

## Overall Character

This Character Area stretches from the Upper Arun Valley in the west to the Upper Adur Valley in the east. It is a relatively low-lying, gently undulating clay landscape, drained by shallow stream valleys. Occasional outcrops of sandstone create low ridges. An intricate pattern of small pastures, enclosed by hedgerows and shaws, contrasts in places with a broader, open, homogenous arable landscape with some large fields. Suburban elements and associated roads dominate larger settlements. Immediately outside the main settlements, landscape is rural and peaceful.

### Key Characteristics

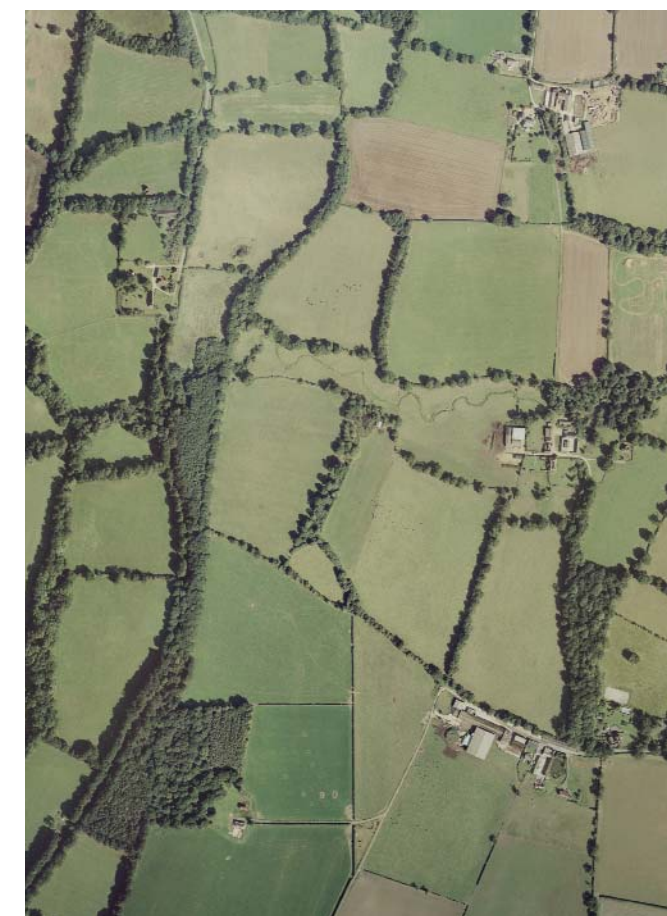
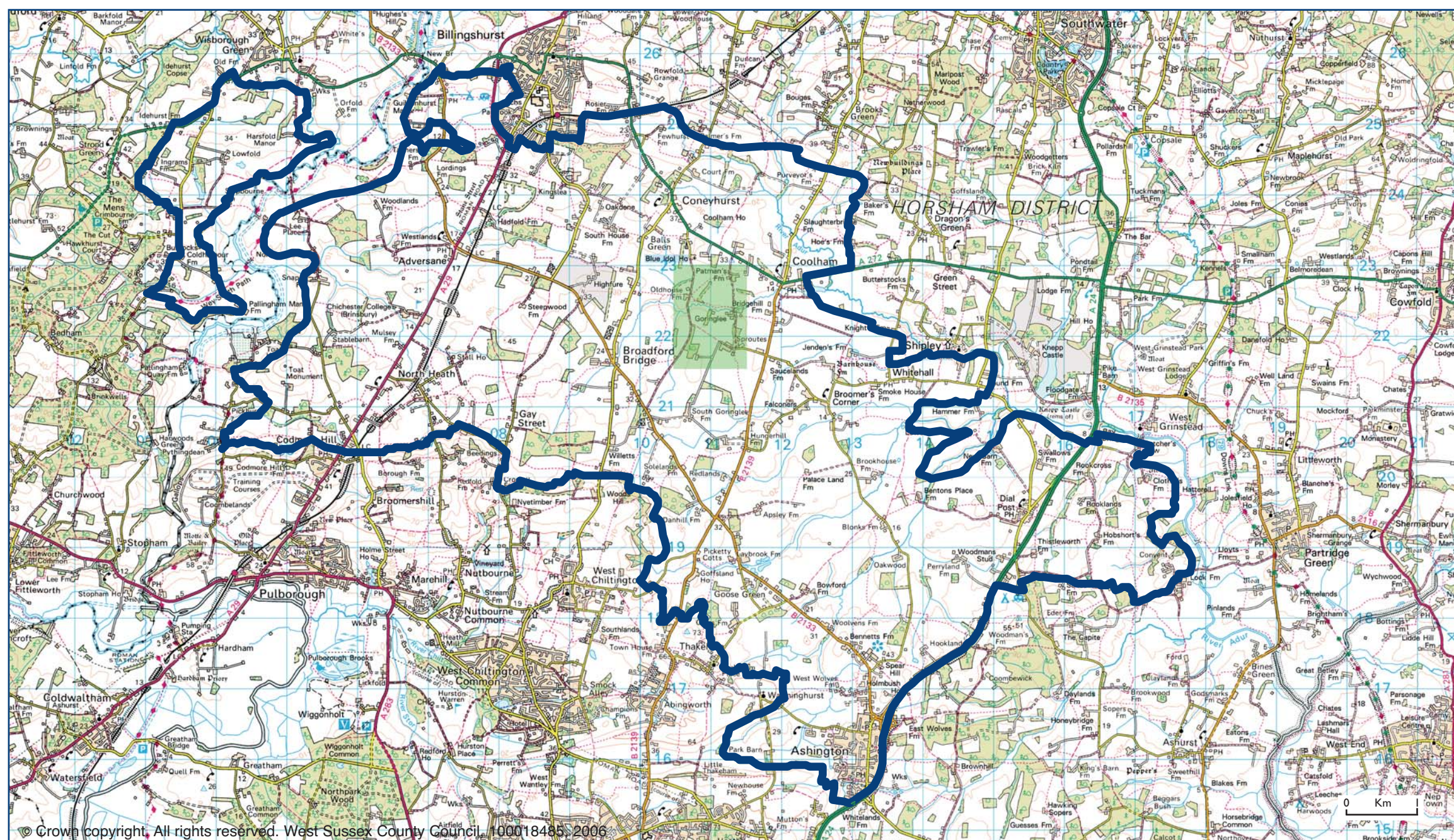
- Mostly low-lying, flat to gently undulating landscape.
- Occasional low wooded ridges in the east of the area.
- Intricate patterns of small pastures and large arable fields.
- Where field sizes have been enlarged by removal of hedgerows, remnants of irregular ancient field patterns are still visible.
- Variable hedgerow network, fragmented and depleted in places.
- Old hedgerow alignments are indicated by isolated oak trees standing in broken lines.
- Distinctive scatter of isolated semi-natural copses, woodlands and linear streamside woodlands.
- Many hedgerow oak trees, some stag-headed.
- Occasional long views to the South Downs and the High Weald.
- Remote rural character in the west. Roads, pylons and suburban influences evident in the east.
- Traditional building materials are of timber frame, brick, tile and Horsham Stone.
- Winding lanes, some narrow, some with wide verges, link scattered hamlets and farms.

## Southern Low Weald

### Low Weald

The area covered by the Sheet is derived from:

Southern Low Weald (L2) Landscape Character Area as defined in the unpublished **West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment** (November 2003).



## Historic Features

- Evidence of Roman occupation. Route of Roman Road of Stane Street.
- Moated farmsteads, windmills and watermills.
- Pattern of small fields as a result of enclosure in medieval times.
- Scattered brickworks and brickyards, and some iron workings.
- Collection of flint workings at Adversane.
- Historic centre at Ashington made up of a collection of sites, including a windmill, watermill, and medieval church.
- Moated site and earthworks west of West Wolves Farm, Ashington, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- Small areas of historic parkland at Holmbush House and Warminghurst near Ashington, and Highfure near Broadford Bridge.
- World War II Airfield at Coolham.

## Biodiversity

- Overall biodiversity is reduced by extent of arable farmland in some areas.
- Small blocks of ancient coppice woodlands at Rosier Wood - Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), Great Lordings Wood and Marringdean Wood around Billingshurst and Woodhill Copse in the West Chiltington area.
- Field ponds.
- Veteran or isolated field trees and hedgerow trees. Good hedgerow matrix.
- Streamside vegetation and ditches with marginal vegetation.
- Water, wet grassland, stream and meadow habitats including SNCI'S at part of the Wey and Arun Canal, Lording's Farm Meadows, Hookland Farm Meadow's, Northwood Farm Fen and Brinsbury College.
- Areas of unimproved neutral grassland, including SNCI's at St Cuthman's Pond and Cattlestone Farm.

## Change - Key Issues

- Continuing hedgerow removal and lack of management.
- Over-maturity and decline of hedgerows and field trees.
- Pylon routes.
- Increasing traffic pressures.
- Visual impact and loss of tranquillity associated with major road improvements.
- Introduction of large farm buildings.
- Development pressures around the edges of some settlements.
- Lack of appropriate management of riverside habitats or water meadows.
- Drainage 'improvements' increasing peak flood flows downstream and reducing residual stream flows during dry summer months.

## Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Key sensitivities are:

- Removal of hedgerows.
- Loss of individual specimen trees in hedgerows and fields.
- Unsympathetic riverside development or drainage of water meadows.
- Intrusion of urban development around the major settlement of Billingshurst, and extensions to smaller settlements such as Southwater and Coolham.
- Road improvements.



Pasture enclosed by hedgerows and woodlands - Adversane



Large arable fields - Billingshurst

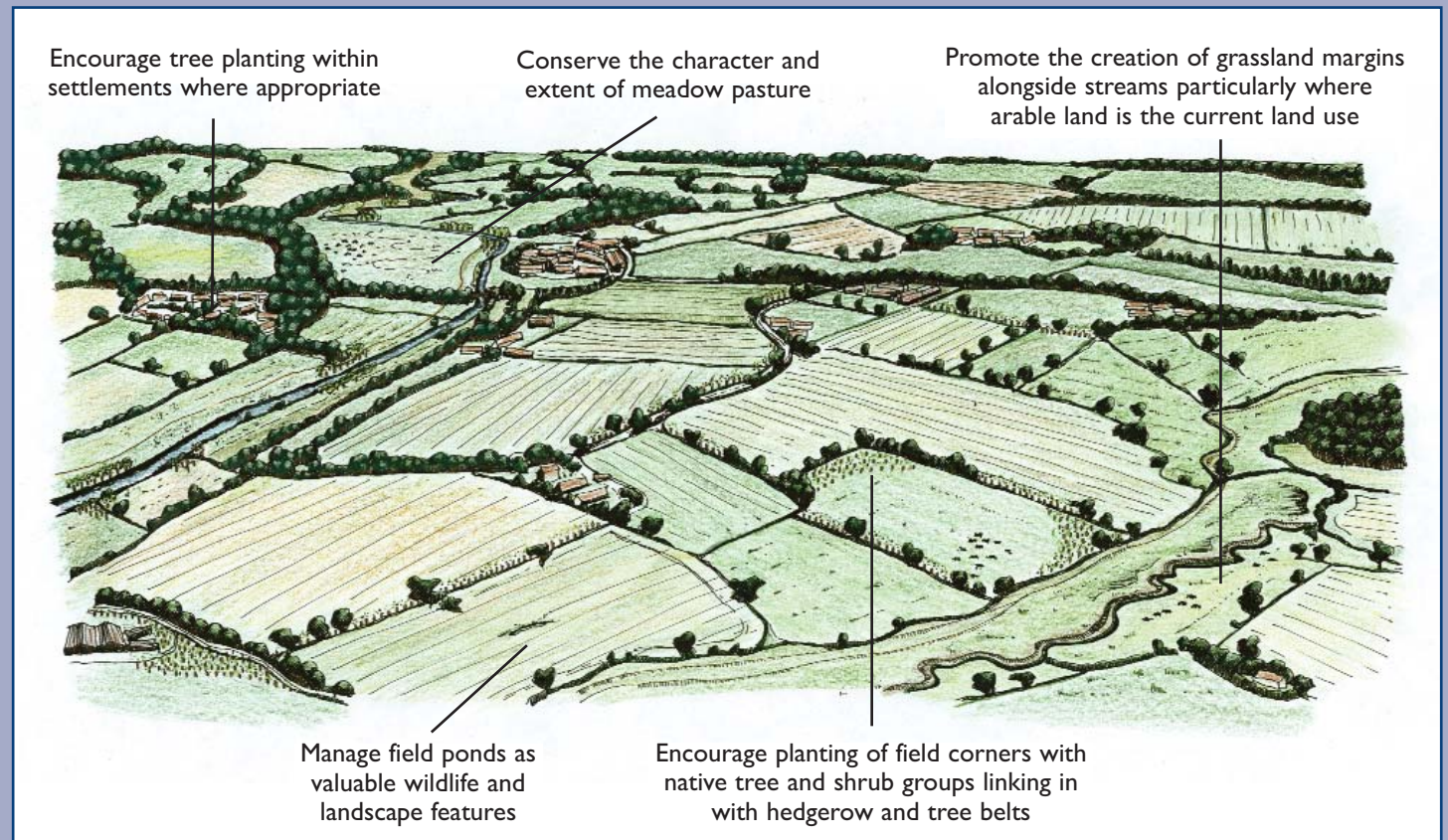


Hedgerow oak trees - Broadford Bridge



Ancient coppice woodland - Rosier Wood

## Land Management Guidelines



**Conserve and enhance pastoral rural character. Maintain the historic character of the area, including moated sites, and the pattern of small irregular fields.**

- Conserve and manage existing tree and woodland pattern, especially coppice and streamside woodlands and ponds, copses, tree lines and mature hedgerow trees.
- Promote the replacement of hedgerow trees by replanting or selection of regenerated trees to perpetuate features.
- Maintain and strengthen existing hedgerows and shaws. Conserve hedgerows by careful management and infill planting.
- Restore and create a network of new, small broadleaved farm woodlands, hedgerows and shaws throughout the area, whilst maintaining long views to distant ridges and respecting existing field patterns.
- Consider carefully the design of rides and extraction routes to avoid straight lines and uniform widths.
- Encourage planting field corners with native tree and shrub groups linking in with hedgerow and tree belts.
- Encourage group tree planting along the edge of the Rivers Arun and Adur to link in with field boundaries.
- Maintain and manage river and streamside vegetation for both nature conservation and landscape value.
- Promote the creation of arable field margins, particularly where arable land borders the sides of streams.
- Manage and restore field ponds as valuable wildlife stepping stones and landscape features. Conserve the character and extent of meadow pasture.
- Consider the cumulative impact on landscape character of small developments and landuse change. Avoid the introduction of suburban styles and materials.
- Establish new hedgerow and hedgerow tree planting alongside major roads such as the A29 and A24 to blend with existing woodland and hedgerow patterns, and along lanes to mask the visual impact of pylons.
- Ensure any new development is well integrated into the wider landscape. Use new woodland, shaw and hedgerow planting as appropriate. Encourage new tree planting within settlements where appropriate.

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.