

# Overall Character

The Western Scarp Footslopes lie at the foot of the adjacent chalk escarpment of the South Downs, extending from Harting in the west to Bury in the east. This area is diminished in scale by the bold chalk ridge of the Downs above. Low ridges and vales with a varied patchwork of field patterns over sand and clay create a secluded, tranquil landscape punctuated by historic villages. The entire area lies within Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Despite major roads (A285, A286 and A29) crossing north to south, much of the area retains a secluded and tranquil character.

## Key Characteristics

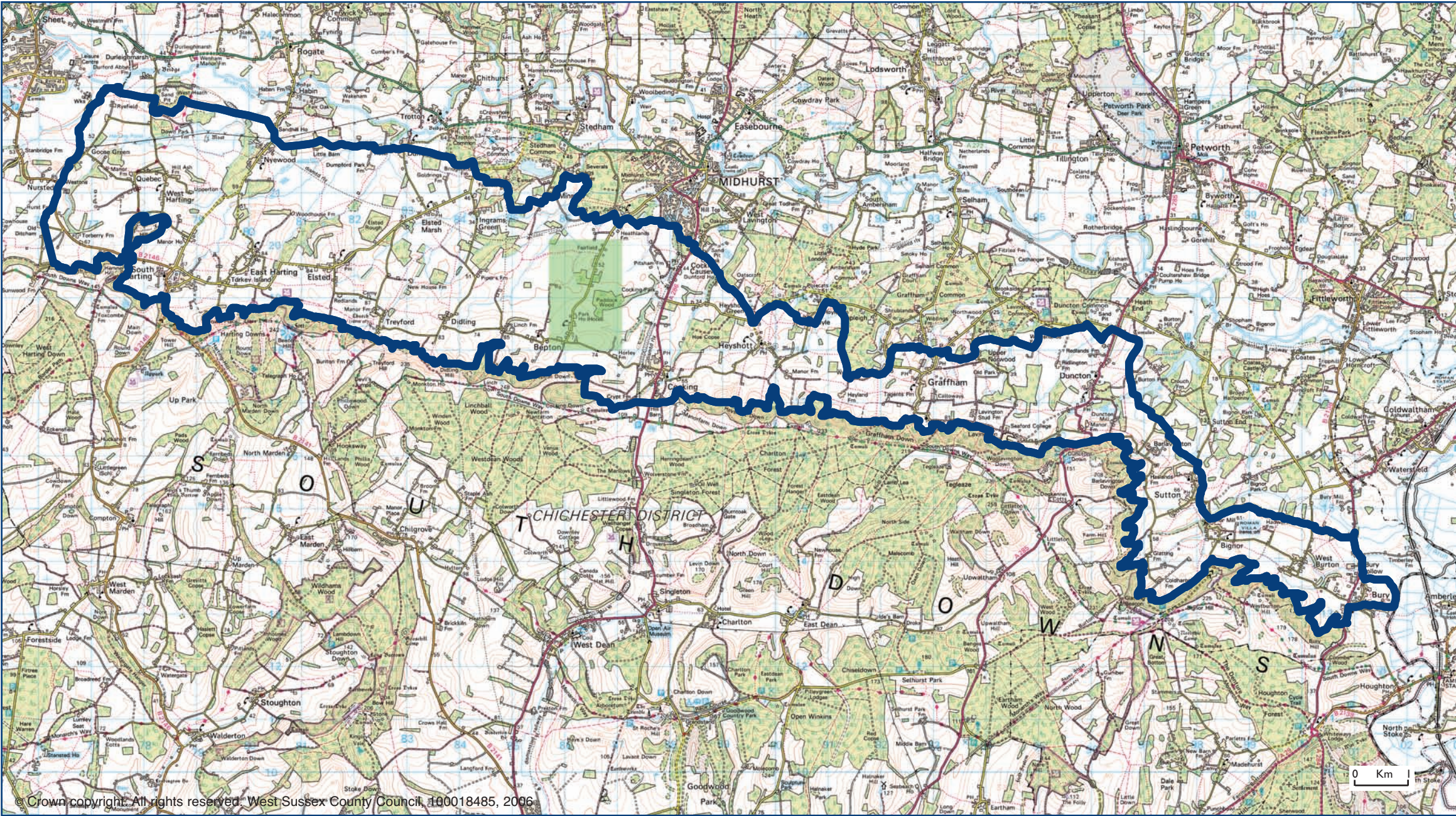
- Rolling relief of low ridges and vales with dramatic views of the chalk escarpment to the south.
- Many winterbourne streams flowing northwards from the base of the chalk escarpment.
- Picturesque, traditional spring line villages with stone churches.
- Patchwork of farmland and woodland interlaced with a varied pattern of hedgerows.
- Narrow winding lanes, often sunken and enclosed by hedge banks, link the settlements.
- Managed parkland and estate landscapes.
- Larger areas of woodland over the clay and numerous streams define the field boundaries.
- The densities of copses, streamside woodlands and hedgerow trees tend to increase towards the edges of settlements.
- Settlements are small and usually clustered with a strong historic character and few suburban influences.
- The influence of the large country houses and estates is strong in some settlements.
- Varied building materials include flint, clunch (both chalk and white sandstone), brick, local sandstone and half-timber.
- Villages, scattered farms and designed parklands provide a wealth of detail and interest.

# Western Scarp Footslopes

## Wealden Greensand

The area covered by the Sheet is derived from:

The western section of Harting to Steyning Scarp Footslopes (GI) Landscape Character Area as defined in the unpublished **West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment** (November 2003).





## Historic Features

- Roman Villa at Bignor, Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM).
- Historic parkland, for example Lavington Park and Burton Park.
- Historic scarp slope villages along the spring line.
- Irregular and regular field patterns, the result of post-medieval and Parliamentary enclosure.
- Medieval moated site at Parlour Copse, (SAM).
- Brick works.
- Watermills at, for example, Duncton and Bignor.
- Medieval churches (small scale for small villages) and ruined church at Treyford.

## Biodiversity

- A wide variety of habitats are present, despite intensive arable farmland.
- Sunken lanes with hedge banks rich in ferns and mosses.
- Ponds, springs and streams of high water quality and winterbourne nature, important for invertebrates and plant species.
- Unimproved grassland, for example at Heyshott Green Site of Nature Conservation Importance, (SNCI).
- Clay woodlands of oak with ash, hazel and field maple, many of these are ancient woodlands like Paddock Wood (SNCI), Brickkiln Copse (SNCI) and Pondtail Plantation (SNCI).
- A few woodlands on sandstone comprising ash, hazel, field maple and oak, for instance at West Harting.
- Occasional species-rich roadside commons.

## Change - Key Issues

- Continuing hedgerow removal due to modern farming methods and management.
- Decline in the number and condition of hedgerow oaks.
- Localised increases in horse-grazed areas with fragmentation into paddocks.
- Modern farm buildings.
- Decline in traditional woodland management techniques such as coppicing.
- Nutrient enrichment of watercourses.
- Gradual loss of locally distinctive building styles and materials.
- Increased pervasiveness of traffic movement and noise in parts of the area.

## Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Key sensitivities are:

- Secluded and tranquil nature is susceptible to cumulative pressure from small changes in farming practices and land use.
- Historic spring line villages affected by the pressure for increased suburbanisation, such as horse paddocks and stables.
- Enlargement of existing post medieval field patterns and reduction in woodland areas.
- Narrow twisting lanes, often sunken and enclosed by species-rich hedge banks, are vulnerable to increase in traffic.
- Decline in number of trees within field boundaries.
- Views to the chalk escarpment have a high sensitivity to the impact of masts and pylons.
- Scarce pockets of rich biodiversity are vulnerable to loss and change.



Medieval church, South Harting



Woodland landscape from Duncton Hill

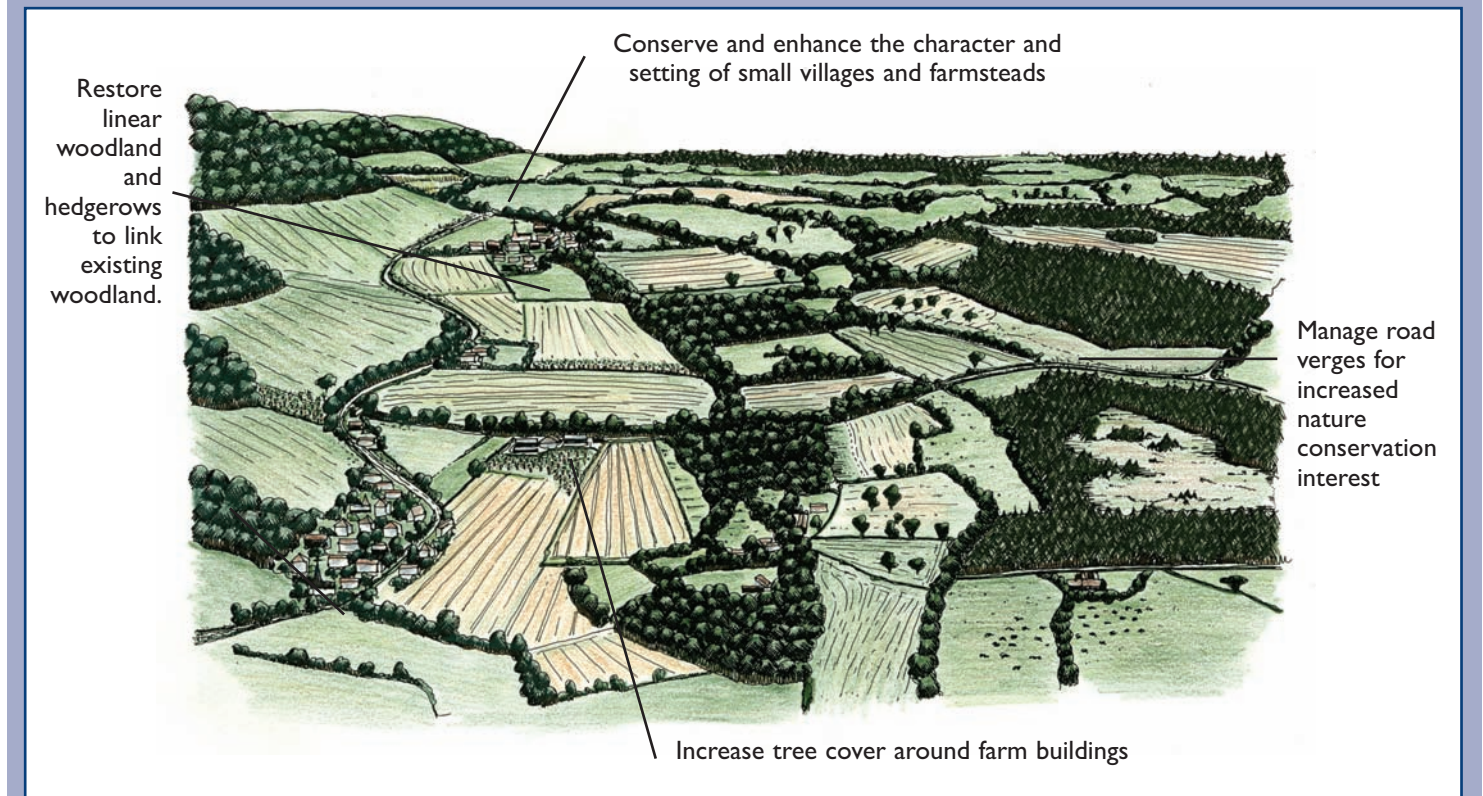


Hedgerows and hedgerow trees, near Dumpford



Views from Treyford Hill - Springline Villages

## Land Management Guidelines



### Conserve the largely secluded, tranquil character of the area.

- Conserve and manage distinctive habitats including coppice woodlands, streamside woodlands, flower-rich grasslands, ponds and small marshes.
- Restore linear woodland and hedgerows across arable farmland to link with existing woodlands.
- Encourage the planting of tree groups around farm buildings and single oak trees in arable fields.
- Plan for long-term woodland regeneration and appropriate management of existing woodlands.
- Conserve, strengthen and manage existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees, especially around irregular fields, and replant hedgerows where they have been lost.
- Conserve tracks and lanes and manage their margins to minimise erosion and maximise nature conservation interest.
- Maintain the historic character of the area including small scale field patterns, historic parkland and sunken lanes.
- Promote the creation of arable field margins and corners including along stream edges.
- Encourage restoration of arable farming to pasture in areas with former parkland trees.
- Promote the use of current Stewardship schemes or equivalent.
- Monitor the cumulative effect of small scale developments on landscape character. Avoid the introduction of suburban styles and materials.
- Seek to reduce the extent, intensity and impact of horse grazing.
- Conserve and enhance the character and setting of small villages and farmsteads.
- Ensure new development is well integrated into the wider landscape, using small woodland and new hedgerow planting as appropriate.
- Encourage the reduction in fertilizer use on agricultural land.
- Pay particular attention to the siting of telecommunication masts.

The Guidelines should be read in conjunction with:

- County-wide Landscape Guidelines set out in *A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape* (October 2005) published by West Sussex County Council.
- Objectives and actions contained in the *South Downs Management Plan* (October 2007) published by the South Downs Joint Committee.