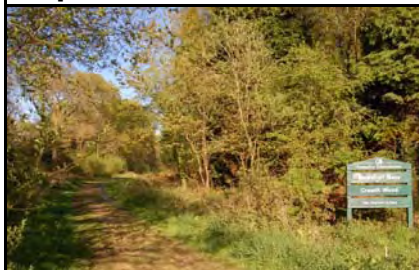


2F: FOREST OF BERE EAST



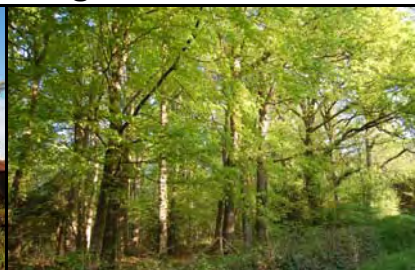
Typical assart landscape of small to medium sized fields bounded by irregularly shaped woodland blocks and hedgerows, often of ancient origin.



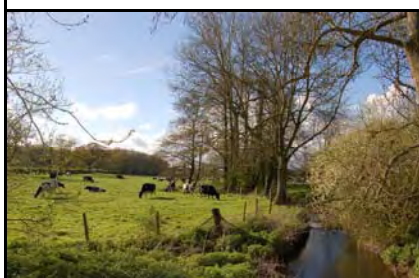
Large woodland managed by Forestry Commission with variety of access opportunities – Creech Wood.



19th century parliamentary enclosures of lowland mosaic small scale closely spaced similar age oaks in clipped hedges - Denmead.



Tall straight trunked oaks in woodland were a prized resource for ship building.



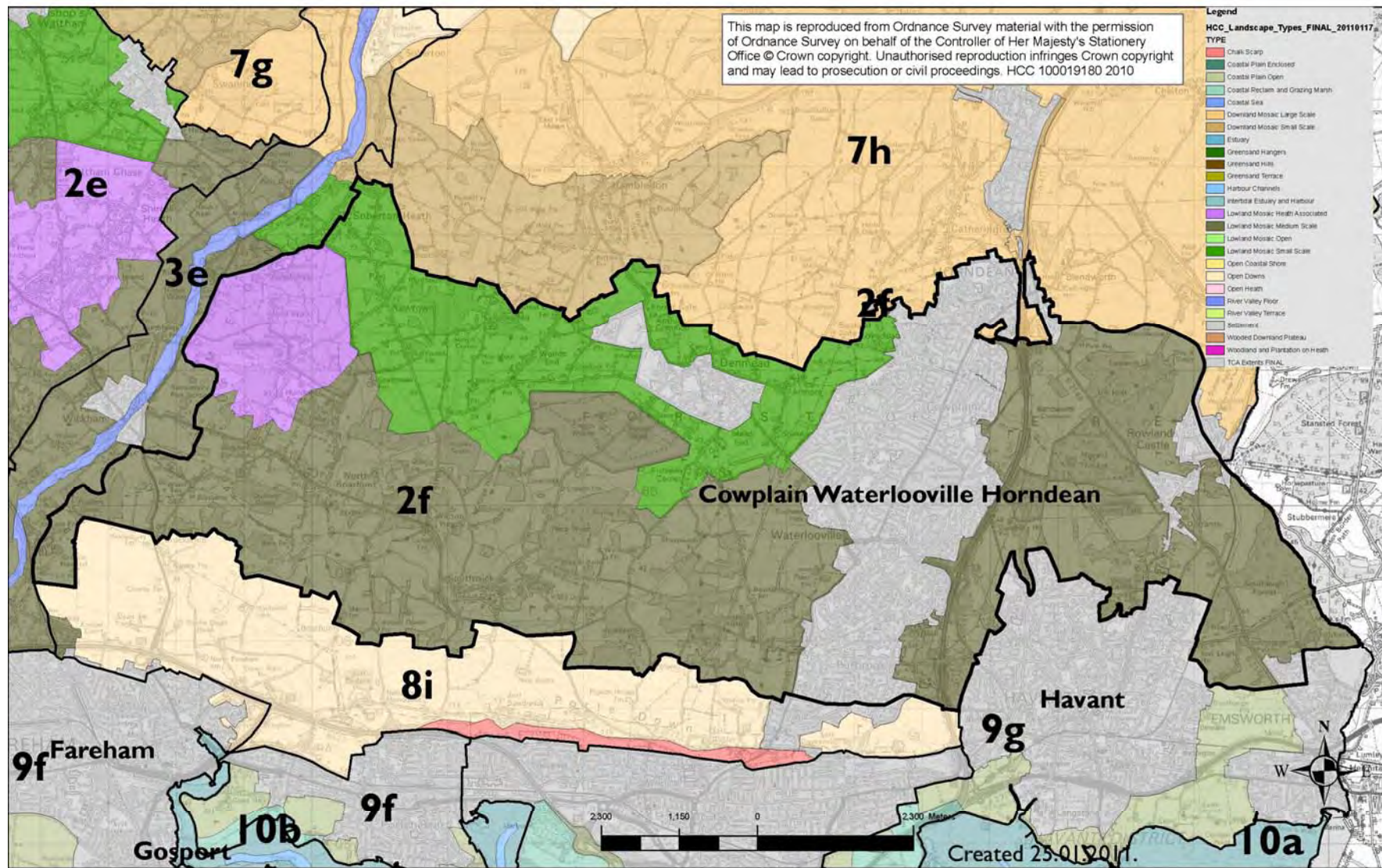
Numerous small watercourses and wet woodland together with areas of permanent pasture in the Lowland Mosaic Medium Scale Wooded.



19th century often double-fronted detached properties with small holdings on woodland and common edges – North Boarhunt



Frequent straight roads following historic alignment through heaths – Soberton Heath.



I.0 Location and Boundaries

I.1 This character area falls within the Hampshire Basin, bounded by the Hampshire Downs to the north, Portsdown Hill in the south west and the Coastal Plain in the south east. The Meon Valley forms the western boundary and the County boundary the eastern. The LCA eastern boundary equates with the 'Funtington to Highdown



Farmlands' in West Sussex, with which it shares some characteristics. It is defined by the probable eastern extent of the ancient 'Forest of Bere – Portsdown'.

I.2 Component County Landscape Types:

Lowland Mosaic Medium Scale Wooded, Lowland mosaic Small Scale Wooded, Lowland Mosaic Heath Associated, Settlement.

I.3 Composition of Borough/District LCAs:

Winchester CC

Forest of Bere Lowlands

East Hampshire DC

Havant Thicket and Southleigh Forest

Havant BC

Waterlooville and Historic Route

Waterlooville western suburbs

Woodcroft Farm

Waterlooville Business Park

Purbrook and Waterlooville – Eastern Suburbs

Havant BC (continued)

Purbrook

Purbrook Heath

A3M Corridor residential Area

Waterlooville Golf Course

Blendworth Common and Woodlands

A3M Eastern Corridor

Leigh Park

West Leigh

West Leigh Industrial Estate

Southleigh Forest

New Brighton

The character areas falls predominantly in Winchester CC and the boundaries are very similar to this character area. The mosaic of Havant character areas when amalgamated have a common boundary between this character area and the County coastal plain character area and with Portsdown Hill Open Downs character area. The chalk and lowland boundary in the East Hampshire and Winchester assessments are similar.

I.4 Associations with JCAs and Natural Areas:

NCA 128: South Hampshire Lowlands

NA 75: South Coast Plain and Hampshire Lowlands

I.5 Townscape Assessment Areas:

Havant (part) and Waterlooville, Purbrook and Cowplain.

2.0 Key Characteristics

- A low lying landscape with shallow undulations, predominantly south sloping.
- Varied geology and soils, with seasonally saturated heavy clays in the central and southern parts and locally higher, more undulating sandy outcrops resulting in agriculturally poor soils. .
- Predominantly pasture, commercial forestry and woodland with small some smallholdings
- High proportion of woodland, both coniferous plantation and ancient semi-natural woodland, some fairly extensive, often accessible.
- Woodland creates a secluded landscape, contrasting with the adjoining major towns, although there are strong urban fringe influences around large settlements.
- High proportion of semi natural habitats including ancient woodlands, wet woodland, remnant heath, unimproved neutral meadows and acid grassland supporting a rich biodiversity.
- Part of the former hunting reserve of the Royal Forest of Bere, which has shaped the pattern of woodland, commons and assart fields. Hedgerow oaks and hedgebanks are common features. The fringes are typically of later formal enclosure.
- Routes vary from straight roads with wide verges associated with formal enclosure, to narrow, winding, hedged lanes.
- Historically, mixed settlement pattern of low density dispersed farms, with linear settlements along stream tributaries and common edges.
- Extensive mid to late 20th century development of Waterlooville, Horndean and Cowplain which divides the area in two. Other significant modern expansion at Denmead and Soberton Heath.

3.0 Physical Characteristics and Land Use

3.1 This is a low lying, gently undulating landscape, predominantly south sloping, but rising to the base of Portsdown Hill in the south. Locally higher and more undulating where sand and gravel outcrops occur in the central and southern areas. The Lowland Mosaic Small Scale Wooded landscape in the north is underlain by silty sandy clays. Clay and gravel head deposits are found in the lower sections of the Wallington catchment and in 'fingers' of lowest lying land. Soils are seasonally waterlogged and generally unproductive, although higher quality soils are found on the lower slopes around the head of the Wallington and in a narrow band south and west of Boarhunt.

3.2 Land use is very mixed, with a higher proportion than average of pasture and rough grassland. Farm holdings are predominantly small¹⁴. The Lowland Mosaic Medium Scale Wooded landscape is predominant, extending over much of the area and characterised by irregularly shaped coniferous and ancient semi-natural woodland blocks, especially in the core Forest area. These combine with tall, thick hedgerows on low banks and ditches to form distinctive assart landscapes. Sometimes there are no hedges adjacent to lanes reflecting the historical informal commoning land management. The Lowland Mosaic Small Scale Wooded landscape in the north of the area is characterised by generally small fields with straight edges and low clipped hedgerows with often closely spaced spreading oaks. The Lowland Mosaic Heath associated landscape has small fields and typically small holdings, paddocks and

gardens around the woodland and plantation forestry of West Walk. The character area is rich in semi natural habitats.

- 3.3 The area falls within the Environment Agency Wallington catchment area. The Wallington in the west and Hermitage and Lavant streams in the east of the area are small and meandering, with numerous tributaries, although altered and canalised in suburban settings. The Wallington and its tributaries cause flooding of parts of the rural lane network. Small brick culverts, field ditches and small areas of standing water are common.

4.0 Experiential/Perceptual Characteristics

- 4.1 There are occasional elevated views over the area from the Lowland Mosaic Small Scale Wooded landscape and from Portsdown Hill (in the adjoining character area). Topography and woodland cover combine to give varying views; sometimes framing views to higher ground, but often limiting and containing them.

- 4.2 West Walk, Creech Wood, Southleigh Woods and Havant Thicket are woodlands with public access. They are supplemented by numerous rights of way which, together with the quiet rural lane network, provide good access, particularly for local residents. Long distance routes include Wayfarers Walk, Pilgims' Trail and Staunton Way.

- 4.3 Portsdown Hill separates the conurbations to the south from the western and central section of the area, making this area feel relatively remote. The high proportion of woodland cover creates a rural and secluded character, even close to settlements. There is a marked transition from urban to rural, although urban fringe characteristics such as high voltage power lines, heavy traffic, fly tipping, small holdings and horse paddocks are evident. The central and western parts of the area are more tranquil, although pockets of seclusion can be found in the more wooded parts of the east.

5.0 Biodiversity Character

- 5.1 This landscape character area has a mixture of habitat types. In the large urban residential areas to the east habitats include patches of broadleaved woodland, amenity grassland and sports pitches. In the central productive agricultural land, comprising improved grassland and some arable land there are patches of unimproved grasslands and woodlands. Woodland varies in character with broadleaved woodlands, active coppice with standards, coniferous plantations and mixed plantations. In the west of the area there is a large patch of mixed woodland consisting of broadleaved and coniferous plantations containing patches of wet heath, dry heath with acid grassland mosaic and some active coppice with standards. In the far east of the character area there is a habitat mosaic comprising semi improved and unimproved neutral grasslands, tall herbs and patches of bracken along with a woodland matrix comprising mixed woodlands and mixed plantations. This habitat patch is isolated from the wider area by a large urban area. Much of the woodland, including small isolated patches within the agricultural landscape, is ancient and semi-natural woodland or replanted ancient woodland.

- 5.2 The west of the area is covered by the Forest of Bere BOA. The Forest of Bere BOA contains a high concentration of ancient woodlands, wooded common, wood

pasture and unimproved grassland and is of particular importance for small-leaved lime woods.

5.3 There are two SSSIs designated in this landscape character area. Hook Heath Meadows SSSI is designated for its mixture of woodland and agriculturally unimproved acid pasture over London Clays which are rare in lowland Britain because of agricultural intensification. Their close juxtaposition here is of particular value as an invertebrate habitat. Lye Heath Marsh SSSI is a species-rich, unimproved neutral grassland, on the more freely-draining slopes supporting an intimate mixture of basic flushes, unimproved grassland, alder woodland and dense hedgerows, which combine to form a now rare association of individually restricted habitats.

5.4 There are over 220 SINC's within this landscape character area designated mainly because of ancient woodland habitats and agriculturally unimproved grasslands. West Walk SINC is a large site, covering 361ha of woodland where a significant element of ancient semi-natural woodland survives.. Hazleton Common LNR is a lowland heath site with some copses supporting a range of birds and invertebrates.

6.0 Historic Character

6.1 Archaeology

6.1.1 The woodland has always been exploited for its animals, grazing land and timber, although its poor soils made it less attractive for farming. In the Mesolithic, exploitation of the land was transient, and there is archaeological evidence that this area was particularly favoured. There is no evidence of fields or settlements in the Neolithic period, although artefacts suggest that the area continued to be exploited.

6.1.2 It is likely that this pattern of exploitation from adjacent settled areas continued through the subsequent periods. There was a strong Bronze Age presence in the coastal zone immediately to the south, with populations probably exploiting the resources of this area. Unusually, the area has no currently recorded Bronze Age burial mounds, although Bronze Age material has been found, implying some use of the landscape. Burial mounds have been found on the higher commons in the lowland wooded belt to the west. There is little evidence of Iron Age activity in the area.

6.1.3 In the Roman period the area was crossed by the Roman road to Chichester. There are some high status Roman villa sites, possibly related to Roman hunting estates which may have been the precursors of the royal hunting forest. Although there is little evidence of industrial activity, similar landscapes to the west and east have evidence of iron working, pottery and tile production by this period.

6.2 Historic Landscape

6.2.1 There is a strong correlation between the two major landscape types within the area, and their historic evolution. The Lowland Mosaic Medium Scale Wooded landscape forms the core of the 11th century Royal Hunting Forest of Bere – Portchester. 1810 mapping shows this area to be a mixture of wood, heath, rough grassland and marsh, or 'waste'. Piecemeal clearance of woodland for grazing resulted in irregular boundary assart fields and woods, and characterises the western and central parts of the area. Open commons such as at Soberton, Blendworth (Havant thicket), Walton Heath, Wickham Corner (Wickham

Common) and Creech Plain were grazed on an informal basis. The area also supplied timber for shipbuilding. The Forest of Bere was the last Royal Hunting Forest in Hampshire to be disbanded in 1810. Graziers acquired squatters rights on the more peripheral commons which became the focus for common edge settlement expansion. Many of the field boundaries contain individual trees often of ancient origin.

- 6.2.2 The Lowland Mosaic Small Scale Wooded landscape in the north of the area tends to have been subject to Parliamentary enclosure in the C. 19th. The 1839 tithe map shows that encroachment from the south was piecemeal, resulting in small to medium fields with wavy boundaries in an irregular pattern, interspersed with assarts. This process is likely to have been going on informally for a few hundred years prior to the C.19th. Very small, straight, regular enclosures tended to occur around the common edge settlements such as Soberton Heath, Purbrook and Hundred Acres. First edition mapping shows a similar pattern of small regular fields with far less woodland cover than the core area of the Forest. Straight field boundaries, clipped hedges and closely spaced oaks occur around Denmead, Havant and Waterlooville.
- 6.2.3 The mid to late 20th century saw the rapid expansion of Havant and Waterlooville, and mass housing in areas like Leigh Park. Large areas of woodland were cleared for development, leaving 'island' fragments such as Queen's Enclosure. Ancient woodlands such as Havant Thicket, Creech Wood and West Walk were replanted with conifers.
- 6.2.4 It is likely that deer parks once existed between Purbrook and Leigh Park and at Southwick, where there was also an early eighteenth century formal landscape of canals and terraces depicted in a Kip engraving of 1708. West Lodge near Wickham was used as a hunting lodge, and the eastern part of the eighteenth century parkland of Rookesbury Park is also within the character area. Leigh Park, now known as Sir George Staunton Country Park, retains many of its original features and is on the English Heritage Register. Where the park adjoins Havant Thicket the historic character of the Forest of Bere can still be found. This was one of a number of nineteenth century parks grouped around Havant, although many have subsequently been built over or developed. Often the house or other features, such as the woodland garden at Park Wood and the original house, mature trees and lodge at Oaklands School, have survived and contribute to the character and identity of the area.
- 6.3 **Built Environment**
- 6.3.1 Very straight lanes and roads associated with commons and parliamentary enclosures occur frequently, such as the Horndean Road, Emsworth Common Road and Church Road/Shoot Hill south west of Soberton Heath. Elsewhere the network is more winding and, with the exception of the B2177, has a predominantly north-south orientation.
- 6.3.2 The historic settlement pattern in the mid 19th century was low density and dispersed, especially in the core area of the Forest of Bere. Conversely, in the Lowland Mosaic Small Scale Wooded landscape the distribution was more nucleated, particularly along the upper reaches of the Wallington and around the commons.

Development spread loosely along roads and common edges, such as Soberton Heath, Newtown, North Boarhunt and Anthill Common. Southwick, Purbrook and Rowlands Castle are regular row settlements with Conservation Areas reflecting the architectural consistency of their cores. Irregular row settlements in the north include Horndean (on the boundary), and Worlds End and Denmead associated with the Wallington River. These settlement types tend to have straggling historic cores with modern infill. The eastern part of the area was subject to mass housing expansion in the 20th century which extended from Havant, Purbrook, Waterlooville and Denmead over the parliamentary fields and remnant Forest. The Common Edge settlements expanded to infill the adjoining open land and lost some of their historical relationship with their immediate landscape.

- 6.3.3 The distribution of farmsteads echoes the settlement pattern. Farmsteads are more frequent in the Lowland Mosaic Small Scale Wooded landscape and have a more nucleated distribution than in the 'core' Forest of Bere area. Most of the farmsteads are of modern or 19th century origin, reflecting the late enclosure of the landscape. Some farms in the Downs immediately to the north would have had grazing rights in the Forest of Bere.⁶
- 6.3.4 Typically, settlements are comprised of a variety of building periods and style from mid 19th century to the modern day. This is reflected in the irregular row and common infill settlements typical of the north of the area. There are frequent examples of Victorian double fronted detached red brick cottages originally associated with smallholdings, set back from the road with front gardens in generous plots. Post-1850 brick kilns producing the famous 'Fareham reds' brick in the area would have supplied local housing and the rapid expansion of the coastal settlements. The lack of listed buildings is indicative of the lack of status of the settlements and the limited prosperity of the area. Southwick is an exception, having a conservation area, the only grade I listed building in the character area (the Church of St James) and surviving timber framed buildings. The high concentration of listed buildings reflects the medieval origins of the village. Blendworth has a larger but less architecturally consistent conservation area.
- 6.3.5 Extensive areas of post WW2 housing developments were concentrated in the east, with employment opportunities focused on Portsmouth. This contrasts with the core Forest of Bere area to the west and the more piecemeal development in the Lowland Mosaic Small Scale Wooded landscape. Modern infill housing in settlements such as Soberton Heath, Rowlands Castle and Purbrook has had a strongly suburbanising influence.

EVALUATION

7.0 Forces for Change

1. New large scale urban extensions.
2. Farm conversion to residential and loss of traditional land management practices.
3. Pressure for urban fringe use related activities.
4. Enabling greater access opportunities for local people.
5. Climate change on semi natural habitats.
6. Forestry and woodland management change.

KEY QUALITIES AND EFFECTS OF FORCES

7.1 <i>Remnant islands of former Forest landscapes and assarts with 19th century enclosures on the fringes –especially the north – resulting in a well wooded landscape and thick hedgerow network with mature even age oaks.</i>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
I.3.4.6	Threats: Further loss of farmland and in particular hedges and hedgerow oaks. Development within or adjoining remaining open forest landscapes.
	Opportunities: Target agri-environment scheme and other grant funding sources towards conservation and enhancement of this key quality.
7.2 <i>Mixed settlement pattern of low density in the core former forest, and traditionally dispersed small settlements on the Forest edge where there are Victorian smallholdings and later mixed piecemeal development.</i>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
I.2.3	Threats: Modern conversions and piecemeal development in small common and former forest edge settlements, and continuing change of use from small holdings to residential. Increased traffic from commuter rat runs from burgeoning surrounding population.
	Opportunities: Influence LDF policy related to this quality (Winchester, Havant, Fareham councils) – in particular MDAs/SDAs (West of Waterlooville and North of Fareham) and SHLAA sites that are considered for housing allocation /reserve sites.

7.3

History of low intensity exploitation and high proportion of semi natural habitats, many of which have SINC designations; especially ancient woodland, wet woodland, wood pasture, wooded common and hedge, unimproved grassland and islands of heath and acid soil related habitat.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
All	Threats: Possibility of conflicts of interest /objectives for Forestry Commission owned former Forest areas, especially between access and conservation. Localised changes to ground and surface water levels by alteration to field drainage (dereliction or deepening). Climate change, weather extremes affecting wetland habitats. Isolated small woodland and heath island sites are generally more vulnerable than larger connected sites. Loss of habitat and potential connections between habitat to development particularly in the east and north of Fareham and pressure for urban fringe related uses, golf courses, horse paddocks and settlement edge recreation grounds. Opportunities: Influence River Catchment Flood plans of the Wallington, Hermitage and Meon. There are significant and large PAWS where there are potentially reversion opportunities. Much of the larger woodland blocks are under grant aided management but there is probably an opportunity for increasing the number of smaller woodland blocks under management. There are a few opportunity areas of potential heathland habitat creation particularly associated with West Walk and Soberton Heath. Support BOA target habitats for conservation, habitat linking, creation and reversion opportunities for lowland woodland, unimproved grassland, heath and damp habitats.

7.4

Commons and Forestry Commission managed sites form very local countryside to large centres of population, visually separated by Portsdown Hill.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
2.3.4.6	Threats: Over formalisation of semi-natural areas to provide recreation facilities. Increasing access opportunities can introduce greater likelihood of conflict through misuse (eg fly tipping trespassing) on local farmland. Opportunities: Influence and support Countryside access plan CAP objectives; including off road links between countryside sites and improve connections north-south in relation to severance by M27 and A3M. Influence green infrastructure policy for this part of the PUSH area. Influence development proposals in rural areas such as Havant Thicket reservoir.

7H: SOUTH EAST HAMPSHIRE DOWNS



Large scale downland is the predominant landscape type, typically with expansive, rolling arable landscapes and extensive wooded visual horizons, - Queen Elizabeth Country park between Charlton and the A3M



Mini scarps – Old Winchester Hill, Hill Fort with imperious views over the bend in the Meon Valley



Elevated downland at Butser - view over the Meon Valley.



Pedunculate oak-ash-beechwood – maple variant. – Hyden Wood with flush of bluebells.



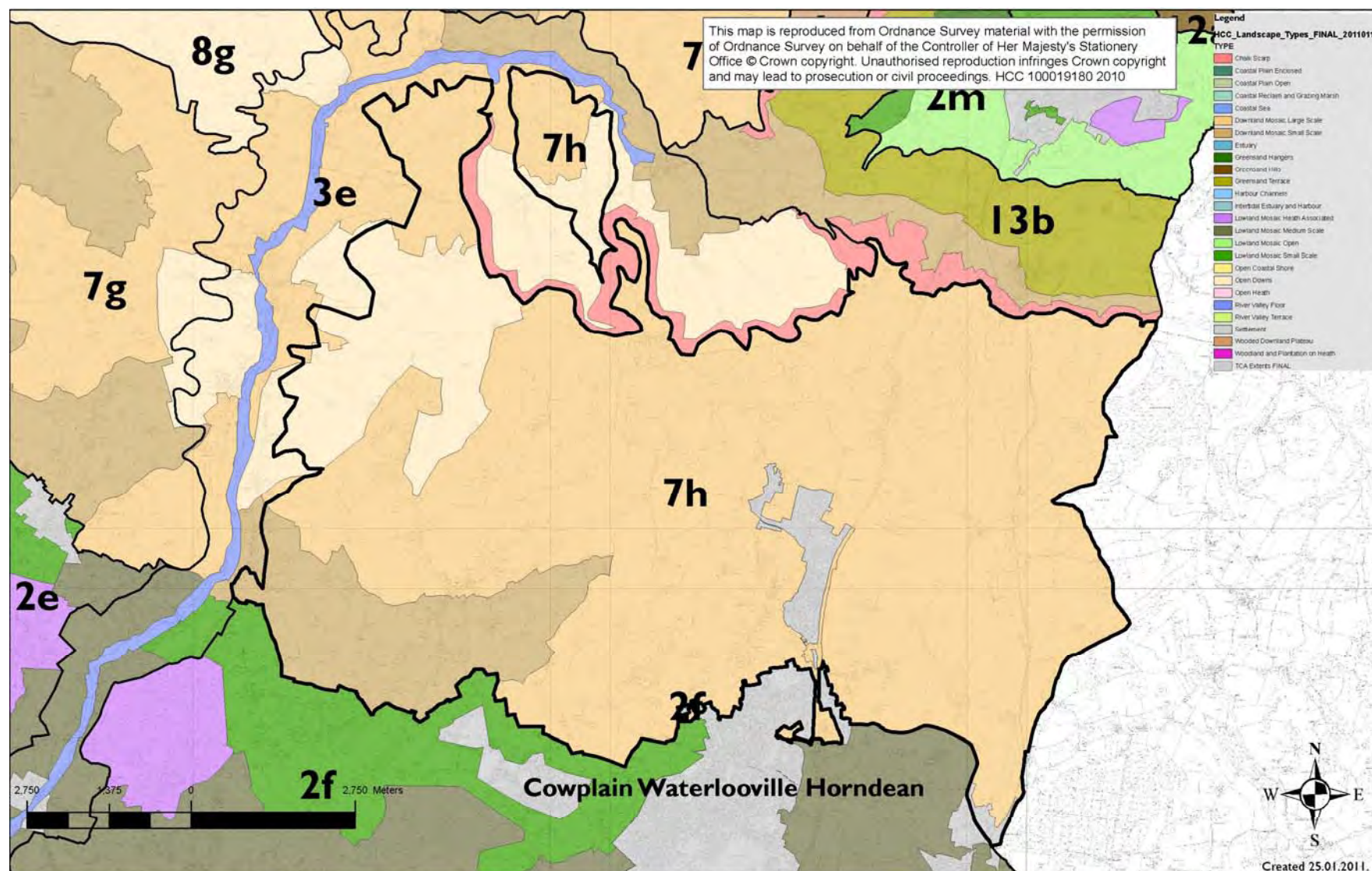
Large irregular fields bounded by tracks at Broadhalfpenny down, Hinton manor.



Valley settlement of Hambledon. – predominantly regular row. Small market place in the distance.



Clanfield – 20th Century Development



SOUTH EAST HAMPSHIRE DOWNS



Hampshire
County Council

1.0 Location and Boundaries

1.1 The top of the dip slope (which includes the South Downs ridge) is the predominant northern boundary feature. The southern boundary follows the join between the chalk and the lowland clay landscape. To the west and northwest it abuts the Meon Valley and to the east the County Boundary.



1.2 Component County Landscape Types

Downland Mosaic Large Scale, Downland Mosaic Small Scale, Open Downland
Significant sized settlement.

1.3 Composition of Borough/District LCAs:

East Hampshire DC

Clanfield Downland Mosaic (in part)
Queen Elizabeth Forest Wooded Estate Downland
Horndean Clanfield Edge Downland Mosaic

Winchester CC

Hambleton Downs
Lower Meon Valley

Closely follows the boundary of the combined East Hampshire character areas to the north and south and in the west where it meets the Winchester C.C. are the extent of the Hambleton Downs which covers most of the remaining part of the character area.

1.4 Associations with NCAs and Natural Areas

NCA 125: South Downs
NA 74: South Downs

1.5 Townscape assessment areas:

Catherington and Clanfield

2.0 Key Characteristics

- A dip slope containing a series of lower, broken escarpments, creating a large scale landscape of ridges and sweeping, smooth undulations.
- Sharp transition from clay to the south to Upper chalk geology, with clays in dry valley bottoms giving rise to well drained flinty soils.
- Small tributaries of the Wallington and Meon with several occasional winterbournes in the south extending well up chalk valleys when flowing. Arable dominated farming with significant areas of woodland associated with scarps, areas of former downland and small copses.
- Varied degrees of visual enclosure from dramatic panoramic views on the main escarpment to enclosed views framed by coombes and copses.
- Very rural, with urban fringe influences largely limited to the south east. A quiet rural lane network, but localised negative influence of the A3M .

- Intact network of lanes and rights of way connecting historic villages and the main chalk escarpment and providing recreational opportunities.
- Habitats of ecological significance include ancient semi natural woodland and remnants of unimproved chalk grassland, especially on chalk scarps.
- Unusual coincidence of Mesolithic and Neolithic finds, which are normally mutually exclusive.
- Rich legacy of Bronze Age artefacts on higher ground, including burial mounds which have visual links with the Meon valley.
- Mostly 19th century regular formal enclosures with early wavy boundaries and fields bounded by tracks and remnant downland on escarpment.
- Timber frame and red brick and flint buildings occur in farmsteads and village cores.
- Historically, a low density nucleated settlement pattern, concentrated in valley bottoms with little 20th century expansion apart from Clanfield and Horndean.

3.0 Physical Characteristics and Land Use

- 3.1** The broad and sweeping landform punctuated by small steep scarps is strongly influenced by the different chalk formations which run east to west. The Lewes Nodular formation creates the largest escarpment on the northern boundary to the character area. It coincides with an undulating and twisting ridgeline and series of hills which include, from east to west, Butser 270m, Teg Down Hill 225, Salt Hill 234m and Winchester Hill 197m. There are secondary escarpments with east – west running mini scarps associated with the Newhaven Chalk and dip slopes of the Tarrant Chalk. These are often associated with species rich downland or hanger woodland, e.g. Catherington Down, Windmill Hill, Wick Hanger and Hambledon hangers. The secondary escarpments are cut by north to south sloping, dry valleys.
- 3.2** The varied topography in this area has given rise to substantially different soil types and in turn different land cover patterns. The presence of clay with flint capping varies and is thickest on the lower slopes, frequently supporting areas of woodland and pasture. The thinner clay over chalk soils on well drained undulating dip slopes support large open arable fields. The thinnest soils on the scarp slopes support ancient hangers and chalk downland.
- 3.3** Arable land use is dominant overall, but the proportion of pasture is greater within the small scale downland mosaic area in the south and east. Hedgerows tend to be mixed in character. Low clipped hedges are abundant and more prevalent although thick, tall wooded hedges over 1.4m occur in lower sections of the dry valleys. Instance of mature specimens, typically oak, in hedges is occasional in the small scale downland mosaic, a borrowed characteristic of the adjoining lowland mosaic to the south. The long axis of fields follow the contours of the north-south running dry valleys and ridgelines. Field size is varied, typically 15 to 35ha, but smaller fields, below 7ha, occur in proximity to nucleated settlements of Clanfield and Hambledon. Large woodland blocks such as Hyden and Coomber wood (c300ha) and Queen Elizabeth Country Park occur on the dip slope of the major South Downs escarpment. This part of the character area has shared characteristics with the wooded estate downland type immediately across the County boundary with West Sussex. The secondary escarpment to the south is associated with long, narrow hanger woods such as Hambledon Hanger.

- 3.4 There is almost no naturally occurring open standing or permanently running water. There are two significant Winterbourns one in the Idsworth Finchdean valley (feeds the R. Ems) and the other in the Hambledon valley. (feed the R. Wallington). They run infrequently, but when they do flow, they have caused major flooding problems to valley floor settlements (e.g. winter 2001). Man made ponds occur at Clanfield, and Catherington and were associated with wheelwrights – but are not unique to this landscape.

4.0 Experiential/Perceptual Characteristics

- 4.1 The variety of topography and landcover results in varying degrees of enclosure and rich texture The northern part of the character area contains high, exposed and open landscapes associated with the major chalk ridge and dip slopes. The southern dry valleys feel secluded and intimate, with, large woodlands and hangers, and fields bounded by thick tall hedges.
- 4.2 Public access is well served by important long distance rights of way such as the South Downs Way National Trail, Monarch's Way and the Sussex Border Path/Staunton Way. Queen Elizabeth Country Park and Winchester Hill NNR are popular honeypot sites providing varied informal recreation opportunities.
- 4.3 The diversity of settings in this downland landscape in turn leads to a variety of tranquillity levels. There are opportunities to experience prospect and refuge from ridge lines and dry valleys and thick hedge lined tracks. The area retains dark night skies typical of more remote downland but these are affected by night time glow from development along the south coast. The hilly topography lessens the spread of noise from the A3 trunk road where it cuts through the chalk ridge at Butser. The relatively high proportion of woodland imparts a strong sense of naturalness to sections of the landscape. The tranquillity of the landscape is compromised by development around Clanfield and Horndean, but again the surrounding ridges limit the perception of development in the wider landscape.

5.0 Biodiversity Character

- 5.1 This is an arable agricultural landscape with patches of improved grasslands, and contains internationally designated habitats at Butser Hill SAC where a varied range of slope gradients and aspects have a strong influence on the vegetation composition. A particular feature of the SAC is its lower plant assemblage - it has the richest terricolous lichen flora of any chalk grassland site in England. It also supports the largest known UK example of the distinctive southern hepatic mat association of leafy liverworts and mosses on north-facing chalk slopes which are very rare in the UK. Butser Hill is also designated SSSI for its dense yew woods and sheep-grazed chalk grassland. The calcareous yew woods are outstanding examples of a habitat with a very small representation in Britain and this, combined with chalk grassland and mixed scrub, were the subject of a series of pioneer ecological studies.
- 5.2 Other SSSIs in this character area include Catherington Down SSSI (comprising short downland turf with a good range of chalk herbs, including large populations of several species of limited distribution such as pyramidal orchid, autumn lady's tresses and, most notably, round-headed rampion), Coulters Dean SSSI (comprising a small area of chalk grassland of considerable scientific interest because (a) its flora has been recorded at intervals since 1914; (b) its flora and invertebrate fauna are very

rich), Old Winchester Hill SSSI (comprising rich grazed grassland of mainly sheep's fescue but with the full range of characteristic downland grasses present). A further SSSI at Peake Wood is a prime example of ash/hazel woodland on calcareous soils. It lies on a west-facing chalk slope on which there are variable depths of loamy material mixed with chalk flints. The woodland is mainly old hazel coppice, with ash, field maple, beech, yew, and some conifers. There are a wide range of other woody species and a rich herb layer dominated by dog's mercury and bluebell. Rare plants include common star of Bethlehem and fly orchid. Butser Hill and Old Winchester Hill are both designated as National Nature Reserves while Catherington Down, Catherington Lithe, Oxenbourne Down and Yeoll's Copse are all Local Nature Reserves.

- 5.3 There are further patches of unimproved and semi-improved grasslands within the agricultural landscape and these often occur in mosaic, sometimes with semi-improved neutral grassland. Woodland exists throughout the area but is most prevalent in the north and east, where there are some large areas including Queen Elizabeth Forest and Hyden Wood. Types include broadleaved and mixed woodland, coniferous, mixed and broadleaved plantations, and some active coppice with standards (e.g. Lowton's Copse). In the south, woodland mainly comprises strips and interconnected patches of broadleaved woodland, with some coniferous and mixed plantations. Forestry scrub is often associated with woodland mosaics and patches.
- 5.4 This landscape character area contains most of the South Downs (East Hampshire) BOA, which covers the chalk downland on the predominately north-facing escarpment of the South Downs. Its habitats include calcareous yew woods and rich downland flora and bryophytes.
- 5.5 There are over 90 SINC's in this landscape character area. Some are designated for their unimproved grassland/ relict downland, whilst the majority are designated for their ancient and semi-natural woodland.

6.0 Historic Character

6.1 Archaeology

- 6.1.1 The scarp along the north (but slightly outside the character area) is rich with Mesolithic evidence, the distribution of which extends into the open downland zone that over looks the Meon valley. It is clear that the distribution of Mesolithic evidence within and adjacent to the character area is focused onto the high ground over looking the Meon valley. There is only limited Mesolithic evidence within the core of the character area, but there is evidence of a Mesolithic site and artefacts in the north- south valley that runs past Clanfield.
- 6.1.2 Generally speaking in Hampshire the distribution of Mesolithic and Neolithic evidence tends to be mutually exclusive. However in this area they coincide, where the Mesolithic distributions from the high sandy soils to the east to the westward lowland and coast cross the Neolithic distribution along the chalk belt of the South Downs. There are three Neolithic long barrows on the open down which wraps around the northwest corner of the character area, two of which are within the character area and one of which is immediately adjacent. These are located on the higher ground above the Meon Valley. Neolithic artefacts mimic the distribution of Mesolithic material along the scarp, and south west into the open downland. This

may be taken to imply Neolithic exploitation of the Meon valley (there is a Neolithic site recorded in the Meon valley itself) and the open downland that flanks it. There is also a small trend of Neolithic sites and finds along the valley running past Clanfield, perhaps suggesting a route across the downs. There is Neolithic and Mesolithic evidence in the north-south valley at Finchdean, and perhaps a hint in the valleys to the west. It appears that this area was only lightly exploited, possibly characterised by penetration of the downs pattern along valleys.

- 6.1.3 The scarp to the north has a rich legacy of prominent Bronze Age burial mounds, and this also includes a burial mound on the open down to the west. Again this distribution seems to have significance to the Meon valley rather than to 7H. There are two Bronze Age settlements recorded in the Meon valley and it seems likely that the Meon valley and its flanks were settled and farmed. There are also Bronze Age barrows in the valley by Clanfield, and on the high ground between that valley and the valley to the east. There is a cluster of sites and finds in the Chalton area. It would appear that whilst the character area as a whole was extensively rather than intensively used at this time, the area at Clanfield started to emerge as a farmed landscape.
- 6.1.4 The area around Chalton has a density of Iron Age settlements and field systems which suggest agricultural exploitation of the north east corner of the character area, evolving out of the Bronze Age focus. At Old Winchester Hill above the Meon is the hill fort of Old Winchester Hill, on open downland and overlooking the valley. This was the most important local settlement, focused on the valley and/or any east-west route along the South Downs with the valley flanks being farmed. The area between the Meon and the northeast corner was also probably exploited, but the evidence for settlement is much sparser. The South Downs were more sparsely settled than the downs to the west of Winchester.
- 6.1.5 In the Roman period the northeast corner remained extensively settled, including the emergence of several villas. There were also several villas established in the small scale mosaic, including a putative vineyard at Hambledon. These may have been established in an area not previously exploited. The distribution of Roman villas and settlements on the eastern margin of the character area may betray a route north, speculated from Havant and perhaps connecting the coast to the Alice Holt pottery industry.
- 6.1.6 There are Saxon burial grounds in the Meon valley, which probably indicate the emergence of valley bottom settlement. Saxon burial grounds and settlement on the downs at Chalton, suggest that the agricultural landscape continued to develop in the northeast of the character area.

6.2 Historic Landscape

- 6.2.1 The northerly part of this character area was dominated by open downland common land until the mid C.19th and coincides with the ridge and dip slope of the South Downs chalk escarpment. Although predominantly open downland, there are significant blocks of ancient estate woodland at Ditcham, Stansted, Hen and Coombe Woods. Large areas of common downland were enclosed, relatively late, in the mid C.19th to form medium sized regular pattern fields. Scrub and post 1810 woodland including conifer plantations and later beech plantation were established on the

steepest areas of War and Head Down and now form part of Queen Elizabeth Country Park.

- 6.2.2 The majority of this character area, which covers the lower parts of the major dip slope, secondary escarpment and most of the dry valleys, forms the second block of historic landscape types. The fieldscapes in this middle/lower section are predominantly the result of early informal enclosures of medieval to post medieval origin, which evolved in a piecemeal fashion from open landscapes of downland and open fields. The mid to upper sections of the dry valleys have an abundance of large fields with wavy boundaries. These are probably the direct result of woodland and scrub clearance, assarting and informal enclosure likely to be of late to post medieval origin. The dominant historic landscape type on the higher ground and dip slope is irregular downland fields bounded by tracks and roads, and is one of the most extensive areas of this historic landscape type in Hampshire. Closer inspection of the field systems in these locations shows that there is a mix of informal and parliamentary enclosures. Fields are orientated at right angles to former drove routes. Corn-sheep husbandry was developed through the medieval period, with communal flocks brought up to pasture on the downs in the day and down onto the arable field at night to provide valuable manure. The system here was far less efficient than in the east part of the South Downs- perhaps because there is greater presence of clay over chalk and flint which made the soil more difficult to work. The evidence for this may be reflected in the apparent concentration of deserted medieval villages at Rushmere, Glidden, Hinton Manner, Blendworth and Idsworth. The location of these villages and valley floor settlements such as Hambledon and Finchdean coincides with the more wavy boundary and older enclosures. Further up the dip slope to the north the field size increases and there is a greater area of later, formal enclosure derived from downland but more occasionally from open fields and downland such as at Chalton. There is a large area of modern field boundary loss resulting in Prairie fields at Windmill Hill and north of Chalton.
- 6.2.3 The third area is in the lower parts of the Hambledon and Clanfield /Catherington dry valleys. The southern parishes of this character area had rights in the Forest of Bere to the south. The chalk soils here are heavier (deeper clays and less well drained than further north) hence these areas were less intensively worked. These two small areas are predominantly assarts interspersed with small parliamentary fields enclosed at a similar time to the Forest of Bere in the early C.19th.
- 6.2.4 There are several historic parks. Typically they are quite small, and tend to be located in the south or lower parts of the dry valleys. There was a deer park at Hambledon Park and others have been suggested at Bury Lodge and Chalton Park. Hambledon also has two other historic parks that make a significant contribution to the landscape character of the area: Whitedale House (which appears to have had a much larger park in the C.18th) and Fairfield House. Two of the largest parkland sites were Old Idsworth House and Idsworth Park. Although much this parkland is now under arable cultivation some parkland trees survive including the Lime Avenue. Other parks include Ditcham Park, Hinton Daubnay and Catherington Retreat House. In the C.19th there was a cluster of small parkland sites in Blendworth.

6.3 Built Environment

- 6.3.1 The road network is not particularly dense. B and C class roads tend to follow the bottom of dry valleys and are often lined with thick hedgebanks. The A3 is the only A-class road in the character area. It was upgraded in the 1990s, including the cutting at Butser Hill.
- 6.3.2 Overall the settlement pattern tends towards low density nucleation. It is concentrated in the south in the lower parts of the dry valleys and away from higher downland. Higher settlement density occurs within the small scale downland mosaic. The presence of deserted medieval villages is a defining characteristic. Villages appear to have contracted in the early 19th century as the local agrarian economy declined and employment opportunities grew in the urban coastal areas. The village cores maintain strong historic rural edges and the larger villages such as Hambledon and Clanfield have substantial village cores –although they are generally smaller than the historic cores of the adjoining river valley settlements. There is a preponderance of name places with -don or -ton suffixes reflecting associations with downland hills and early enclosure of farmsteads, villages or manor estates. Development from the south is a constant threat to the rural landscape, particularly the northward sprawl from Horndean to south and east of Clanfield. Despite this Clanfield's historic core and rural edge is still well preserved on its northern side.
- 6.3.3 Farmsteads of medieval origin are strongly linked with the downland mosaic small scale landscape in the south west of the character area. Although most of the farmsteads are isolated and fairly prominent in the landscape, there are examples of village associated steadings around Blendworth, Clanfield and Chalton, illustrating the tendency towards a nucleated settlement pattern.
- 6.3.4 There are numerous listed buildings in the downland villages. Hambledon has the largest concentration. The conservation areas occupy a large proportion of village footprints and often retain significant amounts of adjoining rural edges and lack of modern development. Hambledon has a small market area but this is an exception in these downland villages. The downland mosaic small scale landscape has significant collections of timber frame, 1700 – 1850 brick buildings and most notably chalk stone buildings. Brick and flint are abundant across the landscape as a proportion of the total building number.
- 6.3.5 Hambledon Cricket club is purportedly the oldest in the country (founded 1750). The gradual decline of the Hambledon Cricket Club coincided with the forming of the MCC in 1787 when the control and administration of the game slowly passed from Hambledon to Lord's.) HMS Mercury above East Meon was the navy's main on shore communications training establishment. A large section of the site has been taken over by the Sustainability centre which aims to promote greener lifestyles.

EVALUATION

7.0

Forces for Change

1. New small scale development within and on the fringes of settlement particularly in the south east of the area.
2. Farm conversion to residential and possible loss of grazing land management practices.
3. Pressure for urban fringe related activities and recreational pressures on open access and country park/countryside service sites.
4. Climate change; storm and winterbourne frequency and intensity, changes in crop choice.
5. Take up of land management grant schemes.
6. South Downs national park designation and South Downs Management Plan.

KEY QUALITIES AND EFFECTS OF FORCES

7.1

A wide variety of historic landscapes which are distinctly visible as a series of east- west bands from open downland to formal informal enclosures and areas of surviving former drove routes which give the fieldscape a structure based on ancient countryside.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:

CONSEQUENCES

2.3.5

Threats:

Ancient sinuous field boundaries form long, visible lines in the relatively open landscape, connecting early enclosures to former downland areas. Their association with tracks and lanes make them well used features, perhaps susceptible to widening/realignment. Cropmarks, possibly associated with past open fields, are quite abundant especially around settlements and are vulnerable to ploughing. Trend towards larger farm size with land taken from neighbouring farms and consequent field enlargement / amalgamation.

Opportunities:

Emphasise historical importance to keep the intactness and form of ancient tracks and lanes through transport and rights of way planning. Greater awareness of the likelihood of cropmarks associated with former open fields could be raised with land managers. Further interpretation of the historic landscape – perhaps identifying ancient drove tracks, former open field systems and former downland to influence local level assessments.

7.2

Several deserted and shrunken medieval hamlets and villages, many of which retain a morphology relatively free of modern development with a high proportion of listed 1700 to 1850 buildings and strong sense of association with ancient countryside. A high density of visible valley bottom farmsteads in the southern half of the area.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:

CONSEQUENCES

1.2.4

Threats:

Cumulative impact of small scale development in visually prominent parts of existing settlements could dramatically increase their visual presence in the landscape. Change of use of existing farmsteads and farmland to residential use with gardens and paddocks appears to be quite high, especially in the southern half of the area. Possible changes to increase frequency of and damage by winterbournes to valley bottom settlement and steadings.

Opportunities:

Local level assessments and village design statements could give the opportunity to emphasise the importance the small fields of medieval origin have on the setting of the

	small settlements. Conservation area appraisals of Hambledon, Catherington, Chalton, Rowlands Castle, Blendworth and Horndean provide basis for monitoring condition and retaining character of the most historically important built parts of settlement. When designing new or built additions promote reference to historic building guidance documents (HCC, EH and local) particularly in respect of brick and flint, malmstone, timber frame, thatch, clay tiles.
7.3 <i>Predominantly arable farmland but with significant areas of semi-natural habitat including semi natural ancient woodland and downland – these habitats tend to be in visually prominent location (steep areas and higher ground) increasing the perception that the landscape appears to have a high- semi natural content.</i>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
All	Threats: Balancing nature conservation interest of the relic downland with recreational pressures. Species composition change due to climate change – particularly associated with the steep elevated relic downland sites. Crop type changes in response to climate change – particularly in more open areas such upper parts of dip slope could have dramatic effects on visual characteristics of the area. Opportunities: The South Downs ESA covered much of the north of this area – there is potential to increase higher level stewardship particularly in this area. Ways to ensure the continuation of the trend for recent positive change in the form of conversion of arable land back to pasture and management of chalk grassland habitat – particularly in the BOA area could be investigated. Support BOA target habitats in the north and south for conservation, habitat linking, creation and reversion opportunities for unimproved grassland, relic downland and semi natural ancient woodland.
7.4 <i>Varying hedgerow character and undulating landform gives a variety of experiences of enclosure, from wooded and treed hedged landscapes in the south to expansive landscapes in the north which have scenic beauty and a great sense of prospect over the sweeping chalk landform.</i>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
3.4.6	Threats: Increase in traffic related issues associated with the A3 Over formalisation of semi-natural areas to provide recreation facilities. Close proximity to large populations immediately to the south can introduce greater likelihood of conflict through misuse (e.g. fly tipping, trespassing) on local farmland. Proliferation of vertical structures on escarpment tops disrupting sweeping lines of the landscapes. The small exposed hanger woodlands may be most susceptible to predicted increased frequency of storms and substantially alter the perception of the area as wooded. Opportunities: Increase draw to the area from national park designation– particularly from settlements to the south and Butser Country park, and feasibility of reducing reliance on cars for access. Visual impact assessment of existing vertical structures and changes are likely to be over fairly extensive areas. Local opinions could be sought for particular valued views to help with identifying important receptor sites.