

Overall Character

Strongly linear valley adjoining Haywards Heath, its boundaries defined clearly by a marked break of slope. In the west, the river is a small, tree-lined stream amidst parallel streams and ridges, the valley broader to the east, the river meandering through water meadows. The signature of the valley is the high, long brick-built Ouse Valley (Balcombe) Viaduct on the London to Brighton Railway Line.

Key Characteristics

- Shallow but well-defined attractive rural valley landscape largely within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- Small, tree-lined stream in the western part amidst confined parallel streams and ridges.
- Broader valley and meandering river with water meadows in the eastern part.
- Relatively few panoramic or long views across or down the valley.
- Woodland cover less extensive than that of the High Weald fringes, despite an impression in places of a strong woodland presence strengthened by shaws, hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Pattern of mixed arable and pastoral medium to large-sized fields.
- Numerous crossing and flanking roads and lanes, including the A23 Trunk Road, many of which are busy.
- London to Brighton Railway Line crosses the valley, spectacularly so at the Ouse Valley (Balcombe) Viaduct.
- Pockets of rich biodiversity including ancient woodlands at Haywards Heath.
- No settlements in the valley other than dispersed farmsteads although towns and villages lie on the valley edges.
- Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timber-framing, Horsham Stone roofing, Wealden stone and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging.
- Old mills, weirs and bridges.
- Extensive designed landscape at Borde Hill.

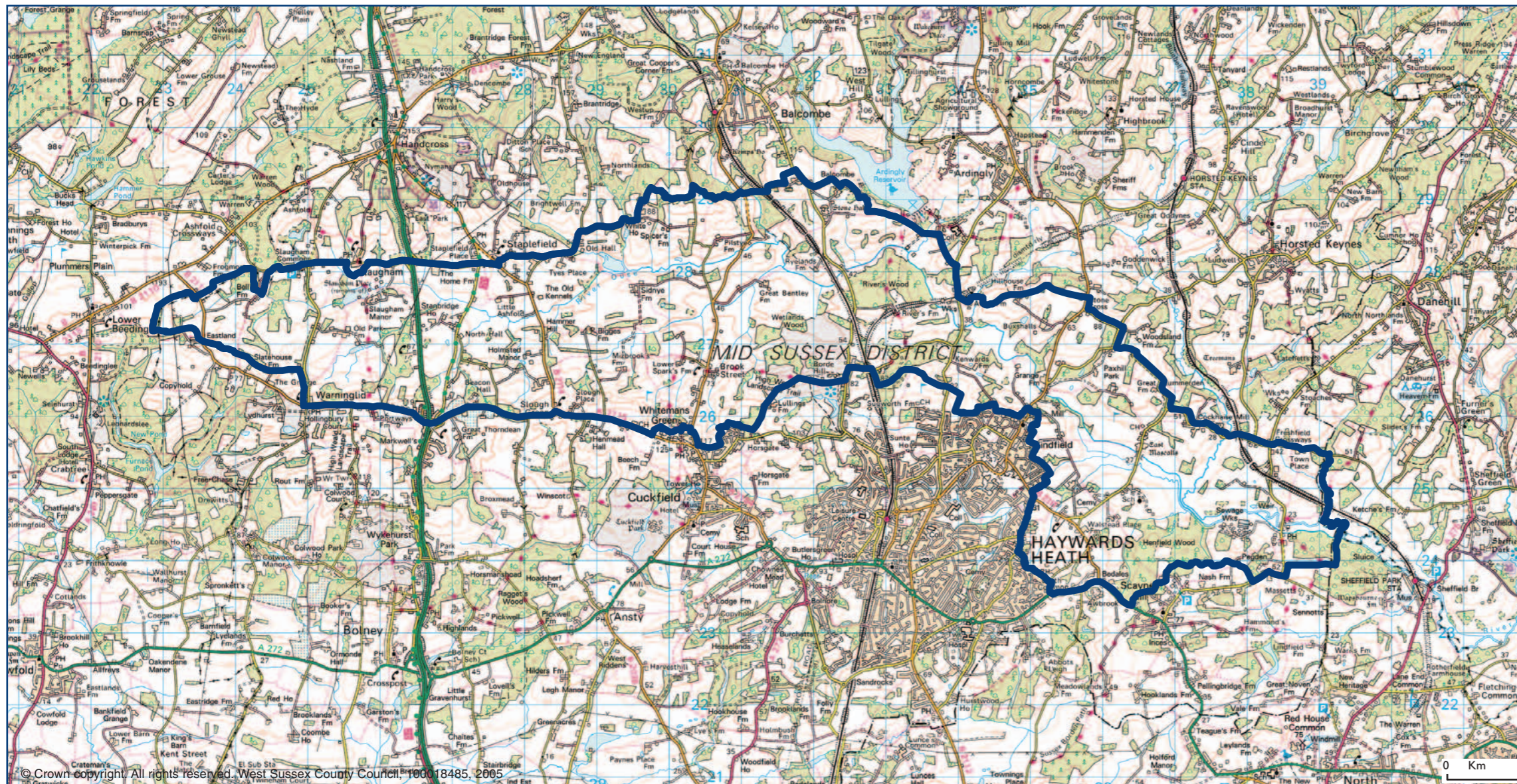
Sheet HW3

Ouse Valley

High Weald

The area covered by the Sheet includes:

The Ouse Valley (Area 9) Landscape Character Area in Mid Sussex District



Historic Features

- Line of Roman road.
- Ancient valley-edge routeways.
- Medieval house, moat and garden remains at Slaugham Place.
- Historic country houses, farmsteads and parkscapes.
- Historic mills, weirs and bridges.

Biodiversity

- Species-rich valley-side ancient and other semi-natural woodlands.
- Field ponds and marginal vegetation along river banks.
- Small meadowland and water meadow plant communities.

Change - Key Issues

- Importance of retaining the unique identity of the valley and as an important landscape and wildlife corridor.
- Pressures for change in the drainage pattern including drainage of water meadows, straightening of channels and loss of river margins.
- Decline in traditional woodland management techniques such as coppicing.
- Continuing field amalgamation into a pattern of medium and large-sized fields with hedgerow loss and the ageing and loss of hedgerow and field trees.
- Increasing pervasiveness of traffic movement and noise on the network of roads crossing the valley.
- Perceived increased traffic levels on small rural lanes with consequent demands for road improvements.
- Visual impact of new urban and rural development including modern farm buildings, horse riding centres and paddocks.
- Pressures for built development in the urban areas fringing the valley.
- Increasing recreational use of the area, including golf course development.
- Gradual loss of locally distinctive building styles and materials.
- Gradual suburbanisation of the landscape including the widespread use of exotic tree and shrub species.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

- High level of perceived naturalness in the landscape and drainage pattern and a rural quality with a general absence of development in western reaches of the valley.
- Pattern of medium to large-sized fields and watermeadows intermixed with woodlands and hedges imparts a scenic quality to the landscape.
- Legacy of designed landscapes and treescapes.
- Scarce pockets of rich woodland biodiversity are vulnerable to loss and change.
- Valley-edge settlements include Haywards Heath, Lindfield and Cuckfield, the impact on the valley reduced by their woodland setting.
- Settlement pattern currently sits well within the rural landscape although there is a danger of the cumulative visual impact of buildings and other structures.
- High sensitivity to visual intrusion from pylons and telecommunications masts.



Ouse Valley, Staplefield



Balcombe Viaduct

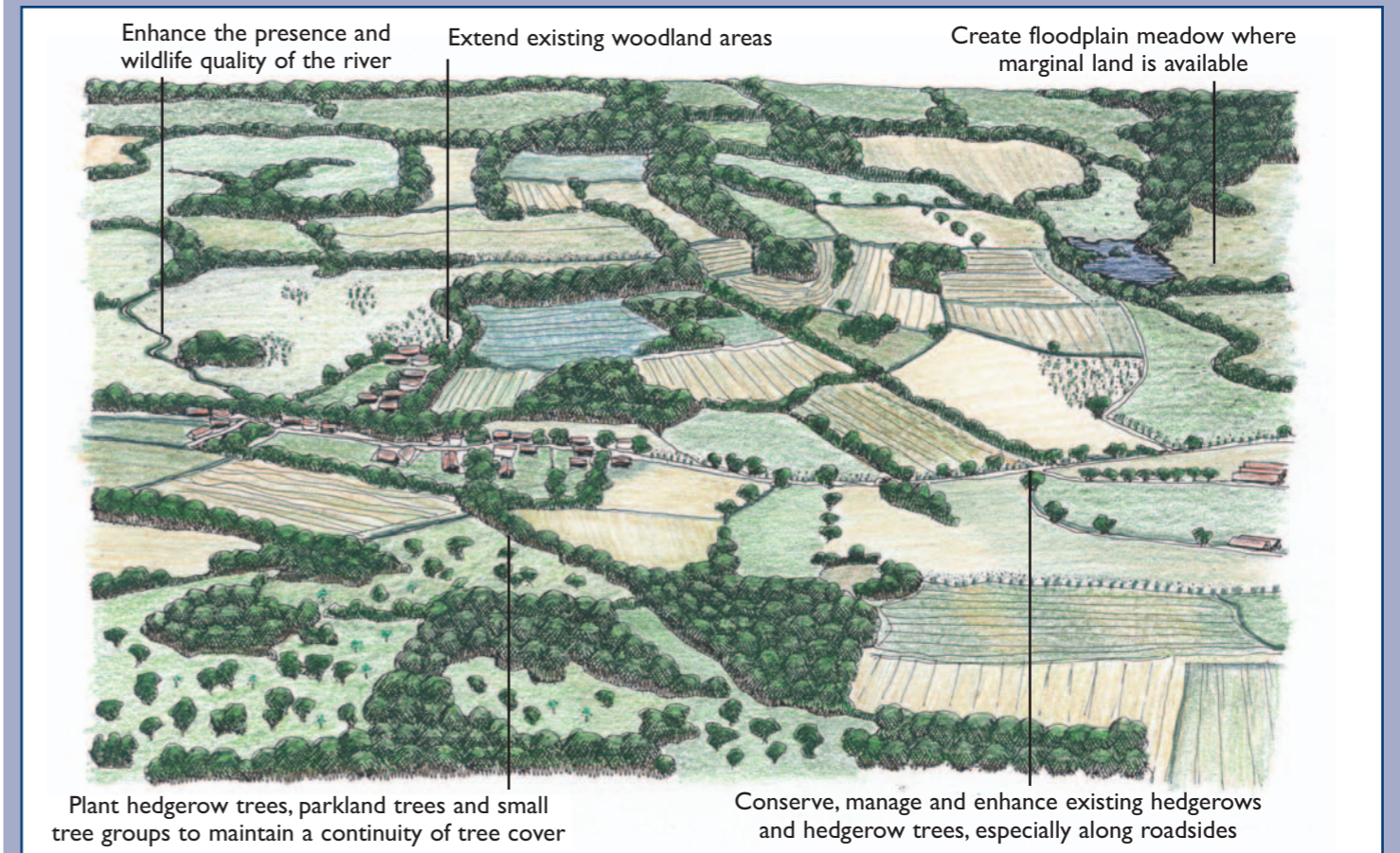


Ouse Valley



Ouse Valley from Slough Green

Land Management Guidelines



Conserve the rural quality of the valley including the pattern of the agricultural landscape, the mosaic of woodland and other habitats, and the intimate and unobtrusive settlement farmstead pattern.

- Conserve and enhance the undeveloped character, drainage pattern and pastoral qualities of the valley.
- Protect existing views from ridge tops and avoid skyline development, paying particular attention to the siting of telecommunications masts.
- Conserve and enhance the presence of the river and its wildlife by streamside planting and creation of new wetland areas.
- Extend existing woodland areas rather than creating new woodland features, reinforcing existing, distinctive landscape patterns.
- Plan for long-term woodland regeneration, the planting of new broad-leaved woodlands and appropriate management of existing woodlands.
- Promote the creation of arable field margins including alongside the sides of streams.
- Increase tree cover in and around villages, agricultural and other development and on the rural urban fringe, including along the approach roads to settlements and along busy urban routes.
- Conserve and plant parkland trees and tree groups and replant single oaks in hedgerows to maintain succession.
- Conserve, strengthen and manage existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees and replant hedgerows where they have been lost.
- Maintain and manage all lakes and ponds and their margins for their landscape diversity and nature conservation value.
- Conserve species-rich meadows and road verges.
- Protect the character of rural lanes and manage road verges to enhance their nature conservation value.
- Reduce the visual impact of golf courses, and stabling and grazing for horses.
- Minimise the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.

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 targets contained in *The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004* (Adopted March 2004) published by the High Weald AONB Joint Management Committee.