

Appendix 3
Landscape Character
Assessment
for the Parish of
Buriton



Landscapes are the settings for our lives...

They have:

- economic value, providing the setting for economic activity and often helping to attract business and tourism
- social and community value, as an important part in people's lives, bringing enjoyment and inspiration
- environmental value, as a home for wildlife and wild flowers.

When well cared-for, landscapes provide some of the essentials of life, such as clean air and water, food, fuel and raw materials. They help to regulate our climate, store flood waters, filter pollution and provide opportunities for us to improve our health and well-being.

If we can understand what makes our local landscapes special, what gives our parish its 'sense of place', then we may be able to understand how it may be sensitive to development and change.

This understanding can then be used to inform local planning policies and individual planning decisions – to help protect local distinctiveness.

Hundreds of local people have been involved in producing this Landscape Character Assessment: by attending special events in the Village Hall and building on work undertaken for Buriton's Parish Plan. And we had 'expert' inputs, too, from the South Downs National Park Authority, the District and County Councils, CPRE, the Queen Elizabeth Country Park and from the local farming community.

By producing this Landscape Character Assessment for the parish, we have tried to capture what makes our landscapes valued by local people. This document describes and champions the special qualities of our local countryside and records the community's views on, and aspirations for, its future.

It is hoped that this Landscape Character Assessment will:

- add value to existing Landscape Character Assessments and local planning policies
- present local views in a consistent and well-informed way for when planning applications (and other proposals which may change the landscape) are considered
- form a vital part of the Buriton Village Design Statement and complement other community-led planning documents such as the Buriton Parish Plan
- raise awareness of local landscapes and how they are valued

The Countryside within the parish of Buriton includes three distinct landscape character areas which have been classified and described in the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment:

1. wooded estate downland across the south of the parish
2. the dramatic scarp slopes of the South Downs across the middle of the parish; and
3. the Greensand Terrace which forms the northern part of the parish.

For each of these areas, descriptions, key sensitivities and future considerations identified by the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment are reproduced followed by supplementary local comments (in green text) which amplify the assessment. Some relevant locations, relating to a number of the issues identified, are indicated on the map in the updated Village Design Statement.



Area 1: Wooded Estate Downland

“The rolling chalk landform, extensive woodland plantations and vast fields contribute to a perception of a large scale and simple landscape. Within this landscape there are significant contrasts between the densely wooded parts, which convey a strong sense of enclosure and remoteness, and the open hilltops allowing expansive views. Woodland and arable land uses are interlinked along angular lines which contrast with the smoothly rolling landform. The extensive wooded ridges create distinctive dark horizons in views from the south. The colours of the beech woods and cereal crops create dramatic seasonal change.

“Although this character area contains large blocks of coniferous woodland alongside intensive agricultural production, it has a strong sense of remoteness as a result of its low noise levels, sparse settlement, large areas of semi-natural woodland, and few overt built human impacts, notably few roads.

“The woodland resource includes a number of ecologically important hanger woodlands dominated by beech, ash and yew, as well

as mixed beech woodland associated with the deeper calcareous flint soils.

“Local areas of unimproved chalk grassland provide important habitat diversity and the relatively intact hedgerow network around the arable fields have an important function in linking small woodlands to the larger woodland blocks.

“Parkland landscapes at Ditcham Park provide evidence of the great transformation of the landscape in the 18th century evoking a strong sense of history whilst a number of prehistoric and later earthworks also provide a strong sense of historical continuity.”

“Key sensitivities include:

- The prominent undeveloped ridges and hills
- The panoramic viewpoints from ridges and hilltops
- Areas of ancient woodland which have a rich ground flora and contribute to the distinctly wooded and deeply rural character...

- The large scale of the landscape created by the landform, commercial forestry plantations, and vast fields bounded by hedgerows

- Areas of chalk grassland which are of great biodiversity interest...

- The strong sense of remoteness...

- Increased recreational provision, including improved access...

- Recent increases in traffic on the few roads that cross the area

- Archaeological sites hidden within woodland are sensitive features ...

- The historic parkland landscapes at Ditcham Park...”

“**Broad management objective:** the overall management objective should be to conserve the large scale landscape mosaic of woodland, chalk grassland, and farmland, and the deeply rural secluded character.”

Landscape Management and Development Considerations include:

- Conserve the large scale mosaic of distinctive beechwoods, ancient woodlands and hedgerows that enclose open arable fields, all of which create a bold, distinctive identity

- Encourage re-planting of native broadleaved species as coniferous woodlands are felled and encourage sensitive forestry practice

- Consider the impact of forestry operations on views, avoiding harsh edges and fragmented blocks which could be at odds with this large rolling landscape

- Conserve and manage the hedgerow network with hedgerow trees which are of biodiversity interests and create a strong landscape pattern...

- Protect and continue to manage the existing chalk grassland...

- Avoid ‘improvements’ that would alter the rural character of the unmarked lanes



- Maintain the network of bridleways and public footpaths and consider further opportunities for recreation and access to this less well visited part of the South Downs

- Conserve the very low density of settlement and road access, and consequent strong sense of remoteness...

- Maintain clear, undeveloped ridges and skylines – particularly those that are visible...

- Consider views from the ridge in association with any change in adjacent areas...

- Seek opportunities to reduce the visual impact of existing visually intrusive elements on the downs such as prominent electricity pylons

- Conserve the historic designed landscapes at Ditcham Park...

- Conserve important archaeological sites, including those hidden within plantation woodland...

- Conserve the historic field systems such as the Romano-British and Iron Age field systems and hollow ways at Holt Down

Supplementary local comments, amplifying the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment

This section includes important local characteristics, detracting influences, key sensitivities, vulnerable features and guidance for management and development:

This is a grand landscape. Medium and long distance views over open undulating fields looking towards woods are typical.

Views from open hilltops provide expansive views including those from the high downs around Ditcham Park which extend across Southern Hampshire to the Solent and the Isle of Wight on a clear day. Within the woodland there are some intermittent views from rides and clearings.

The small chalk grassland nature reserve at Coulters Dean is now a refuge for many scarce plants and butterflies, full of flowers in spring and summer. At times it is a sea of Cowslips and Round-Headed Rampions as well as providing a home for about a dozen species of orchid.

The ash and beech woodlands are felt to look lovely whereas the conifers on Head Down are less attractive. Any further reforestation could be perceived as a threat to some of the valued long-distance views.

In general, the area is really quiet and peaceful with often the only sound being of the wind blowing through the leaves on the trees. Nearer to the A3 Trunk Road the tranquillity used to be spoilt by a constant rumble of traffic noise but re-surfacing with ‘whisper tarmac’ in 2015-16 has vastly improved the situation.

In places, large high voltage power lines and pylons spoil the landscape and produce noise too. Some lines of low voltage power cables also march across the landscape.

There are few roads, generally straight and often with lovely tree canopies creating a tunnel effect. Speeding traffic can be a problem. Sunken stretches of some of the lanes may need to be managed so that the feeling of enclosure is not lost. Some very large vehicles now access some light industrial premises and can damage the ancient lanes. In one place, a significant length of motorway-style crash barrier seems to be a particularly unsightly engineering solution to a localised safety issue.

Some of the isolated dwellings have introduced ‘foreign’ fencing features, gates, pergolas and non-native leylandii planting which can all detract from the special local character and give a feel of inappropriate urbanisation.

There are some problems of litter along the South Downs Way and some worries about increased visitor numbers and activities since the area has become part of a National Park.

The SDNPA’s ‘Secrets of the High Woods’ project has indicated that ancient settlement earthworks, field systems and other archaeological features are buried beneath woodlands and so the area may have a rich archaeological potential.

Commercial forestry is a relatively recent addition to our landscapes with many of the trees on the downs being introduced within the last 75 years. Future changes to the landscape are likely to relate to the extent and type of woodland and the contents of the South Downs Forest Design Plan will be very important. The community should continue to engage with the forestry organisations about future plans.

Area 2: the Scarps



(A) The Buriton scarp

“This is a well-wooded scarp, much of it of pre-1800 date. The extensive woodland cover contrasts sharply with the more open scarp to the west. It is a dramatic steep north-facing chalk escarpment, clothed by woodland to produce a soft, irregular texture masking the slope profile. The slopes have a secret, secluded character contrasting with exposed open scarp tops. At the foot of the scarp, where the slopes are less steep, the land is ploughed for crops – here the open fields contrast well with the wooded scarp face. The elevated landform provides panoramic views over the Rother Valley to the north, and beyond to the Greensand Hills – the climb through dense woodland builds a sense of anticipation for the views from the open summits.

“The steepness of the scarp means that there is little human activity in this landscape. As a consequence this is a quiet landscape which, combined with the swathe of woodland, is

perceived as highly natural and tranquil. This section of scarp is particularly tranquil due to the relatively low density of rights of way and high density of woodland. Abandoned chalk quarries are a feature of the scarp revealing the exploitation of chalk in the past to produce lime for fertilising acidic soils. These quarries are ecologically notable habitats, for example Buriton Chalk Pit LNR. The hanger woodlands are also an internationally important habitat along the escarpment contributing to the outstanding ecological importance of the landscape.”

B) The open chalk scarp above Weston

“A dramatic steep north-facing chalk escarpment, particularly prominent around Butser Hill where the crest of the scarp reaches 250m AOD. The scarp supports little woodland, revealing its open smoothly eroded form and supporting extensive areas of chalk grassland habitat and some chalk heath (eg Butser Hill SAC).

“The dramatic scale of the landform and the large swathes of chalk grassland create a large scale exposed landscape which is dominant in views from an extensive area. The elevated landform provides panoramic views over the Rother valley to the north – the open summits have an exposed, remote character. At the foot of the scarp, where the slopes are less steep, the land is ploughed for crops – here colours contrast with the muted grey-green colours of the scarp face.”

“Key sensitivities of the scarps include:

- The extensive views from the scarps, across adjacent lower lying landscapes, that are vulnerable to change (development, lighting etc) which would affect the special remote character of the scarps
- The subtle presence of tracks and rights of way that zig zag across the scarps. These are vulnerable to damage by intensive recreational use, notably off road vehicles...

- The sense of tranquillity, remoteness and space that results from the overall low incidence of human activity and absence of development...

- The steep scarps are extremely prominent in views from adjacent landscapes

- The open and undeveloped skylines which are highly visible and particularly sensitive to any form of development or vertical structures...

- The scrub and ancient woodland cover which provides texture, dramatic shadows and internationally important habitats...

- The swathes of chalk grassland which are of national ecological value...

- Damage to tracks and rights of way across the scarp from intensive recreational use, including four wheel drive vehicles.”

“**Broad management objective:** the overall management objective should be to conserve the dramatic landform and open skyline, with extensive areas of chalk grassland exposing the scarp profile [above Weston] and woodland cover providing a dramatic combination with the steep landform [above Buriton].”

Landscape Management and Development Considerations include:

- Consider the impact of any change (development) in views from the scarp...

- Maintain panoramic views over the surrounding lowlands...

- Manage recreational use to respect the special character of the scarp and key features of of chalk grassland, ancient trackways, sense of remoteness and tranquillity...

- Conserve the tranquillity of the scarp, resisting road improvements on the historic tracks and lanes that traverse the scarp and manage the verges to avoid erosion and encourage species diversity...

- Conserve the wooded, undeveloped character of the scarp and of the skyline [above Buriton]

- Conserve the open, undeveloped character of the scarp and of the skyline [above Weston]

“Off road vehicles really damage some local tracks”

Supplementary local comments, amplifying the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment

This section includes important local characteristics, detracting influences, key sensitivities, vulnerable features and guidance for management and development:

The ‘hanging woods’ on the chalk scarps are a particularly spectacular feature and provide a dramatic backdrop for views from the north.

On the scarp slope itself, inside the hanger woodlands there are generally only short-medium length views but there are occasional opportunities for exciting glimpses of long distance views to the north through the trees and through hedges and gateways. These opportunities should be retained.

From open summits and other viewpoints there are panoramic views to the north which can reveal inappropriate developments on the lower, northern parts of the parish.

Views out from the scarp slope are one of the reasons why so many people visit this area. These views of the surrounding landscapes are vulnerable to development, which has the potential to create intrusion and alter the scale of views due to urbanising and incongruous elements.

The beech and ash trees on the hanger slopes are felt to be soft and they help to create sweeping wooded slopes – better than conifers – and a secret, secluded feeling.

Another important characteristic of this part of our local landscape is its quietness and tranquillity: any noises echo off the hangers. The sound of birdsong and of muffled church bells in the village below resonate along the slopes.

The tranquillity of the scarp slopes can be spoilt by lightspill from development below and by sunlight reflecting off glazed areas in daylight.

Small, long-abandoned chalk quarries into the scarp slopes now form ecologically important habitats. Sites such as the Buriton Chalk Pits have gradually regenerated with a high level of chalk-based species. Such areas of rare habitat, with so little recent disturbance, form sites of significance in Hampshire and

beyond; with designations as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and Local Nature Reserves (LNR).

At least one route down the scarp slope, the Milky Way and Mead Lane, is felt to be over-used by four wheel drive recreational vehicles, but motorbikes and paint-ball activities can be dangerous too. Recreational uses need to be better managed and should respect the special character of the area and the sense of tranquillity.





Area 3: the Greensand Terrace



“A distinct terrace formed from Upper Greensand with a locally prominent escarpment defining its outer edge. The Greensand Terrace is cut by a number of streams which rise from springs at the foot of the chalk escarpment and have eroded narrow, deep valleys as they cross the terrace resulting in an undulating landform.



“Deeply sunken lanes have eroded downwards to reveal exposures of the Greensand geology and gnarled tree roots. Road verges have botanical interest.

“This is a small-scale landscape of intimacy and enclosure provided by the woodland cover and sunken lanes contrasting with more open arable areas. A diversity of field patterns and enclosure includes small irregular fields carved from woodland indicative of medieval assarts at Nursted Copse. Contrast is provided between the more open arable fields and the intimacy and enclosure created by the sinuous bands of woodland and narrow stream valleys.

“This rural landscape has a strong sense of tranquillity as a result of its low noise levels, presence of semi natural woodland, thick hedgerows and grassland, absence of

overt human impact, and low density settlement. Views are restricted and often confined along sunken lanes. Where woodland is absent there are dramatic views to the chalk escarpment and, at the edges of the Greensand Terrace, there are views across the adjacent lower lying farmland.

“Arable fields are interspersed with pasture and woodland. Distinctive hanger woodlands, remnants of ancient woodland, cling to the steepest slopes, a habitat of international importance. Areas of former hop gardens are marked by poplar shelter belts.

“The settlement pattern in this area is characterised by nucleated settlement. A scatter of isolated farmsteads is also present. Villages are located along the springline with the chalk scarp often forming a dramatic backdrop. Buildings materials are typically local ‘Malmstone’ with red brick detailing, particularly around windows and doors. Flint is sometimes seen in buildings and walls and timber boarding is frequently used on agricultural buildings. Clay tile is the most typical roofing material although thatch is also seen.

“Evidence of Roman settlement indicates the

continuity of use of the landscape for agriculture through history.”

“Key sensitivities include:

- The strong sense of tranquillity as a result of low noise levels, presence of semi natural woodland, thick hedgerows and grassland, absence of overt human impact, and low density of settlement

- The small nucleated villages with building materials reflecting local geology

- The sunken lanes which provide a sense of antiquity and provide exposures of the underlying bedrock geology

- The ancient hanger woodlands, meadow grasslands and road verges all of which have botanical interest...

- The locally prominent escarpment which defines the outer edge of the Greensand, and is visible from adjacent areas

- The terrace is also clearly visible from the adjacent chalk scarps which enhances its visual sensitivity.”

“Broad management objective: the overall management objective should be to conserve the intimate scale and secluded rural and tranquil character of the landscape, derived from its ancient hanger woodlands, interconnected pattern of enclosed pastures, sunken lanes, and small rural villages.”

Landscape Management and Development Considerations include:

- Conserve the nucleated form and rural character of the villages and maintain the low level of dispersed settlement

- Ensure that any built development reflects the local vernacular – develop design guidance to help resist suburban style garden boundaries, kerbs and lighting

- Ensure that new farm buildings are sensitively integrated into the landscape through careful siting and screening...

- Conserve traditional farm buildings and maintain their external fabric, appearance and setting

- Conserve the character of the sunken lanes – seek to reduce traffic pressures and road improvements which would alter the character of these ancient lanes

- Discourage inappropriate use of historic lanes and tracks (including BOATs) by motorised vehicles

- Local change in relation to individual properties such as lighting or introduction of (sub) urban style fencing and boundaries, or increased traffic pressures on rural lanes, may cumulatively start to erode the perceived rural character of the area and physically erode roadside verges and sunken lanes

- An increase in fields used as paddocks resulting in fields separated using white electric fencing and over-grazed grassland

- Conserve ancient/hanger woodland; continue to manage woodland; conserve the patterns of early enclosures; and encourage management and restoration of hedgerows planting new trees where necessary...

- Conserve the field and woodland patterns associated with the area of assarts around Nursted Copse

- Encourage the management and protection of small valleys and streams...

- Encourage management of trees and shrubs alongside sunken lanes and sensitive management of road verges for their botanical interest

- Conserve the dramatic views of the chalk escarpment



Supplementary local comments, amplifying the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment

This section includes important local characteristics, detracting influences, key sensitivities, vulnerable features and guidance for management and development:

This is a gently undulating landscape with a delightful mix of farmland and some wonderful individual field trees and woods. Relatively small fields with hedges of trees and shrubs are important in the landscape and we have some lovely ‘lost streams’.

The landscape has some delightful, sinuous bands of woodland (including within the narrow stream valleys) and there are dramatic views of the chalk escarpment to the south. In places there is a very special sense of intimacy/ enclosure created by the woodland copses and narrow stream valleys.

The northern boundary of this landscape area is marked by a minor scarp slope (the edge of the Greensand Terrace) which has some very special characteristics of its own.

The area has a strong sense of rural tranquillity because of the general absence of human activity and a low density of settlement.

A network of local Rights of Way provides many lovely medium and long distance views – particularly panoramic views of Butser Hill and the South Downs to the south.

The character of the area comes from the mosaic of different land uses: a mix of grazing and arable farming, with mixed woodland (predominantly ash and oak) and some patches of lower pasture on the Downs helping the setting.

Farming is vital to the landscape but it is recognised that some forms of farm diversification will be necessary. Residents and

visitors will have to try to help the farming community so that they can continue to manage the countryside carefully. A programme of community activities to better connect residents with local farmers commenced in 2008.

Virtually all the buildings in Buriton and Weston are hidden from view from long distance vantage points and from each of the main entranceways to the settlements. The villages nestle naturally in the landscape.

Sunken lanes through the Upper Greensand in the northern parts of the parish produce a very special beauty and a distinctive ‘sense of place’: feelings of enclosure are generated by the short views, the high roadside banks and the natural bends within the landscape. There are some amazing rock features where lanes cut through the Greensand and some of the large trees and their root systems also provide attractive features, although they can present management and maintenance problems.

The sunken lanes, which form the main entranceways into both Buriton and Weston, can be entrancing at any time of year: whether they are capturing shafts of winter sunlight, forming green tunnels in the springtime, providing cool shade in the heat of summer or displaying sensational changing colours in the autumn. They are quiet and tranquil when there is no traffic – but the size and volume of traffic can cause problems.

The verges of many of our lanes are, however, being eroded as unofficial passing places where motorists drive on them to avoid oncoming traffic. The resulting scars detract from the views of the landscape. Large vehicles, including local authority refuse collection vehicles, are a threat to these lanes. There is also a fear that the creation of a South Downs National Park may lead to an increase in parking on roadside verges as visitors attempt to access local footpaths.



‘whisper tarmac’ in 2015-16 has vastly improved the situation. Remaining eyesores include the web of low voltage power cables spoils many views. There is also evidence that fly tipping is becoming an increasing problem.

Increasing inappropriate recreational uses of some Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) – particularly off-road, 4x4 vehicles – are eroding and spoiling a number of ancient trackways as well as disrupting the sense of peace and tranquillity. In at least one place, a new track had to be constructed for farm use because the ancient BOAT, which has been used for generations, was being wrecked by recreational users. Recreational uses need to be better managed and should respect the special character of the area and the sense of tranquillity.

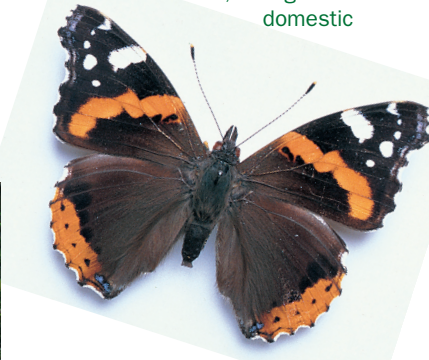
The ‘green gap’ between Petersfield and the parish is essential to preserve the landscape setting, the character and the separate identity of the settlements: in the west, parts of Petersfield are already within half a mile of Weston; and, to the east of The Causeway, the open fields just north of the minor scarp to the Greensand Terrace are crucial – providing the sense that open countryside has begun, before a more enclosed feeling of old A3 cutting is encountered at Mapledurham. The edges of Petersfield, particularly new roundabouts on The Causeway (B2070), have already introduced

unwelcome light pollution into the night sky of the parish.

There is a fear that the cumulative impacts of many small-scale changes, through developments and changing land uses, may easily alter the local character of the parish in the future. In other nearby places, small-scale changes (which include residential development, overhead service lines, changes to domestic

cumulative changes in the parish – both changes that fall under planning control and those that are permitted development or lie entirely outside planning controls.

Low boundary walls in brick and flint, brick and malmstone or just brick are common throughout the parish – often with ‘half-round’ cappings – and contribute significantly to the local character. Boundary treatments can enhance or detract from local character in many ways and timber fence panels are generally inappropriate in visible locations. The use of inappropriate boundary treatments should be limited in the public realm.



boundaries, pony paddocks and horse-related developments and subdivisions of fields with field shelters on small holdings) have already lead to the gradual erosion of local rural character. The conversion of buildings can also affect the built fabric and bring new uses and traffic into the landscape. Clear approaches are needed for dealing with



“Old sunken lanes and tracks are a link with the past”



“Lots of little changes can gradually make a big difference to the character of the place”

In other places the rural characteristics of some of our country lanes have been lost by kerbing or culverting introduced by the highway authority. This is felt to have an unnecessary ‘urbanising’ effect and there is a feeling that other ‘clutter’ from road signs, lighting or urban-style footpaths could have the same effect.

Landscape features are generally in good condition although some hedges have been removed, changing the feel of the landscape and removing historic field divisions. The use of some small parcels of land for equestrian activities is beginning to spoil the rural scene in places, as well as removing land from agriculture for the foreseeable future.

Whilst there are a number of good examples of barn conversions and extensions to domestic properties, some have been developed unsympathetically. Views from the slopes and summits of the downs reveal a number of conservatories and the occasional new ‘out-of-character’ dwelling which can detract from the scene. Malmstone and flint cottages blend in well with the local landscape and, in places, seem to literally grow out of the bedrock.

The Links and adjacent fields, meadows and hedgerows are felt to be a very important part of Buriton, bringing the landscape almost into the very heart of the village. Together, the stream, the trees in the old hedgerows, the unimproved grassland and a number of splendid individual oaks create a feature of very high landscape value. For many residents, and for walkers along the Hangers Way, this is a particularly special place with only the low voltage power lines which cross this secret valley (between Bones Lane and North Lane) detracting from the natural ambiance.

In the past, the tranquillity of parts of the area was spoilt by noise from the A3 Trunk Road but re-surfacing with



