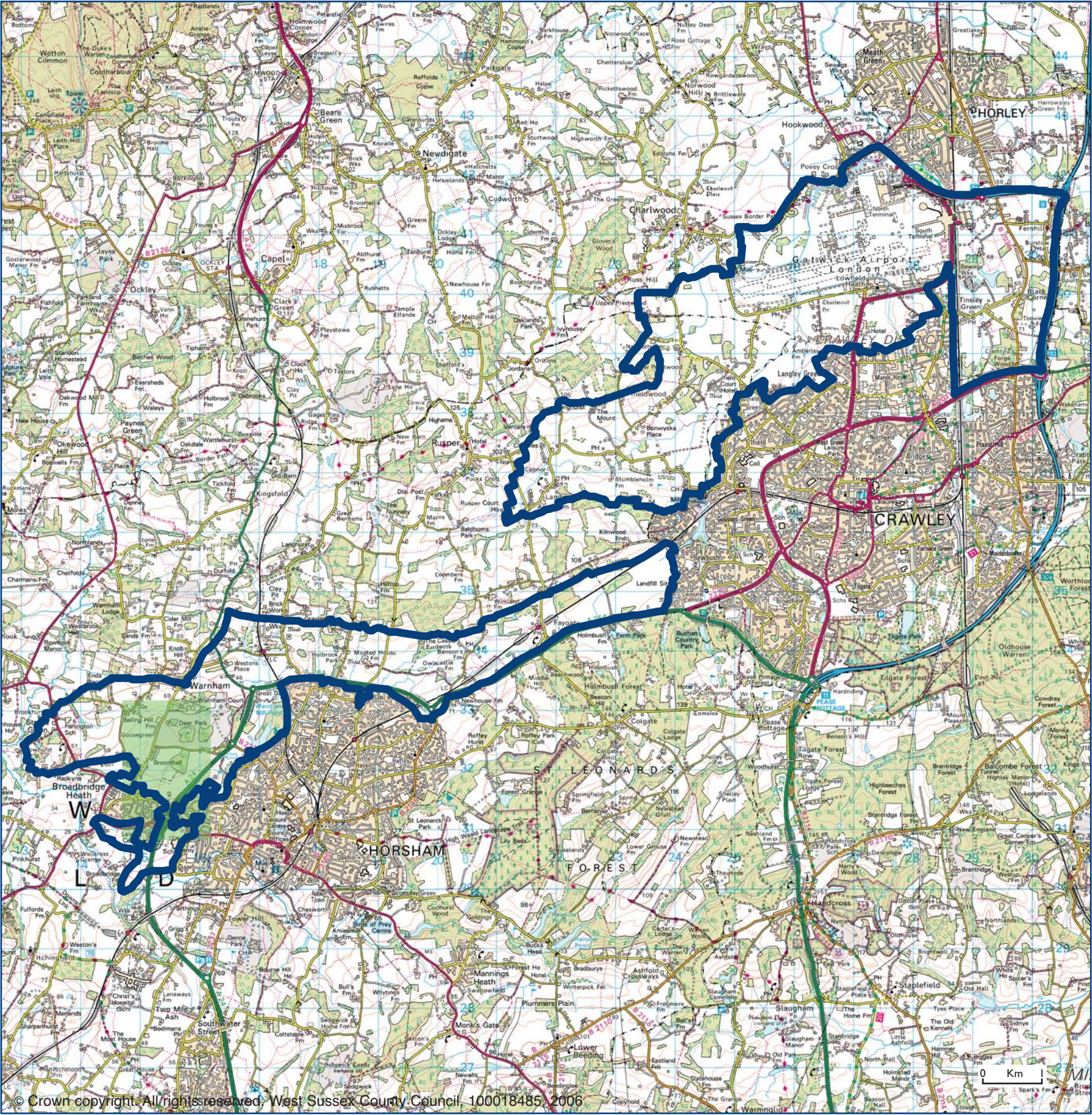


Overall Character

In the north of the county, this character area comprises a narrow clay vale running north east/south west between low wooded ridges to the north, and the higher wooded ridges of the High Weald to the south. It contains a mixed landscape of woodland, shaws and hedgerows, pasture, and low lying areas, overlain by road and rail corridors, and pylon lines. The towns of Horsham and Crawley New Town have a dominant influence, as do the dual carriageways of the A24 and the A264, which cut through the landscape.



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Sheet LW8

Northern Vales

Low Weald

The area covered by the Sheet includes:

The Upper Mole Farmlands (K1), the Warnham and Faygate Vale (K2), the Upper Arun Valley (P1) Landscape Character Areas defined in the unpublished **Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment** (October 2003).



Key Characteristics

- Flat to gently undulating narrow clay vale, with floodplain and upper tributaries of the River Mole in the north east.
- Crossed by the upper reaches of the River Arun in the south west including one of its main tributaries, Boldings Brook.
- Pattern of small, medium and large fields with a variable density of hedgerows.
- Predominantly pasture farmland in the north east changing to arable farmland with smaller areas of pasture around Warnham and Faygate to the south west.
- Scattered tree cover, isolated woodlands and copses.
- Distinctive field trees and farm ponds.
- Major road and rail corridors and pylon lines.
- Strong suburban and urban fringe influences of Crawley, Horsham and Gatwick Airport.
- Some localities retain an enclosed rural character, for instance, west of Ifield.
- Significant area of historic parkland of Warnham Court.
- Large golf course near Ifield.
- Visual intrusion in parts from retail and industrial areas, housing, and sand and gravel workings.

Historic Features

- Occasional moated farmsteads such as Ifield Court Farm.
- Motte and bailey castle and other medieval earthworks.
- Historic parkland at Warnham.
- Mix of small irregular field pattern and more recent, straighter field boundaries.
- Historic Mills.
- North-south drove roads.

Biodiversity

- Fragmented woodland and hedgerow habitats.
- Small areas of ancient woodland and unimproved pasture.
- Small isolated field corner copses and pockets of streamside woodland.
- River Mole and River Arun.
- Warnham Millpond Local Nature Reserve.
- Field ponds and lakes.

Change - Key Issues

- Visual and noise impact of Gatwick Airport.
- Pressure of traffic on rural lanes eroding road verges and hedge banks.
- Potential pressure for further road improvements.
- Potential for increased recreational pressure around Horsham and Crawley.
- Localised visual impact of urban fringe uses, including development of horse paddocks, smallholdings and small scale industrial uses.
- Pressure for further urban development.
- Loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees due to agricultural intensification.
- Localised loss of hedgerow boundaries often replaced by post and wire fencing.
- Pressures for engineered flood defences on river valley and floodplain.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Overall sensitivity to change is moderate. Thick hedgerows, hedgerow trees and occasional woodlands to some extent reduce its visual sensitivity. However, those parts that retain a stronger rural character and the remaining woodlands, hedgerows, unimproved grasslands and historic lanes, are particularly sensitive to change.

Key sensitivities are:

- Large scale commercial and residential development.
- Small scale incremental changes eroding rural character.
- Unsympathetic flood defences.
- Pasture improvement and land drainage.
- Expansion of horse paddocks.
- Visual and noise intrusion of major traffic routes.
- Minor and major road improvements.
- Loss of existing woodlands and hedgerow boundaries.



Horsham District - Scattered tree cover and hedgerows



Historic Park - Warnham

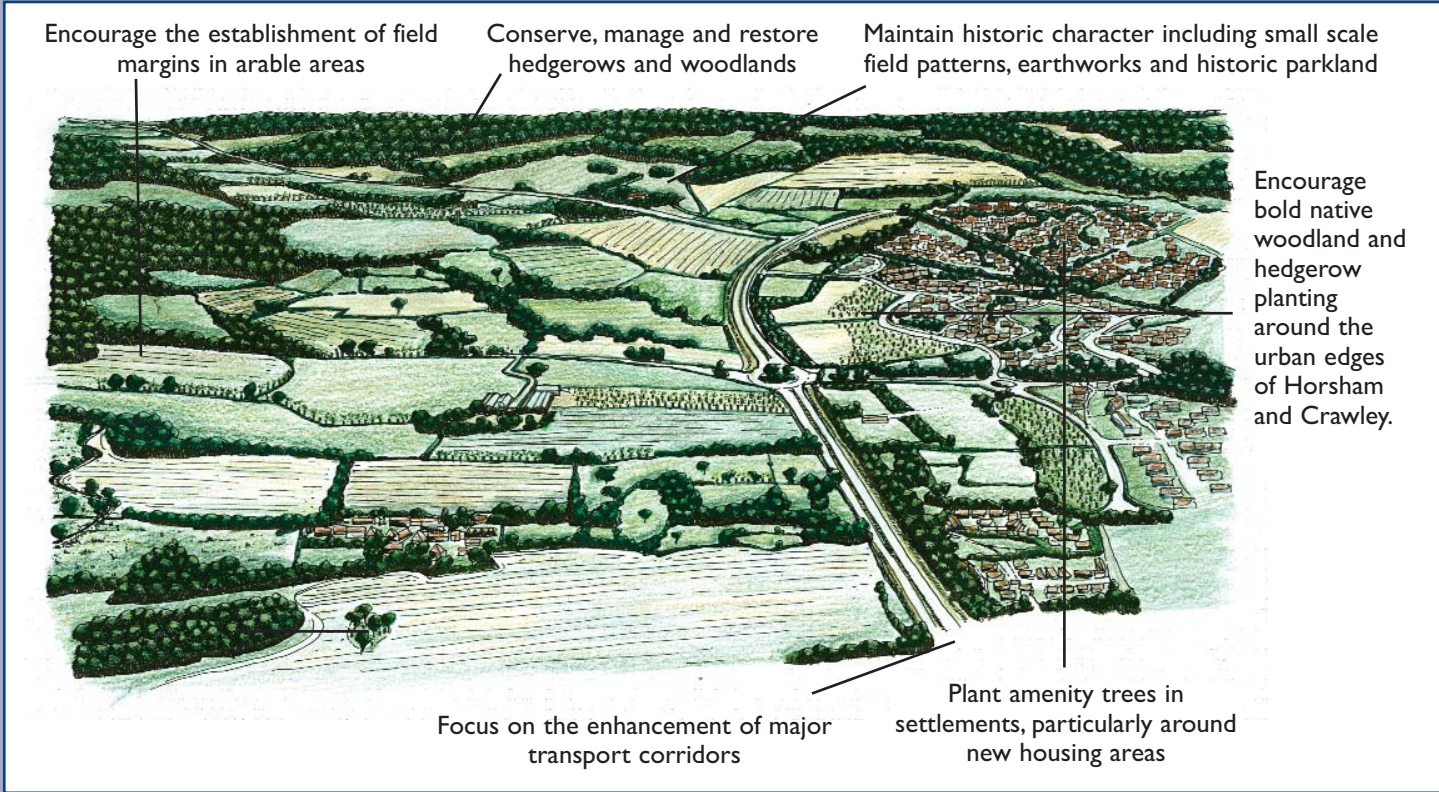


Pasture at Ifieldwood



Crawley - Urban Fringe

Land Management Guidelines



Conserve the mostly rural character of the area.

- Conserve, manage and restore woodlands, hedgerows, hedgerow trees, field ponds, species rich grassland and meadows, unimproved grassland and meadows.
- Maintain historic character including small scale field patterns, earthworks and historic parkland.
- Establish a framework of new woodland and hedgerow planting.
- Promote the establishment of field margins in arable areas.
- Conserve the open character of the floodplain and promote natural floodplain management avoiding the introduction of engineered flood defences.
- Conserve, enhance or restore marginal vegetation along the River Mole and River Arun tributaries.
- Conserve historic lanes with their ancient oaks and unimproved roadside verges.
- Focus on the enhancement of the major transport corridors, seeking better integration into the existing field pattern of the wider landscape.
- Ensure any small scale development responds to the historic dispersed settlement pattern and local design and materials.
- Seek to reduce the intensity and visual impact of horse grazing.
- Ensure any new development around the urban edges, in particular Horsham, Crawley and Southwater, is well integrated with the wider landscape pattern. Encourage bold native woodland and hedgerow planting. Buildings should also blend in with the landscape in scale, form, colour and design.
- Plant amenity trees in settlements, particularly around new housing areas.
- Encourage screen planting of native trees and woodland around roadside buildings and service areas, and industrial and commercial development, including Gatwick Airport.
- Support any initiative to create community woodland for multi purpose objectives including active and passive recreation, timber production and coppicing.

The Guidelines should be read in conjunction with:

- County-wide Landscape Guidelines set out in *A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape* (November 2005) published by West Sussex County Council.