

Overall Character

This character area lies in the west of the county and is part of the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is characterised by dry open heathland and dense woodland which form an irregular patchy mosaic covering very low, flat-topped ridges. Significant tracts of common land, once used for rough grazing and bracken or turf cutting, also permeate the area. An extensive network of historic tracks and footpaths links the common land to nearby settlements. The traditional settlement pattern is of isolated cottages and farms and there are few villages. Despite the presence of a few suburban developments along roads and sand quarries, much of the area retains a predominantly undeveloped character.

Key Characteristics

- Very low, flat topped sandstone ridges cut by small streams running south to north.
- Large swathes of heather dominate the distinctive heaths of Iping and Ambersham Commons, with smaller patches occurring elsewhere.
- Extensive areas of pine and oak-birch woodland which border the heaths.
- Rough-grazed agricultural land and horse paddocks.
- A few straight roads and dead-end tracks.
- Ancient earthworks and banks.
- Isolated cottages and farms.
- Views limited by tracts of dense woodland.
- Localised suburban style development along roads.
- Sand quarries.
- Ponds.
- Extensive tracts of Common Land.

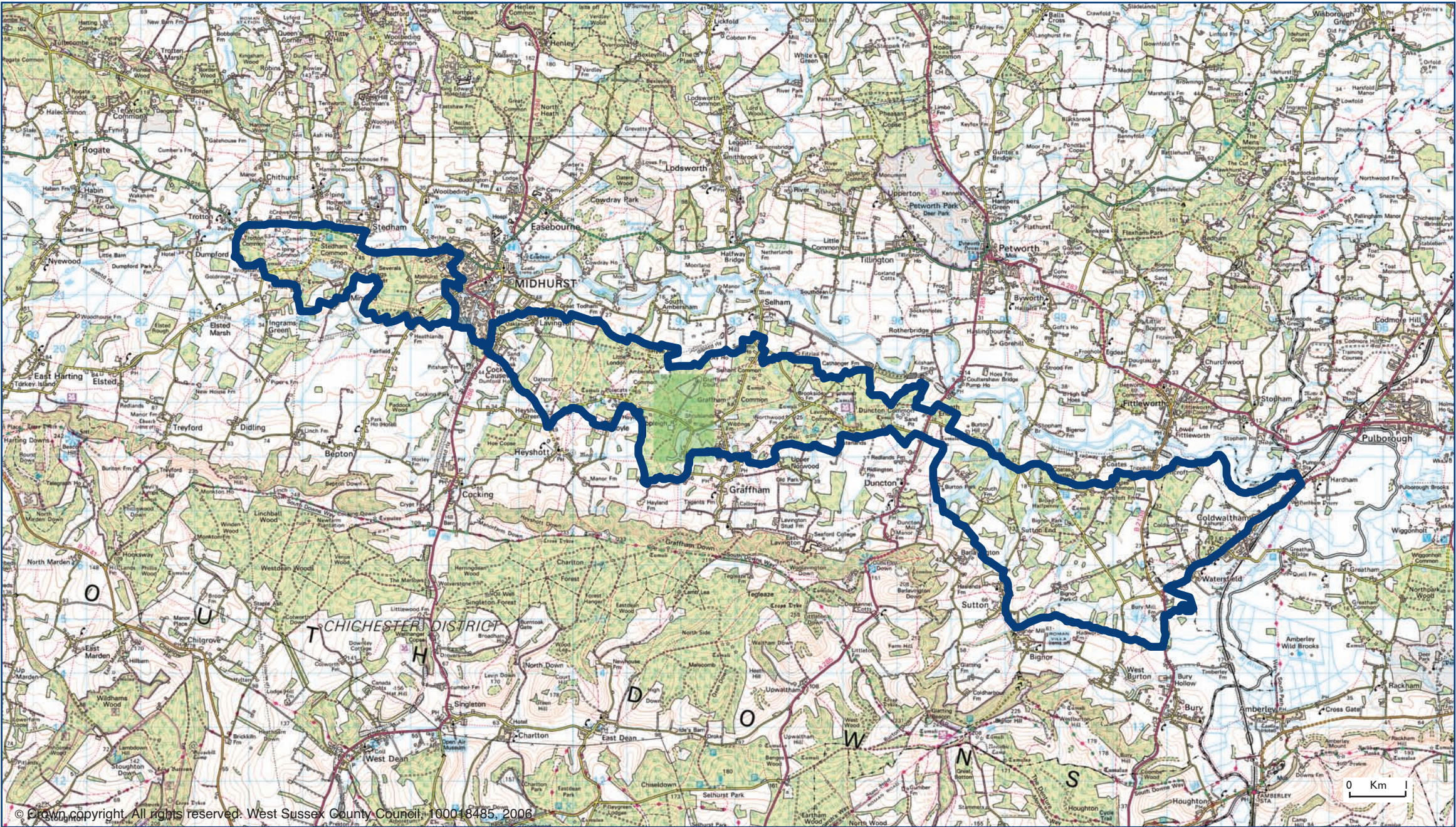
Sheet WG5

Rother Woods
and Heaths

Wealden Greensand

The area covered by the Sheet is derived from:

Midhurst to Coldwaltham Commons (H1) Landscape Character Area defined in the unpublished **West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment** (November 2003).



Historic Features

- Bronze Age barrows can be found throughout the area, such as at Iping Common, Sutton Common and Fitzhall Heath Common - designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments, (SAMs).
- A section of Roman Road Stane Street (SAM) runs across Iping Common.
- Extensive historic commons, for example, Stedham, Iping and Ambersham Commons.
- Many historic trackways.
- Historic parkland at Burton Park and Bignor Park.
- Mills and millponds.
- Historic environment indicators contained in pollen sequences on Iping Common and Midhurst Common.

Biodiversity

- Burton & Chingford Ponds Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is important for dragonflies, rare wetland plants, breeding and wintering birds.
- Dry sandy lowland heaths, in some cases of international importance for biodiversity, such as at Iping, Ambersham and Lavington Commons which are all Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Small areas of wet heath.
- Small pockets of unimproved acid grassland.
- High woodland cover of pine, birch and oak surround the heaths, such as Midhurst Common, Graffham Common and Fir Toat, and Hesworth Common (all SNCIs).
- Streams and ponds with rich marginal vegetation.

Change - Key Issues

- Loss of heathland due to bracken, scrub and woodland invasion.
- Erosion of heathland due to recreational pressure.
- Rhododendron invasion of woodlands.
- Potential pressure for continuing localised development.
- Increasing traffic in rural lanes.
- Localised intrusion and traffic from sand quarrying operations.
- Decline in woodland management.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Key sensitivities are:

- Heathland remnants vulnerable to loss and change.
- Erosion of narrow country lanes.
- Localised visual intrusion, changes in land form and road improvements from sand quarrying operations.
- Change in water levels on the wet heaths and woodlands.
- Cumulative impact on landscape character of small developments and land use change.
- Loss of woodland cover or decrease in overall diversity of woodland due to poor management or plantation planting.



Ambersham Common



Burton Mill Pond

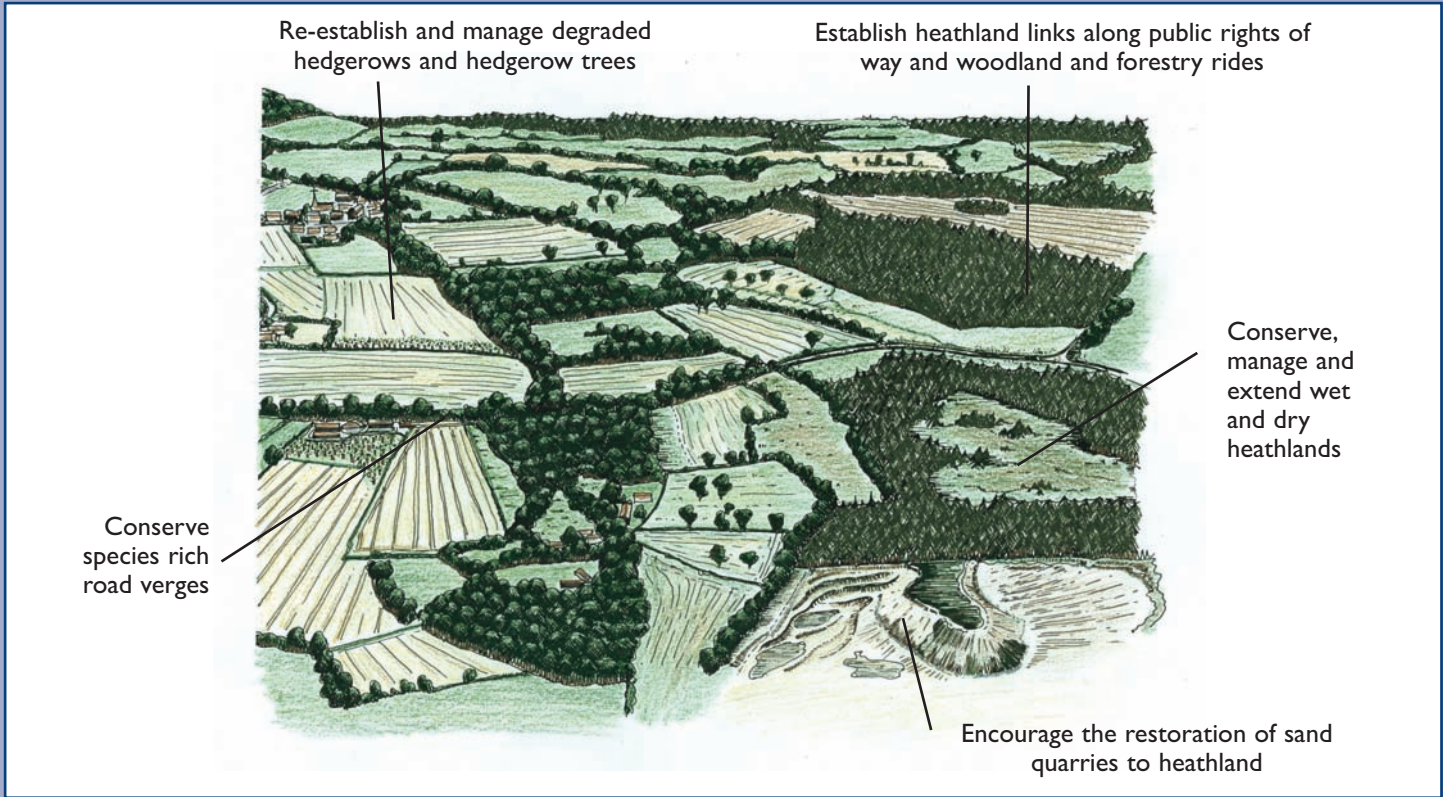


Lavington Common



Pendean Sand Pit

Land Management Guidelines



Conserve the largely undeveloped character of the landscape.

- Conserve the historic character of the area, including features such as Bronze Age barrows, historic parklands and millponds and mills.
- Conserve, manage and extend extensive wet and dry heathlands using sound heathland management techniques, taking account of prehistoric heathland landscape.
- Create heathland links through restoration of old heathland and along public rights of way, woodland and forestry rides.
- Encourage the restoration of sand quarries to a range of habitats including heathland, sand banks and open water, to increase their wildlife value.
- Encourage appropriate screening of all quarry works by planting, carried out in advance of quarrying wherever possible.
- Conserve and encourage sound management of the woodland cover, promoting coppice management where appropriate.
- Conserve areas of alder associated with streams running south to north.
- Manage degraded hedgerows and hedgerow trees, using the trees in particular to screen development.
- Conserve species-rich road verges.
- Conserve and manage the old trackways and lanes with their associated banks and verge vegetation.
- Carry out tree planting to screen unsightly buildings, linking in with existing vegetation patterns.
- Avoid further introduction of suburban styles and materials into the landscape.
- Consider the cumulative impact on landscape character of small developments and land use change.

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.