

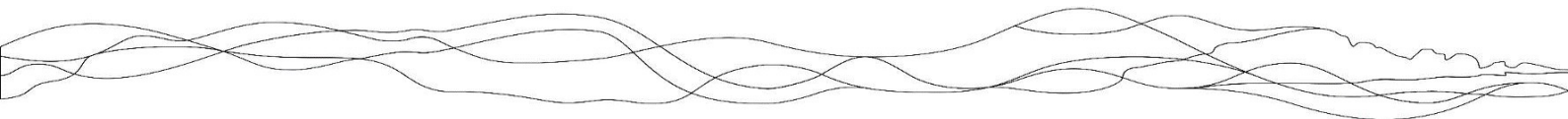


**South Downs National Park
Authority**

**Settlement Context Study
Report and User Guide**



Photo: View looking north over Petersfield from Butser Hill SAC



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I. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- 1.1 The *Settlement Context Study (SCS)* is part of the landscape evidence base for the emerging *South Downs Local Plan*. It provides a strategic overview of the landscape context of the settlements in the South Downs National Park (SDNP). It describes how the elements of the National Park's purposes are spatially represented in the context of each settlement. This has helped to inform the Local Plan's spatial portrait, which introduces a new way of looking at the National Park as a single entity.
- 1.2 This study provides an analysis of individual settlement context in the landscape, showing how elements of the landscape are combined and interact within the setting of each settlement. The maps are policy 'blind' and do not consider settlement policy boundaries or similar planning policy matters. The study provides a snapshot and signpost to the strategic considerations in designing for new development and landscape change. They may assist in identifying both constraints and opportunities in relation to proposed development, particularly with reference to green infrastructure planning principles and the *Natural Environment White Paper*, where proposed development could be proactively designed to achieve their objectives ('bigger, better, more joined up') where there is currently a deficit of habitats and natural green space.
- 1.3 The context analysis drawings are not intended to be exhaustive and should be used as a basis from which to undertake more detailed site specific studies. Achieving sustainable development successfully in the National Park is highly complex and requires a fully detailed understanding of the landscape and its qualities which goes beyond the scope of this study.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

- 2.1. The SCS considers all the 39 settlements, which were identified as suitable for some housing development in draft policy SD23 of the *Local Plan: Preferred Options*. This was published for Regulation 18 consultation in autumn 2015. The SCS also considers a further two villages that were identified as suitable for some housing in draft policy SD26 of the *Pre-Submission Local Plan*. This will be published for Regulation 19 consultation in autumn 2017.
- 2.2. The SCS has been prepared alongside a number of other Local Plan evidence based studies. The other main study to inform the spatial portrait is called, '*Mapping Ecosystem Services within the South Downs National Park using the EcoServ GIS Tool*'.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

- 3.1 The SCS broadly considers how the National Park's purposes are spatially represented in the landscape context of the settlements across the National Park.
- 3.2 National Park Purposes are;
 1. *Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage*
 2. *Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of National Parks by the public*

- 3.3** The results of the study are presented as a series of single subject baseline maps which are then condensed and combined with fieldwork data to produce an individual context analysis drawings for each settlement. The context analysis drawings all use the same legend which simplifies a large amount of data into 'headlines'. Using the same legend for all settlements means that they are comparable with one another and use consistent imagery.

4. OUTPUTS OF THE STUDY

- Series of baseline maps for the settlements (Appendix 3)
- Settlement context analysis drawings for the settlements (Appendix 4)
- Photos of all viewpoints identified on the context drawings (available on request from SDNPA)
- Parkwide composite dataset and ArcGis shapefile of sensitivity mapping for landscape character, biodiversity and historic environment (available on request from SDNPA)

5. METHODOLOGY

- 5.1** The settlement context information has been produced from desktop research and fieldwork as described in the following section. The geographic extent (and hence the scale) of each the settlement maps was set individually for each settlement to reflect the variations in the contextual relationships between settlements and their surroundings.

6. DESKTOP RESEARCH

- 6.1** A range of baseline maps were created from existing GIS mapped data ranging from biodiversity information to flood zone and historic landscape character. These maps are described in the following section.

6a) LANDSCAPE BASELINE MAPS

- 6.2** The following elements in the landscape were mapped separately;

6a.i. Landscape Character

- 6.3** Landscape Character Assessment is described in the '*An approach to Landscape Character Assessment, October 2014* (Natural England)¹ as the process by which landscapes are categorised into a pattern of distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that make one landscape different from another rather than better or worse. The product of this process is a mapping of landscapes with similar characteristics which can be undertaken at any scale from national to local whereby each analysis nests within the one above.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types>

6.4 In the SDNP the ‘*South Downs Integrated Character Assessment (SDILCA) 2011*’² is the relevant LCA and has been used for this study. The SDILCA classifies the landscape of the South Downs National Park into 18 generic landscape types which are subdivided into 49 individual geographic character areas. A detailed description and evaluation is presented for each of the landscape types and further specific information is provided for each of the character areas. The descriptions are not repeated in this report, the SDILCA can be referenced on line³. The maps show landscape character in relation to each of the settlements.

6a.ii. Historic Landscape Characterisation

6.5 Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is an archaeological method used to define and map the historic and archaeological dimension of the present day landscape. It forms part of a National Programme developed by English Heritage in the early nineties and is continually evolving with ongoing development and changes in methodology, technology and application.

6.6 Of particular relevance to the National Park designation, HLC is important for identifying older landscapes which have remained unchanged or are described as ‘intact’. Typically, these areas of older landscape, which can date to the medieval period and earlier, exhibit high sensitivity in landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage terms and have aged features and ancient qualities which are often highly valued – e.g. ancient woodland, veteran trees, important hedgerows, boundary features, ancient tracks and earthworks features. The lack of recent human intervention that these landscapes have typically experienced contributes to the sense of remoteness and tranquillity. There are large areas within the weald for example where the low fertility of the land has limited landscape change and large areas of small irregular medieval field patterns within a woodland matrix are still in existence today. Understanding the time depth in the landscape often gives another dimension when considering the inherent sensitivity of the landscape.

6.7 In the SDNP there are two HLC studies which have been used – The ‘*Sussex HLC (2010)*’⁴ and the ‘*SDILCA HLC (2005)*’ for areas in Hampshire.

6a.iii. Topography

6.8 The topography of the landscape has a direct relationship to the settlement pattern in the National Park owing to its effect on the varying fertility of soils and subsequently the availability of resources, and also its effect on the accessibility and viability of the land for cultivation. The scarp slope of the chalk ridge, as an example, has no record of cultivation, enclosure or settlement, although its strong relationship with the settlement pattern is in relation to the so called ‘underhill villages’ which are located on the springline between the chalk and the clay at the foot of the slope. There is often an ‘underhill lane’ connecting the line of settlements. These settlements are often linear in form. This settlement pattern is repeated along the length of the scarp slope from Eastbourne to Selborne. Topography therefore is an important consideration for identifying a range of settlement specific characteristics from

² <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-advice/landscape/>

³ <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-advice/landscape/>

⁴ <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/land-waste-and-housing/landscape-and-environment/sussex-historic-landscape-characterisation/>

potential viewpoints, to drainage, land use patterns, settlement types, settlement footprints and landform sensitivity.

6a.iv. River Corridor / Flood Zone

- 6.9** Flood Zone 3 is used to identify river corridors in the study and potentially those areas which are likely to remain undeveloped due to flood risk. These areas are also often inherently valuable for biodiversity networks and often provide a range of wetland and riparian habitat types which are focussed within the river corridor and floodplain. The land within Flood Zone 3 is often periodically waterlogged and these areas are frequently not used for intensive agriculture as a result; often being left as permanent pasture. These areas are valuable wildlife habitats and their low intensity of use also supports soil health and water quality through often more limited cultivation, chemical use and sedimentation. There are often public rights of way along the river valleys which offer opportunities to extend the biodiversity connectivity and physical access to these corridors in the future. For these reasons this study has identified the flood zones as indicators of particular lowland connectivity for water, people and biodiversity called blue corridors in the legend.

6a.v. Public Rights of Way and Publicly Accessible Land

- 6.10** The public rights of way (PROW) network is one of the primary means by which members of the public enjoy and experience the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the SDNP.
- 6.11** The PROW network is one of the key delivery systems for Purpose 2 for the SDNP. Users of the PROW network are considered to be highly sensitive to changes in the landscape within the SDNP owing to its protected status⁵. Because of this the PROW network and areas of open access land have been included in the study maps as green corridors. The maps also show roads and other routes in the base mapping and can be used to identify strategic connectivity and opportunities in relation to land use change.

6a.vi. Historic Environment

- 6.12** The cultural heritage assets in the area of study for each settlement have been mapped and include Conservation Areas, Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM), Registered Parkscape listed buildings and National Trust land.

6a.vii. Biodiversity

- 6.13** There are two biodiversity maps included in this study for the settlements. Existing biodiversity designations are mapped at local, national and European level on the maps. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan opportunity areas are also mapped and included separately to identify further areas of opportunity and possible constraints.

6a.viii. Tranquillity

- 6.14** This mapping is from the research carried out by the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE). It involved the identification of criteria which contribute or detract from tranquillity and attributing those qualities to a map based analysis of the UK. Tranquillity is one

⁵ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd ed. (2013):

<https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/technical/glvia3-panel/>

of the qualities considered as part of the natural beauty criteria for National Park designation⁶ and is noted as one of the SDNP Special Qualities. The term *relative* tranquillity is used to describe areas in terms of their comparative value for tranquillity, not a fixed grade or measure i.e. *absolute* tranquillity. The data is specific to the National Park and shows relative tranquillity between areas within the park, based on the range of tranquillity scores within the SDNP.

6b) CREATING THE NEW SHAPEFILES FOR THE CONTEXT ANALYSIS DRAWINGS

6.15 A wide range of GIS datasets (as listed below and detailed in Appendix 2 and described above) have been condensed into a single context analysis drawing for this study. To achieve this the data has been simplified to a selected range of high level subject areas which most closely reflect the National Park's purposes. The term 'sensitivity' is used in the broadest sense to describe the presence of features which could be affected by development, and those which have inherent and intrinsic value of their own. Each of these subject areas includes features with a wide range of sensitivity and significance. Many of them are overlapping and extensive. The maps do not identify the degree of sensitivity within each subject area or undertake any evaluation of the sensitivities identified. It was considered that this would be dependent on the bespoke circumstances of any proposals and could not therefore be universally applied in the study. The study is to provide a snapshot and signposting to the strategic considerations in designing for new development and landscape change. In some cases the baseline mapping will provide further information on these issues. The following headings take each of the legend items in turn and describes which data is included in that legend item.

6b.i. Biodiversity and Historic Environment Sensitivity

6.16 These elements have been identified through combining the existing datasets of known designations and biodiversity opportunity areas.

6b.ii. Green Corridors

6.17 These are the public rights of way, accessible land and other routes which are mapped – e.g. cycle routes.

6b.iii. Landscape Character Sensitivity

6.18 This element of the sensitivity mapping is the most difficult to define from datasets and is intended to be indicative and not exhaustive. This legend item was designed to highlight likely areas of inherent landscape character sensitivity and does not represent an assessment of sensitivity to a specific proposal. Assessing landscape character sensitivity is a complicated issue comprised (according to guidance⁷) of considerations of the landscape resource – its character as a whole and the individual elements which contribute to character, for example natural factors, cultural factors, landscape quality and condition, and aesthetic factors. The

⁶ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/2635576>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types>

mapping produced is based on a range of existing datasets which identify areas of land which may have these qualities manifested. The areas have not been verified through fieldwork owing to their extent. Landscapes which are identified as pre 1800 have been included in this legend item. The assumption is that the older landscapes from the HLC – (pre 1800) are likely to be associated with mature and established landscapes where a range of features such as lanes, hedgerows, woodland, and settlement edges and fieldscapes patterns will be likely to contribute to a more complex and inherently sensitive landscape. Also areas of land with community importance and value have been identified and included. Often these areas may be sports fields or allotments, and as such be regarded as having a low natural landscape quality, but have been included due to their high societal value based on national guidance⁸⁸. Other criteria such as tranquillity, remoteness, wildness, scenic beauty, cultural associations and conservation interests are broadly considered to be supported by the HLC data owing to the significant overlap between aged landscapes and the presence of these qualities. These elements would require further detailed study in order to assess a specific development proposal.

7. DESKTOP RESEARCH FOR VIEWS AND VISUAL SENSITIVITY

7.1 Desktop research involved the review of local planning documents, for example, parish plans, village design statements, conservation area appraisals and management plans and long distance trail guides to consider and locate the views that these publications refer to as important and notable. Ordnance survey maps, topography, land cover and PROW and open access land were also considered. The ‘SDNP Viewshed Characterisation and Analysis’⁹ has also been used to identify potential views and visibility.

8. FIELDWORK

8a) VISUAL SENSITIVITY / VIEWS

8.1 Visual sensitivity and views have been identified separately from landscape character in the context analysis to reflect guidance¹⁰ and best practice. Whilst this principle has been followed it is important to note that the study, however, is not an evaluative report and does not measure effects, impacts or the appropriateness or otherwise of development proposals.

8.2 Fieldwork was undertaken for each settlement to identify and verify the desktop research. Where views were identified they were photographed. The fieldwork stage was also used to

⁸ Topic paper 6: Techniques and criteria for judging Capacity and Sensitivity, Scottish Natural Heritage and The Countryside Agency: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5146500464115712>

⁹ <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/national-park-local-plan/evidence-and-supporting-documents/viewshed-analysis>

¹⁰ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual impact Assessment 3rd ed. (2013):
<https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/technical/glvia3-panel/>

consider the extent of each of the context analysis drawings; in some cases leading to the production of a series of maps for some settlements where the extent of visibility is wide ranging, or the settlement is within a large scale landscape – eg ~Petersfield.

- 8.3** Views have been classified in 3 ways and in general all views are likely to be representative of a range of views which are possible from a number of viewpoints. This aspect of the study is not therefore a visual survey and is not exhaustive:
- Views from the settlement out to the surrounding landscape/landmarks
 - Open views towards the settlement
 - Glimpsed views towards the settlement

8b) INTRUSION

- 8.4** This identifies where there are detracting influences on the landscape; these can be aural, visual or olfactory detractors – for example a motorway, large industrial complex, shooting range, manure heap, silage clamp, slurry pits, sewerage works.

8c) LANDMARKS

- 8.5** These can be a range of human and natural features - from a church spire to a clump of trees to a community/visitor resource. They are often the focal point of a view or community activity, they could also be significant buildings, trees etc.

9. USER GUIDE

9a) GUIDANCE FOR USERS OF THIS STUDY

- 9.1** The context analysis drawings capture large amounts of information in a simple diagrammatic manner and can be used with the SCS photo library (available on request from the SDNPA) and the baseline mapping as reference for landscape and GI planning for each of the settlements covered by the study. The study is strategic and should not be used to inform detailed design as a standalone resource. It is more appropriate to use at a masterplanning level.
- 9.2** The identification of sensitivity is not intended to necessarily identify constraints in the landscape although of course this could apply to varying degrees.
- 9.3** The study can/should be used to plan landscape change positively – through the identification of opportunities to enhance existing features and characteristics, including habitats, connectivity, experiential and cultural capital, access and routeway connections, extensions and creations, planting and visual improvements. These are all embodied in Green Infrastructure planning principles – further information on this can be found in the ‘SDNP Green Infrastructure Framework 2015’¹¹ together with the ‘SDNP Design Guidance’. Intrusion and

¹¹ SDNP Green Infrastructure Framework (2015):

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-advice/south-downs-green-infrastructure-framework-informal-consultation/>

visual context should also be considered when considering landscape change and an indication of these issues at a settlement level are included in the context analysis drawings. Further more detailed work would be required to support any specific proposals.

9.4 Potential uses for the study (using both the SCS maps and the wider dataset);

- Neighbourhood development plans
- Local Green Infrastructure planning
- Rural Tourism
- Farm diversification
- Whole Estate Plans

9b) WHAT CAN'T THIS STUDY BE USED FOR?

9.5 The study should not be used in the place of site and/or proposal specific landscape impact assessment. It should however, provide useful baseline and context information to assist with masterplanning and settlement scale baseline information.

9c) WHAT ABOUT THE 'WHITE' AREAS?

9.6 Areas which are not mapped for landscape character, biodiversity or historic sensitivity are part of the National Park (if within the boundary) and are subject to the national level of landscape protection set out in the NPPF and primary legislation. Whilst these areas have not been specifically identified in this study as having an alert for inherent sensitivity, further site specific and detailed analysis may reach different conclusions on this. These areas may be a component part of a view or a landscape or be part of the setting for other assets, or have a strong relationship with other sensitive features – e.g. the setting of a listed building. The identification of views and other features in the study may assist with identifying where this may be likely to occur. Areas of sensitivity are identified according to existing data and are not exhaustive or site based, neither do they take account of any development proposals.

9d) UPDATING THE MAPS

9.7 In theory the shapefiles can be updated as required. It is possible that new data would be identified by local groups and individuals as part of community planning exercises such as Neighbourhood plans.

9.8 The baseline maps will not be updated on an ongoing basis.

APPENDIX I: SETTLEMENTS INCLUDED IN THE STUDY

1. Alfriston
2. Amberley
3. Binsted
4. Buriton
5. Bury
6. Chawton
7. Cheriton
8. Coldwaltham
9. Compton
10. Ditchling
11. Droxford
12. Easebourne
13. East Dean (ES)
14. East Meon
15. Fernhurst
16. Findon
17. Fittleworth
18. Greatham (Hants)
19. Hambledon
20. Itchen Abbas
21. Kingston nr Lewes
22. Lavant
23. Lewes
24. Liss
25. Meonstoke and Corhampton
26. Midhurst
27. Northchapel
28. Petersfield
29. Petworth
30. Pyecombe

- 31.** Rodmell
- 32.** Rogate
- 33.** Selborne
- 34.** Sheet
- 35.** South Harting
- 36.** Stedham
- 37.** Steep
- 38.** Stroud
- 39.** Twyford
- 40.** West Ashling
- 41.** West Meon

APPENDIX 2: DATASET LIST FOR SENSITIVITY SHAPEFILE

Legend name	Dataset/typology list to make up layer	Notes
Biodiversity sensitivity	SAC, SPA, SSSI, NNR, LNR, SNCI/SINC, Ramsar Ancient semi-natural woodland; BAP Habitat,	Special Areas of Conservation Special Protection Areas Sites of Special Scientific Interest National Nature Reserve Local Nature Reserve Site of Nature Conservation importance/Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (Local Wildlife Sites) Ramsar – Wetland sites of international importance Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat
Cultural Heritage sensitivity	Conservation areas, Listed buildings, SAM, Registered Parks and Gardens Designed landscapes (i), National Trust land	(i) From the SDILCA Historic
Landscape Character sensitivity	Assart fieldscapes(i)(Fieldscapes subchar All areas up to Late post medieval in PERIOD value field. Registered Commons Village greens Public open space & sports fields (i) HLC Recreation Unimproved/Unenclosed HLC	(i) From Sussex HLC (subcharacter) (ii) From HLC Character Roman, prehistoric, early medieval, medieval, early post medieval , late post medieval values – pre 1800

	Char (ii) Cliffs beaches (i) HLC Coastal sub char	
Legend name	Dataset/typology list to make up layer	Notes
Landscape Character sensitivity	Early enclosures, recent enclosures, pre 1800 woodland (likely to be covered in ASNW layer) Unenclosed, valley floor, Coastal, recreation land, parks and open spaces.	SDILCA HLC (Hampshire) Ancient Woodland Semi-Natural
Green corridors	PROW	ESCC, WSCC, HCC data
River and stream (Blue) corridors	EA Flood plain 2	EA data
Transport	Main roads Railway	Drawn
High ground	Contours and OS Map shading	Specific for each settlement
Open unfiltered view of settlement	Identified through fieldwork	Specific for each settlement
Glimpsed view of settlement	Identified through fieldwork	Specific for each settlement
Views out of settlement	Identified through fieldwork	Specific for each settlement
Intrusion	Identified through fieldwork	Specific for each settlement

APPENDIX 3: BASELINE MAPS BY SETTLEMENT

These maps can be found on the SDNPA website and are listed by settlement. Link : <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/national-park-local-plan/evidence-and-supporting-documents/settlement-context-study/settlement-baseline-maps/>

APPENDIX 4: SETTLEMENT CONTEXT ANALYSIS DRAWINGS BY SETTLEMENT

These maps can be found on the SDNPA website and are listed by settlement. Link: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/national-park-local-plan/evidence-and-supporting-documents/settlement-context-study/settlement-context-analysis-drawings/>