

## 4.14. Cranbury Woodlands Landscape Character Area



South of Hursley, looking towards Ampfield Wood



### Key Characteristics

- Undulating ridge running in a north-west to south-east direction to the north of Hiltingbury, coinciding with a geology of clay and sand.
- Numerous streams, ponds and springs, including the Bourne stream at Otterbourne.
- A mosaic of woodland, pasture, parkland and arable fields, giving short, enclosed views.
- Fields are small to medium, generally irregular in shape but with straight boundaries, resulting from the assarting of woodlands from medieval times and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century enclosure of commons.
- Extensive areas of irregular, assarted, woodland often comprising semi-natural ancient woodland and replanted ancient woodland.
- The varied geology and soils of the area has resulted in a variety of tree species present in the

woodlands, including oak, sweet chestnut and beech, together with rare areas of small-leaf lime coppice at Ampfield Wood and oak coppice at Otterbourne Park Wood.

- Historic 18<sup>th</sup> Century park of Cranbury lies within the area, together with part of the medieval Merton Castle deer park.
- Relatively few public footpaths, tracks or lanes. The M3 motorway bisects the area to the east, and the Southampton-London railway line runs just beyond the eastern end of the area. Consequently, although visually remote, it is not tranquil.
- The area is sparsely settled, being dominated by woodland and parkland. Otterbourne forms the only settlement, having a relatively linear form that has developed along the chalk-clay spring line, particularly expanding in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

### Landscape Types within the Area

Mixed Farmland & Woodland      Pasture on Clay  
(Enclosed)

Historic Parkland

### Settlement Types within the Area

Chalk-clay spring-line

### Location and Boundaries

The Cranbury Woodlands Landscape Character Area lies to the north of Hiltingbury and Chandlers Ford, forming a boundary with Eastleigh Borough Council. It stretches from the Itchen Valley, east of Otterbourne, to Ampfield Wood in the west. The northern boundary of the Character Area is formed by the more open downland and parkland of the Hursley Scarpland Landscape Character Area.

### Formative Influences

The geology of this area forms a sharp contrast to the Upper Chalk that forms the downland to the north. It consists of a series of parallel bands of underlying

sands and clays, from Reading Beds (mottled clay and sand), through London Clay to Lower Bagshot sands, as well as gravels associated with the River Itchen. The relationship of the clay with the adjacent chalk has resulted in a series of springs along this boundary, together with a network of small streams, ditches and ponds. The varied geology has also resulted in a mosaic of woodland, meadows and a variety of plant species.

The area has probably been settled since the Iron Age, with Cranbury Park developing on the site of an Iron Age fort. There is also evidence of Roman settlement, near Matthew's Copse, and Roman roads, including the Otterbourne–New Forest route and the Winchester–Bitterne route. Almost all this area was probably part of the Forest of Bere-Ashley, which was subject to Forest Law in medieval times, being managed primarily for game, but minor rights (such as grazing) being granted by favour of the Lord. The area has retained its wooded character although settlements have developed (e.g. Otterbourne), one of which is now deserted. The majority of change in the

landscape has occurred since the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, with the development of Cranbury Park, and the subsequent enclosure of heathland at Ampfield Wood.

### **Landscape & Settlement Description**

This character area forms an undulating ridge between the suburban area of Hiltingbury to the south and the chalk downlands surrounding Hursley to the north. The landscape is characterised by a high proportion of woodland, much of it semi-natural ancient woodland (Windmill Copse, Woodend Copse, Great Moorlands Copse, Freemantles Copse, Otterbourne Park Wood) and replanted ancient woodland (Ampfield Wood). Other areas of woodland were converted to plantations in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Areas of agricultural land and parkland are interspersed with woodland, forming a sheltered, enclosed rural mosaic with occasional longer views.

Cranbury Park dates from the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century and covers a large proportion of the area, surrounded by a heavily wooded boundary. The varied soil type in this area has resulted in a mixture of woodland species, including sweet chestnut, birch, oak, and beech. Historically the forest formed part of a vast tract of heathland and woodland which included the New Forest. Otterbourne Common is the only unenclosed remnant of this, although commoners rights have lapsed even there.

Fields in the area tend to be relatively small meadows, often being assarts from the Forest. To the north, an area of relatively regular fields is associated with formal enclosure in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Hedgerows here are predominantly hawthorn with standard oak trees. These trees tend to be of a similar age and many are in decline. It is therefore important that additional replacements are provided. Elsewhere fields are associated with earlier informal enclosure, having less regular boundaries with a wider variety of species including hazel, hawthorn, hornbeam, dog rose, goat willow, ash and field maple. In some areas gorse and bracken are also present.

The predominance of clay in this area has resulted in the presence of ponds, streams and springs in contrast to the chalk uplands to the north. It is likely that the village of Otterbourne developed in response to the proximity of these water sources as well as the adjacent River Itchen. Despite evolving along a Roman road and having a core of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century dwellings, the village is dominated by 20<sup>th</sup> Century development. It has evolved in a nucleated, linear form between the M3 and the railway, roughly parallel to the Itchen. The village, however, is visually and physically separated from the river. An adjacent medieval settlement, close to the site of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century St Matthew's church, has since been deserted.

Given the high proportion of recent dwellings, construction materials are generally modern, although local brick and flint are used on some older dwellings

together with slate roofing.

The high proportion of trees gives the area a visually remote feel, with Otterbourne forming the only settlement. Due to its proximity to Eastleigh and Winchester, however, the area is heavily influenced by aural intrusion from the M3 motorway and Southampton-London railway line, both of which bisect the area to its northern end. The proximity of Southampton Airport to the south also reduces the perceived remoteness of the area.

### **Key Issues**

- Fragmentation of woodlands and associated habitats
- Opportunity for the restoration of conifer plantations to semi-natural conditions on ancient woodland sites
- Suburbanisation
- Visual and aural intrusion of M3 motorway and Southampton-London railway line
- Visual intrusion of overhead cables
- Improvement of grass through fertiliser and herbicide use

### **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 alien species. Replanting should use locally indigenous species.

- Encourage extensive management in large woodland blocks, to mimic current conditions in the New Forest and recognise the historic links between it and the Forest of Bere-Ashley
- Protect and conserve hedgerows through appropriate management. Replant hedgerows where they have been lost, or have gaps, to retain the existing landscape pattern. Plant additional hedgerow trees where existing trees have been lost or are over-mature.
- Conserve and enhance the unenclosed, heathy character of Otterbourne Common by the removal of recent woodland / scrub.
- Conserve the generally enclosed, varied views throughout the area
- Improve agricultural practices to minimise chemical run-off, which could lead to the pollution of the River Test and River Itchen and to a reduction in biodiversity.

### **Built Form Strategies**

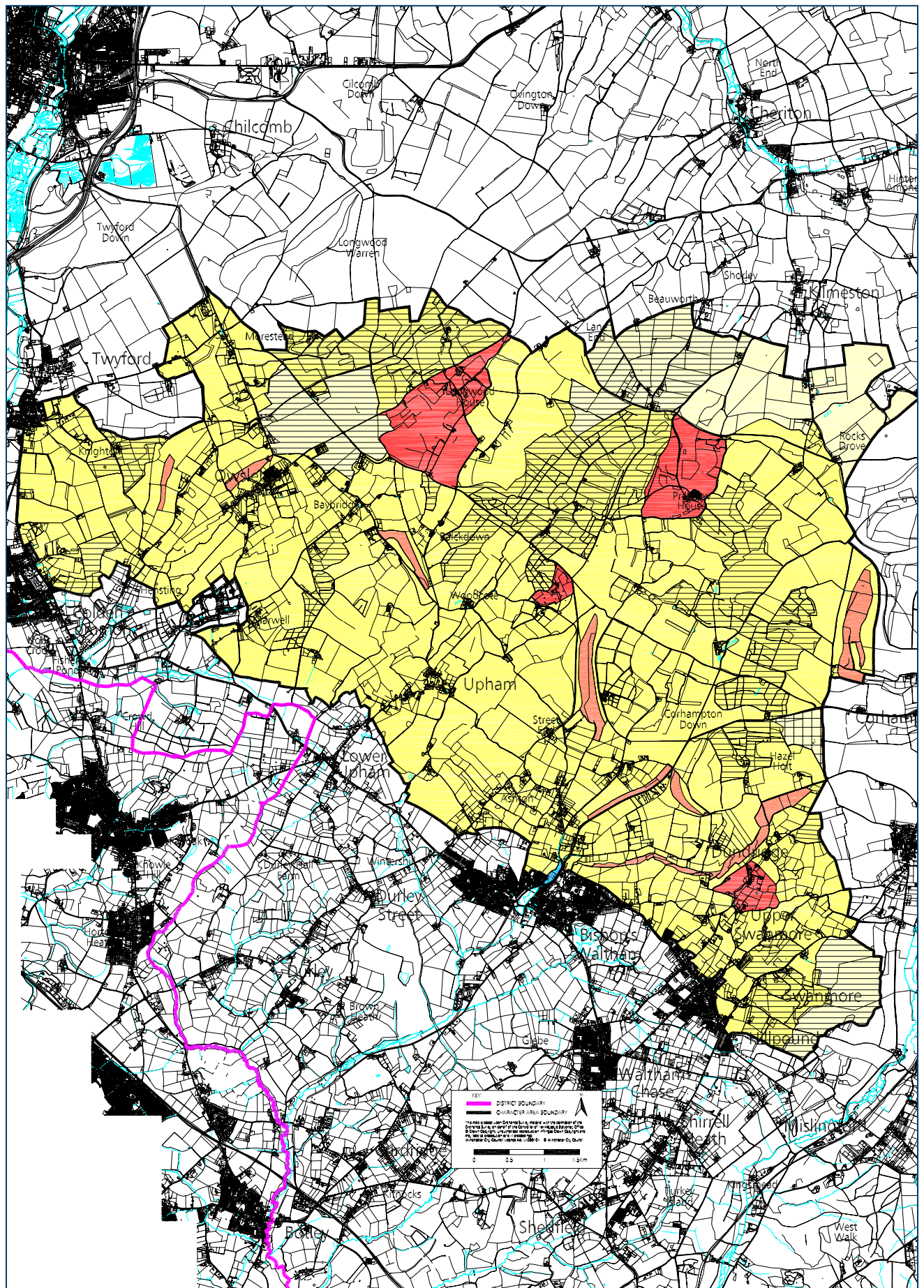
- Conserve the linear nucleated form of Otterbourne.
- Conserve the scattered pattern of rural farm and parkland settlement.

- Respect the small-scale nature of existing dwellings.
- Integrate new dwellings into the well-treed rural setting through the careful siting and the use of locally indigenous tree and hedge planting.
- Conserve and promote the use of local building materials such as red brick, painted brick, vitrified brick, flint and slate.
- Conserve and promote the use of traditional rural garden and parkland boundaries including palisade fencing, brick walls and hedgerows.

## Key Designations

- **Ampfield Countryside Heritage Area**
- **Conservation Areas**  
None
- **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**  
Park pale to the north, west and south west of Hursley Park (Mon. No. 34132)
- **SSSIs**  
Ratlake Meadows
- **SINCs**  
Ampfield Wood (part); Petty Priest Copse; Deer Park Copse (not on HCC list); Upper Ratlake Farm (northern meadow); Bailey's Paddock / Roundridge Mead; Bunstead Farm Copse; Gully Field, Ladwell; Barn Copse; Blacklands Row (not on HCC list); Long Meadow, Ladwell; Strowden's Copse Belt; Wells Row; Great Moorlands Copse Complex (part) in Cranbury Park; Oakwood Copse; Sparrowgrove Copse; Long Mead; Otterbourne Common; Otterbourne Hill Common; Otterbourne Wood; Little Headlands Copse (not on HCC list); Kents Copse; Snows Copse Meadow
- **Parks listed in the Hampshire Register of Parks and Gardens**  
Cranbury Park (site 1533. English Heritage Grade II\* Listed Park)  
Otterbourne House (site 1561)
- **Countryside Heritage Areas**  
Ampfield





4.15. South Winchester Downs Landscape Character Area



From Morestead, looking north



Key Characteristics

- Large area of tranquil, undulating chalk downs, stretching from Winchester to the Meon Valley, forming the southern boundary of the eastern end of the South Downs.
- Well-drained area of upper chalk with occasional areas of Clay with Flints and thin calcareous topsoil. The landscape consequently has numerous hills, dry valleys, scarps and combes giving some long panoramic views towards the Isle of Wight and Fawley oil refinery for example, as well as views of a more enclosed intimate nature.
- Remote, rural landscape of predominantly arable farmland with some mixed farming. The fields are often medium in size and were generally enclosed by informal means in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, although later rationalisation has resulted in larger, more regular fields. Hedgerows are generally strong, often with mature trees.
- Significant areas of woodland, from small copses, game spinneys and chalk dells, to larger woods, a number of which comprise ancient semi-natural and replanted woodland. Some also show evidence of assarting. Beech and ash are characteristic tree species of the area, together with some oak and yew. Wooded scarps ('hangers') are also characteristic of the area. These wooded areas provide an important ecological corridor across much of the northern part of the area.

- Remnant downland with areas of calcareous grassland on scarps
- Historic parkland and houses, including Preshaw House, Belmore house and Longwood Park.
- Long history of settlement including Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age sites and deserted medieval village of Lomer.
- Well-connected network of footpaths, tracks, drove roads and winding narrow lanes, together with straight sections of Roman Road. Footpaths include Wayfarer's Walk, Monarch's Way, Pilgrims Way, South Downs Way and Kings Way.
- Accessible countryside for leisure pursuits including footpaths, bridleways, gallops (e.g. Stephens Castle Down), motor cycle scrambles (e.g. Morestead), shooting (e.g. Longwood) and golf (e.g. Corhampton Down)
- Numerous scattered farms, hamlets and villages generally retaining a remote, rural, historic character.
- Settlements are small and loosely structured, either located on hill tops, (Owslebury, Upham, Ashton, and Upper Swanmore) or in sheltered valleys (Morestead, Dean and Dunderidge). These are generally well integrated with the landscape, screened by its topography and mature trees, as is Bishop's Waltham to the south of the area. Traditional building features and methods, including timber frames, flint, thatch, red brick, painted brick, vitrified brick, weatherboard (barns), clay tiles, thatch and slate

Landscape Types within the Area:

Open Arable	Open Arable (Exposed)
Chalk & Clay (Farmland)	Chalk & Clay (Woodland)
Scarps	Historic parkland

Settlement Types within the Area:

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

Location and Boundaries

The South Winchester Downs Landscape Character Area covers a large area of chalk downland, stretching from Twyford in the west to Swanmore in the east. Much of the northern half of the area lies within the East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Its southern boundary is formed by the abrupt change in geology to the lower lying clays to the south of the district. To the north-west, the boundary with the

adjacent landscape character area is defined by a number of plantation woodlands and the landscape is far more exposed and rolling. To the north-east, areas of clay overlying the chalk have formed a more wooded area. To the east, the visual envelope of the Meon Valley forms a topographically distinct area.

### **Formative Influences**

The geology of this area consists almost entirely of Upper Chalk, with occasional areas of clay with Flints to the south. The permeable nature of this geology has resulted in a rolling well-drained topography, associated with dry valleys, combes and escarpments and no surface water streams.

The formation of the present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the Bronze Age, when much of the original forest cover was probably cleared for arable, agriculture and grazing. However, the downland is still characterised by a high proportion of woodland, much of it ancient, and often associated with the areas of more clayey soil.

During medieval times the area would have contained much open sheep pasture. Subsequently, the assarting of woodlands and the informal enclosure of fields in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century followed by the loss of field boundaries in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has resulted in the field patterns seen today.

### **Landscape & Settlement Description**

This is an area with a strong rural character. The combination of numerous areas of woodland and arable fields; small settlements and farms and an undulating landscape has combined to provide an area of much variety and interest. The frequent hills, ridges and escarpments provide the opportunity for numerous views, often panoramic and extending as far as the Isle of Wight. However the predominance of woodland and strong hedgerows, combined with a landscape of dry valleys and combes also provide many enclosed, sheltered aspects. A high proportion of the woods comprise semi-natural ancient woodland, including Dur Wood, Kings Copse, Littleton Copse, Downleaze Copse and Bottom Copse.

The majority of the farmland is given over to arable production. Field size varies from smaller paddocks surrounding the villages, to larger areas of enclosed downland. The long history of settlement and agriculture in the area is expressed in the irregularity of its field shapes, resulting from informal enclosure, prior to accurate surveying. Fields are often bounded by woodland or tall, thick hedgerows although in places these have been lost or have been poorly managed during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The area also contains areas of pasture, a high proportion of which supports mixed farming or horse grazing. There is an area of orchards to the east of Stanmore. The long history of the area is also indicated by the high proportion of footpaths, tracks and lanes crossing the area and linking the numerous farms and settlements. These are generally narrow and winding in character although the Morestead Road stands out as a stretch

of straight Roman Road.

Compared with the more open downs to the north of Winchester, this is an area with a relatively large amount of rural settlement, although it is small in scale and generally unobtrusive. Some small historic villages such as Upham and Owslebury are located on higher ground, but are well integrated with their setting due to the high proportion of mature trees and hedgerows in the area. Other hamlets, such as Dean and Dunderidge have evolved along linear dry valleys and are again visually unobtrusive. Lomer, a deserted medieval village also lies within the area. As well as containing historic settlements and farms, the area also has a number of historic parks, including Belmore, Preshaw, Marwell Hall and The Holt, generally benefiting from their close association with adjacent woodland and farmland.

Buildings within the area are small in scale, with a high proportion constructed using traditional construction methods and materials. Red brick, flint, clay tiles, and thatch are all characteristic materials, together with weatherboard for barns.

### **Key Issues**

- Soilerosion and chemical pollution of aquifer and Meon and Hamble Rivers from intensive agriculture techniques
- Erosion of thin topsoil and flash flooding as chalk becomes saturated
- Removal of hedgerows in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century and their ongoing neglect
- Management of ancient semi-natural woodland
- Decline of sheep farming resulting in loss of traditional chalk grassland management
- Management of unimproved/semi-improved calcareous grassland
- Protection of archaeological remains, especially ancient field systems, barrows and Lomer medieval village
- Development of prominent large agricultural buildings
- Opportunities for the restoration of arable to chalk downland and the management of 'conservation headlands'
- Opportunities for the restoration of coniferised ancient woodland to a more semi-natural condition.
- Horsiculture and intrusive uses such as scrapyards
- Conversion of farm buildings to housing
- Impact of traffic on commuter routes such as the Morestead Road, Beeches Hill and Whaddon Lane.
- Damage to soil and vegetation by over intensive use of footpaths and tracks by horses, motorcycles and 4-wheel drive vehicles
- Pressure to provide large-scale leisure facilities such as golf courses

## Landscape Strategies

- Conserve and restore the structure and condition of woodlands through appropriate management such as thinning, coppicing and replanting, ride and edge management, and the removal of invasive alien species. Replant using locally indigenous species.
- Manage and replant medieval hedgerows to ensure they create a continuous ecological network and connect isolated habitats, particularly towards the south of the area. Replanting should use locally indigenous species and be generally kept below ridgelines. Remove post and wire/rail fencing and, if necessary, replace with hedging.
- Manage and replant parkland trees as appropriate to ensure their conservation. Restore arable parkland to pasture.
- 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.
- Conserve the open parts of the area to sustain farmland birds and protect long views.
- Encourage environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural practices, to minimise chemical and soil run-off.
- Restore areas of arable farmland to chalk downland.
- Conserve public access to rural leisure facilities whilst also conserving the rural character of their setting.
- Encourage any groundworks to contribute to the reduction of surface water run-off and conserve safe flood plains in valleys.
- Conserve the tranquillity and visual and aural remoteness of the area and seek to restore it where the Morestead Road and B3035 have impinged on this.

## Built Form Strategies

- Conserve and respect the visually remote character of the area, given that settlement is small-scale and scattered and often well screened by trees.
- Conserve and promote the use of local building materials such as brick, flint, weatherboard, thatch and slate.
- Integrate new development with the surrounding rural landscape through appropriate siting and the use of locally indigenous planting.
- Conserve and promote the use of traditional garden and parkland boundaries such as brick and flint walls, palisade fencing, railings and non-coniferous hedging
- Conserve the well-screened setting of Bishop's Waltham with its lack of urban fringe activities

## Key Designations

- **East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**
- **Conservation Areas**
  - Preshaw
  - Upham
- **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**
  - Twyford Roman villa (Mon. No. 173 HA)
  - Park pale at Marwell, SE of Cowleaze Copse (Mon. No 20070)
  - Long barrow 250m SW of Warren Farm, Owslebury (Mon. No. 12114)
  - Long barrow 700m SW of Longwood House, Owslebury (Mon. No. 12099)
  - Two bowl barrows N of Hoe Farm, Bishop's Waltham (Mon. No 12142)
  - Corhampton British village on Corhampton Down (Mon. No. 134 HA)
  - Four round barrows in 'Hump Field' S of Stakes Lane, Corhampton (Mon. No. 238 HA)
  - Enclosure in Preshaw Wood (Mon. No. 548 HA)
  - Lomer deserted medieval settlement (Mon. No. 541HA)
- **SSSIs**
  - Galley Down Wood (See also Scarp)
- **SINC's**
  - Blackhouse Row; Cockscomb Hill Reservoir; Priests Wood (part); Gabriel's Copse; Cockscomb Hill Copse; Park Copse; Otter Copse; Boyes Copse; Horsham Copse / West Copse; Great & Little Coney Park Woods; Sladfords and Ley Bushes Copses; Austin's Copse; Rowhay Wood; Buldean Copse & The Rookery; Bridleway Row; Hillbarn Copse; Beech Grove; Bushy Copse; Shortlands Copse; Shortlands Row; Park Plantation; Downwards Copse; Downwards Plantation; Long Wood; Collygrove Copse; Dur Wood; High Wood; Well Copse; Chamberlaynes Row; Linches Row; Hazards Copse; Keepers Row; Keepers Copse; Little Preshaw Wood (Sargeants Copse); Franklin Wood; Preshaw Wood; High Wood (not on HCC list); Sailors Wood; Crookhorn Copse; Downleaze Copse; Lomer Rows; Devil's Punch Bowl; Hazel Holt; Shepherd's Down; Beechen Copse / Phrympt Copse; Little Horsecroft Wood; Mayhill Copse; Peak / West/ Blackman Copses; Roundbushes Copse; Lodge Copse; Kilmeston Hattock; Owslebury Down Row; Riversdown Wood (part); Wyn Row; Love Lane Wood; Stephen's Castle Down; Runnydown / Sheelds Copses;



- Parks listed in the Hampshire Register of Historic Parks & Gardens

Marwell Hall (site1563) Deer Park

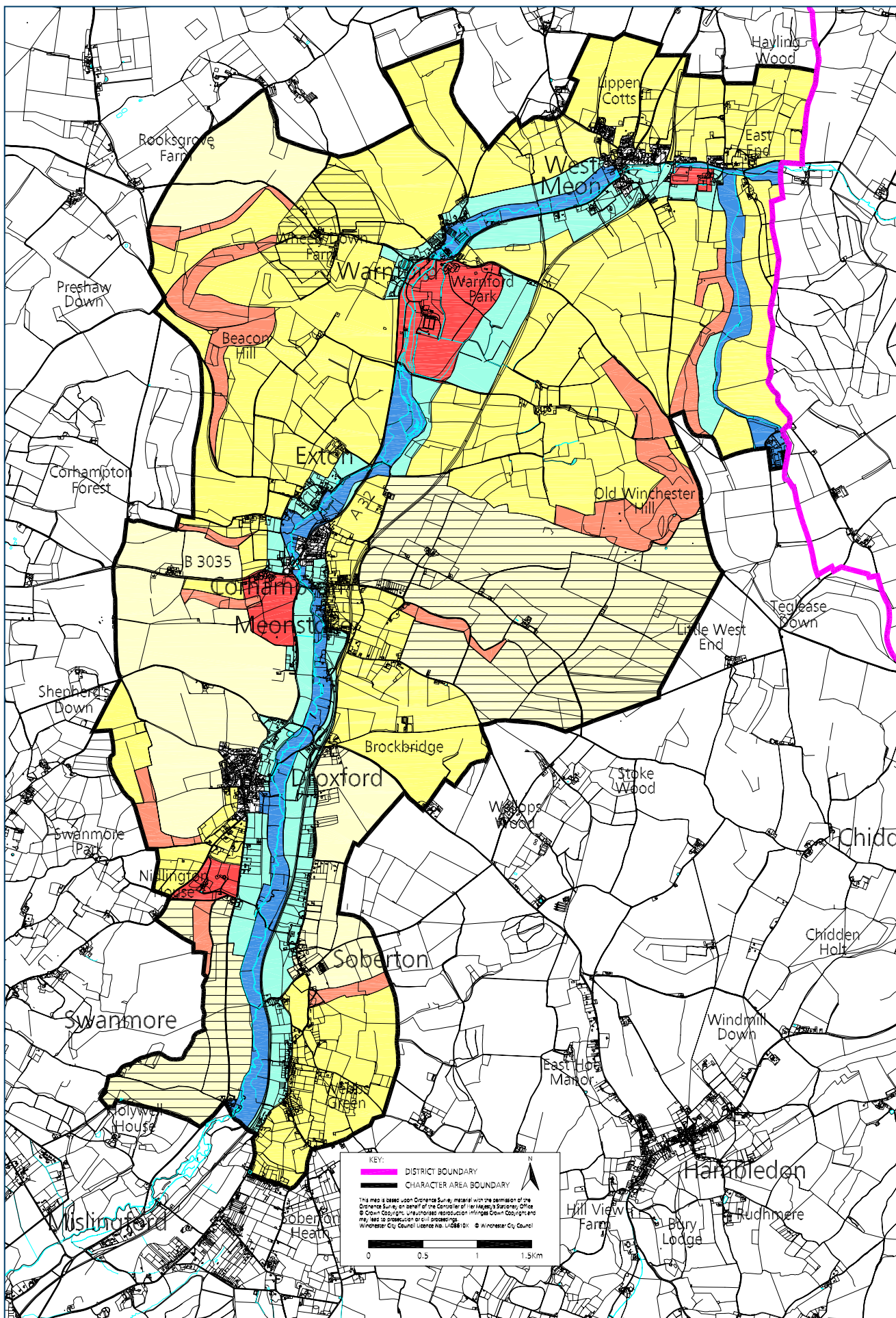
Belmore House & Park (site1587) Pre 1810 Park

Longwood House (site1562) Post 1810 Park

Preshaw House (site1526) Post 1810 Park

Swanmore Park House (site1577) Post 1810 House

Hill Place, Swanmore (site 1574) Pre 1810 Park



#### 4.16. Upper Meon Valley Landscape Character Area

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*Looking north-west from Old Winchester Hill Lane*



##### Key Characteristics

- Relatively wide river valley landscape cutting through the chalk uplands and including the distinctive wide vale formed out of the soft chalk between Old Winchester Hill and Beacon Hill.
- South Downs ridge line (on an east/west axis), of which Beacon Hill and Old Winchester Hill form a part. This is bisected by the River Meon, which flows southwards.
- Clear alkaline spring water in meandering narrow channels, which are often braided, together with occasional lakes, ponds, mill chases, springs, watercress beds and ephemeral headwaters.
- Distinction in land use relating to topography; with arable farmland on the valley sides and chalk downlands and grazed paddocks, water meadows and pastures within the valley flood plain.
- Woodland is largely confined to scarps, steeper built-up valley sides and in association with parkland landscapes.
- Predominantly small, regular fields subject to both informal and formal enclosure, especially over more clayey soils. The higher, more exposed areas form larger fields with regular boundaries which were subject to parliamentary enclosure, and irregular boundaries of informal enclosure, on the dip slopes.
- Many historic parks on the valley floor and sides, including Warnford Park, Corhampton House, Midlington Place in Droxford and Hall Place in West Meon. These are generally enclosed by mature tree belts.
- Many important ecological habitats, including calcareous grassland (SSSI's) on scarps at Old Winchester Hill, Beacon Hill and Peake Wood; ancient semi-natural woodland, such as Halfway Wood and the aquatic habitat of the River Meon itself (designated as a SINIC).
- The rivers rise in chalk with clear spring water supporting rich aquatic flora and fauna. Rich and diverse habitats along floodplains including fen; carr; swamp; reedbed, ephemeral headwaters and unimproved neutral grassland/fen
- Open feel to the north, with long panoramic views gained from high points such as Beacon Hill and Old Winchester Hill. From within the valley floor the landscape has a more enclosed feel, with views contained by landform and trees.
- Numerous footpaths including the South Downs Way, Monarch's Way, and the Wayfarers Walk, which take advantage of routes along the river, through the river valley villages and meadows along the valley floor. A bridleway/cycle route follows the disused Meon Valley Railway line.
- Routes within the character area are concentrated along the river valley, the A32 and the now disused railway line. Other routes mainly cross the river valley where villages have often developed.
- Routes within the exposed arable areas are largely straight, often following ridgelines
- Settlements are concentrated along the river valley at crossing points. They are generally loosely linear in form, of Saxon origin and typically characterised by 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century dwellings. Exton is an exception, being a nucleated village.
- Historic features include the Iron Age hill fort on Old Winchester hill, numerous tumuli (Bronze Age barrows) and the remains of St. John's House and the medieval site of the original village of Warnford in Warnford Park.
- Traditional building features & methods, including brick and flint and clay plain tile and occasional use of longstraw and wheat-reed thatch.

## Landscape Types within the Area

River Valley Floor	River Valley Side
Open Arable	Open Arable (Exposed)
Chalk and Clay (Farmland)	Chalk and Clay (Woodland)
Scarps	Historic Park

## Settlement Types within the Area

Chalk River Valley

## Location and Boundaries

The Upper Meon Valley character area is situated to the eastern side of the district, and encompasses part of the upper reaches of the River Meon, which flow through the chalk downlands before reaching the clay lowlands to the south. The source of the river Meon is close to East Meon, which lies within the adjacent East Hampshire District.

Most of the character area also lies within the East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Northern boundary abuts the Bramdean Woodlands Character Area and includes the valley sides and visual 'envelope' of the valley landscape. The eastern boundary follows the District boundary with East Hampshire and includes a tributary of the Meon. To the south, the boundary between the upper and lower Meon Valley coincides with the boundary of the chalk downlands and the clay landscape of the Hampshire Basin. The western boundary includes the valley sides to the top of the river valley's visual envelope.

## Formative Influences

The upper reaches of the Upper Meon Valley comprise an expansive landscape, seemingly very wide in comparison to the small scale of the River Meon itself. This is partly due to areas of lower softer chalk which lie between Beacon Hill and Old Winchester Hill which, through erosion, has resulted in a wide basin of undulating land gently sloping towards the river, contained by the escarpments of harder Middle Chalk.

The presence of the river has resulted in a long history of occupation in the area. The river valley floor is typified by small-scale grazed paddocks and pastures and by the presence of settlements, which originated largely in the Saxon period at favourable river crossing points, close to the water source. The field pattern of the surrounding valley sides has been influenced by the informal and formal enclosure of grassed common downland to form arable land and create a variety of field sizes with regular or wavy boundaries.

## Landscape & Settlement Description

The Upper Meon Valley Character Area is characterised by undulating chalk downland and bisected by the valley of the River Meon. The landscape within the character area is orientated towards the river, with a variety of both steep and gently sloping arable fields dropping to the river floodplain. The area is noticeably less treed compared to the adjacent clay-influenced character areas.

Old Winchester Hill is the only National Nature Reserve in the district, and contains all stages of an ecological sere on chalk, from open grassland through to native woodland, including extensive juniper, yew and whitebeam. Similarly, the scarps associated with Beacon Hill provide important areas of calcareous grassland.

The concentration of settlements and historic parks within close proximity to the river is distinctive, as is the absence of settlements on the surrounding downland. The disused railway line that follows the valley floor creates a strong tree lined feature in the landscape. Typical buildings largely date from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century, though some buildings in West Meon and Soberton date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Droxford, however is dominated by Georgian buildings. Building materials within the character area typically include red brick, flint and clay plain tiles and occasionally long straw and combed wheat reed thatch, found in West Meon for example.

## Key Issues

- Impact of agricultural chemicals on chalk river (including watercress farms)
- Management of calcareous grasslands and scrub encroachment on scarps
- Fragmentation and management of hedgerows during the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- Erosion and other impacts on chalk grasslands and archaeological sites from increasing visitor pressure
- Impact on biodiversity of intensive farming practices
- Impact of suburbanisation on settlement character
- Opportunities for restoration of arable to chalk downland
- Under-management of historic parkland trees
- Protection of open views
- Development of large agricultural buildings on open valley sides
- Flood prevention for the River Meon

## Landscape Strategies

- Conserve and enhance the unimproved areas of pasture and water meadows within the valley floor.
- Conserve and maintain areas of calcareous grassland.
- Conserve and restore the structure and condition of ancient semi-natural woodlands at Halfway Wood, Peake Wood and Old Winchester Hill (species rich Ash-Hazel woodland) as well as other scattered woodlands, through appropriate management such as thinning, coppicing, replanting, ride and edge management. This would also be an area suitable for the



reintroduction of native black poplar, *Populus nigra*

- Control scrub encroachment on scarp to minimise loss of calcareous grassland.
- Seek opportunities to restore arable to chalk downland, especially adjoining existing species-rich grassland.
- Conserve and restore the hedgerow network to connect key habitats where appropriate.
- Conserve important archaeological sites such as Old Winchester Hill fort.
- Restore the water meadow structures and encourage appropriate management of the meadows.
- Conserve and manage the rural character of the land, footpaths, tracks and visitor attractions.
- Encourage the retention and traditional management of watercress beds, to ensure that they remain a characteristic feature of this 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 Meon
- 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.
- Conserve the rich bio-diversity associated with the clear spring water and the river banks.

### **Built Form Strategies**

- Conserve the form and pattern of the river valley settlements.
- Conserve the open, undeveloped character of the valley sides, avoiding the construction of large agricultural buildings here for example
- Promote the use of local building materials, such as red brick, flint and clay plain tiles in keeping with the character of existing settlements.
- Respect the compact and small-scale nature of existing dwellings.
- Conserve rural garden boundaries such as brick and flint walls, and native hedgerows and promote their use in new developments.
- Respect the sparse pattern of development beyond the river valley floor.

### **Key Designations**

- **East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**
- **Conservation Areas**
  - West Meon
  - Exton
  - Corhampton & Meonstoke
  - Droxford
  - Soberton Pumping Station
- **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**
  - Long barrow in the grounds of Long Barrow House, Droxford (Mon. No.12091)
  - Long barrow 640m SE of Stock's Farm (Mon. No. 2090)
  - Round barrow cemetery and hollow ways on Beacon Hill (Mon. No. 32545)
  - King John's House (or St John's House) in Warnford Park (Mon. No. 27HA)
  - Boundary earthwork and barrow at Sheepbridge (Mon. No. 565 HA)
  - Bowl barrow 825m N of Old Winchester Hill (Mon. No. 31158)
  - Old Winchester Hill camp and adjacent round barrows (Mon. No. 31159)
- **SSSI's**
  - Peake Wood; Old Winchester Hill; Beacon Hill
- **National Nature Reserve**
  - Old Winchester Hill
- **SINC's**
  - Disused Railway Line – Meon Valley; Chappetts Copse; Rolls Copse; Plover Hill Meadows; Alpha House Meadow; Deans Row; Halfway Wood; River Meon (in Warnford and Corhampton Parks); The Mountain; Shogden Hill; Soberton Down; Mayhill Down; The White Way, Exton.
- **Parks listed in Hampshire Register of Historic Park and Gardens**
  - Warnford Park (site No.1590. English Heritage Grade 11 Listed Park) – Pre 1810 Park
  - Corhampton House (site No. 1511) – Post 1810 Park
  - Midlington Place, Droxford (site No. 1522) – Pre 1810 Park
  - Hall Place, West Meon (site No. 1340) – Pre 1810 Park