

Overall Character

The open, eastern ‘glorious South Downs’, defined to the north by a steep escarpment (scarp) facing the Weald. An elemental landscape despite intensive cultivation and the closeness of large urban areas.

Key Characteristics

- Elevated, open rolling landform of hills, dry valleys and a steep escarpment (scarp) across uniform chalk upland scenery close to the sea, within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- Panoramic views across the Weald to the Surrey Hills and the North Downs.
- Southern boundary of the area is fringed by the major coastal towns of Brighton, Hove and Shoreham-by-Sea.
- Predominance of open arable and grassland cultivation with irregular, smaller pastures, woodland patches and hedgerows in the chalk valleys and coombes, on parts of the scarp, and along the scarp foot.
- Remnant species-rich grassland.
- Isolated farms and farm buildings on the high downland and sparse settlement elsewhere, clustered in the valleys, in hamlets and farmsteads.
- Ridge line was line of a major ancient routeway, today the South Downs Way.
- Many landmarks and distinctive prehistoric and historic landscape features.
- Chalk quarries and pits, telecommunications masts, pylon lines, golf courses, and intensive recreational use centred on Devil’s Dyke.
- Crossed by the A23 Trunk Road, the A27 Trunk Road (Brighton By-pass) to the south, and by a modest network of high lanes, some of them busy with traffic.
- Much localised traffic noise from roads within and on the edges of the downland.
- London to Brighton Railway Line crosses the area via Clayton Tunnel.
- Traditional rural buildings built of local flint and brick with weatherboarded barns.

Eastern Downs

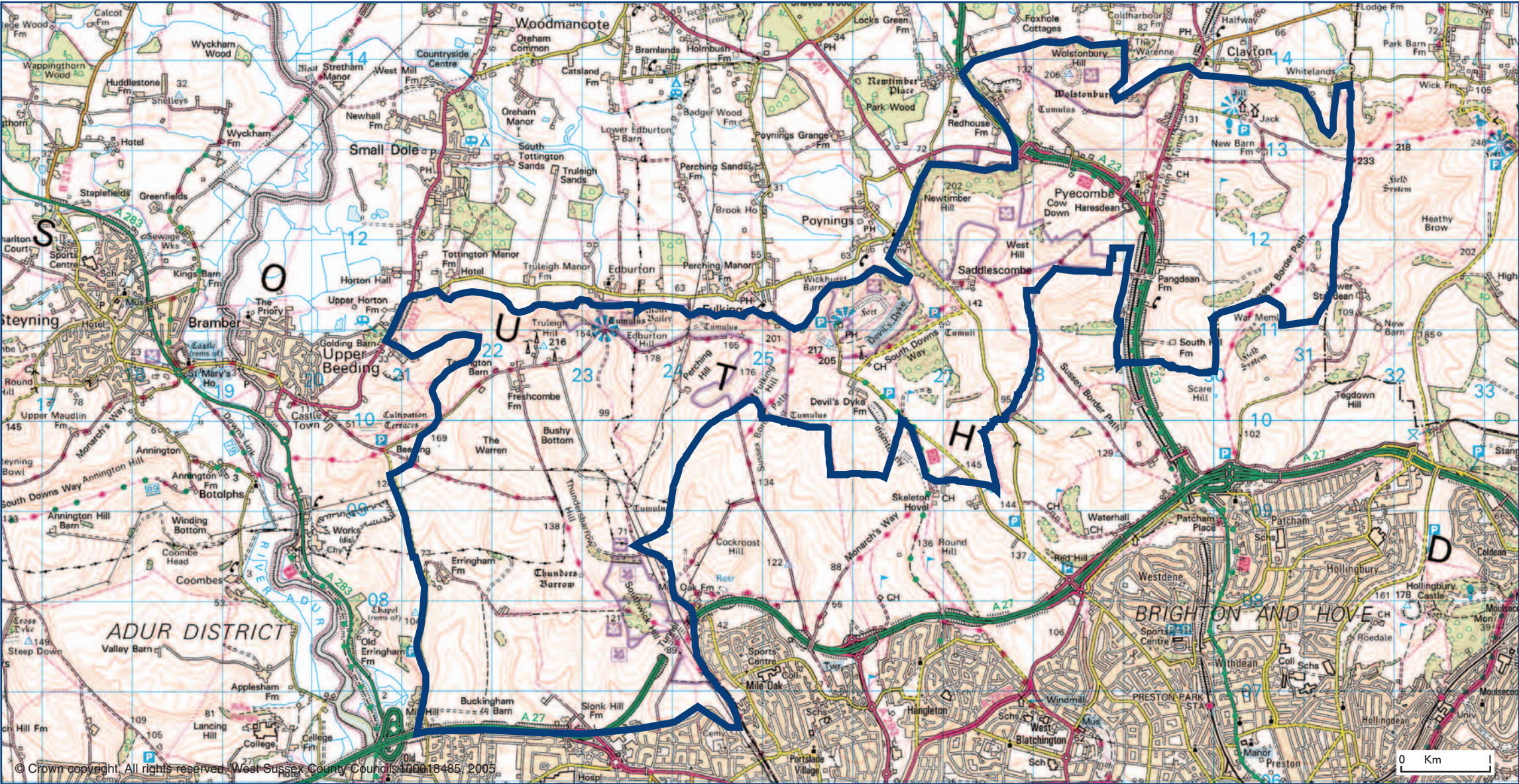
South Downs

The area covered by the Sheet includes:

The Devil’s Dyke and Clayton Downs (Area 1) and Fulking to Clayton Scarp (Area 2) Landscape Character Areas in Mid Sussex District.

*The Beeding Downs (Area A1) and the Beeding to Edburton Scarp (Area B1) Landscape Character Areas defined in the unpublished **Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment** (October 2003).*

The Mill Hill and Southwick Downs Landscape Character Area (yet to be included in a District Assessment) in Adur District.



Historic Features

- Post-medieval and modern landscape of mixed field sizes.
- Prehistoric and Bronze Age cross-ridged dykes.
- Bronze Age barrows and bowl barrows.
- Iron Age hillforts at Devil's Dyke and Wolstonbury Hill.
- Site of Roman road, earthworks and terrace way.
- Evidence of Roman and Romano-British settlements.
- Saxon cemetery, field systems and cultivation terraces.
- Medieval earthworks and motte and bailey castle site.
- Perching Deserted Medieval Village and lynchet.
- Post-medieval windmill sites and Jack and Jill Windmills.

Biodiversity

- Remnants of nationally important species-rich grassland confined to the scarp, other steep slopes and valley sides.
- Small woodlands and scrub areas.
- Dew ponds.

Change - Key Issues

- Species-rich downland grassland now confined to remnants on steep slopes, the significant loss of this habitat due to intensive arable and grass production and scrub encroachment.
- Greater recognition of the value of restoring sheep grazing to maintain increased areas of downland grassland.
- Visual impact of encroaching urban development, new roads and modern farm buildings.
- Continuing pressures for development on the southern downland fringes.
- Impact on the landscape of exposed pylons and telecommunications masts.
- Increasing pressures for a wide variety of recreational activities.
- Increasing pervasiveness of traffic movement and noise within and close to the downs.
- Damage to (and loss of) archaeological remains.
- Gradual suburbanisation of the landscape, loss of locally distinctive building styles and materials, and the widespread use of modern fencing.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

- Highly distinctive landscape of national importance much valued for its open, scenic qualities, cultural associations and recreational potential.
- High sensitivity to the impact of encroaching urban development, modern farm buildings, masts and pylons and new roads, reinforcing the cumulative visual impact of buildings and other structures.
- Views from the downs are highly sensitive to visually prominent development both on the urban edge to the south and in the Weald to the north.
- Species-rich downland grassland has been reduced to remnants.
- Numerous important archaeological remains are vulnerable to damage and loss.



Eastern Downs dip slope from Devil's Dyke



Scarp slope from Devil's Dyke

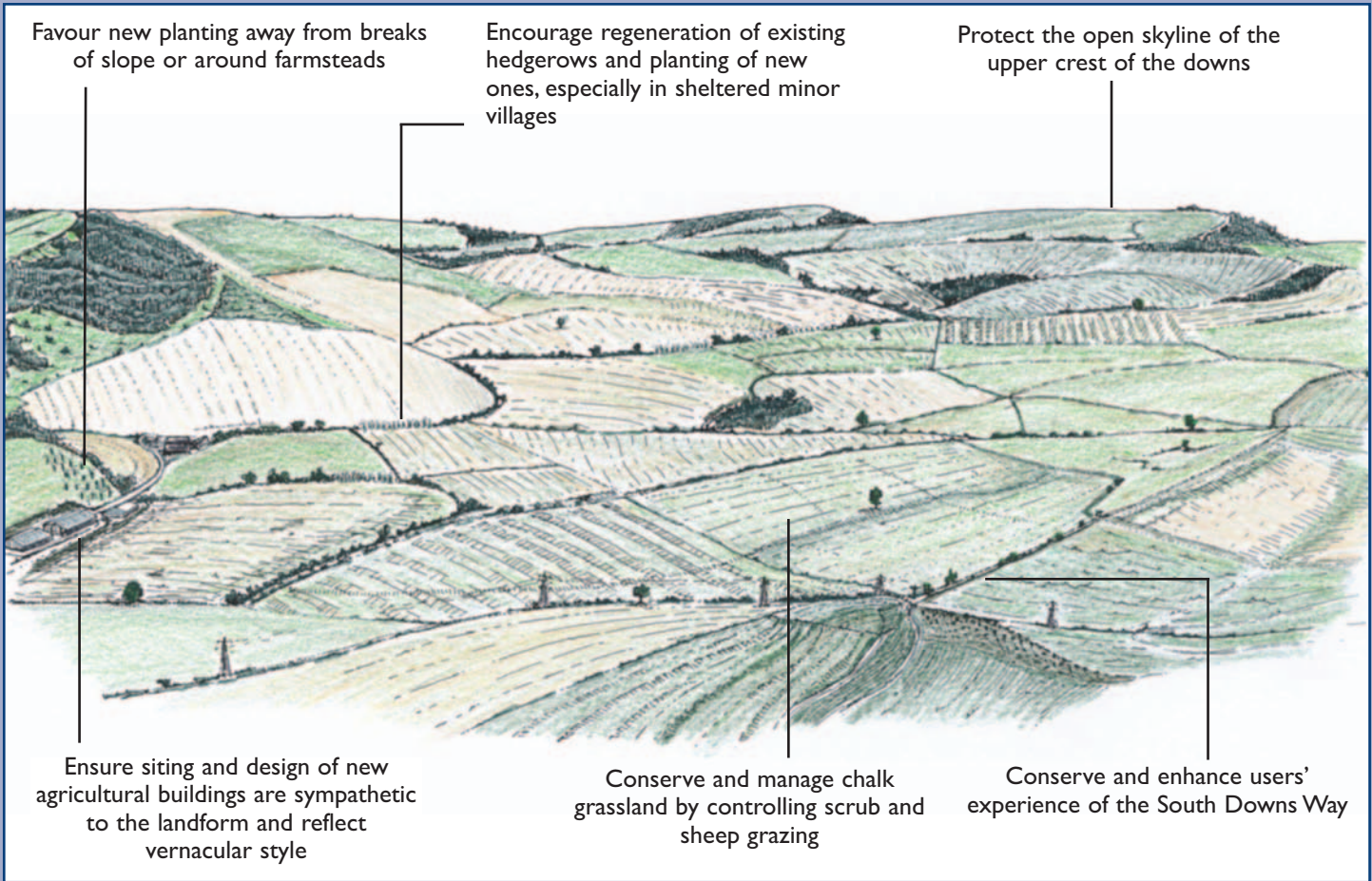


Edburton Hill



Jack and Jill Windmills

Land Management Guidelines



Conserve and enhance the open, elemental qualities of the downland landscape and its historic legacy, encourage landscape restoration and woodland management, and ensure that new development is well-integrated within the landscape.

- Conserve and enhance the essence of the open downland and scarp landscapes through scrub clearance and grazing.
- Ensure that any new development has a minimum impact on views from the downs and is integrated within the landscape.
- Pay particular attention to the siting of telecommunications masts.
- Maintain and manage surviving species-rich chalk grassland and plan for the restoration of extensive new areas.
- Protect and enhance the historic legacy of the area including important archaeological remains and ancient routeways.
- Maintain, restore and manage woodland and hedgerow landscapes, and visually important tree clumps and belts where this does not conflict with conservation of the historic and natural environment.
- Carry out landscape improvements to the rural urban fringe to the south in accordance with a long-term plan to be agreed by all partners.
- Maintain and manage dew ponds for their landscape diversity and nature conservation value.
- Protect the character of rural lanes and manage road verges to enhance their nature conservation value.
- Resist creating areas of horse paddocks, riding schools and stabling in open downland.
- Reduce the visual impact of recreational activities including golf courses, car parks, horse stabling and grazing, and enhance the landscape at Truleigh Hill and around the recreational facilities at Devil's Dyke.
- Conserve and enhance the setting of historic farmsteads and barns.
- 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 actions contained in the *Interim South Downs Management Plan* (March 2004) published by the Sussex Downs Conservation Board.