its cumulative effect led to the development of heathland in areas of sandy soil. Again, there is no evidence in the landscape of the settlement of the Mesolithic people, as the population moved around, hunting and gathering food. Some

archaeological finds, however do show that certain areas of the District were favoured for repeated visits or longer occupation.

The *Neolithic period* (4000 BC – 1800 BC) marks the first major human influence in the process of landscape change. The population became more settled and as tools improved activities focused upon the clearance of areas of woodland to support temporary arable and pastoral farms. During this period sheep were introduced and cattle and pigs were domesticated. In particular the lighter soils of the chalk downlands appear to have been the preferred locations for occupation. Where there was a high density of grazing animals, the woodland did not regenerate and sites were gradually colonised by grassland plants that could withstand grazing. During this time, wheat was also introduced and the first evidence of ploughing was found. Consequently the landscape became much more open. Pollarding and coppicing were also practised. Evidence from the period includes long barrows (funeral monuments) on the downlands, flint implements, pottery fragments, and indications of settlements at Corhampton and at Winnall Down.

The *Bronze Age* (1800 BC – 600 BC) brought about recognisable landscape change. Pollen evidence suggests that woodlands were cleared for agricultural expansion, particularly on the chalk uplands where the soil was thinner. This practice would also have led to the gradual spread of heathland as poor soils failed to regenerate. Pasture was widespread and the countryside became more open as great sheep and cattle ranches were created. By the middle Bronze Age, most field systems were definitely related to recognisable hamlets or farmsteads, now seen as clusters of small irregular paddocks within the rectilinear field systems. Round Barrows, which are often sited prominently on chalk ridges (such as those at Magdalen Hill Down), are characteristic of the period. Although advances in agricultural technology over the ages have meant that such relics are vulnerable to destruction, many good examples within the District have survived and are protected as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (see landscape character area descriptions in Chapter Four).

The *Iron Age* (AD 600 – AD 43) saw the use of stronger tools, which enabled the clearance of the heavier soils. This led to the greatest destruction of the wild wood as fixed agricultural systems became fully established and it is likely that the farmscape was intensively managed. Coppicing would have been widespread, as wood would have been the main construction material. Enclosed field systems and small villages became more frequent. Long term occupation of settlements is indicated in the archaeological record, and the District has many sites, including Winchester itself, which probably developed for reasons of trade rather than purely farming. A tribal structure appears to have become well established by the Iron Age and defence was therefore also important, resulting in the construction of hill

forts such as those at Old Winchester Hill and St Catherine's Hill.

### 2.2.2 The Roman Landscape (43- 410 AD)

The Romans introduced greater organisation to farming and woodland management, as well as providing the potential for a vast export market for cereals and wool. They also introduced technological improvements, in the form of a wide range of iron tools and the heavy plough. This meant that all but the poorest land could be farmed and consequently agriculture expanded even further onto the clays. Timber was required for domestic and industrial purposes, such as iron smelting in the Forest of Bere and pottery at Bishop's Waltham, Shedfield, Wickham and consequently much woodland was managed as coppice, to ensure a constant source. Sweet Chestnut was also introduced by the Romans for this purpose. By the end of the Roman period, 70% of the wild wood had gone, having become farmland or deteriorated to heathland.

At its height, the Romano-British period was one of great stability and prosperity in the south and this resulted in the urbanisation of Winchester, which became the capital of the area. Small market towns such as Wickham, were established and many rural villas and their associated estates were built, such as those at Sparsholt, Twyford and Bramdean.

The Roman invasion was accompanied by the rapid construction of a network of roads and this has had an important impact on the landscape of Winchester District. These characteristically straight roads can be seen at Morestead, East Stratton and Kings Worthy for example. In a few cases the road causeway and flanking ditches survive as visible earthworks, and many modern roads follow, at least in part, the same course.

### 2.2.3 The Anglo-Saxon Landscape (410-1066 AD)

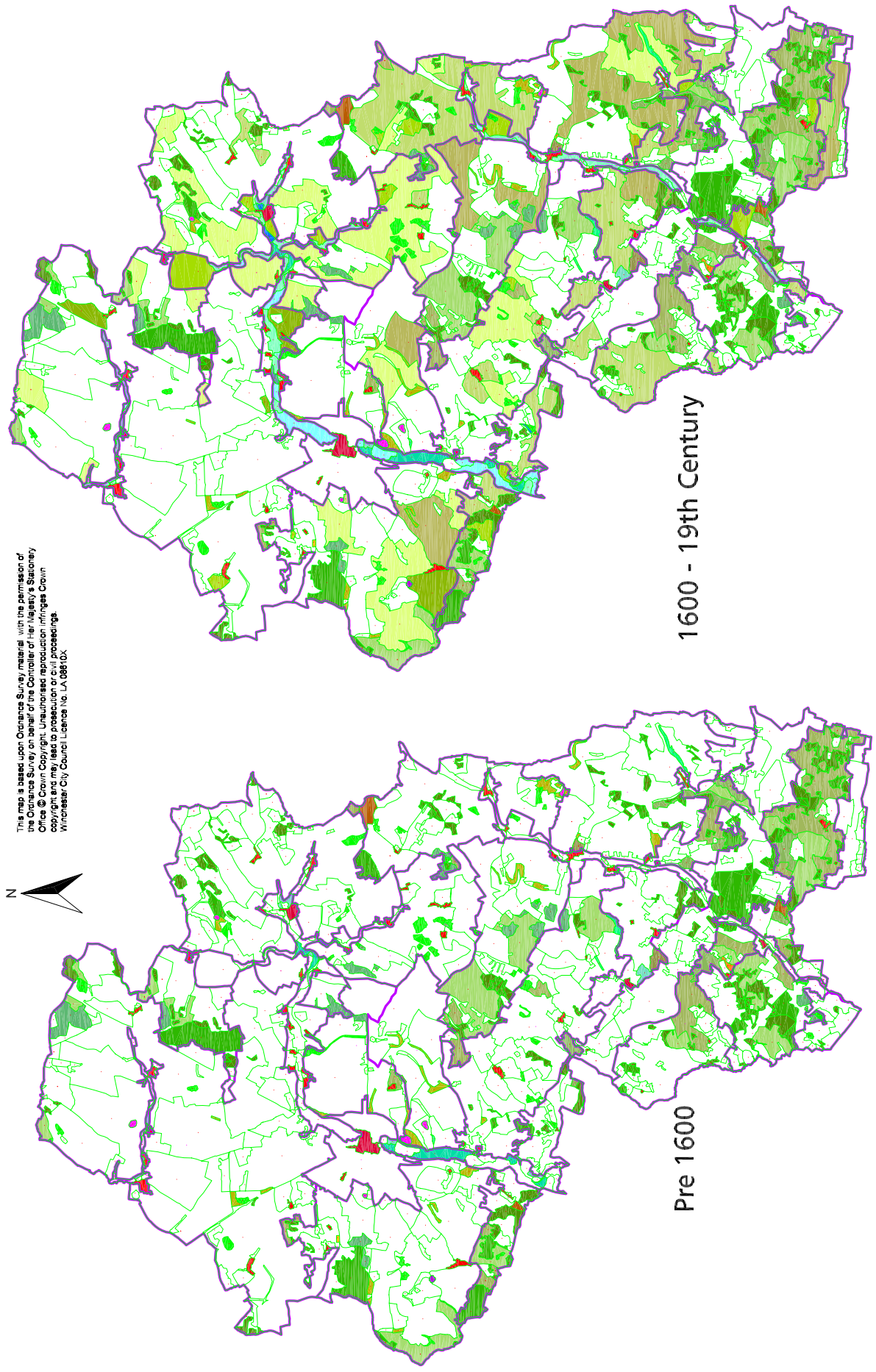
The loss of the Roman export markets during this period, meant that arable fields fell into disuse and scrub and woodland developed in a pattern which can still be seen today. During the Saxon period it is estimated that 50% of woodland was cleared and it was necessary to introduce protective legislation. Much of the present pattern of isolated woods and copses dates from this time and represents what is generally considered to be the traditional woodland heritage. Where this has survived, it is due to continued careful husbandry.

There is much documented reference to woodland, including the hangers on steep slopes and trees that marked boundaries. The Domesday survey confirms that the chalk was much less wooded than the lowland clay. There was a Saxon "haga" (hunting park) in the Forest of Bere.

The early Saxon landscape would have been peppered with small hamlets and farmsteads. Saxon estates were often based on valley settlements and these can be particularly seen along the Meon, which stretched up the valley sides to woods on unfarmable land.

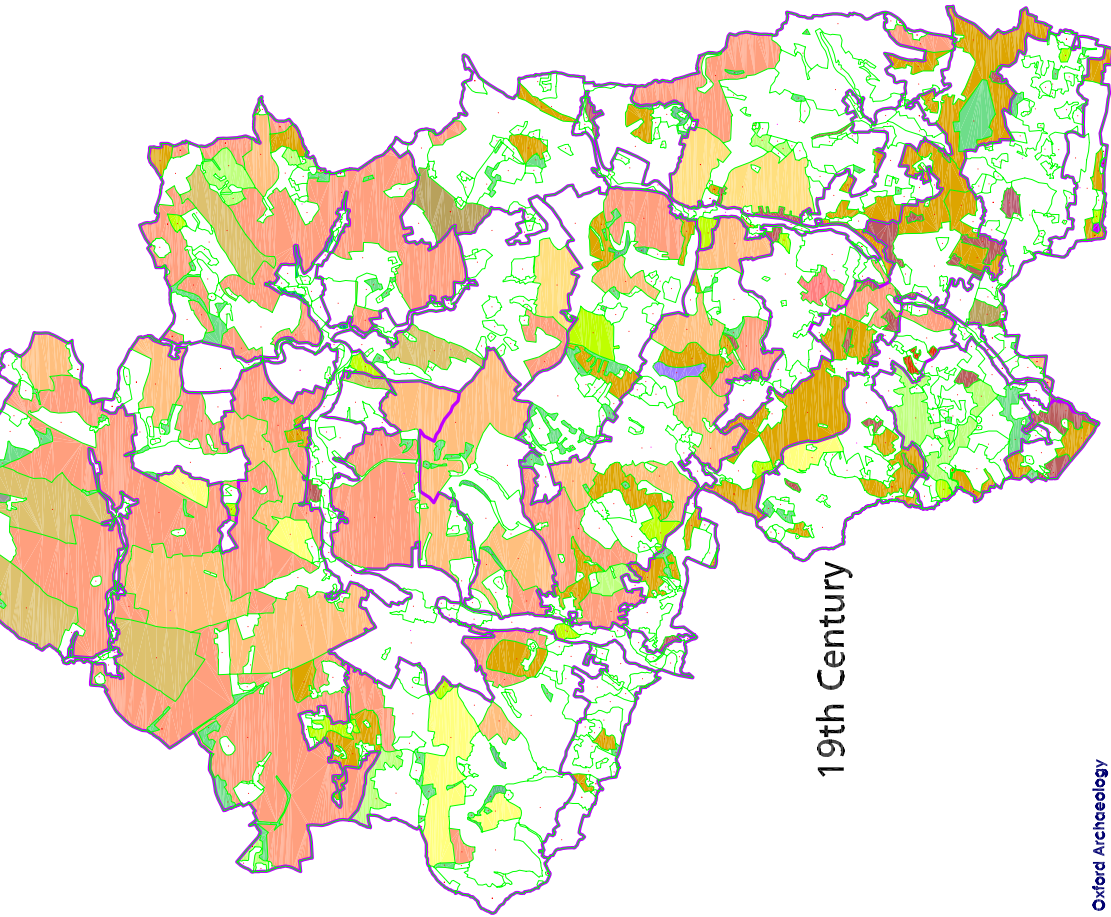


Figure 2.6 Time-depth Analysis

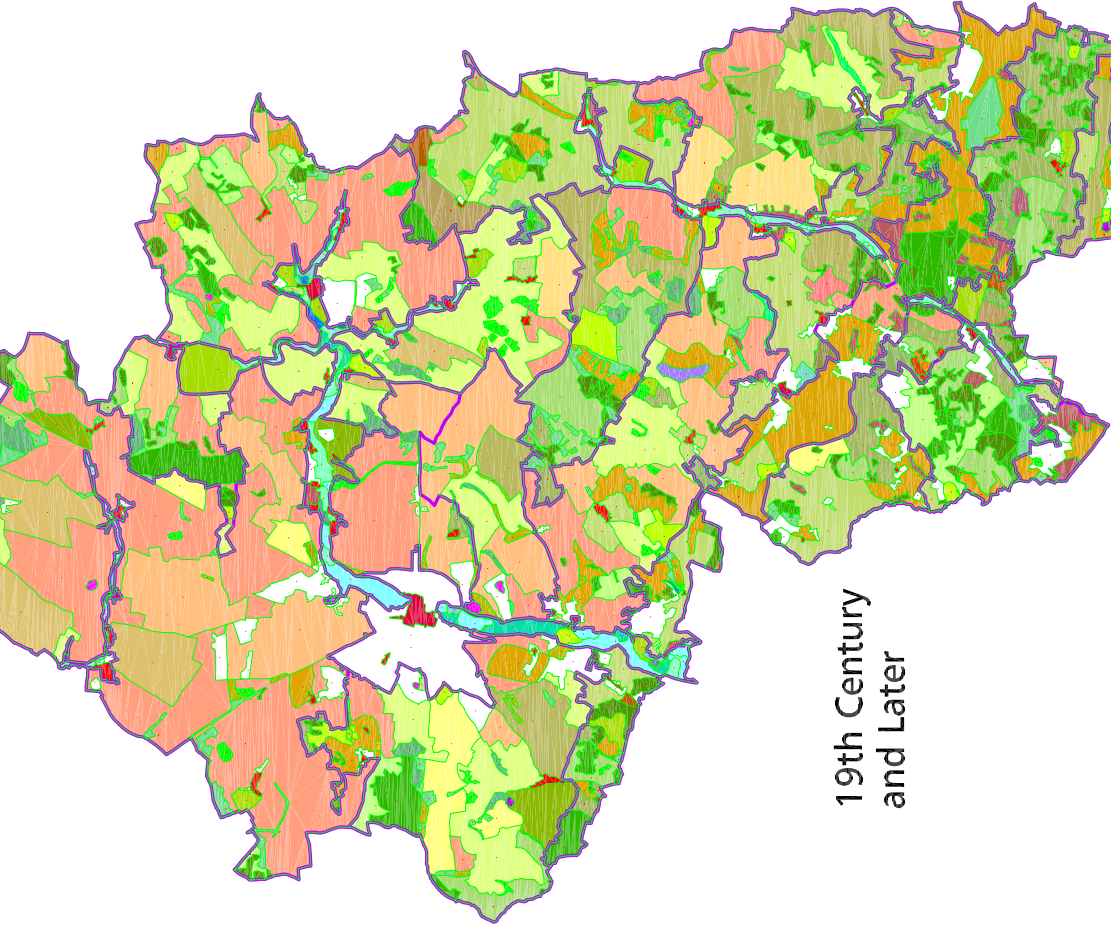


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19th Century



19th Century  
and Later

### Historic Time Depth Analysis



Early Saxon settlements also reused Roman sites and in some took their name from a nearby Roman road such as East Stratton (stratton meaning the 'farmstead near the street').

The distribution of this hamlet and villages pattern forms the basis of modern day settlement patterns and during the mid to late Saxon period, the modern system of parishes was established with many of the boundaries still surviving today. Very little evidence of early or middle Saxon settlement remains however, although cemeteries of this period have been found at Worthy Park, Kings Worthy, Winnall, Droxford and

Meonstoke. Churches became established and some, such as Corhampton, Headbourne Worthy and Boarhunt still remain. Monasteries were also constructed and, under Alfred the Great, Winchester assumed importance as the capital of Wessex.

By the late Saxon period, many of the District's present-day settlements had formed, and were referred to in the Domesday Book. Many place names also indicate their Saxon origins as well as identifying how the land was used. *Ley*, for example, (as in Durley), refers to either an area of woodland or an area cleared to make a farm, while place names

## KEY TO HISTORIC LANDSCAPE TYPES

 1.1 Small Assarts	 6.1 Downland
 1.2 Medium Assarts	 7.1 Miscellaneous Valley Floor
 1.3 Large Assarts	 7.2 Valley Floor Woodlands
 1.4 Regular Assarts	 7.3 Marsh & Rough Grazing
 1.5 Strips and Furlongs	 7.4 Water Meadows
 1.6 Large Wavy Boundaries	 7.5 Unimproved Grassland
 1.7 Irregular Straight Boundaries	 7.6 Watercress Beds
 1.8 Regular Ladder Fields	 7.7 Fisheries, natural ponds, lakes
 1.9 Small Parliamentary	 7.8 Watermills
 1.10 Medium Parliamentary	 9.1 Scattered 1810 Extent
 1.11 Large Parliamentary	 9.2 Scattered Post 1810 Extent
 1.12 Graded Size Parliamentary	 9.3 Common Edge 1810 Extent
 1.14 Prairie Fields	 9.4 Common Edge Post 1810 Extent
 1.15 Fields Bounded by Tracks	 9.6 Post 1810 Settlement
 1.16 Small Wavy Boundaries	 9.7 Village/Hamlet 1810 Extent
 2.1 Common Heathland	 9.9 Town & City 1810 Extent
 2.2 Common Downland	 9.11 Caravan Sites
 2.3 Other Commons & Greens	 10.1 Pre-1810 Parkland
 2.4 Commons, Wooded Over	 10.2 Post 1810 Parkland
 3.1 Orchards	 10.3 Deer Parks
 3.3 Nurseries with Glasshouses	 11.1 Racecourses
 4.1 Assarted Pre-1810	 11.2 Golf Courses
 4.2 Replanted Assarted Pre-1810	 11.3 Sports Fields
 4.3 Other Pre-1810	 12.1 Chalk Quarries
 4.4 Replanted Other Pre-1810	 12.2 Gravel Pits
 4.5 19th Century Plantations	 12.5 Water Treatment
 4.6 Pre-1810 Hangers	 13.1 Stations & Sidings
 4.7 19th Century Hangers	 13.3 Airfields
 4.8 Pre-1810 Heath, Enclosed Woods	 13.4 Motorway Services
 4.9 19th C Heathland Plantations	 14.1 Prehistoric & Roman
 4.10 Pre-1810 Wood Pasture	 14.2 Medieval
 4.11 19th Century Wood Pasture	 14.3 Post Med 1500-1830
	 14.4 19th C 1830-1914
	 14.5 20th C 1914-

including *ham*, (such as Wickham) indicate the siting of major Saxon estates or settlements. Similarly, *ton* (as in Soberton) was used from Saxon times through to the Middle Ages to, indicate an enclosed farm.

#### 2.2.4 The Medieval Landscape (1066-1499)

During the Norman and Medieval Periods the present pattern of settlements and communications was consolidated, although there were less dramatic changes to the landscape than in previous times. Medieval management of land, which had its roots in the Saxon period, continued to mould the landscape and establish many of the features, which we consider to be characteristic of the District's countryside. Woodland, for example, was managed in two ways:

*Coppiced Woods*: Coppiced hazel understorey was often maintained with standards (forest canopy trees), grown for timber. Standards were usually oak, but also included sweet chestnut, ash, maple, beech and hornbeam. Such woodland was often enclosed ('encoppiced'), to protect it from grazing.

*Pasture/woodland*: In these areas, trees were often grown as pollards, to allow stock grazing beneath. There were three main categories:

- *Wooded commons*. These allowed Commoners rights to pasture and fuel, e.g. Bramdean Common
- *Forests*. These included a mixture of woodland and wooded common or heathland, which were managed for hunting but allowed grazing rights to commoners. Very little of these areas now remain except in place names. The Forest of Bere was a Royal Forest and as such controlled by the King and subject to Forest Law, while chases, such as Waltham Chase, were similar, but not subject to Forest Law. The Bishop of Winchester had control over them and relics still exist such as Close Wood (Meon Valley) and Bishop's Wood.
- *Parks*. Deer parks, also used for grazing other stock, were widely established during medieval times. Their enclosure was granted only by licence from the King and achieved by the construction of earthen banks, surmounted by a park pale fence, inside which was a ditch. Examples of such can be found at Bishop's Waltham, Bramdean and Hursley.

During the 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries the process of 'assarting' created small irregular parcels of land for grazing or arable as the edges of woodland were cleared forming small-scale, irregular 'open-field' systems, many of which are still visible today.

The wealth generated by successful agriculture promoted the further expansion of farmsteads during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries. During the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries this was associated with moated manor houses, such as Marwell Manor. Monastic farms were also associated with this period, often recognisable by their title '*Grange*', such as Hunton Grange Farm.

Royal castles and palaces were also constructed during this period, including the Great Hall in Winchester and the smaller Bishop's residences of Bishop's Waltham Palace, Wolvesey Castle (Winchester) and Merdon Castle (Hursley). During this time the wool market became buoyant, and pasture for sheep grazing became a more important feature of the downlands, whilst the clear water of the River Meon was used for washing and dyeing.

Many small villages and hamlets that had originated during late Saxon times consequently evolved during the medieval period along the bottom and lower slopes of the Meon, as well as along the Itchen and Dever valleys and along the spring lines where the chalk downs met the clay lowland. These still form the nucleus of many present-day settlements. During the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries however, poor weather conditions led to a severe decline in arable farming, which was exacerbated by outbreaks of Black Death. Many settlements were deserted at this time or dramatically shrank, but traces of strip ploughing, earthworks and foundations can be seen beneath the turf, as at Lomer and Abbotstone.

*Typical landscape features associated with this period are particularly common to the south of the District and along the river valleys. These include:*

- *networks of old twisting and sunken lanes and numerous public footpaths;*
- *patterns of tiny hamlets and occasional small towns;*
- *dispersed ancient farmsteads sheltering in hollows, often near streams, with names like Church -, Manor -, Hall -, and Court Farm;*
- *many small ancient woods with irregular boundaries;*
- *remnants of heath and commons;*
- *fields of varying sizes, with curving or rambling boundaries;*
- *thick hedgerows, often on banks, rich in shrubs and old coppice stools of maple, oak or ash, and full of woodland plants;*
- *Saxon place names suggesting late clearance of woodland*
- *ditches, ponds and mill-streams.*

*(from Colebourne & Gibbons, 1990)*

#### 2.2.5 The Post-Medieval & Early Modern Landscape (1500 - 1914)

During this period, the landscape of the District saw large-scale change with several movements towards the creation of larger and more regular field systems. Field enclosure, associated with the Agricultural Revolution, was extensive during this period, as common open fields and forests were divided into larger privately owned fields. Such enclosure was undertaken either by Acts of Parliament or through less formal legal agreements throughout the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>

and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries leading to the widespread surveying and planning of the land, resulting in straightened field boundaries, roads and streams. The need for new field boundaries also resulted in the mass planting of hawthorn hedges, with oak and ash trees for timber. Fields in the chalk uplands remained the largest, partly due to their traditional use as sheep walks.

Agricultural improvements in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries also resulted in the creation of 'water meadows', as the practice of flooding ('drowning') meadows in the late winter onwards with the relatively warm alkaline spring waters of the rivers, became a common means of improving the productivity of the valley pastures. A complex system of sluices, channels, ridges and furrows, enabled the production of early grass for sheep and cattle, followed by the harvesting of hay crops in the summer. These were most frequently found along the chalk rivers and there are many traces such as old irrigation channels still visible along the Itchen, Meon and Dever. The enclosure of the ancient down pastures at this time also enabled manure to be used on the arable land.

Between the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Centuries most land was owned by the Church and lay lords. With the dissolution of the monasteries however, land was transferred to Tudor knights and courtiers. Estates and country houses were consequently established with associated parkland, often located within the river valleys and lower slopes. These had an impact on the wider landscape and were influenced by the formality of the Dutch and French designers. These parklands were often redesigned in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century as the English Landscape Movement developed an informal, 'naturalistic' approach to design. The redesign of estates often involved the loss of existing villages and other features, where they compromised the design. There are numerous examples of this in the Winchester District, including Warnford Park (Brown) and Stratton Park (Repton).

Changes in woodland were also occurring during this period. Some forests such as Waltham Chase, were enclosed during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, to be replaced by farmland, whilst elsewhere in this century, the development of commercial forestry also began to have an impact, with the planting of conifer plantations and shelterbelts.

The industrial revolution had a limited impact on the rural landscape of Winchester District. Several railway lines were however, constructed throughout the District:

- along the Meon Valley (now dismantled and used as a footpath)
- along the Itchen Valley (Winchester-Alresford, now disused) and on to Alton (still functioning as The Watercress Line steam railway)
- Botley - Bishop's Waltham (now dismantled and partly used as a footpath)
- the Southampton – Newbury- Didcot line (with

stations at Sutton Scotney, Worthy Down Halt, Kings Worthy, Chesil and Winchester, (now disused)

- the Southampton-Waterloo main line, which runs north-south through the district, stopping at Shawford, Winchester and Micheldever Station.
- The Portsmouth line through Botley and Knowle

As well as the visual impact of their embankments and cuttings, these railway lines also contributed to the growth of adjacent rural industries, in particular transporting fruit from the Shedfield area and watercress from the River Itchen to a wider market. They also allowed the transportation of the products from the brick making industries of Colden Common and Bishop's Waltham as well as the transportation of other building materials such as Welsh slate into the area, thus diluting the use of locally sourced materials.

As the population grew, the Victorian period also saw the beginnings of change to the built environment, as Winchester and villages such as Bishop's Waltham and Alresford, gradually began to develop Victorian suburbs, commencing a period of growth that such rural settlements had, until then, been unused to.

*Indicators of 'planned' areas of countryside, which developed their character during this period, are most common in the chalk downland areas of the district. These include:*

- *Few roads. These are often ruler-straight with wide verges and are not sunken*
- *Large villages, one per parish*
- *Any isolated farms are eighteenth or nineteenth century, of Georgian or Victorian design, with names like 'New Farm'*
- *Ancient woodlands are either few or absent, but square coverts or linear shelter beds are present*
- *Most, or all hedges are straight and thin, lacking coppice stools. Standard trees may be present. Few woodland flowers*
- *Heaths and commons are rarer*

*(from Colebourne & Gibbons, 1990)*

### 2.2.6 The Modern Landscape (1915 – Present day)

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the fastest period of change occurring to the District's landscape, as developments in agriculture and transport resulted in a loss of traditional landscape features.

During and following World War II, maximising agricultural output became a priority and this, together with technological advances, resulted in increased agricultural mechanisation. To remain profitable, both field and farm sizes grew, resulting in the loss of landscape features such as hedgerows and trees, as well as traditional farm buildings becoming increasingly redundant. These changes also resulted in the increased use of large metal framed and clad sheds. Traditional farm buildings meanwhile, have

been converted to new uses with varying degrees of success and both trends have had an impact on the setting of farmsteads in the countryside

Financial incentives to produce arable crops in the middle and end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century resulted in a dramatic loss of downland grazing in the district, with most of the chalk downs being converted to cereal production. Fertilisers and pesticides use also increased dramatically during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and wetlands have been drained to maximise areas suitable for production. There are however, still dairy and sheep farms scattered throughout the District, together with watercress beds along the river valleys and horticultural production where areas of rich loamy soils allow intensive production.

During the latter years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, surplus produce and greater environmental awareness resulted in a change of emphasis. There is no longer the incentive to over-produce, and alternative farming practices, crop variation and diversification and measures to improve biodiversity are actively being encouraged by the government, both in the form of controls such as the Hedgerow Regulations and Forestry Commission Felling Licenses and in the form of grants such as the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and the Woodland Grant Scheme. These measures are described further in Chapter Five.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century has also seen the fastest occurring changes in the built infrastructure of the District. The increased use of the car and heavy goods vehicle has resulted in road construction and widening schemes, most notably those of the A34 and M3; as well as the abandonment of the Meon Valley, Itchen Valley and Bishops Waltham-Botley railways. Many areas of the District still retain their remote, rural character however, with lanes that have remained largely unchanged through the centuries.

Perhaps the most notable change to the District over the past 100 years has been the expansion of settlements. The 20<sup>th</sup> Century has seen settlements such as Winchester, Kings Worthy, Colden Common, Bishop's Waltham, Denmead, and New Alresford grow significantly, as well as the development of some entirely new settlements, such as South Wonston and Whiteley. This pattern will be continued with the completion of Knowle. Many of the smaller rural villages in the District have changed little during the past century though and due to their historic and architectural importance are now protected by conservation area and listed building regulations. The pressure to develop is still great though, given the demand for housing in the county, but there is evidence that the controls associated with the Town and Country Planning Acts from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, are helping to manage this.

## **2.3 Landscape Designations in Winchester District**

The following section describes the various protective landscape and ecological designations that apply to areas of the District. The specific areas are listed in the relevant landscape character area descriptions in Chapter Four.

### **2.3.1 East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty & Proposed South Downs National Park (AONB)**

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a designation made by the Countryside Agency, under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, to an area of countryside that it is desirable to conserve and enhance. AONBs, along with National Parks, have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. They are not necessarily areas of high nature conservation value, although in practice they often include many areas that are. Most of the area is privately owned and not necessarily open to the public.

The East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated in 1962 and covers 382km<sup>2</sup> of the South Downs that fall within the boundaries of Winchester City Council and East Hampshire District Council (see Fig 2.1).

To help protect AONBs, government guidance states that major developments in AONBs should be in the public interest. Assessment should therefore be carried out of the impact of the development on national considerations, the local economy and landscape, and the scope for developing elsewhere. AONBs usually also have special funding to help promote good management and sustainable development within them (see Chapter 5.2.4 for details). There are no statutory duties on local authorities to do anything in an AONB however, and they vary greatly in the degree and type and level of funding and activities found there. The importance of the AONB is recognised in both the Hampshire Structure Plan 1996-2011 Review (Policy C3) and the Winchester District Local Plan Review, Revised Deposit 2003 (Proposal C.7).

In 1998, Hampshire County Council published the East Hampshire AONB Integrated Management Guidelines, which describes the character of the AONB landscape, the issues affecting its future and provides management guidelines aimed at conserving and enhancing the landscape. It is intended that the Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment will work in tandem with the AONB Management Guidelines. The Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment has been written with the primary intention of conserving and enhancing the landscape through the planning process, including strategies for improving both the landscape and built environment, as a supporting document to the Local Plan (see Chapter 4). The AONB Guidelines, instead place less influence on the historic and built environment, and more emphasis on landscape

management and biodiversity. It is hoped that the two documents will complement each other and that the AONB strategies have been reinforced in this document where appropriate to the Local Plan process.

To encourage recreational opportunities in this area, whilst still supporting the same landscape conservation objectives, the Countryside Agency has begun the process that could lead to the designation of a South Downs National Park and the establishment of a National Park Authority. The National Park area may include some or all of the area within the District currently in the AONB, and possibly some adjoining areas. If such a designation were to take place, it could have implications for the administration of the planning process in the area.

### 2.3.2 Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) were introduced in 1986 by the Ministry of Agriculture to help safeguard areas where the landscape, wildlife or historic interest is of national importance as it was recognised that damage and loss was occurring through agricultural 'improvement'. ESA designations therefore encourage traditional farming methods. They have no planning status however, and therefore cannot be used as a reason for refusing planning applications.

Two ESAs fall partially into the Winchester District; the South Downs ESA and the Test Valley ESA, along the River Dever. For further details see Chapter 5.4.1

### 2.3.3 National Nature Reserves

National Nature Reserves (NNRs) are designated by English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, to protect sites of national wildlife importance. These provisions were strengthened by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. NNRs have the highest level of conservation protection available under UK legislation and are all Sites of Scientific Interest (see 2.3.4 below)

In many cases NNRs are owned and managed by the statutory authority, (for example English Nature), and to retain its special status an NNR has to be managed appropriately. Landowners and occupiers must manage the land in accordance with Nature Reserve Agreements. Not all NNRs are open to the public, although most have some areas that are accessible.

NNRs are given strict protection against damaging operations, and any such operations must in theory be authorised by the designating body. It also has strong protection against development on and around it. English Nature is therefore consulted on any planning applications that might affect reserves.

There are two National Nature Reserves in the Winchester District, at Old Winchester Hill, and Beacon Hill. Old Winchester Hill has been designated by English Nature as one of 31 'spotlighted' reserves in the country, for offering the best opportunity for visitors to enjoy wildlife.

### 2.3.4 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are designated for their ecological or geological interest by English Nature under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. An SSSI is given certain protection against damaging operations, and any such operations must in theory be authorised by the designating body.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) strengthened the powers given to the designating body to refuse consent for damaging operations, and to take action where damage is being caused through neglect or inappropriate management and to enter into management agreements. Local Authorities and other public institutions now also have a statutory duty to further the conservation and enhancement of SSSIs both in carrying out their operations, and in exercising their decision making functions, which includes planning decisions.

There are 20 SSSIs within the Winchester District and these are listed under their appropriate Landscape Character Description (see Chapter Four). Typical habitats in the Winchester District SSSIs include species-rich grassland (e.g. Cheesefoot Head), woodland (e.g. Crab Wood), meadows (e.g. Itchen Valley) and wood pasture (e.g. Hook Heath Meadows). The largest SSSI in the district covers Botley Wood and Everetts Muses Copses, an area of 350 hectares.

### 2.3.5 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are statutory designations of European importance required under the EC's Habitats Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of flora and fauna (1992). They are considered to be important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to the conservation of the habitats and species identified in the Directive as being most in need of conservation at a European level.

Areas subject to these designations have the highest nature conservation importance, and are effectively irreplaceable. Consequently SACs in England are covered by The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994 and are protected through Proposal C.8 of the Winchester District Local Plan Review (Revised Deposit 2003).

The designation process for SACs by the European Commission is underway, and following consultation with site owners/occupiers and other interested parties, the River Itchen has now achieved the status of candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC). Further consideration is now required by the EU before it can be designated as a SAC.

### 2.3.6 Local Nature Reserves

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are statutory designations made by local authorities or local naturalists' trusts under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, as being of local wildlife importance. Local Nature Reserves can also be an SSSI

or have other designations, although they cannot also be a National Nature Reserve. LNRs are given protection against damaging operations in policy Proposal C.10 of the Winchester District Local Plan Review (Revised Deposit 2003), and this can also be supplemented by local by-laws.

Local Nature Reserves are almost always owned by local authorities, although their management is often passed on to County Wildlife Trusts. There is no legal necessity to manage an LNR to any set standard however, but management agreements often exist. They often have good public access and facilities. There are nine LNRs designated within the District.

### **2.3.7 Countryside Heritage Areas**

Countryside Heritage Areas (CHAs) are designated by Hampshire County Council. They are considered to be some of the most important parts of the Hampshire countryside because of their distinctive landscape, ecological, archaeological and historic features. The CHAs are seen as some of the areas in Hampshire least changed by the activities of modern society, containing historic parks and archaeological sites as well as semi-natural habitats for example. The appearance and ecological value of the areas have largely developed and been maintained by traditional land-use practices, including the establishment of water-meadow irrigation systems, the grazing of common land, such as meadow, heath, or wood pasture, and the coppicing of woodland.

The designations have no special preservation or conservation status although they may also encompass sites which are subject to statutory designations, such as SSSIs, and LNRs. Hampshire County Council does however, promote their conservation and management through the voluntary co-operation of landowners and other interested parties. In some instances local groups of landowners, local authorities, interested organisations and individuals are being formed to provide a focus for ideas and practical assistance and for the establishment of specific studies or land management projects which contribute to conservation of the areas.

Three Countryside Heritage Areas are found in the Winchester District; the Itchen Valley CHA, the Forest of Bere CHA and part of the Ampfield CHA .

### **2.3.8 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation**

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) are sites of particular importance within Hampshire according to criteria jointly agreed by HCC, English Nature and the Hampshire Wildlife Trust. They are considered to be of local conservation interest and are protected in the Hampshire County Structure Plan 1996-2011 Review and by Proposal C.9 of the Winchester District Plan Review (Revised Deposit 2003) against development that would have an adverse impact on them, unless the need for the development outweighs that impact.

SINCs include areas of ancient woodland, ancient meadows and species-rich grassland. The distribution of sites is generally focused in the area south of Winchester where the impact of modern agricultural technology is less evident than in the far north of the District.

### **2.3.9 Historic Parks and Gardens**

The Hampshire County Structure Plan 1996-2011 Review and Proposal HE.3 of the Winchester District Local Plan Review (Revised Deposit 2003) offers protection to gardens and parks included in English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest and Hampshire County Council's Register of Parks and Gardens. Development that is likely to have an adverse impact on these areas will not be permitted unless the local planning authority is satisfied that the need for the development outweighs that impact.

Historic parks that are listed by English Heritage and Hampshire County Council are listed under the relevant Landscape Character Area description. Gardens are not listed in this document, however, generally having less impact on the landscape as a whole.