

Overall Character

The Downland Arun Valley character area, SD2, which stretches between Arundel and Amberley has a broad valley floor, gently sloping sides, and lush seasonal meadows. The gently sloping valley sides are smooth and open, whilst the steeper parts are wooded. The valley also contains one of the highest amounts of unimproved grassland in the county in the form of seasonal floodplain meadows and chalk grassland slopes. Prominent local features include the elevated Arundel Castle, the church spire of North Stoke Church and several chalk pits. Spectacular views can be gained from the north and from the valley sides.

Key Characteristics

- Isolated and unspoilt character.
- Wide flat bottomed valley.
- Small lush pastures subject to seasonal flooding divided by ditches.
- Steep undulating chalk valley sides with branching dry valleys within the downland.
- Some hedgerows towards the edge of the floodplain.
- Meandering river but confined within embankments close to valley sides.
- Curving linear strips of woodland on lower valley sides, with open chalkland slopes on higher valley sides.
- Lack of settlement apart from small historic hamlet of North Stoke elevated above the river on a projecting spur.
- Building materials of mainly flint with brick detailing.
- Open cross valley views including dramatic views of Arundel (castle, Roman Catholic cathedral, parish church, clustered hillside housing).



Sheet SD2

Downland Arun Valley

South Downs

The area covered by the Sheet includes:  
  
The Lower Arun Valley (O2), and a small section of the Amberley & Pulborough Brooks (O1) as defined in the unpublished **Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment** (October 2003).

The Arun is the major river of the County. It extends from the vicinity of Horsham to the sea at Littlehampton. The river cuts across the Low Weald, Wealden Greensand, the South Downs and the Coastal Plain Regional Character Areas, giving rise to strong variations in valley side landform and tree cover. This is the basis for the division of the four Land Management Guideline Sheets SC10, WG6, SD2, and LW3.





# Historic Features

- Burpham Anglo-Saxon Church.
- Historic water meadows with associated earthworks.
- Small drained fields with a mixture of earlier winding ditches and more recent, straight ditch boundaries.
- Small historic settlement of North Stoke.
- River and railway communications route.

# Biodiversity

- Extensive flood meadows and wet grassland very important for large numbers of both wintering and breeding waders and wildfowl.
- Rich flora in ditches.
- Occasional rare black poplar trees.
- Abandoned meander loop with rich and varied flora.
- Valley side broadleaved woodlands.
- Remnant chalk grassland on chalk valley sides.
- Fewer features on valley sides due to intensive arable farmland.
- Reedbeds, particularly at the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust at Arundel.

# Change - Key Issues

- Loss of some pasture on the valley floor to arable, due to drainage schemes.
- Change to river banks, meanders and drainage pattern.
- Scrub invasion of flood meadows and grassland.
- Change of cattle grazing to silage production in parts.
- Road improvements, particularly along the A27 trunk road.

# Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

The overall condition is good although ecological condition is declining on the upper valley sides. Overall sensitivity to change is high due to its openness and visual prominence of valley side slopes and the many intrinsic landscape qualities of the valley floor. *Key sensitivities are to:*

- Loss of rural character of the valley.
- Change to open character of the flood meadows.
- Any possible changes in land management which could weaken ecological character.
- Change in important views including those of settlements and landmarks.
- Change to river banks and drainage by unsympathetic reprofiling.
- Any built development on the valley floor.



River Arun



Arundel - lush pastures



Views to Arundel Castle



Amberley - strips of woodland on lower valley sides

# Land Management Guidelines

Where possible enhance the wildlife potential of river banks and drainage channels by reprofiling at sympathetic time of year.

Encourage traditional management of flood meadows, ditches and water courses

Conserve and extend existing grassland, managing for species interest

Encourage the planting of alder and willow in groups along the riverside where appropriate.

## Conserve the unspoilt undeveloped character of the area.

- Ensure any small scale development responds to historic settlement pattern, form and building materials.
- Conserve cross valley view.
- Conserve existing small scale pastures.
- Encourage traditional management of flood meadows, ditches and watercourses.
- Conserve and manage ditches to maximise floristic diversity.
- Encourage the planting of alder and willow in groups along the riverside where appropriate.
- Conserve and extend existing grassland managing for species richness.
- Conserve the wildlife potential of marshy areas by controlling scrub, to avoid suppressing marshland plants and drying out of the ground.
- Where possible enhance the wildlife potential of river banks and drainage channels by reprofiling at sympathetic times of the year.
- Encourage the positive management of wetland areas through the local management of water tables for visual and nature conservation value through Stewardship schemes.

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.
- Objectives and actions contained in the *Interim South Downs Management Plan* (March 2004) published by the Sussex Downs Conservation Board.