

Medway Landscape Character Assessment

March 2011



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Executive Summary

The primary purpose of this study is to support and inform landscape planning policies within the Medway Core Strategy and to provide a landscape planning guidance document for the countryside and urban-rural fringe areas of Medway.

The introduction is split into two sections. The first section considers why landscape is important; purpose and scope; planning context; previous Landscape Character Assessments; methodology, content and structure of the report. The second section looks more carefully at the particular character and local distinctiveness of Medway's landscape. It considers wider influences, including the impact of new development, the historic environment, biodiversity, climate change, green infrastructure and the benefits of adopting an ecosystems approach. The introduction concludes by considering variations in landscape character; the value and importance of reinforcing local distinctiveness; the principal themes that emerge from the main body of the report; achieving a wider vision; stakeholder involvement and current projects, plans and delivery mechanisms that will enable practical change to be achieved on the ground. This approach will enable change at a local level to be set within the context of a wider and sustainable vision of landscape and environmental enhancement.

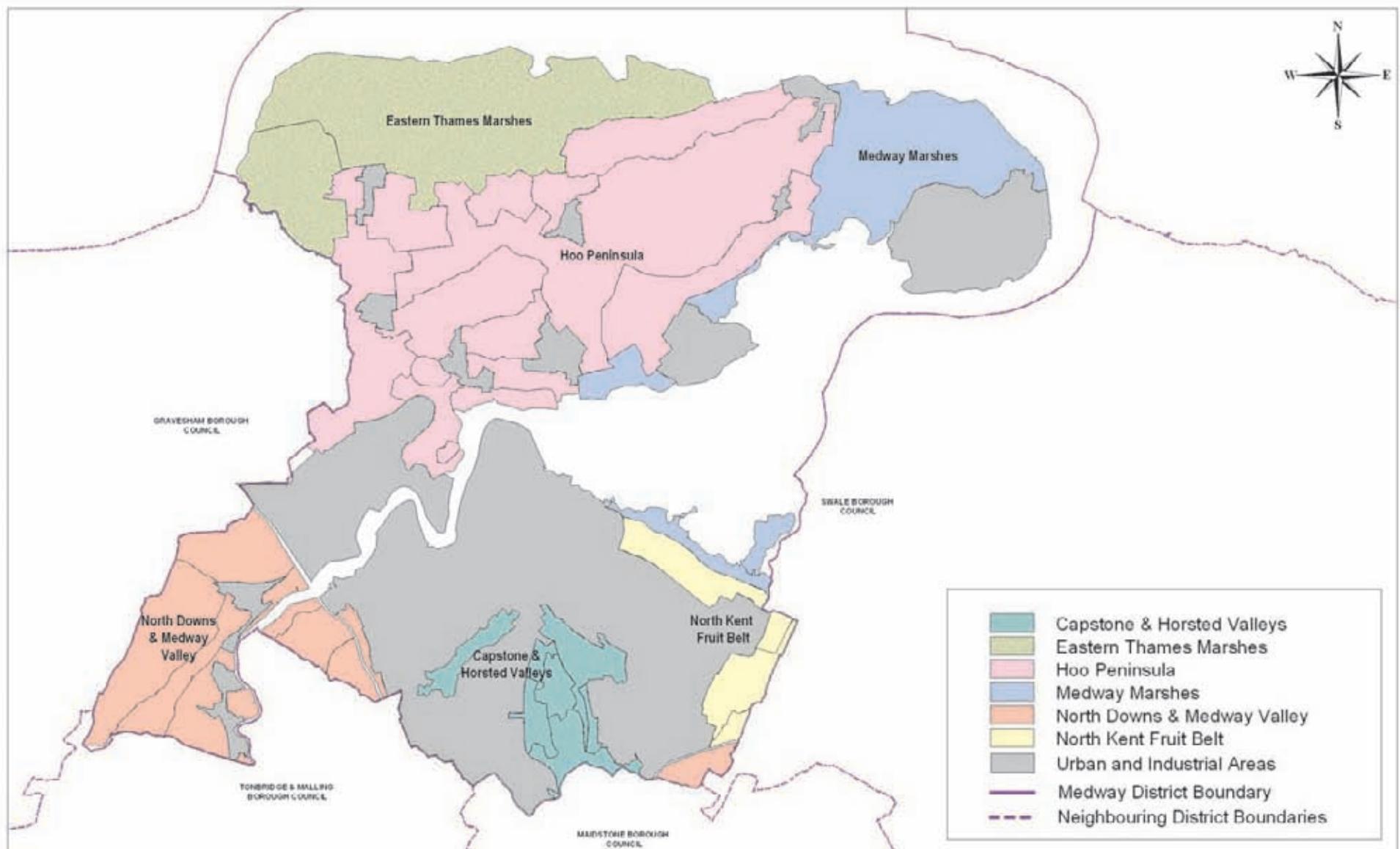
The main body of the study divides Medway's countryside into six principal areas – Eastern Thames Marshes; Medway Marshes; Hoo Peninsula;

North Kent Fruit Belt; Capstone and Horsted Valleys; North Downs and Medway Valley. The study adopts a consistent methodology and follows a rigorous analytical process in defining a series of local landscape character areas. Definition of the boundaries of each of these character areas is based on an analysis of earlier studies; on landscape survey work of Medway's countryside and urban-rural fringe areas undertaken in 2009 and on an overall evaluation of all assembled data. The study divides Medway's countryside into forty-two distinct local landscape character areas. A series of summary sheets describe what makes each of these character areas distinctive and what is valuable and important about them.

Each summary sheet provides a character area map, a description, a list of characteristics, an analysis of condition and sensitivity, a list of issues, recommended actions and a set of guidelines. A large map showing the whole borough at a recognisable scale (1:25,000) and defining all the character areas is provided as a supplement.

The appendix section of the report summarises current relevant planning policy; lists the principal landscape types and their descriptions and provides a methodology and analysis summary. Appendix illustrations include a sample survey sheet and GIS mapping analysis samples. The report concludes with a detailed bibliography.

Principal Landscape Areas



Landscape Character Areas

Eastern Thames Marshes

1. Cliffe Pits and Pools
2. Cliffe to St Mary's Marshes

Medway Marshes

3. Allhallows to Stoke Marshes
4. Hoo Flats
5. Riverside Marshes
6. Motney Hill

Hoo Peninsula

7. Cliffe Farmland
8. Cooling Farmland
9. Northward Hill
10. St Mary's Farmland
11. Hoo Peninsula Farmland
12. Lower Stoke Farmland
13. Cliffe Woods Farmland
14. Chattenden Ridge
15. Deangate Ridge
16. Hoo Farmland
17. Cockham Farm Ridge
18. Hogmarsh Valley
19. Bald Top Hill
20. Tower Hill

North Kent Fruit Belt

21. Lower Rainham Farmland
22. Moor Street Farmland
23. Meresborough Farmland

Capstone and Horsted Valleys

24. Darland Banks
25. East Hill
26. Capstone Farm
27. Sharstead Farm
28. Elm Court
29. Hempstead Fringe
30. Horsted Valley

North Downs/Medway Valley

31. Matts Hill Farmland
32. Nashenden Scarp
33. Nashenden Valley
34. Wouldham Scarp East
35. Wouldham Marshes
36. Cuxton Scarp Foot
37. Halling Marshes
38. Holborough Marshes
39. Halling Quarries
40. Halling Scarp West
41. Bush Valley and Dean Farm
42. Ranscombe Farm



Introduction

What is landscape and why it matters

Landscape is the relationship between people and place; it forms the setting for our day-to-day lives. It results from the way that different components of our environment – natural (geology, soils, climate, flora and fauna) and cultural (historic and current impact of land use, settlement, enclosure and other human interventions) interact and are perceived by us. Landscape character is the pattern that arises from particular combinations of these different components.

People's perceptions turn land into the concept of landscape. Understanding landscape is not just a matter of visual perception but also how we hear, smell and feel our surroundings and the feelings, memories and associations that they evoke. Our activities influence and shape the appearance and function of the landscape that surrounds us.

Landscape is valued for lots of different reasons – not all related to traditional concepts of aesthetics and beauty. It can provide and contribute to: habitats for wildlife; a cultural record of how people have lived on the land and harnessed its resources; social and community value; a sense of identity, well being, enjoyment and inspiration; it has economic value – it forms the context for economic activity and can be a central factor in attracting business and tourism. Landscape Character Assessment has emerged as an appropriate way to look at landscape as it provides a structured approach to identifying character, distinctiveness and value.

Landscape is not just about special or designated areas. All landscapes matter. Our landscapes represent a coming together of the natural world, human society and people's needs. They provide a range of ecosystem services (the services that the Earth's ecosystems provide,

including food, water, disease management, climate regulation, spiritual fulfilment and aesthetic enjoyment). They have influenced the character of our towns and cities and they provide places of widely ranging character, where people can relax, recreate and learn. Landscapes should be managed, planned and, where appropriate, protected to deliver a full range of ecosystem goods and services. The government's lead body on landscape related issues, Natural England (NE), advocates the use of a landscape character approach, which can be used to underpin local, regional and national policies and actions, ensuring that landscapes remain distinctive and highly valued. A key driver behind Natural England's 'All landscapes matter' approach is the Government ratified European Landscape Convention (ELC), which came into force on 1 March 2007 (see Appendix A for more details).

Purpose and scope

The need for a new updated Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for Medway has been driven by a number of key factors:

- Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is recognised as a powerful tool for evaluating the role played by landscape in defining local distinctiveness and sense of place and in informing decision-making on the planning, design and management of landscapes.
- The Local Development Framework (LDF) planning system requires the preparation of Core Strategy policies that are supported by a strong evidence base. It is intended that this document will provide a firm and robust evidence base that supports landscape and countryside policies within the Medway Core Strategy and the Development Plan Document (DPD) that is prepared subsequently in order to provide more detailed policies.



Horsted Valley

- There is need for a well researched, regularly updated and robust landscape guidance document that Development Management Planning Officers can use when considering the appropriateness and sensitivity of new development proposals within the countryside and the urban-rural fringe. There is also a need for this guidance to be publicly available for developers, their agents and the local community.
- Current National Planning Guidance (PPS7) recommends a change from the use of rigid Local Landscape Designations (LLDs) to a criteria based policy approach, using techniques such as Landscape Character Assessment. This study takes a criteria-based policy approach to all of Medway's landscapes and assesses the value and significance of each landscape character area, including the key characteristics, functions and local distinctiveness of existing rigidly designated areas (known within the current Local Plan as Areas of Local Landscape Importance – ALLIs)¹. This approach ensures that all

areas of Medway's countryside outside the urban areas and principal rural settlements have been evaluated in an holistic way that assesses their special and locally distinctive qualities.

- Regional Planning Guidance (The South East Plan) removed the county-wide landscape protection designations of Special Landscape Area (SLA). This designation was applied under the Kent and Medway Structure Plan to a large proportion of Medway's North Kent Marshes as well some tracts of adjacent farmland situated on the Hoo Peninsula. This designation recognised the special quality of this landscape in terms of its natural beauty. This study seeks to recognise those special qualities within relevant character areas and ensure that the high landscape value and distinctive quality of these areas continue to be recognised. The SLA designation is saved within the current Local Plan.
- Landscape changes and evolves over time and it is important to record the process of change and assess the current condition and levels of sensitivity. The last local landscape assessment (Medway Landscape and Urban Design Framework) was undertaken in 2001. It considered landscape character in urban and rural areas but was not fully completed. There is now a clear need for a new study.

This study focuses entirely on rural and urban-rural fringe landscapes and does not include urban areas, industrial developments or larger rural settlements. Urban parks and open spaces are only considered when they form distinct clearly identifiable green links from the countryside into urban areas and retain a strong sense of rural identity. Good examples of this category of open space would include the Capstone and Horsted Valleys.

It is proposed that this study is reviewed and updated on a five year cycle. This will ensure that it continues to reflect current guidance, policies and research and that

by regular updating it continues to provide a valuable tool within the planning process when considering issues related to landscape, land use and land management².

Planning context

Current national planning policy guidance (PPS7) proposes that rigid LLDs should be replaced by criteria-based policy guidance (using techniques like LCA). They should only be retained when it can be clearly shown that criteria-based policies cannot provide the necessary protection.

Within the process of undertaking this LCA, careful attention has been paid to all those areas previously protected under a rigid system of landscape designation (LLDs are known as ALLs within Medway's current Local Plan). It is considered that the assessment work within this study (characteristics, recommended landscape actions, issues and guidelines for each character area), will ensure an appropriate level of protection continues to be provided for these areas without a continued need for rigid designation. This approach will also ensure other previously undesignated areas are also adequately and appropriately protected. This strategy seeks to ensure that a positive land management approach is taken in planning for the future of Medway's countryside.



Meresborough Farmland

One of the principal purposes of preparing this study has been to provide a robust evidence base in support of landscape policies within the Core Strategy. The data, guidelines and outcomes of this study will be directly linked to the landscape and countryside policies within Medway's Core Strategy. It has been proposed against regional guidelines and has been subject to consultation with a range of key stakeholders, including Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency. As such it will be a significant 'material consideration' in making planning decisions. A separate Consultation Report details the stakeholders engagement and includes a comprehensive schedule of representations received and the response to these.

Within a wider context, the UK government is now a signatory to the European Landscape Convention (ELC); The ELC aims to promote the protection, management and planning of landscapes. Natural England (NE) as the lead body for the implementation of the ELC within the UK has recently produced a series of consultation papers including one entitled 'All Landscapes Matter'. This paper supports the general principles underpinning the ELC.

Appendix A provides more detail on national and regional planning policy guidance as it relate to the countryside, landscape, green infrastructure, climate change and the natural and historic environment

Landscape Character Assessment – previous studies

- National Character of England map (1998) – 159 areas – 3 areas within Medway – Greater Thames estuary (81), North Kent Plain (113), North Downs (119)
- County-wide The Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004) (KCA) – 16 areas within Medway

- *Thames Gateway* The Kent Thames Gateway Landscape (KTGLA) – Landscape Assessment and Indicative Landscape Strategy (July 1995)
- *Local Medway Landscape and Urban Design Framework (LAUD)* – Landscape and Townscape Character Assessment (May 2001)

A review by Council Officers of two of these studies (KTGLA and LAUD) concluded that The Kent Thames Gateway Landscape study adopted a more informative

approach and could usefully provide the basis for a new study of the Medway countryside and urban-rural fringe areas. This 1995 study predates current national guidance produced in 2002 (The Landscape Character Approach: Countryside Agency); however the approach taken is broadly within the guidelines. The process of updating and reviewing the Medway LCA has ensured that currently accepted methodologies and guidance have been observed. Natural England are currently preparing an updated LCA guidance document for England.



St Mary's Farmland

Methodology and Analysis

Desk top study

As a first stage, the Kent Thames Gateway Landscape Assessment (KTGLA) character areas and the Medway Landscape and Urban Design Framework (LAUD) character areas were mapped separately as overlays on top of the Landscape Assessment of Kent (KCA) character areas. This identified key relationships and areas of conflict within each study. It also helped to confirm an agreed consensus that the KTGLA was the more useful and appropriate study to form the basis of a new landscape character study. Appendix E illustrates this mapping exercise.

As a second stage the KTGLA character areas were overlaid over a series of maps that included geology, soils, topography and protective designations. This helped in understanding previous decisions related to character area boundaries and provided an opportunity to consider and review these boundaries. Decisions on character area boundaries within Medway to the south of the Thames Gateway area were strongly influenced by the conclusions of the KCA study; proposed boundaries for these areas were also mapped over the geology, soils and other mapping as listed above. In order to address cross boundary issues the Swale, Gravesham and Maidstone Borough Council LCAs were reviewed and face to face meetings took place with officers from Maidstone, Gravesham and Tonbridge and Malling. Tonbridge and Malling do not currently have their own LCA but are in the process of planning to produce one.

Fieldwork

Site survey fieldwork was undertaken between the months of January and March 2009. Some follow-up work took place in the subsequent period – to visit more inaccessible areas, to ratify results and to check conflicts. All visits were undertaken by Medway's Landscape Officer assisted by a Chartered Consultant Landscape Architect. On the few occasions the consultant was unavailable a

technical officer partnered the Landscape Officer. The Landscape Officer visited all character areas.

Site Assessment Methodology

Boundaries were reviewed and principal routes and viewpoints visited within each character area, prior to completion of a site assessment sheet (see Appendix D); this was completed at a carefully selected survey point. The format and approach adopted for these sheets was based on best practice with reference to (1) Countryside Agency guidance and (2) Condition and Sensitivity assessment techniques used for the Landscape Assessment of Kent (as well as Landscape Assessments produced by a number of neighbouring Kent authorities, including Swale, Maidstone and Gravesham). See Appendix C for a summary of the approach taken to assessing Condition and Sensitivity. See Appendix D for an example of a completed survey sheet

Boundaries

It should be noted that boundaries are often indicative of transitional rather than arbitrary zonal change. In different cases they can be defined by man made or natural boundaries – e.g. motorways and roads, industry and settlements, watercourses, woodlands and topography. The boundaries may therefore indicate in different cases an abrupt or more gradual transition from one zone to another.

The site and analysis work gave due consideration to landscape character areas that extended beyond the district boundaries of Medway into neighbouring authorities and this included a review of local Landscape Character Assessments for these authorities (where these existed). All neighbouring authorities have been consulted. As a result of these consultation responses it was decided that character areas boundaries should terminate at the Medway boundary; thereby allowing neighbouring authorities to make final judgements on their own local landscape character area designations.

Landscape types

Landscape types are divided into two broad categories – rural and transitional. These are further sub-divided into types and sub-types. In the Thames Gateway study (KTGLA), areas were identified according to landscape type. Whilst these categories remain, each character area has now been clearly identified by the adoption of a locally distinctive name. A summary of the classification of landscape types can be found in Appendix B.

Content and Structure

Medway's countryside is divided up into a number of distinct landscape areas. These areas broadly match areas identified within The Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004). They form a logical framework which then sub-divide into more detailed landscape character areas. The six principal areas defined within this study are: the Eastern Thames Marshes, Medway Marshes, Hoo Peninsula, North Kent Fruit Belt, Capstone and Horsted Valleys, North Downs and Medway Valley. The structure of the report reflects these categories.

The following subject headings have been considered for each survey sheet. The results are summarised on each character area summary sheet.

Description and Characteristics

General description (including location, geology, soils, accessibility, designations) and key distinguishing characteristics

Condition and Sensitivity

Assesses Condition and Sensitivity based on a commonly accepted approach – see Appendix C for a fuller explanation. Condition can vary widely within a particular character area. A judgement is made based on an assessment of overall condition across the whole character area. Exceptionally wide variation or unusual features/influences are highlighted within individual area assessments. Levels of sensitivity may also vary across a particular character

area and a judgement is made based on an assessment of overall sensitivity across the whole character area.

Actions

A matrix grid is used to balance condition and sensitivity. This provides nine different management option categories. This approach gives a broad indication of each character area's ability to accommodate a change in management or use without a loss of overall integrity. Some character areas could vary in condition and sensitivity outcomes when considered at a finer grain but may nevertheless retain a degree of coherency in terms of their overall characteristics. The character assessment approach provides the opportunity to undertake more detailed studies on condition, sensitivity and capacity for change for individual application sites. This approach would be encouraged, particularly for sensitive sites; however this work should be undertaken within the context (i.e. the framework and conclusions) of this assessment. It should be undertaken by a competent and skilled landscape professional and it should follow currently recognised Landscape Character Assessment procedures and methodologies.

Issues

This section seeks to identify particular issues that are specific to each character area. A summary of recurring and more generic issues is provided within introductory sections. It is intended that the Guidelines sections provide pro-active responses to the issues raised for each character area.

Guidelines

This section seeks to address principal issues and put forward a set of specific, realisable and pro-active management actions. These actions should mitigate trends that degrade locally distinctive landscape character and

encourage positive action to enhance and raise landscape quality and condition. Achieving the objectives outlined in the guidelines may not always be a simple process; however it is intended that highlighting objectives in this way will focus attention of landowners, planning officers, developers and the local community on a clear aspiration to improve the condition of the landscape in a pro-active and positive way set that is set within an overall framework and consistency of approach. The guidelines should provide an appropriate landscape framework for new development in the countryside and urban-rural fringe areas of Medway and encourage and support separate green infrastructure initiatives. A good example of this would be providing a wider green infrastructure framework to support the development of a sustainable new community at Lodge Hill. This aim can only be achieved through a multi-agency approach, drawing together funding and support from key stakeholders like the Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage and obtaining financial and practical support for this approach from central government. An existing mechanism is in place to achieve this multi-agency approach through the Parklands funding regime, which is led within the Medway, Swale and Dartford and Gravesham districts by Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway (GGKM).

These guidelines are intended for use by Planning Officers when considering planning applications but are also for use to support and inform discussions with individual landowners as part of strategic landscape, biodiversity, cultural heritage and access enhancement initiatives that are being initiated within the Thames Gateway (as led by GGKM and Natural England). More detail on delivery mechanisms is provided in the following section.

A series of guidance sheets will be produced to support this study. This guidance will seek to reverse trends highlighted within the summary sheets that have led to

an erosion of local distinctiveness and rural character. In many cases such adverse impacts are related to the introduction of equine related activities³ and hard and soft landscape boundary treatments⁴ considered in many cases as insensitive to their context. Guidance notes on Equine Management and Boundary treatments are likely to be produced first. A wider holistic study will also be produced that considers urban and rural settlement edges within Medway. This study will seek to ensure that new and existing developments are more sensitively integrated into the surrounding countryside. A biodiversity study linked to this current LCA is recommended within the next section. A timetable to complete these projects will be subject to identification of adequate resources to fund the work. In the meantime useful guidance on the first two topics can be found within the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook and Equine Management Guidance (see Bibliography section).

Footnotes

1. The Great and Lower Lines is a high valued and distinctive landscape designated as an ALLI within the current Local Plan. This large open space (now named Great Lines Heritage Park) is surrounded by development, has been categorised as an urban open space rather than countryside and is therefore outside the scope of this study. This does not devalue its considerable significance as a metropolitan open space with high biodiversity and cultural value. It has been the subject of a number of detailed landscape and other assessments in recent years and the area forms part of a current bid for World Heritage Site status (for the Chatham Historic Dockyard and its defences). It is well protected within the current local plan as an open space, for its wildlife value and it also sits within a Conservation area. Thames Gateway Parkland funding is currently being spent on landscape enhancements to this area. Despite its urban location, this open space has great value and potential for improvement as part of a green lung linking the countryside to the south into Medway and should be considered in Green Infrastructure terms for its potential to form a stronger link between the densely populated urban areas of Chatham and Gillingham and the open spaces
2. It is recommended that future updated LCA studies in Medway include a section that considers change in landscape condition over time – from previous studies, but also in the context of time depth / historic landscape character. An updated Landscape Character Assessment Guidance document is currently being prepared by Natural England. This will address current thinking and examples of best practice in LCA.
3. There are a number of references within this study on the adverse impacts of equine related activities on the landscape. These relate to visual and landscape character impacts. Typical adverse impacts may relate to the lotting of agricultural land (reducing larger fields into smaller units not in character with the historic field pattern) or the introduction of unsightly and insensitive boundary treatments. These issues need to be judged on a case by case basis but useful guidance on good practice may be found within the Kent Downs AONB Equine Management Guidance document (see Bibliography section).
4. Hard and soft landscape boundary treatment guidance would consider ways to achieve sensitive rural landscape treatments and remedy the gradual trend towards suburbanisation in many areas (especially along road corridors – often described as ribbon development). Typical adverse impacts are the introduction of suburban features like conifers, close board fences, ornamental shrub planting etc.



Medway's Landscape

New development and landscape context

Medway is required to plan spatially to meet its growth requirements. One of the functions of this study is to ensure that new development, where considered appropriate, is sited sensitively within the countryside and integrated in a manner that respects and enhances its immediate context and the wider landscape. The use of standard Landscape Character Assessment and Visual Impact Assessment techniques can be a useful and valuable method of evidencing the impact of new development on the landscape, and may support or discourage different scales and types of development. The suitability for development within areas judged as having high sensitivity and to be in good condition should be given particularly careful attention; however areas with lower levels of sensitivity and in poorer condition should not be judged automatically as more appropriate sites for development. Apart from other factors that may affect judgements, it is important to realise that condition and sensitivity levels may vary across a particular character area depending on the grain of detail at which the character area has been assessed. This study would support the principle of requiring more detailed character assessments for particular sites; these studies would generally be expected to support and nest within the existing landscape character areas, but should provide more detail for the proposed development site and its immediately surrounding area.

A wide range of issues other than landscape may determine the appropriateness of a particular area or site to accommodate new development. A balanced judgement will always need to be made by the Local Planning Authority in determining applications; weighing up professional advice and assessing relevant planning issues. Decisions are likely to be based predominantly

on national, regionally and locally adopted guidance and policies within the Local Development Plan. It is acknowledged that new development does offer opportunities to contribute positively to the landscape but this development needs to be in the right place, at the right scale and with appropriate uses. It is intended that this study will provide a landscape framework document that ensures new development within Medway is sited and designed in a manner that fully respects local landscape character and distinctiveness.

The historic environment

The influence of man has played a formative role in shaping the landscape of Medway from the earliest times. Water and industry have played a significant role in the evolution of the landscape, particularly along the edges of the Thames and Medway estuaries. Industries that have been practised since Roman times include salt making, brick making and pottery; boat and ship building; munitions and cement production – in many cases with associated wharfage to support transport and delivery of goods and services. Distinctive relics of many of these industries reflect the past and have helped to shape the landscape of today; notably the chalk quarries along the Thames estuary at Cliffe, within the urban area at Frindsbury and along the Lower Medway Valley at Cuxton and Halling. More recent industrial activity is reflected on the Hoo Peninsula in Power Stations and Industrial Estates, a Fuel Storage & Distribution Depot and a Container Dock Terminal – all situated along the north bank of the River Medway. Further evidence of this industrial landscape is provided by overhead power lines; a rail freight line and a road network supporting this industrial activity.

Medway has a long military history and this history is clearly evidenced within its landscape. The area has been



Chatham Historic Dockyard

used since Tudor times for the storage and manufacture of munitions. Upnor Castle sits on the River Medway opposite the site of the original Tudor and the more recent Georgian Dockyard at Chatham with its network of defensive fortifications. The area has a long history of use as a military base and as a training school for the Royal Engineers. There are a number of remaining historic forts (and lines of defensive fortifications). These date from different periods of history and were built principally to protect the Dockyard from landward and seaward invasion. In some cases evidence of past land use is very visible but in other places it is more subtle and requires seeking out and interpretation. This study does not attempt a comprehensive analysis of Medway's historic past but draws attention to the significant role that past uses have played in shaping the current landscape. Understanding and respecting historic landscape and local distinctiveness is an essential stage in the process of shaping coherent and valued landscapes for the future.

Even character that may not be highly valued today is part of the historic value of a place. Industrial or military remains may not be beautiful but they are important to the character and history of a place such as Medway.

Other features that have helped shape the pattern of Medway's landscape is its long history of food production – arable crops on the high grade agricultural land of the Hoo Peninsula and the distinctive pattern of orchards and shelter belts that characterise the North Kent Fruit Belt. The reclaimed marshland of the North Kent Marshes has traditionally been used for the grazing of livestock. Much of the land to the south of Medway is situated within or immediately adjacent to the North Kent Downs AONB. The North Downs supports a wide range of land uses, specifically woodland and mixed farmland. It is an ancient landscape that has been the site of human activity and settlement since prehistoric times. Although this landscape is highly protected, its proximity to the Medway Towns places it under significant urban-rural fringe pressure.

English Heritage has recently commenced a major historic environment study covering the Hoo Peninsula. This piece of work will look at the landscape development of the peninsula; it will reveal how landscape developed and increase understanding of the time depth issues that have shaped this area. It will seek to ensure that historic character can be preserved and enhanced as the area is inevitably changed by development and it will seek to better accommodate other issues such as flood defence. This study, once completed, should be considered in future landscape assessments, alongside other relevant historic environment studies, to inform a greater understanding of Medway's past and current land uses. Relevant published historic environment studies for the Medway area have been listed in the Bibliography Section.



Cliffe to St Mary's Marsh

Biodiversity

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) provides the framework for conservation of biodiversity (defined as the richness and diversity of wildlife) within the UK. This plan identifies priority species and habitats most under threat and develops measures (or targets) for their conservation. These measures are in addition to and complimentary to the process of site designation and protection. Local authorities have a duty of regard to the conservation of priority species and habitats under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (known as the 'Biodiversity Duty').

In order to survive and adapt to change, species require sufficient accessible habitat to sustain viable populations. Loss of habitat area or quality can reduce population size or lead to local extinction. In a changing environment (pressures can include new development, changes in land use and the impacts of climate change) species need to be able to disperse or migrate safely between areas of habitat as areas become more or less suitable. Loss and fragmentation of habitats should therefore be considered a serious threat to species survival and a significant pressure on the sustainability of biodiversity.

Medway contains extensive areas of BAP priority habitats and large numbers of BAP priority species. Broad habitat categories of significance include open water; wetland, grazing and salt marsh, inter-tidal habitat, species-rich neutral grassland; chalk grassland and woodland. Of particular significance and highly designated for their biodiversity value are the Eastern Thames and Medway Estuaries; these include large expanses of inter-tidal mudflat, saltmarsh and coastal grazing marsh and a network of ditches, sea walls and areas of open water; this is an internationally important area for its rich assemblage of breeding over-wintering and passage birds. Located to the higher ground of the Hoo Peninsula are a number of SSSI designations, including several blocks of Ancient Woodland. To the south and west of the borough, there are significant chalk grassland and ancient woodland sites – within the Capstone and Horsted valleys, within housing areas to the south of Gillingham and on sites within the Kent Downs AONB. The Medway Natural Assets and Open Space Report (see bibliography) provides local maps and further detail on these and other biodiversity designations.

The Kent Habitat Survey (KCC, 2003) includes valuable data on habitat extent within Medway. Key features are that the Medway area contains approximately 4,800 hectares (ha) of littoral sediment (of this, over 4,300 ha is the Habitats Directive Annex I habitat, mud flats and sand-flats; the remainder consists of saltmarsh). Medway also holds 14% of the county resource of wetland habitats; although only 1% of land cover, 50% of this is reed beds, a UK BAP priority habitat. It also holds two thirds of the County's saline lagoons (a Habitats Directive Annex I habitat). The district has 2,100 ha of neutral grassland (16% landcover) – the majority of this is coastal grazing marsh with almost 75% within SSSIs. An unusual feature is that only 3% of landcover is broad leaved, mixed and yew woodland (a quarter of the county average). Other valuable data available on the Kent Landscape Information Service (KLIS) website include a series of species and habitat fact sheets and links to the BRANCH research

programme on adaptation of terrestrial and coastal biodiversity habitats in north west Europe to changing climate. Kent Biological Records Centre and Kent Wildlife Trust also hold records and data on priority habitats and species within Medway.

Medway's Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) considers both natural and cultural components and how they influence landscape character and local distinctiveness but biodiversity has not been studied at a detailed scale. A more meaningful understanding of the relationship between landscape and biodiversity in Medway could be achieved through the preparation of an independent but closely linked Biodiversity study. It is hoped that a detailed scoping for this study can be prepared. Factors to consider include quality, robustness and intactness of habitats; threats, barriers and opportunities; anticipated impacts of climate change on landscape character and biodiversity; recommendations for habitat creation, restoration and improved habitat connectivity. Mapping and interpretation should be at an appropriate landscape scale and could usefully be based on the landscape character areas identified within the Medway LCA. A Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal that takes this suggested approach has recently been produced by Swale Borough Council (see Bibliography Section). Existing county-wide biodiversity studies could be referenced to inform this study, notably the work already undertaken by KWT on Biodiversity Opportunity areas, as part of their Living Landscapes project. In terms of protection, there are a wide range of biodiversity designations within Medway, from International (Ramsar); European (SCAs and SPAs); National (SSSIs and NNRs); County (Local Wildlife Sites – LWSs) and Local Nature Reserves – LNRs¹.

Balancing land management conflicts

Guidance and landscape actions for each landscape character area should inform landscape priorities at both a broader strategic level and for individual sites. In certain

cases more detailed feasibility studies and more specific guidance from statutory authorities may be required. Judgements on land use, siting and design of new development should always give prime consideration to creating and/or preserving locally distinctive landscape character.

In some circumstances there will be conflicts over prioritisation and balancing of different criteria. For example, improvement to access within the North Kent Marshes will need to be balanced with potential impacts on bird populations. Biodiversity improvements may impact adversely on historic landscape character and features. There may also be technical constraints and considerations relating to natural resources issues – such as flood defence, groundwater and water resources, contamination, minerals and waste. These issues are not considered in any detail within this study but issues are highlighted where considered relevant within the summary sheets and a brief summary is provided within the Planning Policy Guidance section (Appendix A).

When seeking to balance land management conflicts whilst considering the wider context, it is important also



Hoo Peninsula Farmland

to consider some of the issues that are raised under the Green Infrastructure, Ecosystems and Climate Change sections of this introduction.

Green infrastructure

The role and significance of Green Infrastructure (GI) has now become embedded in the planning process. More detail on 'The South East Green Infrastructure Framework: from Policy into Practice' can be found in Appendix A. At national guidance level, a draft PPS 'Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment', proposes consolidation of planning policy contained within four separate Planning Guidance documents (PPS7, PPS9, PPS17 and PPG20) and includes policy changes relating to the provision of GI. See Appendix A for further details.

This study focuses particularly on local distinctiveness and therefore a previous South East Plan objective of 'creating a sense of place and opportunities for greater appreciation of valuable landscapes and cultural heritage' is of particular resonance. It also seeks to inform other multi-functional objectives including access and recreation opportunities, biodiversity, water resource and flood management issues, mitigation and adaptation to climate change impacts, sustainable transport, education and crime reduction and the production of food, fibre and fuel. This study assesses Medway's landscape within a spatial framework that is considered for its locally distinctiveness. It therefore provides an important tool and reference point in the development, strategic planning and implementation of retrofitted and new GI infrastructure within Medway. Of particular significance are those areas of countryside that surround the urban areas; these areas with their close proximity to the main centres of population offer the greatest opportunities and potential for a wide range of multi-functional uses as defined above.

This LCA focuses on the rural and urban-rural fringe areas of Medway; within GI infrastructure planning it is important to also consider the work being undertaken on

developing a public realm strategy focused on the urban areas of Medway. It is recommended that further work is undertaken on a joint spatial planning exercise that provides integrated mapping of GI infrastructure for both urban and rural areas of Medway. This work would consider areas of open space deficiency and need within Medway as required under 'PPS17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation' and would seek to define areas suitable for single and multi-functional uses and the prioritisation of objectives within a wider framework. Such a study, the guidance it offers and the developing themes that it identifies, could inform borough wide spatial planning at strategic and practical levels and form a realistically implementable and updateable Green Infrastructure Planning Framework for Medway.

The work on GI that is being undertaken within Medway is being led at a wider strategic scale by Greening the Gateway Medway & Kent (GGKM) as part of the Thames Gateway Parklands vision. Strategic partners at this wider scale include the Kent Downs AONB team, Natural England's North Kent team, the Environment Agency and English Heritage. These and other stakeholders have been consulted in the preparation of this document. At a local scale, the Rural Strategy Manager, Green Spaces Development Team and Landscape Officer are working in partnership with local stakeholders to define and realise a GI strategy and implementation plan. Local initiatives include a GI plan that is being developed by Land Securities for the planned new Lodge Hill development and surrounding areas at Chattenden; a Four Parishes GI plan being led by Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT) and the Valley of Visions project currently being implemented within the Medway Gap area. A stakeholder partnership group (the Green Grid Forum) represents a wide range of different interest groups and meets on a regular basis to explain, articulate, discuss progress, raise issues and develop new initiatives.

The ecosystems approach

The ecosystems approach takes a global perspective on the environment. Within the UK, DEFRA's Ecosystem Goods and Services initiative seeks to value and assess the contribution that environmental assets make to the economy and in supporting human well-being. This approach considers food, water, disease management, climate regulation, spiritual fulfilment and aesthetic enjoyment and breaks them into four types of service – provisioning services (food, water, fuel etc.); regulating services (mediating role of ecological systems in affecting climate, disease, water quality etc.); cultural services (non material benefits – spiritual; recreation; tourism; aesthetics, cultural etc.) and supporting services (processes that underpin other services – soil formation, nutrient cycling and primary production).

The ecosystems approach supports the benefits of investing in a healthy, natural environment and meeting the challenges of climate change and food, energy and water security by taking a new ecological solutions-based approach, rather than depending solely on technology. It argues for a deeper understanding of the economic value of nature and natural capital and the use of an ecosystem services approach to better inform decision-making processes; enhanced public investment in the natural environment for greater efficiency and improved outcomes; enabling ecosystem services to become part of the formal economy, stimulating innovation, enterprise and investment. Examples of cost-effective solutions include managed coastal re-alignment projects; upland and lowland management to restore floodplains and improve water quality; the health benefits from improving access to green space and raising levels of physical activity (the overall costs to the economy in England of physical inactivity are estimated at £8.2 billion per year); the benefits of Environmental Stewardship schemes in delivering savings of approximately 3.5 million tonnes of CO₂e per year (without the scheme greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture in England would be 11% higher), thereby saving around £1.25 billion. Specific examples relevant to Medway are the benefits of creating inter-tidal mud flats and salt marshes that as well as wildlife habitats also provide natural defences against storm surges; such habitats are declining because of sea level rises and the supply of sediment to build the inter tidal habitats is halted by engineered coastal defences. There are several coastal areas within Medway under consideration for 'managed realignment'. Other global issues relate to projected increases in global population (the UN estimates an increase to 8 billion by 2030) and increased demand for food, water and energy. An ecosystems approach can deliver a broad bundle of benefits, while technological solutions typically do not – accessible urban green spaces with trees and shrubs can reduce tempera-



tures, clean the air, reduce noise effects, provide active and passive recreation space, reduce storm flood risk, have educational value, support wildlife and store carbon. There are still hard choices to be made and conflicts will arise – using floodplains to store floodwater in summer can conflict with agricultural and nature conservation interests. An effective ecosystems approach relies on informed local decision making and wide consultation processes.

Climate change

Increase of atmospheric greenhouse gases, notably carbon dioxide, is driving climate change. However more carbon is stored in soils, vegetation and the oceans than in the atmosphere; these carbon sinks play a vital role in regulating climate. A range of habitats such as woodlands, agricultural land, coasts and the seas all play a role in greenhouse gas regulation. Forests accumulate carbon in their soils and trees; wood also has the potential for use as a renewable carbon neutral fuel and can replace less sustainable materials such as iron, steel and concrete whose production involves high fossil fuel use; timber use in house construction could reduce carbon emissions by up to 73% (Forestry Commission, 2006). Grasslands and arable land are the two largest carbon storage land uses in England. Salt marshes and mud flats also store significant amounts of carbon; the largest carbon sink is the ocean. A wide range of vegetations offer direct climate regulation benefits, through shading of surfaces and cooling of the atmosphere; this effect is most marked in woodlands. All these habitats are present in Medway and it is important that issues such as these are factored into the sustainable planning process.

The purpose of this study is primarily to review current condition and sensitivity of the landscape. Although the physical environment is constantly changing, man-made influences mean that these changes are occurring faster than recorded for many generations. The impact of climate change is leading to warmer, drier summers and milder, wetter winters. Short-lived, extreme

weather events are occurring more frequently and it is these extreme weather events, such as summer drought, that are considered most likely to trigger significant changes in land management and landscape. Sea levels are also rising and this will have localised effects on the Thames and Medway estuaries and on the reaches of the tidal Medway. Impacts are likely to include flood and coastal erosion, habitat and species loss, crop changes, decline and migration. Steps are needed to enable the natural environment to adapt to these changes. If the natural environment is unable to function properly many critical services that it provides will be lost. Salt marsh provides valuable flood control and storm buffering benefits. Medway has many valuable salt marsh areas which require protection and enhancement. In some cases lost

salt marsh will require replacement; this will need to be balanced with the impact of losses to grazing marsh and freshwater habitats. Other actions to address climate change include habitat creation to improve resilience of habitats and allow migration of species; the careful selection of species in woodland replanting and creation; coastal realignment projects, flood attenuation by slowing the passage of water through catchments. The current draft proposals for flood defence, alleviation and storage, replacement of lost salt marsh (see Shoreline Management Plan and Thames Estuary 2100 strategies) are addressed briefly within the relevant character assessment sheets; reference should be made to these more detailed studies and currently available guidance to provide a full picture of the current situation.



Salt Marsh, Horrid Hill



Lodge Hill

The study of Climate Change is a rapidly changing and evolving science. Natural England regularly updates its assessments on the impact of climate change on the natural environment. Their research confirms that there is evidence of change in the timing of natural events – earlier leafing and flowering dates for many trees, shrubs and flowering plants and later leaf fall for many broad leaved trees. There are also changes in the distribution of species – many species are shifting their distribution northwards and as the climate warms new, often non-native, species are beginning to colonise. Such changes are factors that will over time have an impact on the character, appearance and sustainability of the landscape. More localised data on the anticipated effects of Climate Change on the landscape of the North Downs can be found in The Kent Downs AONB Management Plan (2009–2014).

Variations in landscape character

Medway's countryside consists of a wide range of different landscape types, ranging from coastal marshes, chalk downland, orchards and shelter belts; large scale arable farmland and extensive tracts of woodland. It also includes countryside that is strongly influenced by built

development – around industrial areas, urban fringes and larger rural settlements; this countryside is categorised within this study as transitional. These transitional landscapes are often in degraded condition and subject to considerable pressure – from insensitive or inappropriate development and from urban–rural fringe activities that tend to erode distinctive character and degrade landscape condition.

Reinforcing local distinctiveness

This study assesses the current state of the countryside in Medway and offers a set of actions and guidelines appropriate and responsive to the particular character of each defined area. It is intended that these guidelines will provide a framework for maintaining or improving that landscape. The threat of erosion of rural character and local distinctiveness is a recurrent theme within this study, particularly within urban–rural and industrial fringe landscapes. It is therefore important that all new development proposals within the countryside are assessed in the context of their sensitivity to landscape context, avoidance of material harm to landscape character and evidence that proactive steps are being taken to strengthen and enhance landscape character and distinctiveness. New development, where it is allowed, should be appropriately and sensitively sited and carefully designed. Open countryside, particularly on the fringes of urban areas has an important role to play in buffering, separating and protecting the local identity of different communities. As a general principle and in order to retain openness and respect rural character in these buffer areas, major development proposals should be avoided and low key recreational and access improvements would be generally considered as the most appropriate level of intervention.

General themes and policies

Certain key themes emerge from the detailed character area assessment work that was undertaken. These themes reflect issues that tend to recur across different character areas and types of landscape and enable a more holistic



Capstone Country Park

view to be taken. By assessing common themes at a broader scale, local guidance can be applied to the wider landscape framework and applied more successfully to cross-cutting themes such as Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity, whilst still attending to the need to preserve and enhance local distinctiveness. The principal themes are therefore not just directly related to landscape but consider also other inter-related land management issues:

1. Resist the threat of coalescence; maintain separation and openness between rural settlements; retain a strong sense of local distinctiveness and rural character within countryside areas; seek positive roles and functions for all landscapes; seek to address the threat of anti-social uses and activities
2. Protect distinctive and prominent landscape features; including views from the Thames and Medway estuaries and across the marshes; green backdrops, escarpments, wooded ridges and open farmed hills
3. Repair and restore damaged landscapes, particularly in urban–rural and industrial fringe locations where erosion of rural character and loss of local distinctiveness is most threatened – typical adverse impacts

include large pylons and industrial structures, piece-meal and random small scale development, insensitive boundary treatments and a gradual trend towards suburbanisation of the countryside

4. Strengthen and reinforce landscape structure in urban–rural fringe areas and across the wider countryside; examples include places where farmland has been denuded by loss of orchards, hedgerows and shelter belts and the gradual erosion of historic field patterns, this is particularly relevant to some areas of farmland on the central Hoo Peninsula
5. Resist or seek to mitigate against adverse impacts on rural landscape character and loss of local distinctiveness brought about by trends away from traditional farming practices towards equine-related land uses
6. Ensure that trends towards visually prominent and intrusive horticultural practices, including the introduction of plastic crop mulches and poly tunnel frames, are managed through good design and sensitive siting to reduce impacts, avoid material harm and respect landscape character
7. Ensure that the edges of new and existing urban and



Horsted Valley

rural settlements blend comfortably with the surrounding countryside – balancing sensitivity in architectural and urban design detailing and form with a sound understanding and appreciation of landscape context

8. Conserve and protect all landscapes noting particularly those high quality landscapes along the Thames and Medway estuaries; the landscape of the North Downs; the traditional orchard and shelter belt field pattern of the North Kent fruit belt and all areas of ancient woodland and chalk grassland;
9. Consider the value of the Eastern Thames and Medway Marshes for their natural beauty, their cultural and biodiversity value and their distinctive ‘sense of place’ alongside their role and importance within the wider landscape of the North Kent Marshes and Thames Estuary
10. New development proposals should seek to strengthen and reinforce local distinctiveness and identity; balance and prioritise conflicting land use issues; respect the environmental and cultural heritage of the area in which they are planned and seek to create sustainable landscapes
11. Accessibility and connectivity – Access and connectivity is what makes the landscape understandable and able to be appreciated by the many rather than the few. In many part of Medway access and connectivity is fragmented and weak. There is great potential to improve off-road cycle and footpath links between urban areas and the countryside
12. Consider the wider Green Infrastructure framework beyond district boundaries which are often arbitrary in terms of landscape and biodiversity significance; consider especially the inter-connectivity of woodland and farmland with neighbouring boroughs to the south, west and east of Medway
13. Seek opportunities to strengthen landscape character and biodiversity value by improving Medway’s wildlife habitat network; including restoration of hedgerows and shelter belts and enlargement of woodland areas; noting the value of lowland woodland refuges (to address climate change impacts); the carbon fixing benefits of woodland and the relatively low percentage of woodland within Medway compared to the rest of Kent
14. Consider the impacts of ‘coastal squeeze’ on intertidal and freshwater habitats; noting the three potential habitat creation sites planned along the northern coastline of the Hoo Peninsula
15. Seek to strengthen landscape coherence around Medway’s urban fringe edges and resist gradual trend towards fragmentation by adopting an integrated land management approach
16. Areas currently designated within the Local Plan as Areas of Local Landscape Importance (see Purpose and Scope section – bullet point 4), have been judged significant not only for their landscape importance but also in considering their role as green hillsides and backdrops to the urban area and other functions, including their role as green lungs and buffers helping to maintain individual identity of urban neighbourhoods and rural communities; as green corridors enabling communities to reach the wider countryside; as ‘fringe’ land needing protection from the pressures of urban sprawl and as habitats for wildlife and corridors, along which wildlife from the wider countryside can reach the urban environment. It is important that all of these valuable functions continue to be valued and protected, particularly when considering the urban–rural fringe character areas of Medway.
17. Development proposals should be judged on the basis that no material harm is caused to landscape character and function and that a positive land management approach has been evidenced that is both sensitive to landscape context and follows the recommended actions and guidelines with this document.

Achieving a wider vision

The issues and guidelines sections within this study highlight adverse trends and propose positive remedial measures for each character area. It is important however that a wider vision is achieved and that the process of environmental enhancement is more than a piecemeal 'tidying up' process of removing unsightly elements – although this is important as well. There needs to be a strong sense of overall vision in order to restore local distinctiveness and diversity.

There is potential to take positive action to reverse trends towards fragmentation of the landscape from urban fringe pressures and changes in agricultural practice. It is important to restore landscape structure where this has been lost whilst seeking to strengthen and reinforce distinctive and valued features within the existing landscape. Particularly threatened areas in Medway include urban fringe landscapes within the Capstone and Horsted Valleys; the North Kent Fruit Belt to the north of Gillingham and east of Rainham; and open farmland landscapes on the Hoo Peninsula. Bold restoration proposals for these landscapes should be considered and might include:

- Creation of a strongly wooded landscape framework, with extensive broad leaved woodland planting in large blocks, linked to and characteristic of existing woods; a network of hedgerows and shelter belts containing an appropriate scale of field pattern².
- The use of linear planting along roadsides to reduce the intrusion of traffic and the suburbanising influence of ribbon development; strong belts of woodland along major roads to reduce intrusion, provide landscape continuity, diversify the landscape experience from the road and act as a wildlife corridor
- The planting of hedgerows, shelter belts and small woods around the fringes of built areas, to reduce their visual intrusion and provide a strong landscape



Cliffe Woods farmland

framework into which future development can be absorbed

- Strengthening and reinforcement of natural features like watercourses as accessible green corridors linking built up areas with the wider countryside

The landscape of Medway is linked to and part of a much larger landscape – the North Kent Fruit Belt, the North Kent Marshes and the North Downs. Much of Medway's countryside is close to urban areas and a large proportion is located within the Thames Gateway regeneration area. This places particular pressures on parts of this landscape. It calls for greater levels of understanding of the wider context and the highest level of co-operation between partners and stakeholders. It offers opportunities for managing change and the sourcing and targeting of funding to deliver that change.

Delivery mechanisms and stakeholder involvement

The Medway Green Grid Forum is a group that meets on a regular basis and includes representatives from neighbouring boroughs, the Kent Downs AONB Unit, Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway (GGKM), the

Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage, Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT), RSPB, Groundwork Kent and Medway (GKM), Land Securities, Defence Estates, Council Officers, Parish Council and other stakeholder and landowner representatives. This group brings together a wide range of interest groups (from statutory authorities to community based organisations) and is working in partnership to harmonise strategic work (e.g. GGKM's Green Cluster work³, Medway Green Spaces development plans, Natural England and Kent Downs AONB initiatives), with the development and implementation of smaller, more locally based projects (e.g. Kent Wildlife Trust and Groundwork Kent and Medway initiatives).

It is intended that this landscape character study will provide a strategic framework for Green Infrastructure planning within Medway and neighbouring boroughs and that it should inform, according to the availability of resources, more detailed work on access, biodiversity, cultural heritage and urban landscape analysis; seeking ultimately to achieve an integrated environmental enhancement strategy for Medway within a co-ordinated programme of action.

Available funding options that support a more positive and pro-active land management approach include: Agri-Environment grants (Natural England operate Entry, Higher Level and Organic Stewardship schemes); Community Infrastructure Levy; Section 106; Thames Gateway Parklands and European funding; Local Transport Plan funding, Landfill tax grants and Forestry Commission Woodland grants. The Medway Gap Valley of Visions (VoV) and RSPB Cliffe Pools Bird Reserve projects are good examples of projects where funding has been obtained for landscape, access and biodiversity enhancements within a strategic area; more locally based projects include KWT's Nashenden Valley Nature Reserve. High priority strategic projects where funding is likely to be available include the

extension of coastal access around Medway (the Marine and Coastal Access Act, 2009, makes provision for the establishment of a coastal access route around the coast of England). This project is likely to include landscape and biodiversity improvements and will be linked into a wider Green Infrastructure Planning Framework.

The creation of multi-functional landscapes and adoption of the principles of Green Infrastructure Framework planning should underpin all environmental enhancement initiatives and processes put in place to promote and deliver the strategic vision that is set out by the lead organisations. This will involve a partnership approach and discussions with all stakeholders. It should be recognised that addressing private land ownership issues and concerns will be a key element within the process of achieving successful GI planning. The role and participation of agricultural land owners and managers (as a key sector in influencing landscape management processes and decisions) should be considered within the GI process. The basic principles and recommendations within the character area guidelines sections should be introduced when lead organisations enter into discussions with landowners about landscape, biodiversity, heritage and access enhancements.

Footnotes

1. LWSs are non-statutory and LNRs are designated by Local Authorities
2. Assessing an appropriate field pattern scale for an area should always be referenced within a whole farm management context, including assessment of historic field patterns and biodiversity opportunities. See Bibliography for reference to Kent Downs Rural Advisory Service Farm Diversification Toolkit.
3. Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway have undertaken Cluster studies within Medway for the Hoo Peninsula and Capstone Valley which include recommendations for landscape, access and biodiversity enhancements. A more recent cluster study (Shorne to Shore) covers the area immediately to the west of Medway. Each of these studies is referenced in the bibliography.



Ranscombe farm - Mill Hill



Eastern Thames Marshes

Principal characteristics

- Two distinct areas – traditional grazing marsh to north has strong rural character; former mineral workings to west are returning to nature but have transitional influences from adjacent industry and infrastructure
- Overall this is a predominantly remote and tranquil area with uninterrupted views out into the Thames Estuary; there is a degree of visual influence from Canvey Island industrial complex on adjacent side of Thames Estuary; impact contained by distance; the area is more coherent in character than the Medway Marshes – which suffer generally from greater impacts of urban and industrial influence
- High levels of biodiversity and nature conservation value; protected by national and international (SSSI, Natura 2000/Ramsar designations; valuable areas of grazing marsh managed for protection of wetland birds by RSPB and others
- Area forms part of wider North Kent Marshes area with its high overall level of landscape and biodiversity significance
- Cultural heritage; landscape settled since Mesolithic period; finds from Roman times when salt panning and pottery were main industries; medieval settlements; 19th century cement and explosives industries; major fort at Cliffe reflects former defensive importance of area; strong cultural associations with works of Charles Dickens – notably ‘Great Expectations’
- High biodiversity, landscape and cultural value with long, open views and absence of tree cover (which is not generally appropriate to open marshland areas) means these landscapes are highly sensitive to change and will not readily able to absorb new development

- Salt marsh areas along this coastline are distinctive but relatively small in area compared with larger areas salt marsh along the Medway estuary
- Restricted access within marshes includes severed footpath link between Cliffe and Thames estuary shoreline and no direct link between Cooling and estuary shoreline

Principal issues

- Role of marshes as important natural asset that provides a distinctive ‘sense of place’ and natural beauty and contributes to wider Thames Gateway Parklands vision; relationship to wider landscape, biodiversity and Green Infrastructure framework of North Kent Marshes area
- Protection of distinctive landscape and biodiversity value of this area; the need for sensitive management and careful consideration of all development proposals; improving access and protecting biodiversity
- Loss of existing salt marsh and creation of new salt marsh areas; loss of inter-tidal areas as a result of ‘coastal squeeze’; plans within Thames Estuary 2100 (TE2100) strategy to replace these lost habitats includes one site within Eastern Thames Marshes (St Mary’s Marshes); impact of these potential changes on the alignment of the coastal path
- Impact of enlarged areas of salt marsh on net loss of grazing marsh and freshwater habitats; effects of change on landscape character and biodiversity value
- Consider EA plans relating to coastal processes – requires no net loss of inter-tidal and freshwater marsh habitats within study area (this extends beyond Medway boundary; consult EA for detailed guidance)

- Ensuring that reversion from grazing marsh to cultivated land within marshland areas is resisted; has been successful in recent years through mechanism of Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) agreements with landowners
- Development plans for RSPB Cliffe Pools Bird Reserve and Conservation Park within former industrial workings
- Need to Improve accessible footpath links within marshes and between Cliffe, Cooling and shoreline
- Strategic importance of access – Coastal Path network planned under Marine and Coastal Access Bill (November 2009) – this will in due course secure a continuous path around English coastline
- Promoting awareness of the natural beauty of the North Kent Marshes, their distinctive landscape value and significance and the particular qualities of the Eastern Thames Marshes

I Cliffe Pits and Pools

Landscape type: Marshland Fringe (T3)

Sub-type: Marsh with urban/industrial influences (T3a)

Forms section of Eastern Thames Marshes character area (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – area to west of Cliffe Village
- Geology – Upper Chalk with Alluvium deposits
- Soils – Grade I and undefined
- Accessibility – good network of paths, including Saxon Shore Way (SSW); network enhanced and improved by permissive path network within RSPB Reserve; coastal erosion of SSW to south of Cliffe fort
- Designations – Natura 2000 (SPA); Ramsar; SSSI; Undeveloped coast; Conservation Park; ALLI; Scheduled Ancient Monument (Cliffe Fort); Kent RIGS – Francis Chalk Quarry
- Flood – most sections within tidal flood area (2003)

Characteristics

- Open, flat marshland with former mineral extraction uses has created a distinctive, complex landscape of man-made lagoons and chalk pits; includes areas of grazing marshland to north and south of main pools
- Lagoons to north and west are reverting to a more natural appearance with gradual vegetation of margins, spits and islands
- Lakes within chalk quarries to north and south of Salt Lane are well screened from roads and have well vegetated margins and gradually vegetating quarry walls
- Chalk quarry due west of Cliffe Village opens onto marshes; has well vegetated quarry floor and slopes within northern section; southern section dominated



by unauthorised industrial estate development with harsh unsympathetic design and uses

- Land area in RSPB ownership currently in process of restoration as bird reserve; wider area has value for other outdoor recreational users and includes scuba diving and sailing on water bodies at southern end
- Cliffe Fort to west retains historic relationship to wider estuarine landscape and defensive system; Brennan torpedo launch rails are significant historic features
- Area highly designated for its biodiversity value – includes national and international protection designations
- Natural regeneration and careful management (particularly areas within RSPB ownership) of these former industrial workings has created a distinctive new landscape with a strong sense of remoteness
- Area threatened by anti-social activities – RSPB and Medway Council have worked hard to manage these threats; condition of landscape is variable – tends to be poorer in areas outside RSPB ownership
- Area largely designated as a Conservation Park; includes industrial features, predominantly clustered at southern end. These areas which include a large aggregates plant and conveyor belt, jetties and an isolated industrial estate to the east; all are unsympathetic to the natural character of the landscape, existing recreational uses and the overall vision of a flagship Conservation Park and Bird Reserve
- Area predominantly located within tidal flood area

Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Coherent
Detracting features – Some
Visual Unity – Coherent
Ecological integrity – High
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – High



Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Recent
Sense of place – Strong
Landform – Dominant
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – High

Actions Conserve and Restore

Issues

- Context within wider area of North Thames Marshes and plans for Thames Gateway
- Realising vision for this area as a new Conservation Park
- Managing the impact of increased numbers of visitors
- Controlling anti-social activities within area – e.g. motorbikes, fly-tipping etc.

- Balancing biodiversity with access – noting plans for continuous coastal path
- Adverse impact of detracting features on character of area – particularly industrial developments
- Controlling the impact of new development on this sensitive landscape
- Loss of salt marsh along Thames Estuary from ‘coastal squeeze’
- Intrusiveness and adverse visual and landscape character impact of overhead power lines
- Intrinsic value of grazing interest
- Changes as a result of climate change – includes EA flood alleviation plans along Thames Estuary; impact of increased tidal flood levels on habitat and landscape character

Guidelines

- Development proposals should respect and seek to positively enhance the open and remote character of the marshland and lagoon areas; consider within wider landscape context of North Kent Marshes and Thames Gateway
- Retain and encourage the open water, wetland, scrub and woodland habitats which are developing within redundant mineral workings, and consider the long term character of the landscape, in any plans for restoration and future after-use
- Industrial activities remain a feature of this landscape; further expansion should be resisted where this threatens openness, local distinctiveness and biodiversity value; for post industrial uses, seek reversion to a more naturally regenerating landscape in character with the vision of a Conservation Park
- Seek to inhibit further loss or physical/visual degradation of the landscape, protect the natural recovery that has occurred and encourage further positive efforts to restore the landscape

- Conserve and restore characteristic features of grazing marshes, including remnant drainage features lost through agricultural drainage or infilling; ditches, ponds, channels, reed beds, counter walls; characteristic trees (e.g. willows along ditches) and encourage traditional management (e.g. grazing, control of water levels in ditches and pollarding etc.).
- Remove poor boundary features, e.g. urban post and wire fencing, palisade fencing etc. and replace with ‘wet fences’ (ditches), timber wing fencing and gates of appropriate rural character. Maintain timber fences and gates; introduce treatments that deter anti-social uses but are sensitive to rural character of area
- Firmly resist proposals for new overhead power lines or cables and seek to under-ground cabling of existing overhead lines
- Improve levels of management for areas outside RSPB Reserve – to ensure consistent quality of environment throughout area; manage adverse impacts of anti-social activities
- Consider climate change impacts and EA flood alleviation proposals
- Introduce new areas of salt marsh to counter effects of ‘coastal squeeze’ where opportunities arise; balance with impacts on loss of grazing marsh and freshwater habitats
- Encourage facilities that support the proposed Conservation Park and ensure these are sensitively designed, appropriately located and that they respect and enhance landscape character and biodiversity significance
- Retain and restore chalk quarry areas as distinctive, naturally regenerating landscapes; seek to improve biodiversity value and accessibility

General Notes

- Considerable improvements have been made in recent years by controlling access to motorcycles, abandoned cars, fly-tipping etc. The areas outside the bird reserve to south and south west are in poorer condition because of reduced levels of control and management but also from impacts of industrial uses (aggregates, plant and storage facilities, jetties and conveyor).
- There are access concerns re footpath RS331 which runs between Cliffe Fort and the district boundary. This path is slowly being eroded. The Council has put up warning signs.
- The illegal industrial estate in the quarry to the east of the RSPB Reserve is considered to have had an adverse impact on the quarry and the adjacent marshland landscape. Further developments of this kind should be discouraged within this area. See Bibliography for reference to Medway Council’s Landscape Proof of Evidence and Appendices prepared for February 2010 Public Inquiry.
- This landscape is predominantly flat and open with long views and only intermittent pockets of scrub/tree cover. Although it is a landscape formed from past industrial activities, it is strongly influenced by its marshland character and its proximity to the Thames estuary and has developed a distinctive sense of place.
- Apart from Fort and Torpedo Rails, other recorded historic features include WW2 air raid shelters for cement factory workers (corner of Salt Lane) and pill boxes located at West Court Farm; wharves at Cliffe Creek for factories including the old Parish Wharf; lime kilns within Francis Chalk quarry

2 Cliffe to St Mary's Marshes

Landscape type: Coastal Marshes (R4)

Sub-type: Grazing marsh (R4b)

Forms section of Eastern Thames Marshes Character area (KCA 2004). Includes Cliffe, Cooling, Halstow and St Mary's Marshes plus remnant salt marshes at Egypt Bay, St Mary's Bay and Dagnam Saltings

Description

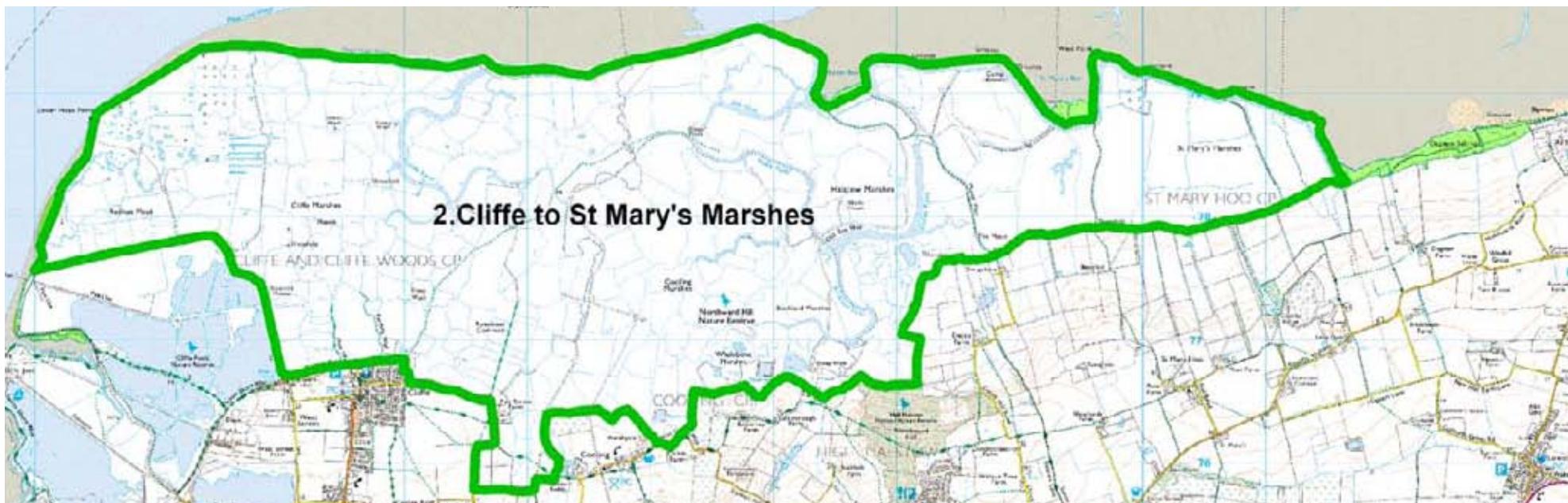
- Location – Marshland tract of land north of Cliffe Village and west of Allhallows
- Geology – Upper Chalk, Thanet and Lenham beds with Alluvium deposits
- Soils – Grade 3 and undefined
- Accessibility – coastal path provides strong east west link but weakened by poor north/south PROW

connections between coastal path and settlements at Cliffe, Cooling and High Halstow

- Designations – Natura 2000 (SPA); Ramsar; SSSI; Undeveloped coast; Conservation Park; SLA;
- Flood – all sections within tidal flood zone (2003)

Characteristics

- Peaceful, remote, open, flat and expansive marshland landscape with big skies and long wide views; occasional isolated trees; predominantly grazing marsh
- A landscape strongly influenced by its largely unspoilt marshland character and proximity to Thames estuary
- Water and wildlife contribute to strong sense of place – prominent features include creeks, dykes,





fleets and pools; wild birds and grazing animals

- Distinctive character of this area has strong cultural links with Charles Dickens and 'Great Expectations' (especially at Cooling Marshes)
- Includes Cliffe (Curtis and Harvey) explosive works – forms distinctive landscape feature at north west corner of character area
- Pockets of remnant salt marsh (Egypt Bay, St Mary's Bay and Dagnam Salttings)

Analysis

Condition Good

Pattern of elements – Coherent

Detracting features – Few

Visual Unity – Coherent

Ecological integrity – High

Cultural integrity – Good

Functional integrity – High

Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Very distinct

Continuity – Historic

Sense of place – Strong

Landform – Dominant

Tree cover – Open

Visibility – High

Actions Conserve

Issues

- Protection of coastal grazing marsh from reversion to arable farmland
- Footpath accessibility – particularly north/south connections to estuary path
- Climate change impacts including 'coastal squeeze' and loss of inter-tidal habitats

Guidelines

- Discourage development proposals which could detract from unspoilt and remote character of marshes; conserve remnant salt marsh and resist reclamation; create new salt marsh areas where appropriate
- Conserve coastal grazing marsh and characteristic remnant features; protect and reinstate drainage ditches (lost through agricultural drainage or infilling) creeks, channels, dykes, sea/counter walls, ponds, reed-beds scrub and characteristic trees (particularly willows along ditches); encourage traditional management (e.g. grazing, control of water levels in ditches and pollarding)
- Remove poor boundary features, especially urban post and wire fencing, and replace with 'wet fences' (ditches) or timber wing fencing and gates of more appropriate rural character. Retain and maintain existing timber fences and gates
- Continue to promote and use agri-environment mechanisms to encourage appropriate management of grazing marshes to maximise landscape and wildlife benefits
- Firmly resist proposals for overhead power lines and cables across marshland
- Improve footpath network, especially north/south links between villages at Cliffe, Cooling and High Halstow with Thames estuary footpath

General Notes

- The main threat to cultural and ecological integrity of this area has been conversion of traditional grazing marsh to arable cultivation. This has been arrested in more recent years through Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) Management Agreements with landowners.
- Planning permission has been granted for creation of a new area of salt marsh as mitigation for the loss of salt marsh in Essex; this is related to proposals for a new container port at Shellhaven.
- Egypt Bay – a typical Thames estuary landing spot for smugglers. Shades House, on Halstow marshes, was built specifically to aid the landing of contraband on the southern shores of the Thames.
- This is an area that retains a distinctively remote, wild and isolated character. Charles Dickens lived and worked in this area and transmitted a deep understanding of the marshland landscape through his writings. In the opening chapter of 'Great Expectations', the author surveys the marshes from the churchyard at Cooling and paints a sensitive and atmospheric picture: '... the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing, was the sea ...'



Medway Marshes

Principal characteristics

- Open expansive areas of marshland with big skies and wide views; includes substantial areas of water which contribute to a strong sense of place
- An area of high biodiversity value with national and international designations
- Area forms part of wider North Kent Marshes area with a high overall level of landscape and biodiversity significance
- Power stations along with other industrial facilities at Grain and Kingsnorth have major impacts on character of whole area, affecting views from southern as well as northern banks of estuary; structures retain some sense of 'grandeur' in their isolation
- Strong urban/industrial influence affects rural character of these character areas and leads to a predominance of transitional landscape categories; includes urban fringe influences along southern side of estuary and industrial fringe influences along northern side
- Integrity of marshland landscape less affected by more distant views of industry from southern shores; balanced by views of boats and shipping in foreground; stronger sense of remoteness along shore of Motney Hill character area
- Includes extensive areas of salt marsh within estuary and along southern and northern banks

Principal issues

- Role of marshes as important natural asset that provides a distinctive 'sense of place' and natural beauty and contributes to wider Thames Gateway Parklands vision; relationship to wider landscape, biodiversity and Green Infrastructure framework of North Kent Marshes area
- Plans for flood management contained within the Shoreline Management Plans (SMP) and Thames Estuary 2100 (TE2100) – include some areas recommended for managed realignment and proposals for area around Yantlett Creek
- Loss of existing salt marsh and creation of new salt marsh areas; loss of inter-tidal areas as a result of 'coastal squeeze'; plans within Thames Estuary 2100 (TE2100) strategy to replace these lost habitats includes two potential sites within Medway Marshes (Allhallows and Grain Marshes); impact of these potential changes on the alignment of the coastal path

- Impact of new development proposals on landscape character, along southern side of estuary where industrial impacts are less intrusive; along northern side to ensure the threat of industrial coalescence is carefully constrained
- Consider EA plans relating to coastal processes – requires no net loss of inter-tidal and freshwater marsh habitats within study area (this extends beyond Medway boundary; consult EA for detailed guidance)
- Protection of landscape/biodiversity value of SSSI and Natura 2000/Ramsar sites; from urban fringe pressures along southern side of estuary and industrial fringe pressures along northern side; role and value of marsh and farmland areas as protective buffer to designated areas
- Ensuring that reversion from grazing marsh to cultivated land within marshland areas is resisted
- The adverse visual and landscape character impacts of large infrastructure components – particularly power stations and power lines – solutions may include seeking the under-grounding of cables and the partial screening/softening of larger industrial structures from footpaths and roads
- Restricted access to MOD land and sand and gravel works to north of Grain
- Balancing infrastructure requirements of industrial uses on Peninsula with environmental impacts



3 Allhallows to Stoke Marshes

Landscape type: Marshland Fringe (T3)

Sub-type: Marshland with urban/industrial influences (T3a)

Forms part of Medway Marshes Character area (KCA 2004); includes Allhallows, Lees, Grain and Stoke Marshes; saltmarsh at Stoke Creek; land north of Kingsnorth

Description

- Location – Marshland and salt marsh – between Allhallows, Grain and Kingsnorth
- Geology – London Clay with Alluvium deposits
- Soils – Largely undefined; small pockets of Grade 2
- Accessibility – weak – no footpath link between Allhallows, Lower Stoke and Grain
- Designations – Natura 2000/Ramsar; SSSI; Undeveloped coast; Conservation Park; SLA; ALLI; Scheduled Ancient Monument (Grain Fort and Battery)
- Flood – all sections within flood zone (2003)

Characteristics

- Open, flat and expansive marshland landscape with big skies and wide views; strong industrial influences to south and south east (at Grain and Kingsnorth)
- Area includes several former industrial sites planned for business park and warehouse uses, specifically (1) extensive National Grid owned site to west of Grain Village planned for warehouse uses and (2) former PFA industrial waste storage site top north east of Kingsnorth and Damhead Creek Power Stations with outline approval for new business park. This area includes natural features (streams, pools, marshland and regenerating scrub) with protected wildlife zones;
- Includes land to north and east of Grain Village with

former industrial and military uses – including Grain Foreshore flood defence wall (with searchlight embrasures); former mineral workings, earthworks to site of Grain Fort – undulating land returned to scrub; pockets of marshland; bridleway; good biodiversity value but in generally poor condition; demolition range at Yantlett (a former proving range for guns)

- Substantial areas of water (along Yantlett Creek and at Stoke Marshes) form distinctive landscape feature marking historic boundary between Isle of Grain and rest of Hoo Peninsula;
- Water contributes to strong sense of place – historic creeks, fleets and pools interrupted in places by strongly rectilinear man made dykes (e.g. EA land at mouth of Yantlett Creek); sea wall and counter walls; wild birds/ grazing animals contribute to strong sense of place
- Extensive tracts of grazing marsh with isolated trees; includes some areas of managed grassland (EA access land)
- Large pockets of salt marsh at Damhead Creek, Stoke Creek and Stoke Salttings; high overall biodiversity value – wetland and scrub habitats



- Poor footpath network with restricted accessibility and connectivity – particularly between Grain and Allhallows/Lower Stoke

Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Many
Visual Unity – Interrupted
Ecological integrity – High
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Moderate

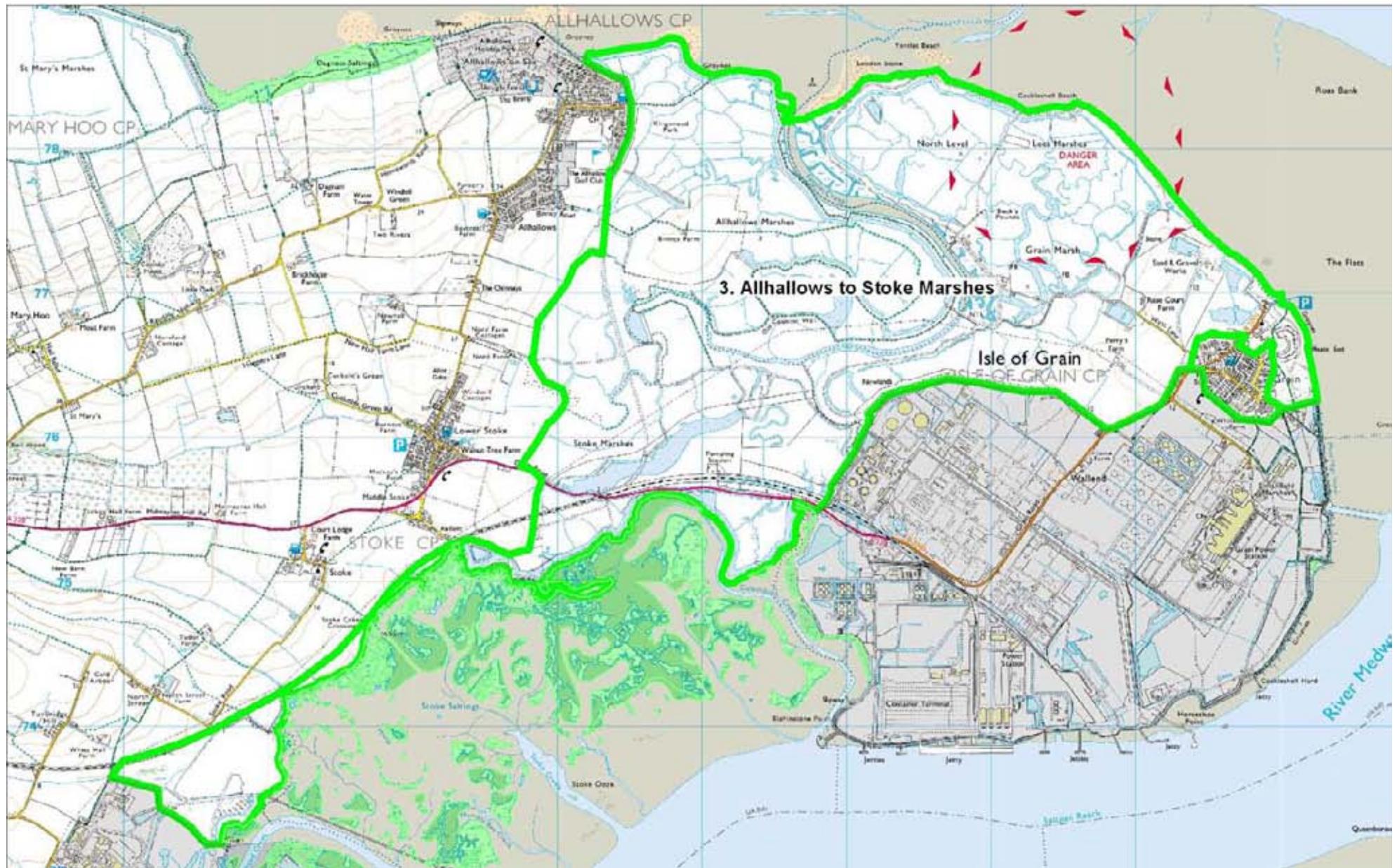
Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Very distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Strong
Landform – Dominant
Tree cover – Open
Visibility – High

Actions Conserve and Restore

Issues

- Restricted access to MOD land at Grain and Lees Marshes – future land use and access plans
- Important infrastructure network supporting energy and other industrial uses at Grain and Kingsnorth
- Plans to improve road network to support transport needs
- Poor footpath connections/accessibility
- Thames Estuary 2100 (TE2100) proposals and climate change – impact of proposed changes on biodiversity, landscape, historic character and access





- Flood protection of energy infrastructure at Grain and Kingsnorth – Hoo Peninsula major UK energy supplier; condition of Grain Foreshore Flood defences
- Major development proposals for business parks within Kingsnorth and Grain Industrial areas. Outline approval for land to north of Damhead Creek and land to north of Thamesport Container Dock; visual, landscape character and biodiversity impacts of new development
- Adverse visual and landscape impact of pylons/power lines
- Long term plans for Conservation/Country Park to east of Grain village
- Proposals for Wildfowl and Conservation area to east of Grain Village

Guidelines

- Improve footpath network, especially direct links between villages of Allhallows, Stoke and Grain and new shoreline path between Allhallows and Grain (Grain foreshore)
- TE2100 proposes flood alleviation measures to Marshland between Grain and Allhallows; wetland creation linked to flood storage; measure long term impacts on access, biodiversity, landscape and historic character
- Review and if necessary upgrade flood defences around energy infrastructure
- Ensure new development proposals respect open, remote character of marshland landscape and minimise visual intrusiveness; mitigation of impacts should be sought primarily through careful design and siting; planting and earth binding as secondary mechanisms; introducing extensive areas of planting (even using water tolerant species) would not generally be considered suitable to character of open marshland
- Country Park – protect and enhance biodiversity

and cultural value, improve access, interpretation and standards of maintenance

- Conserve and restore characteristic features of coastal grazing marshes, including remnant drainage features lost through agricultural drainage or infilling; ditches, ponds, creeks, channels, dykes, reed beds, counter walls; scrub and characteristic trees (e.g. willows along ditches) and encourage traditional management (e.g. grazing, control of water levels in ditches and pollarding etc); resist arable reversion
- Use available agri-environment mechanisms to encourage appropriate management of grazing marshes to maximise landscape and wildlife benefits

- Encourage removal of poor boundary features, especially urban post and wire fencing, and replacement with ‘wet fences’ (ditches) or timber wing fencing and gates of more appropriate rural character. Maintain existing timber fences and gates
- Firmly resist proposals for new overhead power lines or cables and seek to under-ground cabling of existing overhead lines



4 Hoo Flats

Landscape type: Marshland Fringe (T3)

Sub-type: Marshland with urban/industrial influences (T3A)

Forms part of Medway Marshes Character area (KCA 2004);

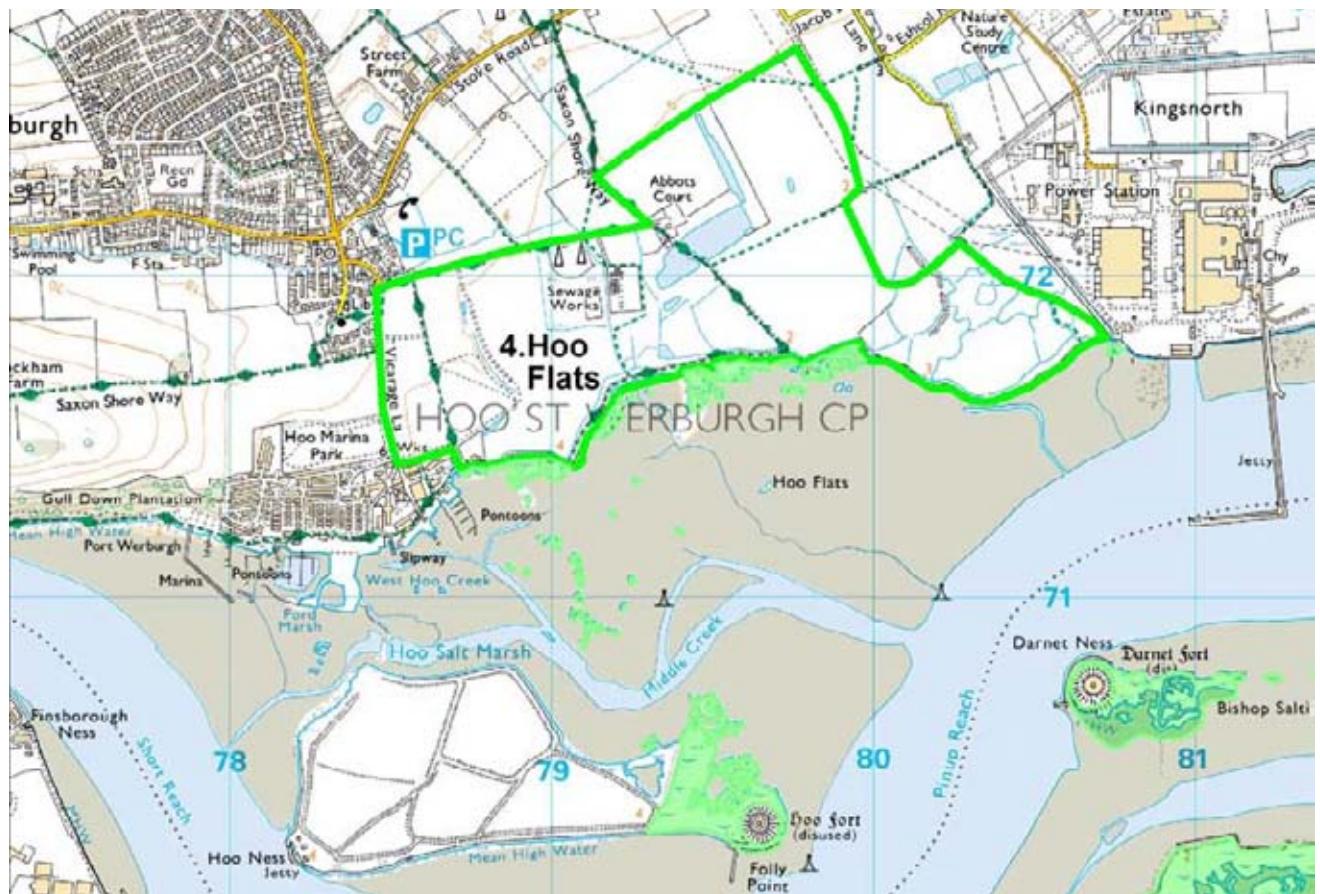
Description

- Location – marshland between Hoo and Kingsnorth
- Geology – London Clay with head gravel (or brick-earth) and alluvium deposits
- Soils – largely Grade 1 agricultural
- Accessibility – good footpath network – links Hoo to Kingsnorth and surrounding areas – includes two branches of Saxon Shore Way
- Designations – includes SSSI; SPA; Ramsar; undeveloped coast; rural lanes
- Flood – predominantly within tidal flood zone (2003)

Characteristics

- Low lying marshland area with remnant features – ditches, hedges, creeks
- Mixed arable; grazed marshland and equine related land uses
- Paroramic views of estuary; sea wall, saltmarsh areas; 19th century artillery forts (Hoo and Darnet) all contribute to strong sense of place
- Strong industrial influences with adverse impacts – includes Power Station, pylons and sewage works; also includes pockets of equine managed land in poor condition
- Includes fishing lakes (created by mineral extraction) – this is located within SSSI area and forms distinctive landscape feature; new mineral extraction works planned within this area

- Footpaths well used and valued by local community – recreation, dog walkers etc
- Includes WW2 Hoo to Cliffe stop line – line of defence forms part of national GHQ stop line
- Hoo Island in close proximity and prominent in views to south – see General Notes



Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
 Detracting features – Many
 Visual Unity – Interrupted
 Ecological integrity – High
 Cultural integrity – Variable
 Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
 Continuity – Historic
 Sense of place – Moderate
 Landform – Dominant
 Tree cover – Intermittent
 Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Create

Issues

- Planning approval for aggregate extraction to north eastern corner of this area – will have adverse impacts on landscape character in short to medium term; long term restoration proposals will create new features and enhance landscape character, although not necessarily be sympathetic to historic character
- Hoo to Cliffe WW2 stop line
- Visual and landscape character intrusions of industrial development, pylons, settlements, fly-tipping; rural fringe pressures – including land managed for equine related uses
- Proximity to neighbouring settlement, marina and industry introduces threat of coalescence, loss of rural character, tranquillity and local distinctiveness
- Poorly treated edges to Hoo Village, Marina and Industrial areas
- Trend from away from grazing marsh towards cultivated farmland; salt marsh protection and extension

Guidelines

- Resist reversion from grazing marsh to arable; support change from arable to grazing; maintain and improve existing reed beds
- Consider significance of WW2 stop line in assessing development proposals for this area
- Seek to strengthen biodiversity and landscape value of area – woodland blocks and hedgerows will assist screening and provide valuable habitats; some areas may require a more open habitat where this favours certain bird species
- Resist development proposals that threaten enhanced biodiversity value, rural character, tranquillity and distinctive sense of place
- Maintain separation and openness between rural and industrial settlements
- Support natural screening of industrial areas, village and marina envelope
- Promote use of native species to reflect and reinforce rural character; resist suburbanisation of roadside edges
- Firmly resist proposals for new overhead power lines or cables and seek to under-ground cabling of existing overhead lines
- Seek to increase controls on adverse impacts of urban-fringe activities such as fly-tipping

General Notes

- Hoo Island sits immediately to the south of this character area. The main part of the island (central and western end) has had a variety of land uses historically and is currently licensed for the deposit of river dredgings. A series of engineered cellular bunds have been constructed to contain these dredgings. These engineered bunds, which are approved, have raised the level of the island in views from surrounding areas. The raised embankments have an unnatural

appearance and in places obscure/screen the openness of views across the estuary. The adverse impact of views across the river from the southern embankment is increased by the untidy jetty structures and the various plant operations associated with licensed dredging works. The eastern end of the island, which includes Hoo Fort and salt marsh areas is in better condition and retains a more natural and unspoilt character.

- Hoo to Cliffe stop line from WW2 (part of the national GHQ stop line) crosses this area and other parts of the Hoo peninsula. Considered to be a good surviving example of such a national defence line through a combination of a high percentage survival of the concrete components such as pillboxes and the character of the landscape it was designed to defend.
- There is a legal section of footpath (RS338) physically lost on account of low lying marsh next to power station. This section could be re-instated or preferably diverted onto firmer ground.



5 Riverside Marshes

Landscape type: Urban Fringe (T2)
Sub-types: Urban fringe with urban/industrial influences (T1c); Saltmarsh (R4a)
Forms part of Medway Marshes Character area (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – Lower Rainham Road (B2004) to south, Medway estuary to north, Gillingham to west and Rainham to south
- Geology – Upper Chalk and Thanet Beds with alluvium and head deposits
- Soils – Grade I with undefined areas
- Accessibility – Good PROW network – Saxon Shore Way follows northern fringe; good access within country park; links to south but overall poor connections to main areas of population at Twydall and Rainham
- Designations – adjacent to Natura 2000/Ramsar sites; Designated Country Park; undeveloped coast
- Flood – most of area at risk from tidal flooding (2003)



Characteristics

- Strip of marshland rising gently to farmland and stretching from southern coastal edge of Medway estuary to Lower Rainham Road
- Strong industrial influences at Kingsnorth and Motney Hill; B2004 introduces urban influence
- Diverse land uses – scrub, orchards, small fields, equine related; area fragmented and lacks overall sense of coherence; land in poor condition around former equestrian centre at western end

- Saxon Shore way forms strong east/west link along sea wall; weaker north south links
- Several salt marsh areas add to distinctive character along estuary
- Much of area owned by Medway Council and managed as country park with Visitor Centre and Car Park – introduces amenity element rather than distinctly rural character
- Country Park designation (2003) extends to most of this character area



- Forms important buffer to urban edge of Gillingham, protects Natura 2000/Ramsar sites, valuable recreational and biodiversity resource, green corridor from countryside into urban area; integrally linked with Lower Rainham Farmland character area
- Historic features – includes Black House – small medieval grade 2 listed building to south of Visitor Centre in poor state of repair; strong industrial character remains from former uses – quays, cement works etc; includes several evocative hulks and other remains on the intertidal flats
- Long views and open character in views out to estuary from sea wall; stronger sense of enclosure to interior; provides good vantage point to view wider estuary including late 19th century artillery forts (Hoo and Darnet – scheduled monuments). Also views of industrial, energy and port infrastructure

Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
 Detracting features – Some
 Visual Unity – Interrupted
 Ecological integrity – High
 Cultural integrity – Variable/Poor
 Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
 Continuity – Historic
 Sense of place – Moderate
 Landform – Apparent
 Tree cover – Intermittent
 Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Create

Issues

- Urban fringe degradation and threats to loss of distinctive character
- Sensitivity of marshes as covered by Natura 2000/ Ramsar designation
- Role as buffer to marshland wildlife habitats; introduction of new natural features
- Green corridor, footpath and National Cycle route linking community in urban areas to countryside; weaker north south links
- Strong connections with Lower Rainham Farmland character area to south and overall role of two character areas as generous buffer and corridor separating urban areas from natural spaces of estuary
- Condition of farmland areas; land use proposals – e.g. re-introduction of orchards, new pond areas, improved visitor facilities
- Future plans for Riverside Country Park as recreational, educational and wildlife resource
- Historic character of the marshes and waterfront
- Protection and enhancement of salt marsh areas
- Creeping urbanisation in signage (especially EA signs) and other features



Guidelines

- Introduce positive land management that addresses future plans for country park
- Reflect historic character of the marshes within interpretation of the country park
- Balance potential conflicts between educational, recreational and wildlife interests
- Ensure new development proposals protect area from adverse visual and landscape character impacts
- Introduce more active management of farmland, including reintroduction of orchards, to reinforce sense of working landscape; improve roadside verges and grassland areas with native species planting (hedges and native wildflower mixes)
- Seek to manage signage and other features to strengthen and reinforce rural character
- Improve habitat, access, recreation opportunities; improve access for urban communities to estuary – strengthen north-south footpath links towards urban areas at Twydall and Rainham
- Area has key role as gateway into Medway; linking urban areas and countryside and as interface between estuary and orchards of North Kent Fruit Belt
- Include preservation and interpretation of Black House alongside other development plans for Country Park

6 Motney Hill

Landscape type: Rural Fringe (T1)

Sub-types: Rural fringe with urban/industrial influences (T1c/T3a); Saltmarsh (R4a)

Forms part of Medway Marshes Character area (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – Lower Rainham Road (B2004) to south, Medway estuary to north, Gillingham to west and Rainham to south
- Geology – Thanet Beds and Lambeth Group with alluvium deposits
- Soils – Grade 2 with undefined areas
- Accessibility – Saxon Shore Way to east and west sides of peninsula but no formalised access to tip of Motney Hill peninsula
- Designations – includes and adjacent to SSSI, SLA, SPA and Ramsar sites; Proposed Country Park; Nature Conservation Interest sites; Undeveloped coast
- Flood – area at risk from tidal flooding (2003) – excludes Motney Hill

Characteristics

- Narrow peninsula with broad estuary to west and Otterham Creek to east forming boundary with neighbouring Swale
- Natural and man made features – marshland, reed beds, sea wall, scrub and saltmarsh – give varied and distinctive character to area with high biodiversity value
- Dramatic open views across estuary from sea wall and inland from higher ground to north
- Remote, tranquil and peaceful; informal routes along shoreline, especially at low tide; Saxon Shore Way route follows edges and crosses mid point of peninsula

- Includes some detracting industrial influences – especially sewage works but also views of Kingsnorth and Grain industry across estuary
- Country Park designation (2003) extends to most of this character area – excluding sewage works

Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable

Detracting features – Some

Visual Unity – Interrupted

Ecological integrity – High/Moderate

Cultural integrity – Variable

Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Distinct

Continuity – Historic

Sense of place – Strong

Landform – Dominant

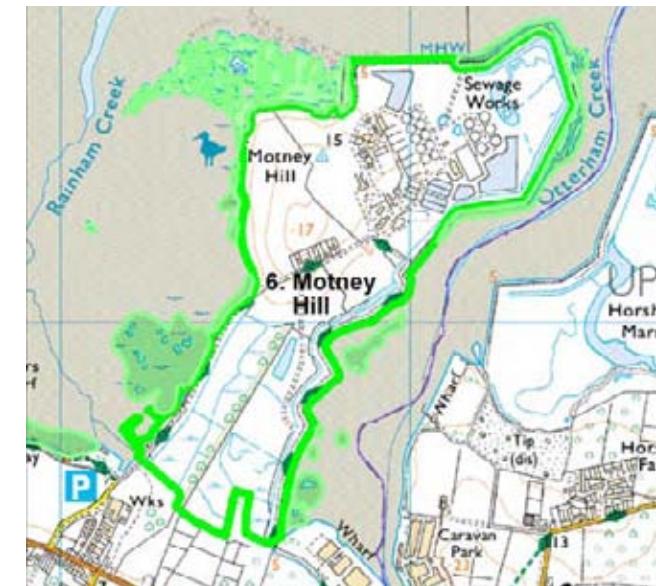
Tree cover – Intermittent

Visibility – High

Actions Conserve and Restore

Issues

- Management of rough pasture areas
- Impact of detracting features – sewage works, telephone poles, barriers etc
- Preservation and enhancement of salt marsh and reed bed areas
- Condition and quality of boundary treatments



- Preserving and enhancing rural character and protecting from rural fringe degradation and threats to loss of distinctive character
- Sensitivity of marshes covered by Natura 2000/Ramsar designation; role as buffer to marshland wildlife habitats
- Biodiversity value and restricted public access to tip of peninsula;
- Possible route for new estuary coastal path

Guidelines

- Consider future land management plans for country park
- Balance potential conflicts between educational, recreational and wildlife interests
- Discourage further built development; ensure all new development proposals protect area from adverse visual, landscape character and biodiversity impacts
- Seek to enhance character of area, screen adverse impacts and improve biodiversity value with native planting proposals
- Seek landscape and biodiversity enhancements as part of plans for new coastal path





Hoo Peninsula

Principal characteristics

- Predominantly agricultural area links to extensive tracts of marshland along north, south and eastern edges; central clay ridgeline with woodland to upper slopes forms central backbone and creates visual barrier between north and south.
- Broad leaved woodland (much of it protected with ancient woodland and SSSI designations) forms significant landscape feature; notable and distinctive elements include extensive woodlands around Chattenden Ridge, at Beacon Hill and Cockham Wood and the RSPB Reserve at Northward Hill
- Three dominant rural landscape types – 1) flat or undulating arable farmland – large open arable fields with long views 2) mixed farmland with orchards and shelter belts – smaller fields with stronger sense of containment 3) isolated wooded or farmed hills
- Includes large areas of grade I agricultural farmland, open, often remote and isolated but fragmented in places by roads, dispersed settlements, industrial areas, power and rail lines; includes significant areas of urban-rural and industrial transition – particularly to south at Kingsnorth and Hogmarsh Valley
- Includes most of the principal rural settlements on the Peninsula, as well as scattered farms and smaller settlements
- Includes a number of RSME sites; notably Lodge Hill site identified for development as a new, mixed-use settlement
- Role of countryside of Hoo Peninsula (farmland, woodland and villages) to provide a rural green buffer between the protected areas of the Thames and Medway estuaries and the urban settlements of Medway.

Principal issues

- Loss of landscape structure and fragmentation caused by infrastructure (industry, roads, pylons etc); change of land use – loss of orchards, shelter belts and hedgerows; trend towards larger arable fields; equine related land uses; impact of suburban-style developments with ill-considered and weak edge treatments
- Intrusiveness and adverse visual and landscape character impact of overhead power lines which run through several farmland character areas
- Proximity of rural settlements; poor quality edge treatments; intrusion of urban-rural fringe activities (often prominent in views from main roads) into countryside; trend towards loss of rural character with threat of settlement coalescence and loss of local distinctiveness
- Introduction of unsightly crop protection structures (e.g. polytunnels, plastic crop mulches); insensitive structures, building styles and use of inappropriate materials and finishes
- Overall loss of biodiversity from trend towards larger field patterns, lost hedgerows and shelter belts; increasing suburbanisation of road corridors and settlement edges
- Potential to strengthen landscape character and biodiversity value by improving habitat network; including restoration of hedgerows and shelter belts and enlargement of woodland areas
- Wider scale accessibility links fragmented (off-road footpaths and cycleways) – Saxon Shore Way links Cliffe, High Halstow and Hoo St Werburgh but poor connections north out to Marshes and east towards Allhallows, Stoke and Grain; poor links from urban areas (e.g. Medway City Estate) out to wider countryside
- Impact on countryside and landscape character of major new development plans on Peninsula for sites at Chattenden, Grain and Kingsnorth; Park and Ride scheme at Whitewall Creek, Upnor and Frindsbury Barn
- Opportunity to strengthen landscape structure, improve landscape condition and accessibility; remove and screen adverse urban-rural fringe impacts; co-ordinate and link enhancements with overall strategic framework and development plans for major new schemes on Peninsula
- Opportunity to strengthen woodland structure across peninsula; especially through linking up Ancient Woodland fragments into larger blocks of SSSI woodland

7 Cliffe Farmland

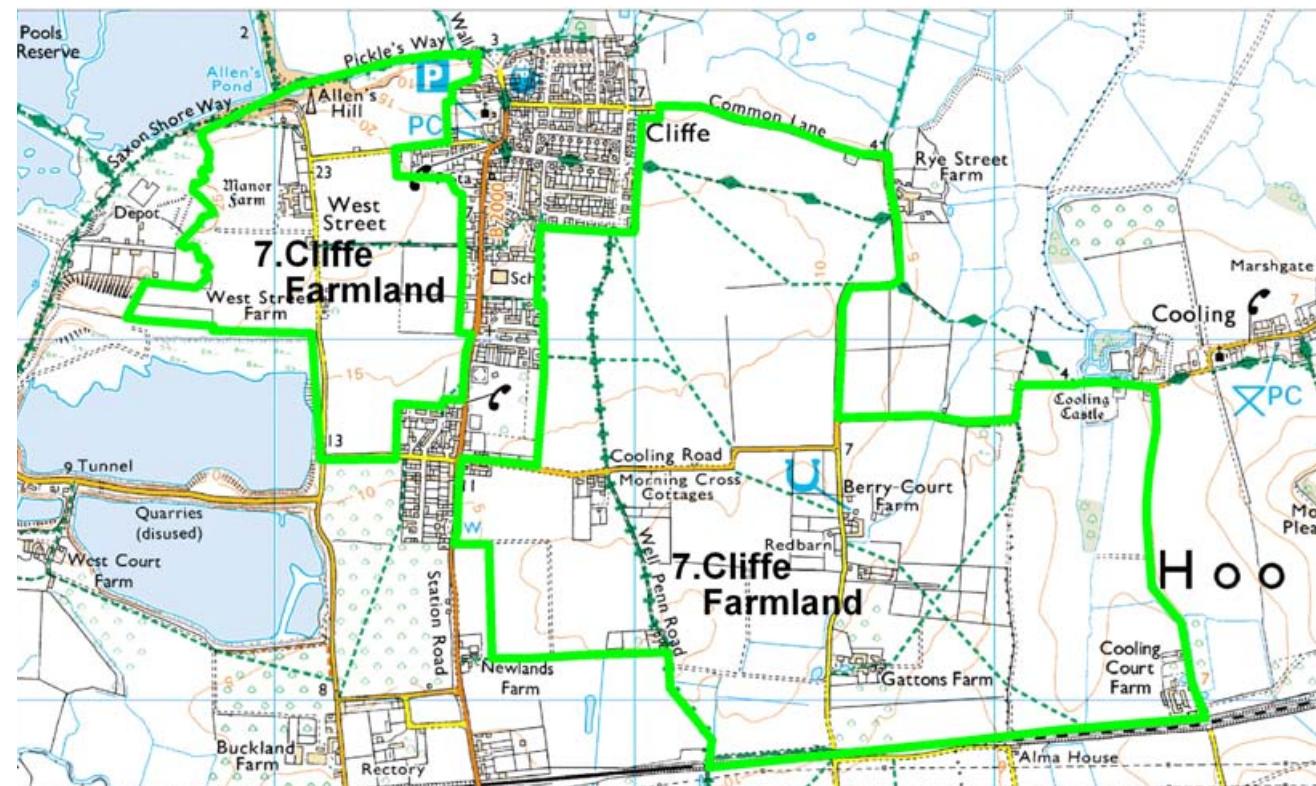
Landscape type: Flat or undulating open farmland (R6);
Sub type: Flat or undulating arable farmland (R6a).
Forms part of Hoo Peninsula Character area (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – farmland between Cliffe Village and Cooling Village and to west of Cliffe. Thames marshes to the north and west and Hoo Farmland to the south and east
- Geology – Upper chalk and thanet beds with head deposits
- Soils – grade I agricultural
- Accessibility – good path network including Saxon Shore Way
- Designations – predominantly open countryside (white land); includes Rural Lane
- Flood – southern and eastern sections within tidal flood zone (2003)

Characteristics

- Flat arable farmland with relatively large fields, big skies and long views – little sense of enclosure
- Few hedgerows, isolated trees, sparse mixed woodland (mainly around farm buildings)
- Small pockets of orchard with trees and hedgerows
- Cliffe Village edge prominent in views to west; Chattenden Ridge and North Downs forms backdrop in views to south; includes open marshland views to the north
- Localised equine management land uses have led to lotted fields and visual interruption of stabling, timber fences etc.



Analysis

Condition Poor

Pattern of elements – Variable
 Detracting features – Few
 Visual Unity – Interrupted
 Ecological integrity – Low
 Cultural integrity – Poor
 Functional integrity – Low

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Indistinct
 Continuity – Historic
 Sense of place – Moderate
 Landform – Apparent
 Tree cover – Open
 Visibility – Moderate

Actions Restore and Create

Issues

- Introduction of equine management land uses in some areas has introduced a fragmented character
- Pressure for small scale developments adjoining main settlement at Cliffe
- Weak landscape structure and lack of local distinctiveness – includes lack of hedgerows and woodland
- Value of historic character of area and field patterns

Guidelines

- Strengthen landscape and biodiversity value whilst respecting historic character – increase woodland blocks, introduce hedgerows, introduce wider field margins
- Seek to manage equine management uses sensitively and resist these, particularly where considered inappropriate to historic landscape character of area. Follow general principles as outlined within Kent Downs AONB Equine Management Guidance

- Resist development proposals that lack respect for historic rural character of area; development proposals where considered appropriate should seek to strengthen landscape structure, historic character and enhance local distinctiveness

Historic Note

- Role of this area as an historic hinterland to Cliffe (a medieval settlement and port) and Cooling Castle (historically significant and at one time accessible from the sea) should be considered within long term plans and when reviewing development proposals



8 Cooling Farmland

Landscape type: Flat or undulating mixed farmland (R5)
Sub type: Orchards and mixed farmland (R5a)
Forms part of Hoo Peninsula Character area (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – land to north and east of Cooling Village. Cooling Marshes to north; Northward Hill to east and Hoo Peninsula farmland to south and west
- Geology – Thanet and Lenham beds
- Soils – predominantly grade I agricultural
- Accessibility – Saxon Shore Way (SSW) runs east/west to north of this character area; includes section along road with poor pedestrian access
- Designations – SLA; 2 rural lanes
- Flood – northern sections within flood zone (2003)

Characteristics

- Undulating mixed farmland and orchards; water bodies to east are within tidal flood zone and connect to drainage system of marshes
- Diverse, small scale and intimate; complex mix of orchards, arable fields and pasture
- Winding lane linking High Halstow and Cooling has strong and distinctive historic character
- Strong sense of enclosure; rich in colour, texture and variety; shaws and hedgerows – intact but in need of repair and strengthening
- Some detracting features to western end (white plastic crop mulches; barn roofs etc); appearance less damaged to east
- Cooling Village edges apparent in views at western end but views generally restricted by topography and enclosure

Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Some
Visual Unity – Interrupted
Ecological integrity – Moderate
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Moderate
Landform – Apparent
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Create



Issues

- Trend towards equine management land uses
- Introduction of horticultural plastic mulches and poly tunnel frames
- Threat of loss of orchards and shelter belts with traditional field pattern to arable farmland
- RSPB base at Bromhey Farm – role played as access point into marshes and wider countryside; RSPB expansion plans for this base
- Poor accessibility along section of SSW that follows road

Guidelines

- Strengthen landscape and biodiversity value – increase woodland, hedgerows, wider field margins
- Seek to manage equine management uses sensitively and resist, particularly where considered inappropriate to historic landscape character of area. Follow general principles as outlined within Kent Downs AONB Equine Management Guidance
- Conserve, restore and reinstate traditional orchards where possible, with hedgerow and poplar shelter

- belt field boundaries. Discourage wholesale trend away from orchards towards arable where judged to weaken landscape structure and local distinctiveness
- Resist development proposals that would threaten enhanced biodiversity value and loss of rural character and distinctive sense of place
 - Consider role of RSPB base at Bromhey Farm and any proposed expansion plans, in light of wider green infrastructure plans; assess impacts on access, landscape and biodiversity of area
 - Discourage introduction of visually intrusive elements – e.g. trend towards plastic crop mulches, horticultural polytunnel frames and discordant roofing to barns, farm buildings etc



- Respect landscape character and biodiversity of area in developing enhanced visitor attractions and recreational uses
- Seek off-road access along SSW within long term plans – using land owner agreement mechanisms

General Notes

- Historic field pattern and enclosure (including orchards) relatively intact
- Threat of loss of orchards and removal of shelter belts
- Area includes some detracting features at western end and some insensitive equine management treatments at eastern end.



9 Northward Hill

Landscape type: Isolated wooded or farmed hills (R1)
Sub-type: Open farmed hills and ridges (R1b)
Forms part of Hoo Peninsula Character area (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – adjoins High Halstow; Thames Marshes to north; Hoo Peninsula farmland to other sides
- Geology – London clay and Lenham beds; small drift pockets
- Soils – Grade 2 and undefined
- Accessibility – predominantly Saxon Shore Way and RSPB network of footpaths; poor link to marshes from western end
- Designations – SSSI; SLA; NNR; Ancient woodland
- Flood – northern sections within flood zone (2003)

Characteristics

- Dominated by extensive tract of ancient broad leaved woodland clothing summit and sides of hill; provides strong landscape structure



- Generally tranquil, peaceful and unspoilt, particularly to western and northern slopes
- Large part of character area owned and managed by RSPB as bird reserve; high biodiversity value; includes two pockets of ancient woodland
- Area has strong sense of enclosure and coherence; southern edges adjoin residential area; some damage to condition along these edges
- Forms strong landscape feature in views from marshes and surrounding farmland; views out restricted by woodland cover but does provide distinctive window out onto the marshes

Analysis

Condition Good

Pattern of elements – Coherent
Detracting features – Few
Visual Unity – Coherent
Ecological integrity – High
Cultural integrity – Good
Functional integrity – High

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Very distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Strong
Landform – Apparent
Tree cover – Enclosed
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Reinforce



Issues

- Future plans for management and development of RSPB bird reserve
- Improving biodiversity of area surrounding bird reserve
- Accessibility to marshes from western end – to be balanced against wildlife protection
- Potential for opening up of more views out towards marshes
- Rural fringe pressures to south – proximity to High Halstow village
- Weak legibility and sense of place for visitors and regular users
- Equine related land uses and planning approval for travellers camp (see general note below)

Guidelines

- Woodland management regime – to include protection of edges, path restoration and control of random waste tipping

- Introduce new paths and open up improved view corridors towards marshes and surrounding farmland – to provide interest and assist visitors in understanding site context; seek to improve signage and overall legibility
- Seek to restore hedgerow network within surrounding farmland – to extend and enhance habitat value beyond the woodland core
- Resist development proposals that would harm biodiversity value and damage distinctive landscape character

General Note

- Some of land to west of this character area has been divided into paddocks and a travellers camp near to Buck-hole Farm has recently been approved with gravelled access, septic tanks and increased traffic along Buckhole Farm Road. This development is considered likely to have an adverse visual and landscape character impact.
- Recent advice by a planning inspector within this character area has discouraged the principle of planting within what is essentially an open landscape.

This view needs to be tempered with an understanding that planting remains a feature in open farmland landscapes, especially around farmsteads and small settlements and along field boundaries. Sensitive and appropriate use of planting should therefore remain an option even in open landscapes. It should be valued especially for its potential to enhance and strengthen landscape and biodiversity value and to mitigate where considered appropriate against the adverse impacts of development proposals.



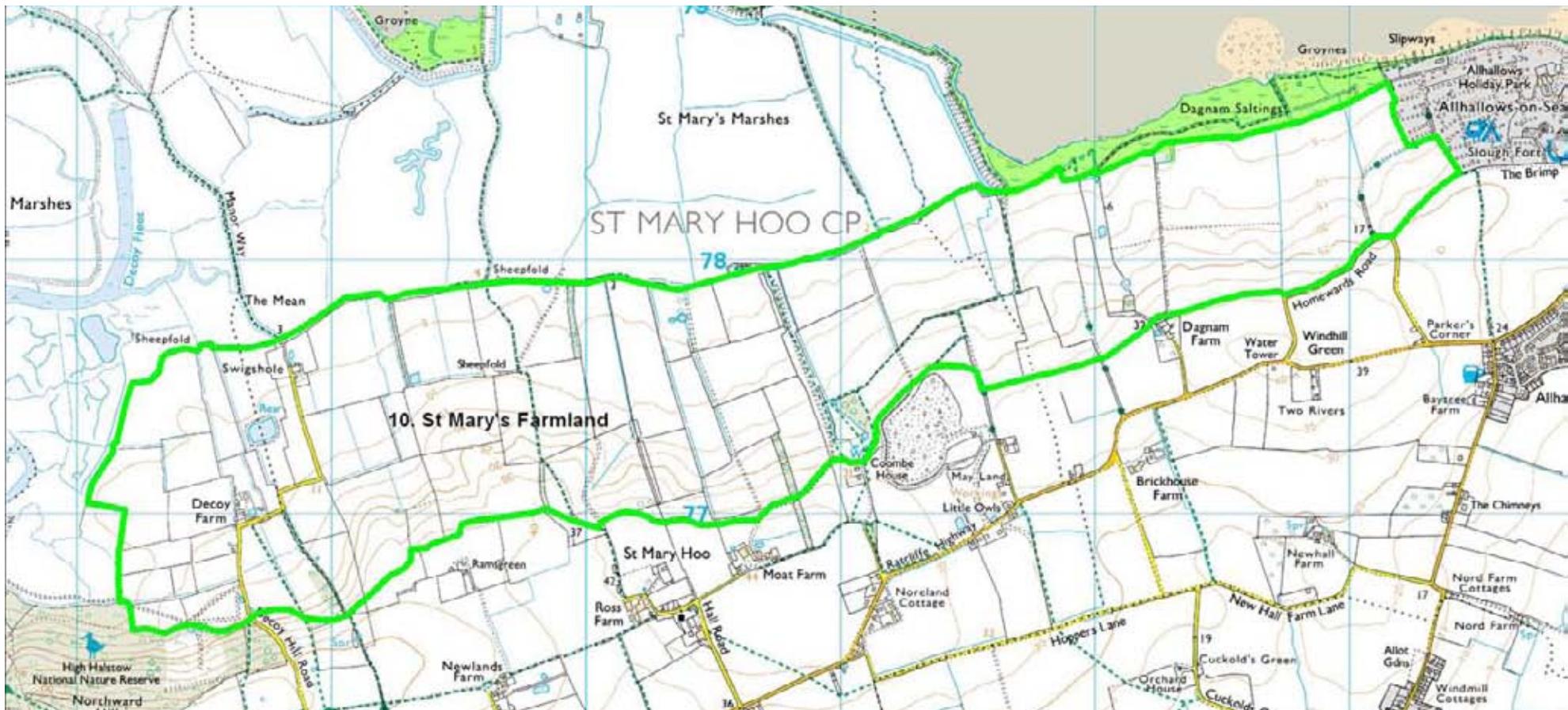
10 St Mary's Farmland

Landscape type: Isolated wooded or farmed hills (R1)
Sub-type: Open farmed hills and ridges (R1b)
Forms part of Hoo Peninsula Character area (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – north of St Mary Hoo, Northward Hill to Allhallows
- Geology – London clay with some river terrace gravel deposits
- Soils – Grade 3 agricultural

- Accessibility – good north/south links – no east/west link along top of ridge towards Allhallows – between Northward Hill and St Mary Hoo / Shakespeare Farm
- Designations – SLA
- Flood – predominantly outside flood zone (2003)



Characteristics

- Distinctive ridge and rolling mixed farmland with open elevated views from upper slopes towards Thames Marshes and Estuary
- Distinctive medium to large scale rectilinear field pattern and elevated position forms pleasing and distinctive contrast with flat marshland to north
- Ridge links higher ground of Northward Hill and High Halstow with Allhallows
- Unspoilt, remote and tranquil rural landscape with very few built or detracting features (apart from Caravan Park at eastern end and landfill site along southern edge).
- Generally strong network of field boundaries defined by hedgerows, shaws and shaves; however fragmented and broken in places

Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Coherent
 Detracting features – Few
 Visual Unity – Coherent
 Ecological integrity – Moderate
 Cultural integrity – Variable
 Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Distinct
 Continuity – Historic
 Sense of place – Strong
 Landform – Dominant
 Tree cover – Open
 Visibility – High

Actions Conserve and Restore

Issues

- High visibility from North Kent Marshes and surrounding farmland; located within Special Landscape area; area has an open aspect towards marshes and a particularly distinctive landscape character
- Declining condition – loss and fragmentation of hedgerows
- Trend to equine management related land uses – noticeable at western end of character area
- Conservation and enhancement of distinctive landscape character

Guidelines

- Strengthen biodiversity and historic field patterns with restoration of hedgerows, shaws and blocks of woodland
- Review opportunities to plant woodland blocks sensitively along slopes and ridge line to strengthen biodiversity and local distinctiveness.

- Resist development proposals that would harm distinctive, open and unspoilt landscape character and adversely affect quality of views towards marshes and views of ridge from within marshes
- Discourage trend towards equine management; introduce mitigation measures where unable to challenge

Historic Notes

- Field patterns and other boundaries may relate to organisation of medieval landscape and its subdivision into holdings that took in a part of different land types – grazing marsh v. arable or orchards.
- Close to Decoy Farm there is a well-preserved duck decoy pond which is a distinctive feature of the Greater Thames estuary marshes.



II Hoo Peninsula Farmland

Landscape type: Flat or undulating open farmland (R6)
Sub type: Flat or undulating open arable farmland (R6a)
Forms part of Hoo Peninsula Character area (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – open arable farmland to central part of peninsula – Cooling in north west; Allhallows to north east; Hoo St Werburgh to south and Cliffe Woods to south west.
- Geology – Lenham Beds and Thanet formation to west; London clay to east
- Soils – predominantly grade 1 agricultural with pockets of grade 3
- Accessibility – local paths link settlements but lacks strong east west axis
- Designations – predominantly white land (open countryside); includes rural lane; SLA:ALLI; Ancient Woodland
- Flood – predominantly outside flood zone (2003)

Characteristics

- Undulating predominantly arable farmland with large open fields and little sense of enclosure; extensive views from higher ground towards estuaries
- Weak landscape structure, lack of distinctiveness and overall coherence
- Field boundaries – mixed fences and hedges – sparse and poorly managed hedgerows, isolated trees and blocks of woodland (often around farm buildings)
- Many detracting features – poor quality edges to farms and settlements with discordant conifers, roads (notably A228), railway, signs, telephone lines and

pylons/power lines; industrial areas at Grain and Kingsnorth often prominent in views to south and east

- Two large remnant orchards along A228 – at Deangate and Fenn Street

Analysis

Condition Poor

Pattern of elements – Incoherent
Detracting features – Many
Visual Unity – Fragmented
Ecological integrity – Low
Cultural integrity – Poor
Functional integrity – Low

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Indistinct
Continuity – Recent
Sense of place – Poor
Landform – Apparent
Tree cover – Open
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Restore and Create

Issues

- Weak landscape structure – poorly managed edges; field boundaries; absence of tree cover; depleted hedgerows; many detracting features; poor quality settlement edges
- Extensive views out across farmland from higher ground towards estuaries
- Loss of orchards to development or conversion to arable farmland
- Expansion of development at Kingsnorth and Grain

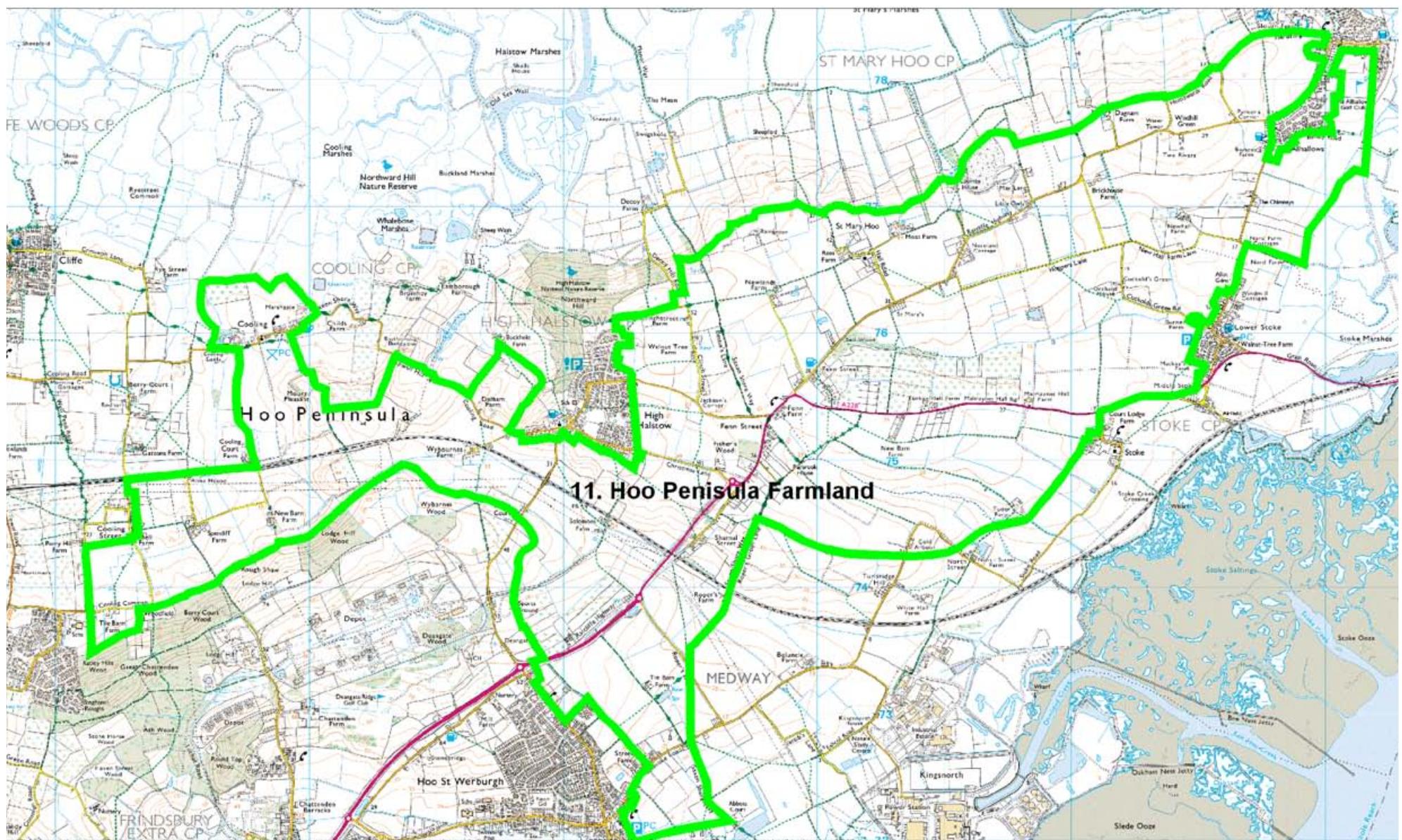
and threat of settlement coalescence – between Hoo St Werburgh and High Halstow and between Hoo and Kingsnorth Industrial area

- Roads and traffic – heavy vehicle traffic movements
- Intrusiveness and adverse visual and landscape character impact of pylons/power lines
- Potential for enhanced woodland links to higher ground

Guidelines

- Strengthen landscape structure and seek to improve image of area with new hedgerows (particularly along major roads, screening of settlement edges and detracting features; seek to achieve sensitive harmonisation of built development and countryside)
- Firmly resist proposals for new overhead power lines or cables and seek to under-ground cabling of existing overhead lines





- Seek to identify and recognise strategic viewpoints that offer high quality views across farmland towards estuaries
- Strengthen and increase biodiversity value – woodland, hedgerows and wider field margins
- Identify potential opportunities for enhanced woodland links and corridors along higher ground; such links should be sympathetic to landscape character; respect valuable open views, strengthen landscape structure and local distinctiveness and enhance biodiversity value
- Seek to strengthen and enhance access opportunities, particularly in the light of major planned new development at Lodge Hill
- Resist suburbanisation to villages and small settlements (particularly along road side edges); encourage planting of native locally found species to reflect and reinforce rural character – note general principles within Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook guidance on designing and specifying sensitive boundary treatments
- New development proposals should respect and enhance biodiversity and local distinctiveness
- Protect existing orchards – resist loss of orchards to arable farmland
- Protect separation, rural character and openness of countryside between villages at Cliffe Woods, Hoo, High Halstow, Stoke, Lower Stoke and Allhallows





12 Lower Stoke Farmland

Landscape type: Rural Fringe (T1)

Sub-type: Rural fringe with urban/industrial influences (T1C)

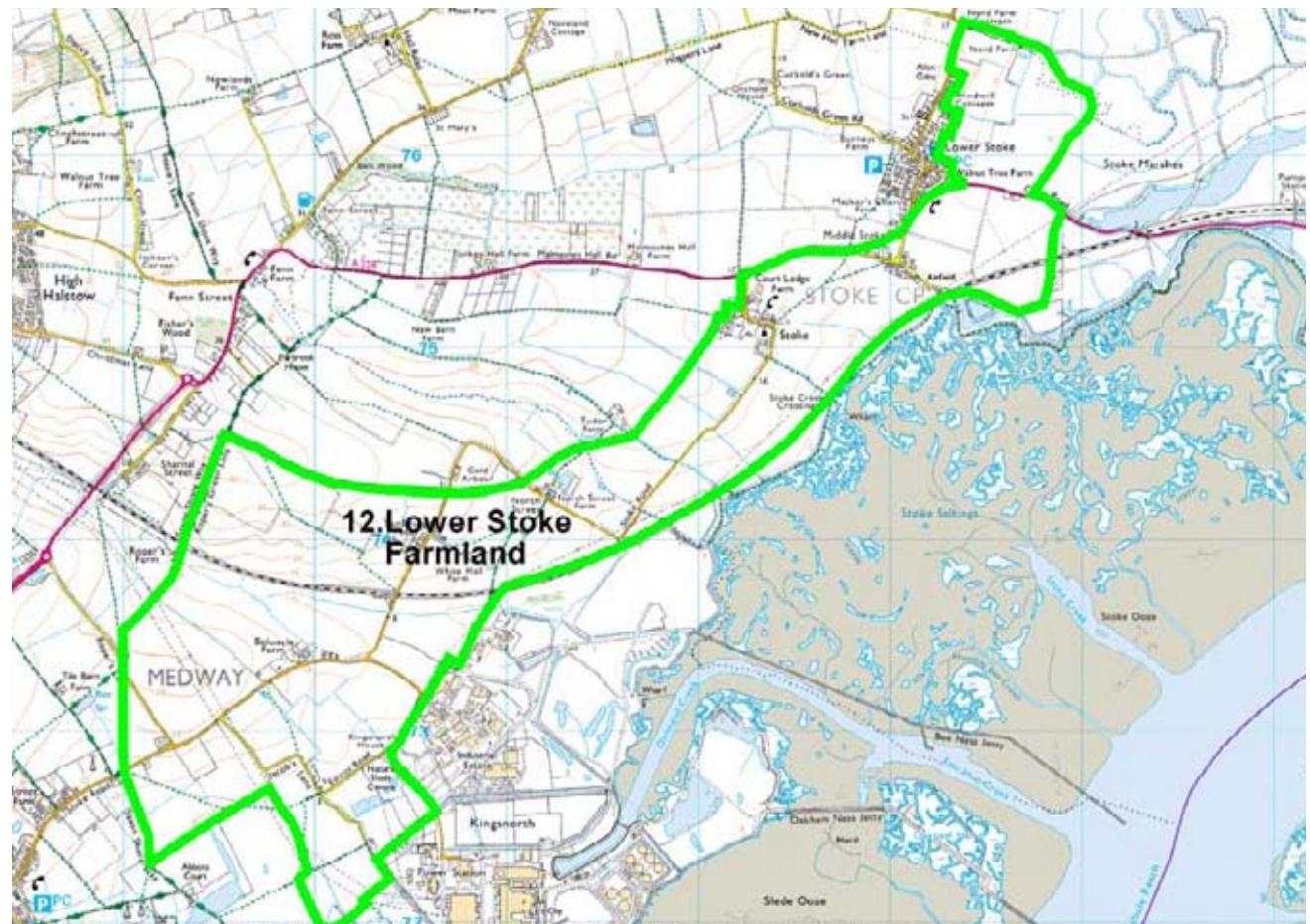
Forms part of Hoo Peninsula Character area (KCA 2004);

Description

- Location – farmland runs east/west between Hoo St Werburgh and Middle/Lower Stokes
- Geology – London Clay with head brickearth, gravel drift deposits
- Soils – Grade I agricultural
- Accessibility – fair footpath network links between Kingsnorth, Hoo and the Stokes.
- Designations – predominantly white land (open countryside); includes rural lanes; SLA
- Flood – small pockets in flood zone (to south)

Characteristics

- Wedge of open undulating arable farmland; medium scale; more diverse, varied and enclosed than Hoo Peninsula farmland character area
- Borders Medway Marshes with aspect towards Medway Estuary and industrial complexes at Grain and Kingsnorth; industry and large pylons have strong and distinctive impact on character and views
- Railway line and Kingsnorth industrial complex forms strong southern edge



Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
 Detracting features – Many
 Visual Unity – Interrupted
 Ecological integrity – Moderate
 Cultural integrity – Variable
 Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
 Continuity – Historic
 Sense of place – Moderate
 Landform – Apparent
 Tree cover – Intermittent
 Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Create



Issues

- Visual and landscape character impact of industrial development and pylons
- Impact of new development on loss of rural character; views of marshes and estuary; coalescence threat of industrial area and settlements.
- Poorly treated edges to infrastructure, settlement and industry
- Intrusiveness and adverse visual and landscape character impact of pylons/power lines
- Loss of biodiversity value

Guidelines

- Strengthen biodiversity value – woodland blocks, hedgerows, wider field margins
- Resist all development proposals considered likely to diminish biodiversity value, tranquillity and rural character
- Maintain separation and openness between industry and rural settlements
- Firmly resist proposals for new overhead power lines or cables and seek to under-ground cabling of existing overhead lines
- Resist and seek to reverse rural fringe pressures – especially suburbanisation of settlement edges, poor boundary treatments, loss of native hedgerows etc.
 – note general principles within Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook guidance on designing and specifying sensitive boundary treatments



13 Cliffe Woods Farmland

Landscape type: Flat or undulating mixed farmland (R5)
Sub type: Orchards and mixed farmland (R5a)
Forms part of Hoo Peninsula Character area (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – north/south from Cliffe to Cliffe Woods and Wainscott/A289; west into Gravesham; east adjoins Hoo Peninsula farmland and Chattenden woods.
- Geology – Thanet and Lenham beds; London clay; some head deposits
- Soils – mixed grade 1 and 2 agricultural
- Accessibility – poor – especially north/south off road; Wainscott, Cliffe Woods and Cliffe links could be strengthened.
- Designations – ALBs (Cliffe Pools and Pits; Dillywood Lane; Chattenden Ridge); Metropolitan Greenbelt (south western section); Rural lanes
- Flood – floodplain band to south of Cliffe Village (2003)

Characteristics

- Undulating and complex mix of arable farmland and orchards – diverse, small scale and intimate.
- Poplar shelter belts are dominant feature along lanes, roads and fields, providing strong sense of enclosure
- Loss of orchards to arable in places has led to decline in distinctive fruit belt character
- Tranquil, rural feel away from main roads creates a distinctive landscape with few detracting features
- Principal development impacts and detracting features are main road (B2000) with heavy traffic includes lorries servicing aggregate works and industrial estate, pylons to north, suburbanisation of village edges, farms plus increasing trend towards visually intrusive horticultural polytunnel frames

- A289 forms southern boundary of character area; to south west road bisects area of countryside separating Strood urban area from rural settlement at Higham; green buffer protects separate identity of Higham; green belt and rural lanes designations; views of countryside from road restricted by embankment and planting

Analysis

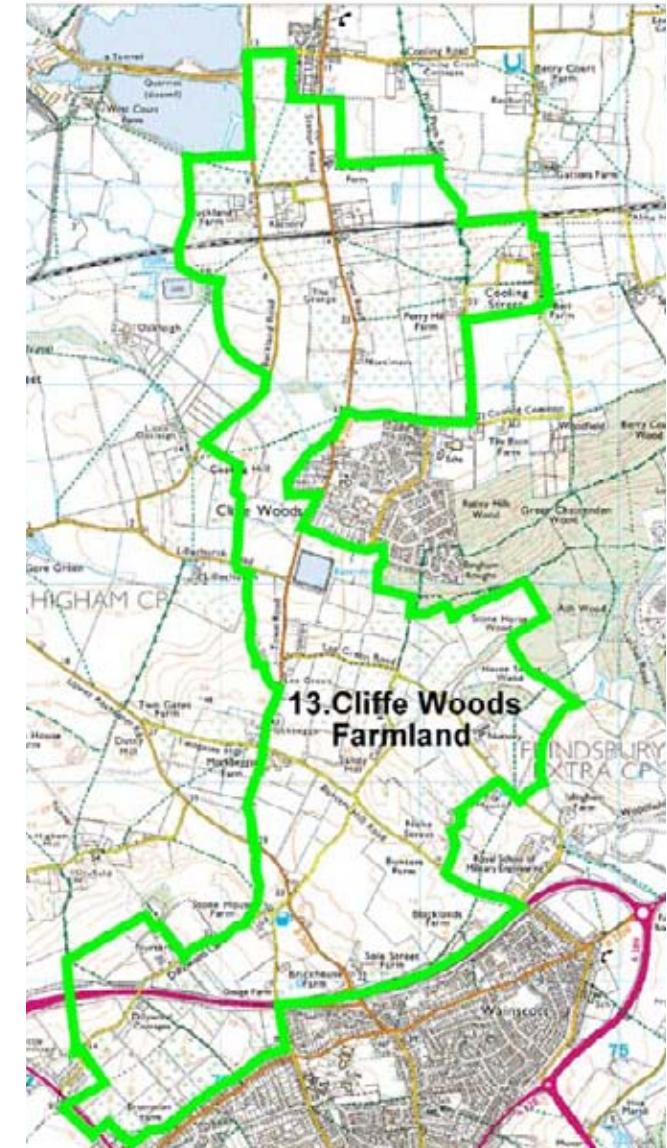
Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Coherent
Detracting features – some
Visual Unity – Intact
Ecological integrity – Moderate
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Strong/Moderate
Landform – Apparent
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Create



Issues

- Damage to character of poorly designed equine management features
- Loss of orchards and shelter belts to arable farming
- Visual intrusion and adverse landscape impacts of horticultural plastic mulches and polytunnel frames
- Heavy vehicular traffic (particularly HGVs) on main road from Wainscott to Cliffe (B2000)
- Coalescence and suburbanisation of urban and village settlement edges and loss of rural character and tranquillity – Higham, Cliffe, Cliffe Woods, Wainscott and Chattenden are all in relatively close proximity
- Wider GI planning links to neighbouring Gravesend
- Intrusiveness and adverse visual and landscape character impact of pylons/power lines

**Guidelines**

- Discourage trend towards equine management related activities – use mitigation measures where difficult to challenge
- Resist loss and encourage restoration and reinstatement of traditional orchards, with hedgerow and poplar shelter belt field boundaries.
- Seek to strengthen biodiversity value – increase woodland, hedgerows, wider field margins
- Resist development proposals that would threaten loss of rural and locally distinctive character; consider proposals in context of adjoining boundary with Gravesham and wider GI planning
- Discourage introduction of visually intrusive elements – e.g. trend towards plastic crop mulches, horticultural

al polytunnel frames and discordant roofing to barns, farm buildings etc

- Maintain separation and openness between rural settlements; resist coalescence
- Promote use of native species to reflect and reinforce rural character; resist suburbanisation of roadside edges to small settlements and villages – e.g. brick walls, close board fencing, conifers and ornamental planting
- Firmly resist proposals for new overhead power lines or cables and seek to under-ground cabling of existing overhead lines

General Note

- There remains a community aspiration to restore access between Wainscott and the wider countryside along Stonehorse Lane. This link was severed by the construction of the A289 northern relief road.

14 Chattenden Ridge

Landscape type: Isolated Wooded or Farmed Hills (R1)
Sub-types:Wooded hills and ridge (R1a)
Forms part of Hoo Peninsula Character area (KCA 2004)

Description

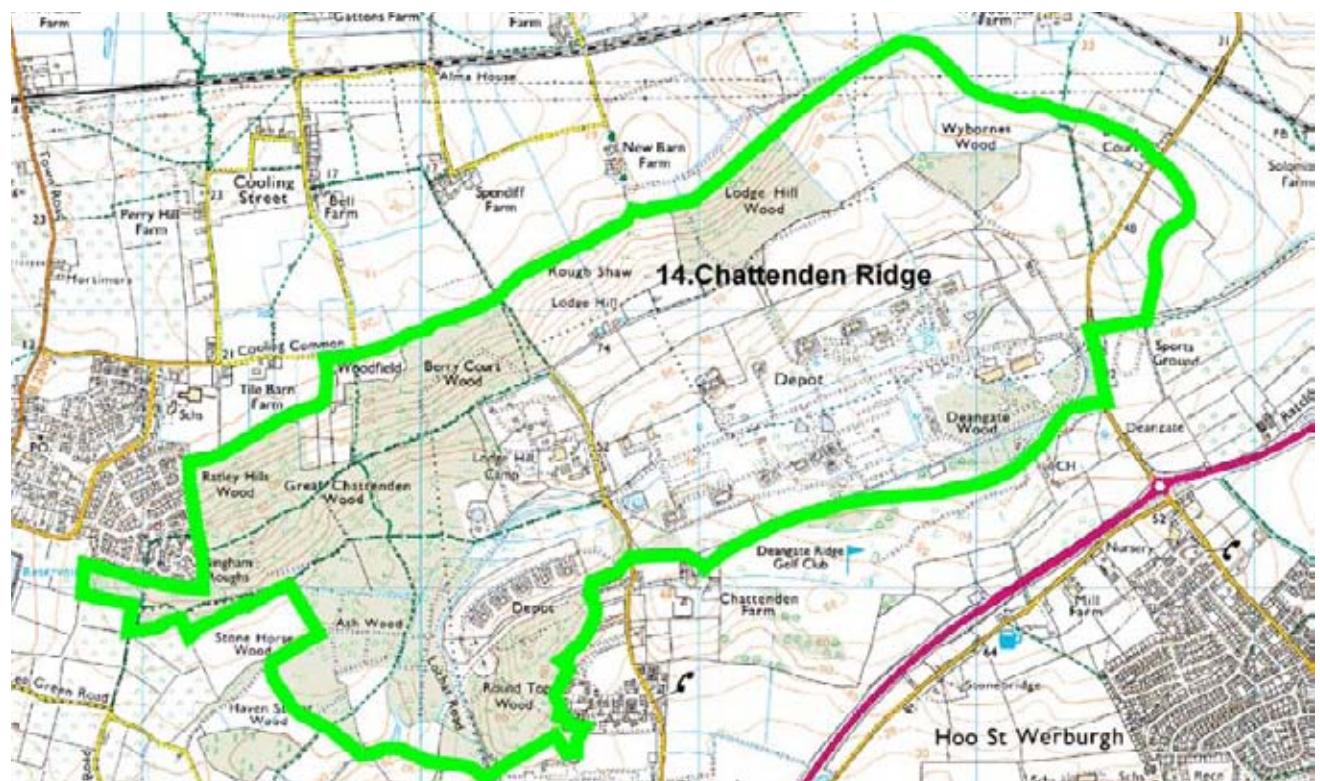
- Location – Wainscott and Cliffe Woods to west; High Halstow and Hoo St Werburgh to east
- Geology – London clay; small deposit of clay with flints to northern ridge
- Soils – Grade 3 in pockets; predominantly undefined
- Accessibility – good PROW network to west of Lodge Hill, no direct through link paths to east and south; one path forms north/south link towards High Halstow
- Designations – SSSI and Ancient Woodland; ALLI; Safeguarding of MOD Estate from ad hoc development
- Flood – n/a (2003)

Characteristics

- Prominent steep wooded ridge with open farmed area at eastern end, dropping down to broad valley bottom at Lodge Hill Training Camp; golf course at southern edge defined by block of woodland
- RSME camp with extensive network of buildings, earthworks, roads and areas of natural regeneration; includes ammunition depot to south west; includes some detracting features but retains distinctive character and contains many remote and tranquil areas
- Extensive woodland blocks particularly to west with high levels of protective designation, including SSSI and Ancient Woodland
- Visibility/views – dramatic views to north of Thames Estuary (particularly high points along Rough Shaw

and along north side of Berry Court Wood), also views south towards North Downs and east towards Kingsnorth; open views towards and back from High Halstow; ridge forms strong landscape feature in views from north

- Water features run east west through camp and lend distinctive character to site – contains network of streams and areas of standing water; streams flow south into Hogmarsh Valley and east towards Kingsnorth; includes man made deep water diving pool (operational facility of Defence Estates training area)



Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
 Detracting features – Some
 Visual Unity – Interrupted
 Ecological integrity – High
 Cultural integrity – Good/Variable
 Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Distinct
 Continuity – Historic
 Sense of place – Moderate
 Landform – Dominant
 Tree cover – Intermittent
 Visibility – High

Actions Conserve and Restore

Issues

- Lodge Hill identified in South East Plan as a major regeneration location
- Threat of loss to rural character, damage to landscape character and biodiversity from large new settlement and associated infrastructure works; siting of new and widened access road network within wider landscape
- Prominent ridge and extensive tracts of protected woodland form distinctive and highly visible landscape feature; existing natural water courses and water bodies help to define distinctive landscape character of area
- Need to preserve references to the former military nature of this landscape within planned new development
- Restricted accessibility within camp and in direct links to east and south; weak off road links between Lodge Hill and Hoo – relates largely to existing military use of land

- The role and function of buffer zones in protecting SSSI designation
- Particular sensitivity of area to north and east of training camp to development impacts; high sensitivity of ridge line to development impacts
- Threat of coalescence with settlements at Hoo, High Halstow, Cliffe Woods and Wainscott
- Managing sensitively continued presence of MOD at sites to western fringes (e.g. Ammunition store) and south of Islington Farm
- Integrating new development into a wider countryside and Green Infrastructure Planning framework

Guidelines

- Develop a planning policy framework for the redevelopment of Lodge Hill through the Local Development Framework
- Protect countryside from development that affects openness and diminishes rural character and distinctiveness; resist coalescence with neighbouring settlements
- Ensure that new development seeks to enhance the character and quality of the landscape and environment; that it is of the highest quality and that it is sensitively and appropriately located to protect from adverse visual impacts and effects on landscape character
- Ensure new development proposals reference and respect the historic military uses and character of this landscape
- Protect ridge lines and valley sides from development that harms landscape character and has adverse visual impact effects
- Consider role, function and extent of SSSI buffer zones – obtain independent ecological advice and consult with Natural England and Medway Council on issues relating to protection of SSSIs
- Ensure that existing natural water courses and water

bodies are integrated sensitively into new development proposals in order to preserve and enhance landscape character, biodiversity and the natural quality of the environment

- Ensure that views of settlement from surrounding open countryside protect and enhance the distinctive and predominantly rural landscape character of the area
- Seek to improve accessibility; these improvements should include enhanced off-road pedestrian and cycle links between Hoo, Lodge Hill, Chattenden, Upnor and Cliffe Woods
- Develop range of multi-functional land uses as part of GI improvements and ensure that the rural character of surrounding countryside is retained and enhanced
- Develop proposals for Lodge Hill and Chattenden in conjunction with Upnor Development Brief and other neighbouring development schemes
- Seek to co-ordinate and develop opportunities arising through neighbouring new developments as part of an integrated strategy for the wider countryside as defined within Medway Council's Green Infrastructure Planning Framework
- Seek to site any additional infrastructure required to service new development in a sensitive manner that respects landscape character and visual impacts

General Notes

- The main site identified for development is located within the broad valley floor and situated within a bowl; the area is reasonably well screened when viewed from the surrounding area, particularly in views from the south east; there is some inter-visibility from western edge of High Halstow
- Historic note. The topography of this area attracted the presence of the extensive late 19th century ordnance sites and arrangements for their defence through perimeter fortifications and AA gun sites of WWI and WW2 date

15 Deangate Ridge

Landscape type: Isolated Wooded or Farmed Hills (R1)
Sub-types: Open farmed hills and ridges (R1b)
Forms part of Hoo Peninsula Character area (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – separates Chattenden, Lodge Hill and Hoo St Werburgh
- Geology – London clay
- Soils – Grade 1 to east; Grade 3 to west
- Accessibility – one short PROW only – no off-road links between Hoo, Chattenden and Lodge Hill – area bisected by A228 dual carriageway
- Designations – ALLI; protected open space; rural lane
- Flood – n/a (2003)

Characteristics

- Elevated ridge, medium scale farmland with undulating arable fields
- Provides green buffer that separates and screens RSME Lodge Hill Camp from Hoo St Werburgh
- Distinctive tract of open countryside that provides attractive setting for A228 which bisects area; built development around fringes of Hoo and Chattenden settlements prominent in many views
- A228 as major transport artery through central Hoo Peninsula is detracting landscape feature
- Medium scale fields divided by hedgerows, introduce local distinctiveness and provide human scale to landscape
- Includes well used set of recreation facilities including golf course and outdoor sports; associated buildings
- Golf course area retains openness but with more manicured appearance compared with arable farmland;

scale reduced by tree clumps; blends reasonably – natural landform reduces prominence in open views

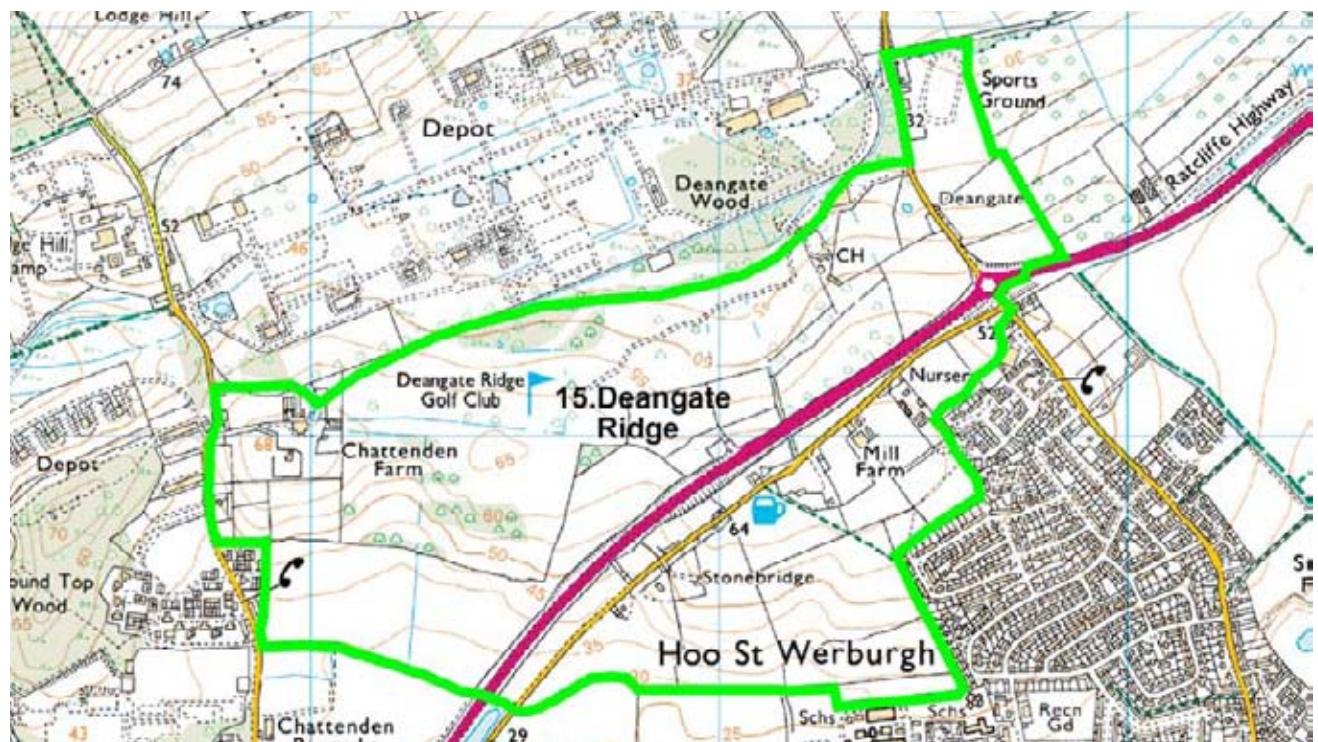
- Stream to south west corner links Chattenden and Hoo – see also Hoo Farmland character sheet

Cultural integrity – Variable/Poor
Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Moderate
Landform – Apparent
Tree cover – Open
Visibility – High

Actions Conserve and Restore



Issues

- Role of area as green buffer strip preventing coalescence between Lodge Hill and Hoo St Werburgh
- Role as attractive green backdrop and gateway from Medway urban areas into wider countryside
- Significance and condition of A228 as main transport artery out to Hoo Peninsula industry, settlements and wider countryside
- Sensitivity of ridges and slopes to new development and prominence in views along A228
- Loss of rural character threat from new settlement plans at Lodge Hill
- Weak footpath and cycleway network and links to neighbouring settlements

- Visually intrusive industrial land uses around edges of Hoo St Werburgh – particularly along Ratcliffe Highway
- Future role of Dux Court as Rural Lane within Lodge Hill development plans

Guidelines

- Protect countryside from development that affects openness and diminishes rural character and distinctiveness
- Relocate or screen land uses that harm local distinctiveness; resist the introduction of activities that damage distinctive rural character and have adverse effects when viewed from the surrounding countryside

- Strengthen 'gateway' value of this open farmed ridge along A228 as key route into Medway and out to Hoo Peninsula – introduce new planting along A228 and improve maintenance of existing planting
- Introduce new off-road pedestrian and cycle links between Hoo, Lodge Hill and Chattenden as part of GI improvements
- Develop proposals in conjunction with Upnor Development Brief and Chattenden AAP
- Strengthen and reinforce native hedgerow and tree planting at field boundaries and around the edges of settlements
- Consider impact of Lodge Hill development plans on character of surrounding rural lanes; seek to retain rural character within approach roads to new development



16 Hoo Farmland

Landscape type: Rural Fringe (T1)
Sub-type: Rural Fringe with industrial/urban influences (T1C)
Forms part of Hoo Peninsula Character area (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – open farmland between Chattenden and Hoo St Werburgh
- Geology – London Clay with head gravel and brick-earth deposits
- Soils – predominantly Grade I agricultural
- Accessibility – Saxon Shore way links southern side of Hoo to existing Chattenden settlement. No direct routes between Hoo Village and Lodge Hill/Chattenden Ridge area
- Designations – ALLI; Protected open space
- Flood – n/a (2003)

Characteristics

- Undulating arable farmland with large open fields; fragmented hedgerow network and sparse tree cover
- Fragmented landscape – Infrastructure (A228 and Ratcliffe Highway) prominent in views; with ribbon development at Broad Street detracting from rural character and coherence
- Long open views from elevated ground; includes Kingsnorth and Grain Industrial areas
- Stream hidden feature; flows from Chattenden to Hoo St Werburgh along route of old tramway
- Saxon Shore Way defines southern edge of character area and provides strong east/west footpath connection

Analysis

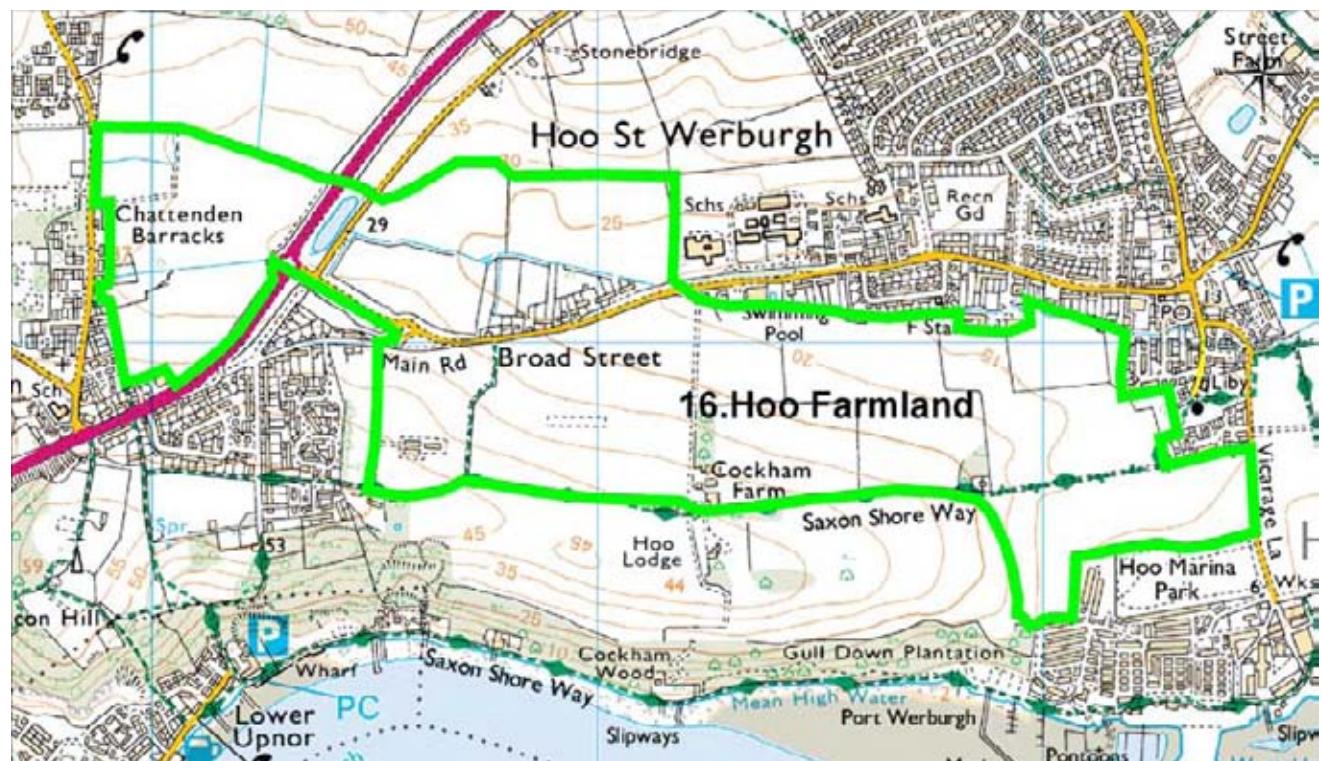
Condition Poor

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Many
Visual Unity – Interrupted/Fragmented
Ecological integrity – Low
Cultural integrity – Poor
Functional integrity – Low

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Moderate
Landform – Apparent
Tree cover – Open
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Restore and create



Issues

- Barren denuded quality of landscape; weak hedgerow/tree framework; low biodiversity value
- Visual impact of settlements, industry and roads from countryside; loss of rural character and tranquillity; poorly treated edges to settlements and industrial areas
- Rural fringe coalescence pressures – between Hoo St Werburgh, Chattenden and Marina
- Poor sense of arrival at Hoo Village on approach roads (especially from A228)

Guidelines

- Strengthen biodiversity value and recreate historic features – e.g. woodland blocks (Broad Street Wood lost to farmland), historic field pattern, hedgerows, wider field margins
- Resist development proposals that would threaten rural character, enhanced biodiversity value, tranquillity and distinctive sense of place
- Maintain separation and openness between rural settlements
- Seek to screen adverse views – with hedgerow and woodland block planting
- Introduce stronger field boundary planting, particularly along Saxon Shore Way
- Improve ‘gateway’ treatment to Hoo Village; seek enhanced entrance points to reinforce and mark village character

General Note

- Upper route of SSW may become main route, if shoreline route cannot be promoted safely



17 Cockham Farm Ridge

Landscape type: Isolated wooded or farmed hills (R1)
Sub-types: Wooded hills and ridges (R1a) and open farmed hills and ridges (R1b)
Forms part of Hoo Peninsula Character area (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – predominantly wooded ridge along northern shore of Medway estuary
- Geology – London Clay with head deposits + landslip along estuary
- Soils – Grade 3 + band of Grade 1 to north
- Accessibility – Good network but potential to improve – Saxon Shore way to northern edge and estuary at low tide; network of north/south paths link Chattenden and Upnor
- Designations – SSSI (Tower Hill to Cockham Wood); Ancient woodland; undeveloped coast; ALLI, SAM's; Protected Open Space
- Flood – tidal erosion to SSSI woodland along shoreline; SMP policy E4 (Kingsnorth Power Station to Cockham Wood) of 'Managed realignment with localised hold the line' may affect shoreline paths including Saxon Shore Way.

Characteristics

- Distinctive and prominent wooded ridge; dense broad leaved to south at Cockham Wood and Gull Down Plantation and to west at Beacon Hill; accessible areas well used by local community
- Undulating large, open arable farmland on gently sloping valley sides to north east with fragmented hedgerow network; poor tree cover; conifer groupings around farmhouses



- Steep wooded ridge along river edge an unusual and distinctive feature; provides strong elevated green backdrop to settlement at Lower Upnor and distinctive estuary edge and setting in views across Medway estuary from southern shoreline and urban areas; includes heritage features along shoreline
- Elevated woodland ridge also prominent and distinctive in views from north; with farmland provides distinctive setting; separating and strengthening identity of settlements at Hoo St Werburgh, Chattenden and Upnor
- Open views from Saxon Shore Way northwards towards Hoo St Werburgh; Kingsnorth Power Station prominent in views to east
- Includes scheduled monuments at Cockham Wood Fort and Beacon Hill (see General Notes section).

Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
 Detracting features – Some
 Visual Unity – Interrupted
 Ecological integrity – Moderate
 Cultural integrity – Variable
 Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Distinct
 Continuity – Historic
 Sense of place – Moderate
 Landform – Dominant/Apparent
 Tree cover – Enclosed/Open
 Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Restore

Issues

- Denuded quality of farmland to north – weak hedge-row and tree cover; poor biodiversity
- Sensitivity and prominence of woodland as green backdrop in views from river and southern bank of River Medway
- Balancing improved access with protection of woodland from rural fringe intrusions and over use
- Erosion of estuary shoreline – loss of woodland and loss of estuary path network between Upnor, Hoo, Kingsnorth and Grain
- Area includes historic remains (often in poor state of repair) reflecting military past
- Management of SSSI – pressures of illegal access in woodland
- Importance of retaining and enhancing distinctive rural character around fringes of settlement at Upnor
- Poor accessibility along shoreline at low tide

Guidelines

- Currently two distinctive character areas (woodland and open farmland); strengthen character of farmland with new woodland planting to upper slopes
- Strengthen field boundary planting, particularly along Saxon Shore way; restore historic field pattern, hedgerows, wider field margins; plant woodland copses and shaws
- Protect and enhance protected woodland areas; observe terms of SSSI management agreement
- Seek to preserve record of past military uses within new development proposals; balance this aspiration with biodiversity, access and other practical considerations
- Seek opportunities to improve accessibility along shoreline; explore scope for permissive path through Cockham Wood to better manage woodland access; consider GI planning and current Lower Upnor access and public realm improvement projects within all new development schemes

General Notes

- Cockham Wood Fort is a rare 17th century fort built in the aftermath of the 1667 Dutch raid as part of a defensive system that included the fort at Gillingham. The long distance footpath provides access along the foreshore but the ruins are vulnerable to tidal erosion. This fort requires a management solution
- Beacon Hill includes another scheduled monument which is part of the military remains here. The historic character of area is becoming obscured by tree planting i.e. the beacon mound is no longer very prominent. The wireless station is derelict and undesigned. There was a WWI AA gun site at this land to which the blockhouse on the beacon mound relates. Twin site to the well preserved example at Chattenden Ridge.



18 Hogmarsh Valley

Landscape type: Urban Fringe (T2)
Sub-types: Urban fringe with urban/industrial influences (T2b)
Forms part of Hoo Peninsula Character area (KCA 2004)

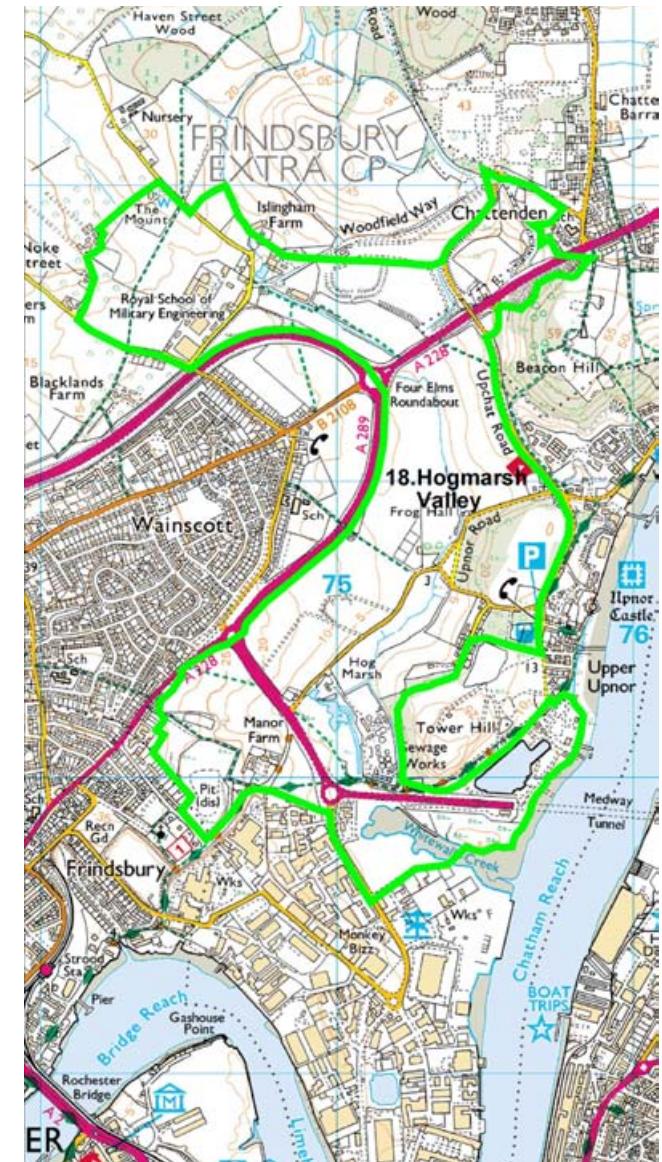
Description

- Location – gently rising land from Whitehall Creek (Lower Hogmarsh Valley) to Wainscott and edges of Chattenden (Upper Hogmarsh Valley)
- Geology – Upper Chalk and Thanet beds with Head Brick earth deposits
- Soils – Grades 1 and 3
- Accessibility – Weak north/south footpath links between Medway City Estate and Wainscott / Chattenden. Better links between Frindsbury, Wainscott and Upnor
- Designations – ALLI; Protected open space; MOD Estate, Chattenden – safeguarding area
- Flood – large area situated within boundary of tidal flood area (2003)



Characteristics

- Broad valley with open, gently rolling arable farmland and distinctive elevated woodland backdrops – at Tower Hill, Beacon Hill and Chattenden Ridge; landscape forms a green buffer, a distinctive gateway and green backdrop to Medway Towns
- Hogmarsh stream runs along valley floor and includes small pockets of marshland; area predominantly situated within tidal flood zone and has flood alleviation/storage potential; Whitewall Creek remains a distinctive natural feature but distinctiveness eroded by surrounding urban infrastructure
- Provides a distinctive and attractive setting for Manor Farm and Upnor Conservation areas
- Detracting features include: Transport corridor (A289); eastern edges of urban settlement at Wainscott; sewage treatment works and military infrastructure (RSME sites at Wainscott and Tower Hill – Gundolph pool)
- Distinctive views across river towards Chatham Historic Dockyard and covered slips; development at Medway City Estate is a detracting feature in many views from lower ground
- Retains rural character but coherence and overall integrity disrupted by urban fringe and military infrastructure land uses; unsympathetic boundary treatment features and neglected pockets of land
- Pockets of tranquillity at Islingham Farm; Manor Farm and Frindsbury Barn (Grade I listed) and around fringes of Upper Upnor



Analysis

Condition Poor

Pattern of elements – Variable
 Detracting features – Many
 Visual Unity – Fragmented
 Ecological integrity – Moderate
 Cultural integrity – Variable
 Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
 Continuity – Historic
 Sense of place – Moderate
 Landform – Apparent
 Tree cover – Intermittent
 Visibility – Moderate

Actions Restore and Create

Issues

- Green backdrop as attractive setting for Medway urban edges and surrounding settlements with potential to create major gateway and strengthen positive image; role as green buffer separating urban and village settlements at Medway City Estate, Frindsbury, Wainscott, the Upnors and Chattenden; role of A289 (and A228) as major connecting transport arteries through Hogmarsh Valley
- Role and benefits of formulating and implementing Green infrastructure (GI) framework
- New development plans – ‘Park and Ride’ at Whitewall Creek; Medway City Estate; Frindsbury Barn and Frindsbury Pit; RSME land uses; new development at Upnor and Chattenden
- Urban fringe land uses and infrastructure pressures; neglect and weak landscape structure along transport corridors; edges of urban fringe; RSME sites; sewage treatment works; Whitewall Creek

- Protection of wooded and open farmed ridges, hills and slopes to north and east from intrusive development
- Role of lower Hogmarsh Valley as potential flood alleviation resource
- Medway City Estate development as detracting component in views to south towards Rochester and Chatham

Guidelines

- Seek to strengthen landscape structure by appropriately sited tree and hedgerow planting particularly alongside roads; soften and screen urban fringes; seek to retain views of wider landscape and screen detracting features
- Seek to realise GI vision of multi-functional landscape providing improved accessibility of urban population into countryside; improved links between settlements; recreational value and health benefits; flood alleviation and storage; create a spatial strategy that encapsulates a realisable vision for this valley working with landowners, stakeholders and partners
- Enhance role of Hogmarsh Stream as distinctive landscape feature and potential off-road route from town into countryside; linking Medway City Estate, Chattenden and wider countryside
- Explore access, biodiversity, landscape enhancement and flood alleviation opportunities for Lower Hogmarsh Valley, working in partnership with EA, landowners and other stakeholders
- Seek to protect and repair fragmented landscape; strengthen field pattern network, hedgerows and hedgerow trees, wider field margins; plant woodland copses and shaws
- Realise ‘gateway’ value of A289 along full extent, particularly at key arrival nodes – e.g. Four Elms and Whitewall Creek roundabouts; strengthen and reinforce landscape structure with landscape enhance-

ments; ‘gap up’ hedgerows and improve boundary treatments where inappropriate

- Seek where possible to screen RSME sites, Sewage Treatment Works and views of Medway City Estate to mitigate against adverse landscape impacts; seek enhancements that provide greater respect for locally distinctive landscape character and overall landscape quality in longer term plans for these areas
- Ensure that future development plans for this area respect landscape context; protect openness and retain views of prominent green woodland backdrop; enhance setting of Whitewall Creek as distinctive landscape feature
- Protect and enhance distinctive landscape setting for Frindsbury Barn and surroundings as viewed from A289 and wider countryside; seek to unlock value from Frindsbury Pit as a natural feature in the landscape; area to north west of disused pit subject to Village Green proposal
- Protect woodland surround, separation and natural rural setting of the Upnors

General Notes

- Frindsbury Barn – Fire damaged barn is major component of medieval manorial complex at Frindsbury and a building at significant risk. The adjacent quarry is a discordant feature in relation to this historic landscape. Enabling development is likely to be part of solution to future of barn and other buildings.
- RSME’s pontooning establishment at Gundulph pool includes location on Upnor hard of 1803 pontoon bridge. This was installed to make reconstruction of Chatham Lines on other bank into their current format and tenable as a *tete de pont* or bridgehead

19 Bald Top Hill

Landscape type: Isolated Wooded or Farmed Hills (R1)
Sub-types: Open farmed hills and ridges (R1b)
Forms part of Hoo Peninsula Character area (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – due north of Four Elms roundabout
- Geology – London clay and Lambeth group
- Soils – predominantly Grade 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – no designated paths; path network to west links Wainscott to Chattenden Ridge
- Designations – includes ALLI; Safeguarding of MOD Estate, Chattenden from ad hoc development
- Flood – n/a (2003)

Characteristics

- Prominent farmed hill; distinctive open pastoral landscape; strong feature in views from A289 and Wainscott
- Very tranquil, unspoilt and well tended space with strongly rural character to north and west slopes; retains remoteness but with some urban influence to south and east
- Views – settlement and roads to south; long distance views to North Downs; Chattenden Ridge and Round Top Hill to north; long distance views to Essex marshes and Tilbury Power Station
- Some remnant hedgerows and groups of trees on slopes but crown of hill very open and exposed (links to name); blocks of scrub to lower slopes along Woodfield Way
- Stream to lower west and eastern slopes links into Hogmarsh Valley stream; informally lined with trees to west provides distinctive character to lower slopes

Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Coherent
Detracting features – Few
Visual Unity – Intact
Ecological integrity – Moderate
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Moderate
Landform – Dominant
Tree cover – Open
Visibility – High

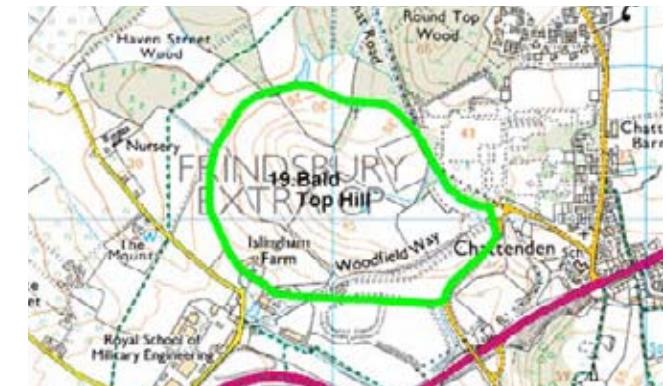
Actions Conserve and Restore

Issues

- High sensitivity to any form of development – highly visible and prominent in views from A289 and Wainscott
- Value of distinctive rural character so close to urban areas
- Accessibility and views – landmark gateway site with potential strategic viewpoint and opportunities to link to PROW network
- Impact of development plans for MOD sites in surrounding area
- Screening of existing military areas

Guidelines

- Improve screening to military areas – buildings and training areas



- Protect open and unspoilt character – resist any form of development to slopes and ridge that is intrusive in any way, harms rural character and affects open unrestricted views
- Strengthen 'gateway' value of this distinctive hill along A289 as key arrival route into Medway
- Seek to develop accessible footpath link to upper slopes and open up dramatic views of Medway urban areas and countryside; offers potential links to Upnor as part of Lodge Hill development plans
- Strengthen woodland edge to upper slopes as viewed from A289 and Lower Hogmarsh Valley



20 Tower Hill

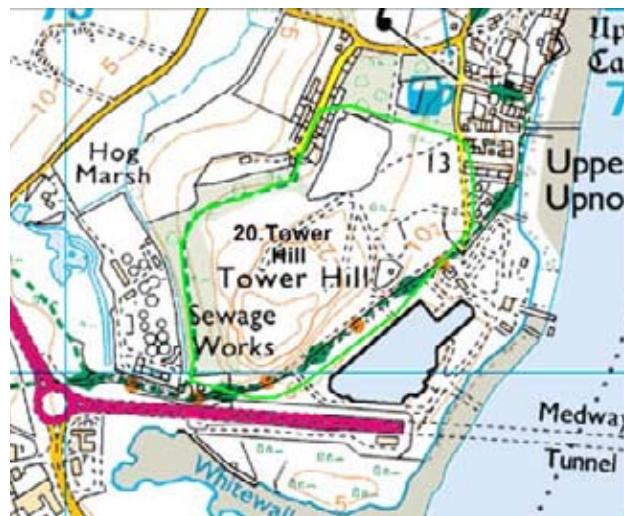
Landscape type: Isolated Wooded or Farmed Hills (R1)
Sub-types :Wooded hills and ridge (R1a)
Forms part of Hoo Peninsula Character area (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – between Upper Upnor and Medway City Estate
- Geology – Upper Chalk and Thanet beds
- Soils – Grade 3 and undefined
- Accessibility – good path network to lower slopes links urban areas to Upnor; access to river edge and upper slopes restricted by MOD uses
- Designations – SSSI; ALLI
- Flood – n/a (2003)

Characteristics

- Prominent wooded hill; naturally regenerating woodland to lower slopes with cleared upper slopes (under MOD control – military training uses)*
- Sewage Works in floodplain on western side with links to Hogmarsh Stream
- Intimate and tranquil away from infrastructure with good pedestrian and cycle connections towards Upnor
- Prominent wooded backdrop in views from Lower Hogmarsh Valley and Medway estuary; vegetation and access limitations restrict views out to surrounding areas
- Predominantly urban fringe in character and surrounded by detracting features; road corridor (A289); Medway City Estate; Sewage treatment works; RSME site to south east (Gundolph pool)
- Includes unsympathetic boundary treatments and neglected pockets of land



Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Coherent
Detracting features – Some
Visual Unity – Interrupted
Ecological integrity – Moderate
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic/Recent
Sense of place – Moderate
Landform – Dominant
Tree cover – Enclosed
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Create

Issues

- Prominence in long distance views from Hogmarsh Valley and Estuary
- MOD strategic development plans for site and long term management proposals for woodland/scrub areas
- Accessibility and views – strategic viewpoint with potential to increase access to upper slopes; value as gateway
- Development plans for surrounding area – Park and Ride at Whitewall Creek; Medway City Estate; Frindsbury Barn; RSME land uses; new development at Upnor and Chattenden

Guidelines

- Improve boundary treatment of sewage works and RSME sites using planting to soften and screen views; protect and repair fragmented landscape
- Protect wooded hills and slopes from intrusive development that harms rural character
- Seek to develop accessible pedestrian link to upper slopes and open up views of Medway urban areas and countryside

General Notes

- Historic military uses – as high spot near dockyard upper slopes were used for siting guns in 1803 and 1939-45 programmes of defence



North Kent Fruit Belt

Principal characteristics

- A predominantly rural agricultural landscape characterised by a complex pattern of orchards, shelter belts, fields of arable, pasture and horticultural crops; divided by small blocks of woodland; gently rolling landform to south of A2 punctuated by two north/south valley systems; landform flatter to north of A2 towards marshes
- A relatively small part of this distinctive area of countryside is located within Medway; the larger part stretching east towards Faversham is within the boundaries of Swale Borough Council; area within Medway contains a mixture of transitional (urban and rural fringe) and rural landscape types
- Orchards have been characteristic feature of this area since the 18th Century; loss of traditional orchards and increasing trend towards urban-rural fringe activities – particularly equine and amenity related; A2 (formerly Watling Street) has a localised urbanising effect
- Open countryside provides a strong and distinctive buffer along northern edge for the Medway Marshes SSSI; maintains and strengthens green corridor and wildlife links from urban areas into countryside; open countryside to east resists pressure of settlement coalescence between Rainham and Sittingbourne
- Area has become partially fragmented by urban fringe influences but retains an essentially rural character

Principal issues

- Pressures affecting local distinctiveness and rural character in urban fringe areas include various amenity uses, waste tips, neglected fields and hedgerows, creeping suburbanisation along roads and at edges of settlements, loss of orchards and shelter belts; also strong trend towards equine-related land uses; result has been increasing landscape fragmentation and overall decline in landscape condition, diversity and local distinctiveness
- Development pressure could lead to gradual coalescence of settlements between Rainham and Sittingbourne; to loss of SSSI buffer edge and green corridor/wildlife links between urban areas and countryside
- Need to seize opportunity to reverse decline in landscape quality, condition and local distinctiveness through landscape restoration and enhancements; linked where possible to targeted funding regimes (e.g. agri-environment schemes); potential to reverse trend towards urban fringe fragmentation by taking integrated approach towards strengthening coherence of rural character
- Access opportunities from urban areas into countryside; opportunity to strengthen links between estuary and North Kent fruit belt; consideration of context of wider GI framework along boundary with Swale

21 Lower Rainham Farmland

Landscape type: Urban Fringe (T2)

Sub-types: Urban fringe with urban/industrial influences (T2b)

Forms part of North Kent Fruit Belt Character area (KCA 2004)

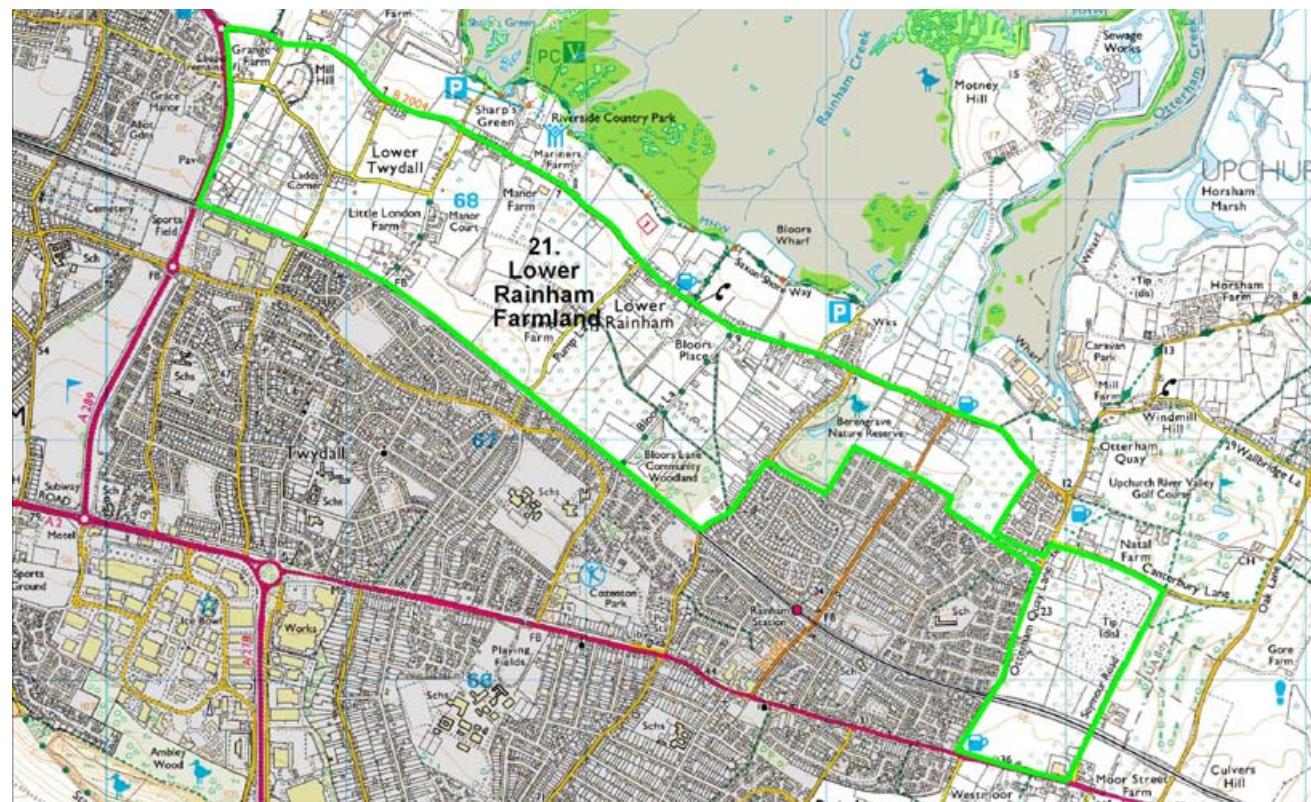
Description

- Location – Lower Rainham Road (B2004) and Riverside Marshes/Country Park to north; railway line and Twydall to south; Gillingham to west; Lower Rainham and countryside to east
- Geology – Upper Chalk and Thanet Beds (solid) with head deposits
- Soils – Predominantly Grade I
- Accessibility – footpath network fragmented; no continuous, direct link between Grange Farm and Berengrave Nature Reserve; rail line causes severance and weakens links into urban areas to south
- Designations – ALLI; 2 no. Conservation areas; 2 no. Rural lanes; 1 no. community woodland; Local Nature reserve
- Flood – Berengrave area at risk from tidal flooding (2003)

Characteristics

- Flat, small to medium scale mixed farmland – orchards, arable, rough grazing
- Neglected pockets of land and busy road gives transitional urban fringe character to area; gradual trend towards suburbanisation (e.g. boundary features) in some localised areas
- Some well managed areas of orchard, shelterbelt, farm buildings, cottages and distinctive rural hedgebanks
- Tranquil in many parts despite enclosure by road to north and rail to south

- Poor accessibility – east/west and north/south links to urban areas
- Recent urban extension to north west of Otterham Quay Lane now divides this character area and diminishes coherence; area to east beyond Rainham has particularly detracting urban and industrial features – including industrial estate, tip with vents and railway line; golf course to north along Swale boundary
- Includes small conservation areas/hamlets at Lower Rainham and Lower Twydall



Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
 Detracting features – Some
 Visual Unity – Interrupted
 Ecological integrity – Moderate
 Cultural integrity – Variable
 Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
 Continuity – Historic
 Sense of place – Moderate
 Landform – Apparent
 Tree cover – Intermittent
 Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Create

Issues

- Value of area as green corridor linking community in urban areas to countryside and role as extended buffer to Country Park and Natura 2000/Ramsar protected coastline
- Consideration of the integral links between this character area and the Riverside Marshes character area
- Potential to restore traditional orchards; strengthen and enhance biodiversity opportunities; introduce more positive land management systems; respect for historic characteristics (see General Notes)
- Poor condition of some farmland areas, tendency towards fragmentation and trend towards urban fringe activities and weakened coherence
- Grade I agricultural soil classification
- Threat of expansion to urban edges on south and west sides, along with gradual, pervasive erosion of rural character



Guidelines

- Restore neglected and abandoned fields to appropriate and sensitive rural land uses – e.g. orchard, woodland, pasture and arable farming; seek to reverse decline in condition of landscape and reinforce rural characteristics
- Improve east/west footpath links between Gillingham and open countryside and footpath links from Twydall
- Introduce regular management of hedgerow boundaries (particularly along rural lanes)
- Discourage conifer planting and other forms of creeping suburbanisation – e.g. inappropriate fencing, gates, ornamental planting
- Resist further built development and introduce more positive landscape management systems
- Consider this area integrally with Riverside Marshes character area for its integral value as a green buffer, wildlife corridor and link to wider countryside

General Notes

- There is considerable variation in the condition of this character area, with some pockets in serious decline and other well managed and cared for areas; area between Lower Rainham and Lower Twydall in generally good condition with urban influences less apparent; area to the east beyond the Rainham urban extension in particularly poor condition with urban fringe and amenity land uses detracting from rural character. Area has high levels of visibility along coastline; inland areas more secluded and screened from views
- There are a number of benefits attached to this area retaining its essentially rural character. It provides a valuable green buffer separating the built up areas of Twydall and Rainham from valuable and internationally protected wildlife sites along Medway estuary; it offers openness and easy access to a countryside area for an extensive urban population; it improves the setting of the A289 along its eastern boundary and provides attractive open views across the marshes and farmland from the railway line and main road; it also improves the setting of the Lower Rainham and Twydall Conservation areas; along with the Riverside Marshes area it provides a distinctive green backdrop when viewed from the Medway estuary
- Historic note. This area has potential for greater understanding of how the marshes and farmland operated as a system and what impact this had for landscape character and the location of settlements. Grange Farm is a major medieval moated site and also had significant Roman archaeology. Along this edge we can anticipate a series of Roman if not earlier estates that are located on creeks between the river and the road network. Important to see movement by water as part of the landscape organisation.

22 Moor Street Farmland

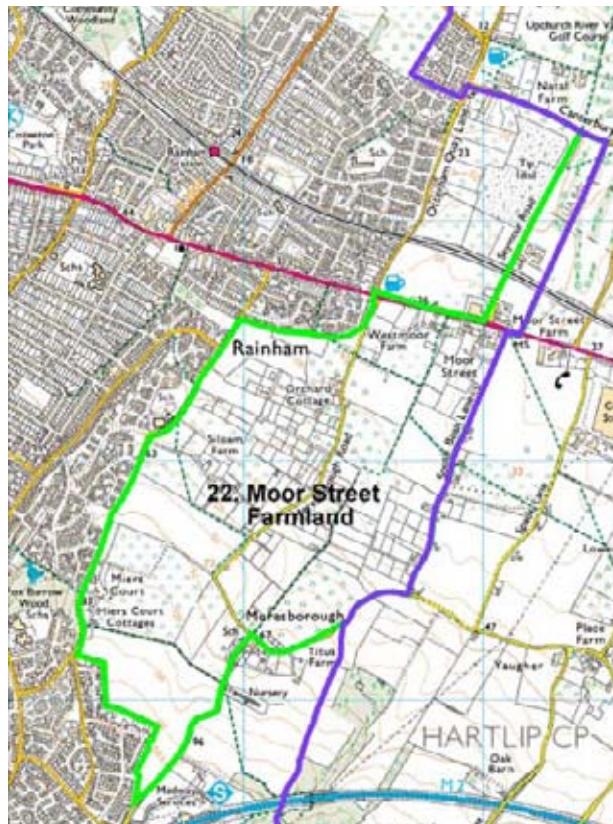
Landscape type: Flat or undulating mixed farmland (R5)
Sub-types: Orchards and mixed farmland (R5a)
Forms part of North Kent Fruit Belt Character area
(KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – countryside to east of Rainham
- Geology – Upper Chalk and Thanet Beds with head, head brickearth and clay with flints deposits
- Soils – Predominantly Grade I
- Accessibility – small scale footpath network links rural settlements effectively
- Designations – ALLI; 2 no. Conservation areas; 1 no. Rural lane
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

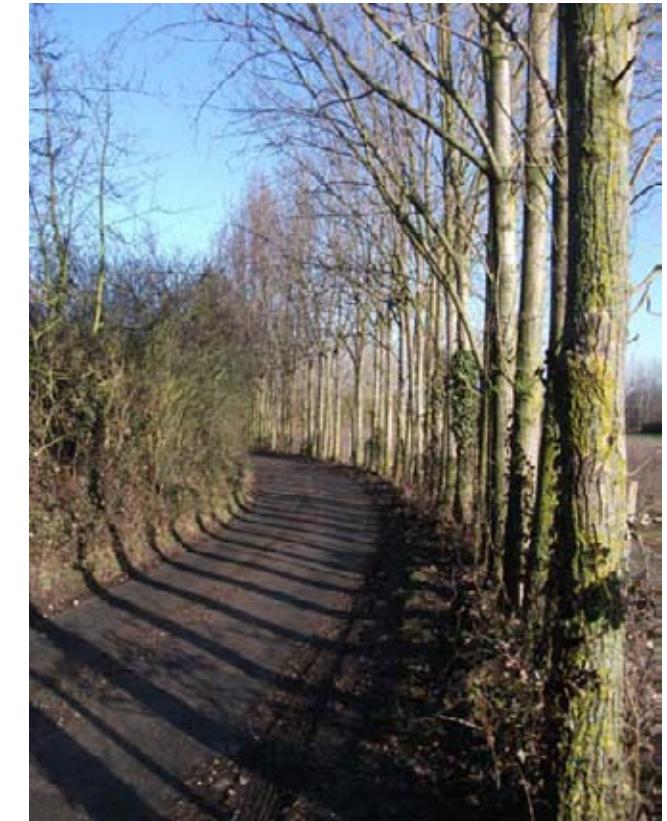
- Undulating landscape of orchards and arable farmland
- Diverse small to medium scale mixed farmland enclosed with shelter belts and hedges; fields with lost shelter belts more open with longer views
- Trend away from traditional orchards to horse paddocks and arable farming has led to decline in traditional field pattern
- Detracting features – particularly associated with the insensitive introduction of equine related activities – includes lotted fields, fencing, equipment, materials, degraded hedges, conifer belts; churned-up road edges
- Good accessibility linking small settlements and urban edges



Analysis

Condition Poor

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Many
Visual Unity – Interrupted/Fragmented
Ecological integrity – Low
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Moderate



Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Moderate
Landform – Insignificant
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Restore and Create

Issues

- Decline in landscape condition and coherence associated with urban fringe pressures and changes in land use – especially towards equine related uses
- Threat of urban expansion from west and gradual, pervasive erosion of rural character through inappropriate land uses
- Threat of settlement coalescence between Rainham and Sittingbourne urban areas
- Loss of traditional orchards, hedgerows and shelter belts; reversion to arable farmland and equine related uses – distinctive character threatened
- Damage to road verges, signage clutter and litter; roads used as 'rat runs'
- Weak legibility means poor understanding of how to access and visit this area of countryside – provides easy links to Queeendown Warren (south of M2)
- Grade I agricultural soil classification

Guidelines

- Discourage trend towards equine related land uses; enforce sensitive management and screening of existing equine related activities; enforce rurally sensitive boundary treatments
- Restore orchards, shelter belts and hedgerows where opportunity arises
- Seek opportunities to strengthen biodiversity value of countryside – wider field margins, hedgerows etc.
- Create strategically located and well surfaced passing places to reduce damage and wear to road verges
- Manage urban fringe activities – including controls on signage, fly-tipping and regular litter collections
- Seek opportunities to improve legibility and increase understanding and valuing of countryside in this area; improve links and increase awareness of North Downs landscape (south of M2)

General Notes

The larger eastern section of this character area is located within the administrative boundaries of Swale Borough Council. Detailed boundaries within this larger area have not been verified but cross border boundaries are broadly consistent with Newington and Upchurch/Lower Halstow Fruit belt character areas (Swale LCA 2005). It is worth noting that the KTGLA and Swale LCA divides the area to the north and south of the A2 between Moor Street and Newington into two separate character areas but with the same landscape type category (Orchards and Mixed Farmland). Very little of the area to the north of the A2 is within Medway. It would not therefore justify a separate character area study. While not disputing this distinction, these two areas have been merged into one for the purposes of this study.



23 Meresborough Farmland

Landscape type: Flat or undulating open arable farmland (R6)
Sub-types: Flat or undulating arable farmland (R6a)
Forms part of North Kent Fruit Belt Character area (KCA 2004); northern part of Hartlip Downs character area (Swale LCA 2005)

Description

- Location – countryside to south of Rainham and east of Wigmore and Park Wood; M2 motorway defines southern boundary
- Geology – Upper Chalk (solid) with head deposits; forms part of North Downs dip slope
- Soils – Grades 1 and 2 agricultural
- Accessibility – 1 no. north/south footpath links Meresborough with Queendown Warren
- Designations – ALLI; 1 no. Conservation area; 1 no. Rural lane; Ancient Woodland; SNCI
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Undulating arable farmland with medium to large scale fields; fragmented network of hedgerows and shelter belts
- Narrow ancient woodland strip at Reeds Shaw links to south across motorway to larger woodland block at Yaughter Woods
- Detracting features include poles, mast, old fences and M2 services to southern boundary
- Good PROW north/south accessibility linking settlements, urban edges and wider countryside
- Dramatic open views of Medway Estuary from higher ground

Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Some
Visual Unity – Interrupted/Fragmented
Ecological integrity – Low
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity Moderate

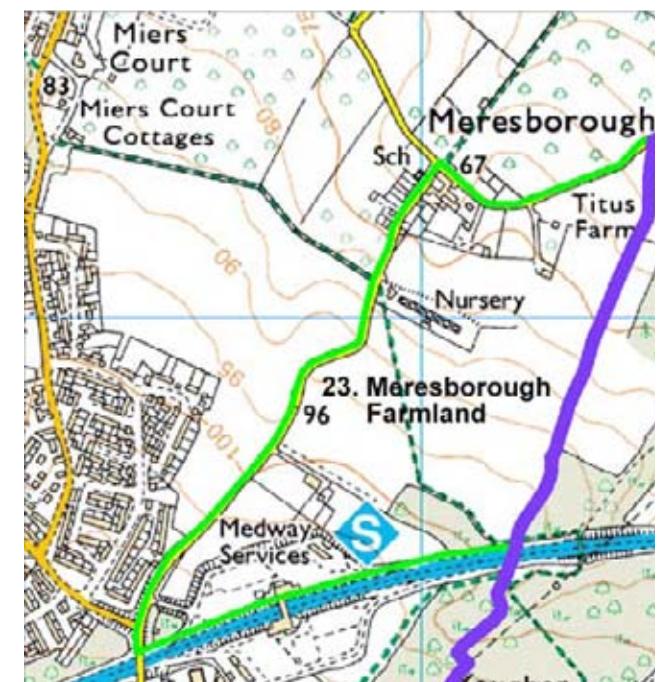
Distinctiveness – Indistinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Moderate
Landform – Insignificant
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Create



Issues

- Intensification of agricultural practices has led to enlarged fields and hedgerow fragmentation
- Grade 1 and 2 agricultural soil classification
- Threat of development intrusion into countryside from urban edges to west
- Wear and tear to road verges
- Threat of settlement coalescence between Rainham and Sittingbourne urban areas
- Links to Kent Downs AONB



Guidelines

- Seek opportunities to reinforce landscape structure and biodiversity value, especially in localised, denuded and open areas;
- Seek to strengthen legibility and links to Kent Downs AONB
- Restore fragmented hedgerows and shelter belts;
- Create strategically located and well surfaced passing places to reduce damage and wear to road verges
- Manage urban fringe activities – including controls on signage, fly-tipping and regular litter collections

General Notes

- Eastern section of this character area located within administrative boundaries of Swale District Council. Detailed boundaries within this area not verified but cross border boundaries broadly consistent with Hartlip Downs character area (Swale LCA 2005); area sits within North Kent Fruit Belt Character area (see KCA 2004)
- Note policy KTG1(x) of the South East Plan, which seeks to avoid coalescence with adjoining settlements to the east of Medway and the west of Sittingbourne.





Capstone and Horsted Valleys

Principal characteristics

Capstone

- Landscape falls into two distinct types; dramatic scarp and valley forms to north; softer rolling open plateau landscape to centre; two valleys bound central plateau to east and west; southern section within Maidstone
- Provides a distinctive natural landscape setting for Capstone Farm Country Park (situated at the heart of the area) and contributes to the setting of the Kent Downs AONB (situated to the south of the M2)
- Forms a green wedge linking urban communities into the wider countryside and the North Downs; connects into the heart of Medway's urban areas with potential for improved links towards the Great Lines Heritage Park (GLHP)
- Valuable semi-rural open space in close proximity to densely populated urban communities offers significant health and recreational benefits
- Provides distinctive edge to urban areas and prevents coalescence of Lordswood/Princes Park and Hempstead
- Remnant chalk grassland on steep slopes to north leads to smaller fields of arable and pasture with larger arable units in southern section
- High biodiversity value within woodlands and chalk scarp slopes; provides valuable wildlife corridor
- Blocks of deciduous woodland (predominantly Ancient Woodland) are distinct feature particularly on shallower slopes and plateau landform; woodlands provide valuable containment for open arable farmland

- Area retains distinctly rural character and strong sense of overall coherence despite urban settlements on eastern and western flanks
- Detracting features include ski slope, car parks; waste recycling/landfill site, narrow lanes with heavy 'rat-run' traffic uses; poor pedestrian and cycle accessibility; development expansion at Capstone; poor quality equine-related facilities

Horsted

- A narrow steep sided valley with chalk grassland slopes; includes two scheduled Napoleonic Forts, golf course, playing fields, allotments; urban and industrial land use pressures at fringes
- Forms a green wedge from urban areas into countryside to south west; Rochester airport open but inaccessible and severs direct connections towards North Downs
- Area between Fort Horsted and Walderslade Lane proposed as Country Park; developed along flanks but increasingly rural and tranquil towards south west
- Attractive open views from upper slopes of valley, towards Darland Banks and back towards Horsted
- An increasingly fragmented landscape threatened with loss of overall coherence by further development

Principal issues

- Capstone and Horsted Valleys are both under increasing development pressure for expansion of urban areas into open countryside; both areas are valuable green wedges linking town with countryside; bringing distinctive North Downs landscape character into urban areas

- Capstone Downs landscape character area extends to the south beyond Medway boundary; protection of local distinctiveness and openness requires co-ordinated approach with neighbouring local authority
- Urban extension at Hempstead plus encroachment of amenity, equine related and other urban-rural fringe land uses has lead to fragmentation and degradation of overall landscape quality; further encroachment likely to overwhelm local distinctiveness
- Decline of grazing on steeper scarp slopes and invasion of chalkland scrub; protection of unique landscape and wildlife value of chalk grassland
- Facility improvement plans for Capstone Farm Country Park; plans for Conservation Park at Horsted; off-road footpath and cycleway accessibility improvement plans; land management of chalk grassland areas at Darland, Daisy and Coney Banks
- Impact on landscape character of new housing development at Fort Horsted; opening up views of Forts at Horsted and Luton and connecting them to wider landscape
- Plans for improved green infrastructure link from Capstone towards Medway estuary, linking to GLHP, Chatham, Gillingham and waterfront through urban area at Luton
- Capstone – Road traffic pressure on narrow rural lane road system; how to relieve this pressure and provide improved facilities for other modes of transport
- Protecting recreational, landscape and ecological value of Horsted and Capstone Valleys – importance of reversing neglect; retaining views and openness; improving accessibility

24 Darland Banks

Landscape type: Chalk scarps and valleys (R2)

Sub-types: n/a

Forms part of Capstone Downs (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – north west/south east facing chalk ridge and valley to south side of Gillingham; stretches to south as far as Elm Court
- Geology – Upper Chalk; Head brickearth, Head and Clay with flint deposits
- Soils – exposed chalk and Grade 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – good east/west footpath links through public space; poor north/south links – fragmented by roads, development and landform; dense urban area at Luton truncates north west links through to Great Lines Park and River Medway; potential to strengthen green links through Gillingham to golf course and Grange Farm/Medway marshes
- Designations – ALLI; Protected open space; SNCI/ LNR; Ancient woodland; Rural lane
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Series of parallel narrow ridges and dry valleys creates prominent, distinctive landscape
- Land cover of rare chalk grassland, deciduous woodland and arable farmland; unified and diverse landscape with high biodiversity value; scrub invasion to chalk slopes
- Medium to large arable field network with blocks of remnant ancient woodland
- Good east-west pedestrian accessibility between urban areas at Luton and Hempstead/Wigmore; area has high recreational value

- Strong uninterrupted views of open countryside looking south from Darland Banks
- Tranquil rural lane towards Spekes Bottom and Hempstead in south east
- Urban intrusion to north west with amenity uses and built development detracts from tranquil character
- Includes narrow strip of land to south of Ski Centre with particularly strong links across to adjacent Hempshead Fringe Character Area (29)

Analysis

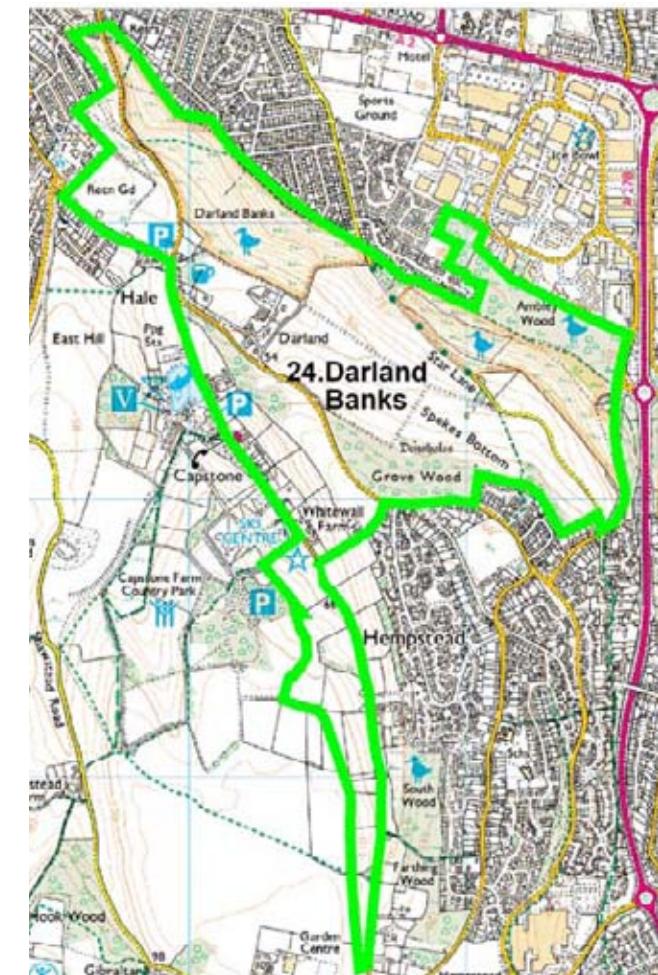
Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Some
Visual Unity – Interrupted
Ecological integrity – High
Cultural integrity – Good/Variable
Functional integrity – High

Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Strong
Landform – Dominant
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Restore



Issues

- Encroaching urban elements, hard edges and land uses
- Loss of unimproved chalk grassland to agricultural use and scrub invasion
- Loss of hedges, trees and woodland to arable uses
- Trend towards arable cultivation / loss of pasture
- Pressure for infill development (housing, retail and formal amenity facilities) from urban areas to east and west
- Trend to increase of equine management uses at southern end (area adjacent to Hempstead Fringe Character Area).

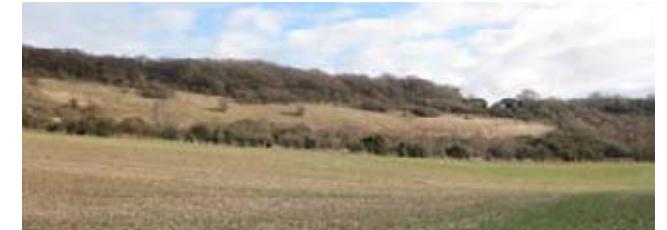
Guidelines

- Conserve and manage remnant chalk grassland habitats and woodlands
- Re-establish chalk grassland on steeper slopes
- Resist development that detracts from the distinctive character of the area
- Promote woodland planting (in character with existing) to screen adverse impacts at urban edges, landfill/waste recycling site, amenity and other sites with detracting urban-rural fringe uses;
- Encourage reversion of arable to pasture
- Promote improved woodland management; strengthen hedgerow planting and biodiversity value
- Manage urban fringe activities – introduce controls on signage, fly-tipping and ensure regular litter collections
- Consider Green Spaces/KWT Darland Banks management plan in any future plans for this area
- Note guidance for adjacent character area (29) at southern end.



Historic Note

- This area contains the northern end of the Chatham ring fortress. These forts were created in the late 19th century and took the form of infantry redoubts.



25 East Hill

Landscape type: Rural fringe (T1)

Sub-types: Rural fringe with urban/industrial influences (T1C)

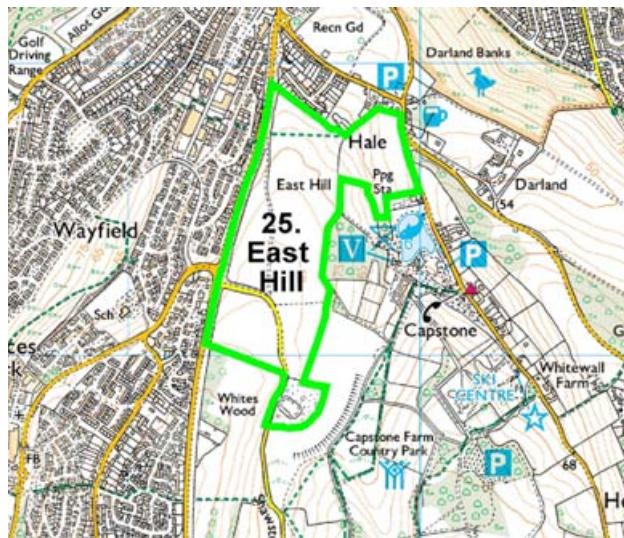
Forms part of Capstone Downs (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – south of Hale and west of Capstone
- Geology – Upper Chalk; pockets of clay with flint deposits
- Soils – exposed chalk and Grade 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – restricted – 1 no. east/west PROW to north; no north/south designated footpath links or access into area from dense urban area to west – complicated by topography and busy road
- Designations – ALLI; Country Park
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Large rolling arable fields with strong woodland edge to fields
- Close proximity to settlement and roads means that relative tranquillity interrupted in places by urban-rural fringe intrusions
- Inappropriately sited waste recycling site to south harms rural character and is strong detractor on surrounding local lanes; negative impacts include localised litter and fly-tipping
- Poor accessibility especially from densely populated urban areas to west



Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Some
Visual Unity – Interrupted
Ecological integrity – High
Cultural integrity – Variable/Poor
Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Moderate
Landform – Apparent
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Create

Issues

- Inappropriate siting of waste recycling plant in rural location impacts on local character; uses create neglected condition within surrounding lanes
- Loss of traditional field boundaries and roadside hedgerows
- Poor footpath network and weak pedestrian accessibility from urban areas
- Pressure for urban development extensions into countryside; leading to erosion of rural landscape character

Guidelines

- Seek to discourage fly-tipping on approach roads to tip and introduce more regular maintenance/clearance of rubbish
- Seek in long term plans for this area to relocate waste recycling plant to more appropriate location and restore landfill site as nature conservation and recreation facility
- Improve footpath and cycle network; note particularly need for improved accessibility from urban areas and safer and more accessible links across North Dane Way
- Resist development pressures from north and west and seek to reinforce and strengthen rural character – measures to include restoration of field and roadside hedgerow boundaries and review waste recycling plant location

26 Capstone Farm

Landscape type: Rural fringe (T1)

Sub-types: Rural fringe with amenity influences (T1D)

Forms part of Capstone Downs (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – Central part of Capstone valley between Princes Park and Hempstead; due south side of Gillingham
- Geology – Upper Chalk; Head and Clay with flint deposits
- Soils – Grade 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – good footpath network; bridleway; publicly accessible area
- Designations – ALLI; Designated Country Park
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Boundary of character area broadly coterminous with country park boundary (excludes landfill site area to west, fields immediately to south of Ski Centre; includes pumping station to north east)
- Country Park is main activity hub at centre of Capstone Valley and a significant visitor destination within Medway and surrounding area
- Principal amenity uses to north – car park, fishing lake, visitor centre, café; ski centre with parking to south west – intensification of uses and landscape treatment gives more highly managed and controlled feel
- Southern and western fringes – farmed patchwork of fields, hedgerows, shelter belts and woodland – framed views to south of more open large arable fields – provides a more rural and tranquil feel to these areas

- Steep valley slopes form backdrop to valley views, often partially cloaked in woodland and topped by lines of houses silhouetted against skyline
- Landfill site to west has adverse influence on landscape character and amenity value of area
- Good footpath network and bridleway – provides opportunity for improved links into surrounding areas

Analysis

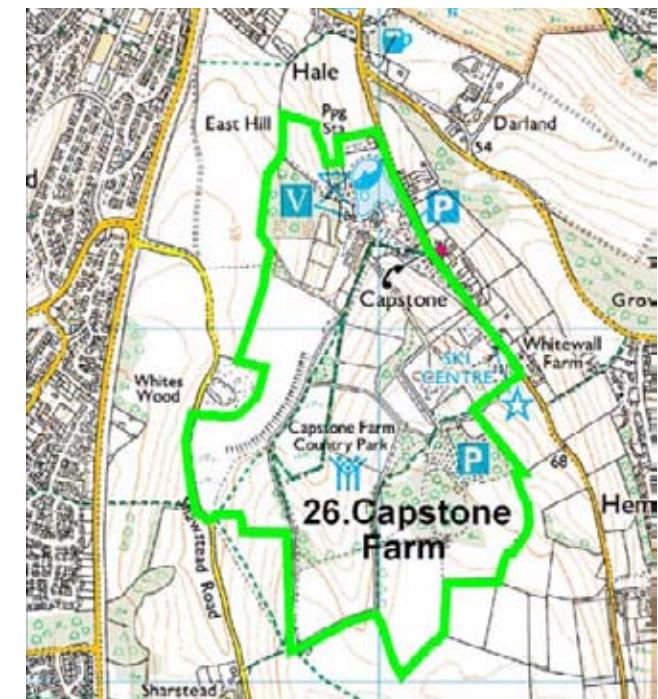
Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Some
Visual Unity – Interrupted
Ecological integrity – High
Cultural integrity – Good/Variable
Functional integrity – High

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Strong
Landform – Apparent
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Create



Issues

- Medway's future plans for development of country park facility
- Managing adverse landscape character impacts of ski centre and landfill site (see issues and guidelines under East Hill landscape character area)
- Development pressure from surrounding urban areas
- Need to strengthen and reinforce rural character and resist urban fringe pressures
- Need to strengthen and improve biodiversity opportunities
- The need for improved cycle and pedestrian links from urban areas into countryside

Guidelines

- Maximise opportunity for Country Park as fully sustainable and multi-functional community facility – offering goods and services (including biodiversity, health, recreation, education, farming, etc.) for the widest possible range of end users
- Plans for Country Park improvements should seek to embed planned uses more firmly within rural and agricultural character of surrounding area and avoid tendencies towards over-controlled and over-managed amenity landscape
- Seek to manage adverse impacts of Ski Centre on landscape character and ensure tight controls over future development plans
- Resist proposals for further built development that does not respect intrinsically rural character of area
- Seek to improve biodiversity opportunities – restore chalk grassland and control scrub invasion; plant more woodland and hedgerows
- Promote woodland planting (in character with existing forms and species mixes) to screen landfill operations, amenity and other rural fringe uses with adverse visual and landscape character impacts
- Seek to improve accessibility and connections between urban areas and wider countryside
- Manage urban fringe activities – including controls on signage, fly-tipping and regular litter collections



27 Sharstead Farm

Landscape type: Chalk scarps and valleys (R2)
Sub-types: n/a
Forms part of Capstone Downs (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – due east of Lordswood and west of Elm Court open farmed plateau
- Geology – Upper Chalk; Head and Clay with flint deposits
- Soils – Grade 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – good footpath network – links to country park and across plateau towards Wigmore
- Designations – ALLI; Protected open space; Proposed community woodland; Proposed LNR; Ancient woodland
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Distinctive farmed dry chalk valley; traditional irregularly shaped field pattern; diverse textures
- Strong sense of enclosure and rural tranquility; wooded ridges



- Ancient woodland block to south; largely intact hedgerow network; shaws and shaves
- Distinctive traditional farm settlement to west
- Good footpath links

Analysis

Condition Good

Pattern of elements – Coherent
Detracting features – Few
Visual Unity – Intact
Ecological integrity – High
Cultural integrity – Good
Functional integrity – High

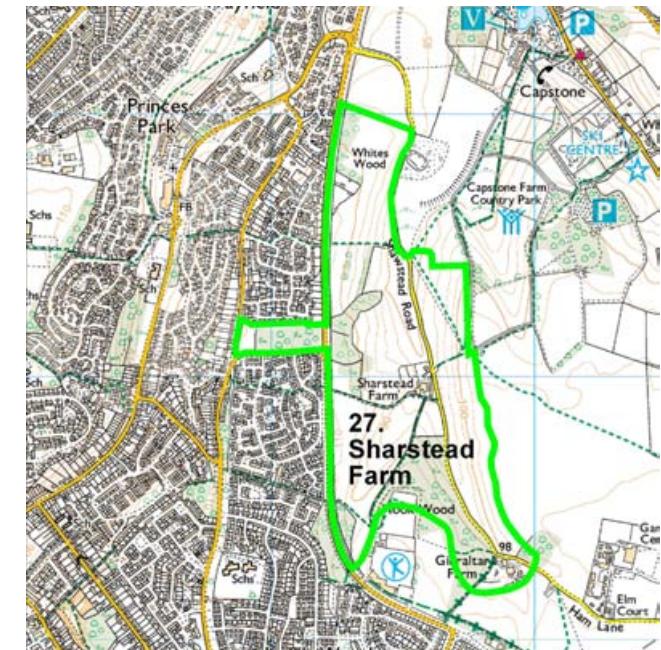
Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Very Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Strong
Landform – Dominant
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve

Issues

- Development pressure from surrounding urban areas
- Need to retain rural character and resist urban fringe pressures and activities
- Potential route for new cycle link to North Downs



Guidelines

- Resist proposals for any built development that does not fully respect or harms rural character of area
- Seek to improve biodiversity – restore chalk grassland where opportunity arises; strengthen woodland and hedgerow planting; introduce wide field margins (includes areas in Environmental Stewardship – encourage further agri-environment schemes)
- Encourage reversion of arable to pasture
- Manage urban fringe activities and seek to control traffic speeds – including controls on signage, fly-tipping and regular litter collections to local lanes
- Resist trend towards arable cultivation / loss of pasture

28 Elm Court

Landscape type: Flat or undulating wooded farmland (R7)
Sub-types: Arable farmland with woodland blocks (R7a)
Forms part of Capstone Downs (KCA 2004)

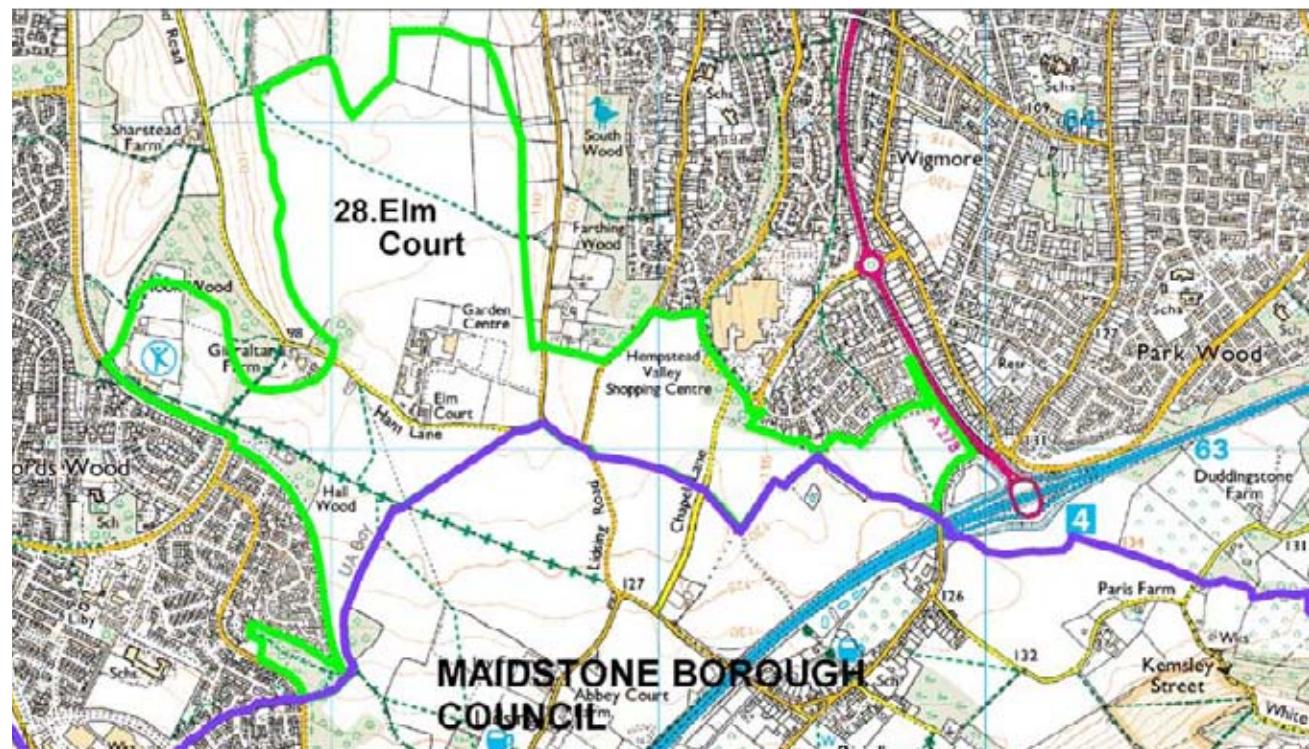
Description

- Location – central plateau with dry valleys to west and east and country park to north
- Geology – Upper Chalk; Clay with flint deposits
- Soils – Grade 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – complex network of country lanes; north-south footpath links poor; some good east-west links including bridleway
- Designations – ALLI; Protected open space; Ancient woodland; Employment area; Proposed playing field; Rural lane
- Flood – not applicable (2003)



Characteristics

- Gently undulating open farmed arable plateau rising in south towards North Downs
- Indistinct field pattern with weak hedgerow structure
- Lack of landform containment gives large scale landscape – flattening and increasingly denuded towards M2 motorway
- Elm Court Industrial Estate with conifer boundary introduces discordant urban elements into rural landscape
- Leisure Centre and playing fields to western corner provides amenity feature at boundary



Analysis

Condition Poor

Pattern of elements – Coherent
 Detracting features – Some
 Visual Unity – Interrupted
 Ecological integrity – Poor
 Cultural integrity – Poor
 Functional integrity – Poor

Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Indistinct
 Continuity – Historic/Recent
 Sense of place – Weak
 Landform – Apparent
 Tree cover – Open
 Visibility – High

Actions Restore

Issues

- Elm Court complex – adverse impact
- Development, transport and urban fringe pressures
- Improvements to north-south accessibility
- Historic field boundaries eroded

Guidelines

- Resist proposals for new development that does not fully respect or is likely to harm rural character of area
- Seek to improve biodiversity and strengthen landscape structure; break up monotony of open farmland with new woodland and hedgerow planting; wide field margins
- Manage urban fringe activities and seek to control traffic speeds – including controls on signage, fly-tipping and regular litter collections to local lanes
- Introduce stronger cycleway and pedestrian links to south



29 Hempstead Fringe

Landscape type: Rural fringe (T1)
Sub-types: Rural fringe farmland (T1a)
Forms part of Capstone Downs (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – west of Hempstead and south of Capstone
- Geology – Upper Chalk; Clay with flint deposits
- Soils – Grade 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – poor – busy narrow north/south country lane but no north-south footpath; good east-west link into Hempstead at South Wood; includes bridleway
- Designations – ALLI; SNCI/LNR; Ancient woodland
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Steep sided chalk valley (see Darland Banks character area) but with rural fringe intrusions from horse grazed pasture and areas of degraded land
- Small scale field pattern with fencing in poor repair and other unsightly features (shacks, rubber tyres etc)
- Ancient woodland to eastern slopes at South Wood and Farthing Wood provides valuable access, recreation and biodiversity opportunities
- Busy narrow lane to west creates harsh, discordant environment; severs connectivity and restricts opportunity for north/south pedestrian/cycle links; severely restricted car parking and waiting opportunities

Analysis



Condition **Moderate**

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Some
Visual Unity – Interrupted
Ecological integrity – Moderate
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity **High**

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic/Recent
Sense of place – Moderate
Landform – Dominant
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – Moderate

Actions **Conserve and Restore** Issues



- Negative impacts of equine related activities and land management
- Poor quality structures and buildings; degraded land condition
- Inappropriate and insensitive boundary treatments
- Poor north/south accessibility; negative impact of busy narrow lane to west with severed east/west connections and poor parking/waiting/passing provision

Guidelines

- Seek to restore more rural character to this dry valley
- Manage and seek to mitigate against adverse impacts from equine related activities; seek to improve condition and upkeep of boundary treatments; consider the design and impact of existing and new structures; resist the intrusion of unsightly features (including piles of car tyres)
- Seek to improve pedestrian access links with larger parking/resting/waiting areas for recreational users along Capstone Lane; review opportunities to control road traffic speeds
- Resist field boundary division (especially to scarp slopes) with loss of openness/distinctiveness of natural landscape

General Notes

- Condition varies across this area but is particularly poor alongside road on valley floor; elsewhere on slopes and particularly within woodland is in more moderate condition.

30 Horsted Valley

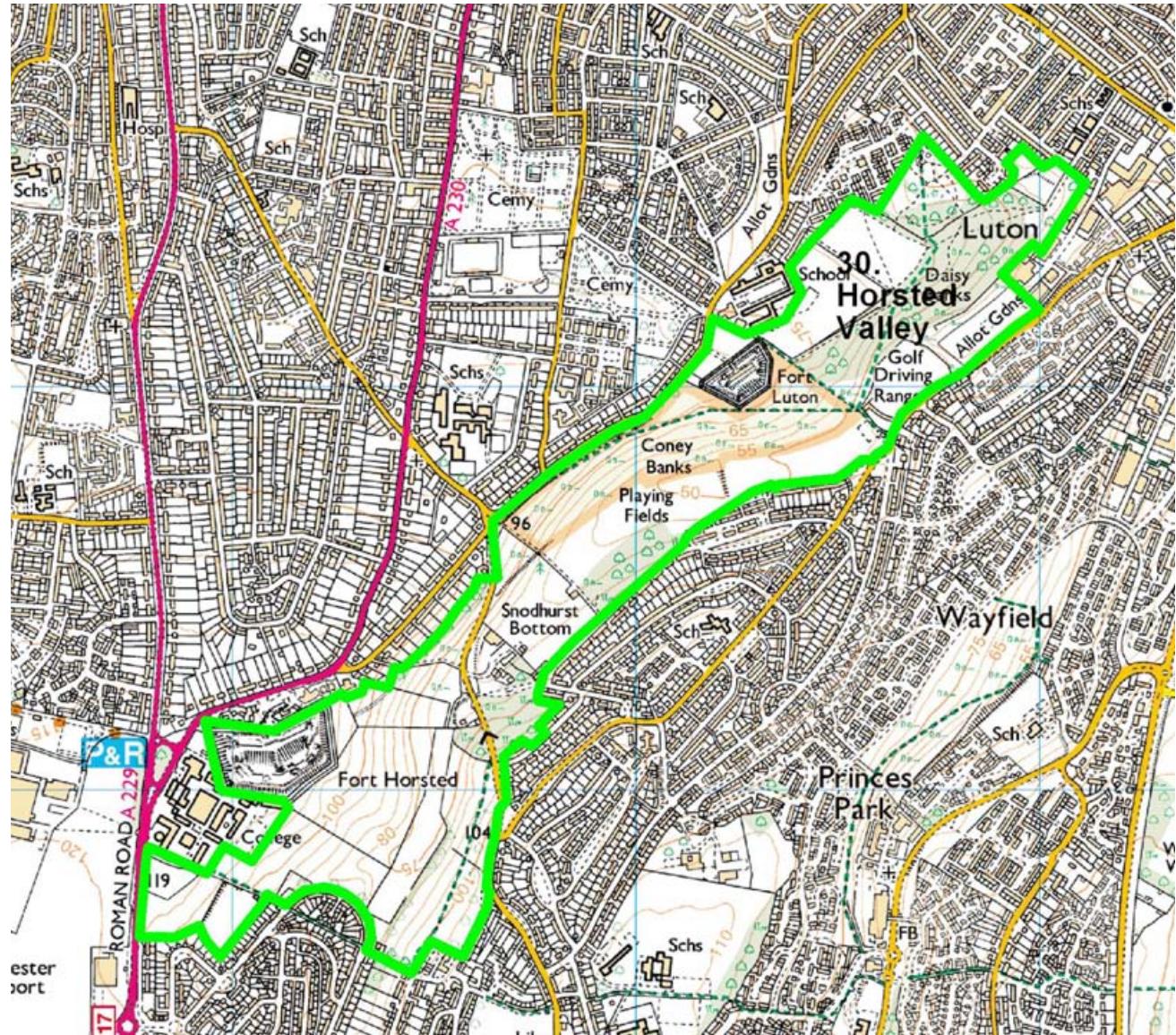
Landscape type: Urban fringe (T2)
Sub-types: Urban fringe with urban/industrial influences (T2b)
Forms part of Capstone Downs (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – open valley links A229 at Rochester Airport with Luton
- Geology – Upper Chalk; head and clay with flint deposits
- Soils – Grade 3 agricultural and undefined
- Accessibility – good path network; proposed cycle route (GG Action Plan)
- Designations – Proposed country park; SNCI/LNR; Proposed community woodland; 2 no. SAMs; ALLI; Protected open space
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Steep sided dry valley – mixed uses including chalk grassland, scrub, amenity, roads
- Predominantly scrub on steep valley sides; extensive areas of open grassland
- Cluster of amenity uses at Snodhurst Bottom and at Luton end – includes golf, leisure centre, playing fields, allotments
- Distinctly rural character in places (particularly at western end) but with urban fringe intrusions; dramatic open views to adjacent valleys from elevated positions
- Strong green wedge separates built development, maintains identities of separate communities and provides green link from wider countryside into more densely populated urban areas





- Includes Coney and Daisy Banks (unimproved chalk grassland); area offers high biodiversity and landscape value with potential for further enhancement
- High levels of accessibility with extensive path network that links urban communities and provides valued wildlife and recreational asset
- Includes two late 19th century Forts (Luton and Horsted) – listed as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) – part of network of Chatham’s concrete ring forts; valley provides natural open setting to forts
- Extensive areas of land within ownership of local authority

Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
 Detracting features – Some
 Visual Unity – Interrupted
 Ecological integrity – Moderate
 Cultural integrity – Variable
 Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
 Continuity – Historic
 Sense of place – Moderate
 Landform – Dominant
 Tree cover – Intermittent
 Visibility – High

Actions Conserve and Create



Issues

- Potential development pressure – area currently has extensive Local Plan protective designations and is largely within local authority land ownership
- Development plans for residential development at Mid Kent College site
- Management of chalk grassland, control of scrub invasion; threat of neglected and abandoned land
- Urban fringe activities and pressures – includes motorbike intrusion, fly-tipping, litter and other anti-social activities
- Threat of discordant visual impacts – includes neglected land, allotments, suburban edge intrusions (e.g. fencing/boundary treatments, conifers and ornamental planting)
- Significant role as valuable multi-functional green corridor – links urban areas to wider countryside; biodiversity, recreational value and opportunities
- Historic role of forts and relationship to landscape character; potential conflict with biodiversity value of wooded areas
- Rochester Airport is an inaccessible open space that severs direct links into wider countryside and out towards North Downs

Guidelines

- Resist development that damages or erodes open rural character, biodiversity, recreational value and accessibility
- Ensure that permitted new development respects and enhances distinctive landscape character of area and protects openness, biodiversity value and views
- Seek to protect and where possible extend areas of managed chalk grassland; control scrub invasion and manage land proactively to reinforce rural character
- Control urban fringe activities – including litter, fly-tipping, motorbike intrusion – by provision of barriers, regular maintenance visits and site presence
- Seek to enhance quality of boundary treatment and ensure that adverse suburban influences are controlled through sensitive design treatment
- Seek to balance historic, biodiversity and access interests within new development proposals

Historic Note

- Forts at Luton and Horsted were located to dominate the ground between them and the openness of the land was essential so that an attacker could find no cover. In WWI the land between the forts was used for trench systems and barbed wire entanglements.





North Downs and Medway Valley

Principal characteristics

North Downs

- Wooded scarp top and steep wooded sides with large open arable fields to lower slopes; rolling dry valleys with strong woodland and landform containment ; distinctive heritage features include Pilgrim's Way, historic lanes and farm settlements
- High biodiversity value contained in ancient woodlands, chalk grasslands and regenerating chalk quarries
- Distinctive and dramatic long open views are marred in places by detracting features along valley floor – roads, quarries, industry etc
- Character areas overlap to south and west into neighbouring boroughs – Tonbridge and Malling, Gravesend and Maidstone*
- See Kent Downs AONB website, Management Plan and other guidance documents for more detail on the distinctive features of the North Downs

Medway Valley

- Mixture of lower scarp slope and valley floor mixed farmland; fragmented by several disused and inaccessible quarries with regenerating woodland edges that help to screen visual impacts
- Pockets of grazed marshland with flood defence walls and reed beds; boundary treatments in variable condition; areas generally retain rural character but with rural fringe intrusions and some detracting features
- Landscape heavily fragmented by historic land uses associated with chalk extraction industries; includes quarries; railway lines; busy roads; settlements; old wharfs; marinas, mobile homes, industrial areas etc.

Principal issues

North Downs

- The North Downs landscape within the Medway area is under considerable pressure on account of its proximity to densely populated urban areas and many busy roads (including the M2 motorway); the highest level of designation for landscape protection ensures that all development proposals are subject to careful scrutiny
- Protection of Nashenden Scarp from pressure of new development; this escarpment is valued as a distinctive green backdrop and gateway feature for the Medway urban area; chalk grassland; highly visible from motorway and North Downs
- Considering the inter-connectivity of woodland and downland links into neighbouring boroughs to the south and west of Medway

Medway Valley

- On-going threat of landscape fragmentation with loss of rural character and local distinctiveness caused by the intrusion of inappropriate urban fringe activities – particularly threatened and damaged areas are on western side of river and include Cuxton Scarp Foot, Halling Quarries, Halling and Holborough Marshes
- Medway Valley – the disused pits offer regeneration opportunities for development, recreation and biodiversity improvements
- Industrial heritage within Medway Valley forms part of local distinctiveness of area
- Current regeneration proposals include a new development scheme for the Halling Cement Works site and proposals for new road and bridge across Lafarge Cement Works site at Holborough; forms link to Tonbridge and Malling's Peter's Pit development

* Two small woodland areas (previously designated as ALLIs within the Local Plan) are located on fringes of urban areas at Walderslade; these extend into larger green spaces within neighbouring districts and are not identified as distinct character areas within this study. See Matt Hill Farmland summary sheet for an analysis of these areas

31 Matts Hill Farmland

Landscape type: Flat or undulating wooded farmland (R7)
Sub-types: Mixed farmland with woodland blocks (R7d)
Forms part of Chatham outskirts: Mid Kent Downs (KCA 2004); southern part of Hartlip Downs character area (Swale LCA 2005)

Description

- Location – countryside to south of Rainham and Park Wood
- Geology – Upper Chalk; clay with flint deposits; forms part of North Downs dip slope
- Soils – Predominantly Grade 3
- Accessibility – good north/south footpath links; no east/west links
- Designations – Kent Downs AONB; Strategic Gap; Ancient Woodland
- Flood – not applicable (2003)



Characteristics

- Small scale, relatively flat landscape with diverse rural land uses – including horse pasture, orchards and arable farming
- Small to medium sized blocks of woodland (ancient) form dominant landscape feature and strong sense of containment
- Includes strip of remnant ancient woodland to north of motorway (Upper Brooms Wood and Ryetop Wood); this provides valuable buffer, screen, wildlife corridor and setting for M2 and adjacent residential development; links with blocks of woodland to south of M2 (within Kent Downs AONB)
- Narrow winding country lanes reinforce secluded rural character
- Detracting features include pylons, small scale industrial uses and low level motorway noise
- Good PROW north south accessibility linking settlements, urban edges and wider countryside

Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Coherent
Detracting features – Some
Visual Unity – Interrupted
Ecological integrity – High
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – High

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Strong
Landform – Apparent
Tree cover – Enclosed
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Restore

Issues

- Kent Downs AONB designation ensures strong protection from inappropriate development
- Woodland provides strong containment and local distinctiveness
- Area subject to urban fringe pressures – includes traffic, horse pasture, minor industrial uses; also in close proximity to M2
- Eastern parts of this character area extend into administrative boundaries of Swale Borough Council. Boundaries within this area not verified but cross border boundaries broadly consistent with Hartlip Downs character area (Swale LCA 2005). The southern parts of this character area, which extend into administrative boundaries of Maidstone Borough Council, are located within their Bredhurst to Bicknor North Downs character area (Maidstone LCA 2000).

**Guidelines**

- Strengthen hedgerow planting and seek further opportunities to strengthen biodiversity value
- Protect and enhance management of ancient woodland blocks to north and south of motorway
- Look for opportunities to reinforce landscape structure, especially in localised, denuded and open areas
- Manage urban fringe activities – including controls on signage, fly-tipping and regular litter collections
- Refer to guidelines within Kent Downs AONB Management Plan (Mid Kent Downs – Boxley to Selling – Landform and Landscape Character) and Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook (p.49)

General Notes

- There are two small wooded valleys to the south of Walderslade at Taddington Wood and Beechen Bank (formerly designated as ALIs). These areas have value for their links into larger green spaces within neighbouring boroughs to the south. They also provide an attractive buffer and wildlife habitat for adjacent urban areas. Beechen Bank links into Maidstone and Taddington Wood links into Tonbridge and Malling. The boundaries of these areas are identified on the large AO map appended to this report.
- Strategic gap designations omitted and replaced by policy KTG1(x) in South East Plan. This policy seeks to avoid coalescence with adjoining settlements to the south of Medway



32 Nashenden Scarp

Landscape type: Chalk scarp and valleys (R2)
Sub-types: n/a
Urban (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – south west of Borstal
- Geology – Upper Chalk
- Soils – Grade 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – Poor; 1 no. footpath at southern end
- Designations -SAM; ALLI; Strategic gap; safeguarded corridor for M2 widening (southern end)
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Prominent steeply sloping and open scarp slope rising from M2 towards urban area of Borstal
- Prison, Youth Custody complex and Industrial buildings border upper ridge line; upper slopes and ridge line afford good views out towards Kent Downs
- Ridge line has distinctive edge of broad leaved woodland and scrub (particularly around Fort Borstal); slopes are mix of rough chalk grassland, scrub and patchy hedgerows
- Narrow linear grassland strip damaged at foot by motorway excavation works and with pockets of degraded and neglected land along upper slopes
- Fort Borstal (19th Century Scheduled Ancient Monument) is a prominent landscape feature, screened in views from the south by dense vegetation
- Scarp slope forms distinctive green backdrop; natural 'gateway' and rural setting for urban areas and M2; creates visual connection with southern side of valley (within Kent Downs AONB); prominent in views from M2 and CTRL



Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Some
Visual Unity – Interrupted
Ecological integrity – High
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Variable

Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Moderate
Landform – Dominant
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – High

Actions Conserve and Restore



Issues

- Strong visibility from North Downs and Motorway; value as gateway and setting for Medway urban areas
- Value as green gateway and buffer to Medway urban area
- Protection and enhancement of chalk grassland slopes for improved biodiversity value
- Protection and enhancement of setting for Fort Borstal
- Neglected, fly-tipped areas along upper slopes at land adjacent to Cookham Wood Young Offenders Institute
- Poor level of accessibility

Guidance

- Protect slopes and ridge line from development likely to harm distinctive open and unspoilt character
- Restore chalk grassland and hedgerows for improved biodiversity value
- Strengthen distinctive woodland planting along ridge line; respect historic character of Fort Borstal
- Seek to improve public access and enhance viewpoints along ridge and slopes
- Seek improved management regime to restore neglected land along upper slopes

General Notes

- Strategic gap designations omitted and replaced by policy KTG1(x) in South East Plan. This policy seeks to avoid coalescence with adjoining settlements to the south of Medway
- The southern section of this character area is located within the Borough of Tonbridge and Malling
- Historic note. Fort Borstal forms part of Chatham concrete ring fort system (see also Horsted Valley and Darland Banks character areas); tree cover surround would not have existed during period of use. In World War Two there was Anti Aircraft (AA) site within this fort



33 Nashenden Valley

Landscape type: Chalk scarps and valleys (R2)

Sub-types: n/a

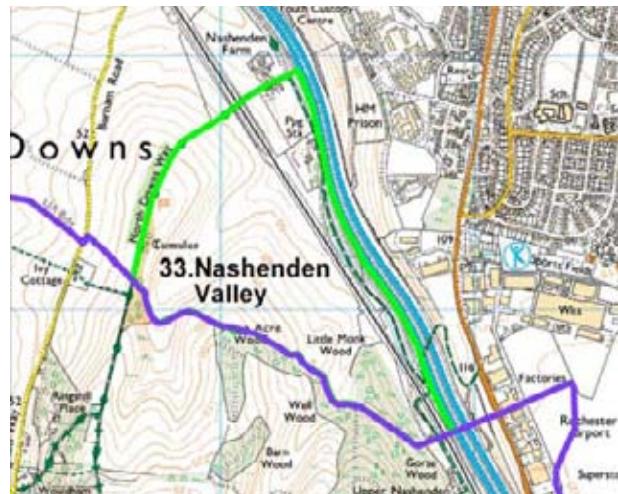
Nashenden Valley: Mid Kent Downs (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – south west of M2 motorway, within Kent Downs AONB
- Geology – Upper Chalk
- Soils – Grades 1 and 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – Good – North Downs and Pilgrim's Way follow western edge
- Designations – AONB; Strategic gap; safeguarded corridor for M2 widening; safeguarded route for CTRL; Ancient Woodland and SNCI/LNR 9 (Little Monk Wood); SAM
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Series of rolling dry valleys set within dip slope of North Downs
- Large arable fields bounded by deciduous woodland blocks but few hedges
- M2 road corridor and CTRL – detracting features to north east but distance, topography and woodland lessens influence to south
- Good views from elevated areas of Medway Valley, Western Scarp and Downs
- Good accessibility along North Downs Way and west towards river
- Southern part of character area extends into Tonbridge and Malling
- A tranquil, complex and distinctive landscape with a strong sense of place



Analysis

Condition **Moderate**

Pattern of elements – Coherent
Detracting features – Few
Visual Unity – Intact
Ecological integrity – Moderate
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity **High**

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Ancient/Historic
Sense of place –
Landform – Dominant
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – High

Actions **Conserve and Restore**

Issues

- North eastern edge in proximity to M2 and CTRL less coherent
- Kent Downs AONB – boundaries subject to urban fringe pressures

Guidance

- Strengthen landscape structure and screen along north eastern boundary – seek opportunities to increase woodland belt planting; restore hedgerows where previously located
- Restore chalk grassland and hedgerows where opportunity arises
- Follow AONB policies and management guidelines – see reference section

General Notes

- Strategic gap designations omitted and replaced by policy KTG1(x) in South East Plan. This policy seeks to avoid coalescence with adjoining settlements to the south of Medway
- Kent Wildlife Trust own and manage land to south and west of Nashenden Farm



34 Wouldham Scarp East

Landscape type: Chalk scarp and valleys (R2)

Sub-types: n/a

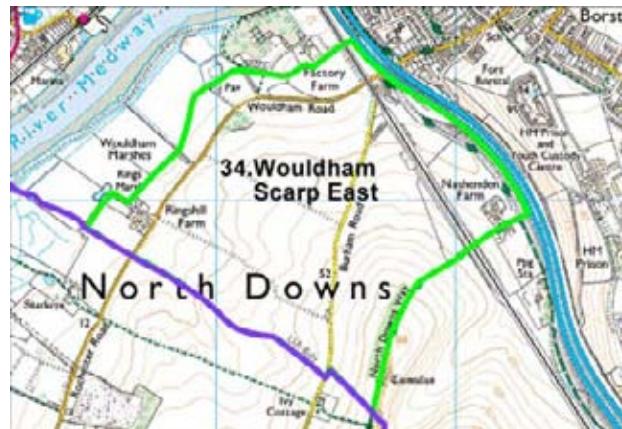
Nashenden Valley: Mid Kent Downs (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – south west of M2 motorway, within Kent Downs AONB
- Geology – Upper and Middle Chalk
- Soils – Grade I agricultural
- Accessibility – Good – towards River and along upper slopes of North Downs
- Designations – AONB; Strategic gap; safeguarded corridor for M2 widening; safeguarded route for CTRL; Rural Lane
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Scarp foot of North Downs Rolling with intensively cultivated fields – large open landscape with few hedgerows
- Good views from elevated areas of Medway Valley, Western Scarp and Downs
- Detracting features – M2/CTRL; Halling cement works; pylons; urban fringe elements
- Good accessibility along North Downs Way and west towards river
- Historic lanes and farm settlements – includes Pilgrims Way
- Southern part of character area extends into Tonbridge and Malling



Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Some
Visual Unity – Interrupted
Ecological integrity – Low
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Moderate
Landform – Apparent
Tree cover – Open
Visibility – High

Actions Conserve and Restore

Issues

- Urban fringe intrusion to north
- Highly visible scarp foot landscape – sensitive to change
- Decline in field boundaries and lack of contour related shaws

Guidance

- Strengthen landscape structure and screen urban fringe intrusion to north east
- Restore hedgerows and shaws – along roads and field boundaries; from higher slopes to land-folds of lower slopes
- Follow AONB policies and management guidelines – see reference section

General Notes

- Strategic gap designations omitted and replaced by policy KTG1(x) in South East Plan. This policy seeks to avoid coalescence with adjoining settlements to the south of Medway
- Redevelopment of Halling Cement Works will change visual and landscape character of waterfront as seen in views from across the river
- Kent Wildlife Trust own and manage land to south and west of Nashenden Farm

35 Wouldham Marshes

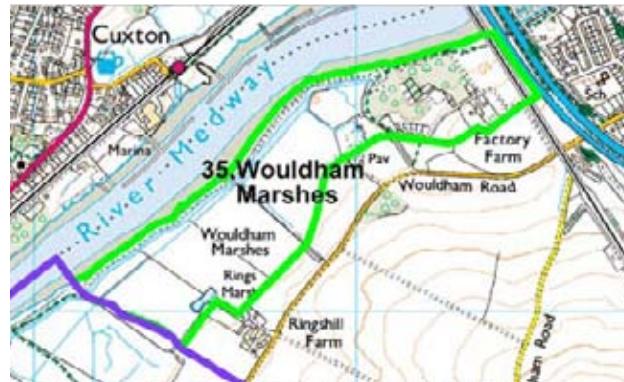
Landscape type: Coastal marshes (R4)
Sub-types: Grazing marsh (R4b)
Medway Valley Lower (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – south of river Medway and west of M2 motorway, within Kent Downs AONB
- Geology – Upper and Middle Chalk
- Soils – Grade I agricultural
- Accessibility – Good – towards River and along upper slopes of North Downs
- Designations – AONB; Strategic gap; safeguarded corridor for M2 widening; safeguarded route for CTRL; SNCI/LNR
- Flood – most sections within flood zone (2003)

Characteristics

- Flat marshland adjoining River Medway within broad valley with raised embankment along river edge
- Characterised by drainage ditches, hedges, unimproved grassland, reed beds
- River forms important and distinctive feature with reeds, mud flats and wading birds at low tide; good habitat potential / strong biodiversity value – area popular with walkers and ornithologists
- Open long views along river towards Rochester Castle and Cathedral; motorway bridge forms strong foreground feature
- Tranquil landscape with attractive river edge – Halling Cement Works detracts but Cuxton Marina and wooded slopes at Trechmanns Wharf enhance views across water
- Potential for multi-user accessible riverside links with urban areas at Rochester and beyond



- Urban fringe intrusion at northern end; includes off-road motorcycle use, rubbish along banks and fly-tipping
- Southern part of character area extends into Tonbridge and Malling

Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Few
Visual Unity – Intact/Interrupted
Ecological integrity – High
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Strong/Moderate
Landform – Dominant
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – High

Actions Conserve and Restore

Issues

- Threat to tranquil character; urban fringe intrusion / activities including fly-tipping
- Gap in footpath link to Rochester urban area
- Management of area for wildlife; conflict with recreational pressure
- Pressures from dredging, vegetation management and other flood plain management
- Role/involvement of EA and landowners

Guidance

- More pro-active levels of management by EA and landowners – to control urban fringe activities and enhance wildlife value
- Strengthen landscape structure and screen urban fringe intrusion to north east
- Gap up and maintain existing hedgerows
- Allow for vegetated buffer zones adjacent to river to enhance aquatic habitats and amenity value
- Access – restore footpath link to Rochester; enhance to allow access for other appropriate countryside users
- Follow AONB policies and management guidelines – see reference section

General Notes

- Redevelopment of Halling Cement Works will change visual and landscape character of waterfront as seen in views from across the river
- Strategic gap designations omitted and replaced by policy KTG1(x) in South East Plan. This policy seeks to avoid coalescence with adjoining settlements to the south of Medway

Historic Note

- This area was a former military training ground for pontooning and bridging and in WW2 had a bailey bridge over the river in case Rochester bridge was bombed or otherwise taken (e.g. by paratroopers).



36 Cuxton Scarp Foot

Landscape type: Rural fringe (T1)

Sub-types: Rural fringe with urban/industrial influences (T1c)

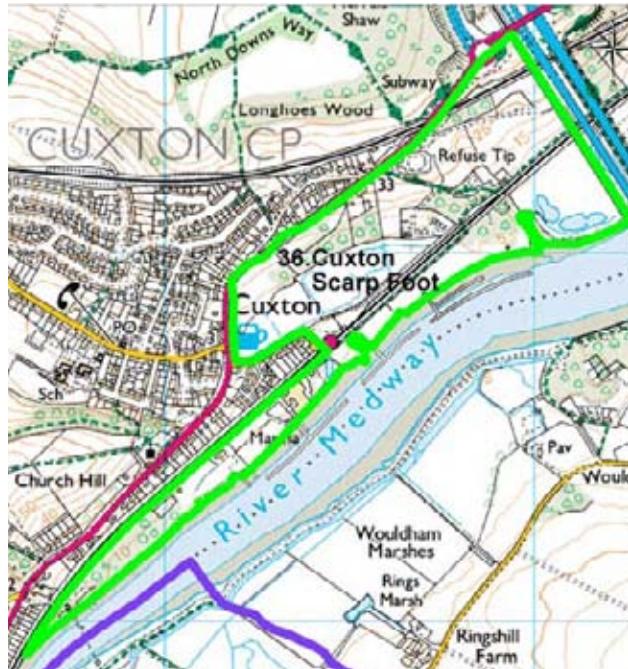
Medway Valley Lower (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – north of river Medway and west of M2 motorway
- Geology – Upper and Middle Chalk
- Soils – Grade 3 and undefined
- Accessibility – one principal route bordering rail line links urban area with Cuxton
- Designations – ALLI; Strategic gap; safeguarded corridor for M2 widening; safeguarded route for CTRL; SNCI
- Flood – southern half within flood zone (2003)

Characteristics

- Visually prominent area rising from marshes alongside River Medway up to Kent Downs AONB
- Prominent in views from many directions (including A228, M2, CTRL, Medway Valley Railway and the Medway River); has significant potential as an inviting ‘gateway’ into the urban areas of Medway
- Includes farmland to north along scarp foot and lower lying marshland to south
- Includes land affected by M2/CTRL works; adverse impacts persist in areas adjacent to this development
- Lagoons in marshland area to south-east created as part of mitigation for CTRL works
- Area has fragmented character from urban fringe land uses, motorway and railway line; land uses include rough grazing pasture; marshland; woodland;



site of nature conservation interest; sewage works; landfill/waste site; derelict land; caravan site

- Railway line creates strong severance – restricts accessibility to marshland and marina
- Mixed containment (footpath link and woodland) and openness (marshland and farmland)
- Strong urban fringe intrusion with overall degraded condition, includes areas of fly-tipping
- Openness maintains separation between urban areas, M2 and CTRL and Cuxton Village; helps to retain local identity and enhance village setting
- Provides visual link and balance with Kent Downs AONB on adjacent side of river



Analysis

Condition Poor

Pattern of elements – Incoherent
Detracting features – Many
Visual Unity – Fragmented
Ecological integrity – Moderate
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Moderate
Landform – Dominant
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Restore and Create

Issues

- Managing urban fringe intrusion/activities including fly-tipping
- Restricted access beyond main footpath link
- Main footpath unattractive and intimidating (see General Notes for further information)
- Off-road cycle path opportunity
- Severance of M2; weak and unattractive pedestrian/cycle links into urban areas to north
- Opportunity to enhance ‘Gateway’ potential of area
- Marina site has been built up with imported materials; developed character not in sympathy with marshland context

Guidance

- Introduce safety/enhancement plan for public right of way – to include vegetation clearance and active management to control anti-social activities
- Review cycle path opportunities linking urban areas to countryside
- Improve path network and pedestrian links through area, onto valley sides and into urban areas to north
- Restore and improve chalk grassland areas to north
- Improve boundary treatment to eyesores – including screen to sewage works entrance; replace galvanised steel palisade boundary fencing with more sympathetic style and finish of security fencing; screen with native planting where possible

- Protect and enhance natural marshland character along river edges as appropriate setting for adjacent river and AONB
- Restore and actively manage hedgerows along field, path and road boundaries and strengthen woodland blocks
- Resist development and urban fringe activities that could lead to further degradation of condition, accessibility and rural character of area
- Seek to develop ‘gateway’ potential of area; landscape enhancements to M2/A228 roundabout and approach roads could achieve step change in arrival experience of visitors into Medway

General Notes

- Strategic gap designations omitted and replaced by policy KTG1(x) in South East Plan. This policy seeks to avoid coalescence with adjoining settlements to the south of Medway
- Historic note. CTRL recorded a small Anglo Saxon barrow cemetery located on a prominent part of the slope so that it would be visible for a long way around. This is a common feature of such sites
- Medway Port Marina wish to divert a section of footpath (RS206) between Cuxton Station and Factory Cottages to the other side of the railway track. This application is currently being considered by the Rights of Way Section



37 Halling Marshes

Landscape type: Marshland Fringe (T3)
Sub-types: Marshland Fringe with urban/industrial influences (T3b)
Medway Valley Lower (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – situated between Halling Village and west bank of River Medway
- Geology – Lower Chalk with Alluvium deposits
- Soils – undefined
- Accessibility – generally good – but no footpath link to north
- Designations – ALLI; Strategic gap; SNCI/LNR; Access Land (CROW Act) at Halling Common
- Flood – area within flood zone (2003)

Characteristics

- Flat open grazing marshland, with pockets of salt marsh, adjoining River Medway
- River wall, drainage ditches lined with patchy scrub
- Poorly managed rubbish, fencing in poor condition, gives degraded feel, but peaceful with good biodiversity potential
- Views out towards western scarp with wooded horizon; towards eastern scarp with built edges of Woudham in foreground; open views into area from adjacent marshes, eastern scarp slopes and railway line
- Provides distinctive rural setting to Halling Village and valued informal recreation space; Halling and Woudham Marshes (on adjacent bank) combine to form distinctive and open character to this section of river
- Cement works and pylons are detracting features
- Broken pedestrian link at Cement works site to north



Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Many
Visual Unity – Interrupted
Ecological integrity – High
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Moderate
Landform – Apparent
Tree cover – Open
Visibility – High/Moderate

Actions Conserve and Create



Issues

- Degraded character with fly-tipping, rubbish and poor quality fencing
- Lack of continuous riverfront footpath/pedestrian connections to north
- Biodiversity and recreational value of area
- Long term management planning for area (see note below re SMP)
- Value of area as natural recreation space and open rural setting to east of Halling Village

Guidance

- Protect openness and rural character of landscape; enhance informal recreational value and opportunities; improve management regimes
- Involve landowners, local community and EA in more pro-active land management of area
- Strengthen biodiversity value; restore wetland features

- Strengthen scrub and hedgerow planting along field boundaries; replace/restore field boundaries with styles of fencing appropriate to rural, marshland context
- Control fly-tipping and other anti-social rural fringe activities
- Open up northern footpath link towards Cuxton and Strood

General Notes

- Redevelopment plans for Halling Cement Works should have beneficial visual and landscape character impacts on this area
- Area identified in SMP for 'managed realignment' – may be subject to change in future
- Strategic gap designations omitted and replaced by policy KTGI(x) in South East Plan. This policy seeks to avoid coalescence with adjoining settlements to the south of Medway



38 Holborough Marshes

Landscape type: Marshland Fringe (T3)

Sub-types: Marshland Fringe with urban/industrial influences (T3b)

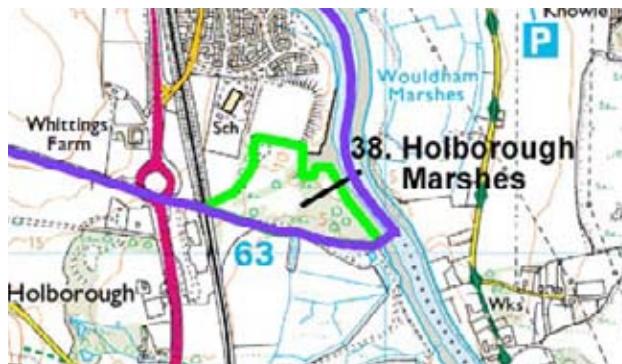
Medway Valley Lower (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – south of Halling Village; west bank of River Medway
- Geology – Lower Chalk with Alluvium and Head deposits
- Soils – undefined
- Accessibility – poor – no designated footpaths
- Designations – Strategic gap; proposed road scheme
- Flood – area partly within flood zone (2003)

Characteristics

- Area of marshland with scattered scrub vegetation has distinctive, tranquil, natural feel;
- Area to north managed as amenity frontage to residential area; degraded land to south includes safeguarded road crossing for St Peter's Pit (Tonbridge and Malling)
- Evidence of industrial heritage – small dock and railway line – now returned to nature
- Reed beds, minor creeks and mud flats along with naturalised scrub vegetation to steep embankment provide high biodiversity value with evidence of extensive birdlife
- Good views along and across river to North Downs



Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Some
Visual Unity – Interrupted
Ecological integrity – High
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Moderate
Landform – Apparent
Tree cover – Open
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Create

Issues

- Impact of Peter's Pit road scheme on character of area
- No formalised pedestrian access or riverfront footpath
- Industrial heritage value
- Protecting tranquillity and biodiversity value

Guidance

- Open up more formalised riverfront footpath link to south; open up riverside access to north and make this multi-user accessible; proposals should retain respect for nature conservation value of area
- Protect industrial heritage features as evidence of historic uses
- Seek to control impact of new road development on biodiversity value and tranquillity

General Notes

- Holborough Marshes is predominantly located within Tonbridge and Malling; northern section within Medway
- Much of this area is leased to Kent Wildlife Trust and managed as a nature reserve. Consequently there is permissive pedestrian access along some of the river-front.
- Strategic gap designations omitted and replaced by policy KTG1(x) in South East Plan. This policy seeks to avoid coalescence with adjoining settlements to the south of Medway

Holborough Marshes



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39 Halling Quarries

Landscape type: Rural fringe (T1)
Sub-types: Rural fringe with urban/industrial influences (T1c)
Kent Downs – Kent Downs – Medway, Western and Eastern Scarp (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – area between Halling and Upper Halling; bounded by A228 and Pilgrims Way
- Geology – Lower and Middle Chalk with pockets of Head deposits
- Soils – Grades 2 and 3 agricultural
- Accessibility – Fair – 3 no. east/west paths link Upper Halling to Halling
- Designations – Green belt; Rural lane along Pilgrims Way; Protected open space
- Flood – n/a (2003)

Characteristics

- Scarp floor with rolling arable fields, interspersed with small settlements, disused quarries, industrial heritage and Peter's Pit development infrastructure works
- Heavily wooded disused pits fragment character but screen visual interruption
- Blue lake to south west of Halling Cement Works forms distinctive landscape feature; overhead pylons and cement works are detracting features
- Southern part of character area extends into Tonbridge and Malling

Analysis

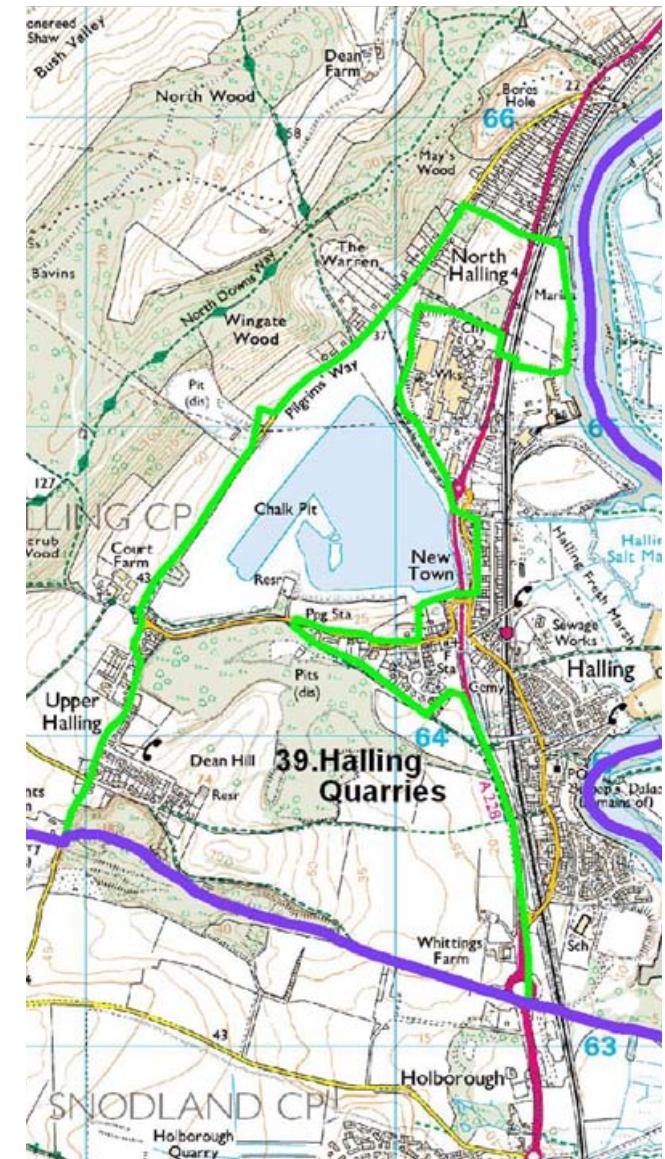
Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Some
Visual Unity – Interrupted
Ecological integrity – Moderate
Cultural integrity – Variable
Functional integrity – Moderate

Sensitivity Moderate

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Historic
Sense of place – Moderate
Landform – Apparent
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve and Create



Issues

- New development proposals for Halling Cement Works and Infrastructure works associated with Peter's Pit development
- Wildlife and recreational potential/opportunities for disused pits between Halling and Upper Halling
- Footpath links through Cemex site enhance access through site; include for viewing areas and access around Blue Lake
- Loss of rural character from new developments and urban-rural fringe intrusion/activities

Guidance

- Seek to strengthen landscape character by active management of disused pits to maximise wildlife and recreational potential
- Enhance access through Cemex site; include for viewing areas and improved access around Blue Lake
- Use appropriate native planting to screen new development proposals from footpaths, roads, existing settlements and rural areas
- Ensure that new development proposals respect rural character of area and criteria associated with Green Belt designation

General Notes

- Removal of cement works and new development on site will alter character of this area from predominantly industrial to residential character



40 Halling Scarp West

Landscape type: Chalk scarp and valleys (R2)

Sub-types: n/a

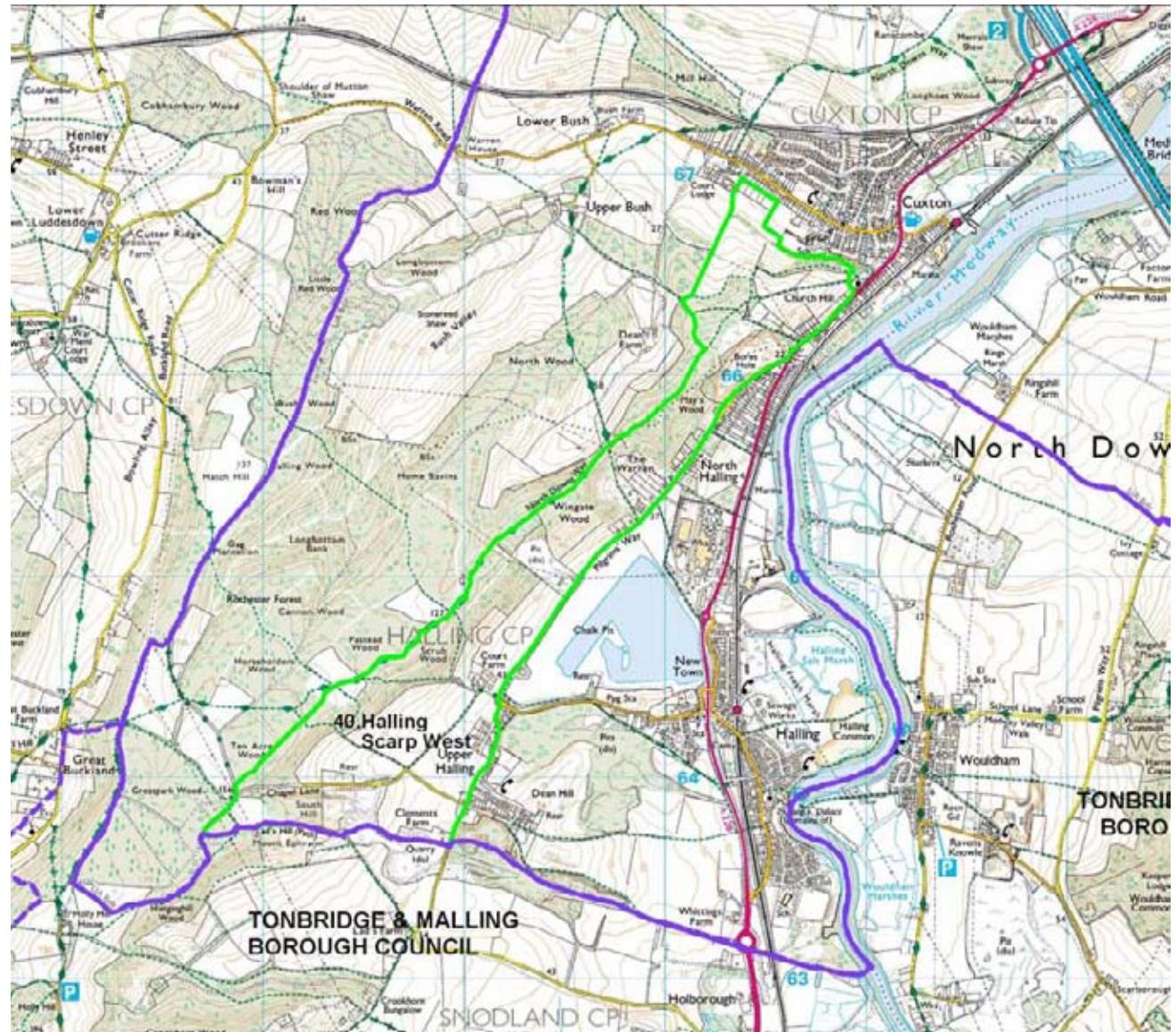
Western Scarp: Medway (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – west of Halling, south of Cuxton; within Kent Downs AONB
- Geology – Upper and Middle Chalk
- Soils – Grade 3 agricultural and undefined
- Accessibility – Good network of public footpaths, including North Downs Way
- Designations – AONB; Green belt; SSSI/NNR; SNCI/LNR; Community woodland; Protected open space; Rural Lane; Special area of Conservation; SLA
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Prominent wooded scarp top with steep wooded scarp sides; mirrored by woodland along adjacent scarp ridge line
- Dense mixed woodland gives way to large, open arable fields with few hedgerows on lower slopes
- Includes areas of Ancient Woodland and SSSI with high biodiversity value
- Lower slopes bounded by significant heritage feature of Pilgrims Way
- Elevated views restricted by woodland; better views from lower slopes but marred in places by detracting features – chalk quarries, industry and pylons – along valley floor
- Good accessibility along North Downs Way and connecting paths



- Historic lanes and farm settlements – includes Pilgrims Way
- Southern part of character area extends into Tonbridge and Malling



Analysis

Condition Moderate

Pattern of elements – Variable
Detracting features – Some
Visual Unity – Interrupted
Ecological integrity – High/Moderate
Cultural integrity – Good/Variable
Functional integrity – High

Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Ancient/Historic
Sense of place – Strong
Landform – Dominant
Tree cover – Intermittent
Visibility – High

Actions Conserve and Restore



Issues

- Highly protected and prominent landscape with AONB, Green Belt, Ancient woodland and SSSI designations – sensitive to change
- Threats from urban-rural fringe activities and new developments along valley floor

Guidance

- Ensure new development proposals along valley floor enhance and do not detract from distinctive character of scarp top and sides
- Seek to screen views of intrusive new developments to lower slopes and valley floor
- Protect and enhance biodiversity value of existing features
- Refer to AONB policies and management guidelines / see also KCA – Landscape Actions

41 Bush Valley and Dean Farm

Landscape type: Chalk scarps and valleys (R2)

Sub-types: n/a

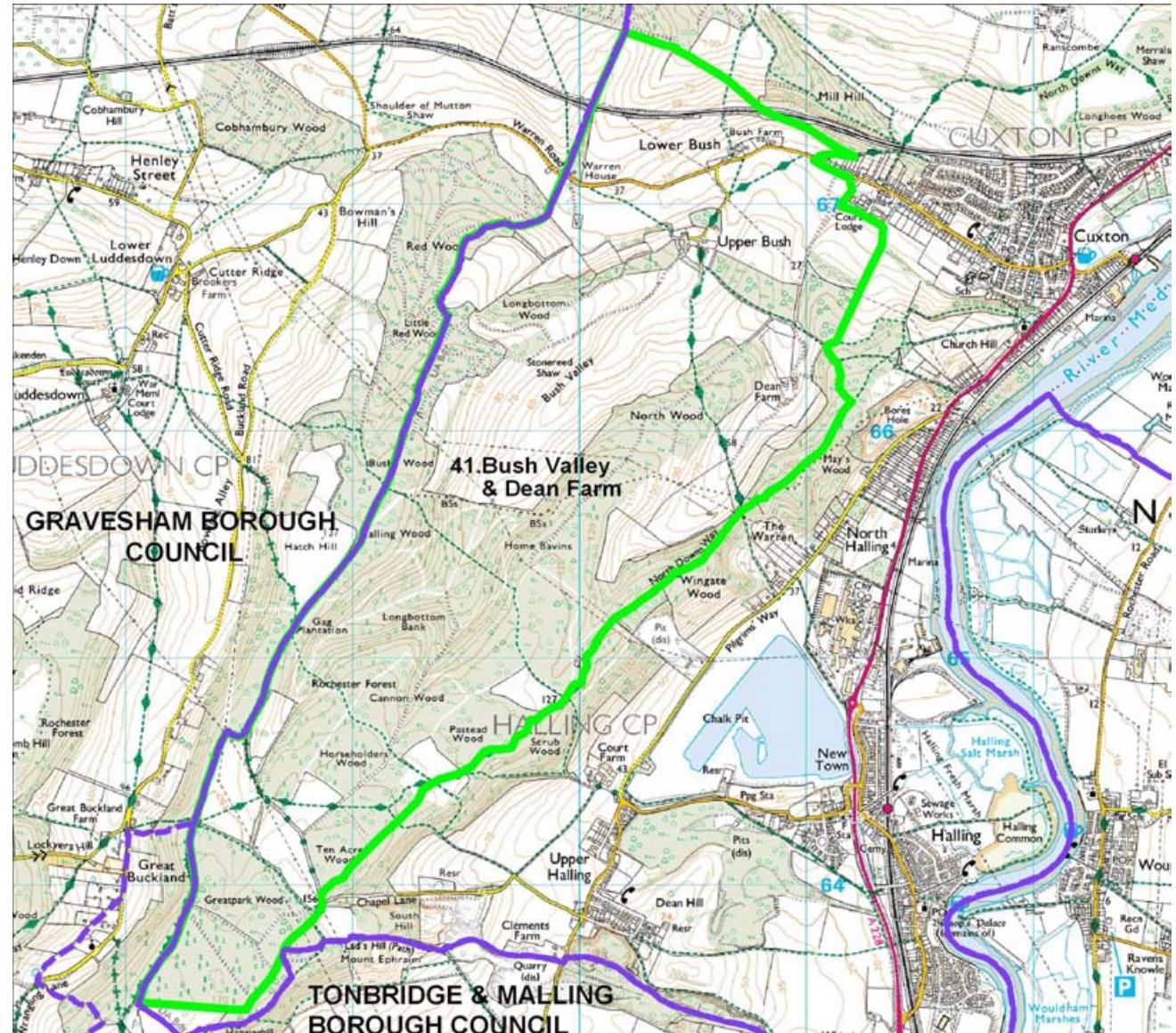
Luddesdown: West Kent Downs; The Western Scarp: Medway (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – south west of Cuxton, within Kent Downs AONB
- Geology – Middle and Lower Chalk
- Soils – Grade 3 agricultural and undefined
- Accessibility – Fair – North Downs forms main north-south link to eastern edge; east-west paths link Luddesdown with Halling and Cuxton; lacks north-south link from Upper Bush towards Great Buckland
- Designations – AONB; Green belt; Rural lane; SSSI/ NNR; Ancient Woodland; SAC; Conservation area; SLA
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Large arable fields enclosed by strong woodland blocks and wooded shaws but few hedgerows
- Steep rolling dry valleys set within dip slope of North Downs
- Bush Valley and Dean Farm Valley predominantly wooded at southern end
- Landform and woodland provide strong landscape pattern and sense of enclosure
- Includes distinctive Upper Bush Conservation area
- A tranquil, complex and distinctive landscape with a remote feel and a strong sense of place – few detracting features
- Western part of character area extends into Gravesham; small southern section links into Tonbridge and Malling



Analysis

Condition Good

Pattern of elements – Coherent
 Detracting features – Few
 Visual Unity – Intact
 Ecological integrity – High/Moderate
 Cultural integrity – Good/Variable
 Functional integrity – Strong

Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Distinct
 Continuity – Ancient/Historic
 Sense of place – Strong
 Landform – Dominant
 Tree cover – Intermittent
 Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve

Issues

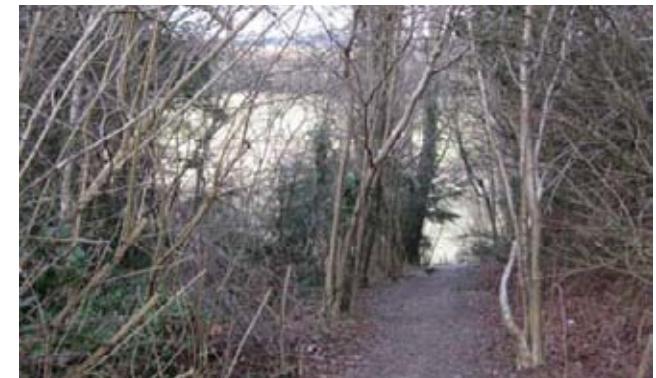
- Illegal and intrusive off-road vehicle use causing substantial damage to both open and wooded areas.
- Poor surface quality of byways due to soil conditions and legal use by off-road vehicles.
- Use of physical barriers inappropriate to a rural landscape to prevent illegal off-road use.
- Persistent fly-tipping and dumping of burnt out cars.
- Land ownership currently in state of flux.
- Existing pedestrian and equestrian access is sparse.

Guidance

- Seek to sustain valuable work undertaken by Valley of Vision's 'Securing the Landscape' project which aims to prevent illegal off-road use in the valley.
- Seek to enhance and expand the PROW network wherever possible

General Notes

- This area is located within Kent Downs AONB and Green Belt. Although these designations provide landscape and openness protection, these tracts of countryside are relatively close to urban areas and inevitably subject to urban fringe pressures and activities. General guidance is to seek to manage urban fringe pressures sensitively, observe Kent Downs AONB policies and management guidelines and work closely with key stakeholders



42 Ranscombe Farm

Landscape type: Chalk scarps and valleys (R2)

Sub-types: n/a

Cobham: West Kent Downs (KCA 2004)

Description

- Location – north of Cuxton and south west of M2 motorway, within Kent Downs AONB
- Geology – Predominantly Upper Chalk; clay with flints deposits
- Soils – undefined
- Accessibility – Good – Network of paths has been enhanced with additional permissive rights of way
- Designations – AONB; Green Belt; SSSI/NNR; Proposed Country Park; Ancient Woodland; safeguarded corridor for M2 widening; safeguarded route for CTRL
- Flood – not applicable (2003)

Characteristics

- Rolling chalk downland, dry valleys and wooded shaws
- Strong blocks of woodland, especially to upper slopes, frame farmland and give strong sense of enclosure and intimacy
- Well managed woodland with evidence of coppicing
- Good accessibility with strong network of footpaths
- Spectacular views towards Upper Bush with a series of carefully managed viewpoints
- Mausoleum and Cobham Deer park on western fringes; character area extends into Gravesham

Analysis

Condition Good

Pattern of elements – Coherent
Detracting features – Few
Visual Unity – Intact
Ecological integrity – High
Cultural integrity – Good
Functional integrity – Strong

Sensitivity High

Distinctiveness – Distinct
Continuity – Ancient/Historic
Sense of place – Strong
Landform – Apparent
Tree cover – Enclosed
Visibility – Moderate

Actions Conserve



Issues

- Enhancement of biodiversity value and improved recreational access (see note below re management)
- Illegal off-road motorcycle access
- Some changes in land ownership at south west edge of Ranscombe Farm LCA and beside CTRL

Guidance

- Put appropriate measures in place to protect area from illegal off-road motorcycle access
- Seek enhanced biodiversity value and access. Contact Green Spaces team for details on management plans for this area

General Notes

- This area is located within Kent Downs AONB and Green Belt. Although these designations provide landscape and openness protection, these tracts of countryside are relatively close to urban areas and inevitably subject to urban fringe pressures and activities. General guidance is to seek to manage urban fringe pressures sensitively and observe Kent Downs AONB policies and management guidelines
- Area under joint partnership management of Medway Council, Plantlife and landowners with particular emphasis on enhancement of natural features to increase biodiversity value



