

4.10. Bighton Woodlands Landscape Character Area



Near Upper Abbotstone Wood



Key Characteristics

- Varied, undulating topography, rising up from the Itchen Valley to the north-east, forming one of the highest points in the district.
- Mixed geology consisting of freely draining Upper Chalk, with areas of overlying Clay with Flints, and areas of loamy soils, which is reflected in the mixed land cover of arable agriculture and woodland.
- Well-treed area with strong field boundaries and large areas of woodland. Scattered remnants of assarted ancient woodland, many reduced by clearance in the 19th and 20th Centuries
- Medium to large fields with relatively straight boundaries generally formed through the enclosure of medieval open field systems, and subsequent 19th and 20th Century formal enclosure and field rationalisation.
- Remnant downland at Abbotstone Down.

- Long panoramic views from higher land, with open views elsewhere, enclosed by distant trees and hedgerows.
- Ancient, narrow, indirect lanes, often with hedgebanks, together with a large number of drove roads, tracks and footpaths, including the Wayfarer’s Walk.
- Evidence of long history of settlement, including Bronze Age barrows, Iron Age field systems and an Iron Age settlement.
- Tranquil and remote with no major roads and sparse settlement pattern, consisting of scattered farms, several small historic parks, two hamlets, Gundleton and Lower Lanham and the small village of Bighton.
- Traditional building construction and materials including red brick, colour-washed brick, timber-frame, thatch, flint, and clay tiles.

Landscape Types within the Area

Chalk & Clay (Woodland)	Chalk & Clay (Farmland)
Open Arable	Clay Plateau (Open)
Historic Parkland	

Settlement Types within the Area

Chalk Downland: Dry Valley	20 th /21 st Century
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Location and Boundaries

The Bighton Woodlands Landscape Character Area is located in the north-east of the district. Its northern and eastern boundaries are formed by the district boundaries with Basingstoke & Dean Borough and East Hampshire District. To both the south and west, the area is bounded by river valleys that form tributaries to the Itchen.

Formative Influences

The geology in this area consists of Upper Chalk but with occasional areas of Clay with Flints and clayey soil, particularly in the higher areas around Newmer Farm and around the well-treed areas of Bighton and Gundleton. The resulting landscape is an undulating mosaic of farmland, woodland and occasional remnants of calcareous grassland. The permeable character of the chalk means the area is well drained, with dry valleys, forming part of the catchment area of the Itchen. It, therefore, falls in height towards the valleys of the Candover Stream to the west and the stream at Bishop’s Sutton.

The present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the Bronze Age, when much of the original woodland cover was cleared for arable agriculture and grazing. There is evidence of prehistoric activity in the area, including Bronze Age barrows; Iron Age field systems; a Romano-British Iron Age settlement near Lower Lanham; an Iron Age hill fort at Oliver’s Battery;

the site of a Roman villa north of Bighton Wood and a Roman road near Upper Lanham Farm.

During medieval times, the area consisted of large areas of calcareous grassland, managed as open sheep pasture with relatively few trees and hedges. There is some evidence of early informal enclosure of these open field systems, although generally enclosure occurred by formal agreement in the 18th and 19th Centuries. The 20th Century saw major changes to the landscape of the area, as farming became predominantly arable and increasing areas of woodland were assarted. In the latter half of the century, increasing mechanisation meant that this was accompanied by field rationalisation, with a consequent loss of hedgerows and increase in field size.

Landscape & Settlement Description

This is an area with a strong historic rural character, consisting of largely arable farmland interspersed with remnants of the former woodland cover. The topography of the area is exceptionally undulating, influenced by two chalk river valleys forming tributaries of the River Itchen to the south and west, rising up to a plateau in the north east. The mixture of clay and chalk has also influenced the distribution of woodland, which is typically found on hilltops and may be dominated by either beech or oak. Consequently, the area benefits from a wide variety of long views, some being panoramic and others more enclosed by the landform and woodland.

Trees form an important part of the area, with Abbotstone Down, Godsfield Copse, Lower Lanham Copse and Sutton Beech Wood forming the largest areas. Other woodlands, such as Bighton Wood have significantly diminished in size during the 20th Century through assarting. A relatively high proportion of the woodland is ancient semi-natural or replanted woodland, including Sheep Wood at Abbotsdone Down; Godsfield Copse, Gascombs Copse, Sutton Wood, Hazel Wood and Sutton Beech Wood near Gundleton; Gulleys Wood at Soldridge and the remnants of Bighton Wood. Although woodland has diminished in the area, field boundaries are strong, containing numerous remnant woodland and coppice species.

Agriculture is predominantly arable in character, with medium to large fields with straight boundaries, although these tend to be smaller and more irregular around Gundleton and Lower Lanham.

There is a long history of settlement in the area, although it has retained its rural character. As well as scattered farms, there is one small village, Bighton and two hamlets, Gundleton, and Lower Lanham. Bighton has a strong historic character and has had little recent expansion. It is linear in form, relating to its location in a dry chalk valley. The majority of buildings use traditional building materials and methods, including brick, colour-washed brick, timber-frame and plaster thatch, flint, and clay tiles. Gundleton forms a more dispersed settlement, having developed in a hill side location during the 20th Century.

Routes within the area are ancient and rural, being narrow and indirect, and often having hedgebanks. Many of the most direct routes take the form of tracks and pedestrian 'lanes' and there are many footpaths and drove roads within the area. There are no major transport routes in or near the area, and consequently it is very remote and tranquil in character.

Key Issues

- Loss of hedgerows and woodland in late 20th century, combined with mechanical hedgerow management, leading to gappy hedges, with reduced visual amenity and wildlife corridor functions
- Increase in paddocks and 'horsiculture'
- Reduction in woodland biodiversity caused by lack of traditional woodland management in the 20th century.
- Conversion of much ancient semi-natural woodland to conifer plantation throughout the 20th Century.
- Use of inappropriate, non-native species for game cover
- Loss of calcareous grassland through reduced grazing pressure and conversion to arable
- Loss / reduction in field margins, including both permanent grass field margins and ploughed buffers with arable weeds
- Damage to archaeological sites through ploughing
- Protection of historic character of settlements and farms
- Development of large agricultural buildings
- Potential for nitrate/phosphate pollution of the River Itchen from agricultural chemicals, affecting human water supplies, commercially important fishing rights and nationally important chalk river wildlife
- Reduction in breeding success of farmland birds due to increase in winter crops harvested in early summer
- Reduced feeding opportunities for farmland species, due to increased concentration on arable farming and consequent loss of mixed farmland
- 'Rat runs' along narrow lanes

Landscape Strategies

- 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 alien species.
- Conserve and restore the tall, wide hedgerows and tree belts in the area, through appropriate

management and planting, to retain the existing landscape pattern and link existing areas of woodland and outlying hedgerows.

- Conserve the character of various archaeological sites, particularly within woodland and ploughed fields.
- Conserve the predominantly remote and quiet rural character of the area.
- Conserve the varied open and panoramic views throughout the area.
- Encourage environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural practices, to minimise fertiliser and soil run-off for example, which could lead to the pollution of the River Itchen and the chalk aquifer.
- 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, to sustain important arable weed flora and seed-eating birds, and especially halt the rapid decline of the stone curlew.
- Restore areas of arable farmland to permanent chalk grassland.
- Monitor declining farmland birds to measure the success of the biodiversity strategy.

Built Form Strategies

- Conserve the linear form and rural character of Bighton.
- Conserve the sparse scattered pattern of rural farm settlement.
- Respect the small-scale nature of existing dwellings.
- Integrate new development into the well-treed rural setting through the appropriate use of locally indigenous tree and hedge planting.
- Conserve and promote the use of local building materials such as brick, colour-washed brick, longstraw and combed wheat reed thatch, flint and clay tiles.
- Conserve and promote the use of traditional rural garden boundaries including palisade fencing, brick and flint walls, railings and hedgerows.
- Conserve the historic rural character of lanes, footpaths and drove roads throughout the area and resist any road improvements that would threaten these features.

Key Designations

- **Conservation Areas**
None
- **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**
Oliver's Battery: a hillfort on Abbotstone Down near Alresford (Mon. No. 24338)
Godsfield Chapel (Mon. No. 11 HA)
Roman villa N of Bighton Wood (Mon. No. 315 HA)
Bowl barrow 600m E of Upper Lanham Farm (Mon. No. 12143)
- **SSSIs**
None
- **SINCs**
Bugmore / Brick Kiln Copses (part); Godsfield Copse; Sheep Wood (Abbotstone Down); Abbotstone Down; Finchley Wood / Thorngrove Copse; Lower Abbotstone Wood & Broom Copse; Upper Lanham Copse (not on HCC list); Nettlebed Woods; Lower Lanham Copse (north and south); Bighton Woods; Stonyfield Copse; Sutton Wood and Gascombs Copse; Gullet Wood; Barton Copse; Devil Acre Copse.
- **Parks Listed in the Hampshire Register of Historic Parks and Gardens**
Armsworth Park, Old Alresford (site 1556) Post 1810 Park
Bighton House and Wood (site 1497) Post 1810 Park. c1844

4.11. Bramdean Woodlands Landscape Character Area



Bramdean, from Bramdean Church



Key Characteristics

- Undulating landform along the northern edge of the South Downs, closely related to the River Itchen valley and its tributaries and to the River Meon to the south east.
- Well-drained geology of upper chalk with areas of overlying clay. No visible surface water drainage other than occasional dewponds.
- Rural area with little modern intrusive development consisting of arable farmland defined by strong field boundaries frequently interspersed with scattered woodland
- Relatively high proportion of ancient woodland (much of which has been at least partially replanted with conifers), found particularly on hilltops and coinciding with areas of clay, such as Cheriton Wood. Due to the mixed geology, species are varied, including oak, beech, ash, Scots pine, holly and hazel coppice.
- Varied field size and shape, tending to be smaller around the settlements. These were predominantly enclosed informally in early post-medieval times.
- Bramdean Common, an unenclosed area of grassland and woodland. The wooded areas are designated as SINCs.

- Historic parks, both in the area (Brockwood Park and Woodcote Park) and directly adjoining it (Hinton Ampner Park, Tichborne Park, Ovington Park). This has given settlements such as Bramdean and Hinton Ampner a distinct parkland character with mature ornamental trees. Copper beeches associated with Brockwood Park line part of the A272.
- Views are often long but enclosed by woodland and undulating topography.
- Numerous footpaths, drove roads and pedestrian green lanes, connecting local settlements and linking to New Alresford via the Wayfarer’s Walk. Other lanes are narrow and indirect, with the A272 being the only major through-route.
- A long history of occupation, with numerous archaeological remains, including tumuli, barrows, the site of a Roman villa, a medieval park pale and ancient field systems.
- Few settlements, namely the small Domesday villages of Bramdean, Kilmeston and Hinton Ampner. Farms are sparsely scattered throughout the area and are particularly found in the south.
- Loosely structured villages, with no clear centre, all retaining a strong rural historic character with traditional building materials and methods and little modern expansion.

Landscape Types within the Area

Chalk & Clay (Woodland)	Chalk & Clay (Farmland)
Open Arable	Clay Plateau (Enclosed)
Clay Plateau (Open)	Historic Parkland

Settlement Types within the Area

- Chalk Downland: Dry Valley
- Chalk Downland: Hill Top

Location and Boundaries

This wooded undulating landscape character area lies to the east of the District, with the District boundary with East Hampshire District Council forming its eastern edge. The area forms part of the catchment area for the headwaters of the Itchen and the Bishop’s Sutton tributary forms its northern boundary. To the west and south of the character area, the more exposed arable downland of the northern slopes of the South Downs form the boundary

Formative Influences

The geology in this area consists of Upper Chalk but with frequent bands of Clay with Flints, particularly in the higher areas, around Cheriton Woods and Bramdean Common and to the east of the Itchen and south of Bramdean and Hinton Ampner. These clay areas tend to coincide with the higher land forming the valley sides of the River Itchen.

The present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the earlier prehistoric period when most of the original forest cover was probably cleared for arable agriculture and grazing, although many small areas of woodland have survived or have been replanted. There is much evidence of prehistoric activity in the area including Stone Age and Bronze Age barrows and a number of Iron Age enclosures. There is also evidence of an iron age settlement at Tichborne, a Roman villa near Bramdean and medieval park pale to the north of Bramdean Common. The three main settlements in the area, Kilmeston, Hinton Ampner and Bramdean are all recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 or earlier.

The farmland of the area has not been subject to parliamentary enclosure and the medieval open field systems and downland were most likely to have been enclosed by informal and formal agreement. This has resulted in fields with irregular, wavy boundaries, probably enclosed from late medieval to 17th/18th Centuries, although the later enclosures have resulted in straighter field boundaries. The larger fields are probably a result of 20th Century boundary loss and rationalisation.

Landscape & Settlement Description

This is an area with a strong historic rural character, consisting of largely arable farmland interspersed with areas of woodland. The topography of the area is undulating and varied, influenced by the northern slopes of the South Downs and the chalk valleys of the River Itchen and its tributaries. The mixture of clay and chalk has also influenced the distribution of woodland, which is often found on hilltops and may be dominated by either beech or oak.

Woodland forms an important part of the area. A large number of small woodlands are scattered throughout the area, enclosing views and giving it a remote, secluded feel, despite its proximity to Winchester and Alresford. Many of the woodlands are semi-natural ancient or replanted ancient woodland, and of significant historic and conservation value. Parts of Bramdean Common are ancient semi-natural woodland, but due to its long history of unenclosed grazing, the area supports all habitat gradations from woodland to grassland, producing a biodiversely rich mosaic.

Agriculture in this area is predominantly arable, with field sizes varying, the smallest being closest to settlements and largest located towards the downs to the south and west. Fields are enclosed by strong hedgerow boundaries or woodland edges, offering

the potential for important nature conservation value and visual enclosure.

There is a long history of settlement in the area, although it has retained its rural character. As well as scattered farms, there are the three small settlements of Kilmeston, Bramdean and Hinton Ampner. These villages have remained small and rural, with no recent expansion. All settlements are loosely clustered in form, but have no central core. They are all closely integrated with the surrounding farmland although their topographic location varies, with Bramdean lying in a dry valley, Kilmeston on the side of the downs and Hinton Ampner on the top of a hill. Both Bramdean and Hinton Ampner are strongly influenced by adjacent parkland landscapes, with a high proportion of large mature parkland trees, although the condition of some around Brockwood Park is declining.

Many buildings in the area date from the 18th century, with some dating back further. Building materials and methods are traditional, including timber frames, red and vitreous bricks, colour-washed brick and render, long straw thatch (especially in Hinton Ampner), flint and clay tiles. In the centre of the villages, brick and flint boundary walls are common, as are railings.

Routes within the area are ancient and rural, being narrow and indirect. Many of the most direct routes take the form of tracks and pedestrian 'lanes' and there are many footpaths within the area. Consequently the area is relatively tranquil, with the only main road through the area being the A272 Petersfield-Winchester road, with the A31 and A32 running along the northern and eastern boundaries.

Key Issues

- Potential impacts on the Itchen cSAC, arising from agriculture and development
- Loss of hedgerows during the second half of the 20th Century
- Declining hedgerow and woodland management
- Loss of calcareous grassland during the 20th Century
- Neglect of Brockwood Park
- Continued extensive management of Bramdean Common

Landscape Strategies

- Ensure that land-use changes in this area do not affect the Itchen and Meon. As the River Itchen is protected by European legislation, Winchester City Council is responsible for ensuring that the permissions it gives will not adversely affect the interest of the river, either alone, or in combination with other changes.
- 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 alien species.

- Restore replanted ancient woodland to a more semi-natural condition, and manage the regeneration of wood pasture at Kilmeston.
- Conserve hedgerows and tree belts, through appropriate management, to retain the existing landscape pattern and link existing areas of woodland and outlying hedgerows.
- Conserve the character of various archaeological sites, particularly those within woodland and ploughed fields, including Cheriton Battlefield.
- Protect Bramdean Common from enclosure to conserve its character and manage it extensively, as a whole entity, whilst still allowing the possibility of restoring grazing.
- Conserve the predominantly remote and quiet rural character of the area.
- Conserve the sheltered, wooded views throughout the area.
- Conserve the historic rural character of roads, lanes and tracks throughout the area and resist any road improvements, which would threaten these features.
- Enhance the landscape of historic parkland, such as Brockwood Park, through continued replacement tree planting and woodland management
- Encourage environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural practices, to minimise fertiliser and soil run-off for example, which could lead to the pollution of the River Itchen and to promote the growth of arable weeds in field margins and habitats for declining farmland birds.
- 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.
- Seek opportunities for the restoration of arable to permanent chalk downland

Built Form Strategies

- Conserve the loosely nucleated form and strong, rural historic character of Kilmeston, Bramdean and Hinton Ampner.
- Conserve the scattered pattern of rural farm settlement and respect the small-scale nature of existing dwellings.
- Integrate new development into the well-treed rural setting through the appropriate use of native tree and hedge planting
- Conserve and promote the use of local building materials such as red and vitrified brick, flint, clay

tiles, combed wheat reed and long straw thatch and slate.

- Conserve and promote the use of traditional rural garden boundaries including palisade fencing, brick and flint walls, railings and hedgerows.

Key Designations

- **East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**
- **Conservation Areas**
None
- **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**
Lippen Wood Roman villa
(Mon. No. 133 HA)

Long Barrow N of Lamborough Lane
(Mon. No. 12111)

Bramdean Roman Villa
(Mon. No. 209HA)
- **SSSIs**
None
- **SINCs**
The Rookery (part); Trodds Copse; Fulley Wood; Severington Farm Copse; Hookham Copse; Dark Copse; Bramdean Woods; Shorley Copse; Powell's Grove Copse; Durden Copse; Rabbit Copse; Newdown Copse; Lane End Down Copse; West Wood; Riversdown Wood (part); Bere Copse; Lippen Wood; Marldell Wood (not on HCC list); Hayling Wood and Little Hayling Wood; Railway Cutting – Great Headdon; Heart Copse; Shutts Copse.; Tichborne Down Golf Course; Bramdean Common; Bramdean Common – The Plantation; Cheriton Wood; Scrubs Copse; Sutton Park ; Inwood Copse; Moons Copse; West Wood Brake (not on HCC list); Brockwood Copse; Joan's Acre Wood; Blackhouse Copse; Godwins Plantation Meadow (not on HCC list);
- **Parks listed in the Hampshire Register of Historic Parks and Gardens**
Old Park Wood
(site 1498) Deer Park

Bramdean House
(site 1500) Early-Mid 18th Century (EH Grade II)

Brockwood Park (site 1501) Pre 1810 Park

Woodcote Manor House & Park
(site 1502) Pre 1810 Park

Hockley House
(site 1506) Post 1810 Park
- **Sites listed in the English Heritage Register of Historic Battlefields**
Cheriton Battlefield

4.12. East Winchester Downs Landscape Character Area



Chilcomb



Key Characteristics

- Topographically varied landscape with high open expansive areas of arable farmland at Longwood Warren, Gander Down and Twyford Down for example, punctuated by steep escarpments, with a distinctive wide low vale at Chilcomb.
- Upper Chalk geology, apart from the Vale of Chilcomb which lies on eroded softer Lower Chalk, enclosed by long winding escarpments of hard Middle Chalk.
- Free-draining area with no obvious surface water bodies and channels other than occasional dew ponds and sewage works’ ephemeral lake. Forms part of the River Itchen catchment area.
- Intensive arable farmland occasionally broken by shelterbelts and beech clumps. A field pattern strongly influenced by informal and formal enclosure followed by subsequent boundary loss and rationalisation, resulting in regular medium to large fields. In particular, this has resulted in the extensive prairie fields of Longwood Warren, returning the area to its former downland openness.
- Woodland is largely confined to the north-eastern corner of the character area, and includes semi-natural and replanted semi-natural ancient woodland and 19th Century plantations.
- Although there are no historic parks within the area, the ancient driveways to Avington Park in the Itchen Valley (Duke’s Drive and Temple Drive) form strong features within the local landscape.

- Important ecological sites include the calcareous grassland at St Catherine’s Hill and Cheesefoot Head (SSSI’s), and ancient semi-natural woodland at Magdalen Hill Down, Deacon Hill and Hampage Wood (SINC’s). These remnants of the pre-enclosure landscape provide reservoirs of biodiversity in an otherwise highly intensively farmed landscape.
- The variety in landform and tree cover within the character area has given rise to differing senses of enclosure throughout the character area, from the exposed, panoramic nature of the Downs, to the more sheltered intimate feel of Chilcomb, nestled at the base of Deacon Hill.
- Numerous historic features, including the prehistoric hillfort on St Catherine’s Hill, and the enclosures south of Twyford Down and south of Avington Park. Drove roads are also a common feature, such as the Dongas at St Catherine’s Hill.
- Routes, such as the Morestead Road and Alresford Road are generally fairly straight and direct, reflecting their Roman origins. The A272 follows the upper chalk ridgeline.
- Footpaths including sections of the South Downs Way and Wayfarers Walk give good access to the countryside.
- A sparsely populated area, the only settlements include the small nucleated Domesday villages of Chilcomb and Avington.

Landscape and Settlement Types within the Area

Open Arable	Open Arable (Exposed)
Chalk and Clay (Woodland)	Chalk and Clay (Farmland)
Scarps	

Settlement Types within the Area

Chalk Downland Dry Valley

Location and Boundaries

The East Winchester Downs Landscape Character Area lies to the east of the City of Winchester. The City and the Itchen valley form the northern and western boundaries of the character area. Part of the area includes the western extent of the chalk escarpment within the East Hampshire AONB. The Eastern boundary adjoins the Bramdean Woodlands Landscape Character Area, which has a greater

occurrence of tree cover. To the south lies the South Winchester Downs Landscape Character Area, the boundary is defined by a large area of plantation woodlands.

Formative Influences

The character of the East Winchester Downs area is strongly influenced by its chalk geology. The A272 ridgeline forms the western end of a series of intermittent but prominent ridgelines which follow the Meon anticline, with a series of hills, the most westerly one being St. Catherine's Hill. Erosion of the chalk has resulted in areas of lower lying land contained by inward facing escarpments, such as the Vale of Chilcomb which is contained by the escarpments of Deacon Hill and Magdalen Hill Down.

There is evidence of prehistoric settlement within the area, with Bronze Age barrows and Iron Age field systems and hill forts, for example at St Catherine's Hill. At this time, extensive woodland clearance first enabled the chalk downs to be grazed. This forest clearance continued through Roman occupation forming extensive areas of arable farmland followed by a gradual transition to sheep farming. Field enclosure began in the medieval period but its main impact was between the 17th and 19th Century, when the Parliamentary Enclosure Acts sanctioned the conversion of common open fields and forests into privately owned fields. The agricultural revolution saw the increase in arable production and the loss of downland pasture. More recently, increased mechanisation, larger fields, and industrial scale farm buildings have had a significant impact on these open chalk downland areas, increasing their degree of exposure. The M3 cutting has had a severe impact.

Landscape & Settlement Description

The East Winchester Downs character area is one of contrasts. It predominantly comprises high rolling downs and extensive areas of arable farmland such as at Longwood Warren, although it also contains some lower lying areas, in particular the Vale of Chilcomb. Intermittent steep dramatic long winding escarpments, two of which enclose the Vale of Chilcomb; Magdalen Hill and Deacon Hill, punctuate this landscape. Although woodland and scrub occurs on sections of these steep escarpments, many consist of significant areas of protected unimproved chalk grassland, for example at Cheesefoot Head and St Catherine's Hill.

The north east corner of the character area is influenced by more clayey soils, and forms a more wooded and enclosed landscape, which falls gently towards the River Itchen. Here, some areas of woodland are ancient in origin, for example Hampage Wood. However, to the north of Cheesefoot Head more recently planted plantations are characteristic, such as Black Bushes Clump, Great Clump, Long Clump and Lodge Clump.

The field pattern within the character area varies from medium-sized fields with a fairly well-treed hedgerow structure around Hampage Farm, to large or 'prairie'

like fields, with a regular clipped or absent hedgerow structure around Longwood Warren and Gander Down.

Though very rural in character and sparsely populated, there is a long history of settlement within the area, including the prehistoric hillfort on St Catherine's Hill, the enclosures south of Twyford Down and south of Avington Park, thought to be Roman in origin, plus numerous tumuli and barrows. Today, Chilcomb is the only village within the area; other settlement being limited to within scattered farms located in sheltered positions with valleys or at base of scarps.

There are some major routes which pass through the character area, including the M3, which to some extent cuts off St Catherine's Hill from the rest of the character area. The A272 is more rural in character and follows the main ridgeline through the area. Other secondary routes include the Roman routes of the Alresford Road and the Morestead Road, which are typically straight. The area is also characterised by rural tracks, lanes and drove roads connecting roads and farms and linking them with Winchester and Alresford.

Key Issues

- Opportunities for the restoration of arable to chalk downland
- Potential adverse impacts arising from agricultural intensification
- Opportunities for restoration of replanted ancient woodland to a more semi-natural character
- Rectilinear form of recently established woodland blocks and shelterbelts
- Lack of, or inappropriate management of, woodland cover and tree clumps
- Visual impact of prominent structures on skyline such as telecommunication masts and satellite dishes
- Management of remnants of species-rich calcareous grassland
- Visual impact of urban influence of Winchester, such as the dance festival at Cheesefoot
- Damage by four-wheel drive vehicles
- Visitor pressure to key locations such as St Catherine's Hill and Cheesefoot Head
- Impact of traffic on rural commuter routes such as the Morestead Road

Landscape Strategies

- Conserve and enhance the restored chalk downland on land adjoining Magdalen Hill. This in compensation for loss of species-rich grassland due to development elsewhere in the district and should be monitored, so that similar opportunities to extend existing areas of wildlife interest can be taken with minimum risk.

- Restore and enhance existing hedgerow structures through replanting (where appropriate) and management, whilst retaining the openness of the downland.
- Encourage appropriate management of chalk grassland roadside verges.
- Conserve and restore the structure and condition of the ancient woodland through appropriate management such as thinning, coppicing, replanting, ride and edge management and removal of invasive alien species.
- Encourage any new woodland planting to use locally indigenous species and to respond positively to the contours and landform.
- Encourage environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural practices, to minimise fertiliser and soil run-off for example, which could lead to the pollution of watercourses.
- 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.
- Restore scarps to semi-natural grassland, by removal of plantation trees or restoration of appropriate management.
- Monitor the chalk grassland and invertebrates on restored grassland on the land adjoining Magdalene Hill, so that similar opportunities to extend existing areas of wildlife interest can be taken with minimum risk.

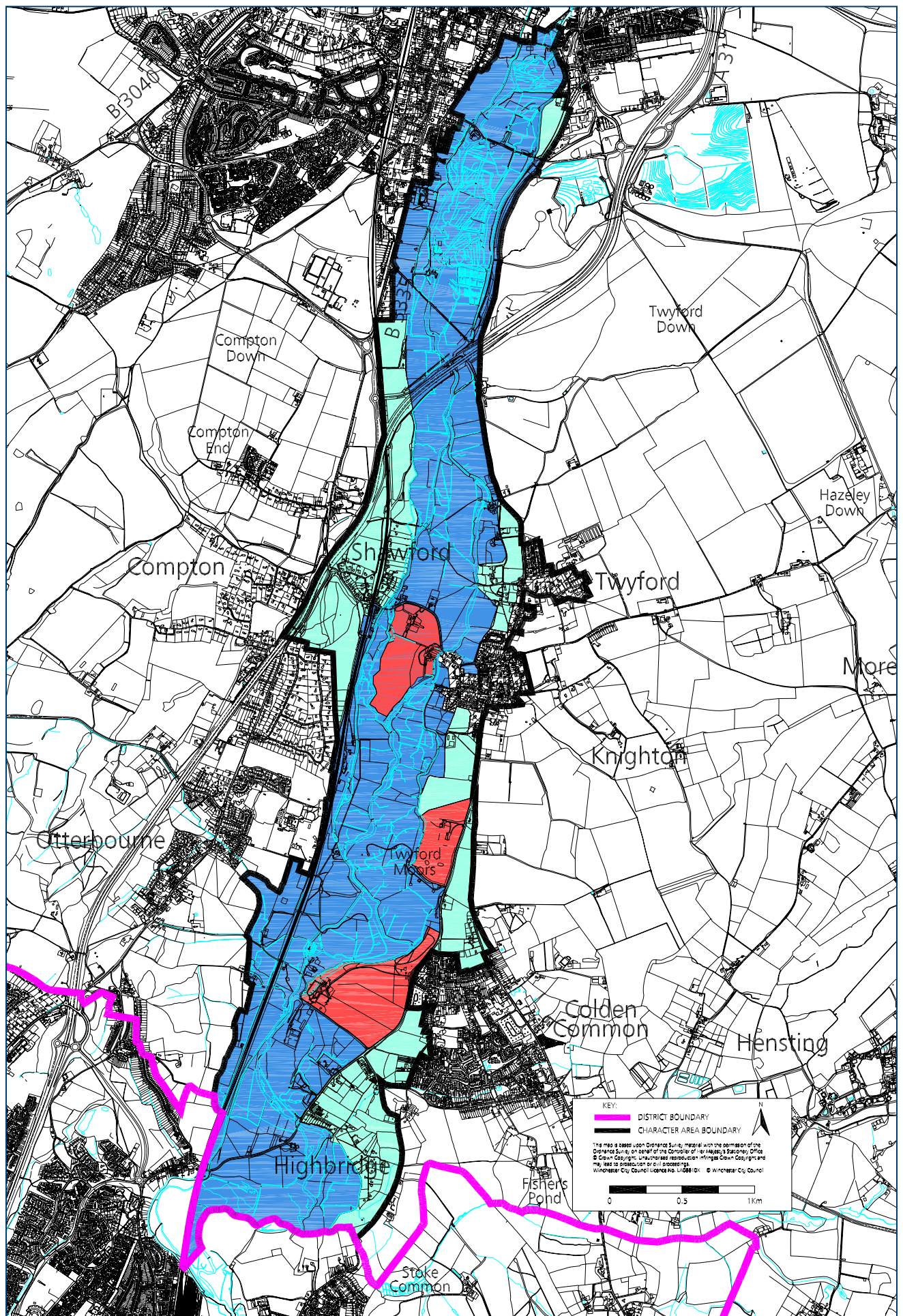
Built Form Strategies

- Sensitively locate new development to avoid prominent ridgelines and plant locally indigenous species where appropriate.
- Conserve traditional construction details and local building materials such as flint, brick, clay plain tiles and either long straw or combed wheat reed thatch, and promote their use in any new development where appropriate.
- Conserve the nucleated form and rural character of Chilcomb, and important open views of the village (and its landmark church) from surrounding escarpments and from Winchester.
- Conserve the scattered pattern and sparsely populated rural character of the area.
- Retain the rural character of the villages, roads and lanes throughout the area, avoiding and removing insensitive improvements and signage where possible. Encourage the use of traditional flint walling or indigenous hedged garden boundaries.
- Conserve the routes and character of the historic tracks and drove roads

- Minimise the impact of intrusive structures (eg. telecommunications masts) through sensitive siting and screening with planting

Key Designations

- **East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**
- **Conservation Areas** Avington
- **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**
 - Lynchets on north west spur of Twyford Down (Mon. No. 31164)
 - St Catherine's Hill hillfort (Mon. No.31165)
 - Romano-British enclosure and later hollow ways on Twyford Down (Mon. No.31163)
 - Roman road E of St Catherine's Hill (Mon. No. 543 HA)
 - Pumping station (Mon. No.501HA)
 - Two bowl barrows 200m E of Twyford pumping station (Mon. No.12138)
 - Cross Dyke 720m west of Cheesefoot Head (Mon. No. 34143)
 - Three bowl barrows on Fawley Down, 580m west of Cheesefoot Head (Mon. No.34142)
 - Circular and rectangular enclosures (Mon. No.553 HA)
 - Bell barrow, bowl barrow and regular aggregate field system E of Ganderdown Farm (Mon. No.32560)
 - Round barrow cemetery on Magdalen Hill Down (Mon. No. 32543)
 - Bowl barrow at the E end of Magdalen Hill Down (Mon. No.12140)
 - Bowl barrow on Telegraph Hill (Mon. No.12160)
 - Alresford Drive earthworks, Avington (Mon. No.169 HA)
- **SSSI's**
 - Cheesefoot Head; St Catherines Hill.
- **SINC's**
 - Hampage Wood; Little Hampage Wood; Twyford Waterworks Meadows; Hazeley Copse; Chilcomb Cutting (not on HCC list); Longwood Warren; Hockley Golf Course. Magdalene Hill Down; Deacon Hill; Chilcomb Wood and downland; Morestead Down; Cockscomb Hill (not on HCC list).
- **Parks listed in the Hampshire Register of Historic Parks and Gardens**
 - None
- **Local Nature Reserves**
 - St Catherine's Hill, Winchester
- **Countryside Heritage Area**
 - Itchen Valley



4.13. Lower Itchen Valley Landscape Character Area



River Itchen at Brambridge Park



Key Characteristics

- Wide flat, low-lying floodplain with gently rising valley sides channel containing river with many meanders and braided sections
- The area includes a transition in the underlying geology, with the northern valley sides lying on chalk and the southern ones lying on clay, with alluvium based soils in the valley floodplain.
- The alluvium-based soils in the valley floor have provided for both improved and unimproved nutrient rich pasture for sheep, cattle and more latterly horse grazing.
- A well treed character, particularly in association with historic parkland. Individual specimens and belts of trees are commonly located along the river and its tributaries and on the valley sides.
- A fairly irregular field pattern largely made up of paddocks and pasture resulting from the enclosure of historic water meadows.
- Historic features associated with the presence of the river and the Itchen Navigation include water mills, locks, carriers and drains from the flood meadow system and historic parks such as Brambridge Park and Shawford Park.
- Habitats of national and European ecological importance including the clear alkaline river, fen/carr/swamp/reedbed, unimproved neutral

grassland, calcareous grassland, standing open water, ephemeral headwaters and ancient semi-natural woodlands. The watercourse and banks are designated as a SSSI and the watercourse has also been designated as a cSAC. Unimproved neutral grassland at Shawford Down is designated as a SIN.

- An enclosed and sheltered feel, in stark contrast to the open arable landscape to the east and west of the character area.
- Important landmark buildings and views such as St Cross Hospital and Twyford Church and the view from Shawford Down across the river valley to Twyford. This landscape provides the immediate setting for Winchester.
- The river valley provides a transport corridor and includes several 'B' roads, a main line rail line, numerous footpaths including the Itchen Way and the historic course of the Itchen Navigation. In particular, the Hockley viaduct is an important landmark.
- Valley side settlements include Twyford, a nucleated settlement that developed at a river crossing point and Shawford, a village which developed in Victorian times with the advent of the railway station.

Landscape Types within the Area

River Valley Side River Valley Floor
Historic Parkland

Settlement Types within the Area

Chalk River Valley Victorian Railway

Location and Boundaries

The Lower Itchen Valley Character Area lies to the south of Winchester. It starts within the built up area of the City and extends in a linear form southward, towards the district boundary with Eastleigh Borough

Council. The character area is strongly defined by the topography of the river valley and its boundaries are formed by its visual envelope, which often coincides with the M3 Motorway and the B3335 and the built edge of Colden Common and South Down.

Formative Influences

The character of this area has been strongly influenced by the presence of the river, which has resulted in a mixed landscape of pasture, settlements and woodlands set within a varying topography. To the north of the area, the underlying chalk geology has allowed the development of a meandering river set

within a relatively wide, open, flat flood plain with steep valley sides. Further south, however, between Otterbourne and Colden Common, the underlying clays have resulted in a more enclosed landscape with more trees but much shallower valley sides, rising almost imperceptibly in places, for example along Kiln Lane.

The landscape has also been influenced by its historical use. From post-medieval times, in particular between 1650 and 1850, the flood plain would have been used as water meadows. These were periodically flooded, to allow the nutrient rich waters to fertilise and warm the land, to provide rich alluvium soils. With the introduction of new farming techniques in the mid 19th Century, such as chemical fertilisers, water meadows fell into decline and only a few survive in tact, such as those to the West of St Catherine's Hill and south of Lords Wood. The pattern of the landscape is still evident today in features such as the head mains, carriers, drains, ridge and furrow earthworks and weirs. Many of today's paddocks and pastures are a result of the enclosure of meadows and other pastures along the valley floor.

Landscape & Settlement Description

The character area comprises a wide flat river valley flood plain and valley sides. The River Itchen is distinctly meandering within this area and has many tributaries. The valley floor and sides provide a setting for historic parks including Shawford Park and Brambridge Park on the valley floor and Twyford Moors and Twyford Lodge along the valley side. Although there are numerous settlements close to the area only two settlements, Twyford and Shawford, are directly related physically and historically to the river, which has provided both a source of energy for water mills as well as a suitable river crossing point. The village of Twyford is a typical chalk valley side settlement, having originated in Anglo Saxon times and the river has made a considerable contribution to its economy. The Domesday book lists four flour mills in Twyford and together with fishing rights and tolls, these were an important source of income. The character of Shawford has been more influenced by the railway and although the village originated in early medieval times it has particularly developed since the construction of its railway station in Victorian times.

The river valley corridor is important for transport routes and includes the Southampton-London railway line along its western valley side, the B3335 road on its eastern side and the canal, the 'Itchen Navigation', which functioned until the mid 19th Century. It is also a popular amenity for walkers, with numerous footpaths including the 'Itchen Way', which follows the canal tow path for most of its course from Winchester to Southampton.

The landscape character area is of significant ecological importance, both for its aquatic species and its unimproved chalk grassland, such as at Shawford Down. The Itchen has been identified as a candidate Special Area for Conservation (cSAC), as it is considered to be one of the best examples of a chalk

river habitat in Europe. As such it is protected by the 1994 Habitats Regulations. Winchester District Council is the authority which administers these regulations in respect of most planning applications. The Council is therefore responsible to the UK government, and ultimately the European Council for the conservation of the Itchen at favourable conservation status. English Nature is the statutory authority that is required to provide advice on the implications of this legislation.

Key Issues

- Maintenance of the Itchen cSAC favourable conservation status
- Pollution of river water from agricultural chemicals (including watercress farms)
- Silt deposition in the river as a result of the ploughing of permanent pasture
- Potential impacts of development on the cSAC
- Under-management of the Itchen Navigation
- Loss of meadows and lack of appropriate management of unimproved neutral grassland.
- Under-management of historic parkland trees
- Loss of parkland pasture
- Suburbanisation and loss of tranquillity within the character area
- Visual intrusion of detractors such as pylons, paddock fencing, and industrial buildings
- Fragmentation and neglect of hedgerows and wet woodlands
- Artificial changes to river course
- Reduction in biodiversity through intensive agricultural practices
- Protection of historic character of settlements
- Decline of the Hockley viaduct
- Water abstraction, treatment and flooding

Landscape Strategies

- Co-ordination of Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment to enable the effects of changes on the integrity of the Itchen cSAC to be taken into account, including co-ordination of river users to feed into the SEA and enable ongoing monitoring of the favourable status of the cSAC.
- Consult English Nature on planning applications, to seek advice on likely significant impacts on the integrity of the cSAC.
- Restore and maintain the Itchen Navigation and its banks.
- Conserve and restore the structure of hedgerows and wet woodland through appropriate management such as thinning, coppicing, replanting and the removal of invasive alien species to retain the existing landscape pattern.

- Replanting should use locally indigenous species, such as ash, willow and poplar on the valley floor and oak and beech on the valley side. This would also be an area suitable for the reintroduction of native black poplar, *Populus nigra*.
- Restore and enhance unimproved neutral grassland through appropriate management, with appropriate grazing uses, and retain as long-term pasture or traditional hay meadows.
- Conserve and enhance water meadows through traditional management and the restoration of head mains, carriers, drains, ridge and furrow earthworks and weirs.
- Conserve the rich bio-diversity associated with the clear spring water.
- Encourage environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural practices, to minimise fertiliser and soil run-off for example, which could lead to the pollution of the River Itchen and the chalk aquifer.
- Conserve the varied nature of views throughout the area, particularly those of the river.
- Conserve and restore the landscape and built features of the historic parks as appropriate, in particular through continued replacement tree planting, woodland management and the restoration of pasture.

Built Form Strategies

- Conserve the rural character of the landscape and resist development that would result in further suburbanisation of the character area.
- Protect and enhance the rural setting of settlements within the character area, by resisting inappropriate development or development in unsuitable locations.
- Respect the valley side settlement pattern and small scale of the existing development within the character area.
- Encourage the restoration of the Hockely viaduct as an important feature in the landscape
- Conserve local traditional building form and materials such as red brick, white colour-washed brick, flint, clay plain tiles and promote their use in any new development.
- Conserve and restore river-associated features, such as mills and bridges.
- Conserve traditional garden and parkland boundaries such as brick and flint walls, palisade fencing, railings and non-coniferous (with the exception of Yew) hedging, and promote their use in any new development.
- Integrate new development with the surrounding landscape by providing locally indigenous planting, as appropriate.

Key Designations

- **Conservation Areas**
Twyford
- **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**
Moated site at Otterbourne Manor (Mon. No.12055)
Bowl barrow 75m W of Itchen Cottages (Mon. No.12120)
Moated site 300m SE of Compton House (Mon. No.12059)
- **SSSI's**
River Itchen
Braids of the River Itchen SSSI run along the edges of Shawford Park, Twyford Moors House and Brambridge Park.
- **SINC's**
Shawford Down; two non-SSSI channels of the Itchen (not on the HCC list)
- **candidate SAC's**
River Itchen
- **Parks listed in the Hampshire Register of Historic Parks and Gardens**
Brambridge Park, Colden Common (site1797) Pre 1810 Park
Shawford House, Twyford (site 1509) Pre 1810 Park
Twyford Lodge, Twyford (site1582) Pre 1810 Park
Twyford Moors, Twyford (site 1585) Post 1810 Park
- **Countryside Heritage Area**
Itchen Valley