

Settlement Types within the Area

Chalk clay spring-line Estate village

Scattered clay lowland Heath associated

Location and Boundaries

The character area encompasses the lowlands of the Hampshire Basin to the south of the district, between the chalk uplands of the Hambledon Downs to the North and the chalk ridge of Portsdown Hill to the South. The eastern boundary abuts Waterlooville (Havant District) and the western Boundary abuts the lower Meon Valley.

Formative Influences

The lowland topography and the deep fertile soils of clay, with deposits of sand and gravel create conditions suitable for woodland cover, with the largest areas of woodland being situated on the Bagshot Sands. The distinctive character of this area has evolved from the remnants of the former Forest of Bere, an extensive royal hunting reserve.

The forest was enclosed in 1814 by parliamentary act resulting in significant landscape changes throughout the 19th Century, including the creation of medium sized regular shaped fields and woodland plantations, particularly in the northern and eastern part of the area. To the south, around Boarhunt and Southwick, the landscape has evolved from the more piecemeal clearance of woodland, forming a mixture of enclosure patterns and associated ancient woodland, with small irregular fields some with wavy boundaries.

Landscape & Settlement Description

The landscape of this area has an ancient character, retaining historic landscape features and a network of ancient winding narrow lanes. Due to the informal piecemeal nature of woodland clearance, the landscape has a distinctive pattern of small irregular fields, with treed hedges forming boundaries, interspersed with small irregularly shaped woods and copses. The area also includes many meadows associated with the River Wallington and a strong hedgerow network, which provides a backdrop to more open fields and the historic landscape of Southwick Park.

There are a number of settlements in this area interspersed with the woodland. These vary significantly in form. The largest is Denmead, a nucleated settlement that originated on the spring line that has formed where the chalk uplands meet the clay lowlands. It is only in the past 40 years that this has expanded substantially though, consequently giving it a 20th Century character. The oldest settlement is the estate village of Southwick, which developed at the boundary of the Southwick Park. Soberton Heath, Hundred Acres and Boarhunt are examples of heath associated settlements with a typically linear form.

Key Issues

- Opportunities to protect and enhance, re-establish and link habitats and features characteristic of the Forest of Bere, including heaths, grasslands and ancient woodland.
- Suburbanised urban 'fringe' character of parts of the area, with assorted sheds, horse paddocks and fencing, neglect of hedgerows, small nurseries and tipping.
- Loss of rare heathland habitats and lack of appropriate heathland management.
- Impact of fertilisers and herbicides on unimproved acid grassland and meadows.
- Loss of semi - natural structure of ancient and ancient replanted woodland.
- Impact of modern land use on the historic Southwick Park.
- Localised intrusion of power lines and the busy B2177.

Landscape Strategies

- Increase awareness of the Forest of Bere
- Conserve and restore the structure and condition of the woodlands through appropriate management such as thinning, coppicing, replanting, ride and edge management and the removal of invasive alien species.
- Create a more heavily wooded matrix between woodland blocks such as West Walk and Creech Wood.
- Conserve semi-natural grassland through the promotion of extensive grassing systems and hay making without fertiliser or herbicide.
- Restore and enhance the biodiversity of arable farmland, by encouraging the retention of conservation headlands, wildlife strips and grass strips around fields, and the increased use of spring sown arable crops and retention of winter fallow fields.
- Identify and restore ancient species-rich hedgerows.
- Restore and appropriately manage former heathland areas, through clearance, grazing and controlled burning where appropriate.
- Create wetland habitats along the River Wallington valley.
- Improve habitat footpath linkages between Creech Wood and West Walk.
- Conserve and enhance the parkland associated with Southwick Park.
- Monitor the success of strategies by regular surveys of key species, particularly the distribution and abundance of those characteristic of unimproved grasslands and heaths.

Built Form Strategies

- Enhance the local urban edge, by planting locally indigenous hedgerows.
- Resist development, which further fragments the restoration of the former Forest of Bere, or suburbanises local settlements, such as that associated with 'horsiculture'.
- Minimise the impact of intrusive structures such as telecommunications masts and electricity pylons, through sensitive siting, screening and the use of underground cables.
- Respect the distinctive linear pattern of many of the heath-associated settlements.
- Respect the historic character of Southwick.
- Respect the distinctive relict pattern of smallholdings at Hundred Acres.
- Retain the rural character of the local minor roads within the character area.

Key Designations

● Conservation Areas

Southwick

● Scheduled Ancient Monuments

Southwick Brewhouse (Mon. No. 591 HA)

Southwick Priory (Mon. No. 204 HA)

Ringwork and bailey in Place Wood, 680m WSW of Wanstead Farm (Mon. No. 32552)

● SSSI's

Hook Heath Meadows

Lye Heath Marsh (Acid grassland/bog)

● SINC's

Kiln Copse; Forest Lodge Farm Pond / Meadow. Wickham Common; Walton Heath / Ashlands (north); West Walk; Rooksbury Park Plantation (NW & E); Wickham Meadow; Martin's Copse; Fullimore's Copse; Birching Copse; Orchard Copse; Grub & Mill Coppices; Gravelhole Copse; Moor Coppice; Dirtystyle Coppice; Whitehill Row (not on HCC list); Hone Copse; Goathouse Complex; Dradfield Copse; Hale Meadow; Staplecross Row; Dirty Ground Copse; Carman's Copse; Opposite Carmans Copse; Ashleydown Copse; Fodderhouse Copse; Hall's Copse; Charles Wood; Hipley Copse; Great Breach Row; Walton Heath / Ashlands / Staplecross (South); Marls and Stroud Coppices; Stroud Coppice Field; Perriges Coppice; Walton Pond; Goldsmith's Copse; Crooked Walk Meadow; Southwick Meadow; Commanders Field, HMS Dryad; Anells Copse; Mitchelland Farm Meadow; Mitchelland Copse; Mill Plain; Hoegate Common; Mill Copse; 9 x Lovelock Meadows; 5 x Lower Beckford Meadows; Wiggs Wood; Wynns Copse; Place Wood and Little Belney Copse; Creech

Walk West; Creech Walk Plantation; Creech Farm Copse; Wood; Hill Barn Meadows Areas 1 & 3; Creech Comphouse Moor Coppice; Creech Walk East; Vinnells Wood; Highwood Meadow; Anthill Farm Meadow; Anthill Common Areas 1 – 4; Inhams Lane Meadows 2, 4 & 5; Harts Copse / High Wood; Creech Edge Scrub; Mount Pleasant Meadow; Pitymoor Coppice; Sawyers Wood; Hookheath Alders; Hookheath Meadows G3, 4, 5 & 6; Hookheath Scrubs; Venables Coppice; Hazelhook Coppice; Broomfield House Copse; Drivetts Complex; Broomground & Potwell Coppices; Widley Walk Meadow; Pinsley Complex; Sheepwash, Tattle & Dunstand coppices; Piper's Hill Wood; Sandy & Aldermoor Coppices; Aldermoor Meadow; Lings Pond Meadow; Anmore Dell Meadow; Alsfordmoor Coppice; Purbrook Heath; Marrelsmoor Row; Marrelsmoor Coppice; Newlands and Plant Rows; Newlands Farm Meadow; Bucks Copse; Clamp Kiln Row; Ham Coppice; Castle Farm Meadow; Mitchelland Meadow; Assell's Meadow; Lovelocks Marsh (south); Lovelocks Meadow (OS 1330) South; Lovelocks Meadow (OS 1330) north; Lovelocks Meadow (OS 0357); Lower Beckford Meadow 24.

● Hampshire Register of Historic Parks And Gardens

West Lodge (Site No.1568) Pre 1810 Park

Southwick Park (Site No.1569) Deer Park

● Local Nature Reserves

West Walk

● Countryside Heritage Areas

Forest of Bere