

Overall Character

This Character Area consists of the smaller southern part of K3 lying north of Steyning and west of the Adur Valley. It is a mainly pastoral landscape with a well-wooded character. Strong patterns of small to medium size fields of pasture enclosed by woodlands, shaws and hedgerows are generally common across the area, although some localities contain larger arable fields. Local character varies depending on the presence or otherwise of concentrations of horse paddocks, and the A24 which follows the western boundary. Away from the A24 most areas have a tranquil character.

Key Characteristics

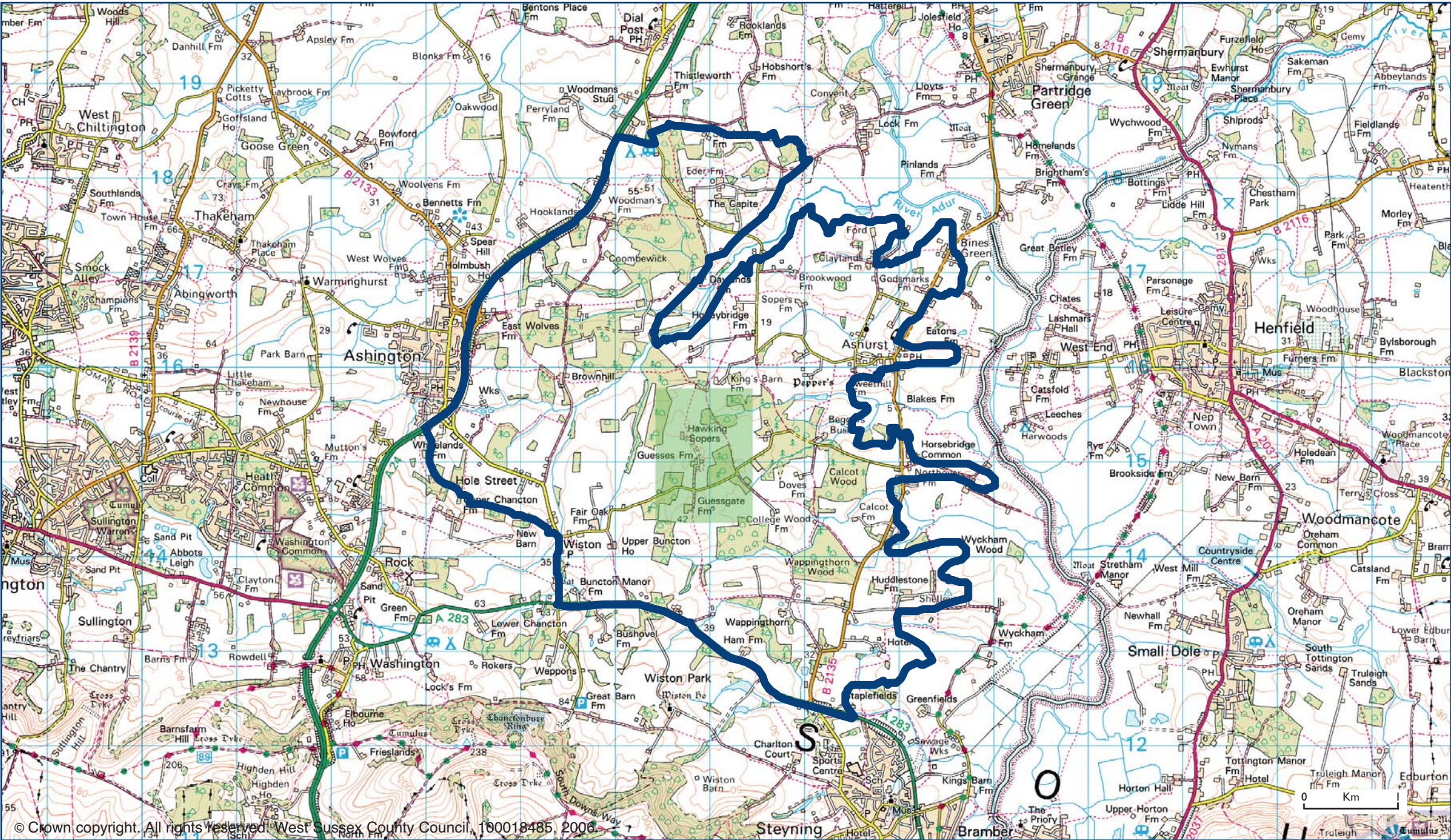
- Gently undulating landform.
- Predominantly small to medium-sized pasture fields, enclosed by woodlands, shaws and hedgerows.
- Isolated trees in pasture.
- Local concentrations of horse grazed paddocks, giving a ranch like appearance.
- Dense cover of ancient broadleaved woodlands and conifer plantations.
- Small stream valleys draining to the Adur.
- Scattered country houses, some suburban in character.
- Network of rights of way, green lanes and droveways.
- Scattered, traditional Wealden farmsteads, cottages and a few linear villages.
- Many small farms and cottages are concentrated along lanes with the few historic linear villages located at crossroads or road junctions.
- Low density of winding rural lanes.

Wiston Low Weald

Low Weald

The area covered by the Sheet is derived from:

The Central Low Weald (K3) Landscape Character Area as defined in the unpublished **West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment** (November 2003).



Historic Features

- Scattered farmsteads, many of which are Listed Buildings.
- Moated farmstead and Watermill at Bunton.
- Old droveways.
- Small and medium-sized assarts. Linear patterns associated with droveways and irregular fields radiating out from settlements.
- Medieval church at Ashurst.
- Scattered brickyards and brickworks.
- Prehistoric occupation and Roman Road.

Biodiversity

- Overall biodiversity reduced in some areas by intensive arable fields, concentrations of horse paddocks and plantation woodlands.
- Many small to medium-sized broadleaved semi-natural woodlands. America and Gratwicke's Wood is a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) and currently identified as ancient woodland in part.
- Large isolated trees in pasture.
- Marginal vegetation and small patches of wet woodland, including willow and alder woodlands on wet grounds along streams.
- Ancient woodland, notably a section of Capite Wood (SNCI), Wappingthorn Wood, Calcot Wood, Trickles Wood and Grinders Wood.
- Field corner ponds.
- Small number of unimproved neutral grasslands. Unimproved grassland at Bines Green (SNCI).
- Rich in hedgerows, with high density and good connectivity.

Change - Key Issues

- Poor hedgerow and woodland management.
- Fragmentation of hedgerows and the ageing and loss of hedgerow and pasture or field trees.
- Neglected ponds.
- Increased traffic.
- Road improvements to A24 Trunk road to the west.
- Expansion of horse paddocks.
- Increased use of rights of way network.
- Increased rural development including large scale modern farm buildings.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Key sensitivities are:

- Unsympathetic development, changes in settlement pattern and addition of suburban features.
- Unsympathetic or major road improvements.
- Loss of woodland cover or diversity of woodland due to plantation planting or lack of management.
- Changes in farming practices leading to expansion or addition of modern farm buildings.
- Changes in land management practices leading to change in field sizes, and loss of hedgerows and isolated pasture trees.
- Loss of tranquillity.
- Rights of way network vulnerable to reduction in quality due to poor drainage management and increased use.



Farmsteads and houses along linear roads - Ashington



Pasture enclosed by hedges and woodland - Spithandle Lane



Isolated trees - Kensett's Corner



Green, winding lanes - Capite Wood

Land Management Guidelines

Conserve and manage streamside vegetation and ponds

Encourage the development of hedgerow trees on roadsides through tagging

Conserve and reinstate small scale pasture and hedgerow patterns wherever possible

Replant and manage isolated trees in pasture

Encourage the planting of tree belts and hedgerows around horse paddocks

Conserve existing tranquil rural and predominantly wooded character of the area.

- Conserve and encourage sound management of all woodlands. Support and promote woodland industries.
- Link hedgerows through new planting and encourage the development of hedgerow trees through tagging, especially on roadsides.
- Create new woodlands, linking in with existing field boundaries to extend and link existing woodland areas. Encourage wooded linkage through land parcels where there are gaps in the network.
- Maintain the historic character of the area, including the pattern of small fields and the network of green lanes and droveways. Conserve and reinstate small scale hedgerow and pasture wherever possible.
- Maintain and restore hedgerow patterns and shaws.
- Replant and manage isolated trees in pasture.
- Conserve and manage streamside vegetation and ponds. Encourage appropriate management to perpetuate conservation and landscape interests.
- Seek to reduce the extent, intensity and impact of horse grazing. Encourage the planting of tree belts and hedgerows around horse paddocks.
- Encourage landscape enhancements to existing village edges and road approaches. Plant amenity trees in villages.
- Consider the cumulative impact on landscape character of small developments and land use change. Avoid the introduction of suburban styles and materials.
- Encourage management of existing ponds.
- Encourage sound management of rights of way network.

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.