

Introduction & Summary

Description

Opportunities

Key facts
and data

Landscape
change

Analysis



Key characteristics

- The plain slopes gently southwards towards the coast. From the coastal plain edge there are long views towards the sea and the Isle of Wight beyond.
- The underlying geology of flinty marine and valley gravels extends several miles inland to the dip slope of the South Downs and the South Hampshire Lowlands. This gives rise to deep and well-drained high-quality soils.
- In places, streams and rivers flow south from the higher land of the Downs to the sea.
- Coastal inlets and 'harbours' contain a diverse landscape of narrow tidal creeks, mudflats, shingle beaches, dunes, grazing marshes and paddocks. These include the internationally important Chichester, Langstone, Portsmouth and Pagham harbours, the Hamble Estuary and the recent coastal realignment site at Medmerry between Chichester Harbour and Selsey.
- There are stretches of farmed land between developed areas, often with large arable fields defined by low hedges or ditches.
- There are isolated remnants of coastal heath in the west.
- Sand dune grasses and intertidal marsh communities are characteristic of the coastline, while small areas of species-rich meadow remain inland.
- The coastline provides feeding grounds for internationally protected populations of overwintering waders and wildfowl and is also extensively used for recreation.

- Along the exposed, open coastal plain and shoreline, tree cover is limited to isolated wind-sculpted woodlands and shelterbelts.
- The area has significant urban development, with settlements along the coastline dominated by the Portsmouth conurbation, suburban villages and seaside towns including Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Worthing linked by major road and rail systems.
- Historic fortifications along the coast include the Roman fort at Portchester and 19th-century defences and later naval installations built to protect the Portsmouth naval dockyard.



Catamaran departing Portsmouth Harbour.

SEO 2: Plan for the creation of a strong landscape framework within and around major settlements and identified growth areas, while managing and enhancing existing greenspace and access, and balancing the needs of agriculture, communities and the natural environment.

For example, by:

- Developing a comprehensive framework of green infrastructure throughout the NCA and the creation/improvement of other green spaces that link into the heart of urban areas and contribute to urban greening, meeting Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt) where possible.
- Working in partnership with local authorities to develop effective solutions to address negative impacts of recreational pressure on bird populations as identified by the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project.⁹
- Seeking potential compensation sites and ensuring that adequate mitigation is provided for development that will cause significant adverse impact upon the area's internationally important bird populations.
- Ensuring that all coastal development and access provision respects the area's particular sensitivity to bird disturbance issues.
- Creating new areas of multifunctional greenspace within and surrounding identified growth areas, including community food gardens and significant areas of new saline and freshwater wetlands forming sustainable urban drainage systems to improve water quality, provide a local recreational resource, enhance landscape setting and aid flood alleviation.
- Working with local groups such as the Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Nature Partnerships, Chichester Harbour Conservancy, local planning authorities and individual businesses to take a strategic view of commercial opportunities that can be delivered in a way that supports the natural environment.
- Engaging early in the scoping of new developments to ensure that they maximise their contribution to sustainable development.
- Seeking to maintain and enhance areas of open countryside in this heavily urbanised NCA, to preserve the distinct settlement pattern and ensure that local communities have access to greenspace for their wellbeing and enjoyment.
- Encouraging a strategic approach to the planning of land use around Chichester and Langstone harbours and the Manhood Peninsula to address the pressures of climate change and development, ensuring that natural processes continue to function and the comparatively wild and tranquil character is retained.
- Ensuring that development and its associated infrastructure (including light, noise and air pollution) does not intrude on the special qualities of Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the South Downs National Park; and ensuring that the landscape character within these areas and their settings is conserved, restored, reinforced or created as appropriate to reflect the ambitions of their respective management plans.
- Promoting and enhancing the rights of way network throughout the area, especially along the coast and linking to the South Downs, while developing new permissive access that links towns and settlements to quality greenspace and other areas of interest as part of a cohesive network of inspiring access provision for all.

⁹ Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project (URL: www.solentforum.org/forum/sub_groups/Natural_Environment_Group/Disturbance_and_Mitigation_Project/)

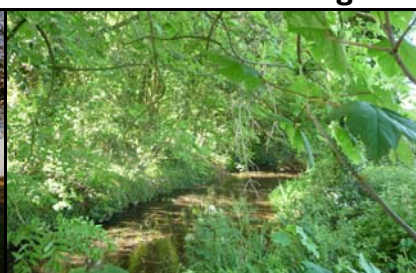
9G: HAVANT AND EMSWORTH COASTAL PLAIN



Pasture field near Warblington castle; a Church and manor settlement which has had little change to its original form. Hedges can often be thick and wooded and which play an important characteristic in screening modern development.



Open coastal plain fields north of Emsworth.



Crystal clear small chalk springs emerge from the junction between chalk and clay.



Southmoor – coastal grazing marsh/meadow – harbour edge embankment in middle distance.



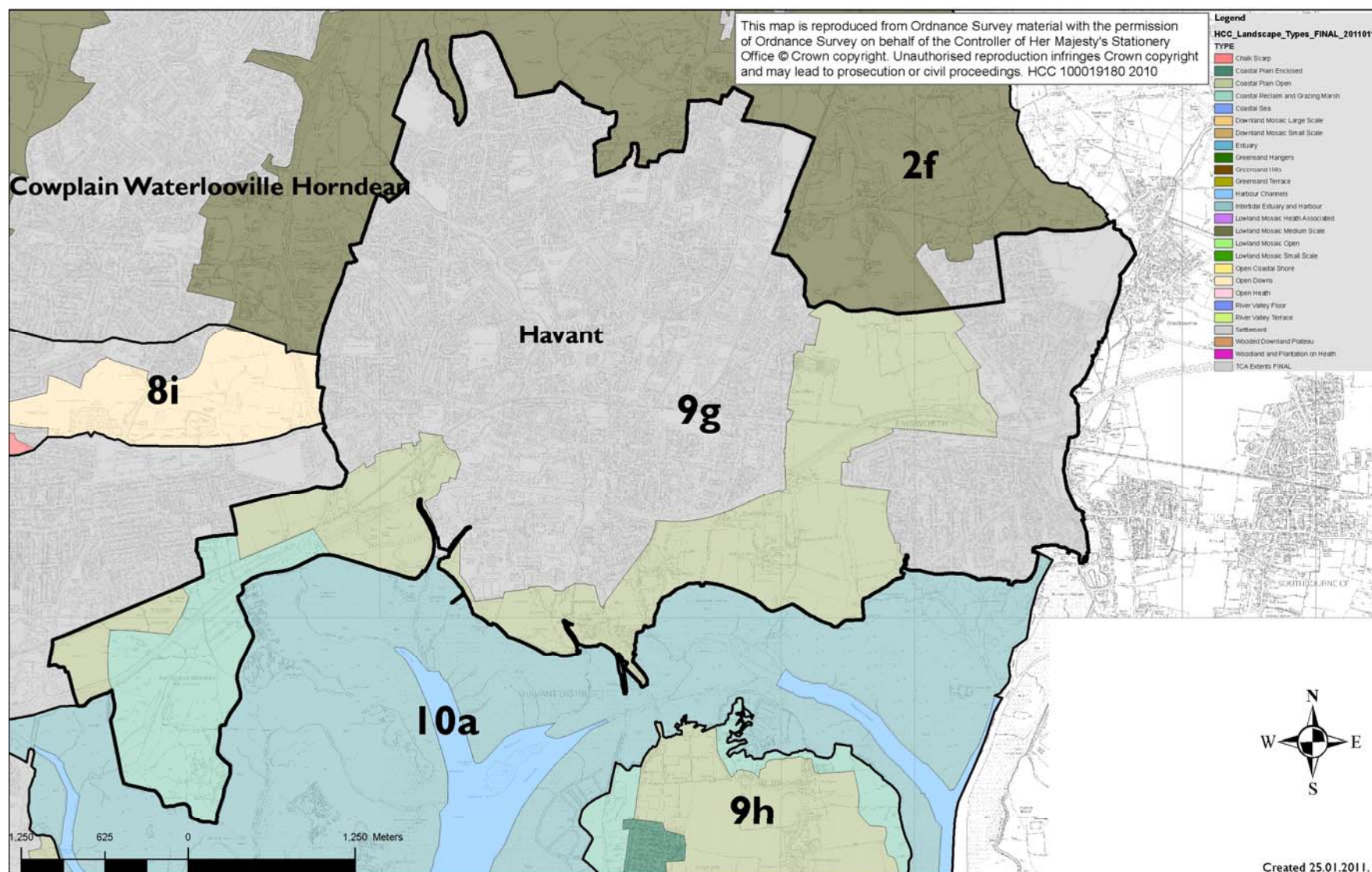
Langstone Mill –there are several historic tide mill along this part of the coast.



Stockheath common–remnant oaks, surrounded by Leigh Park



View over Denvilles – Havant from northern edge of the character area.



HAVANT AND EMSWORTH COASTAL PLAIN

I.0 Location and Boundaries

I.1 This area is bounded to the east by the County boundary with West Sussex and to the west by Farlington marshes and Portsmouth. It extends northwest to the foothill of Portsdown Hill and the strong A3M corridor.



I.2 **Component County**
Landscape Types
Coastal Plain Open

I.3 Composition of Borough/District LCAs:

Havant BC:

(extends into Portsmouth UA at Farlington Marshes)

Rural related:

Southleigh Agricultural Plain
Warblington and Wade Court
Southmoor and Broadmarsh Coastal Park

Urban and settlement related:

Historic Bedhampton
Havant Historic Core
West Leigh Industrial Estate
Leigh park
Bedhampton and Havant – north west suburbs
Brockhampton Industrial Area
Denvilles
New Brighton
Emsworth Western Suburbs
Emsworth Historic core

I.4 Associations with NCA and Natural Areas

NCA 126: South Coast Plain

NA 75: South Coast Plain and Hampshire Lowlands

I.5 Townscape assessment areas:

Havant

2.0 Key Characteristics

- A former river terrace landscape of Pleistocene origin with extremely fertile and nationally important agricultural silty loam alluvial soils.
- Springs emerge on the chalk clay boundary and form short crystal clear chalk streams.
- An early small scale enclosure landscape which has been substantially modified to larger open fields in the northern half of the character area.
- Remnant mature oaks in suburban settings along verges and stream courses likely to have been associated with former field hedges.
- Varying tranquillity levels declining in proximity to modern development/busy transport infrastructure.
- Good access for walkers from settlements down to the harbour shore.
- Well preserved setting of the Saxon origin settlement of Warblington church and manor.

- A historically nucleated settlement pattern that has expanded massively in post second world war – including social housing area of Leigh park.
- A particular concentration of historic tide mills and ponds which have now been converted and adapted to modern uses and evidence of relatively small scale Salterns.

3.0 Physical Characteristics and Land Use

3.1 A flat coastal plain landscape which has origins as a former river terrace of sands, silts and clays lying over London clay north of the A27, and chalk south beyond a thin band of Lambeth clays, silts and sands. The coastal plain rises very gently to 20m AOD to the north and 30m at the Portsdown foothills. The rich stoneless alluvial soils which have developed over the river terrace gravels are some of the most fertile and agriculturally important in the southeast region. There are local superficial deposits of sands and gravels in the area north of Havant and West Leigh.

3.2 The rich agricultural soils have given rise to intensively used mixed farmland with market garden crops including horticultural use and glasshouses. Field sizes vary considerably from smaller fields in the wetter less well drained areas in the south to medium and large scale fields further north. Much of the land has been exploited for agricultural use and there are few areas of common and woodland.

3.3 The occurrence of chalk bedrock in the southern half of the character area beyond the clay has determined the hydrology and influenced the early economic development of the area. Clean chalk aquifer fed freshwater springs bubble up to the surface a mile to 2 miles inland and form short crystal clear streams with a slightly raised temperature. These streams and their small floodplains of rich alluvium include Brockhampton and Hermitage streams, the Lavant brook and river Ems. Substantial sections of these streams have been canalised as part of housing flood defence schemes which has lead to very rapid run off and stream bed erosion further downstream. Parts of the Lavant brook and Ems still retain very natural profiles.

4.0 Experiential/Perceptual Characteristics

4.1 Although the predominant landscape type in this character area is Open Coastal Plain, the numerous wooded stream courses and thick hedgerows especially in the southern half of this landscape and the settlement fringe vegetation impart an enclosed feel. The grazing marsh/meadow area of Southmoor and arable farmland inland create a more open feel. Views from the adjoining character areas to the north give the impression of open farmland and wooded suburbs of natural and ornamental planting.

4.2 There are small residual areas of common land such as Stockheath (now built into an extensive network of green linear spaces in Leigh Park). Southmoor and Broadmarsh coastal park have good footpaths (including the Solent Way) and open access respectively but are probably not as popular with walkers as the access along the Chichester harbour side. There are good links associated with the courses of the north-south running streams which link the coast with development inland including the Hayling Billy disused railway.

- 4.3 The perception of tranquillity of this landscape is very varied. The expansive 20th century development, major busy transport routes and few semi natural habitats inland contrast with the peaceful harbour edge and treed stream sides and mill ponds that can be experienced, particularly at quieter times of the year. The calls from the seasonal wintering wildfowl and expansive mudflats and saltmarsh heighten the sense of wildness and contact with wildlife.

5.0 Biodiversity Character

- 5.1 The southern fringes of this landscape character area are internationally designated. Chichester and Langstone Harbour RAMSAR and SPA cover a small area of coastal grazing marsh in the southwest. Chichester and Langstone harbours are large, sheltered estuarine basins comprising extensive mud and sand flats exposed at low tide. The site is of particular significance for over-wintering wildfowl and waders, and a wide range of coastal and transitional habitats supporting important plant and animal communities. The harbour is among the twenty most important intertidal areas in Britain as a summer and autumn assembly ground for waders during the moult (when they require abundant high protein food) and as a post-moult wintering ground. The Solent and Isle of White Lagoons SAC covers a small lagoon associated with Farlington Marshes in the south of the area. It is isolated in marsh pasture but, although separated from the sea by a sea-wall, receives sea water during spring tides. The lagoon holds a well-developed low-medium salinity insect-dominated fauna. These designations are also covered by the Langstone Harbour SSSI. A separate SSSI exists at Warblington Meadow valued for its unimproved grazing marsh in the south of the area adjoining Chichester Harbour. It is of special interest for its gradation from freshwater, baserich marsh to old reclaimed saltmarsh, and for its rich associated flora.
- 5.2 Beyond the designations this landscape character area mostly comprises a large area of urban development, interjected with amenity grasslands and sports pitches which, along with gardens and street trees, occasional patches of parkland, broadleaved woodland, unimproved grassland and semi-improved neutral grassland and occasional patches of parkland provide some habitat variation. The coastline has a different habitat character than elsewhere in the character area. There is still some urban development, including marinas and a quarry, but there are also patches of scattered scrub, semi-improved neutral grassland and coastal grazing marsh. Woodland includes broadleaved woodland and parkland. In the southeast there is a sizable patch of arable land and improved grassland providing a more open character than elsewhere.
- 5.3 The coast of this character area is covered by the Chichester/Langstone Harbours and Hayling Island BOA. The area is of particular significance for wintering wildfowl, waders, and breeding birds within the harbour and surrounding permanent pasture and woodlands.
- 5.4 There are a few SINCs in this landscape character area, designated mainly for the notable species they support. Farlington Marshes is designated as a local nature reserve.

6.0 Historic Character

6.1 Archaeology

- 6.1.1 The fringes of Langstone harbour are rich in Mesolithic evidence indicating the coastal plain was being utilised. In the early part of the period this would have been an inland rather than a coastal zone, despite being harbour edge today.
- 6.1.2 There is also evidence of Neolithic settlement and activity around the harbour fringe, and the long barrows on Portsdown Hill suggest that the plain was settled or farmed. There is evidence of Neolithic pottery on the plain below Portsdown Hill (although not in this character area), which whilst not definitely settlement, does imply settled existence.
- 6.1.3 There was Bronze Age settlement around the fringes of Langstone harbour and below Portsdown Hill, but no evidence of field systems. The burial mounds are on the higher ground behind the coastal plain and the number of Bronze Age hoards in this landscape may indicate a less intensively settled landscape or reflect the mechanisms of cross channel trade. There is Bronze Age burial activity at Langstone and North Hayling at each side of the approach to Hayling Island.
- 6.1.4 There is evidence of Iron Age settlement on the coastal plain, but this is limited in scope and scale. There are also Iron Age sites below Portsdown Hill and on Hayling Island and it seems that the coastal plain below Portsdown Hill was settled and farmed.
- 6.1.5 There is Roman evidence along the coastal plain under Portsdown Hill presumably reflecting the important transport corridor along the coast, and this does seem to be particularly strong in this vicinity area. Havant is a cross roads of Roman roads (with the probability of a settlement) and there are Roman villas both east and west of Havant, and on the north edge of Langstone harbour. There is a Roman road heading towards Hayling, which lead to a Roman temple on Hayling Island.
- 6.1.6 In the medieval period Havant and the castle at Warblington were established, and the coastal road was an important communication route. Some areas of marshes today would have been salt marsh, possibly associated with salterns, but probably more seasonally used then today.

6.2 Historic Landscape

- 6.2.1 From the OS drawing map of 1797 it is clear the majority of the area had been enclosed by this time and that the field patterns south of the former Roman Road and northwards of Havant and Emsworth, were of irregular size with straight boundaries, their long axis perpendicular to the streams to maximise access to water. Moving eastward and northward towards the boundary with Emsworth common, the field boundaries became more wavy. On the adjoining land, where the numerous chalk fed springs and brooks expunge along the harbour coast there were areas of grazing meadow and marsh which appears to have been unenclosed at this time. Much of the lower lying areas had been embanked by this time including Southmoor, which still retains the essence of coastal grazing meadow/marsh. There are several medieval saltern sites recorded, particularly on the farmland north of Chichester harbour. The coastal landscape here was probably favoured for relatively early reclamation, to a very fertile farmland landscape. The major period of this

activity along the coast was between 1600 and 1900. Generally, the southern half of the character area seemed to have a mix of uses and was intensively farmed. Grazing dominated adjacent to the streams and the land around the harbours was used for growing corn. Small watercress beds and several orchards south of Havant are discernible on the 1797 map.

6.2.2 The rural agricultural landscape has had drastic recent change particularly during the 20th century, both to expansion of Havant and Emsworth and significant reorganisation of the field patterns into a much more regular pattern with extensive boundary loss. Much of the land for dairying and cattle has been reduced and replaced by development and horsiculture. Mid to late 20th century adjoining coastal development and reclamation such as at Broadmarsh (created from landfilled waste and arisings from the M27) has often been unsympathetic and obliterated the former rural landscape.

6.2.3 Part of the site ascribed for Bedhampton deer park is within this area but has been developed for housing so it is unlikely that any evidence for the deer park has survived. There was also a deer park at Warblington but no field evidence has been identified. It was probably surrounding or close to Warblington Castle where some features of the moated castle and garden survive. Wade Court is another historic site possibly dating back to the 13th century with later alterations and additions including a small park and ornamental water gardens. Given the urban character of the area many of the historic parks and gardens have been affected by development or lost entirely. However, the surviving garden features and planting do contribute to the character of an area like Bedhampton. Near the centre of Havant a small period garden has been created around a surviving eighteenth century gazebo. There are a number of public parks and open spaces including Havant Park as well as Havant and Warblington Cemeteries.

6.3 **Built Environment**

6.3.1 The character area is bisected by major transport routes of the A/M27 which runs east-west and also the south coast railway. The elevated sections of the former increase its dominance in the landscape. The other major road is the A259 which is on the line of the Roman road connecting Winchester and Southampton with Chichester. Despite modern large scale development the historic road network still pervades.

6.3.2 There is a strong historic settlement association with the line of the east-west Roman road (now the A259) and occurrence of chalk springs. These include Bedhampton, and market towns of Havant and Emsworth, all of which have sufficient historical interest to have conservation areas. The area was a focus for early industries such as salt making, tanning and parchment making. As well as Emsworth being an important port known for its ship building, rope making net and sail making and fishing and home to large oyster fishing fleet. There was a settlement at the site of Warblington castle and church since the 6th century. The agricultural setting to the church and manor is well preserved with no modern development.

6.3.3 By the turn of the 19th century much of the local traditional industries were in decline, but the area offered a more rural and peaceful existence to the crowded industrial and naval base at Portsmouth. It was the immediate post 1945 period that

saw the most notable expansion and development of Leigh park estate to re-house many of the residents from bomb-damaged Portsmouth. At the time it was the largest municipal housing scheme in Europe⁸¹. The single style social housing incorporated generous public green space often retaining large specimen oaks. From this point onward, the area's rural character changed to a predominantly residential suburban character.

- 6.3.4 There is a high density of farmsteads, particularly to the north of Emsworth and Bedhampton. These are mostly of 19th century origin. Many have been subsumed by modern development and lost their farming function. To the south of the A27 there are far fewer farmsteads of more varied origin.
- 6.3.5 Tide mills are a particular characteristic of this character area and in the context of the Solent coastline. The mill at Langstone is an iconic feature of this part of the coast. The associated mill ponds are attractive features and many have public access to the edge such as at the Langstone and around Emsworth. Flint is a fairly typical building material due to the presence of chalk on the coastal fringe.

EVALUATION

7.0

Forces for Change

1. New housing development mainly potential urban extensions and cumulative impact of small infill sites and changes to existing stock.
2. Pressure from urban fringe use related activities.
3. Recreation pressures.
4. Climate change in particular sea level rise and increase in frequency of storms.

KEY QUALITIES AND EFFECTS OF FORCES

7.1

A rich historic built environment associated mainly with the harbour side, such as tide mills, Warblington church and manor, Emsworth and Langstone High St.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:

CONSEQUENCES

4

Threats:

Increased flood and tidal inundation risk to harbour side Conservation Areas and listed buildings, a large proportion of which are located below the 5m contour. Isolation of some historic buildings, townscape and materials, alignment and design of flood defences which are out of character with the low lying coastline and setting.

Opportunities:

Coastal sea level rise impact and mitigation studies such as the North Solent Shoreline management plan could make reference to the effect on the historic built environment.

7.2

Parts of the southern fringe are important for the transition between freshwater base rich habitats to brackish reclaimed saltmarsh. They have a rich flora and its close relationship with the internationally important harbour habitat to the south by providing space at high water for overwintering wildfowl to roost and feed.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:

CONSEQUENCES

2.3.4

Threats:

Inability to locate compensatory habitat from sea level rise and competition with economic and social land uses (e.g. farmland and recreation) within the character area reducing the semi natural habitat proportion still further. Changing salinity of tidal mill ponds and streams affecting species composition. Loss of amenity sites and increase in disturbance / pressure for recreation in particular inland high water Brent goose sites.

Opportunities:

Locating compensatory habitats in managed coastal retreat areas where sea defences are breached in line with the objectives of the Solent Dynamic Coast Project (SDCP) and Shoreline Management Plan (SMP)- in particular in relation to former Saltern sites. Habitats include dilapidated/ flooded f former salterns, coastal grazing marsh and other important coastal habitats particularly along the Warblington coast and Southmoor.

7.3

Nationally important agricultural land quality remains in local / strategic gaps and provides an essential separation between settlements.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
All	Threats: Potential permanent loss of agricultural land to urban extensions particularly in the Havant Emsworth Gap. Possible change in use due to pressure for Gaps to provide greater range of uses and as a green infrastructure resource. Urban fringe related land management changes such as proliferation of horticulture related fields and formal amenity areas on land which traditionally supported market gardening/dairying.
	Opportunities: Improve and maximise the function of gaps by co-ordinated stewardship of land designated as Gaps.

7.4

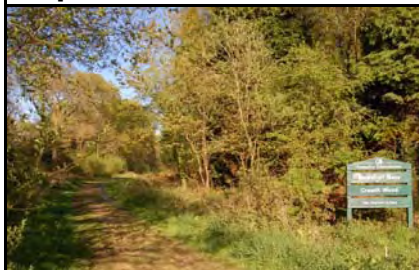
Variety of accessible and well connected open spaces in residential areas related to stream locations, and popular harbour side access which has a high degree of naturalness and tranquillity in close proximity to a large population.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
All	Threats: Coast paths may need to be realigned to accommodate compensatory habitats in intertidal areas (as a result of climate change). This realignment may be difficult to negotiate with landowners and may result in a loss of coast path or a reduction in its quality. Loss of connectivity between open spaces by small infill development adjacent to stream network. Fluvial, tidal and tide locked flooding- particularly susceptible are the Hermitage and southern fringes of the character area.
	Opportunities: Support open space strategies and audits/green infrastructure strategy to identify where stream side linkages could be improved. Ensure any new development which affects these sites takes this quality into account in the design. Better linkage of stream side open spaces from the coast to centres of population would fit the objectives of the Solent area CAP and influence outcomes of the Hampshire Coastal Access Audit.

2F: FOREST OF BERE EAST



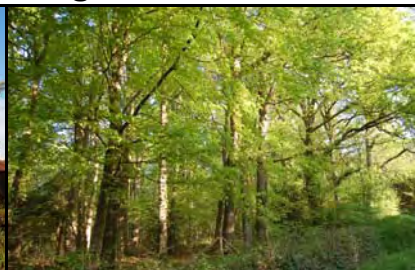
Typical assart landscape of small to medium sized fields bounded by irregularly shaped woodland blocks and hedgerows, often of ancient origin.



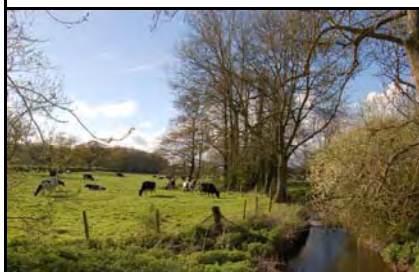
Large woodland managed by Forestry Commission with variety of access opportunities – Creech Wood.



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	<p>Threats:</p> <p>Possibility of conflicts of interest /objectives for Forestry Commission owned former Forest areas, especially between access and conservation.</p> <p>Localised changes to ground and surface water levels by alteration to field drainage (dereliction or deepening).</p> <p>Climate change, weather extremes affecting wetland habitats. Isolated small woodland and heath island sites are generally more vulnerable than larger connected sites.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Opportunities:</p> <p>Influence River Catchment Flood plans of the Wallington, Hermitage and Meon.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>There are a few opportunity areas of potential heathland habitat creation particularly associated with West Walk and Soberton Heath.</p> <p>Support BOA target habitats for conservation, habitat linking, creation and reversion opportunities for lowland woodland, unimproved grassland, heath and damp habitats.</p>

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	<p>Threats:</p> <p>Over formalisation of semi-natural areas to provide recreation facilities.</p> <p>Increasing access opportunities can introduce greater likelihood of conflict through misuse (eg fly tipping trespassing) on local farmland.</p> <p>Opportunities:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Influence green infrastructure policy for this part of the PUSH area.</p> <p>Influence development proposals in rural areas such as Havant Thicket reservoir.</p>

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