

Overall Character

The River Adur rises deep in the Low Weald, extending from Shipley at its northernmost point, to the sea at Shoreham. This Character Area covers the section from Upper Beeding to Old Shoreham, where the Adur cuts through the South Downs. The steep downland sweeps in ever gentler slopes to the valley floor, and the river meanders across a broad floodplain. The valley is a mixture of arable farmland and chalk grassland with small hamlets and farmsteads, interspersed with a number of intrusive elements such as busy roads, disused cement works and pylons.

Key Characteristics

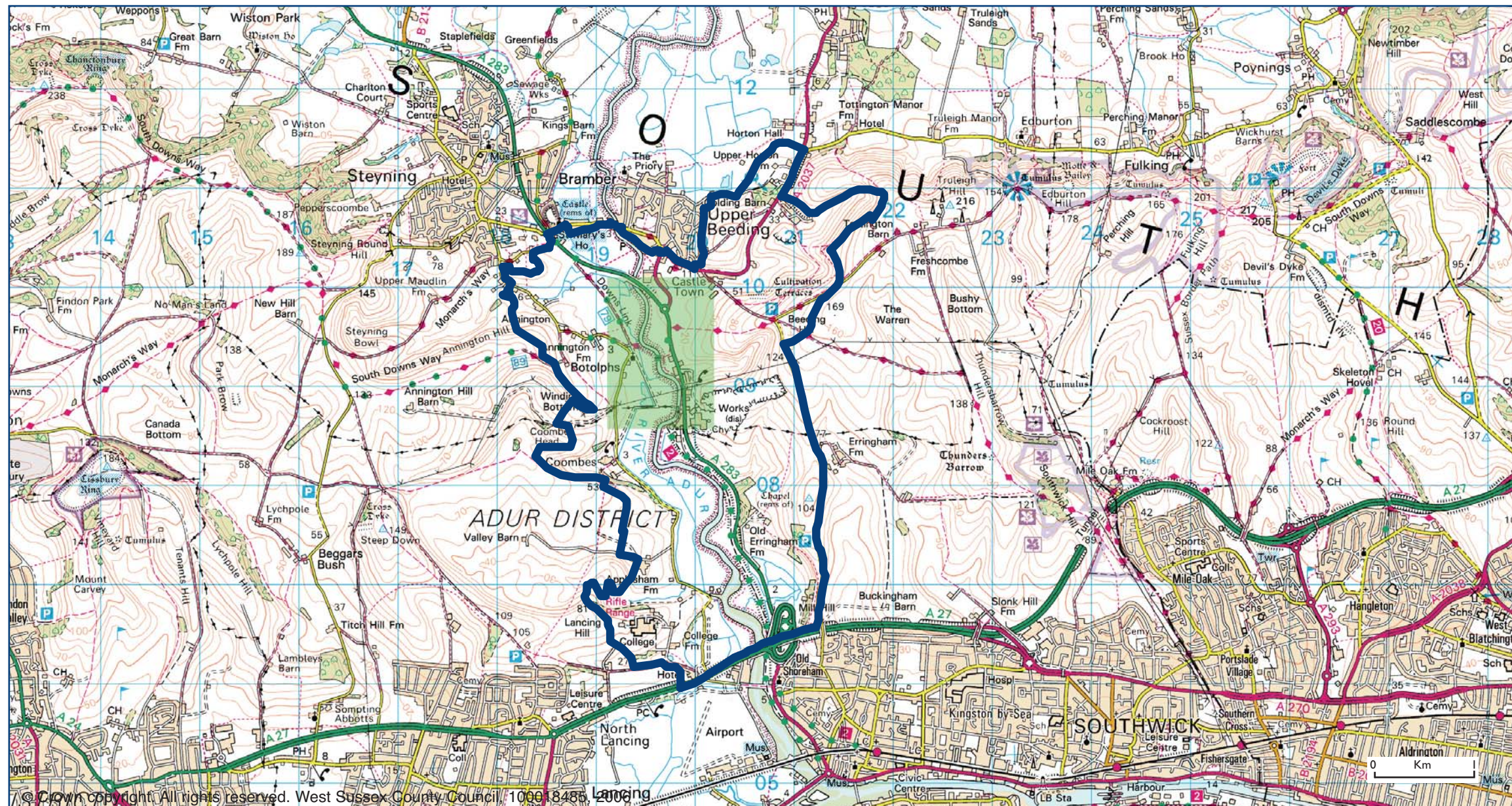
- Wide open flat bottomed valley, with gently meandering river.
- Wide sloping chalk valley sides with steep tops.
- Main river tidal, with salt marsh and mud flats. Mostly canalised, and contained by levees.
- River levees carrying recreational routes adjacent to river on both sides.
- Wet floodplain meadows, streams and water channels.
- Some significant areas of arable farmland on the valley floor and lower slopes.
- Relatively open character, with a denser network of hedgerows and small woodlands on the tributaries.
- Downland turf and invading scrub on the valley sides.
- Small lanes and brick bridges.
- Impressive views across the valley including striking views of Lancing College.
- Visual intrusion from the disused cement works and chalk quarries, major roads and pylons.
- Bounded on the south by the complex of flyovers where the A27 trunk road and the A283 intersect.
- Small hamlets and farmsteads on lower sides using varied materials including flint, brick and tile hanging.
- Two disused railways, now major recreational routes, and also crossed by the South Downs Way.

Downland Adur Valley

South Downs

The area covered by the Sheet is derived from:

Adur Valley (03) Landscape Character Area as defined in the unpublished **West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment** (November 2003).



Historic Features

- Pattern of small, irregular fields enclosed in medieval times.
- Medieval settlement at Botolphs and Coombes, with associated churches, houses and farmsteads along Coombes Road. Many of the farmsteads are listed buildings.
- Saltern mounds (left over from salt-making) on valley bottom from prehistoric period onwards.
- Cultivation terraces at Beeding Hill.
- Lancing College and Chapel.
- South Downs Way.
- Remnants of the cement industry.
- Shrunken medieval settlement at Old Erringham and Cross Dyke on Beeding Hill; both are Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM).

Biodiversity

- Rich marginal vegetation along river course and ditches in places, providing cover for nesting birds. Good concentration of protected and rare species which are recorded.
- Mill Hill Local Nature Reserve, Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI).
- Adur Estuary and Beeding to Newtimber Hill are sites of national importance, designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Freshwater marsh and reed beds, chalk springs and fragments of river meadow.
- Salt marsh and mud flats where river becomes tidal.
- Alder and willow wet woodland.
- Hedgerows and relatively few small woodlands, including one small area of ancient woodland.
- Localised areas of unimproved and chalk grassland.
- Notable Road Verges along Steyning Road.

Change - Key Issues

- Conversion of floodplain meadows and pasture to improved grassland.
- Highly visible pylon lines.
- Severe visual impact of major roads, for instance the A27 intersection near Lancing College.
- Minor road improvements affecting rural lanes.
- Possible re-use of cement works and quarry sites.
- Engineering works on the river course.
- Abandonment of pasture to scrub invasion.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Key sensitivities are:

- Loss of open views both along and across the valley floor.
- Changes to the rural character of the valley, meandering quality of river and open floodplain.
- Maintenance of important views including those of settlements and landmarks, especially Lancing College.
- Changes to historic pattern of small irregular fields, and isolated farm settlements.
- Changes to the drainage affecting the pattern of marsh, reed beds, wet woodlands and floodplain meadows.
- Loss of chalk grassland due to lack of grazing.
- New development particularly associated with the re-use of the cement works and quarry site.



Tidal river with mud flats - Shoreham



Arable farmland on the valley floor and lower slopes from Coombes Road

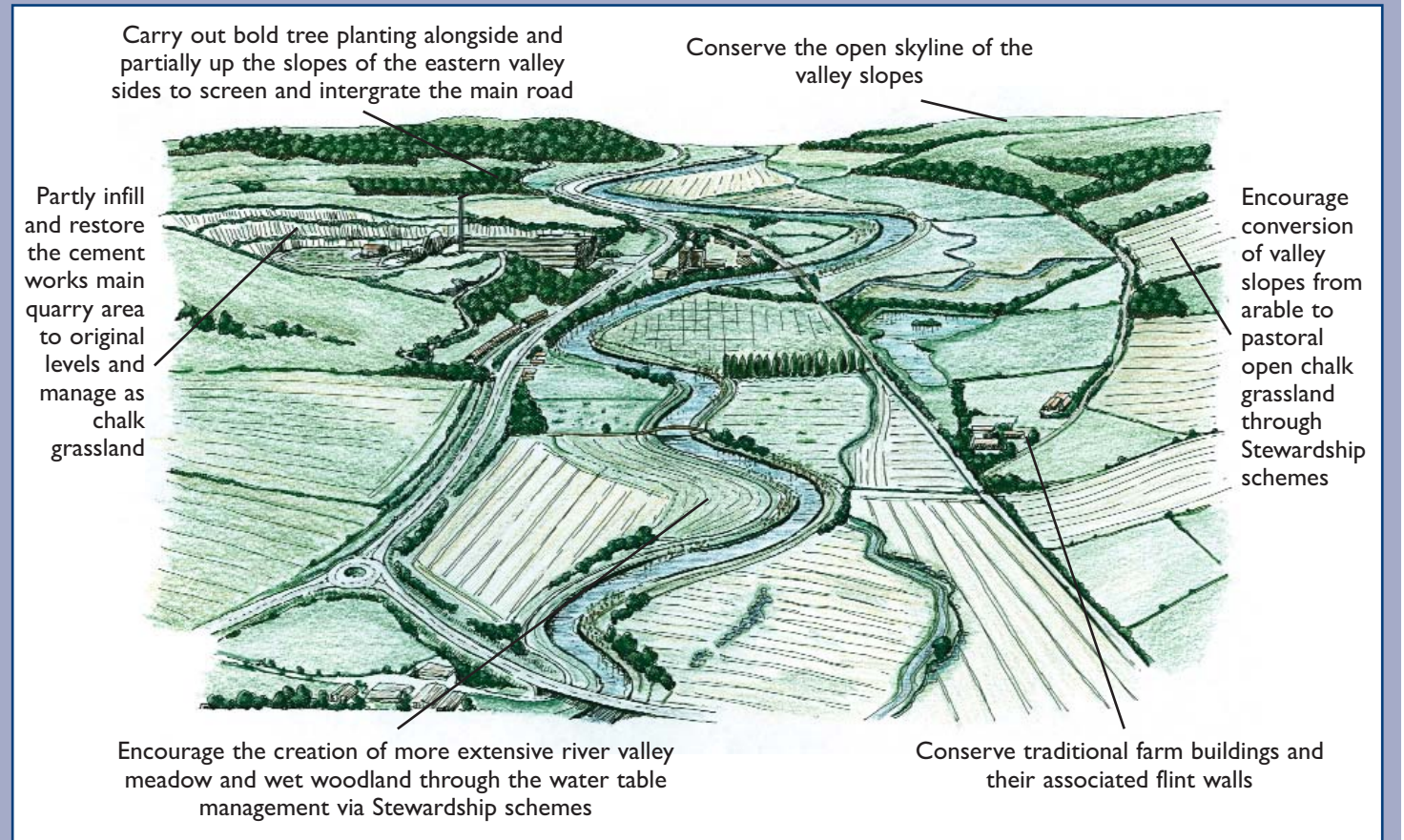


View across the valley from Mill Hill



Views across the tidal River Adur to Shoreham cement works

Land Management Guidelines



Conserve the open character of the floodplain and open skylines of the valley slopes.

- Conserve existing areas of chalk downland. Encourage conversion of the valley slopes from arable to pastoral open chalk grassland and attempt to link them on the upper slopes through Stewardship schemes.
- Discourage use of fencing where aligned straight up the valley slopes, especially where they separate contrasting land uses.
- Conserve, manage and improve existing hedgerows particularly where the local landscape is degraded and visually intrusive elements dominate. Consider replanting hedgerows where they have been lost, especially at the edges of footpaths and on lower valley slopes.
- Encourage small scale tree planting at the foot of coombes (dry valleys) and around settlements and farms.
- Conserve and manage the small irregular field patterns on the valley floor and drainage ditches between pastures.
- Encourage the creation of more extensive river valley meadow and wet woodland through water table management via Stewardship schemes.
- Encourage removing, realigning or under grounding the pylons. Avoid planting near pylons so as not to exaggerate their scale.
- Investigate ways of assimilating the A27 flyover more satisfactorily into the landscape.
- Carry out bold tree planting alongside and partially up the slopes of the eastern valley sides to screen and integrate the main road.
- Partially infill and restore the cement works main quarry area to original levels and manage as chalk grassland, retaining some of the quarry elements as features for future historical reference. Ensure this takes account of the proposals set out in the Horsham District and Adur Local Development Plans.
- Conserve and frame key views to Lancing College from the valley floor.
- Conserve traditional farm buildings and their associated flint walls.
- Conserve and enhance the special character of small local lanes on the western side of the valley. Notable Road Verges are also located on the eastern side of the valley along Steyning Road.
- Maintain and enhance the recreational network of footpaths and bridleways along and across the valley.

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.