

Appendix B

East Winchester Local Landscape Character Assessment 2020

Description

As part of this project, a local landscape characterisation exercise has been undertaken to understand and define the special qualities that exist at the study area scale. It sits within the framework areas of the SDILCA and was undertaken by the study team at the start of the project.

EW1. Western Itchen Valley;

EW2. Eastern Itchen Valley;

EW3. Winnall Down;

EW4. Cheesefoot Head and Hampage Woods;

EW5. Ovington Down;

EW6. Twyford Itchen Valley;

EW7. Chilcomb Vale;

EW8. Twyford and Hazeley Down;

EW9. Longwood Warren; and

EW10. Longwood Mosaic.

Introduction

The landscape of the Study area is strongly influenced by the underlying geology and soils as well as patterns of drainage. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 illustrate the geological and soil variations across the study area

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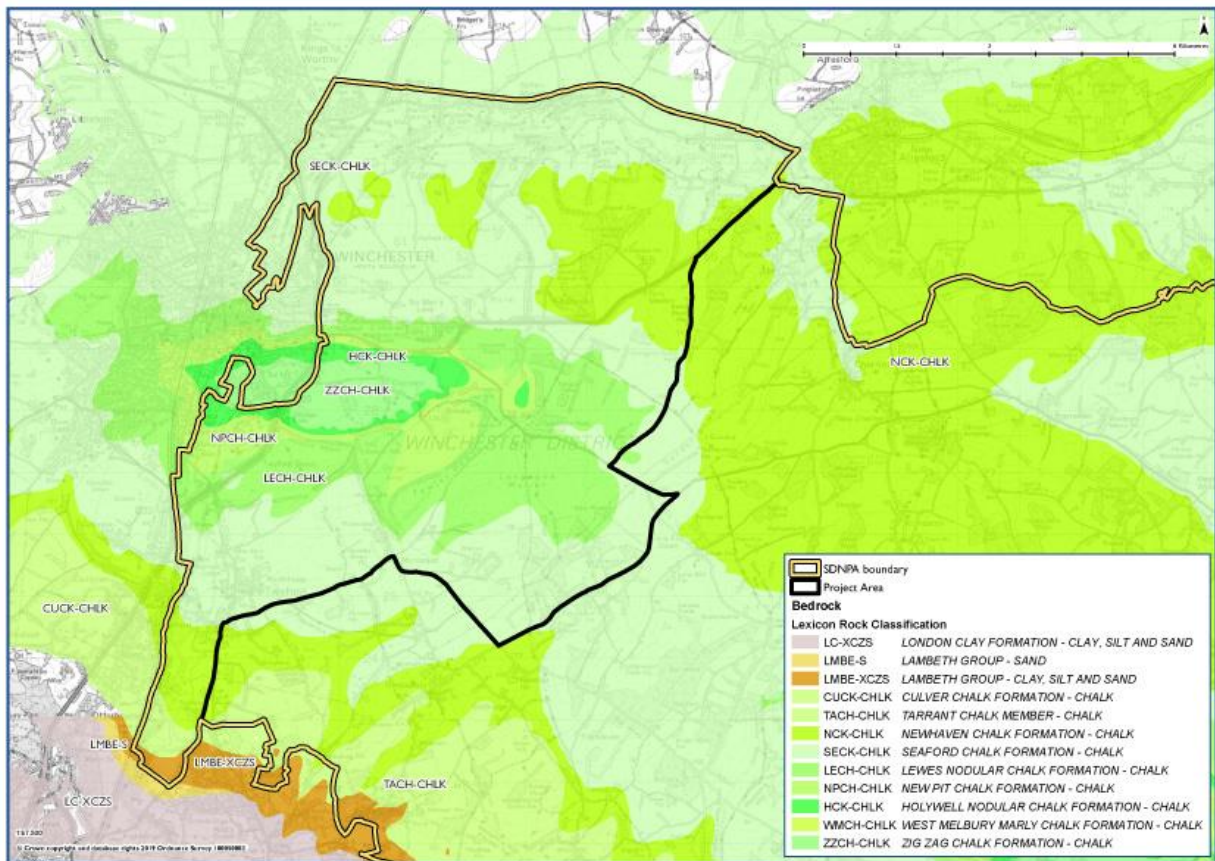


Figure 3.1: Geology within and around the study area (source: SDNPA)

Within the study area, the underlying geology is predominantly chalk (Figure 3.1) with an area of clay, silt and sand to the south west of the study area. The chalk geology of the area gives rise to chalk streams and grasslands. There has been an 80% decline in chalk grasslands since World War II and these chalk grasslands currently cover 4% of the SDNP, making it an extremely important habitat.

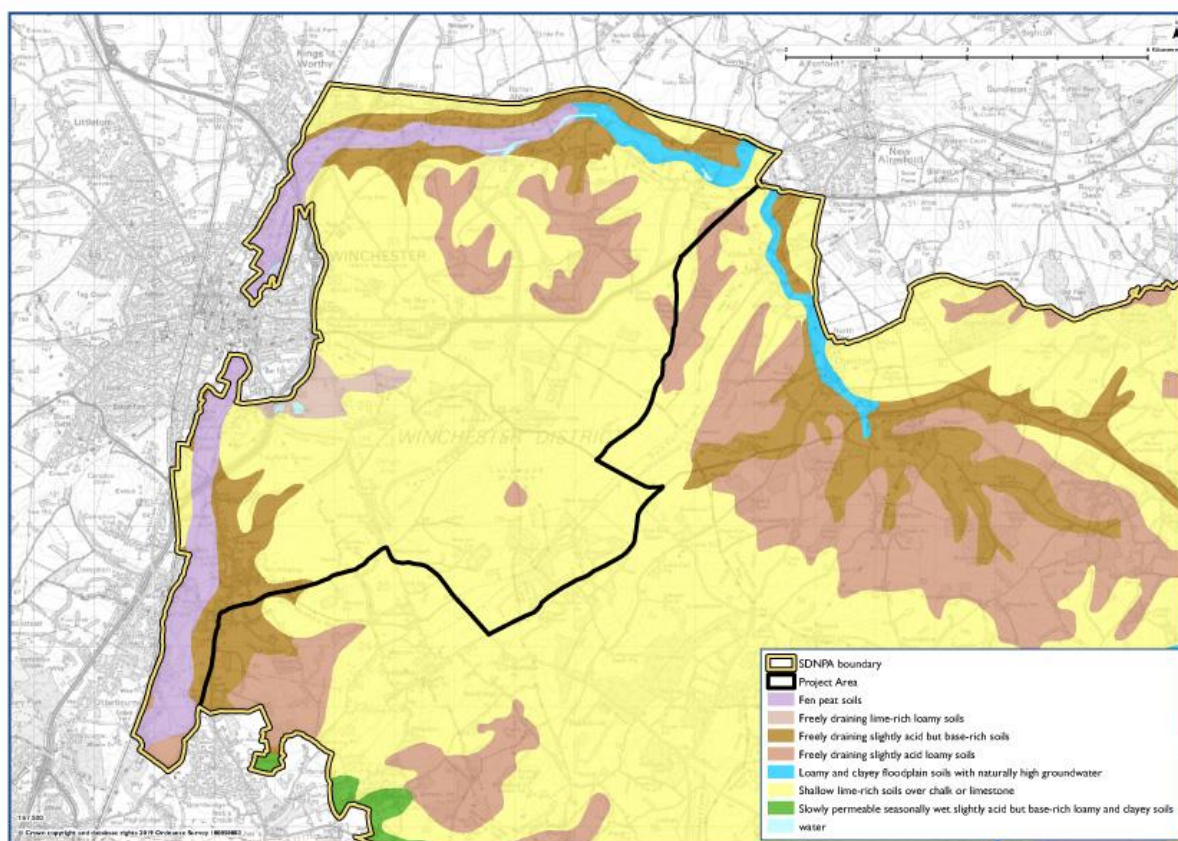


Figure 3.2 Soil type within and around the study area (source: SDNPA)

Shallow lime-rich soils over chalk is the predominant soil type within the study area (Figure 3.2). There are also fen peat soils to the east of study area and large areas of freely draining slightly acidic loamy soils to the north.

Local Landscape Areas

Whilst the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment is the most up to date assessment for the area, an earlier East Hampshire character assessment and a study of the Setting of Winchester (1998) also provide useful information regarding some of the local variations in character found within the downland landscape. This, along with field assessment and desk based GIS review, has resulted in the Study area being further subdivided into local landscape character areas. These have been presented at Stakeholder workshops and form a useful framework for understanding issues affecting the Study area and the development of locally specific initiatives as part of an Action Plan for the area.

The local landscape character areas are illustrated on Figure and are described briefly below.

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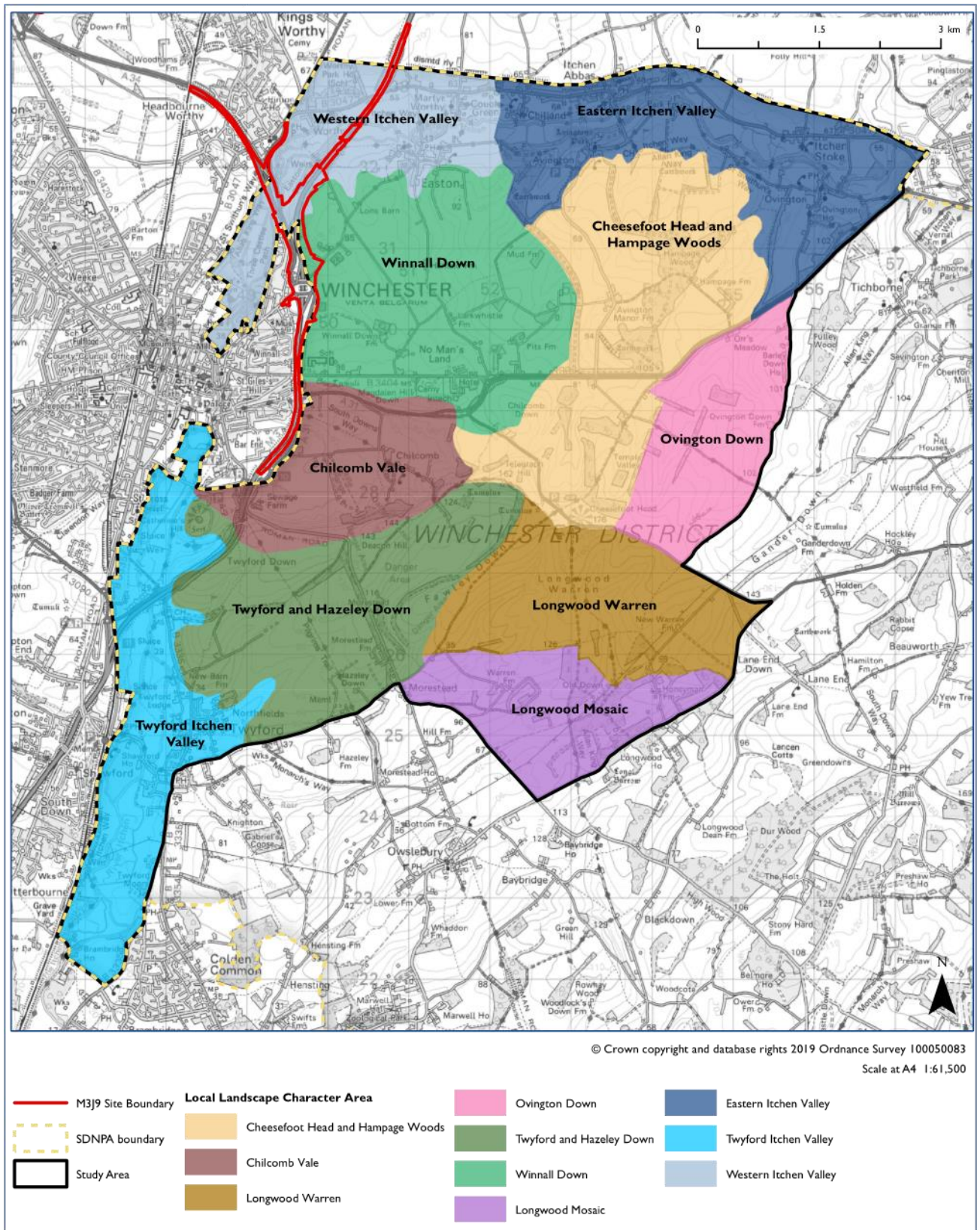


Figure 3.3 East Winchester Local Landscape Character Areas

EW1. Western Itchen Valley

This landscape forms part of the Itchen Valley and includes the historic villages of Itchen Abbas, Itchen Stoke and Ovington as well as Avington House and associated parkland. This is a typical chalk river valley landscape, with the valley floor containing the braded channel of the Itchen, flanked by valley floor pastures, with rural lanes on the lower valley slopes connecting the rural settlements.

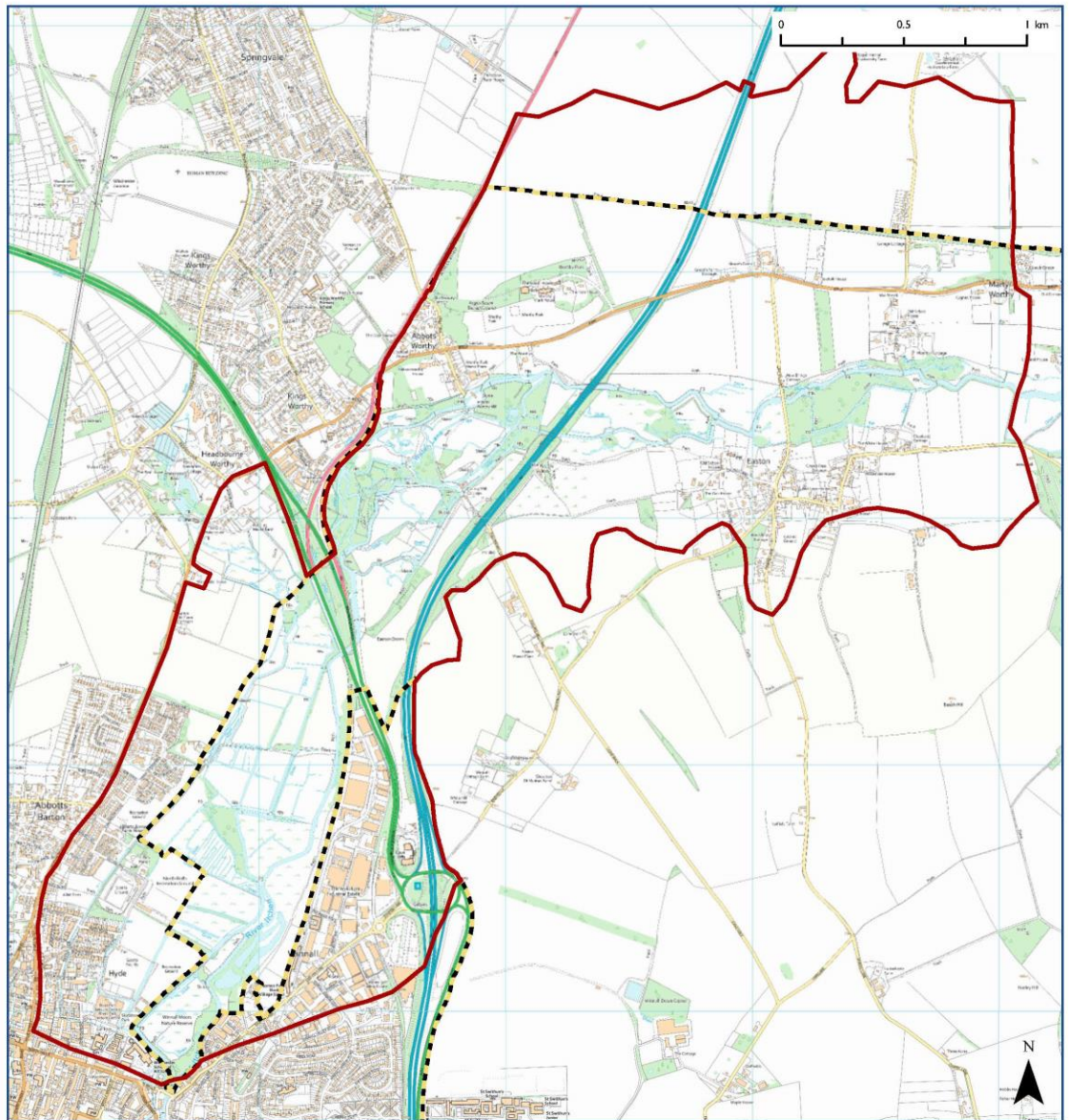
Much of the valley floor comprises pasture and patches of woodland, while the valley sides comprise mainly arable farmland on gently convex slopes which are backed by woodland that form an immediate skyline. As a result, views are often contained and, coupled with the valley floor woodlands, this landscape has an enclosed and settled character. Landscape features which add variety and interest include church towers, vernacular buildings, river footbridge crossings, and parkland features such railings and lime avenues.

The St Swithin's Way long distance path passes through this landscape following rural lanes, along with Sustrans route 23. These routes, as well as opportunities for fishing and golf, reflect the importance of this landscape for outdoor recreational pursuits.

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Local Landscape Character Area:
Western Itchen Valley



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- Local Character Area
- SDNPA boundary
- Study Area



EW2. Eastern Itchen Valley

This area is located to the north and east of the M3. It includes the valley floor and the downland which define the valley sides. As such, the downland landscape surrounding the valley floor reinforces the sense of place, associated with a chalk river system and forms a rural setting to Winchester.

This landscape comprises a relatively flat and open valley floor with gently rising valley sides. The valley sides are highest to the east (rising to 90m AOD on Easton Down) and more gentle to the west (56m AOD). These slopes have a distinctive rounded quality defining the valley and reinforcing perceptions of a chalk river valley. The open valley floor is textured and colourful due to the expanses of water meadow and wet pastures and there are frequent expanses of open water channels. Woodland is generally limited to the edge of the valley floor and lower valley slopes, helping to define the valley whilst leaving the higher valley sides open in character.

A string of historic villages (often with Anglo-Saxon origins) occur along the Itchen Valley at crossing points. A number are designated as Conservation Areas including Abbots Worthy and Easton as well as the city of Winchester to the south. Listed Buildings are concentrated within the villages, including Abbots and Kings Worthy.

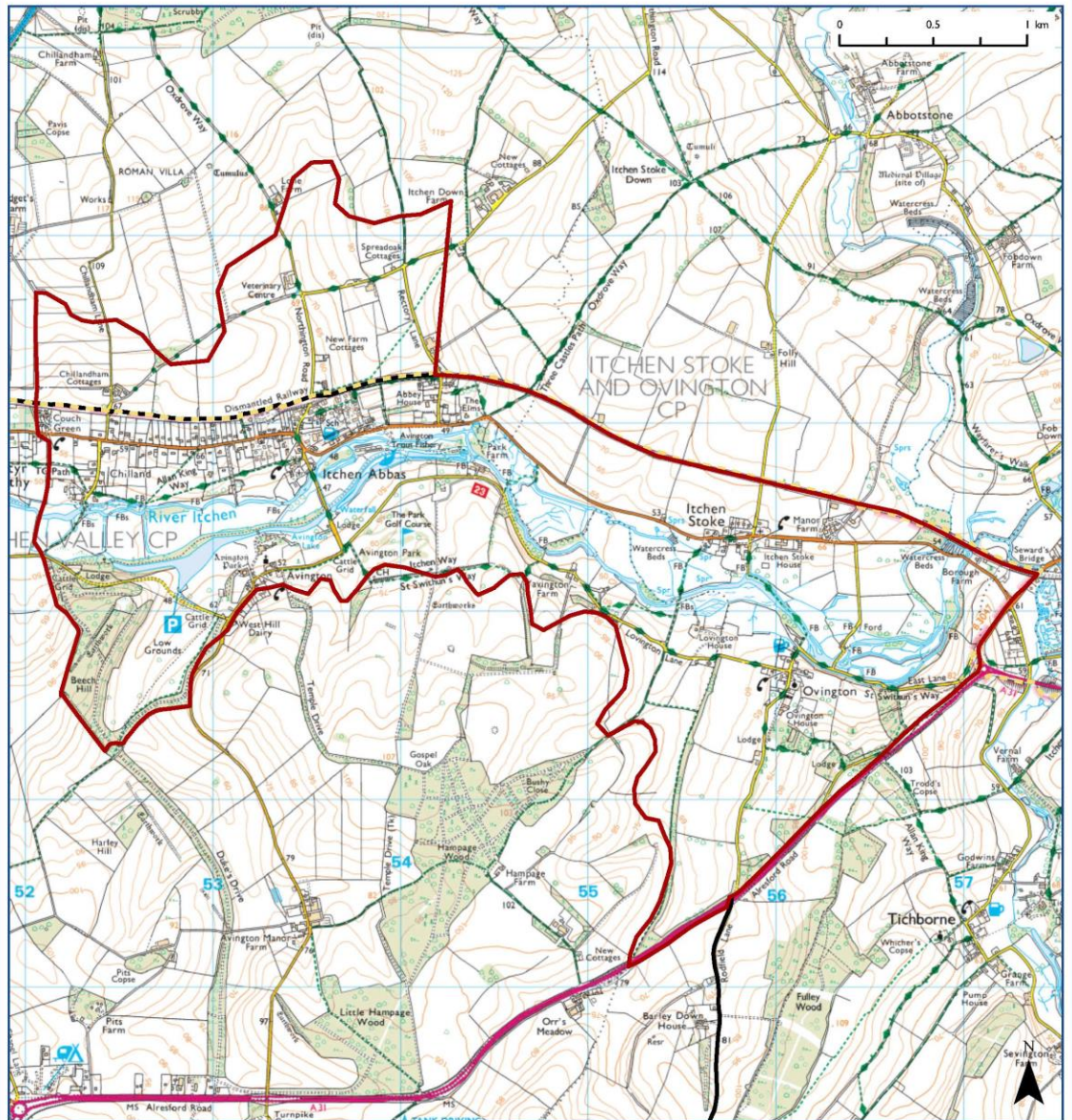
This landscape is highly valued for its nature conservation interest. The Itchen is a classic chalk stream and is botanically very important, with extensive areas of unimproved vegetation along its length including fen, carr and herb- rich meadows, much of it on peat. Many of the meadows were managed as water meadows in the 19th century. The rich vegetation supports important populations of wetland birds and the river supports one of the few populations of the native white clawed crayfish remaining in the rivers of southern England, as well as breeding otters, nationally important populations of water vole and southern damselfly, and freshwater fish including bullhead, brook lamprey and Atlantic salmon.

There is good linear access along the River Itchen in the form of two Long Distance Footpaths (LDR): The Allan King Way, the Itchen Way and St Swithuns Way. There is also a notable area of open access for visitors wishing to explore the wetland wildlife of the Winnall Moors Nature Reserve which is located on the very edge of the National Park, straddling the border. The reserve has excellent access for wheelchair users, but there is no access for dogs.

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Local Landscape Character Area:
 Eastern Itchen Valley



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Scale at A4 1:29,100

-  Local Character Area
-  SDNPA boundary
-  Study Area



EW3. Winnall Down

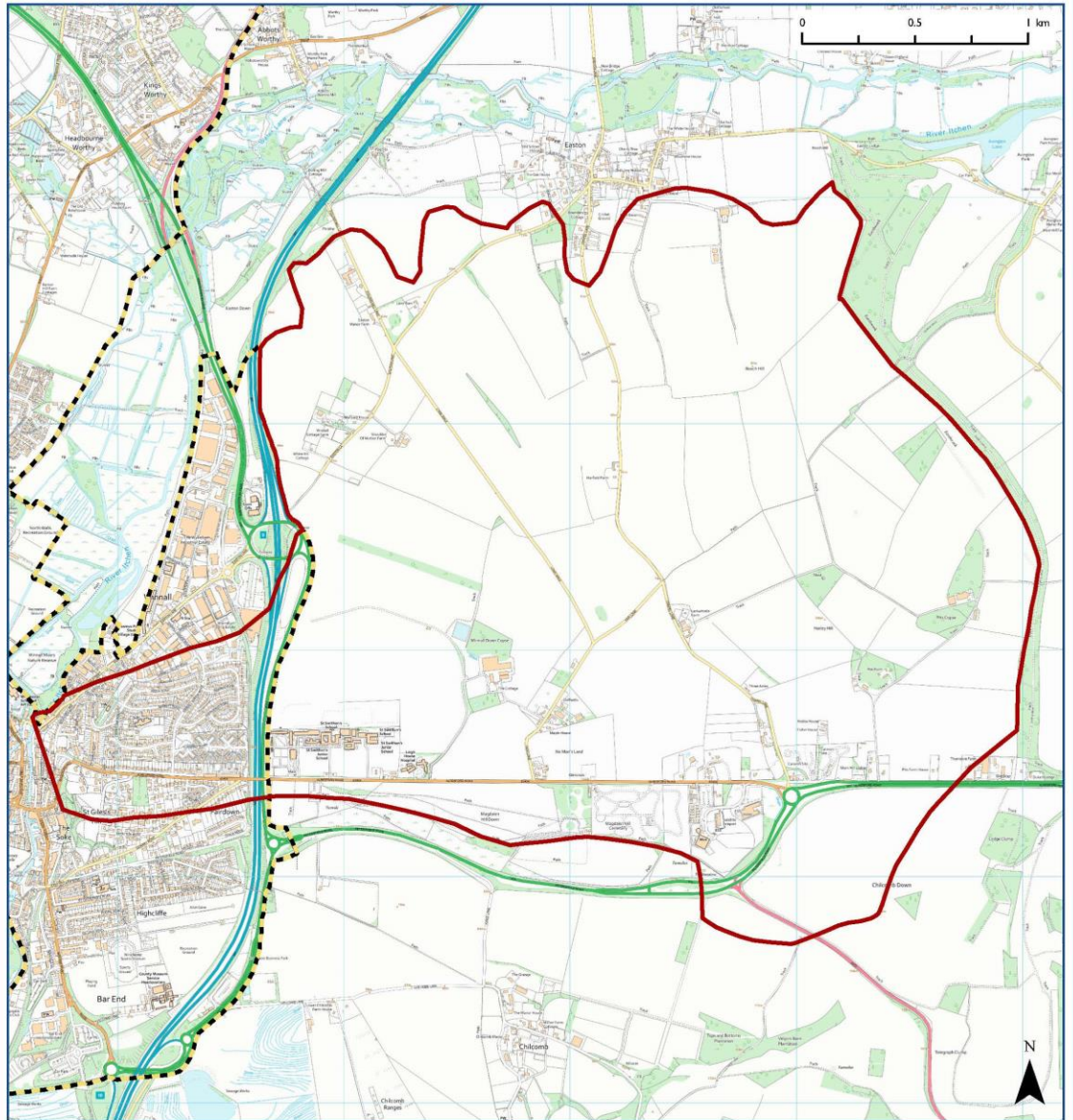
This area is located to the east of the M3 and includes the southern part of the M3 Junction 9 improvements as well as the Spitfire Link. It includes open rolling downland including Winnall Down and is framed to the south by the rising land of Magdalene Hill. The western slopes of this land form an important setting to Winchester City and provide recreational users with their first experience of the downs on leaving Winchester.

This landscape imparts an elevated and open character which is expansive and empty, with only occasional farmsteads and no villages. This can give rise to a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity. The landform is gently rolling, forming rounded hills and ridges reaching c.105m AOD, some of which are planted with beech clumps and woodland copses. The open character is interrupted by the small scale lanes which traverse the landscape. These routes funnel views and create a degree of enclosure. The Land use is predominately arable, defined by low well-trimmed hedgerows. The patterns and textures are simple, and there is a strong degree of uniformity. This is broken in places with views towards Winchester or the existing M3.

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Local Landscape Character Area:
Winnall Down



- Local Character Area
- SDNPA boundary
- Study Area

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Scale at A4 1:24,200



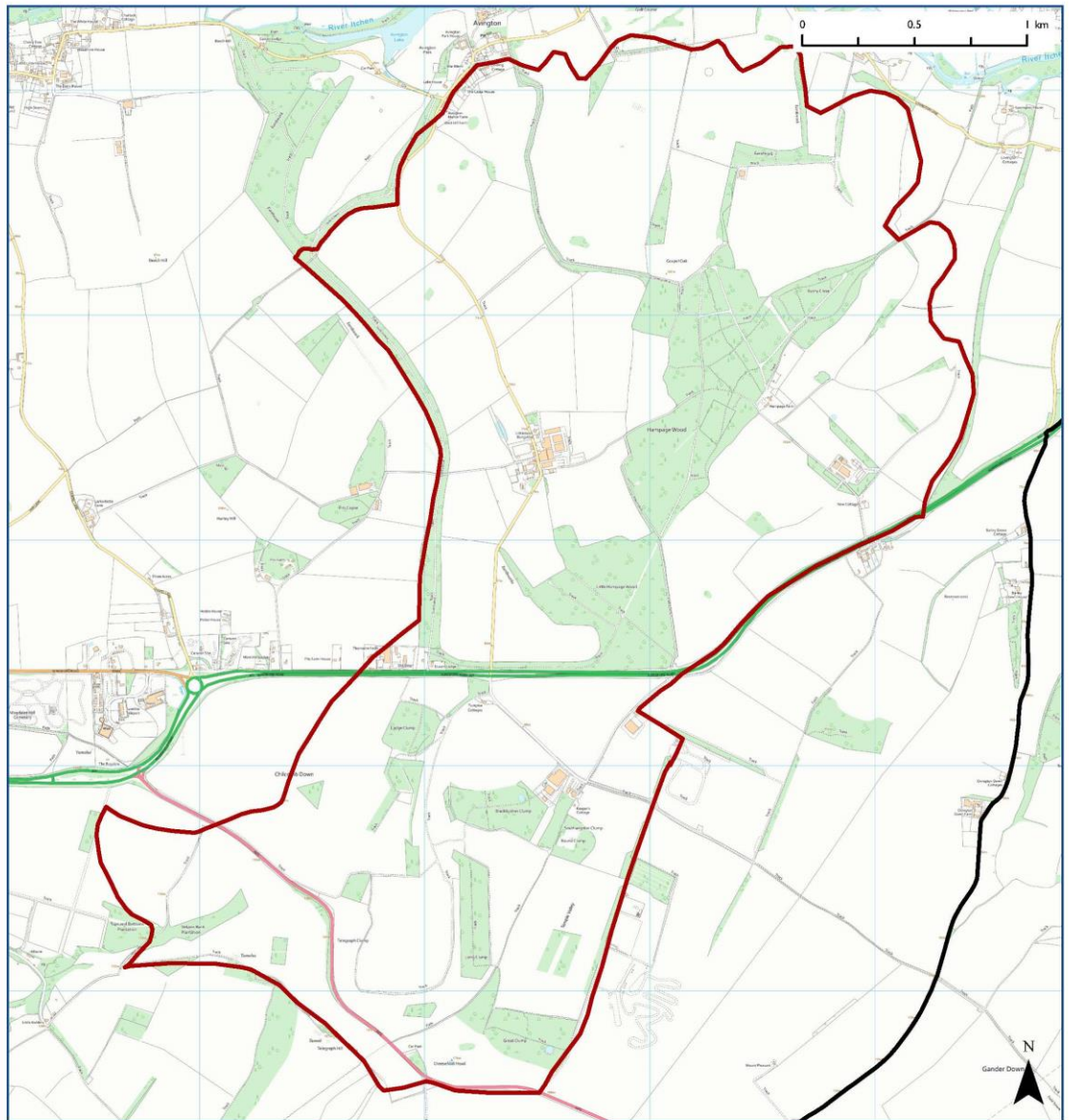
EW4. Cheesefoot Head and Hampage Woods

This landscape forms the highest part of the Study area at Cheesefoot Head which rise to c. 176m AOD and offers panoramic views across the Study area and beyond. Whilst predominately sloping in a northerly direction towards the Itchen Valley, this landscape has a strongly rolling character with distinctive knolls of higher land and in places steep sided coombes which are spectacular for their scale and drama. Of all the landscapes within the study area, this is the most wooded including the largest area of continuous ancient semi-natural woodland at Hampage and Little Hampage Woods. Other woodlands reflect the historical evolution of the landscape; the northern part of the area previously formed part of the Avingdon designated parkland and former deer park (The Prior of St Swithin's). Here beech clumps on prominent knolls and linear park boundary plantations that hug the contours and provide visual containment and key features. Further south, the woodlands are smaller in scale and blocky in character, reflecting more recent land management associated with country sports and game shooting. Here rectilinear woodlands may be of mixed species and incorporate earlier semi-natural woods. As a result of these past and current land management influences, this landscape has a strong estate character.

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Local Landscape Character Area:
Cheesefoot Head and Hampage Woods



- Local Character Area
- SDNPA boundary
- Study Area

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EW5. Ovington Down

The open downland around Ovington Down with the Itchen Valley to the north is a more remote tranquil area with few destinations and some rights of way and bridleways which provide access to the open countryside.

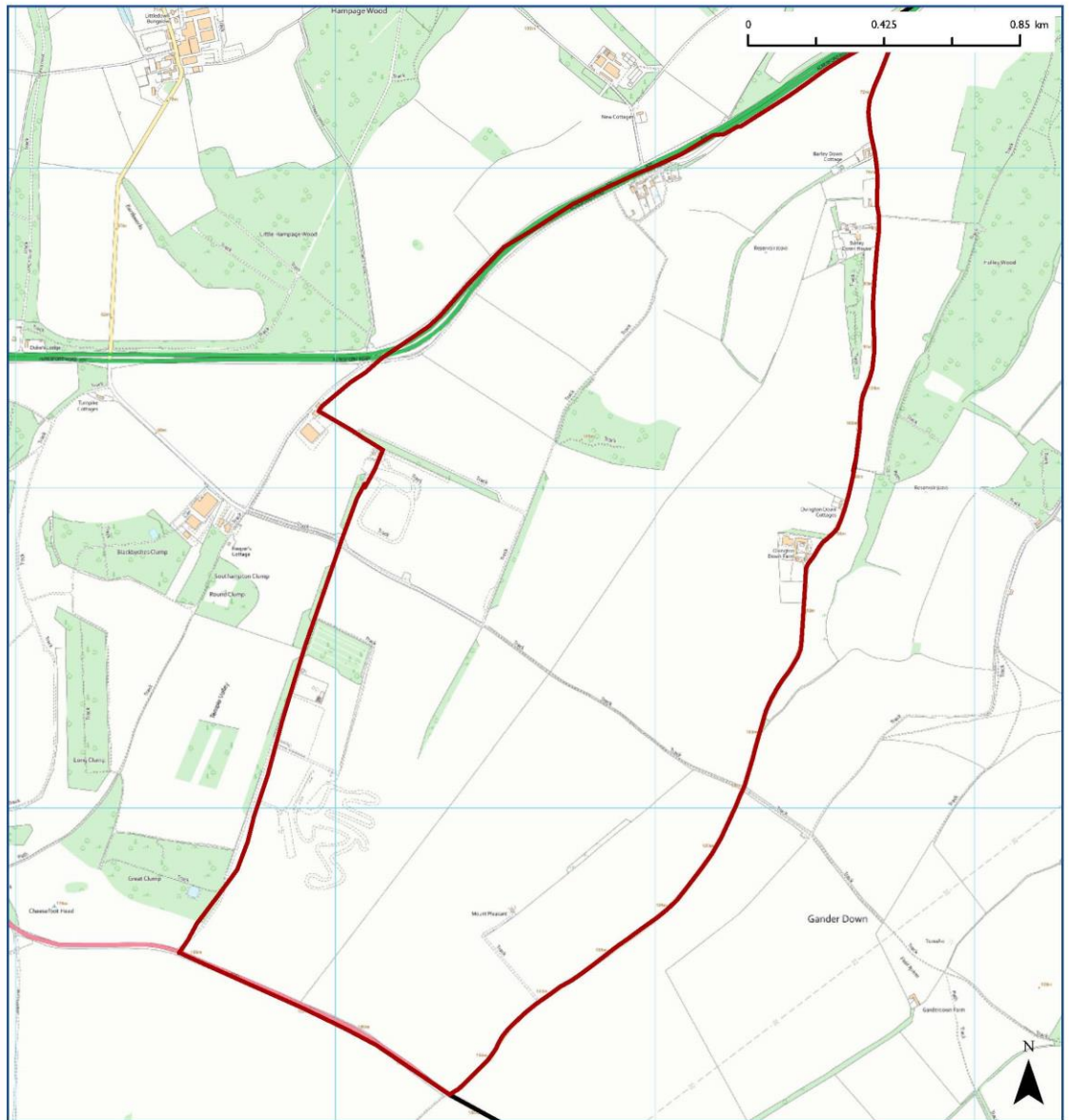
This landscape lies to the northwest of Cheesefoot Head, comprising predominately north facing rolling chalk slopes, ranging from c.170m AOD along the A272 to c. 100m AOD along the A31. The chalk slopes form the wider setting of the Itchen Valley and the valley settlements of Ovington and Titchborne. The area is accessed via infrequent rural lanes and rights of way such as Allan King Way which connects Titchborne with Cheesefoot Head and is a highly visible landscape from the A31.

Much of this area is open arable farmland although linear belts of woodland form some enclosure and can appear at odds with the curving lines of the chalk landform. Settlement is restricted to farm complexes such as Matterly Farm and Ovington Down Farm which often contain large scale barns and farm buildings.

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Local Landscape Character Area:
Ovington Down



- Local Character Area
- SDNPA boundary
- Study Area

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EW6. Twyford Itchen Valley:

This landscape forms the Itchen Valley south of Winchester as far as Colden Common. It is a linear landscape between adjacent conurbations, partially including the settlements of Twyford and Northfield.

The northern part of the area comprises Winchester College flood meadows. Their textured wet grassland and muted tones, multiple ditches and channels form a magical setting to outstanding heritage features of St Cross, the dramatic and imposing slopes of St Catharine's Hill and the Hockley Railway Viaduct.

To the south the M3 cuts across the valley floor, causing physical fragmentation and disruption to tranquility, especially to the south. South of Shawford the pastoral qualities of the valley regain prominence, with the braded water channels, wet pastures and woodland along with vistas to features such as Twyford Church creating a strong sense of place. Views are often contained by vegetation such that adjacent development does not overtly intrude despite its proximity.

The Itchen Way long distance route passes along the western margins of the flood plain, while the Monachs Way crosses the valley between Shawford and Twyford. This is joined by the Pilgrims Trail and Clarendon Way north of the M3, as all routes converge on the Minster.

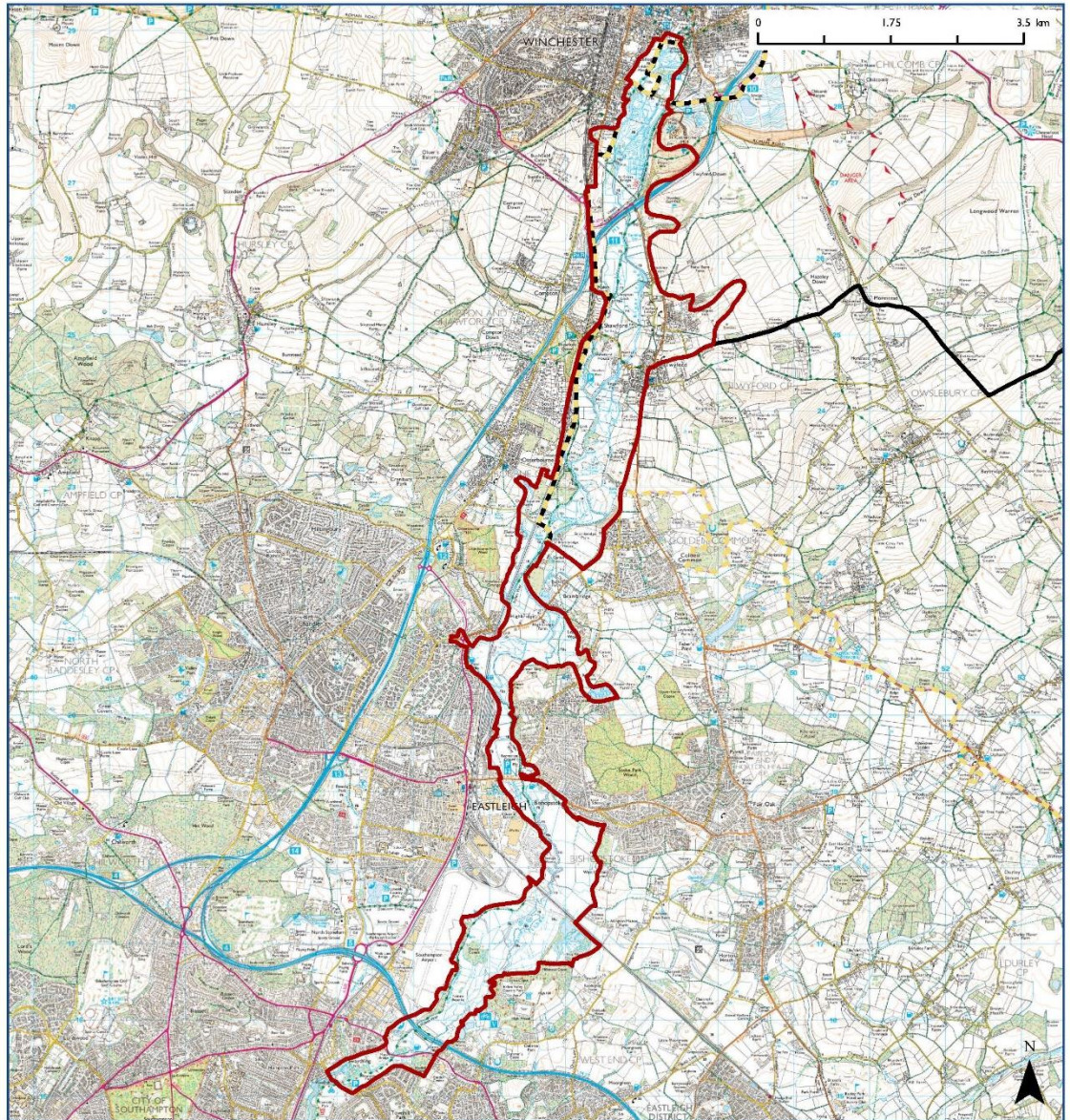
On the steepest slopes the landscape supports areas of species-rich grassland, but arable farming is the most prevalent land use.

This landscape is accessible via the A31 and A272 which pass through the area, providing access to Cheesefoot Head viewpoint and carpark, and access to long distance routes such as the South Downs Way. This landscape also hosts the Boomtown annual festival.




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Local Landscape Character Area:
Twyford Itchen Valley



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-  Study Area



EW7. Chilcomb Vale

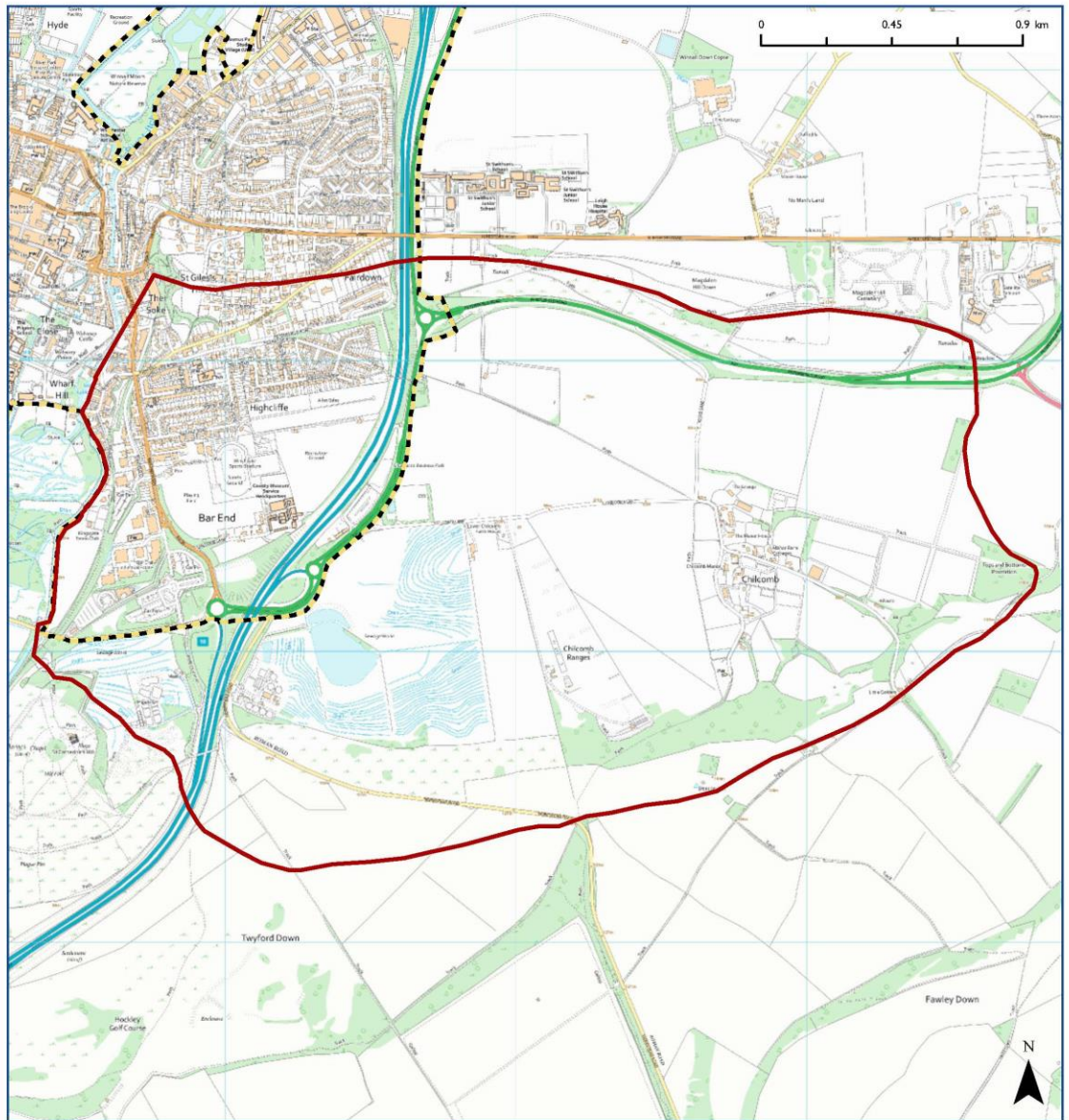
This area is located to the south of Junction 9a of the M3 and forms a discrete vale through which the M3 passes. It includes the south facing scarp slopes of Magdalene Hill and the north facing scarp slopes of Deacon Hill. Views are inward looking, across the M3 and into Winchester, with built development at Highcliff and St Giles Hill being visible. This area also includes the northern side of St Catherine's Hill where it faces onto the vale with views across the city.

This landscape comprises a distinctive vale landscape defined by steep escarpments to the north and south, which rise to 124m AOD at Magdalene Hill Down and 144m AOD at Deacon Hill. The escarpments support areas of open downland, scrub and woodland, while within the vale land use is predominately arable in large scale fields or smaller enclosures around the historic downland village of Chilcomb. The combination of wooded steep slopes, woodland associated with the M3 corridor and hedgerows with hedgerows trees around Chilcomb give this landscape a more enclosed and intimate character than other areas of open chalk landscape. From the elevated parts of this landscape there are views into Winchester and the cathedral which reinforce the sense of place and visually connect the town and country. This landscape is affected by land uses which have altered landform e.g. Southern Water former sewage works, and areas with restricted access e.g. rifle ranges. Away from the M3 corridor there is a high degree of tranquility, however, closer to the M3 there is noise intrusion and from some locations on higher scarp slopes there are views down the length of the M3 which can be seen carving through the chalk at Magdalen Hill and St Catherine's Hill.

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Local Landscape Character Area:
Chilcomb Vale



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- SDNPA boundary
- Study Area

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EW8. Twyford and Hazeley Down

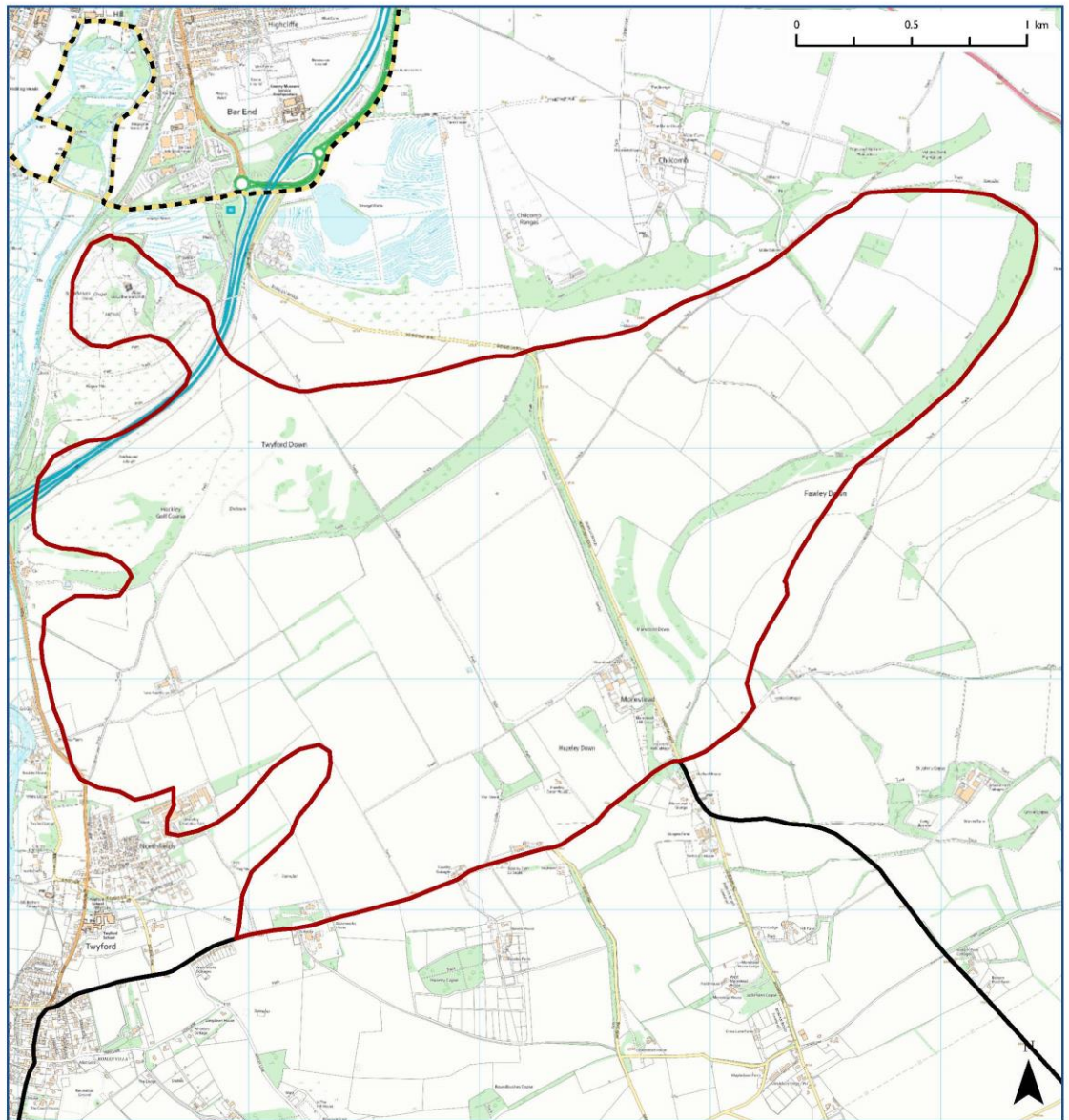
This area comprises elevated downland and extends either side of the M3 corridor and includes the distinctive hillfort of St Catherine's Hill, which sits in a commanding position above the Itchen Valley and Winchester and the open rolling wider downland of Twyford and Hazeley to the west. This landscape forms an elevated open chalk downland landscape with strongly rolling topography creating dry chalk valleys, steep scarps and open ridges. St Catherine's Hill sits at 97m AOD and the downland rises gradually to the west 143m AOD at Deacon Hill. Although steeply rolling in places, the general orientation of this landscape is to the south west.

Land use is predominately arable but around St Catherine's Hill and parts of Twyford Down there are remnant areas of downland which reinforce the smooth rounded topography. In places, scrub has encroached on the downland or there are mixed wood plantations. This landscape is predominately tranquil, although in closer proximity to the M3 corridor there can be significant noise intrusion from traffic.

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Local Landscape Character Area:
Twyford and Hazeley Down



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- Local Character Area
- SDNPA boundary
- Study Area



EW9. Longwood Warren

This landscape forms the south facing slopes which extend from Cheesefoot Head and range from c. 165m AOD to c. 95m AOD in the south west. This is an open landscape with wide reaching panoramic views across rolling farmland and with a pervading sense of emptiness and expansiveness. Land use is predominately arable within large fields which have no strong enclosure pattern. Here the landscape patterns are defined by topography and areas of chalk grassland or scrub on the more dramatic and steepest slopes, which form distinctive linear features or coombes. Within the folds of the landscape and where there is some plantation woodland e.g. Oakclose Plantation, there is a sense of enclosure and remoteness which contrasts with the exhilarating views afforded by elevated ridges.

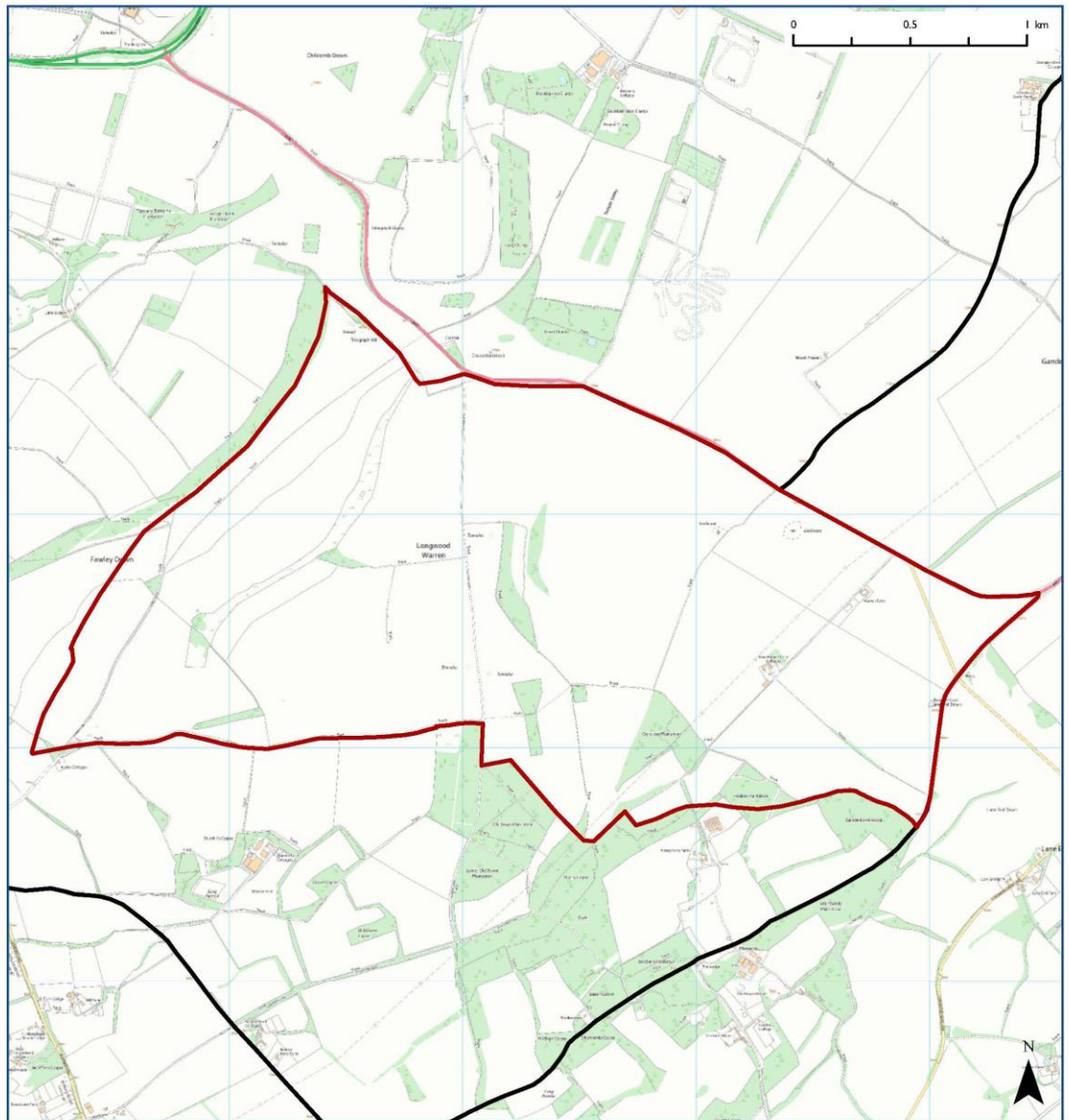
Lack of settlement (comprising only occasional farms), and other built form gives this landscape a relatively high tranquility. A higher incidence of small plantations, as elevation drops, provide a gradual transition to the Longwood Mosaic local character area which is visible along the southern fringes of this area.

There are no roads through this local character area and access is provided by historic tracks (e.g. Warren Lane and Ox Drove) which once provided access to wide areas of open downland. These tracks are now used as rights of way including long distance recreational routes such as the Allan King Way.

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Local Landscape Character Area:
Longwood Warren



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- Local Character Area
- SDNPA boundary
- Study Area



EW10. Longwood Mosaic

This landscape is located in the southern part of the study area on gently undulating land between c.70-100m AOD. It is the most wooded part of the Study area containing a high incidence of woodland copses and plantations, many of which comprise ancient woodland. This pattern of vegetation has established in part due to the historical association of the area with the Longwood Estate, the house and park lying to the south. The high incidence of mature trees including oak, ash and beech as well as areas of coppiced hazel give this landscape an established leafy character, and the number of farmsteads impart a settled feel. Fields of arable and some areas of pasture are defined by the woodlands or linear belts of planting/hedgerows and give rise to a well structured and often enclosed composition. Occasionally there are views beyond the area to the north, where the land rises to the open downland around Cheesefoot Head.

The southern and western edge of this area are defined by minor roads, otherwise the area is only accessible via public rights of way. Whilst there is a relatively high incidence of routes, none of the woodlands are publicly accessible.

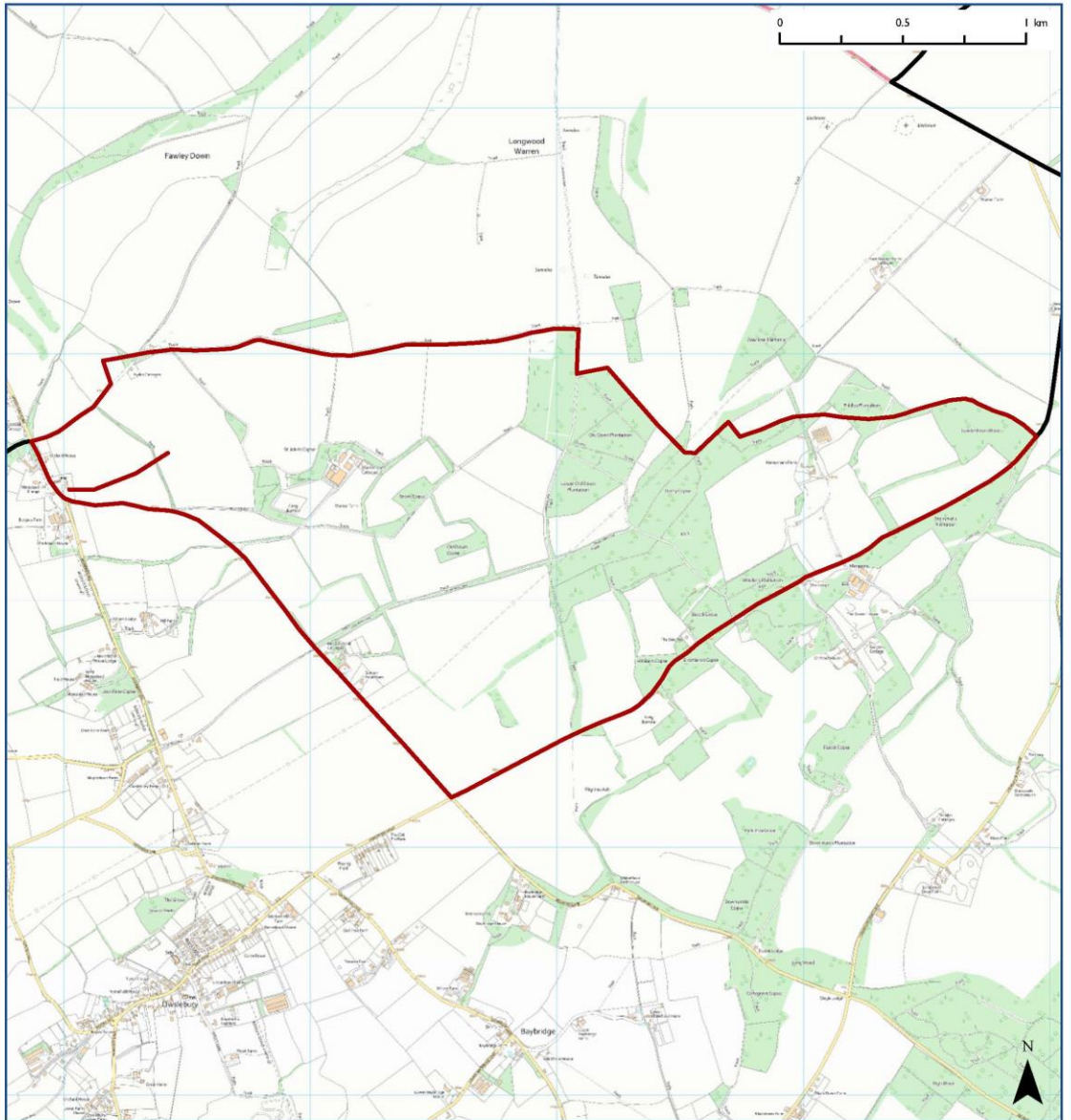
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Local Landscape Character Area:
Longwood Mosaic



0 0.5 1 km



-  Local Character Area
-  SDNPA boundary
-  Study Area

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