





## I: Scarp Footslopes

# LANDSCAPE TYPE I: SCARP FOOTSLOPES

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- I.1 The *Scarp Footslopes* landscape comprises the lowland shelf that lies at the foot of the steep northern scarp of the South Downs east of the Arun Valley. This landscape type is dominated by the chalk scarp which forms a dramatic backdrop. The footslopes themselves form a transition between the steep chalk scarp to the south and the Low Weald to the north.

## DESCRIPTION

### Integrated Key Characteristics:

- Complex geology comprising bands of lower chalk, mudstones and sandstones giving rise to a locally undulating landform.
- Forms a transition between the steep chalk scarp to the south and the Low Weald to the north.
- Large, straight-sided arable fields close to the scarp foot which have encroached up onto the scarp in places.
- Mosaic of farmland and woodland comprising irregular fields of arable and pasture bounded by an intact network of thick hedgerows, with hedgerow oaks, and woodland.
- Streams, arising from springs at the foot of the chalk flow northwards in narrow, hidden stream valleys, some enshrouded in woodland.
- Villages, located on the springline, are often associated with springs, mill ponds and mills. The steep chalk scarp forms a dramatic backdrop.
- Varied building materials – consisting of a mixture of flint, brick, sandstone, clunch, rendering and half timber.
- Underhill lanes, often surviving as rural lanes or rough tracks, indicate the course of ancient coaching lanes at the scarp foot.
- Historic picturesque parkland landscapes are important landscape features.
- Impressive panoramic views onto the footslopes from the adjacent scarp and downs reveal a balanced woodland and farmland mosaic.

### Physical Landscape

- I.2 The *scarp footslopes* are underlain by a complex geology comprising bands of lower chalk, mudstones and sandstones. The lower chalk outcrops at the base of the steep scarp where it has been eroded into a smooth concave form. Moving away from the steep scarp slope, a narrow band of Upper Greensand gives way to the older Gault mudstones which are revealed beneath the lower chalk and greensand bench. Further north bands of more resistant sandstones of the Lower Greensands (Folkestone formation) form localised undulations in the landform. The combination

of these rocks types is reflected in the soils. The lower chalk gives rise to well drained calcareous fine silty soils which support arable cropping nearer the scarp, and the mudstones give rise to slowly permeable clayey soils which tend to support permanent grassland and woodland with thick hedgerows and hedgerow trees. The Lower Greensands give rise to less fertile sandy soils.

- I.3 The solid geology is masked in places by deposits of 'Head' which relate to the lower lying ground. Springs mark the junction between the chalk and clay. These springs feed small streams that flow northwards into the Low Weald. The clay substrate has also allowed the formation of many ponds, including field corner ponds, mill ponds and designed ponds associated with designed landscapes. The historic parklands are of picturesque design with sculpted landforms, groups of specimen trees, and woodlands.

### **Perceptual/Experiential Landscape**

- I.4 The balanced mosaic of arable, pasture and woodland gives the *scarp footslopes* a sense of unity as viewed from the adjacent scarp and downs to the south. The interlocking network of woodland, intact hedgerows and hedgerow trees creates a sense of seclusion and enclosure. The small scale irregular fields on clay provide a dramatic contrast with the vast scale landscapes of the adjacent downs to the south. Scattered farms, villages and designed parkland add a wealth of interest, contributing to a lively character.
- I.5 This is a deeply rural landscape as a result of the low noise levels, peaceful villages, pastoral parklands and low incidence of overt built human impact. However, the sense of tranquillity is eroded in localised areas by roads and railways which tend to follow the scarp foot.
- I.6 The *scarp footslopes* generally have a good network of public rights of way, forming links both north into the Low Weald and south up into the downs. There are typically many visitor attractions on the scarp footslopes, including village pubs, country houses and parklands which provide public access.
- I.7 In contrast to the open downs, the *scarp footslopes* provided a mellow, romantic setting for many Victorian novelists, including R D Blackmore who based '*Alice Lorraine: A Tale of the South Downs*' (1875) in this landscape.
- I.8 The *scarp footslopes* also became the home of writers' and artists' colonies. Most notably the Bloomsbury set whose summer retreat was Charleston Farmhouse. In 1916 Charleston became the home of the artist Vanessa Bell (sister of Virginia Woolf who lived at nearby), fellow artist Duncan Grant, and the writer David Garnett. Regular visitors to Charleston included the Woolfs, Roger Fry, Lytton Strachey, John Maynard Keynes, T.S. Elliot, Desmond MacCarthy and E.M. Forster.

### **Biodiversity**

- I.9 The *scarp footslopes* are dominated by intensive arable agriculture at the base of the scarp, together with areas of improved pasture grassland on the clays. Ecologically, the scarp footslopes support occasional blocks of woodland, much of which is of ancient origin and carries non-statutory designation, being important for a range of woodland plant species and breeding birds. A particularly notable example, is



Parham Park SSSI, a medieval parkland dominated by oak and beech woodland, together with open parkland. This site is especially important for its lichen and invertebrate assemblages. Occasional areas of wetland and chalk grassland habitat provide additional habitat diversity.

- I.10 In the wider landscape, areas of intermixed agricultural land uses including improved pasture, arable land, hedgerows and mature trees provide important ecological habitat for a range of farmland birds. The relatively intact network of hedgerows and mature trees also provide important habitat connectivity at a landscape scale, and create green corridors between existing woodland blocks. Occasional streams, ditches and ponds are also present, and contribute to the landscape's overall ecological character.

<b>Key Biodiversity Features</b>	<b>Importance</b>
Areas of woodland (including some of ancient origin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many of the woodland areas are of ancient origin and carry non-statutory designation.</li> <li>Nationally important woodland/parkland habitat occurs at Parham Park SSSI.</li> </ul>
Occasional small areas of chalk grassland occur at the foot of the scarp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small areas of nationally important chalk grassland, which support diverse plant assemblages and notable invertebrate species.</li> </ul>
Occasional wetland habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small streams, ditches and ponds provide locally important features.</li> </ul>
Network of hedgerows and mature trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide important ecological features at the local level.</li> </ul>

## Historic Character

- I.11 The fertile soils of the scarp foot, sandwiched between high downland and intractable clays, has long been recognised as a 'zone of preferred settlement'. Prehistoric occupation of the *scarp footslopes* is likely to have been extensive although evidence is scarce and buried beneath later colluvial deposits. The fertile soils were identified by the Anglo-Saxons, who established a string of settlements along the foot of the scarp, positioned to exploit the varied forest and downland resources. Some of these early settlements were located in areas formerly occupied by Roman villa estates. A parallel string of settlements, possibly of secondary origin, occupied the outcrops of Lower Greensand further to the north, beyond the clay.
- I.12 By the medieval period, the scarp footslopes formed an integral part of a sophisticated and efficient agrarian landscape based around sheep-corn husbandry. Nucleated villages were established along the scarp footslope, surrounded by open fields with woodland and downland pastures towards the extremities of the parishes. The open arable fields were manured by sheep flocks brought from the downland sheepwalks at night. Bostal tracks are the old droveways which climb the scarp of the downs – they survive as deep holloways running diagonally (sometimes zigzag) up the scarp. To the north of the fertile strip, situated on Gault Clay, many fields originated as woodland assarts and were enclosed during the medieval period. These fields were probably utilised for pasturing cattle.

- I.13 The changing economic and social conditions of the later medieval period saw the decline of the open field system, and many of the remaining open fields were enclosed on a piecemeal basis, often beginning with the lords' demesne lands. Some of the richer landowners created landscape parks.
- I.14 The *scarp footslopes* still reflects the dual nature of the medieval and later agricultural landscape. The nucleated villages, strung out along the chalk/clay boundary are flanked to the north, on the claylands, by irregular enclosed fields of early creation, representing a largely intact late medieval landscape. Woodland is relatively common in this area, including frequent but small blocks of ancient woodland of pre-1600 date, as well as more recent plantations and game coverts (mostly post-1800). The area close to the scarp foot, conforming to the main arable land, is now largely covered by modern fields. Occasional blocks of early and recent enclosure (15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively) hint at the earlier landscapes which once existed here before being swept away during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This dichotomy reflects the relative wealth of the two soil types in the past.

<b>Key Features of the Historic Environment</b>	<b>Importance</b>
Nucleated settlements	Indicative of medieval manorial system based around open fields.
Early enclosures on clay	Indicative of areas of less productive soil
Pre-1800 woodland	Provides evidence of medieval and early post-medieval woodland exploitation, e.g. coppicing and charcoal burning
Designed parkland	Indicative of the changing economic and social conditions of the later medieval period
Modern enclosures on chalk	Evidence for major reorganisation of landscape of more productive soil

### **Settlement Form and Built Character**

- I.15 The settlement pattern in the *scarp footslopes* is characterised by strings of nucleated settlements along the foot of the downs. The first is situated on the springline at the boundary of two contrasting soil types, chalk and clay. Sometime there is a secondary string of settlement located on the Lower Greensand outcrops. This conforms to English Heritage's rural settlement designation of East Wessex Sub-Province within the South-eastern Province. The typical settlement form is of mid-late Anglo-Saxon origin, and comprises nucleated groups of former farmsteads situated around the church and manor house, and set within groups of fields enclosed in the later medieval period but originally forming open fields farmed on a communal basis. The springline settlements are linked by an 'underhill lane', an historic coaching route which runs along the bottom of the scarp slope. This is often visible as a rough track or rural road. Scattered isolated farmsteads derive from more recent enclosures during the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and are set within large regular field systems that have replaced earlier patterns.
- I.16 Building materials are varied, but typically include a mixture of flint, brick, sandstone, clunch, rendering and half timber, with clay tile roofs. This gives the villages a lively character.

## EVALUATION

### Sensitivity

- I.17 This landscape has many sensitive natural, cultural and aesthetic/perceptual features that are vulnerable to change. Key landscape sensitivities include:
- The pattern of small irregular fields of pasture and meadow which represent a largely intact late medieval landscape, are of biodiversity value, and would be vulnerable to field expansion or boundary loss.
  - Intact network of hedgerows, hedgerow oaks, and woodland, which creates a sense of seclusion and enclosure as well as being of high biodiversity value.
  - Hidden stream valleys and stream side woodland that form important visual and biodiversity features and would be vulnerable to lowering of the water table.
  - Field ponds, mill ponds and designed ponds which are important visual features and would be vulnerable to lowering of the water table.
  - Picturesque, nucleated villages exhibiting a consistent palette of building materials (a mixture of flint, brick, rendering and half timber, with clay tile roofs) which provides unity. These could be vulnerable to insensitive, or excessive, built development.
  - The deeply rural character and intact visual structure of the area which could be vulnerable to the cumulative effect of many piecemeal changes.
  - Underhill lanes and bostal tracks, often surviving as rough tracks and public rights of way, indicating the course of ancient coaching lanes and droveways. These may be vulnerable to erosion as a result of recreational pressure and particularly from off-road vehicles.
  - The presence of historic picturesque parkland landscapes.
- I.18 The intact hedgerow network and presence of woodland limits visual sensitivity of the landscape as changes could be screened by these existing elements. There is also opportunity to mitigate potential visual impacts through new planting which would not significantly alter the character of the area. However the scarp footslopes are highly visible from the adjacent scarp and downs to the south and this inter-visibility increases visual sensitivity.

### Change – Key Issues and Trends

#### *Past Change*

- I.19 Observable changes in the past include:
- Encroachment of arable fields onto the lower scarp slopes, replacing calcareous grassland in the past 70 years.

- Modern development on the edges of rural villages and introduction of 'suburban' features into the rural landscape including use of exotic tree and shrub species in the past 70 years.
- Amalgamation of small fields and hedgerow loss over the past 70 years.
- The development of golf courses, reservoirs, and pylons in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- The appearance of apparently abandoned land which has been 'set-aside' as a requirement of the Common Agricultural Policy.
- A recent increase in fields used as paddocks resulting in changes in field boundaries and poor quality pasture.

### ***Future Landscape Change***

- I.20 In the short term (5 years) change is likely to be on a small-scale basis. Individual changes may not be immediately apparent or have a clear (visible) landscape impact. There is likely to be a trend towards land being managed in larger units which could threaten the small scale field patterns. However, there may also be pressure for increases in paddocks and small holdings that may affect the visual structure of the landscape and quality of pasture. There may also be local change in relation to individual properties and villages such as introduction of external lighting or (sub) urban style fencing and boundaries.
- I.21 It is difficult to be prescriptive about long term change (20 years) as this will be dependent on prevailing policies and incentives. The South Downs Management Plan will be a key tool in managing change and ensuring a positive future for the area. Some potential changes and key vulnerabilities within the *scarp footslopes* are outlined below.

**Climate Change:** Increased drought conditions could result in the potential to grow different crop types which could change the visual character of the *scarp footslopes*. In response to climate change, the pursuit of renewable energy may result in demand for growth of biomass crops such as poplar or willow. Increased storms could result in damage to the woodlands. However, future management of woodlands for fuel may be a positive benefit.

**Agricultural Change and Land Management:** Agricultural management will be driven by the changes in the world market and the CAP. On the marginal land it is possible that areas will be vulnerable to purchase as hobby farms or for horse grazing and these uses will require active management to ensure the lush and rural character of the area is retained. On the other hand smaller farm units may be able to respond to environmental initiatives and opportunities.

On the arable fields at the scarp foot it is likely that agricultural production will continue to intensify with amalgamation of farms and potential new large scale farm buildings. Positive landscape change could result from regimes to promote enhanced environmental management of hedgerows, hedgerow trees, woodland, and chalk grassland at the foot of the scarp.

**Development:** Although the *scarp footslopes* contain many village settlements and a good communication network, the current designation of the area as an AONB and,

if confirmed, its future designation as a National Park, is likely to continue to limit pressure for built development. Although extensive development is not envisaged, the character of these villages could be eroded by incremental small scale changes.

### **Broad Management Objective and Landscape Guidelines**

- I.22 **The overall management objective should be to conserve the deeply rural, secluded character of the intact medieval landscape of interlocking irregular fields, woodlands and parklands, and conserve areas of chalk grassland on the lower scarp.**

#### ***Landscape Management Considerations***

- Conserve the intact pattern of small irregular fields of pasture, which represent a largely intact late medieval landscape, and resist field expansion or boundary loss. These areas would be most suited to pasture.
- Manage the hedgerow network and monitor regeneration of hedgerow oaks, re-planting where necessary.
- Manage areas of deciduous woodland to ensure a diverse species and age structure by thinning, coppicing, and replanting as necessary. This will minimise risk of damage as a result of increased storms and high winds. Encourage interest in, and marketing of, local wood products.
- Consider new woodland planting in more open areas to promote a balance farmland and woodland mosaic. However, avoid harsh woodland edges which are visually intrusive on the lower scarp slopes.
- Monitor water flows in the streams and conserve and manage sinuous, linear streamside woodlands and copses, placing emphasis on planting of wetland species.
- Monitor erosion of underhill lanes and bostal tracks by bikes and off-road vehicles.
- Seek to conserve and restore historic designed landscapes, and their settings. Encourage reversion of arable to pasture in these landscapes.
- Plan for climate change by considering opportunities for appropriate biomass crops and management of woodland for bio-fuel whilst maintaining the lush pastoral character of the footslopes.
- Support extension of chalk grassland habitats onto the lower slopes of the scarp to improve the visual integrity of the adjacent scarp.

#### ***Development Considerations***

- Conserve the nucleated form of springline villages and limit development along the underhill road that links villages at the foot of the scarp.

- Conserve the rural setting to villages - consider using woodland or tree planting to screen development on the edge of villages. In particular conserve the striking undeveloped scarp backdrop to the springline villages.
- Monitor the cumulative effect of many piecemeal changes that could alter the deeply rural character and intact visual structure of the area – resist suburban style garden boundaries, kerbs, and lighting - and minimise such change by providing design guidance and encouraging applicants to enter into discussions at an early stage in the preparation of their proposals.
- Encourage sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, hardstanding, jumps and other paraphernalia that are associated with hobby farms or private stables and that fall outside planning control.
- Maintain the consistent range of building materials (a mixture of flint, brick, sandstone, clunch, rendering and half timber, with clay tile roofs) which gives the villages a distinctive character.
- Take account of views from the adjacent scarps and downs to the south in relation to any change.

#### **Character Areas**

There are three distinct areas of *Scarp Footslopes* in the South Downs – each separated by a major river valley. They run along the northern edge of the major scarps forming a transition between the steep Chalk scarp to the south and the Low Weald to the north.

I1:	Ouse to Eastbourne Scarp Footslopes
I2:	Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes
I3:	Arun to Adur Scarp Footslopes

## II: OUSE TO EASTBOURNE SCARP FOOTSLOPES

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### DESCRIPTION

#### Location and Boundaries

- II.1 The *Ouse to Eastbourne Scarp Footslopes* forms a relatively narrow strip of land at the foot of the northern scarp of the *Ouse to Eastbourne Downs*, between Lewes and Eastbourne. The character area is divided in three by the River Cuckmere and Glynde Reach. There are also two small outliers which have been separated from the remainder of the area by built development on the edge of Eastbourne.
- II.2 The southern boundary of this character area is defined by the steep scarp of the *Ouse to Eastbourne Downs Scarp* and has been drawn along the southern edge of the arable fields that form part of the scarp footslopes. To the north the character area extends beyond the study area boundary (marked by the A27) where it forms a gradual transition to the landscape of the Low Weald.

#### Integrated Key Characteristics:

- A lush lowland landscape at the foot of the northern scarp of the *Ouse to Eastbourne Downs*.
- Large, fertile straight-sided arable fields on the Lower Chalk geology at the foot of the scarp, enclosed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from open fields and earlier piecemeal enclosures.
- Small irregular fields of pasture on the less productive clay soils, which originated as woodland assarts, represent a largely intact late medieval landscape.
- Hedgerows with mature hedgerow oaks link closely with the woodland, forming an interlocking network that is of high biodiversity value as well as creating a sense of seclusion and enclosure.
- Streams, arising from springs at the foot of the chalk flow northwards in narrow, hidden stream valleys, some enshrouded in woodland. Field ponds, mill ponds and designed ponds are common features of the clay.
- Anglo-Saxon villages, for example Wilmington, Berwick, Alciston and Firle, located on the spring line between the chalk and clay, linked by the busy A27.
- Underhill lanes and bostal tracks, often surviving as rough tracks and paths, indicate the course of ancient coaching lanes and droveways.
- Historic picturesque parkland landscapes e.g. Firle Park and Glynde Park are important landscape features.
- Charleston Farmhouse was the summer retreat of the Bloomsbury set.

- A number of visitor attractions including golf courses on the edge of Eastbourne, Drusillas Zoo, Firle Place, Charleston Farmhouse, and Glynde Place, in close proximity to the A27.
- A consistent palette of building materials (a mixture of flint, brick, rendering and half timber, with clay tile roofs) provides unity across the area.
- Visually dominated by the steep Chalk scarp to the south, which forms a backdrop to views. Impressive panoramic views from adjacent scarp and downs reveal a pleasingly balanced woodland and farmland mosaic.

### **Specific Characteristics Unique to the Ouse to Eastbourne Scarp Footslopes**

- 11.3 The *Ouse to Eastbourne Scarp Footslopes* occur at the eastern end of the South Downs. Here the landscape has a relatively simply solid geology composed of Lower Chalk and Gault mudstone. The Lower Chalk outcrops at the base of the steep scarp where it has been eroded into a smooth concave form supporting the modern arable fields replacing the former medieval open field systems. These chalk slopes support some remnant chalk grassland, most notably at Folkington Reservoir SSSI. Moving away from the steep scarp slope, the older Gault mudstones are revealed beneath the Lower Chalk as a clay vale. Here irregular enclosed fields represent a largely intact late medieval landscape with many fields originating as woodland assarts – this area has a more ‘Wealden’ character.
- 11.4 Small stands of broadleaved semi-natural and broadleaved plantation woodland also occur, including some of ancient origin. The intact network of hedgerows and mature trees which link with existing woodland blocks provide important habitat connectivity at a landscape scale. Occasional streams and ditches are also present, and contribute to the areas ecological character.
- 11.5 Typical of the *scarp footslopes*, springs mark the junction between the chalk and clay. These springs feed small streams that flow northwards into the Low Weald or into the River Cuckmere. Also typical of the *scarp footslopes* landscape, are nucleated villages which are positioned along this springline as at Wilmington, Berwick, Alciston, and Firle. Designed landscapes can be seen at Folkington Manor, Firle Park, and Glyndebourne. Firle Place and Glynde Place are open to the public and the annual Glyndebourne Festival attracts many visitors. Charleston Farmhouse, the summer retreat of the Bloomsbury set, also draws visitors to the area.
- 11.6 The sense of tranquillity is eroded, in this area, by traffic on the A27, which is never far away, the urban edges of Eastbourne (including golf courses), and the presence of visitor attractions such as Drusillas Zoo. The area’s proximity to Eastbourne and the A27 means that there are a large number of potential users of the area. A good network of rights of way, focussed around the Cuckmere valley, includes the Weald Way and Vanguard Way which cross the scarp footslopes before heading north into the Low Weald. By comparison, there is notable absence of public rights of way in the footslopes of Mount Caburn.



### **Sensitivities Specific to the Ouse to Eastbourne Scarp Footslopes**

11.7 All of the landscape and visual sensitivities listed in the landscape type evaluation apply to this character area. Specific to this character area are:

- The intact medieval landscape on the clay, particularly the fields originating as woodland assarts.
- The form of springline villages (Wilmington, Berwick, Alciston, and Firle) at the scarp foot.
- The historic picturesque parkland landscapes of Folkington Manor, Firle Park and Glynde Park which add diversity and 'time depth' to the landscape and would be vulnerable to change;
- The remnant chalk grassland at Folkington Reservoir SSSI.

### **Change Specific to the Ouse to Eastbourne Scarp Footslopes**

11.8 Past change specific to this area includes:

- Introduction of a reservoir at Folkington.
- The development of golf courses on the edge of Eastbourne in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Progressive upgrading of the A27(T) in the last 50 years.
- Recent suburban development on the edges of Eastbourne encroaching onto the scarp footslopes.

11.9 The designation of the area as an AONB and, if confirmed, the future designation of the area as National Park, there is unlikely to be further encroachment of built development onto the scarp footslopes around Eastbourne.

### **Landscape Management/Development Considerations Specific to the Ouse to Eastbourne Scarp Footslopes**

11.10 In addition to the generic landscape management and development considerations for this landscape type, the following landscape management considerations are specific to this character area:

- Conserve the intact medieval landscape on the clay, particularly the fields originating as woodland assarts.
- Conserve the historic picturesque parkland landscapes of Folkington Manor, Firle Park and Glynde Park - encourage reversion of arable to pasture in these landscapes.
- Conserve the remnant chalk grassland at Folkington Reservoir SSSI.

11.11 The following development considerations are specific to this character area:

- Conserve the settlement pattern of nucleated springline villages (Wilmington, Berwick, Alciston, and Firle) at the scarp foot.

- Use planting to mitigate the visual impact of existing intrusive features such as the A27 and built development on the edge of Eastbourne.



Large, straight sided arable fields which encroach on the scarp in places.



View from Firle across to Caburn



Paddocks are a feature on the edges of the springline villages.



Historic picturesque parkland landscapes are important features e.g. Firle Park.



Mosaic of farmland and woodland comprises irregular fields of arable and pasture bounded by an intact network of thick hedgerows.



A consistent palette of building materials (flint, red brick, rendering and half timber) provides unity across the area.

## II: Ouse to Eastbourne Scarp Footslopes

## I2: ADUR TO OUSE SCARP FOOTSLOPES

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### DESCRIPTION

#### Location and Boundaries

- 12.1 The *Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes* form a wide band of lowland at the foot of the northern scarp of the *Adur to Ouse Downs*, between Upper Beeding and Lewes. The southern boundary of this character area is defined by the steep scarp of the *Adur to Ouse Downs Scarp* and has been drawn along the southern edge of the arable fields that form part of the scarp footslopes. To the north the character area forms a gradual transition to the landscape of the Low Weald.

#### Integrated Key Characteristics:

- Complex geology comprising bands of chalk, mudstones and sandstones giving rise to a locally undulating lowland landscape at the foot of the northern scarp of the *Adur to Ouse Downs*.
- Large, fertile straight-sided arable fields on the Lower Chalk geology at the foot of the scarp, enclosed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from open fields and earlier piecemeal enclosures.
- Small irregular fields of pasture on the less productive clay soils, which originated as woodland assarts, represent a largely intact late medieval landscape.
- Frequent but small blocks of ancient woodland of pre-1600 date, as well as more recent post-1800 plantations and game coverts (e.g. Foxhole Shaw near Hurstpierpoint).
- Hedgerows with mature hedgerow oaks link closely with the woodland, forming an interlocking network that is of high biodiversity value as well as creating a sense of seclusion and enclosure.
- Sandstone outcrops give rise to locally sandy soils, e.g. at Truleigh Sands, which support areas of acid grassland, bracken and coniferous plantations.
- Streams, arising from springs at the foot of the chalk flow northwards in narrow, hidden stream valleys, some enshrouded in woodland. Field ponds, mill ponds and designed water bodies are common features of the clay.
- Villages, located on the springline, are often associated with springs, mill ponds and mills – Edburton, Fulking, Poynings, Westmeston, Plumpton, and Offham are all linked by an underhill lane. The steep chalk scarp forms a dramatic backdrop to these villages.
- Secondary row of settlements located on the sandstone outcrops further north e.g. Ditchling, Streat, and East Chiltington.

- Historic picturesque parkland landscapes at Plumpton, Danny and Newtimber Parks, although the small size of these suggests that the character area was too valuable for agricultural use to waste on unproductive aesthetics.
- A well developed network of rights of way, and Stonewish Country Park on the edge of Ditchling, provide opportunities for countryside access.
- A consistent palette of building materials (a mixture of flint, brick, rendering and half timber, with clay tile roofs) provides unity across the area.
- Visually dominated by the steep chalk scarp to the south, which forms a backdrop to views. Impressive panoramic views from adjacent scarp and downs reveal a pleasingly balanced woodland and farmland mosaic.

### **Specific Characteristics Unique to the Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes**

- 12.2 The *Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes* cover a relatively large area at the foot of the northern scarp of the *Adur to Ouse Downs*, between Upper Beeding and Lewes. The footslopes extend some way north of the scarp, and include parts of the Low Weald, exhibiting a number of different geological bands. These include Lower Chalk, Upper Greensand, Gault Mudstone, and Lower Greensand. The area also includes a small area of Weald Clay at its very northern boundary, north of Ditchling.
- 12.3 The Lower Chalk at the base of the steep scarp has been eroded into a smooth concave form with large modern arable fields replacing the former medieval open field systems. These chalk slopes support some remnant chalk grassland, e.g. a small area of Beeding Hill to Newtimber Hill SSSI. North of this is a narrow band of Upper Greensand bench. Moving away from the scarp slope, the older Gault Mudstones are revealed. Here, irregular enclosed fields represent a largely intact late medieval landscape with many fields originating as woodland assarts – this area has a more ‘Wealden’ character. Frequent but small blocks of ancient woodland of pre-1600 date, as well as more recent plantations and game coverts (e.g. Foxhole Shaw near Hurstpierpoint). Many of these woodland blocks are classified as ancient woodland, and a number carry non-statutory designation, for example Tottington Wood SNCI. Ecologically they are notable for supporting a range of ancient woodland plant species, as well as providing important habitat for breeding birds.
- 12.4 Within the clay vale are outcrops of sandstone which give rise to locally sandy areas, such as around Ditchling which support pasture and coniferous plantations, for example Ashurst Meadows - Plumpton SINC. There are also a number of sand quarries associated with this geological formation, demonstrating the economic value of the sands.
- 12.5 Typical of the *scarp footslopes*, the junction between the chalk and clay is marked by springs and a string of nucleated villages. Edburton, Fulking, Poynings, Westmeston, Plumpton, and Offham are all typical springline villages, some developing on areas formerly occupied by Roman villa estates (Danny, Clayton and Plumpton). The villages are linked by an underhill lane, indicating the course of the ancient coaching lane at the scarp foot. The steep chalk scarp forms a dramatic backdrop to these villages, such as at Fulking.



- 12.6 This area of *scarp footslopes* is typical of its type in that it contains a number of picturesque parkland landscapes were developed at Plumpton, Danny and Newtimber Parks, although the small size of these provides an indication that the character area was deemed too valuable for agricultural use to waste on unproductive aesthetics.
- 12.7 This area supports a well developed network of rights of way with a north south orientation providing access between the downs to the south and the Low Weald to the north. The density of public rights of way is particularly high around Ditchling and includes the Sussex Border Path long distance recreational route. Stonewish Country Park, on the edge of Ditchling, provides further opportunities for countryside access.

### **Sensitivities Specific to the Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes**

- 12.8 All of the landscape and visual sensitivities listed in the landscape type evaluation apply to this character area. Specific to this character area are:
- The intact medieval landscape on the clay, particularly the fields originating as woodland assarts.
  - The form of springline villages (Edburton, Fulking, Poynings, Westmeston, Plumpton, and Offham) at the scarp foot.
  - Remnant chalk grassland, for example the small area of Beeding Hill to Newtimber Hill SSSI.
  - Ancient woodland, for example Tottington Wood SNCI.
  - Areas of acid grassland on sandstone.
  - The historic picturesque parkland landscapes of Plumpton, Danny and Newtimber Parks.

### **Change Specific to the Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes**

- 12.9 Past change specific to this area includes:
- 20<sup>th</sup> century quarrying of sand.
  - Planting of coniferous species in woodlands during the inter-war and post-war periods.
  - Recent suburban development and urban fringe land uses on the edges of Ditchling, which have encroached into its rural setting.
- 12.10 As a result of the area's designation as an AONB and, if confirmed, the future designation of the area as National Park, there is unlikely to be further extensive built development or quarrying. Future restoration of conifer plantations on ancient woodlands to native species is a potential positive change.

## **Landscape Management/Development Considerations Specific to the Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes**

12.11 In addition to the generic landscape management and development considerations for this landscape type, the following landscape management considerations are specific to this character area:

- Conserve the intact medieval landscape on the clay, particularly the fields originating as woodland assarts.
- Conserve the historic picturesque parkland landscapes of Plumpton, Danny and Newtimber Parks - encourage reversion of arable to pasture in these landscapes.
- Conserve areas of chalk grassland, for example the small area of Beeding Hill to Newtimber Hill SSSI, and seek to extend such habitats on areas of Lower Chalk at the scarp foot.
- Conserve, and seek to extend, areas of unimproved acid grassland on sandstone outcrops.
- Conserve ancient deciduous woodland, for example Tottington Wood SNCI, and support the restoration of conifer plantations to native species.

12.12 The following development considerations are specific to this character area:

- Conserve the settlement pattern of nucleated springline villages (Edburton, Fulking, Poynings, Westmeston, Plumpton, and Offham) at the scarp foot.
- Ensure urban fringe land uses, such as garden centres, nurseries and sewage farms, do not erode the rural character of the landscape. Seek to minimise use of excessive lighting, signage and 'suburban' features on the edge of Ditchling.
- Use broadleaved woodland planting to screen built development and quarries.



Large, straight sided fields enclosed in the 20th century.



Frequent, small blocks of Ancient Woodland are a feature.



Hedgerows with mature hedgerow oaks are closely linked with the woodland, forming an interlocking network of high biodiversity value.



Visually dominated by the scarp to the south.



Villages located at the foot of the scarp.



The underhill road runs along the base of the scarp connecting the villages of the footslopes.



## 13: ARUN TO ADUR SCARP FOOTSLOPES

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### DESCRIPTION

#### Location and Boundaries

- 13.1 The *Arun to Adur Scarp Footslopes* forms a lowland strip at the foot of the northern scarp of the *Arun to Adur Downs*, between Amberley and Steyning. The southern boundary of this character area is defined by the steep scarp of the *Arun to Adur Downs Scarp* and has been drawn along the southern edge of the arable fields that form part of the scarp footslopes. To the north the character area forms a gradual transition to the landscape of the Low Weald.

#### Integrated Key Characteristics:

- Complex geology comprising bands of chalk, mudstones and sandstones giving rise to a locally undulating lowland landscape at the foot of the northern scarp of the *Arun to Adur Downs*.
- Large, fertile straight-sided arable fields on the Lower Chalk geology at the foot of the scarp, enclosed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from open fields and earlier piecemeal enclosures.
- Small irregular fields of pasture on the less productive clay soils, which originated as woodland assarts, represent a largely intact late medieval landscape.
- Hedgerows with mature hedgerow oaks link closely with the woodland, forming an interlocking network that is of high biodiversity value as well as creating a sense of seclusion and enclosure.
- Sandstone outcrops give rise to locally sandy soils which support areas of acid grassland, bracken, gorse, woody scrub, and oak-birch woodland.
- Streams, arising from springs at the foot of the Chalk/Upper Greensand flow northwards in narrow, hidden stream valleys, some enshrouded in woodland. Field ponds, mill ponds and designed ponds are common features of the clay.
- Villages located on the springline, e.g. Washington, are linked by the A283. The steep chalk scarp forms a dramatic backdrop to villages at the scarp foot.
- A parallel string of settlements, possibly of secondary origin (e.g. Buncton was a dependent chapelry of Ashington), occupies the Lower Greensand to the north.
- The medieval market town of Steyning originated as a river port and royal administrative centre in the Saxon period.
- Bramber Castle is a major landmark on the edge of the Adur Valley.
- Landscape parks such as Parham and Wiston are located on the less fertile Gault Clay and Lower Greensand. These add diversity and 'time depth' to the landscape.

- A network of public rights of way provides opportunities for countryside access.
- The scarp footslopes are visually dominated by the steep chalk scarp to the south, which forms a backdrop to views. Impressive panoramic views from adjacent scarp and downs reveal a pleasingly balanced woodland and farmland mosaic.

### **Specific Characteristics Unique to the Arun to Adur Scarp Footslopes**

- 13.2 The *Arun to Adur Scarp Footslopes* cover a relatively large area at the foot of the northern scarp of the *Arun to Adur Downs*, between Amberley and Steyning. The footslopes extend some way north of the scarp, particularly at the eastern end of the character area, and include a number of different underlying bands of geological bedrock and significant local landscape diversity. Moving from scarp foot northwards these include Lower Chalk, Upper Greensand, Gault Mudstone, and Weald Clay.
- 13.3 The Lower Chalk outcrops at the base of the steep scarp where it has been eroded into a smooth concave form with the modern arable fields which have replaced the former medieval open field systems. These chalk slopes support some remnant chalk grassland, e.g. a small area of Amberley Mount to Sullington Hill SSSI. North of this is a narrow band of Upper Greensand. Moving away from the steep scarp slope, the older Gault Mudstones are revealed beneath the Lower Chalk and Upper Greensand as a clay vale with irregular enclosed fields representing a largely intact late medieval landscape with many fields originating as woodland assarts – this area has a more ‘Wealden’ character. North of the clay vale is a band of Lower Greensand which give rise to locally sandy areas, between Chancton and Huddleston Farm which support acid grassland, bracken, gorse, woody scrub, and oak-birch woodland. This intimate mix of semi-natural habitats and agriculture creates valuable foraging and over-wintering sites for a range of bird species. Of particular ecological note is Parham Park SSSI, a medieval deer park situated on Folkestone Sands. This site comprises a mixture of woodland and parkland and has one of the richest epiphytic lichen floras in south east England. Other notable features are a diverse invertebrate fauna and one of the largest heronries in Sussex.
- 13.4 To the north of the Lower Greensand ridge is the Low Weald proper – this is a landscape of farmland, woodland and commons on dense Weald Clays.
- 13.5 Typical of the *scarp footslopes*, springs mark the junction between the chalk and clay where a string of farmsteads and nucleated villages have developed - Springhead Farm and Washington are examples. These were once linked by an underhill lane at the scarp foot, but are now linked by the A283 to the north. The steep chalk scarp forms a dramatic backdrop to these villages. A parallel string of settlements, possibly of secondary origin (e.g. Buncton was a dependent chapelry of Ashington), occupies the Lower Greensand, a less fertile location. The exception to this distinctive settlement patterns is the medieval market town of Steyning, which developed as a river port and royal administrative centre in the Saxon period and which subsequently developed into an important market town. Bramber Castle, located in Bramber Village, is a major landmark on the edge of the Adur Floodplain. Small areas of ecological valuable wetland habitat also fall in the character area, including Amberley Wild Brooks SSSI and the Arun valley RAMSAR. These areas are of

particular ecological value for their over-winter birds, and invertebrate assemblages, including a rich assemblage of dragonflies.

- 13.6 As in the other scarp footslopes landscapes, during the medieval period some of the richer landowners created landscape parks on the otherwise unproductive Gault Clay and Lower Greensand this character area. Parks such as Parham and Wiston continue to have a strong influence on the character of the scarp footslopes today, adding visual and ecological diversity and 'time depth' to the landscape. In addition to these parklands are numerous smaller manor houses, farms and mills.
- 13.7 This area contains a relatively low density of public rights of way – the underhill lane is now a bridleway along part of its length.

### **Sensitivities Specific to the Arun to Adur Scarp Footslopes**

- 13.8 All of the landscape and visual sensitivities listed in the landscape type evaluation apply to this character area. Specific to this character area are:
- The intact medieval landscape on the clay, particularly the fields originating as woodland assarts.
  - The historic picturesque parkland landscapes of Parham and Wiston. Parham Park SSSI is a medieval deer park of high ecological value, and includes one of the richest epiphytic lichen floras in south east England.
  - Acid grassland, bracken, gorse, woody scrub, and oak-birch woodland on outcrops of sandstone.
  - The small areas of wetland habitat which form part of the Amberley Wild Brooks SSSI and the Arun valley RAMSAR.
  - The historic port of Steyning.
  - Bramber Castle, a major landmark on the edge of the Adur Floodplain.

### **Change Specific to the Arun to Adur Scarp Footslopes**

- 13.9 Past change specific to this area includes:
- Planting of coniferous species in woodlands during the inter-war and post-war periods.
  - 20<sup>th</sup> century quarrying of sand (just outside the study area boundary).
  - More recent suburban development on the edges of Steyning.
  - A recent increase in fields used as paddocks resulting in changes in field boundaries and poor quality pasture.
- 13.10 As a result of the area's designation as an AONB and, if confirmed, the future designation of the area as National Park, there is unlikely to be further extensive built development. Quarrying operations are likely to be closely monitored and assessed. Future restoration of conifer plantations on ancient woodlands to native species is a potential positive change.

## **Landscape Management/Development Considerations Specific to the Arun to Adur Scarp Footslopes**

13.11 In addition to the generic landscape management and development considerations for this landscape type, the following landscape management considerations are specific to this character area:

- Conserve the intact medieval landscape on the clay, particularly the fields originating as woodland assarts.
- Conserve the historic picturesque parkland landscapes of Parham and Wiston - encourage reversion of arable to pasture in these landscapes.
- Conserve the mosaic of acid grassland, bracken, gorse, woody scrub, and oak-birch woodland on outcrops of sandstone and support the restoration of conifer plantations to native species.
- Conserve the areas of wetland habitat which form part of, and a setting to, the Amberley Wild Brooks SSSI and the Arun valley RAMSAR.

13.12 The following development considerations are specific to this character area:

- Use planting to mitigate the visual impact of existing intrusive features. Seek to minimise use of excessive lighting, signage and 'suburban' features on the edge of Steyning.
- Encourage sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, hardstanding, jumps that are associated with hobby farms or private stables and that fall outside planning control.
- Maintain visual and physical connections between the medieval port of Steyning and the Adur Valley.
- Conserve Bramber Castle as a landmark on the edge of the Adur Floodplain.
- Use broadleaved woodland planting to screen built development and quarries.



View from the scarp to housing at Steyning.



Villages surrounded by arable fields.



Paddocks located on edges of village settlements in the scarp footslopes.



Woodland and hedgerow trees surrounding a rural road.



Woodland blocks surround agricultural fields.



Parkland landscape of Wiston Park.