

3C: ITCHEN VALLEY



Valley floor in downland setting between Itchen Abbas and Ovington. Permanent pasture, numerous small woods and scattered individual trees, few hedges.



Ovington – Clear chalk streams, often wooded banks.



Valley floor– Lower reaches urban edge, pony paddocks and wooded ridge backdrop at Bishopstoke.



There are numerous historic mills and bridges – along the Itchen. (from SDILCA)



Cheriton – canalised section of the Itchen on the left.

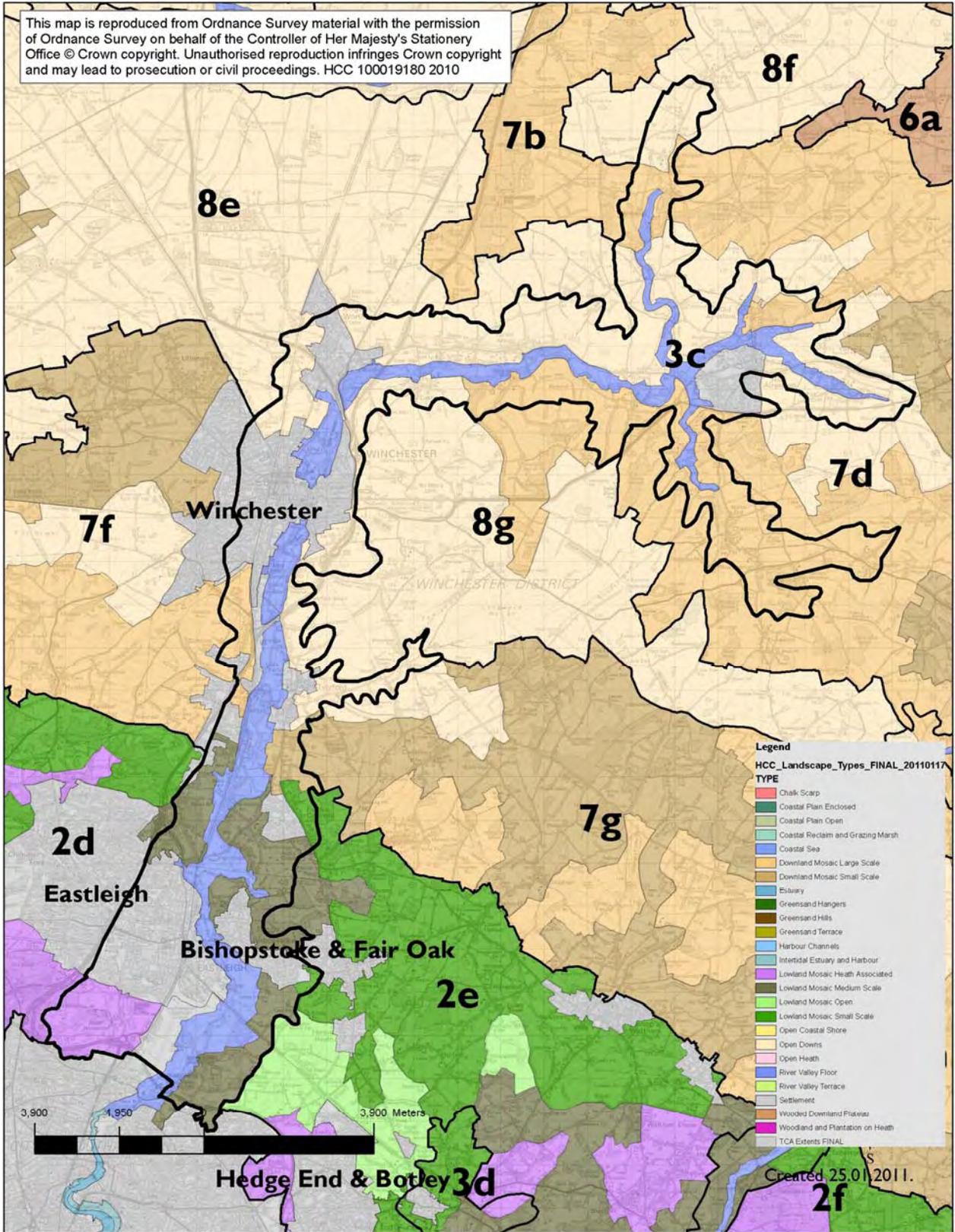


Itchen Valley Country park; sluice as part of restored water meadows.



Playing fields with poplar windbreaks in Lower Itchen Valley.

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ITCHEN VALLEY



1.0 Location and Boundaries

1.1 This character area includes the river valley floor and its sides which make up the visual envelope of the valley. The valley tops are defined approximately where there is a break/slackening in slope angle. The southern boundary is formed at the County/Southampton unitary edge. The upper most reaches of the valley follow three spring fed



tributaries/headwaters, which join close to New Arlesford namely the Candover stream to the north, River Arle to the east and Cheriton stream to the south.

1.2 Component County Landscape Types

Open Downs, Downland Mosaic Large Scale, Downland Mosaic Small Scale, River Valley Floor, Lowland Mosaic Medium Scale, Lowland Mosaic Small Scale, Lowland Mosaic Heath Associated, Settlement.

1.3 Composition of Borough/District LCAs:

Winchester CC

Upper Itchen Valley

Lower Itchen Valley

Eastleigh BC

Broom Hill Farmland and Woodland

Upper Itchen Valley Floodplain

Lower Itchen Valley Floodplain

Eastleigh Airport

Itchen Valley Sports Pitches

The extent of the valley sides is comparable with the two Itchen valley character areas in the Winchester assessment. This LCA boundary is drawn on the approximate valley top of the adjoining dry valleys (hence the wavy boundary), on the rough break in slope indicated by the contour spacing and the approximate visual envelope of the valley. Variations occur between the LCA and local assessments as a result of the perceived extent of valley influence.

1.4 Associations with NCAs and Natural Areas

NCA 125: South Downs, 128: South Hampshire Lowlands, 130: Hampshire Downs
NA 74: South Downs, 75: South Coast Plain and Hampshire Lowlands, 78: Hampshire Downs

1.5 Townscape Assessment Areas:

Winchester

2.0 Key Characteristics

- The Itchen is a classic chalk stream, running through an area of soft permeable rock, supplied by underground aquifers.
- A valley of contrasts from a small stream to a fast flowing river and then deep estuary but the largely undeveloped floodplain is a unifying feature.
- The stream and some of floodplain is internationally designated as a SAC because of its chalk stream habitat, rich in plants, invertebrates and fish.
- Important concentration of remnant water meadows.
- The valley floor is mainly neutral grassland, a complex mosaic of fen species rich meadow and improved meadows, considered to be the largest assemblage of species rich neutral grassland in England⁶¹.
- The small villages and scattered farms sit comfortably within the valley.
- An extremely rich built heritage and setting to Winchester and developed valley sides in lower reaches.
- Frequent minor crossing points marked by white parapets to bridges.
- The upper reaches support the most important watercress industry in the country⁶¹.
- There is fairly good access to the valley by rights of way, and the Itchen Valley path follows the former towpath from Cheriton to Southampton.
- Internationally renowned as a fly fishing river especially for wild brown and rainbow trout.

3.0 Physical Characteristics and Land Use

3.1

The Itchen Valley passes through chalk in its upper reaches and Tertiary clays south of Otterbourne and Colden Common. The downland section comprises mainly Seaford Chalk, while the valley tops often coincide with the presence of Newhaven Chalk which has greater clay content. North and east of Winchester the top of the valley sides are typically 60m AOD increasing to 90m in the three headwater valleys but vary considerably with underlying geology to as low as 20m AOD towards the coast. At Winchester the valley turns sharply south and cuts through the main South Downs ridge while in the Hampshire lowlands the valley passes through a narrow band of the Lambeth formation, then London Clay followed by narrow bands of Whitecliff and Wittering formations. These coincide with locally undulating and raised topography including where the valley breaks through a minor ridge between Colden Common and Bishopstoke. The valley floor broadens out still further where it meets a large outcrop of London Clay. The river valley floor calcareous alluvium overlies river terrace gravels and is stone free and fertile but seasonally waterlogged. The soil pattern echoes the changes in the geology - the valley sides in the downland section are steep, with shallow flinty soil while south of the spring line settlements of Colden Common and Otterbourne the soils are predominantly stoneless and silty, but of lower agricultural grade than the valley sides in the chalk.

3.2

The river valley floor is dominated by permanent pasture and semi or unimproved grassland – often with visible remain of watermeadow features such as field undulations and carriers. Watercress beds particularly around New Alresford and ornamental ponds such as Northington and Avington are a feature of the downland section. The downland section in particular, is world famous for fly fishing of brown trout. Further south and particularly south of Winchester there urban influences

increase although the valley floor is extensively pastoral. The M3 and airport take up substantial areas just above on the river terrace. Around Eastleigh and Southampton playing fields are common, often with windbreak planting which include poplars. The valley floor is particularly well wooded in places, typically small copses, scattered trees but few hedges. Moving up the valley slopes in the lowland section the fields are generally small to medium in size and irregular in pattern. In the downland section the fields become more regular in pattern and larger away from settlements and support an increasing arable land use. The fields in the lowland section are generally smaller and have more wooded hedgerows than in the downland section.

- 3.3 The River Itchen is 45km from its source at New Cheriton to Southampton Water, with a catchment area of 400sq km²⁹. For much of its length, the Itchen is divided or naturally 'braided' into two or more channels. This includes the Itchen Navigation between Winchester and Southampton which has many sluices and man made courses to ensure a permanently filled channel. The Itchen had three main historic uses giving rise to a multiplicity of channels; the harnessing of water power for milling, the use of water meadow systems to provide early growth of pasture and the development of navigation. There are smaller tributaries in the lowland mosaic section due to the comparatively impermeable geology. In extremely wet prolonged weather the chalk aquifers can reach capacity and flooding of low lying settlements (including those further downstream in the hydrological basin) can occur. Summer flows can be maintained in especially dry periods by two boreholes in the Alre and Candover catchments.

4.0 **Experiential/Perceptual Characteristics**

- 4.1 This is a landscape visually contained by the tops of the valley sides creating a sense of enclosure which is greatest where the valley sides are highest, such as where it cuts through the South Downs chalk ridge, or on the narrow twisting valley floor of the headwater valleys, where the sides are steep and close to the valley floor. South of Kings Worthy the valley floor broadens out and where it flows through the lowland mosaic, the low valley sides and broad adjoining tributaries give a sense of openness and larger scale. High up the valley sides there are contrasting views of settlements set within a well treed landscape and beyond the character area boundary, expansive arable and downland in the chalk and a more wooded scene linked with pasture and arable fields in the clay lowlands. The twisting valley of the headwater water tributaries limits views along the valley whereas the straighter course of the Itchen from North of Alresford to Kings Worthy and then Winchester to Eastleigh affords views along the valley – reducing the sense of enclosure.
- 4.2 There are numerous long distance paths, often associated with historical pilgrimage routes, which follow and/or cross the Itchen Valley providing excellent linear walks (The Itchen Way, St Swithun's Way, Kings Way, 3 Castles Path, Ox Drove, Wayfarers Walk, Pilgrims Trail and Clarendon Way). These routes indicate that the Itchen Valley has long been a significant transport route, with Winchester as its focus in the downs. Access land and open spaces tend to be located south of Winchester such as at Shawford Down, St Catherine's Hill, Itchen Valley Country Park and Winnal Moors. Together with accessible local woodland sites such as Stoke Park at Bishopstoke and Otterbourne Park Wood they form important doorstep countryside for local residents. Other access opportunities include

Wolversley Palace, Avington Park, Grange at Northington and Hinton House which have partial public access. The Itchen Navigation project which aims to protect and enhance the biodiversity, archaeology and access of the canal was set up in 2004.

- 4.3 The Itchen is nationally renowned for brown and rainbow trout fishing. There are numerous riverside pubs which attract locals and tourists and add to the area's popularity.
- 4.4 The Itchen Valley retains a strong sense of being rural with a long history of old settlement with relatively little modern expansion apart from the far south of the character area – associated with Eastleigh, Bishopstoke, Allbrook and Colden Common. The locally distinctive land management practices of watermeadows and watercress beds and the Itchen Navigation sit harmoniously in the landscape. More modern infrastructure development such as the M3 cutting, increasing commuter traffic and rapid expansion of settlements in the south are significant detractors which threaten to subsume increasingly isolated and small areas of a rural landscape. Air traffic noise from light commercial aircraft associated with Southampton airport has a localised negative effect on tranquillity. The high tranquillity of the river valley floor landscape with its fast flowing braided chalk stream and rough pasture with woodland and scrub has a high sense of naturalness.

5.0 Biodiversity Character

- 5.1 Much of the River Itchen is internationally and nationally designated as a SAC as well as a SSSI because it is a classic example of a chalk river with associated habitats including fen meadow, flood pasture and swamp. The river is dominated throughout by water-crowfoot (pond water-crowfoot as well as stream water-crowfoot, and river water-crowfoot). Strong populations of southern damselfly occur here, estimated to be in the hundreds which is unusual in this managed chalk-river flood plain context rather than heathland. The river supports high densities of bullhead throughout much of its length with extensive beds of submerged plants that act as a refuge for the species, and coarse sediments that are vital for spawning and juvenile development. Also valuable are Riparian vegetation communities (including wet woodlands) and side channels, runnels and ditches associated with the former water meadows supporting otter, water vole, freshwater fishes including bullhead, brook lamprey and Atlantic salmon, and an assemblage of breeding birds including tufted duck, and shoveler, the waders lapwing, redshank and snipe, and wetland passerines including sedge warbler, reed warbler and Cetti's warbler.
- 5.2 Alresford Pond is another SSSI comprising a relatively large, shallow calcareous lake in the north of the area, formed in the headwaters of the River Arle in the late 12th century as a balancing lake for the River Itchen Navigation. The lake is bordered by extensive fen vegetation, including large reed beds which have gradually encroached into the former open water, whilst the main water body is now shallow and extensively dominated by dense Mare's-tail. The lake as a whole supports a rich aquatic plant community and supports large breeding populations of Reed Warblers and Sedge Warblers and other wetland birds; and relatively large autumn and winter numbers of surface feeding and diving duck. Similar eutrophic lakes are rare in chalk stream valleys and Alresford Pond is considered to be the best example within the county.

- 5.3 Beyond specific designations this landscape character area comprises a variety of habitat types. At the outer peripheries of the area, in the north, arable land with patches of improved grassland and amenity grassland dominates. Adjacent to the river course, habitats become more diverse with a strong riverine influence including marshy grassland/water meadows and base rich fen often with significant floristic diversity and species rich communities. Unimproved and semi-improved grassland becomes common, with neutral grassland dominating in the north and calcareous grasslands more common in the south. There are small patches of woodland associated with the watercourse, this is mainly broadleaved but there is also some patches of parkland and mixed plantations. In the south there is a considerable patch of broadleaved woodland in a mosaic with dry heath/ acid grassland, surrounded by semi-improved neutral grassland, improved grassland and grass sports fields. Nevertheless ancient and semi-natural woodland is limited.
- 5.4 This landscape is covered by the Itchen Valley BOA. The BOA describes the Itchen as a classic chalk stream that is botanically very important with extensive areas of unimproved vegetation along its length. There are also over 70 SINCs, designated mainly for the ancient woodland and unimproved grassland resources which they support. There are also a few wetland SINCs.

6.0 Historic Character

6.1 Archaeology

- 6.1.1 There are Mesolithic artefacts from the valley, particularly from Winchester southwards and through the lowland belt to the coast. This implies that the valleys were exploited in this period. Whilst no Mesolithic sites are currently identified in the Itchen valley there may be undiscovered sites under the later alluvial deposits, as has proved to be the case in other river valleys.
- 6.1.2 There are Neolithic long barrows on the chalk to the northwest and southeast and it seems likely that the proportion of the valley that runs through the chalk forms part of a wider settled and farmed landscape. Settlement and Neolithic pottery (which may be indicative of settled activity) have been found in the valley where it is flanked by chalk. This pattern does not extend into the lowland belt to the south, and the long barrow at the head of the Itchen valley seems to be the very eastern extent of the pattern.
- 6.1.3 In the Bronze Age there was settlement in the Itchen valley, again where it is flanked by chalk between Winchester and the lowland belt. It is also interesting to note that there are two Bronze Age hoards at the point where the valley chalk and valley lowland meet, as though this is genuinely part of the Bronze Age landscape. Whilst there are few Bronze Age burial mounds in the valley itself there are considerable numbers on the chalk flanks of the valley and it is certain that the valley fell within a wider farmed and settled landscape.
- 6.1.4 There were Iron Age settlements in the Itchen Valley reflecting the pattern of the wider chalk hinterland. Winchester is the link between the downs to the northwest and the South Downs and is overlooked by two Hillforts. At a later stage an important Oppida developed in the valley here.

- 6.1.5 In the Roman period the Iron Age settlement at Winchester developed into a Roman civitas Capital and as such became the hub of the local Roman road system. The density of settlement in the valley still reflected the wider chalk hinterland, but Roman settlement is also very apparent down the Itchen valley from Winchester into the lowland zone and on to Southampton, possibly as a result of the Roman road. However, the evidence of settlement in the valley and its hinterland was less pronounced in the east-west stretch of the Itchen towards Alresford.
- 6.1.6 Saxon burials and churches in the river valley, and mediaeval churches and settlement indicate that in the post Roman period the valley became the focus of nucleated settlement that utilised the land beyond the valley itself.
- 6.2 **Historic Landscape**
- 6.2.1 There are three main periods of formal and parliamentary enclosure - the head water valleys to the East of New Alresford, the New Alresford to Winchester section and the southern section to the Southampton unitary boundary.
- 6.2.2 Watermeadows are a consistent historic landscape feature along the length of the Itchen and likely to have originated in the early 17th to 19th centuries around the headwaters below natural springs. They were introduced to encourage early growth of grass, in the Spring and enabled early grazing and an increased number of hay crops. In particular, sheep were grazed on the river valley floor and taken to higher land to be folded and manure the arable, often corn crop. The years between 1640 and 1750 saw a great boom in the construction of meadows¹⁷. The pattern of watermeadow types is mixed but there are trends and differences which can be discussed in the three areas referred to above. With the decline of the watermeadows in the 19th century, the river valley floor has become more wooded. The condition of the surviving water meadows is very varied – about 80% are in condition 3 or worse i.e. extent of survival is only partial¹⁷.
- 6.2.3 East of New Alresford the narrow valley floor shares similarities with the upper parts of the Meon Valley in that the watermeadow types are predominantly ‘simple’ and associated with a significant amount of early formal field enclosure in the 17th century. This area seems to have been favoured for watercress growing, particularly New Alresford, the ‘Watercress line’ providing the transport to the local and London markets.
- 6.2.4 The New Alresford to Winchester section shows a similar pattern on the valley sides of predominantly small formal and some informal enclosures, but generally the enclosure seems to have been a little later than east of New Alresford resulting in small straight sided fields. Like the area to the west the area is associated with historic parks and gardens. The valley floor broadens in this section and the more complex water meadow systems are evident.
- 6.2.5 The section south of Winchester is set within a landscape dominated by early and informal enclosures to the west and south of Colden Common and late parliamentary enclosure to the east in the downland section and in a few isolated parts of the Lowland Mosaic hinterland. The formal enclosure that does exist is typically mid 19th century, predominantly on isolated downland and areas of common. The valley floor is broadest here and the watermeadow systems most

extensive. Within the lowland setting the field pattern is irregular and smaller scale than in the Downland section.

6.2.6 There are numerous parkland landscapes throughout the Itchen Valley. Some originated as Deer Parks such as Avington Park (EH Grade II), Tichborne Park, Worthy Park and North Stoneham Park. Other significant pre 1810 parks include The Grange at Northington (EH Grade II), Old Alresford Park (EH Grade II), Shawford Park, Hinton Ampner, Ovington, Arlebury Park, Twyford Lodge, and Brambridge Park. Some houses may have developed in the late seventeenth century because of Winchester being chosen by Charles II as the site for a new palace and possibly some of the significant avenue plantings at Avington, The Grange, North Stoneham and Brambridge park may date from this period or the beginning of the eighteenth century. A number of parks were enhanced by the creation of lakes in the eighteenth century as at The Grange, Avington Park and North Stoneham. Twyford has some large houses with gardens and grounds and there were clusters of nineteenth century villa landscapes in Kingsworthy and in the suburbs around Winchester. However some have been lost to subsequent development but the surviving features and planting contribute to the character of these areas. Dean Garnier made a particular contribution to this area with his planting in his own garden at the Rectory Bishopstoke and around the Cathedral precincts in Winchester and influenced the planting of other properties in Bishopstoke in particular the Mount. As with the River Test the enjoyment of country sports, hunting, fishing and shooting has been an influential factor in the development of the parks in this area. In Winchester there are some notable public parks.

6.3 **Built Environment**

Lanes in the headwater valleys are typically narrow and twisting and follow the valley floor, with frequent crossing points. Routes up to the surrounding downland are often partially sunken. Roads become progressively wider, straighter and busier further south from the B3047 to the A333 and A335. The M3 south of the Worthys and the railway reduce the rural feel to the Valley but the densely wooded character helps to minimise the extent of noise and visual intrusion into the adjoining landscape.

6.3.1 The Itchen Valley is extremely rich in building and settlement history, indicated by the number of conservation areas and listed buildings. The nucleated settlement pattern is typical of river valley settlement patterns. The historic integrity of the settlement layout, strong and intact historic rural edges and limited modern 19th century growth in most instances adds to this character area's importance. Where the Itchen passes through the chalk settlements they are linear in form and at least 11th century origin lying on either side of the river. Some of the smaller villages appear to be the remnants of shrunken villages³⁷.

6.3.2 The settlement plan form of most of the villages is regular row. There appear to be more irregular row settlements than regular row suggesting the influence of different periods and stages of historic development in the settlement morphology. There are several settlements classified as agglomerations reflecting different historic periods of growth, such as Itchen Abbas, Martyr Worthy and Headbourne Worthy. The 'Worthys' by definition of their place names were thought to be part of an estate landscape the Micheldever Hundred and it seems as though the area

must have been a royal estate of high importance³³. Typically, in the downland section north east of Winchester, the parish shapes are elongated, at right angles to the Itchen and of similar size and link the valley floor with the downs above, often with the church in the settlement close to the valley floor.

- 6.3.3 There are two market towns in the valley, Winchester and New Alresford. New Alresford is located at the junction of the River Alre, Candover Stream and the stream from Bishops Sutton to New Alresford. The town's economy was based on sheep and corn husbandry. The town was densely developed originally and suffered several fires, culminating in a Royal brief from George III to rebuild the town centre. Hence today, the Georgian style architecture, with vibrant coloured rendering and deliberately wide streets of the town centre reflect the need to minimise the further risk of fire. The sheep-corn economic slump of the 19th century was tempered by the success of the local watercress industry and the arrival of the railway.³⁴
- 6.3.4 The villages tend to be bounded by the floodplain for some of their edge and this has ensured an intact historic settlement rural edge boundary. Some settlements such as New Alresford, Bishopstoke and Eastleigh, where the valley side is terraced or less steep, have been subject to substantial and often massive 20th century expansion.
- 6.3.5 The Itchen Valley has a significant concentration of 17th century farmsteads in its upper head water valleys and upper reaches, and their occurrence is fairly frequent, particularly the section from Cheriton to New Alresford. There is a similar density and clustering in the lowland mosaic section. Medieval origin farmsteads occur occasionally. The oldest farmsteads are generally located within settlements, most lying close to the roads. Enclosure by agreement from the 17th century onwards resulted in some farmsteads being located out of villages³⁷. The size of some of the barns is an indication of the success of the adjoining downland. Often two barns were provided on a farmstead and sometimes the second barn was a straddle barn. Barns are typically three or four bays and aisled at least to one side.
- 6.3.6 The Itchen Navigation runs from Woodmill in Southampton to Winchester and was constructed following an Act of Parliament in 1665. Shallow draught barges plied their way through 15 locks. There are numerous historic built features including turf locks, mills such as Wharf Mill, Winchester, Shawford and Allbrook. There were four wharves along the Navigation and bridges such as Blackbridge as well as several canal side houses. The Navigation also seems to have had an important role in maintaining the irrigation of the adjoining watermeadows.
- 6.3.7 Watermills are particularly characteristic. There are about ten surviving mills of late 18th early 19th century origin, most having been listed. The Itchen valley represents the eastern most river valley with cob buildings and although less abundant than the Test they are significant features. There are frequent brick and flint buildings and surviving timber frame buildings. Straw thatch has been the traditional roofing material. There are several longstraw examples in the upper part of the Itchen. High chalk cob walls with thatch or tile cappings can be found occasionally.

EVALUATION

7.0 Forces for Change

1. New housing development mainly small scale and the cumulative impact of small infill sites to settlement morphology but also larger scale extensions.
2. Farmstead conversion to other uses.
3. Pressure from urban fringe use related activities.
4. Recreation pressures and increase visitor draw because of National Park.
5. Climate change in particular increase in frequency of storms, and changes to rainfall and drought patterns.
6. Sand and gravel extraction in the southern section.

KEY QUALITIES AND EFFECTS OF FORCES

7.1 <i>Distinctive pattern of nucleated settlements and associated long thin parishes within outstanding river and downland landscapes. High quality built heritage reflected in the concentration of listed buildings and conservation areas.</i>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
1.2.3	<p>Threats: Development/change in land use around the valley floor that adversely affects the industrial archaeology, remnant water meadows/water management and stream realignments. The importance of the historic landscape settings to the numerous valley floor conservation areas that are vulnerable to change as they fall outside existing boundaries. Farmsteads in the southern part of the area are susceptible to modern conversions. Alteration to built form and extent of nucleated villages by spread of development along the valley floor as at Itchen Abbas. Loss of historic integrity of built features such as narrow stream crossings and bridge structures due to traffic and insensitive highway design responses, insensitive water mill conversions and loss of watermeadow structures.</p> <p>Opportunities: Raise awareness of the historic association and setting the fieldscape provides to settlement in local level assessment work and explore incorporating valued areas of landscape setting into the conservation areas - the Winnall moors area north of Winchester and between the Hockley viaduct and Winchester college are of particular cultural significance. Where feasible explore the extent of Roman influence south of Winchester.</p>
7.2 <i>Notable range of enclosure types and good examples of early irregular formal enclosures, designed landscapes and nationally important watermeadows with strong connections to the higher surrounding land through valley side drove routes.</i>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
1.3.4.5.6	<p>Threats: Boundary adjustment of early irregular rectangular fields around nucleated settlement associated with building plots especially for example around Cheriton and Bishops Sutton. Loss of watermeadows due to sand and gravel extraction in the lowland valley. Urban fringe related land management changes such as proliferation of horticulture fields and formal amenity areas on land traditionally supporting pasture management. Economic viability of the watercress beds in the headwater tributaries.</p>

	<p>Opportunities: Identify the extent of open field systems pre enclosure, the age of the first planned enclosures and where the longest established boundaries and lines in the landscape occur to gain a better understanding of how the farmed landscape evolved. Emphasise the importance of the watermeadows when considering minerals sites and sensitive choice of stocking in agri-environment schemes. Promotion of watercress as locally distinctive and historic Hampshire Fayre.</p>
<p>7.3 <i>An internationally important chalk stream habitat which extends along most of its course and associated nationally important flood plain habitat which flows into the RAMSAR habitat in Southampton Water.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
1.3.4.5.6	<p>Threats: Diffuse source pollution in particular from sediment and in lower stretches, Nitrogen, urban related pollutants and pesticides /sheep dip stretches south of Winchester. Changing salinity levels in lower reaches of the Itchen valley from sea level rise. Greater instance of weather extremes affecting water levels and thus valley floor habitats. Physical damage to habitat from projected increase in tidal flooding.</p> <p>Opportunities: Collect more information on soil erosion and growing lower risk crops particularly for chalk stream habitats which are particularly sensitive to sediment diffuse pollution. Agri-environment schemes targeted at addressing diffuse pollution issues. Opportunity for extensive chalk grassland creation on south facing valley sides from Winchester to Alresford and St Catherine's Hill and Abbotstone. Support the Itchen navigation project which is important in maintaining and enhancing the biodiversity interest in the Winchester to Southampton stretch. Maintain water levels and river valley floor habitat with sensitive abstraction and supply particularly through monitoring and management of surface water run off quality in particular Nutrient, Manure and Crop protection Management Plans. Potential to assist and influence in the Itchen navigation project to conserve enhance and join wetland related habitats and influencing bioengineering design solutions.</p>
<p>7.4 <i>Varied and contrasting valley setting with undeveloped slopes and valley crests, natural beauty in harmony with cultural heritage and high tranquillity close to settlement.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
All	<p>Threats: Development creeping up the valley side and tall structures on the skyline or mineral extraction adversely affecting the tranquillity of the valley in the lowland section. Proliferation of horse grazing paddocks on the valley floor landscape altering the traditional grazing management visually (field subdivision) and sense of extending the urban fringe. Valley crests are particularly vulnerable to development and tall structures particularly in the more open and narrower downland section.</p> <p>Opportunities: Support green infrastructure strategy work which links this area with South Hampshire and initiatives like the Itchen navigation project which promotes access and enjoyment. Maximising the green infrastructure function of Southampton and Eastleigh strategic gap and local gaps between by co-ordinated stewardship and provision of local accessible natural green space. Encourage local level assessment work to identify valued views particularly associated with valley crests, settings to villages and Winchester and natural and historic valley features.</p>