

# Overall Character

This large Character Area is in the centre of the county stretching from Slinfold to West Grinstead. It is a mainly pastoral landscape with a well-wooded character. Local character varies depending on the presence or otherwise of large parkland estates, concentrations of horse paddocks, and major roads and suburban development. Many small farms and cottages are concentrated along lanes and a few historic linear villages are often located at crossroads. These villages, especially those on the major roads, tend to have a suburban character.

## Key Characteristics

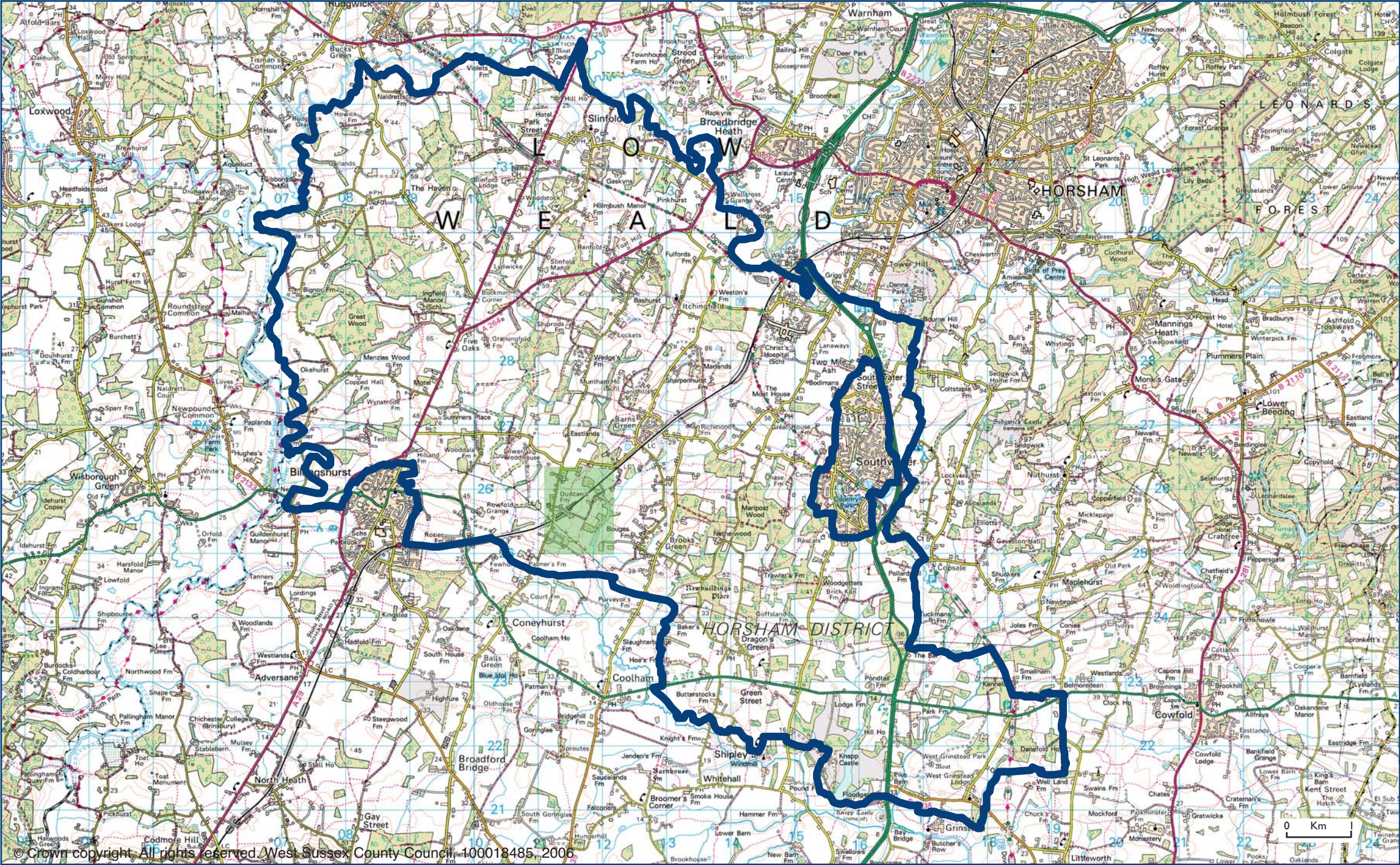
- Gently undulating landform.
- Predominantly small to medium-sized pasture fields, enclosed by woodlands, shaws and hedgerows.
- Some larger arable fields.
- Local concentrations of horse grazed paddocks and golf course development.
- Dense cover of ancient broadleaved woodlands and conifer plantations.
- Small stream valleys draining to the Adur and the Arun.
- Some large country houses and parkland.
- Green lanes and driveways.
- Many scattered, traditional Wealden farmsteads and cottages and a few linear villages.
- Crossed by major transport links north south, both road and rail.

# Central Low Weald

## Low Weald

The area covered by the Sheet is derived from:

Central Low Weald (K3) Landscape Character Area as defined in the unpublished **West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment** (November 2003).



# Historic Features

- Route of the Roman Road of Stane Street.
- Moated farmsteads, such as Marshall’s Farm to the north and Watling’s Farm to the east.
- Old droveways.
- Small and medium-sized assarts. Linear patterns associated with droveways and irregular fields radiating out from settlements.
- Large blocks of historic parkland at Knepp Castle and West Grinstead Park to the south. Smaller blocks of parkland either side of the A29 such as at Slinfold, Summers Place and Lydwicke.
- Various brickwork and brickfields.
- St Nicholas medieval church and Priest House at Itchingfield.
- Hammer Pond at Knepp Castle.

# Biodiversity

- Wet woodland, including willow and alder woodlands on wet ground along streams. Slinfold Stream and Quarry and Coppedhall Hanger are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Some unimproved grasslands. Walden Close Meadow is a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI).
- Many small to medium-sized broadleaved semi-natural woodlands, some of which are also SNCI’s such as Bishops Wood, Lannards and Long Copses, Horsham Common, Alder Copse, Coate’s Furzefield and Constable’s Furze.
- Ancient woodland – notably large blocks at Bignor Wood and Great Wood to the north and Madgeland Wood and Marlpot Wood to the south.
- Field corner ponds and hammer ponds.
- Biodiversity reduced by intensive arable fields and plantation woodlands.

# Change - Key Issues

- Poor hedgerow and woodland management.
- Fragmentation of hedgerows and loss of hedgerow trees and pasture or field trees.
- Neglected ponds.
- Increased traffic.
- Expansion of horse paddocks.
- Increased use of rights of way network.
- Road improvements along A29 and A24.
- Suburban development, in particular around Southwater and Billingshurst settlement fringes, and along main roads.

# Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Key sensitivities are:

- Unsympathetic urban development, changes in settlement pattern and addition of suburban features.
- Unsympathetic or major transport improvements.
- Loss of woodland cover or diversity of woodland due to plantation planting or lack of management.
- Changes in land management practices leading to change in field sizes, and loss of hedgerows and isolated pasture trees.
- Loss of tranquillity.
- Rights of way network vulnerable to reduction in quality due to poor drainage management and increased use.
- Subdivision of fields and changes in boundary styles linked to increase in horse paddocks.



Narrow green lanes - The Haven



Pastoral landscape with a well wooded character - Slinfold

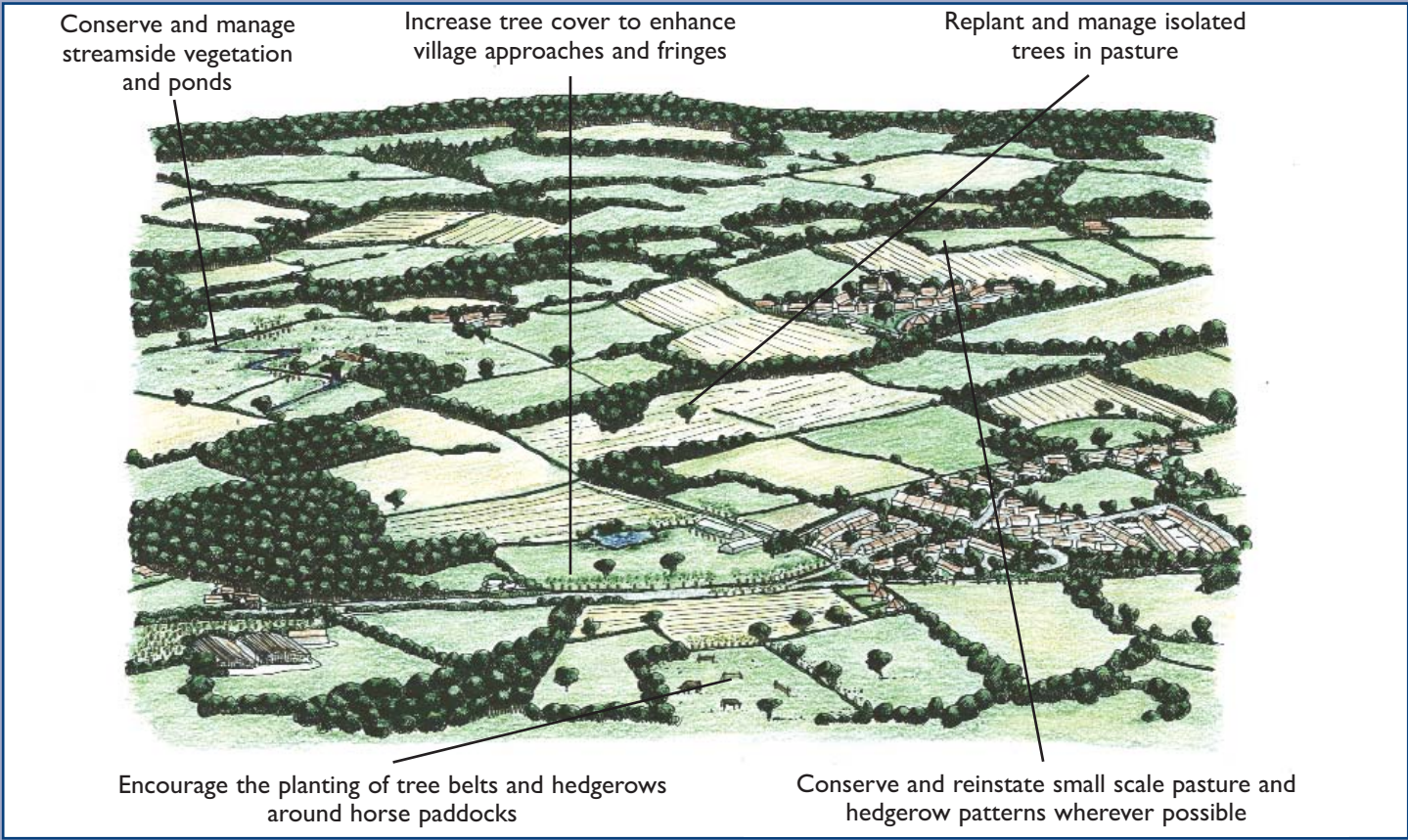


Urban development - Billingshurst



Arable fields - Billingshurst

# Land Management Guidelines



**Conserve predominantly wooded character of the area, and its existing tranquil, rural qualities, and ensure that new development is well-integrated within the landscape.**

- Maintain the historic character of the area, including the pattern of small fields and network of droveways.
- Maintain and restore hedgerows and shaws. Link hedgerows through new planting and aim for good linkage via trees, woodland and hedgerows across land parcels
- Encourage the development of hedgerow trees through tagging especially on roadsides.
- Replant and manage isolated trees in pasture.
- Conserve and reinstate small scale hedgerow cover and pasture wherever possible. Assess the potential for transferring marginal yield arable to pasture.
- Conserve and encourage sound management of all woodlands.
- Support and promote woodland industries.
- Create new woodlands, linking in with existing field boundaries to extend and link existing woodland areas.
- Conserve and manage streamside vegetation and ponds.
- Encourage management of streamside vegetation to perpetuate conservation and landscape interests.
- Seek to reduce the extent, intensity and impact of horse grazing. Encourage the planting of tree belts and hedgerows around horse paddocks.
- Encourage landscape enhancements to existing village edges and road approaches.
- Increase tree cover to enhance village approaches and fringes. Plant amenity trees in villages.
- Consider the cumulative impact on landscape character of small developments and land use change. Avoid the introduction of suburban styles and materials.
- Conserve existing green lanes and drove roads, and conserve and enhance rights of way network.
- Reduce nitrate inputs to increase floral diversity in meadows and re-instate hay cutting regimes.
- Encourage removal of visually and ecologically intrusive conifer plantations and leylandii hedge and tree planting.
- Encourage dredging of old silted up ponds and creation of new ones.

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.