

4.17. Hambledon Downs Landscape Character Area



Hambledon



Key Characteristics

- Undulating rolling landform including part of the South Downs ridgeline to the north of character area where the highest points are at Teglease Down. The land gradually falls from the north-east to the Hambledon valley, but with a secondary ridge east/west of Hambledon. Scarps and dry valleys are common features.
- Upper chalk geology with deposits of clay with flints to the east and west of Hambledon. This gives rise to shallow, well drained calcareous soils.
- The Downs fall towards the south, to the dry Hambledon Valley with gravel deposits. A tributary of the River Wallington flows through the valley to the south of Hambledon.
- Arable crop production dominates the area, interspersed with woodland and pasture on the steeper slopes.
- A variety of copses, shelter-belts and woodlands, many of which are ancient semi-natural woodland and designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.
- Medium to large irregular wavy fields formed through the enclosure of downland in medieval times, together with more regular fields created at the time of parliamentary enclosure.
- Few historic parks, except those concentrated around the settlement of Hambledon. The main one Bury Lodge, a late 18th Century Park.
- Habitats of ecological significance include ancient semi-natural woodland, and remnants of unimproved calcareous grassland, both often associated with scarps.
- Varied degrees of visual enclosure, from the exposed downs to the more enclosed areas to the south of the character area, with a strong pattern of hedgerows, intermittent trees and woodland.
- Numerous long views from high points on the Downs, in particular from Teglease Down, where there are long views over south Hampshire to the Isle of Wight, and views over Hambledon from the surrounding escarpments.
- Tranquil rural nature with no major routes which passing through the area (the main one being the B2150). Routes consist of an intricate network of ancient minor roads, lanes and drove roads. These are mainly straight and open across the downs and winding and narrow elsewhere.
- Sparsely populated area with one main settlement, Hambledon, located in a sheltered base of scarp position, other dwellings include isolated farms with associated outbuildings and cottages.
- The settlement of Hambledon has a distinctly linear form, dictated by the location of adjacent scarps. It has Roman origins and a Georgian architectural character.

Landscape Types within the Area

Open Arable	Open Arable (Exposed)
Chalk and Clay (Farmland)	Chalk and Clay (Woodland)
Clay Plateau (Open)	Clay Plateau (Enclosed)
Historic Park	Scarp

Settlement Types within the Area

Chalk Downland: Dry Valley

Location and Boundaries

The Hambledon Downs Character area comprises part of the south-western corner of the South Downs which lie in the central-east of Winchester District. It abuts the District boundary with East Hampshire to the east. Its southern boundary coincides with the southern limit of the Downs where they meet the clay lowlands of the Hampshire Basin. The visual envelope of the Upper Meon Valley Landscape Character Area forms the western and northern boundaries. The

majority of the character area lies within the East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Formative Influences

The Hambledon Downs Character Area is underlain by Upper Chalk giving rise to the numerous downs within the area. Much of the area is covered with thin calcareous soils, although parts are also overlain by deposits of clay, particularly to the south, giving rise to a greater proportion of woodland. Where the clay lies on particularly high land such as to the West of Hambledon at Home Down, the landscape of large arable fields is particularly exposed, but contained by areas of woodland.

From medieval times to the late 19th and mid 20th Centuries, the major land use on the downs would have been sheep rearing. This has resulted in the large numbers of old drove roads running in a north-south direction, connecting the Downs to the Forest of Bere. With increasing farm mechanisation, arable farming has become prevalent. Where fields were enclosed in medieval times boundaries, boundaries are irregular, but more recent enclosure has resulted in straighter boundaries. The steep scarps with old wood and unimproved downland date from post medieval times.

Landscape & Settlement Description

The areas of Downland have an open expansive character, with long distance views across south Hampshire and to the Isle of Wight. It is intensively farmed land, with large fields and limited hedgerow and tree enclosure, superimposed on a dramatic rolling chalk landform. It appears as a highly managed landscape. The more enclosed chalk uplands are also predominantly arable, but the clay deposits particularly on the higher ground have given rise to a wider range of vegetation types, with more hedgerow and woodland cover. There are a few remnants of unimproved chalk grassland, for example on Speltham Down and hanger woodlands on the scarp slopes to the east and west of Hambledon. Much of the woodland is ancient semi-natural, dominated by ash or oak, with a hazel coppice understorey. Hedgerows are a significant feature of the character area, with hedgerow trees consisting mainly of oak, with some more recently planted beech.

As is typical of most downland landscapes, the area is sparsely populated with settlement confined to isolated farms. The only main settlement in the area, Hambledon, is situated at the base of two scarps which form a 'v' shape in the landscape, giving rise to a compact linear village pattern, characterised by modest Georgian houses, which line the streets. From the main street numerous narrow winding roads rise steeply up the wooded scarp slopes above the village.

Key Issues

- Declining farmland birds, due to historic loss of downland and more recent changes in agricultural practices, particularly winter cropping

- Subdivision of large fields by fencing
- Opportunities for the restoration of arable to calcareous grassland
- Opportunities for enhanced connectivity between semi-natural habitats (ancient woodland, calcareous grasslands, water-courses), although planting should not reduce viability of arable land for farmland birds
- Opportunities for enhanced management of areas of woodland, in particular the semi-natural ancient woodlands
- Harsh rectilinear shape of some woodland planting i.e. Brooks Copse
- Impact of horsiculture around Hambledon, including subdivision of fields to form paddocks
- Risk of continued intensive farming practices causing chemical pollution to chalk aquifer and downstream water courses
- Risk of continued ploughing of steep downland slopes causing further loss of top soil and consequent siltation of downstream water courses
- Impact of commuter traffic on the B2150 and the network of narrow lanes

Landscape Strategies

- Encourage the extension of existing chalk downland, through agricultural and planning policies (e.g. compensation for unavoidable loss of wildlife habitats resulting from planned development).
- Conserve the large-scale open rolling landscape of the Downs by concentrating any new planting in the valleys.
- Encourage the conservation and enhancement of the hangers and areas of unimproved calcareous grassland on scarp slopes.
- 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.
- Encourage the protection and conservation of important wildlife and historic features such as ancient hedgerows and woodlands, tracks and historic parks, especially where they provide a link with other semi-natural habitats.
- 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.

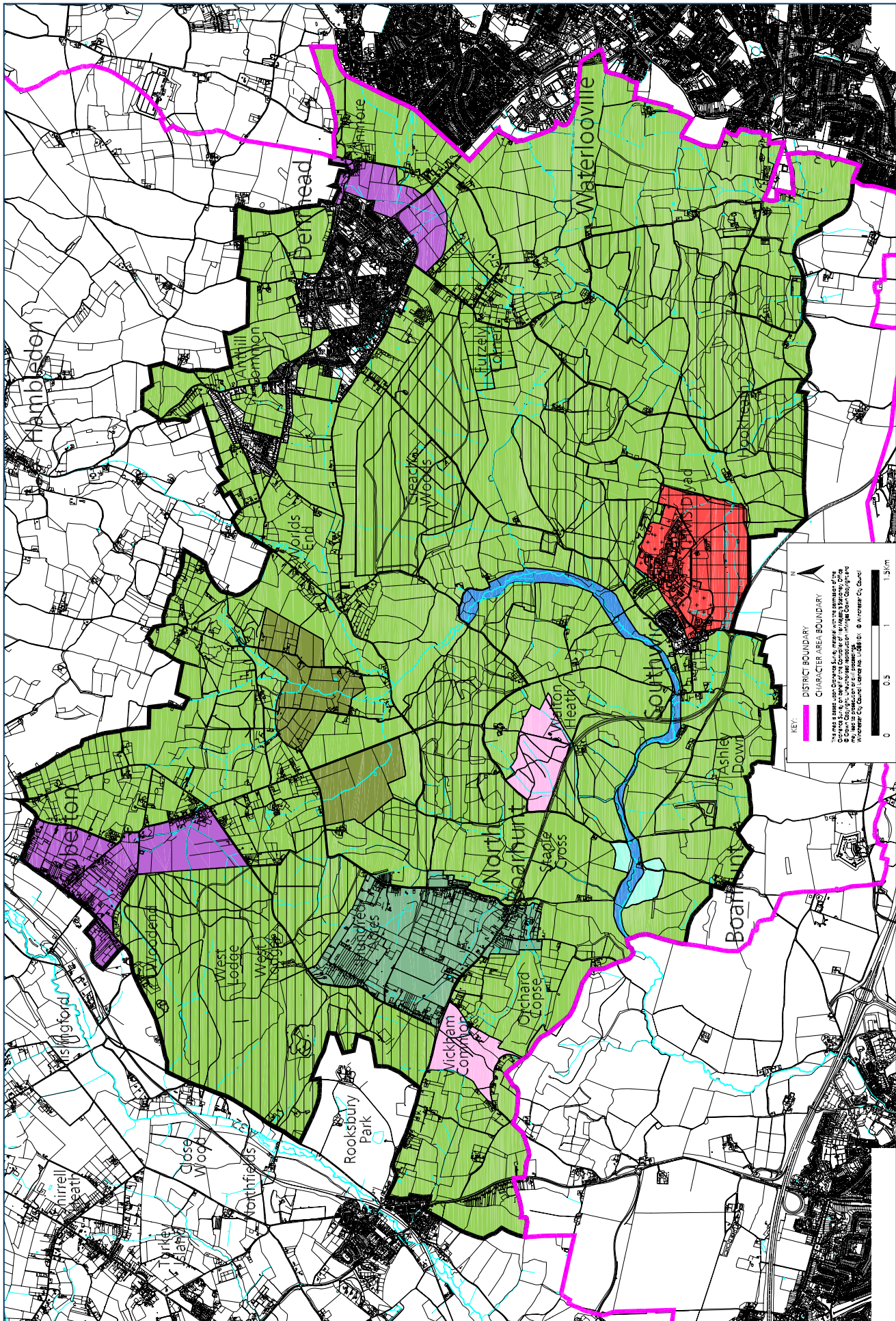
- Promote the introduction of less intensive farming methods to enhance biodiversity and reduce risks of pollution of the aquifer and both pollution and siltation of downstream watercourses.
- Conserve and enhance the rural agricultural character and mosaic of landscape features, which create the contrasting scale of open and enclosed areas of downs.
- Conserve and enhance the remote character and contrasting scale of open farmland and enclosed wooded areas of clay plateau.
- 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.
- Monitor success of ecological strategies by surveying farmland birds and calcareous grassland plants

Built Form Strategies

- Resist visually intrusive development on elevated ridges, including large-scale farm structures and telecommunications masts.
- Conserve the rural character and sparse pattern of farms and settlements.
- Ensure that new development in Hambledon reflects the strong form and pattern of the village, in relation to the adjacent scarps.
- Respect the distinctive Georgian character of the village with appropriate design, scale of buildings and materials.
- Ensure that the intimate rural character of the complex pattern of small roads, lanes and tracks is not altered through inappropriate road improvements.

Key Designations

- **East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**
- **Conservation Areas**
Hambledon
- **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**
Roman villa in Bottom Copse, Soberton (Mon. No. 459 HA)
Three bell barrows and a bowl barrow, 250m & 270m NW of Great Ervills Farm, Denmead (Mon. No. 32551)
Bowl barrow on Teglease Down, 600m NE of Little West End Farm, Hambledon (Mon.No. 31156)
Bowl barrow 640m SW of Coombe Cottages, Hambledon (Mon. No. 31155)
Bell barrow on Teglease Down, Hambledon (Mon. No. 31154)
- **SSSI's**
None
- **SINC's**
Madam's Copse; Teglease Copse; Upper Grenville Copse; Little Sheardley Wood; Great Sheardley Wood; Stoke Wood; Stockram Copse; The Paddocks; Steane Copse; Veniss Copse; Ton Wood; Greasted's Copse; Grove Copse; Bushydown Copse; Shere Copse; Bottom Copse; Boarhuts Copse; Sheepbarn Copse; Brooks Copse; Beckless Copse; Lower Grenville Copse (part); Lithey Hanger; Hambledon Hangers; Madams Copse (part); Goldsmith's Plantation (not on HCC list); Speltham Down
- **Parks listed in Hampshire Register of Historic Park and Gardens**
Bury Lodge, Hambledon (site No. 1527) Pre 1810 Park
Whitedale, Hambledon (site No. 1531) Post 1810 Park
Park House, Hambledon (site No. 1530) Pre 1810 Park



4.18. Forest of Bere Lowlands Landscape Character Area



Creech View



Key Characteristics

- Undulating landscape at the foot of the Chalk Downs which drop steeply down to the coastal plain at Portsdown Hill to the south of this area.
- Varied geology, mainly consisting of London Clay with areas of Bagshot sand and river valley alluvium.
- The catchment of the River Wallington, which flows east to west through the south of the character area, including tributary streams, wetlands and ponds.
- Land cover characterised by farmland and a high proportion of assarted woodland. The farmland is largely arable, with pasture concentrated on lower ground. However it retains an exceptionally high cover of semi-natural habitats, including an extensive complex of base-rich neutral meadows along the tributaries of the Wallington, remnants of heathland (Wickham and Walton Heath Commons), neutral-acid grassland and marsh (Lye Heath Marsh and Hook Heath Meadows SSSIs), wood pasture (such as Anthill Common, Creech Walk, West Walk) and species rich ancient semi-natural woodland (such as Place Wood, Ham Coppice). It is therefore one of the most bio-diverse areas in Winchester District, with many areas designated at SINC.
- Plantation woodland over heath, such as Walton Heath Plantation and 19th Century plantations such as parts of Creech Walk.
- The area is historically strongly associated with the Royal Forest of Bere, which was once a royal hunting reserve, encompassing a much larger area than the present forest. The framework of the

landscape is typified to the south by assarts evolved from the piecemeal clearance of woodland from medieval times onwards, forming irregular enclosures and winding lanes.. To the north of the area, parliamentary type enclosure is typical.

- Southwick Park and West Lodge historic parks lie within the area. Southwick Park, based on the site of a 12th Century Augustine Priory was developed as a deer park from the 16th Century and now accommodates HMS Dryad and a golf course. West lodge lies within West Walk Woodland as is a late 18th Century park.
- Remote and enclosed feel to much of the area, due to the presence of woodland and narrow hedged roads.
- Popular public woodland walks including West Walk and Creech Wood, supplemented by numerous rights of way, including Wayfarers Walk and Pilgrims Way.
- Routes vary from straight roads with wide verges associated with heathland settlements and the pasture on clay and long winding narrow hedged routes through the mixed farmland and woodland.
- Settlements are scattered throughout the area, with the largest ones located in the north and small shrunken hamlets and farms to the south such as Boarhunt. Sprawling 19th Century settlements associated with heathland to the north include Soberton Heath, and chalk-clay spring line settlements such as Denmead and estate villages such as Southwick.

Landscape Types within the Area

Horticulture and smallholdings

Mixed farmland and woodland (Open)

Mixed farmland and woodland (Enclosed)

Pasture and woodland: heath associated

Pasture on clay

Heathland

Heathland plantation

River valley floor

Historic parkland

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 large 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)

• SINCS

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; Dirtystile Coppice; Whitehill Row (not on HCC list); Hone Copse; Goathouse Complex; Dradfield Copse; Hale Meadow; Staplecross Row; Dirty Ground Copse; Carman's Copse; Opposite Carman's 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; Ansells 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

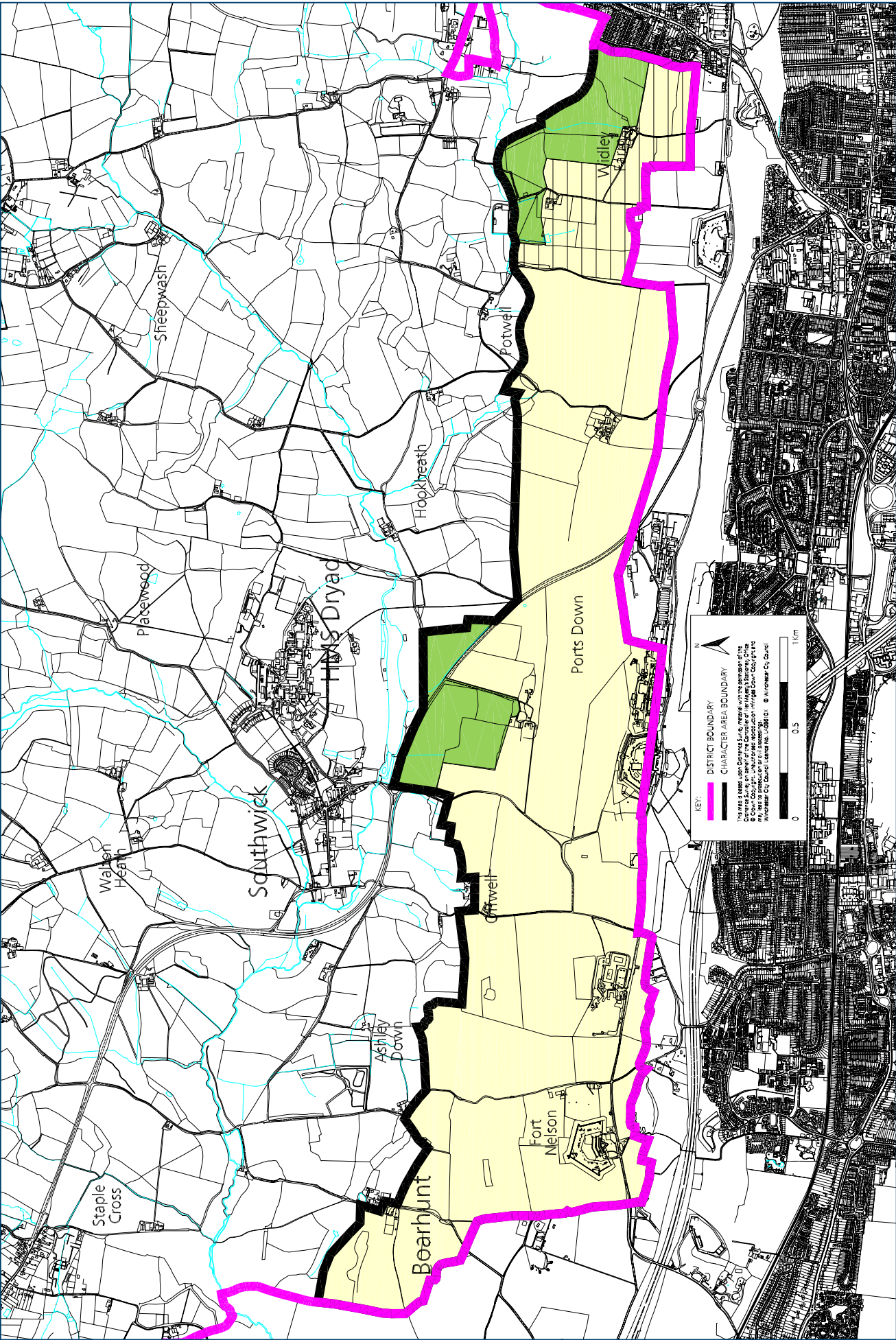
Southwick Park (Site No.1569) Deer Park

• Local Nature Reserves

West Walk

• Countryside Heritage Areas

Forest of Bere



4.19. Portsdown Hill Landscape Character Area



Crooked Walk Lane



Key Characteristics

- Chalk dip slope, rising evenly from north to south where it forms an east-west scarp along the northern edge of Portsmouth.
- Large, predominantly arable fields, with straight boundaries formed by late, formal enclosure, together with larger irregular fields bounded by lanes, resulting from informal post-medieval enclosure
- Sites of recognised ecological interest confined to secondary calcareous grassland that has developed on the steep slopes of man-made structures, as at Fort Southwick. However, area also likely to be of value to declining farmland birds and arable weeds
- Generally minimal hedgerow structure, concentrated to the lower slopes where the hedgerows contain a variety of species and are often on banks. Few trees.
- Small areas of woodland along the northern base of the slope, including 19th Century plantations. Elsewhere however, there is a general lack of trees and woodland.
- Elevated, exposed southern ridgeline gives long panoramic views over the Forest of Bere to the north. The land continues to rise to the south of the district boundary, ultimately forming an escarpment overlooking Portsmouth (and lying within Portsmouth City administrative boundary).
- Series of narrow, irregular sunken lanes connecting the northern lowlands to the southern hilltop, probably representing old drove roads. The B2177 is the only road cutting diagonally up the hill and then along the ridge.
- The Victorian Palmerston forts, Fort Nelson and Fort Southwick, together with Fort Widley (within Portsmouth City boundary) form an important series of historic landmarks along the hilltop, with manmade, virtually treeless slopes to the north (Glacii).
- Other than the strong military presence along the southern ridge, this area contains little settlement, other than occasional farms located along the spring line. Evidence of deserted medieval villages at Boarhunt and adjacent to Mill Farm, Widley.

Landscape Types within the Area

Open Arable Open Arable (Exposed)
Mixed Farmland and Woodland (Open)

Settlement Types within the Area

None

Location and Boundaries

The Portsdown Hill Landscape Character Area runs along the southernmost edge of the district. It forms a distinctive boundary to the District and lies on a chalk escarpment and dip slope between the built up area of Portsmouth City Council to the south and the remote, wooded clay lowland of the Forest of Bere to the north. Its eastern edge is formed by the district boundary with Havant Borough Council and its western boundary is formed by the district boundary with Fareham.

Formative Influences

This character area is strongly influenced by its Upper Chalk geology, which forms a distinct hill rising up from the clay lowlands to the north and forming a steep escarpment above the coastal alluvium of Portsmouth City to the south.

Historically the downland would have been used for grazing as shown by the evidence of medieval settlement and drove roads in the area. There is some evidence of early informal enclosure of these open field systems as well as later formal enclosure towards its eastern end. During the 20th Century farming in the area became predominantly arable, although the expansion of Widley and Portsmouth has subsequently resulted in some further field subdivision for pony paddocks as well as other urban fringe characteristics.

Due to its strategic position overlooking Portsmouth and the Solent, the area has traditionally been associated with military fortifications such as the Palmerston Forts, dating from the mid 19th Century, which have a strong visual presence on the hill top.

Landscape & Settlement Description

The chalk dip slope forms a narrow character area but an important landscape feature, adjacent to the extensive clay lowlands to the north. As well as forming an important enclosing element in views from these lowlands, it also provides a local vantage point appreciated by residents of the city of Portsmouth.

It has a distinct open character, which contrasts strongly with the adjacent woodlands to the north. Fields are generally large with few hedgerows and provide expansive panoramic views to the north. Towards the east of the area, the hedgerow structure is more intact, and a number of fields have been subdivided to form pony paddocks. Although hedges often contain a variety of species, hedgerow trees and woodlands do not form a major feature in the area.

Many fields are bounded by a number of parallel narrow sunken lanes that wind their way down the hill. It is likely that these were originally drove roads, connecting the Forest of Bere to settlements such as Portchester to the south, which had grazing rights within the forest. They would also have connected settlements to the north such as Boarhunt and Southwick to the downland pasture of Portsdown. Other than the B2177, which cuts diagonally up Portsdown Hill from Southwick, there are no major roads in the area.

From medieval times, the area appears to have seen a decline in population, losing villages at Boarhunt and adjacent to Mill Farm, Widley. Now all that remains are the Saxon church of St Nicholas, Boarhunt together with scattered farms. The brow of the hill however, is dominated by a series of brick built Victorian forts, which were screened and protected from the north by huge dry grass covered moats and earthworks known as glacis. Two of these (Fort Nelson and Fort Southwick) lie within the district boundary. These Grade 1 Listed Buildings known as Palmerston's Follies, were built in the 1860s to guard the Dockyard from the perceived threat of French invasion. Fort Nelson is now managed by the Royal Armouries, as a museum, while Fort Southwick is still owned by the Ministry of Defence. In addition the hilltop accommodates three modern MoD building complexes, Portsdown West, Portsdown Main and the Land-based Test Site, their buildings and apparatus being highly visible along the horizon of the hill. The other very visible feature is Nelson's Monument.

The expansion of Portsmouth's suburbs and the adjacent settlements of Waterlooville, Havant, Purbrook, Portchester, Fareham and Gosport is now putting strain on this area, being one of the nearest areas of countryside and offering a variety of coastal and rural panoramic views. Fly tipping is problematic and urban fringe uses such as telecommunications

masts, pylons and pony paddock fencing are visually detrimental.

Key Issues

- Declining farmland birds, through changing agricultural practices (including winter cropping)
- Subdivision of fields to form pony paddocks
- Visual impact of coniferous plantations
- Intrusive farm buildings
- Loss of arable field margins
- Historic loss of calcareous grassland
- Set-aside
- Opportunities for biodiversity gains from set-aside and Countryside Stewardship
- Visual impact of urban fringe activities including fly-tipping, pylons and telecommunication masts

Landscape Strategies

- Promote environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural practices, to minimise chemical and soil run-off which could lead to the pollution of the River Wallington and the 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.
- Protect the open, unenclosed nature of the area through appropriate hedgerow management. This will be of benefit to farmland birds and the preservation of long views.
- Promote less-intensive agricultural practices to sustain arable weed flora and farmland birds
- Promote restoration of arable to chalk grassland, especially extending existing areas of interest.
- Protect the narrow and rural character of the lanes in this area and their north-south direction, by resisting any road improvements which would threaten these features
- Conserve the open panoramic views to the north by avoiding new development in prominent or inappropriate locations.
- Restore fields that have been subdivided into paddocks, through the removal of post and rail fencing and sheds for example

Built Form Strategies

- Respect the setting of Fort Southwick and Fort Nelson
- Conserve and respect the scattered nature of settlement in the area and its visually remote character.
- Integrate new development into the surrounding

rural landscape through the use of appropriate siting and screening with indigenous planting. Avoid locating new agricultural buildings in prominent, visually intrusive locations.

- Conserve and promote the use of local building materials such as red brick, flint and clay tiles.
- Minimise the impact of intrusive structures such as MOD boundary fencing, telecommunications masts and electricity pylons, through sensitive designs and siting, and the use of underground cables.

Key Designations

- **Conservation Areas**

None

- **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**

Fort Nelson (Mon. No. 329 HA)

Fort Southwick (Mon. No. 500 HA)

Nelson's Monument (Mon No. 462 HA)

- **SSSIs**

None

- **SINCs**

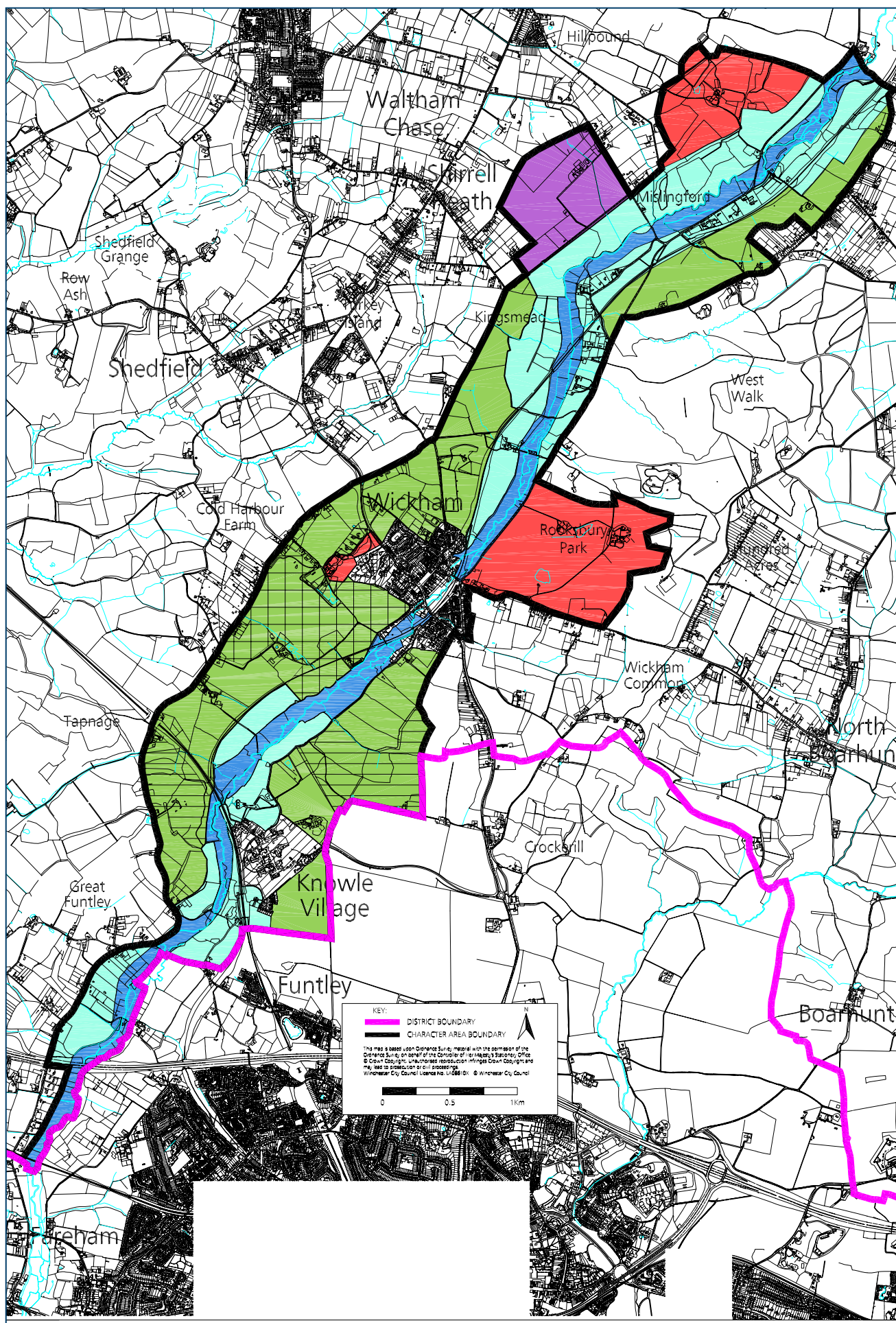
Crooked Walk Banks; Southwick Fort; Motte & Bailey and Chalk Pit; Hookheath Meadow (G 7); Pigeonhouse Row; Bushy Coppice (not on HCC list); Mill Farm Meadow; Diverse woodland communities, including Small-leaved Lime; Wild Service Tree. Rich woodland invertebrate fauna, including Purple Emperor and the rare leaf beetle *Orsodacne lineola*.

- **Parks listed in the Hampshire Register of Historic Parks and Gardens**

None

- **Countryside Heritage Areas**

Forest of Bere



4.20. Lower Meon Valley Landscape Character Area



North of Knowle



Key Characteristics

- A linear, fairly narrow river valley with gently sloping sides, situated within the clay lowlands of the Hampshire Basin.
- The area has a complex geological make-up, with riverine associated alluvium and gravel passing through bands of clays, sands and loam.
- The Lower Meon Valley floor has a distinctively riparian character, with a flat low lying flood plain, with riverside pastures and marshy grassland. Many of these retain high species-richness. Important ecological habitats within the area include the river itself and agriculturally unimproved meadows, such as Hunteage and Wickham Meadows
- The valley floor and sides are typified by paddocks and pastures (enclosed meadows), with little remaining evidence of original water meadows. The adjoining sloping fields, are typified by medium irregular assarted fields, particularly to the south, and larger parliamentary fields to the north.
- The Character area is well treed, with willow-lined watercourses and riverside woodlands and valley side woods, many of which are designated as SSSI's or SINCS, and are remnants of ancient woodland. This well treed character creates a sense of intimacy and enclosure.
- Historic Parks are commonly found in river valley locations. Rookesbury Park for example is situated to take advantage of river valley views.
- Sheltered pastoral and rural character of the valley floor with few detracting influences.
- Routes within the character area generally follow the valley, on the higher ground of the valley sides.
- A sparse pattern of settlement, with dwellings generally located on the higher ground of the valley sides. Wickham is the main settlement within the character area. This compact nucleated historic village has expanded east and west of the river around a medieval planned centre. Knowle is also developing as a new, nucleated village with a character strongly influenced by its previous use as a Victorian hospital.
- Traditional building materials in the area are influenced by the clay geology and include red and grey bricks and clay plain tiles. Later buildings such as Knowle hospital are also roofed with slate. Thatch is not common in this area and flint is rare.
- The disused railway line, which follows the river valley side, creates a distinctive tree-line feature within the landscape and part is used as a bridleway/cycleway.

Landscape Types within the Area

Mixed Farmland and Woodland (Open)	Mixed Farmland and Woodland (Enclosed)
River Valley Floor	River Valley Side
Historic Parkland	

Settlement Types within the Area

Clay River Valley	20th and 21st Century
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Location and Boundaries

The Lower Meon Valley Character Area lies in the south-east part of the District. It has a distinctly

narrow linear form, running along a north-south axis. Its northern boundary is formed by the boundary of the chalk uplands and the clay lowland basin. Its eastern and western boundaries are formed by the edge of the valley envelope, with the Shedfield Heathlands and Whiteley Woodlands Landscape Character Areas to the west and the historic Forest of Bere Lowlands Character Area to the west. The southern end of the area is formed by the district boundary with Fareham Borough Council.

Formative Influences

The geology of the river and its floodplain is varied. It

consists of alluvium and gravel, which creates a linear feature traversing east-west bands of Reading Beds (mottled clay and sand) in the north, through London Clay, Lower Bagshot sand (on which Rookesbury Park lies), Bracklesham Beds (sand and loam), through to more Reading Beds in the south, plus some deposits of plateau gravel, on which Knowle Village lies. This geology has resulted in a varied landscape of woodland, pasture and arable.

The main feature contributing to the character of the area is the River Meon. This has resulted in a relatively narrow valley floor with gently sloping sides. The present landscape of pasture and paddocks in the valley floor has evolved from the enclosure of water meadows. The regular field pattern to the North is due to parliamentary enclosure, whereas the generally more irregular field pattern to the south has evolved through assarting involving the piecemeal clearance of woodland to form enclosures.

Landscape & Settlement Description

The River Meon creates a distinctive feature as it flows south through the clay lowlands, sub-dividing the once extensive Forest of Bere. In comparison to the upper reaches of the river, the valley sides rise relatively gently, especially in the south, generally to about 55 metres above sea level, the highest point being behind Hawk's Nest Farm. As such there are few long views over the character area, other than from Titchfield Lane. In conjunction with the generous tree cover the character area has an intimate and enclosed character, with distinctly riparian features of a flat, low lying valley floor, with pastures and marshy grassland, willow lined water courses and riverside woods.

The area is rural in character with sparse settlements, the main one being Wickham, which owes its current central 'square' to the Norman Lord, Roger de Scures. He developed the existing village into a planned town, based on a rectangle parallel to the river, surrounded by burgage plots, resulting in a compact urban form. Knowle Village, which lies to the south-west of Wickham, is a recent development based around the conversion of a large Victorian hospital.

The predominant architectural character within Wickham is Georgian and Victorian, with 20th and 21st Century buildings to the periphery of the village. Typical materials for the character area include red or brown bricks, often with bands of decorative brickwork and clay or slate roof tiles.

Main routes within the area follow the river valley sides, including the disused railway line, which opened at the turn of the last century and closed in the 1950's.

Key Issues

- Impact of intrusive electricity pylons particularly to the south of the character area.
- Sustained management of semi-natural meadows.
- Impact of large-scale farm buildings and industrial buildings on the open valley sides and lack of integrating planting.

- The impact of urban fringe encroachment, including horticulture and its associated paddock fencing and outbuildings, and inappropriate suburban garden boundaries.
- Under-management of historic parkland trees and loss of parkland pasture.
- Loss of indigenous hedgerows, trees and grassland on golf courses.

Landscape Strategies

- Retain and enhance the rural and riparian character of the area.
- Identify, conserve and enhance areas of agriculturally unimproved neutral grassland and water meadows.
- Conserve and restore the structure and condition of the woodlands through appropriate management such as thinning, coppicing, replanting, and the removal of invasive alien species.
- Encourage the creation of new woodlands to link with existing woodland in adjacent character areas, where appropriate.
- Restore and enhance hedgerow structures through replanting and appropriate management.
- Improve footpath linkages to the disused railway line and the Forest of Bere.
- Encourage environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural practices to minimise fertiliser and soils run-off, which could lead to the pollution of the River Meon.
- 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.
- Encourage the restoration and replanting of hedgerows within golf courses in order to maintain the historic field pattern, using appropriate indigenous species.
- Conserve the rich bio-diversity associated with the clear spring water.
- Restore fields that have been subdivided into paddocks, through the removal of post and rail fencing and sheds for example.

Built Form Strategies

- Future development should be sensitive to the historic character of settlements within the character area.
- The compact nature of existing settlements should be respected and enhanced, with the avoidance of ribbon development.
- Conserve and promote the use of typical local building materials such as red brick, blue brick, clay plain tiles and natural slate.

- Sensitively locate buildings within the countryside, avoiding open ridge-lines and integrating them into the landscape setting, and incorporate new indigenous planting where appropriate.
- Minimise the impact of intrusive structures such as telecommunications masts and electricity pylons, through sensitive siting, screening and the use of underground cables.
- Conserve and enhance the rural character of existing roads and lanes and avoid inappropriate road improvements where possible.

Key Designations

- **Conservation Areas**

Wickham

Soberton Pumping Station

- **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**

Funtley ironworks, site of (Mon. No. 516 HA)

- **SSSI's**

Botley Wood

Everetts and Mushes Copses (small part in the east);

- **SINC's**

River Meon (part); Wickham Meon Meadows; Meadow between disused railway and R. Meon; Closewood (central, north & south); Closewood Fen; Bishops Wood; Huntage Copse; Huntage Row; Huntage Water Meadows; Sandpit Water Meadows; Bere Copse (E & W of railway); Soberton Mill Water Meadows; Timbryard Water Meadows; Ravenswood Row; Knowle Copse / Dash Wood / Ravens Wood; Birchforth Copse; Frith Farm Pit and grassland (not on HCC list); Bishops Enclosure (east); Coach Road Copse; Great Holywell Copse; Crooked Copse; Ragnalls Copse; West Walk (small part) in Rookesbury Park.

- **Holywell House:**

Little Ragnalls; Crooked Copse; Great Holywell Copse; Coach Road Copse; Holywell Pylon Wayleave; Nore Copse; Dirty Copse (part); Great Lion Copse; Little Lion Copse.

- **Parks listed in the Hampshire Register of Historic Parks and Gardens**

Holywell House, Swanmore (Site No. 1575) Post 1810 Park

Rookesbury Park School (Site No. 1593) Post 1810 Park

Park Place, Wickham (Site No. 1595) Deer Park

- **Countryside Heritage Areas**

Forest of Bere