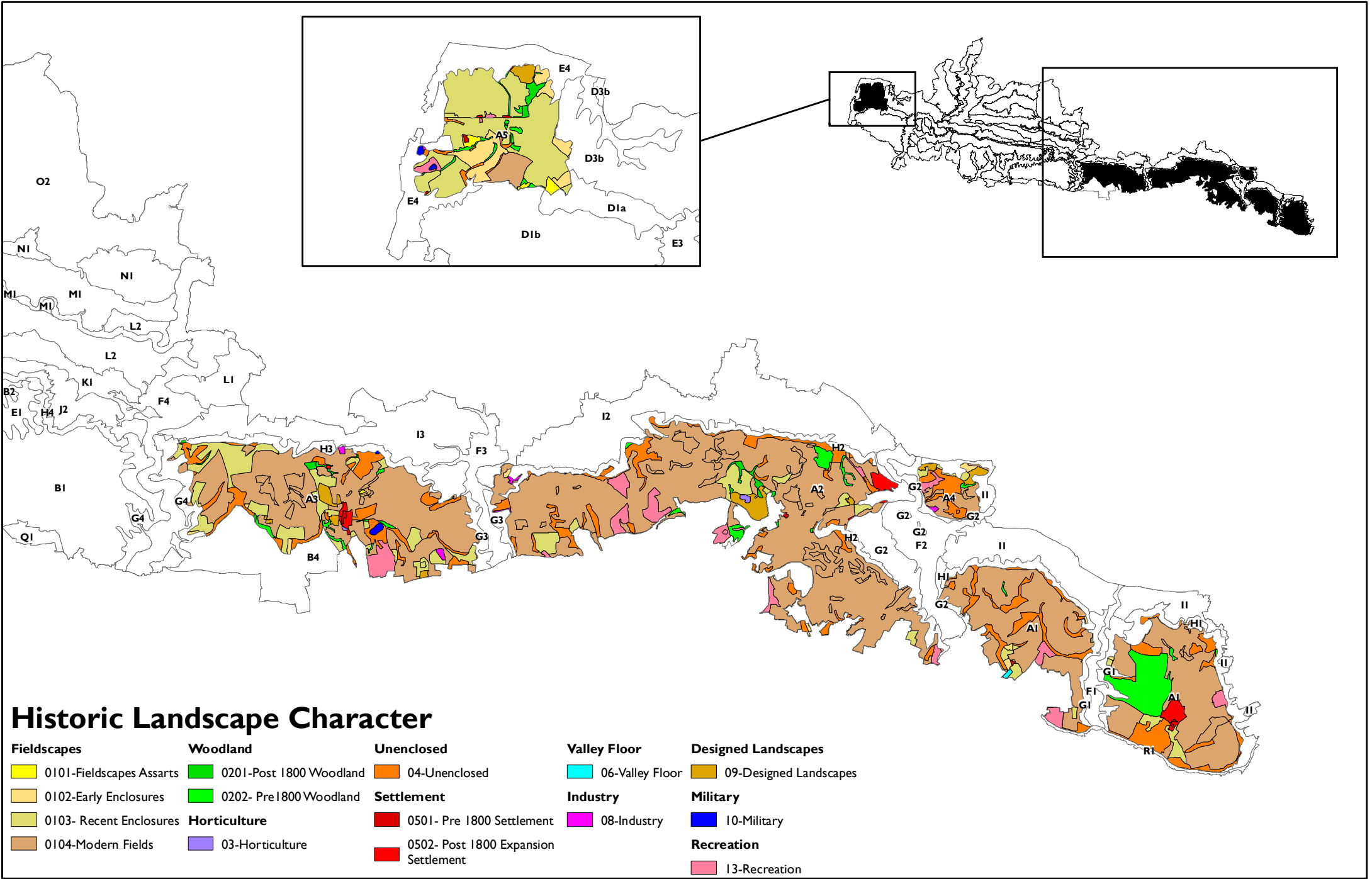


Landscape Character Areas

- A1 Ouse to Eastbourne Open Downs
- A2 Adur to Ouse Open Downs
- A3 Arun to Adur Open Downs
- A4 Mount Caburn
- A5 East Winchester Open Downs

A: Open Downlands



A: Open Downlands

LANDSCAPE TYPE A: OPEN DOWNLAND

A.1 The Open Downland landscape comprises a distinctive narrow spine of open chalk upland landscape on the south facing dip slope of the South Downs, mostly located to the east of the Arun Valley (with an outlier close to Winchester), meeting the sea at The Seven Sisters. This is Kipling's classic 'blunt, bow-headed, whale-backed Downs (Sussex, 1902).

DESCRIPTION

Integrated Key Characteristics:

- Large scale open elevated landscape of rolling chalk downland, with dry valleys and scarp slopes. Secluded dry valleys are a special feature.
- Dominated by the solid chalk geology with very occasional surface clay capping and wind blown sand creating local pockets of variation in the landscape.
- Large scale geometric arable fields, resulting from 20th century field reorganisation, in Sussex with fields of 18-19th century origin in Hampshire.
- Visually permeable post and wire boundaries. Few visible hedgerow boundaries and woodland cover limited to small deciduous woodland blocks and distinctive hilltop beech clumps.
- Ploughed arable fields on chalk dotted with flint contrasting with swathes of arable crops create strong seasonal variation in the landscape.
- General absence of water; the ephemeral winterbournes and distinctive dew ponds are an exception.
- Fragments of chalk downland turf and rare chalk heath, together with associated scrub and woodland habitats are confined to steep slopes where arable cultivation has proved difficult.
- Extensive use of the land for sport (shooting and game rearing) in some part of the Open Downland creating a distinct land cover pattern of open downland interspersed with small woodlands.
- Ancient earthworks and flint mines, including visually dominant Iron Age hillforts, crown the highest summits. Ancient chalkland track – now the South Downs Way national trail follows the northern ridgeline.
- Sparse settlement, with occasional isolated farms and barns. Blocks of modern farm buildings punctuate the open landscape. At a more detailed level flint sheepfolds, barns and shepherds cottages are a visual reminder of the former extent of sheep grazing.
- Large open skies and distant panoramic views – creating a dramatic and dynamic landscape changing according to prevailing weather conditions.

- A tranquil landscape, often seemingly remote and empty, with a windswept exposed character. Views to the sea from panoramic viewpoints in the east.
- Strong artistic and literary associations.
- Urban development, beyond the designated area apparent in views from this landscape.
- Good access opportunities associated with areas of chalk downland plus extensive areas of land in public ownership – with high recreational use, including sports such as paragliding.

Physical Landscape

- A.2 The *Open Downland* is formed from a solid geology of undivided Upper and Middle Chalk. It is the consistent physical qualities of this chalk that gives rise to this extensive area of gently undulating dip slope chalk descending southwards from a prominent escarpment ridge. Some of the highest points in the South Downs occur along this ridge, for example Ditchling Beacon which reaches 248m.
- A.3 The surface of the chalk dip slope is furrowed by extensive branching dry valley systems and winterbournes which are most likely early natural drainage patterns that retreated as the level of the water table in the chalk fell. In the east, where these dry valleys meet the sea this results in a dramatic undulating cliff line, for example at the Seven Sisters. The cliffs provide a cross-section through the chalk – the cliffs of Beachy Head provide excellent exposures of Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk formations.
- A.4 There are also steep ‘mini-scarps’ within the downs that relate to faults in the chalk and the formation of a secondary escarpment. These form asymmetrical dry valleys. Embedded within the Chalk are hard flints which are formed from silica. These flints remain long after the softer chalk has eroded and have been exploited by man as tools and building materials.
- A.5 The underlying chalk geology has given rise to Brown and Grey Rendzina soils which are characterised by their shallow, well drained, calcareous and silty nature and are easily eroded. Veins of sand and gravel (dry valley deposits) are found along the bottom of the dry valleys and in these areas the soils tend to be deeper and less calcareous.
- A.6 Accumulations of clay and embedded flints are located on the higher ridges of the downs where they give rise to the more clayey Paleo-argillic brown earths. All of these soil types give the land a generally good agricultural land capability, with the majority of the land being classified as Grade 3 in Defra’s Agricultural Land Classification (good-moderate quality agricultural soils). The landscape is characterised by vast arable fields, plus areas of pasture, bounded by post and wire fencing or sparse thorn hedgerows.
- A.7 The steeper slopes of the dry valleys and minor scarps are more difficult to farm and these areas often support an irregular mosaic of chalk grassland, scrub and hanger woodland.

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape

- A.8 The sense of scale in this landscape is vast owing to the expansive, rolling topography, the extremely large fields, and the relatively low presence of vertical features which reveals expansive open skies. These large skies ensure that weather conditions are a dominant influence and create a dynamic, landscape varying with the seasons. The rolling topography gives rise to constantly changing views. Field boundaries, that are geometric in form, appear to curve as they cross the undulating landscape. The general absence of hedgerows and woodland creates a strong sense of openness and exposure – this is particularly evident on the coast where the on-shore winds have sculpted hawthorns into contorted, stunted shapes. However, in other inland areas beech clumps create focal features in the open landscape. This is a homogenous, organised landscape as a result of the consistent scale and form of the rolling topography and field patterns. The low density of roads, settlement and people combined with the long views and expansive, elevated character contribute to the perception of a still and remote landscape.
- A.9 The low noise levels, sense of naturalness arising from the presence of chalk grassland, elevation and views plus low presence of overt built human influences, and low population density all contribute to a sense of remoteness and tranquillity across the majority of the downs. This is interrupted only by the presence of occasional car parks and signage related to recreational use.
- A.10 The *Open Downs*' proximity to many local centres of population mean that there are a large number of potential users of the area. There are considerable areas of land in public ownership plus areas of open access land which coincide with areas of chalk grassland. A good network of rights of way and car parking facilities has resulted in a landscape which is very accessible for recreation. However, the presence of roads reduces accessibility of the open countryside from urban areas on foot, by bicycle or on horse back.
- A.11 The dramatic landscape of the *Open Downs* has been a source of literary inspiration throughout the centuries, but the perception of their aesthetic value has changed significantly. As early as 1772 the naturalist Gilbert White, described the '*broad backs*' and '*shapely figured aspect*' of the open rolling downs. Vast flocks of sheep once roamed the downs and these inspired many writers. In 1813 the Reverend Arthur Young write '*the whole tract of the Downs in their full extent, is stocked with sheep, and the amazing number they keep, is one of the most singular circumstances in the husbandry of England*'.
- A.12 In the 19th century the open chalk landscapes were often described unfavourably. William Gilpin described the landscape of the open downs as '*ugly*', Cobbett found the downs '*all high, hard, dry, fox-hunting country*' and Samuel Johnson described the landscape as being '*so desolate that if a man had a mind to hang himself in desperation he would be hard put to find a tree on which to fix a rope*'.
- A.13 The *Open Downs* stirred Kipling to write his poem '*Sussex*' in 1902 in which he describes the '*blunt, bow-headed, whale-backed Downs*'. He also described the intangible elements of the Downs such as the voice of the shepherd, the cries of sheep, clamour of sheep bells, jingling of harnesses, sounds of the sea and absence of mechanical noise. This is now hard to find and illustrates how the downs have changed. Moutray Read noted the '*clear, clean, wholesome, invigorating*' nature of the

downs that exhibited ‘a perfection of curve and outline’. Virginia Wolf was apparently rendered speechless by the beauty of the Downs writing, ‘One is overcome by beauty more extravagantly than one could expect....I cannot express this.’

- A.14 Many painters have also been inspired by the dramatic landscape including Copley Fielding who painted atmospheric watercolours of the Downs in the 19th century, Philip Wilson Steer who painted his watercolour ‘Sussex Downs’ in 1914, Eric Ravilious whose 20th century paintings depict the chalk downlands and agricultural landscapes.

Biodiversity

- A.15 This arable dominated landscape has retained significant ecological interest in the form of areas of unimproved chalk grassland, together with associated scrub and woodland. The majority of these semi-natural habitats are confined to steep slopes where arable cultivation has proved difficult – here significant areas of calcareous grassland, scrub and woodland are retained. Areas of arable land, particularly those which are managed less intensively, also provide valuable habitat and support a range of farmland bird species, arable weeds and invertebrates.
- A.16 In the wider landscape, the character area supports scattered small blocks of secondary and plantation woodland, together with occasional boundary hedgerows. Although these are largely gappy and defunct, they could provide opportunities for enhancement.

| Key Biodiversity Features | Importance |
|---|--|
| Significant areas of calcareous grassland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of nationally important chalk grassland as well as some rare chalk heath. • As a whole the chalk grassland resource supports important populations of vascular plants, birds and invertebrates. |
| Mosaic of arable and permanent pasture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides habitat diversity at a landscape scale, and is particularly notable for supporting a range of farmland bird species. |
| Occasional areas of scrub and woodland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presence of occasional scrub and woodland adds to the overall diversity of chalk grassland habitats, and provides additional ecological interest within the agricultural landscape. |

Historic Character

- A.17 The open chalk downland has been favoured for settlement throughout early history, although largely devoid of settlement today. Finds of flint handaxes within the remnant clay-with-flint deposits indicates the presence of Palaeolithic hunters, while the fertile and thick deposits of loessic soil which formerly capped the chalk attracted Neolithic farmers, who farmed within clearings in the wildwood. Agricultural communities continued to clear the tree cover and farm the downland on an increasing scale until the Romano-British period, leaving extensive traces of their field systems and settlements across the character area. The land was also valued as a ritual landscape, with a number of different monuments constructed, including causewayed enclosures, long barrows and round barrows. Many of these sites were prominently located on, or just below, the ridge-line and are still visible in the modern landscape, many of them used since the early medieval period as significant markers on parish boundaries.

- A.18 Anglo-Saxon settlers initially settled the dipslope of the downland, but later communities settled along the river valleys and the greensand shelf, with some of the original settlements surviving into later centuries as isolated farms on the downland. By the medieval period, centuries of arable cultivation had exhausted the downland soils, and the character area was given over to pasture. A sheep-corn husbandry system developed, with huge communal sheep flocks pastured on the downland during the day, and brought down onto the arable lands at night to provide valuable manure. This system was put under pressure in the 13th century as rising population pressure saw the spread of arable land back up onto the downland, but the economic downturn of the 14th century, exacerbated by climatic change and pestilence (affecting animals and humans), saw the downland returned to sheepwalk. The arable lands of the Open Downs, east of the Arun, tended to be unhedged common fields creating a 'prairie'-like landscape, operating a highly developed form of arable farming based around crop rotations within several large fields and continuous cultivation (i.e. no fields left as fallow).
- A.19 The area was characterised by open sheepwalk until the middle of the 20th century, with some areas of 18th-19th planned enclosure associated with new farmsteads established at this time. Some of the downland was ploughed during the Second World War, but the landscape was transformed from the 1950s onwards when modern farming techniques and political pressure allowed vast areas of the downland to be ploughed and converted to arable production.
- A.20 The character of the landscape now one of large 20th century fields, often bounded by wire fencing but with hedgerows and tracks surviving from the medieval manorial downland landscape, although their historic character is largely subdued by more recent agricultural change. Slopes too steep to plough survive as isolated blocks of downland, often neglected and overgrown, but often preserving ancient terraced field systems. A narrow belt of downland also survives along the top of the escarpment, and it is here that many of the prehistoric and later monuments survive as earthworks. Scattered farmsteads, some of medieval origin representing shrunken hamlets, exist in some of the sheltered dipslope valleys, sometimes with isolated outfarms (small groups of barns and animal shelters). Woodland cover is generally very scarce, comprising isolated shelter belts of post-1800 date associated with farmsteads, or occasional game coverts.

| Key Features of the Historic Environment | Importance |
|---|---|
| Preservation of prehistoric and later earthworks in unploughed areas | Provides strong sense of historical continuity – many are protected as Scheduled Monuments |
| General absence of woodland | Indicates extent of past land clearance |
| Low level of surviving settlement, with earlier settlements existing as earthworks/archaeological sites | Reflects the fluctuations in settlement patterns through time due to changing environmental/cultural conditions |
| Scattered post-medieval farmsteads | Indicates the changing nature of farming practice following decline of traditional manorial system |
| Modern enclosures | Evidence for complete reorganisation of landscape |

Settlement Form and Built Character

- A.21 The settlement pattern in this area is characterised by a low density of dispersed settlement and an almost complete absence of nucleated settlement. This conforms to English Heritage's rural settlement designation of East Wessex Sub-Province within the South-eastern Province, where the dominant settlement form comprises nucleated villages situated beyond the downs. The typical settlement form is relatively late in origin, and comprises isolated farmsteads of 18th-19th century origin set within areas of recent enclosure derived from former sheepwalk where they are often visually prominent. However, some of the farmsteads are of medieval origin and represent former dependent hamlets which have subsequently shrunk. Aisled barns are an iconic feature of the open downland landscape, contained by distinctive flint boundary walls which are critical to their setting.
- A.22 Building materials are typically flint, red brick, clay tiles and Welsh slate, with some modern materials including concrete, corrugated iron and asbestos used in farm buildings. Flint is particularly characteristic of the agricultural barns and walls.

EVALUATION

Sensitivity

- A.23 The *Open Downland* landscape type has a number of sensitive natural, cultural and aesthetic/perceptual features that are vulnerable to change. Key landscape sensitivities include:
- The open uninterrupted skylines and exposed undeveloped character resulting from the rolling topography and absence of enclosing or vertical features. These are especially vulnerable to interruption by development or clutter.
 - Strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness and areas of deep 'remoteness' associated with the hidden dry valleys. This quality is being affected by traffic pressure on the roads and tracks that cross the downs and development on the edge; the night time glow of the adjacent urban areas is already discernable, and prominent in some places.
 - The vast, open character and long views across the landscape resulting from the uniform land cover of grassland and crops, visually transparent post and wire field boundaries and sparse hedgerow/woodland cover. This means that any landscape change or development has the potential to be highly visible.
 - Areas of unimproved chalk grassland, chalk heath, and pasture land cover, which are vulnerable to changes in management and require consistent grazing regimes.
 - The mosaic of habitats, including arable land and pasture that supports arable weeds and farmland birds and could be vulnerable to further intensification of farming methods.
 - The sense of unity and cohesion given by the repeated use of flint, brick and clay tile building materials. It is vulnerable to unsympathetic additions, extensions or conversions, which would disrupt the intact built character. The distinctive isolated barns are especially vulnerable.

- The high number of historic monuments and earthworks that form significant landmarks and a strong sense of historical continuity, and their historic landscape settings.
- The more subtle features of the historic landscape, such as hedgerows and tracks, ancient field systems and tumuli, which are not protected and are vulnerable to change and loss.

A.24 The very open character and long views means there are few screening opportunities making this landscape type highly sensitive visually. Areas that appear hidden from one viewpoint are likely to be exposed from another. The steep dry valleys provide some secluded locations which are hidden from view, and these are especially valued for their strong sense of remoteness.

A.25 The elevated landform typical of this landscape type means there is little inter-visibility with adjacent landscape types, except on its edges (although it should be noted that tall structures could be visible over long distances). For example, the downland that forms the crest of the escarpment permits long views to and from a wider area beyond the South Downs. The landscape is also visually sensitive to changes beyond the South Downs boundary, for example within the adjacent urban areas.

Change – Key Issues and Trends

Past Change

A.26 Observable changes in the past include:

- Conversion of the pasture, which formed the Downs' open and unified character, to large arable fields.
- More recently, conversion of arable land back to pasture with restoration of sheep grazing and management of chalk grassland slopes as a result of more recent agricultural policy. However, global agricultural competition continues to hamper efforts to reinstate sheep grazing.
- Introduction of large steel framed agricultural buildings over the last 70 years.
- Destruction of archaeological sites as a result of post-war ploughing.
- The post-war creation of areas of significant land in public ownership (National Trust and Local Authority) resulting in increased recreation opportunities.
- Development within adjacent urban areas which is prominent in views from parts of the Open Downs.
- The introduction of golf courses on the edges of the adjacent urban areas in the second half of the 20th century which have eroded the rural character of the landscape and diluted the sharp transition between the towns and downs.
- The appearance of apparently abandoned land which has been 'set-aside' as part of a requirement of the Common Agricultural Policy. This has an impact on the 'managed' character of the landscape.

- Increased traffic on the few rural roads that cross the Downs, which has affected the sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Conversion of historic farm buildings, particularly to residential use, creating a domestic and suburban character to their settings.
- Erosion, parking problems and conflicts of interests arising from diverse recreational use of the downs, including activities such as paragliding.
- Over-abstraction of the chalk aquifer resulting in drying of winterbournes.

Future Landscape Change

A.27 In the short term (5 years) it is likely that there will be continued positive change in the form of conversion of arable land back to pasture and creation and management of chalk grassland habitats as a result of ongoing policies and incentives. However, global agricultural competition is likely to continue to hamper efforts to reinstate sheep grazing. Patterns of crops in the arable areas are also likely to continue to change - some of these crops can have a sudden impact e.g. oil seed rape adds bright splash of yellow to an otherwise muted landscape. There are likely to be ongoing pressures for change on the urban fringes although the existing designation of the area as an AONB and, if confirmed, the new designation of National Park is likely to limit pressure for built development. Changes outside the designated area are likely to continue to affect the landscape character of the *Open Downs*. Increased traffic on the few rural roads that cross the downs and link to the urban areas is a key concern.

A.28 It is difficult to be prescriptive about long term change (20 years) as this will be dependent on prevailing policies and incentives. The South Downs Management Plan will be a key tool in managing change and ensuring a positive future for the area. Some potential changes and key vulnerabilities within the *Open Downs* are outlined below.

Climate Change: Changes to the precipitation and temperature could impact upon the species composition of habitats, particularly chalk grasslands and chalk heathlands. This could result in a greater abundance of species with a continental distribution, but the impact of extreme events and the spread of more competitive grasses could cancel out these benefits. Higher temperatures could also lead to incidence of different livestock pests and possible increased use of pesticides if pests and pathogens increase.

Increased drought conditions could result in the potential to grow different crop types such as maize and soya which could change the visual character of the landscape. Intensification of crop production in dry conditions could also result in greater soil erosion and drought could affect the woodlands and beech clumps. On the other hand, drought could also result in withdrawal of arable land from cropping and reversion to natural grassland, particularly in areas of thin soils such as this. Increases in dry summers, combined with over-abstraction of the chalk aquifer, is also likely to result in continued drying of winterbournes.

In response to climate change, the pursuit of renewable energy may result in demand for growth of biomass crops, which could alter the open character of the Downs, or

demand for wind energy development, which could affect the remoteness and tranquillity of the landscape as well as intruding into open skylines.

Agricultural Change and Land Management: Agricultural management will be driven by the changes in the world market and the CAP. It is likely that agricultural production will continue to intensify, in parts of the area, with amalgamation of farms and potential for further new large scale farm buildings. This could result in some other buildings becoming redundant and pressure for conversion or insensitive change. Further intensification in production may have effects on the light chalk soils particularly, in terms of erosion and run off with resultant soils loss and siltation of rivers and streams in adjacent valley landscapes. Further pollution of groundwaters through leaching of nitrates in excess of crop needs is also a concern. On the other hand, it is likely that other areas will become more marginal, notably the steeper slopes and dry valleys. Here, positive landscape change may arise from regimes to promote enhanced environmental management of chalk grassland habitats. However, perpetuation of sustainable grazing will be critical to the success of such schemes.

Development: The existing designation of the area as an AONB and, if confirmed, the new designation of National Park is likely to limit pressure for built development within the *Open Downs*. However, since the *Open Downs* lie adjacent to urban areas it is likely that they will continue to be affected by development in adjacent areas outside the designated landscape. As well as visual impacts, this could result in increases in artificial lighting, increases in traffic through the area, as well demand for abstraction with associated effects on the chalk aquifer. There may also be associated increased recreational pressures, with demand for access and facilities creating further conflict with other user groups.

Broad Management Objective and Landscape Guidelines

- A.29 **The overall management objective should be to conserve the vast open rolling upland character of the *Open Downs* and the strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.**

Landscape Management Considerations

- The continued conversion of arable land to grassland would be a beneficial change, particularly on upper hillsides and summits – creating large continuous areas of grassland linking to chalk downland sites, which reveal the smoothly rolling landform and reduce the risk of soil erosion. The aim should be to create a habitat mosaic of pasture and arable land, and protect archaeological sites and their setting.
- Maintain and increase the species diversity of areas of semi-improved grassland, which act as a reservoir for more common chalk downland species.
- Consider the potential visual effects of different crop types such as maize, soya and biomass crops – conserve the open character and visual unity of the downland landscape, particularly on hill summits.
- Increase the biodiversity of arable land and promote appropriate management of arable farmland to create a wildlife-rich habitat supporting farmland birds,

including retaining areas of fallow land, maintaining over winter stubbles, maintaining an unploughed margin around arable land, and managing existing hedgerows.

- Consider removal of areas of linear scrub along fence lines where the fence is being removed to minimise conflict with the open and smoothly rolling character of the landscape.
- Protect and continue to manage (graze) the existing chalk grassland and chalk – heath sites.
- Protect and manage all existing archaeological earthwork sites for their contribution to understanding and recognising the historic continuity in the landscape.
- Manage areas of scrub on steeper slopes to vary the age and species structure and to enhance the distinctive landform.
- Manage areas of deciduous hanger woodland to maintain these as a feature of the steeper slopes and providing contrast with open rolling downland.
- Monitor water abstraction of the chalk aquifer to and seek to restore flows to the winterbournes. Avoid ploughing out winterbournes to reduce the risk of soil erosion.

Development Considerations

- Maintain the essentially open undeveloped character. Opportunities for built development are severely restricted in this remote and tranquil landscape.
- Conserve the open skylines are particularly sensitive to any type of built development. The crest of the northern escarpment is especially important in relation to long views from the low lying landscape beyond.
- Encourage sympathetic re-use of any traditional farm buildings that may become redundant (such as the flint barns) so as to maintain their external fabric, appearance and setting. Refer to guidance contained in the Historic Farmsteads study¹⁵.
- Consider opportunities for planting to soften the existing urban fringes. Planting should recognise and reveal the subtleties in the landscape and avoid a standardised approach. Woodland is usually confined to lower slopes while isolated woodland clumps are features of some ridgetops.
- Manage recreational use and ensure recreational facilities and signage are well integrated into the landscape by means of siting, materials and design.
- Consider effects of any development beyond the designated area on the South Downs landscape. In addition to being visible in views from the South Downs, secondary effects such as light spill, noise and increased traffic will all have an

¹⁵ Forum Heritage Services (2005) *Historic Farmsteads & Landscape Character in Hampshire, Pilot Project*. Report by Bob Edwards for English Heritage.

impact on the special qualities of remoteness and tranquillity associated with the *Open Downs*.

Character Areas:

There are five areas of *Open Downlands*. These are mostly located in the eastern part of the South Downs. An additional area of *Open Downland* is located at the western end of the South Downs, to the east of Winchester.

| | |
|----|-------------------------------|
| A1 | Ouse to Eastbourne Open Downs |
| A2 | Adur to Ouse Open Downs |
| A3 | Arun to Adur Open Downs |
| A4 | Mount Caburn |
| A5 | East Winchester Open Downs |

AI: OUSE TO EASTBOURNE OPEN DOWNS

Location and Boundaries

- A1.1 The *Ouse to Eastbourne Open Downs* landscape character area occurs at the eastern end of the spine of chalk that forms the South Downs. The area extends from the deep U-shaped Ouse Valley in the west to Eastbourne/ Beachy Head in the east. The crest of the steep scarp defines the northern and eastern extent of the character area. To the south the boundary is defined by the coastline where high, chalk cliffs mark a sharp transition to the shore.
- A1.2 To the north at the crest of the scarp, there are panoramic views out over the scarp footslopes and Low Weald beyond the designated area boundary. To the south, this is the only character area that meets the sea, with associated strong maritime influences and extensive sea views. To the east there are views over Eastbourne, which abuts the scarp, while to the south the suburban area of Seaford (beyond the Park boundary) extends into the chalk landscape.

Integrated Key Characteristics:

- Vast open rolling upland chalk landscape of blunt, whale-backed Downs reaching 217m at Firle Beacon.
- Furrowed by extensive branching dry valley systems which results in a dramatic undulating cliff line where the Downs meet the sea at the Seven Sisters and Beachy Head. Here, there are strong maritime influences and connections with the seascape.
- Straightsided, irregular fields of 20th century date forming a mosaic of arable and permanent pasture, bounded by post and wire fencing or sparse thorn hedgerows, creates a habitat that is particularly notable for supporting a range of farmland bird species.
- Hedgerows and tracks surviving from the earlier manorial downland landscape are important historic landscape features.
- Remnants of unimproved chalk grassland and scrub on steeper slopes, some of which reveal ancient terraced field systems, plus the large area of rare chalk heath at Lullington Heath.
- Central part of the area is dominated by Friston Forest, a 20th century conifer and beech plantation which subdues the characteristic chalk landscape.
- Large open skies ensure that weather conditions are a dominant influence creating a dynamic, landscape, particularly on the windswept coastal edge.
- Strong sense of remote and tranquillity and pockets of 'deep' remoteness associated with hidden dry valleys. At the same time an accessible landscape with high levels of public access.

- Generally, a low density of dispersed settlement, characterised by scattered farmsteads – most of 18th-19th century origin, with some of medieval origin representing shrunken hamlets. Traditional flint barns are a feature; large modern agricultural buildings are now prominent.
- Turn of the century garden estates at East Dean, centred around a medieval core – an unusual feature of the Open Downland landscape
- Large number of prehistoric and later earthworks providing a strong sense of historical continuity; causewayed enclosures, long barrows and round barrows situated on the ridge-line form important landmark features.
- Panoramic views across adjacent landscapes – particularly notable are the views across Eastbourne from the eastern edge of the downs, seascape views from the coastal cliffs and views over the fens and Low Weald from the crest of the northern escarpment.

Specific Characteristics Unique to the Ouse to Eastbourne Open Downs

- A1.3 The landscape is typical of the type with expansive, open rolling downland. It is the only character area to meet the sea – here the cliffs provide a cross-section through the chalk with exposures of Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk formations. Chalk grassland habitats of the Seaford to Beachy Head SSSI are therefore subjected to coastal influence. This character area also supports an area of rare chalk heath at Lullington Heath – one of the largest areas of chalk heath in Britain containing mixed chalk and heathland communities.
- A1.4 Prehistoric occupation of the clifftop zone is particularly evident in the character area as it retains its traditional use as sheepwalk. The lack of extensive modern ploughing has preserved many earthworks that have been destroyed further inland, although many of these are now being encroached by scrub. The most prominent prehistoric features comprise hillforts (Seaford Head and Belle Tout) and barrows (Crowlink), many of which may well have been visible from the sea, thereby informing travellers that this fertile land was already occupied. The commanding nature of this cliff top area has resulted in specific features on the coastal edge with the erection of coastal beacons, coastguard barracks (to combat smuggling) and a range of military sites from Napoleonic batteries through to Second World War pillboxes.
- A1.5 Friston Forest, a large plantation woodland, is an unusual feature of the *Open Downs*. This forest was first planted in 1926 and is dominated by beech, although pine was planted as a nursery crop and is slowly being removed. The site has developed significant ecological interest and is a valuable recreational resource - it offers way marked routes for walkers and mountain bikers and two car parks service the forest. A further feature of this character area is the Seven Sisters Country Park, which provides a popular location for walking, cycling and canoeing. Access to Lullington Heath NNR is limited to public rights of way, but guided walks organised by English Nature allow wider access.

- A1.6 The sense of tranquillity, that is typical of this landscape type, is interrupted by the presence of car parks and related signage in the recreation areas close to Beachy Head. The presence of communication masts at Beachy Head and Beddingham Hill, and the golf courses at the edges of Seaford and Eastbourne also affect the perception of tranquillity and remoteness..
- A1.7 The area exhibits the typical low density dispersed settlement pattern of the landscape type. Exceptions to this pattern are found within sheltered low-lying areas near the edge of the character area where small nucleated settlements of medieval origin are located, such as Bishopstone, Jevington and East Dean. East Dean has grown into a modern dormitory settlement – an unusual feature of the open downland landscape. The 19th century coastal edge settlement, is also unique to this character area. Here, small nucleated groups of terraced cottages were established at Cuckmere and Birling by the Blockade Service/Coastguard to house officers engaged on anti-smuggling duties and modern bungalows have encroached at Birling.

Sensitivities Specific to the Ouse to Eastbourne Open Downs

- A1.8 All of the landscape and visual sensitivities listed in the landscape type evaluation apply to this character area. More specifically, the strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness is being affected by traffic and development on the edge of Seaford and Eastbourne and the landscape is visually sensitive to change within the adjacent urban areas.

Change Specific to the Ouse to Eastbourne Open Downs

- A1.9 Observable changes in the past include the building of the private garden estate in East Dean at the turn of the century which has introduced a built suburban element into the landscape, and the planting of Friston Forest in 1926 which is an incongruous element of the downland landscape.
- A1.10 This coastal edge of this character area has one of the highest rates of erosion in Europe. The cliffs are receding at about 30-40cm each year on average. The process is intermittent with major falls occurring after heavy rain or rough seas, often two or three times per year. Where these falls occur they protect the base of the cliffs from the sea and usually there are no falls in the same places for eight or nine years until the sea undercuts the cliffs again¹⁶. Continued erosion may cause potential loss of landscape features, for example the Bronze Age round barrow on Baily's Hill, coastal property and coastal paths.

Landscape Management/Development Considerations Specific to the Ouse to Eastbourne Open Downs

- A1.11 In addition to the generic landscape management and development considerations for this landscape type, the following landscape management considerations are specific to this character area:
- Consider sensitive approaches to manage coastal erosion.

¹⁶ <http://www.sevensisters.org.uk/whattodo/sisters.html> [September 2005]

- Conserve the earthworks, such as hillforts (Seaford Head and Belle Tout) and barrows (Crowlink), along the coastal edge and manage scrub encroachment.
- Seek to manage recreational use, particularly in areas of high pressure such as at Beachy Head.
- Continue to manage Friston Forest for its ecological and recreational value and seek opportunities for better integration with the downland setting in association with future felling of the beech crop.
- Consider the effect of any change in adjacent urban areas of Eastbourne and Seaford on views to and from the South Downs.



A vast, open, rolling chalk landscape.



Cliffs at the Seven Sisters provide a cross section through the chalk.



Straight sided irregular fields form a mosaic of arable and permanent pasture.



The landscape has a strong sense of tranquility and remoteness.



Remnants of chalk grassland and scrub on steeper slopes.



Traditional flint barns are a feature.

A2: ADUR TO OUSE OPEN DOWNS

Location and Boundaries

- A2.1 The *Adur to Ouse Open Downs* extend between the two river valleys and wrap around the northern edge of Brighton. To the east they abut the edge of Lewes, which has extended up onto the downland from the Ouse valley. The area is defined to the north by the crest of the north facing scarp, the *Adur to Ouse Downs Scarp*, and to the south by the designated National Park boundary approximately along the line of the A27 (T) forming the urban edge of Peacehaven, Brighton, Hove, Southwick and Shoreham.
- A2.2 From the north there are extensive views out across the scarp footslopes and Low Weald, beyond the South Downs. To the south there is an abrupt boundary with the urban area on the coastal plain and frequent views across development. This is a particularly dramatic part of the Open Downs with the prominent northern scarp reaching 248m at Ditchling Beacon.

Integrated Key Characteristics:

- Vast open rolling upland chalk landscape of blunt, whale-backed Downs reaching 248m at Ditchling Beacon.
- Furrowed by extensive branching dry valley systems which produce deep, narrow, rounded coombs. The main dry valleys contain transport routes, for example the A23(T) in the Pyecombe Gap.
- Large scale irregular fields (of 20th century date) of arable and pasture bounded by visually permeable post and wire fencing or sparse thorn hedgerows creating a very open landscape supporting a range of farmland birds. Hedgerows and tracks survive from the earlier manorial downland landscape.
- Significant areas of unimproved chalk grassland, for example at Castle Hill, which supports nationally scarce plant species.
- Occasional scrub and woodland on steeper slopes adds to the overall diversity of chalk grassland habitats, contributes to biodiversity and provides visual texture in the landscape.
- A landscape managed for country sports (game shooting) which preserves the shape and form of the landscape and creates a distinctive landcover including small woodlands and game cover plots.
- Large open skies ensure that weather conditions are a dominant influence creating a dynamic landscape, with considerable seasonal variation.
- A strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity in close proximity to the south coast urban area. Pockets of deep remoteness associated with hidden dry valleys landscape.

- A large number of prehistoric and later earthworks providing a strong sense of historical continuity; a concentration of Iron Age hillforts which form prominent features on the skylines, three overlooking the Weald (Devil's Dyke, Ditchling Beacon and Wolstonbury) and one commanding the coastal plain (Hollingbury).
- Includes the site of the registered battlefield of Lewes, fought in 1264 with cavalry action as a dominant theme.
- Stanmer Park with areas of original parkland surviving around Stanmer House, including 18th century plantations, smaller clumps and trees belts. Stanmer village is a good example of an estate village.
- Good public access with a network of public rights of way and open access land.
- Severe cuttings and ridges associated with the A27(T) around Brighton.
- The Jack and Jill windmills at Clayton and the communication masts at Truleigh Hill are prominent features of the skyline.
- The typical settlement form is relatively late in origin, and comprises isolated farmsteads of 18th-19th century. The individual farmsteads are often prominent features in the landscape.
- Building materials are typically flint, red brick and clay tiles, with more modern materials used in farm buildings.

Specific Characteristics Unique to the Adur to Ouse Open Downs

- A2.3 This character area exhibits open rolling upland chalk scenery typical of the *Open Downs* landscape type. The blunt, whale-backed downs reach a dramatic 248m at Ditchling Beacon and are furrowed by extensive branching dry valley systems which produce deep, narrow, rounded coombs. Three Iron Age hillforts overlook the Weald (Devil's Dyke, Ditchling Beacon and Wolstonbury) and one commands the coastal plain (Hollingbury). This character area also contains the battlefield of Lewes, on which a battle was fought in 1264 and a 20th century Chattri, an Indian military cemetery and war memorial. The Jack and Jill windmills at Clayton are features of the skyline, revealing the power of the wind in this exposed landscape and associated with its long history of arable cultivation.
- A2.4 The location of Brighton on the edge of this area means that this character area has been influenced, on its edges, by urban fringe features such as road cuttings and traffic associated with the A23(T) and A27(T) roads, views of built development, electricity pylons, golf courses, and a cluster of communication masts at Truleigh Hill.
- A2.5 The proximity of Brighton also means that there are a large number of potential users of the area – networks of open access land, which tend to coincide with the steeper slopes and areas of chalk grassland, the extensive network of public rights of way and car parking facilities, particularly around Devil's Dyke, make this a highly accessible landscape. Public transport routes between Brighton and Devil's Dyke, Ditchling Beacon and Stanmer Park enhance countryside access further. The South Downs Way national trail follows the ridge of the northern scarp along much of its length and provides magnificent panoramic views - Sustrans' cycle route 89 also

shares part of this route. The Sussex Border Path also provides north-south access across the downs.

- A2.6 A number of chalk grassland dominated SSSIs are within the area, including Beeding Hill to Newtimber Hill SSSI, Clayton to Offham escarpment SSSI and Wolsonbury Hill SSSI. Castle Hill SAC is an internationally important chalk grassland site and supports a particularly rich orchid flora which includes the national scarce early spider orchid *Ophrys sphegodes*.
- A2.7 An 18th century landscape park at Stanmer is an important feature of the *Adur to Ouse Open Downs*. Although large parts of the park are now converted into modern arable fields, parts of the original parkland pasture survive around Stanmer House, with 18th century plantations occupying the south-western flanks of the park, and further smaller clumps and belts of trees contributing to the diversity to the landscape. The original boundary is still evident in the landscape, particularly where it is formed by a high stone wall. Stanmer village is a typical estate village.

Sensitivities Specific to the Adur to Ouse Open Downs

- A2.8 All of the landscape and visual sensitivities listed in the landscape type evaluation apply to this character area. However, of particular sensitivity in this character area is the level of perceived tranquillity and remoteness which is being eroded by traffic pressures and urban development on the adjacent coastal plain - light pollution already impacts on dark skies. Given the proximity to and views over development on the coastal plain, this area is also especially sensitive to changes in the urban area beyond the study area.

Change Specific to the Adur to Ouse Open Downs

- A2.9 Observable changes in the past have included the introduction and upgrading of major roads, including the A23(T) through the Pyecombe Gap and the A27(T) around the edge of Brighton, which severed the landscape and created incongruous cuttings and bridges. Other changes have included the introduction of golf courses on the edges of Brighton and Peacehaven which eroded the rural character of the landscape and diluted the sharp transition between the urban area and *Open Downs*. The intensively farmed land at Truleigh Hill which forms a harsh line where it meets the muted green of the scarp is a further prominent feature.
- A2.10 In the future there are likely to be ongoing pressures for change on the urban fringes of Brighton and its adjacent settlements.

Landscape Management/Development Considerations Specific to the Adur to Ouse Open Downs

- A2.11 In addition to the generic landscape management and development considerations for this landscape type, the following development considerations are specific to this character area:
- Seek opportunities to reduce the visual impact of existing visually intrusive elements on the downs. These include the severe cuttings and traffic associated with the A23(T) and A27(T) roads, the prominent urban fringes of Brighton, the

large electricity pylons, golf courses, and cluster of communication masts at Truleigh Hill.



The elevated landform provides views to the urban edge of Brighton.



A large scale, open, elevated landscape.



An actively farmed landscape with scrub and woodland on the steeper slopes.



The main dry valleys contain transport routes.



Devil's Dyke towards New Timber Hill.



Field boundaries appear to curve as they cross the undulating landform.

A3: ARUN TO ADUR OPEN DOWNS

Location and Boundaries

- A3.1 The *Arun to Adur Open Downs* character area occupies the open downland between the Arun and Adur river valleys to the north of Worthing. The area is defined to the north by the crest of the north facing scarp, the *Arun to Adur Downs Scarp*. To the west of the A24 the southern boundary is defined by a minor scarp which forms a clear transition to the wooded landscape of the Angmering and Clapham Woods, while to the east of the A24 the southern boundary is formed by the boundary of the designated landscape which follows the urban edge of Worthing/Lancing.
- A3.2 From the north there are extensive views out across the scarp footslopes and Low Weald, beyond the South Downs. To the south there are views over the coastal plain and development at Worthing/ Lancing.

Integrated Key Characteristics:

- Vast open rolling upland chalk landscape of blunt, whale-backed Downs reaching 238m at Chanctonbury Hill.
- Furrowed by extensive branching dry valley systems which produce deep, narrow, rounded coombs - the main dry valley (the Findon Valley) contains the A24.
- Dominated by large scale irregular fields of arable and pasture (of 20th century date) bounded by visually permeable post and wire fencing or sparse thorn hedgerows creating a very open landscape supporting a range of farmland birds. Hedgerows and tracks survive from the earlier manorial downland landscape.
- Significant areas of unimproved chalk grassland, for example at Cissbury Ring and Lancing Ring, which support nationally scarce plant species.
- Occasional scrub and woodland on steeper slopes and beech clumps on hill tops contribute to biodiversity and provides visual texture in the landscape.
- A landscape managed for country sports (game shooting) which preserves the shape and form of the landscape and creates a distinctive landcover including small woodlands and game cover plots.
- Large open skies ensure that weather conditions are a dominant influence creating a dynamic, landscape, with considerable seasonal variation.
- A strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity with pockets of deep remoteness associated with hidden dry valleys.
- Large number of prehistoric and later earthworks, including causewayed enclosures, long barrows and round barrows, providing a strong sense of historical continuity. Iron Age hillforts at Cissbury Ring and Chanctonbury Ring form prominent features on the skyline.

- Four flint mines of Neolithic date (Cissbury, Harrow Hill, Blackpatch and Church Hill, Findon) are associated with minor scarps.
- Good public access with a network of public rights of way and open access land.
- The typical settlement form is relatively late in origin, and comprises isolated farmsteads of 18th-19th century. The individual farmsteads are often prominent features in the landscape. The village of Findon is the exception.
- Building materials are typically flint, red brick and clay tiles, with more modern materials used in farm buildings.

Specific Characteristics Unique to the Arun to Adur Open Downs

- A3.3 This character area exhibits chalk scenery typical of the *Open Downs* landscape type. Within this, Findon valley is a distinctive dry valley which contains the major infrastructure associated with the A24 (which links London to the south coast) as well as the village of Findon. Although this village settlement is atypical of the dispersed settlement pattern that characterises the *Open Downs* landscape type, it is built of materials typical of the downs and is characterised by high flint walls. Secondary scarps are prominent in this character area, for example those seen on the slopes of Cissbury Ring, Church Hill and Burpham Hill.
- A3.4 The proximity of this area to local centres of population such as Worthing and Lancing mean that parts of the landscape are influenced by features of the urban edge such as golf courses and car parks. In common with other parts of the *Open Downs*, this area has high levels of recreational use with a network of open access land. The South Downs Way national trail follows the ridge of the northern scarp along much of its length and provides panoramic views across the downs and the low lying landscapes to the north. The Monarch's Way long distance footpath also crosses the area, passing through the village of Findon.
- A3.5 In ecological terms the character area supports a number of important chalk grassland sites. This chalk grassland is largely restricted to steep slopes, and is especially notable for its rich plant assemblages, which includes many species with a restricted distribution, together with invertebrates such as butterflies. Several sites carry SSSI designation, for example Cissbury Ring SSSI, and parts of Amberley Mount to Sullington Hill SSSI and Chanctonbury Hill SSSI.
- A3.6 The character area was valued as a ritual landscape and is particularly notable for its Neolithic flint mines at Cissbury, Harrow Hill, Blackpatch and Church Hill. The Iron Age hillforts at Cissbury Ring and Chanctonbury Ring are also important historic, and prominent visual, features.

Sensitivities Specific to the Arun to Adur Open Downs

- A3.7 All of the landscape and visual sensitivities listed in the landscape type evaluation apply to this character area. However, of particular sensitivity in the eastern part of this character area is the level of perceived tranquillity and remoteness which is being eroded by traffic pressures on the A24 and urban development on the adjacent coastal plain - light pollution already impacts on dark skies. Given the proximity to and views over development on the coastal plain, this area is also sensitive to

changes in the urban area beyond the study area. Also of particular sensitivity are the prominent secondary scarps and their open and undeveloped skylines which are vulnerable to any change which would interrupt and clutter the horizon.

Change Specific to the Arun to Adur Open Downs

- A3.8 Observable changes in the past have included the introduction and upgrading of the A24 through the Findon Gap and expansion of housing in Findon Village. Other changes have included the introduction of golf courses on the edges of the urban fringes of Worthing and Lancing which have eroded the rural character of the landscape and diluted the sharp transition between the urban area and *Open Downs*.
- A3.9 In the future there are likely to be ongoing pressures for change on the urban fringes of Worthing and Lancing.

Landscape Management/Development Considerations Specific to the Arun to Adur Open Downs

- A3.10 In addition to the generic landscape management and development considerations for this landscape type, the following development considerations are specific to this character area:
- Seek opportunities to reduce the visual impact of existing visually intrusive elements such as the infrastructure and traffic associated with the A24, and prominent built elements on the coastal plain (particularly industrial structures) through sensitive planting such as scrub, informally spaced groups of trees and hedgerow planting. Avoid linear planting along roads. Bold new planting schemes may be appropriate in some locations.
 - Maintain the open and undeveloped skyline of the secondary scarps – avoid siting of buildings, telecommunication masts, power lines and wind turbines on these sensitive skylines.
 - Consider opportunities for landscape enhancement on the edge of Findon village and avoid further extension of development into the Open Downland. In particular maintain an open landscape along the A24 between Findon and the northern edge of Worthing.



Vast, irregular fields of arable and pasture bounded by sparse, degraded, hedgerows.



Small car parks link the rights of way and open access land.



Good public access with a network of public rights of way and open access land.



Pylons form linear features across the landscape and are particularly visible when viewed against an open skyline.



Iron Age hillfort at Cissbury Ring.



Post and wire fencing is a frequently used boundary around arable fields.

A4: MOUNT CABURN

Location and Boundaries

- A4.1 *Mount Caburn* is a small isolated outlier of open downland located between Lewes and Glynde. It is separated from the *Ouse to Eastbourne Open Downs* and the *Adur to Ouse Open Downs* character area by the broad floodplain of the River Ouse. Its boundaries with the floodplain are clearly defined by a break in slope which corresponds to the extent of underlying river alluvium. The north and eastern boundaries of are less clearly defined and form a transition to the scarp footslopes.
- A4.2 From the north and east there are extensive views out across the scarp footslopes and to the south and west there are extensive views across Lewes and the Ouse Valley.

Integrated Key Characteristics:

- Open rolling upland chalk landscape of blunt, whale-backed Downs reaching 164m at Cliffe Hill. Chalk slopes are pitted with disused chalk quarries.
- Furrowed by dry valley systems which produce deep, narrow, rounded coombs as at Malling Down and Bible Bottom.
- Vast irregular fields of arable and pasture (of 20th century date) bounded by visually permeable post and wire fencing or sparse thorn hedgerows creating a very open landscape supporting a range of farmland birds.
- Significant areas of unimproved chalk grassland, for example at Malling Down and Mount Caburn, which support nationally scarce plant species.
- Occasional scrub and woodland on steeper slopes contribute to biodiversity and provides visual texture in the landscape.
- Large open skies ensure that weather conditions are a dominant influence creating a dynamic landscape, with considerable seasonal variation.
- Roads skirt around the edge of the downs – with no access into the downs by car. This produces a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity with pockets of deep remoteness associated with hidden dry valleys.
- Large number of prehistoric and later earthworks, including causewayed enclosures, long barrows and round barrows, providing a strong sense of historical continuity.
- Iron Age defensive sites occupy commanding positions at the southern edge of the downs at Ranscombe Camp and The Caburn.
- Good public access with a large proportion of open access land and public rights of way. The slopes are especially popular for para/hang-gliding.

- Scattered farmsteads, some of medieval origin representing shrunken hamlets, exist at the foot of the downland slopes, sometimes with isolated outfarms (small groups of barns and animal shelters).

Specific Characteristics Unique to Mount Caburn

- A4.3 This character area exhibits chalk scenery typical of the *Open Downs* landscape type. However, it is unique in that it is a small, isolated 'island' of downland. The area includes a rather discontinuous, and partially wooded, north-east facing scarp which extends from Malling Hill to Glynde Holt. There is a particularly high density of chalk quarries on the scarp, with extensive white scars highly visible from surrounding areas.
- A4.4 The location of this area adjacent to Lewes makes it potentially accessible by a large number of users with high recreational use evident. Considerable areas of chalk downland provide open access land. In addition, parts of the downs are popular for para-gliding. However, the absence of roads ensures that the landscape retains a remote character.
- A4.5 This character area is no exception in terms of its rich biodiversity. Particularly characteristic are areas of unimproved chalk grassland, which include the extensive and nationally important Lewes Down SSSI. The area also supports two small chalk pits (Southerham Machine Bottom Pit SSSI and Southerham Works Pit SSSI), which are designated as SSSIs for their geological importance.
- A4.6 The large number of prehistoric and later earthworks are typical of the landscape type – particularly distinctive features in this character area are the Iron Age defensive sites at Ranscombe Camp and The Caburn that occupy commanding positions at the southern edge of the downs.

Sensitivities Specific to Mount Caburn

- A4.7 All of the landscape and visual sensitivities listed in the landscape type evaluation apply to this character area. However, of particular sensitivity in this character area are the sense of remoteness and isolation that results from the absence of roads, and the visually prominent scarp slopes and the open and undeveloped skylines.

Change Specific to the Arun to Adur Open Downs

- A4.8 Observable changes in the past have included the quarrying of chalk leaving prominent white scars on the sides of the downs, and the building of Lewes Golf Course in the downs.
- A4.9 In the future there are likely to be ongoing pressures for change on the urban edge of Lewes.

Landscape Management/Development Considerations Specific to Mount Caburn

- A4.10 In addition to the generic landscape management and development considerations for this landscape type, the following landscape management considerations are specific to this character area:

- Avoid further quarrying operations that are highly visible on the scarp slope and encourage the creative restoration of redundant chalk quarries, exploiting the potential for geological interest, nature conservation, and recreation, and ensuring they blend with their surroundings.
- Maintain the open and undeveloped skyline of the scarp slopes – avoid siting of buildings, telecommunication masts, power lines and wind turbines on the sensitive skyline.



Mount Caburn is a small, isolated outlier of open downland, separated by the broad floodplain of the Ouse.



Occasional scrub and woodland on steeper slopes contributes to biodiversity and provides visual texture in the landscape.



The skyline is open and undeveloped.



Vast, arable fields of arable and pasture.



The high elevations of Mount Caburn are used for hangliding.



Roads skirt around the edge of the Downs.

A5: EAST WINCHESTER OPEN DOWNS

Location and Boundaries

A5.1 The *East Winchester Open Downs* is located to the east of Winchester - parts of the downland boundary are shared with the built edge of Winchester. To the north the boundary is defined by the crest of the Itchen Valley, to the west the boundary is clearly defined by the A31 ring road and built edge of Winchester. The eastern and southern boundaries are defined by a change in field pattern and density of woodland cover – this represents a transition to the *Downland Mosaic* landscape. Due to the open character of the *East Winchester Open Downs*, there are expansive views over Winchester and the Itchen Valley.

Integrated Key Characteristics:

- Open rolling upland chalk landscape of rolling Downs reaching 176m at Cheesefoot Head.
- Furrowed by extensive branching dry valley systems which produce deep, narrow, rounded coombs – for example at Chilcomb and the Devil's Punchbowl.
- Dominated by large 18th and 19th century fields of arable and pasture, bounded by sparse thorn hedgerows creating a very open landscape supporting a range of farmland birds.
- Modern fields at Longwood Warren indicate late enclosure of this area that was set apart from the surrounding fieldscape (for the farming of rabbits).
- Hedgerows and tracks surviving from the earlier manorial downland landscape are important historic landscape features.
- Occasional areas of species rich unimproved chalk grassland occur, for example at Cheesefoot Head and St Catherine's Hill.
- Occasional scrub and woodland on steeper slopes, and game coverts, linear tree features and beech clumps on hill tops (notably at Cheesefoot Head and Deacon Hill) contribute to biodiversity and provide visual texture in the landscape.
- A landscape managed for country sports (game shooting) which preserves the shape and form of the landscape and creates a distinctive landcover including small woodlands and game cover plots.
- Large open skies ensure that weather conditions are a dominant influence creating a dynamic, moody landscape, particularly on higher ground e.g. at Cheesefoot Head.
- A strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity away from the major transport routes (M3, A31, A272) which cross the landscape.

- Large number of prehistoric and later earthworks, long barrows and round barrows, providing a strong sense of historical continuity. St Catherine's Iron Age hillfort occupies a commanding position overlooking Winchester
- Good public access with a network of public rights of way, including the South Downs Way national trail, and open access land at Magdalen Hill Down and St Catherine's Hill.
- The typical settlement form is relatively late in origin, and comprises isolated farmsteads of 18th-19th century with more modern buildings along the B3404 on the edge of Winchester.
- Chilcomb village is located in a dry valley, surrounded by an area of small scale irregular enclosures dating back to the Medieval period.
- Panoramic views from Cheesefoot Head and from St Catherine's Hill across the Itchen Valley.

Specific Characteristics Unique to the East Winchester Open Downs

- A5.2 This character area exhibits chalk scenery typical of the *Open Downs* landscape type. However, the composition of soil types is more varied than the *Open Downs* of East Sussex. Although the majority of the area comprises well drained calcareous soils that are typical of the *Open Downland*, there are some localised areas of clay-with-flints which cap the chalk in the north of the character area and this gives rise to more clayey soils that support areas of woodland, including the relatively large and ancient Hampage Wood. Woodland across the remainder of the area is limited to game coverts, secondary regrowth on uncultivated slopes, and clumps of beech on hill tops. Notable tree clumps are located at Cheesefoot Head and Deacon Hill.
- A5.3 The main difference between this character area and others in the *Open Downland* landscape type is the date of the fields. This character area is dominated by large fields which reflect 18th-19th century planned enclosure of what was probably open downland. There is a small area of modern fields at Longwood Warren, indicating the late enclosure of this area that was set apart from the surrounding fieldscape (for the farming of rabbits), but modern fields are relatively scarce compared to the areas of *Open Downs* east of the Adur Valley.
- A5.4 Occasional areas of species rich unimproved chalk grassland occur, including Cheesefoot Head SSSI, which is located on a predominantly north-facing horseshoe-shaped dry valley. Part of St Catherine's Hill SSSI also falls within the character area. Hedgerows and tracks survive from the earlier manorial downland landscape are important historic landscape features and a late medieval landscape survives around the village of Chilcomb.
- A5.5 Transport routes carve up the area – the M3 runs along the western boundary and the A31/A272 cut across the character area in an east-west direction. The sense of tranquillity and remoteness of this character area is diminished in the vicinity of these major transport routes. Also associated with the major transport routes out of Winchester is ribbon development, as seen along the B3404.

- A5.6 The settlement type is predominantly scattered farmsteads constructed from red brick and flint and clay tiles. The exception to this is the nucleated village of Chilcomb. This village, located within a dry valley, has a Norman church and is surrounded by fields that were enclosed during the medieval period. Within this domestic settled area there is evidence of well tended grass verges.
- A5.7 The location of this area close to Winchester, and the proximity of the M3, A31 and A272, makes it potentially accessible by a large number of users. However, these same roads provide barriers to movement on foot/ horseback. There is a relatively sparse network of public rights of way, although those that exist are important – for example the South Downs Way national trail. Car parking facilities at Cheesefoot Head provide access to two important recreational routes – the South Downs Way national trail, which provides access onto the Downs from Winchester, and the King’s Way which crosses Longwood Warren. The safety area for the Chilcomb firing range restricts access to rights of way when the ranges are in use.
- A5.8 There are a large number of prehistoric and later earthworks that are typical of the landscape type – of particular note is the Iron Age hillfort at St Catherine’s Hill which occupies a commanding position overlooking Winchester. Part of Avington Park extends into this character area, although the main house is located in the Itchen Valley below.

Sensitivities Specific to the East Winchester Open Downs

- A5.9 All of the landscape and visual sensitivities listed in the landscape type evaluation apply to this character area, although there may be a greater potential for mitigation of change due to some existing woodland cover. Of particular sensitivity is the remote and tranquil character of the *East Winchester Open Downland* which is threatened by its proximity to Winchester and numerous transport routes. The intact 18th-19th century planned enclosure landscape is relatively rare within the *Open Downs* landscape type and is sensitive to change. The historic landscape of Avington Park, which extends into this area, is also sensitive to change, as is the hill fort at St Catherine’s Hill. The chalk grassland habitats at Cheesefoot Head and St Catherine’s Hill are also sensitive features specific to this character area.
- A5.10 Given the proximity to, and views over, Winchester, this area is also sensitive to changes in the urban area and on the urban fringe beyond the South Downs study area. Also of particular sensitivity are the prominent scarps and open undeveloped skylines.

Change Specific to the East Winchester Open Downs

- A5.11 Observable changes in the past have included the introduction and upgrading of major roads, including the M3, A272, and A31 which have severed the landscape and created some incongruous cuttings and bridges. Other changes include:
- Expansion and modernisation of farm buildings which has not always been in keeping with traditional building styles and materials.
 - Ribbon development along the B3404 on the edge of Winchester - further development of this kind has the potential to detract from the rural, tranquil character of the downs.

- Planting of game coverts.
- The presence of the Chilcombe firing ranges which has resulted in the presence of warning signs associated with the safety area for these firing ranges.
- The building of the Intech educational science building and satellite dish which are greatly contrasting in size and style to the traditional settlement patterns and building materials.

A5.12 In addition to the future changes outlined in the type description, there are likely to be ongoing pressures for built development on the urban fringes of Winchester.

Landscape Management/Development Considerations Specific to East Winchester Open Downs

A5.13 In addition to the generic landscape management and development considerations for this landscape type, the following landscape management considerations are specific to this character area:

- Encourage landowners to soften the rectilinear blocks of woodland, particularly where they occur on prominent escarpments, by selective felling and the planting of indigenous edge species. Remove inappropriate game coverts i.e. those that occur on prominent escarpments or hill tops.
- Avoid field expansion and hedgerow boundary loss that would erode the intact 18th-19th century planned enclosure landscape pattern.
- Conserve and enhance the historic parkland at Avington Park through management of woodland features, replacement tree planting and the conservation/restoration of parkland pasture.
- Provide appropriate management for significant skyline tree groups e.g. The Clump at Cheesefoot Head. Support limited planting of new landmark tree groups at carefully selected key locations as landmark features.
- Preserve the hillfort at St Catherine's Hill and manage scrub encroachment.

A5.14 The following development considerations are specific to this character area:

- Prevent further fragmentation of the East Winchester Downs by roads and development.
- Seek opportunities to reduce the visual impact of existing visually intrusive elements such as the infrastructure and traffic associated with the M3, A272, and A31, and prominent built elements on the edge of Winchester.
- Consider use of whisper tarmac on major routes such as the M3 to reduce traffic noise.
- Maintain the open and undeveloped scarps and skylines – avoid siting of buildings, telecommunication masts, power lines and wind turbines on the sensitive skyline.

- Encourage use of traditional building styles and materials when expanding/modernising farm buildings and encourage sympathetic re-use of any traditional farm buildings that may become redundant (such as the flint barns) so as to maintain their external fabric, appearance and setting. Refer to guidance contained in the Historic Farmsteads study¹⁷.
- Take account of views from this area when considering change in adjacent areas beyond the study area, such as in Winchester. Pay particular attention to popular viewpoints at Cheesefoot Head and St Catherine's Hill.

¹⁷ Forum Heritage Services (2005) *Historic Farmsteads & Landscape Character in Hampshire, Pilot Project*. Report by Bob Edwards for English Heritage.



Panoramic views from Cheesefoot Head towards Owselbury.



The A272 is one of the major transport routes which cross the landscape.



Good public access with a network of Public Rights of Way, including the South Downs Way National Trail.



Furrowed by extensive, branching dry valley systems which produce deep, narrow, rounded coombes e.g. Devil's Punchbowl.



Despite being largely open, occasional scrub woodland and clumps of trees on hilltops are a feature.



Long, straight roads cross the area.