

Overall Character

This Character Area lies in the south of the County between Crossbush to the west and Highdown Hill in the east. It forms a transition between the open lower Coastal Plain to the south and the wooded downs to the north. Whilst the busy A27 trunk road cuts through the middle, there are few urban influences in much of the area. As a result it retains a mostly undeveloped, rural character.

Key Characteristics

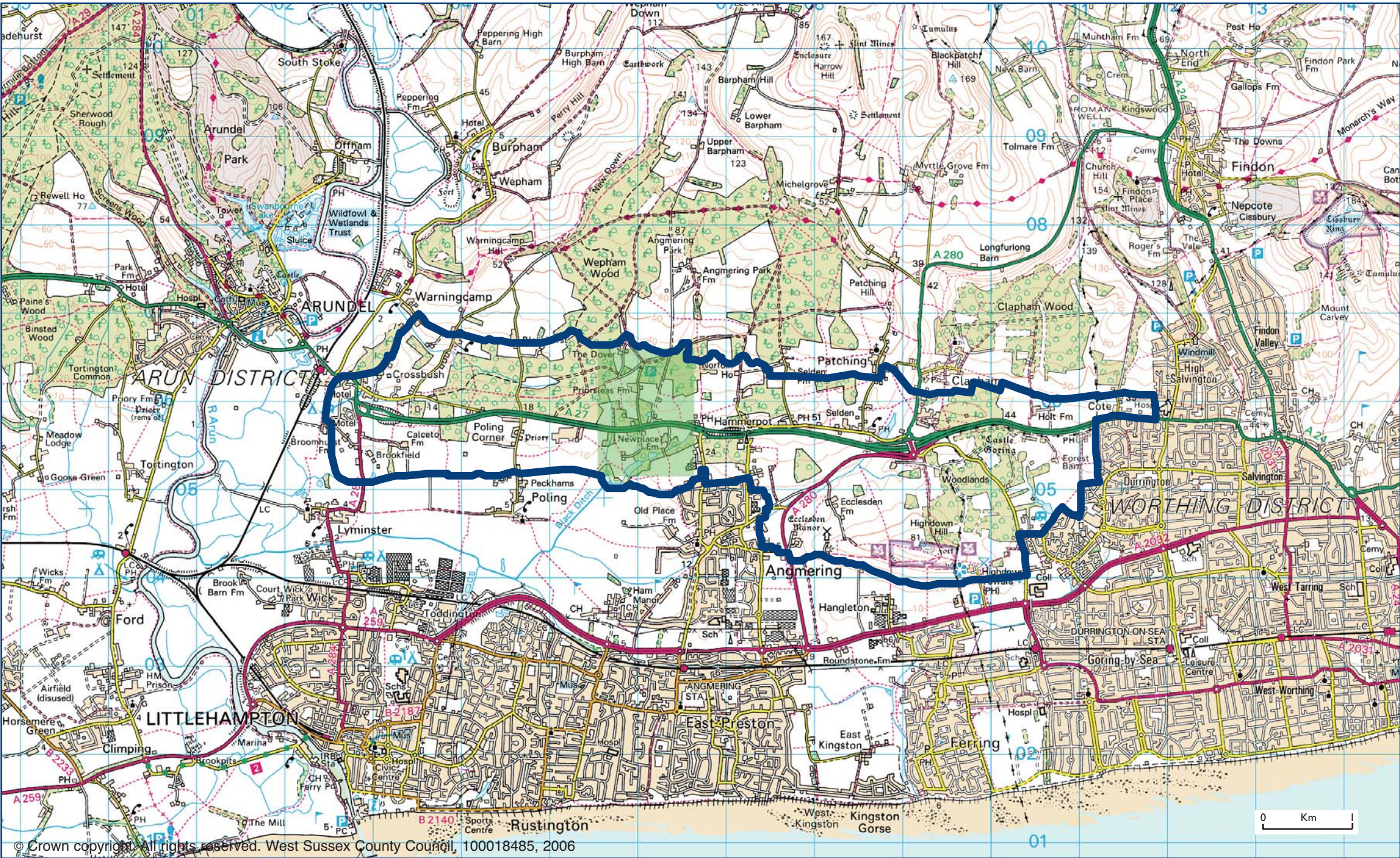
- Very gently undulating landform more intricate in the east, encompassing the distinctive landscape of Highdown Hill (an isolated chalk hill).
- Mainly gently undulating farmland enclosed by woods with frequent hedgerows.
- Strong network of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and medium to large blocks of woodlands.
- Pattern of small to medium-sized pastures and arable fields.
- Intimate hidden wooded valleys containing narrow water bodies, notably at Hammerpot and Patching.
- Wealth of historic landscape features including historic parklands, many ancient woodlands and earthworks.
- A scattering of historic nucleated flint villages, hamlets and farmsteads dot the area accessed by rural lanes mostly linked by the A27 crossing the area east to west.
- Apart from the busy A27, roads are mostly winding hedged or wooded lanes.
- Criss-crossed by numerous rural tracks, byways and rights of way.

Angmering Upper Coastal Plain

South Coast Plain

The area covered by the Sheet is derived from:

Funtington to Highdown Coastal Plain Farmlands (D1) Landscape Character Area defined in the unpublished **West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment** (November 2003).



Historic Features

- Highdown Hill has a late Bronze Age enclosure with an Anglo Saxon cemetery - Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) - in the middle.
- Mix of small, medium and large-sized fields with mainly straight Parliamentary enclosure boundaries. Some earlier, irregular assarts.
- Historic parkscapes at Batworth, Brookfield, Castle Goring and Highdown House as well as the edge of Angmering Park.
- Ecclesden Mill and Ecclesden Manor and Dovecote.
- Remains of St John's Priory at Poling Corner.
- Scattered Iron Age and Roman earthworks.
- Ancient tracks and byways.

Biodiversity

- Remnant semi-rural broadleaved woodlands, interconnecting hedgerows and track ways provide important habitats for wildlife.
- Small area of chalk grassland at Highdown Hill which is a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI).
- A matrix of semi-natural and replanted ancient woodlands at Titnore (SNCI) and Goring Woods, Poling Copse (SNCI), Hammerpot Copse, Highdown Copse, Grooms Copse, Westlands Copse and Sailors Copse.
- A few significant patches of unimproved or semi-improved neutral grassland and meadows.
- Steep-sided stream valleys with narrow interlinking ponds such as at Hammerpot and Patching.

Change - Key Issues

- Extension of coastal conurbation.
- Potential development pressure from the extension of existing settlements to the south and east.
- Decline in traditional woodland management.
- Increased recreational activities, for example associated with horse-riding and golf courses.
- Major existing road improvements along the A27 trunk road and the possibility of new ones.
- Changes in farming practices.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Key sensitivities are:

- Loss of undeveloped rural character of the area.
- Loss of extent and diversity of woodland cover, much of which is ancient woodland.
- Changes in farming practices leading to changes in field size, loss of hedgerows, and loss of chalk grassland.
- Loss of historic landscape features due to changes in land management practices and estate fragmentation.
- Changes to the scattered low key settlement pattern. Cumulative impact of small scale development either through inappropriate scale or unsympathetic design.
- Inappropriate design and scale of road improvements. Apart from the main A27, roads are rural in character, often leading on to historic trackways and byways.
- Loss of rural quality of rights of way network of tracks and byways, through inappropriate development.



Winding hedged lane - Hammerpot



Flint Buildings - Hammerpot



Medium sized pastures - Crossbush



Gently undulating farmland - Poling

Land Management Guidelines

Maintain and enhance the historic character of the area including earthworks, historic field patterns and historic parks

Encourage strong design principles in felling and replanting woodlands and copses to ensure they are integrated into the landscape

Ensure new large agricultural buildings are not obtrusive in the landscape

Plant and link hedgerow trees where areas have been cleared

Conserve and manage existing chalk grassland, clearing and managing scrub where necessary

Conserve and enhance the character and setting of small villages and hamlets

Conserve and enhance the quiet rural qualities and environment of the small villages and rural road and lane network, encourage landscape restoration and woodland management and ensure that new development is well integrated within the landscape.

- Maintain and enhance the historic character of the area including earthworks, historic field patterns and historic parks.
- Conserve and manage distinctive habitats including chalk grassland, stream sides, lakes, ponds and woodland especially those which are under pressure from development on the edges of settlements.
- Conserve and enhance the character and setting of small villages and hamlets. Consider the cumulative impact on landscape character of small developments and land use change. Avoid the introduction of suburban styles and materials.
- Ensure any new development, including any associated with the A27 trunk road, is well integrated into the wider landscape. Pay particular attention to edge of development. Use new woodland and hedgerow planting as appropriate.
- Ensure that new large agricultural buildings are not obtrusive in the landscape. Avoid placing them on slopes from which they would be highly visible from long range views.
- Retain small scale low key road networks. Conserve hedgerows, banks and road verges associated with existing track and byways to retain their significance in the landscape and their nature conservation importance.
- Carry out a full assessment of existing woodland and tree cover. Encourage strong design principles in felling and replanting woodlands and copses to ensure they are integrated into the landscape.
- Encourage sympathetic woodland management, and prioritise the restoration of neglected or damaged woodland, except where there is a nature conservation interest in managing the present created habitat.
- Conserve, manage and enhance hedgerows. Plant and link hedgerow trees where areas have been cleared.
- Plant and replant single tree features and copses throughout arable areas wherever they will create significant landscape features and can be accommodated.
- Extend existing areas of woodland, reflecting the existing scale and structure of the landscape in their design, except where this conflicts with archaeological or nature conservation interests.
- Conserve and manage chalk grassland, clearing and managing scrub where necessary in irregular shaped patches to avoid hard edges, and to provide habitat edges and shelter. Target Environmental Stewardship schemes to ensure retention of existing chalk downland and reversion of arable land.

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.