

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE:

Greensand Hills

Unique to East Hampshire



SIMILAR AND ASSOCIATED TYPES HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT AND BOROUGH LEVEL ASSESSMENTS

Basingstoke:	n/a
East Hampshire	Greensand Hills
Eastleigh	n/a
Fareham	n/a
Gosport	n/a
Hart	n/a
Havant	n/a
New Forest	n/a
Rushmoor	n/a
Test Valley	n/a
Winchester	n/a

SIMILAR AND ASSOCIATED TYPES IN NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITY ASSESSMENTS

Dorset	n/a
West Berkshire	n/a
West Sussex	Wealden Greensand
Wiltshire	n/a

KEY IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS AND BOUNDARY DEFINITIONS

- Western extremity of a landscape of prominent hills formed from sandstones and cherts of the Lower Greensand group with a steep escarpment at their inner edge.
- Streams drain the hills in deep ravine-like valleys.
- Significant woodland cover comprising an interlocking mosaic of different woodland types and structures - oak-birch woodland, beech woods, mixed woodland and coniferous plantations on former common land.
- Woodland clearings support heathy unenclosed commons including ecologically rich habitats - open heather heath, acid grassland, bracken, gorse, woody scrub, and oak-birch woodland.
- Marginal land - irregular pattern of fields within clearings and woodland edges support rough grazing and extensive areas and historically, large proportion of open land – now used for Forestry and MoD training
- Narrow, deeply sunken lanes wind up hillsides linking isolated farmsteads.
- Dispersed medieval settlement form with scattered early piecemeal enclosures around the edge of former commons.
- Extensive network of public rights of way and unenclosed commons open to public access and managed access sites.
- Hammer ponds along the foot of the hills associated with the former Wealden iron industry which stretched eastwards.
- Occasional extensive panoramic views from open hill tops through gaps in the woodland.
- Characterised by a sense of enclosure, mystery and remoteness.

PHYSICAL

GEOLOGY, LANDFORM, ELEVATION:

Bedrock and Superficial Geology: Formed from sandstones and chert from the Lower Greensand. Greenish grey rock with hard bands of chert. Historically, an important sandy coloured building stone; known as carstone.

Landform and Elevation: Undulating topography rising to a height of approximately 40m from the gault clay vale to the west.

SOILS TYPES:

Typical soil type pattern: The sandstone geology gives rise to well drained coarse loamy and sandy soils that are locally stony and support heathland. Predominantly 631d and 631c.

FUNCTIONS:

Hydrological function: free draining permeable soils over sandstone with high storage capacity.

Food and Biomass: Supports conifer plantations..

Biodiversity potential: Supports ancient woodland often in the form of hangers, little of which is replanted. High to very high heathland creation opportunities.

LANDCOVER AND LAND USE PATTERN:

The hills are unified by their dense tree cover in the form of conifer plantations, mixed woodland, oak-birch-chestnut broadleaved woodland, beech hangers and chestnut-hazel coppice. Irregular patterns of fields of pasture are found in woodland clearings where the acidic grassland is often used for horse grazing. Where there is impede drainage, marshy grassland and ponds are also features of these clearings.

HYDROLOGY:

Small streams, deeply incised and dammed from the medieval, to produce hammer ponds and a head of water to power iron extraction from the local stone. Localised marshy areas of impeded drainage and high water table.

EXPERIENTIAL**ACCESS AND TRANSPORT ROUTES:**

Steep winding sunken lanes. Numerous tracks a public rights of way leading up from lower farmland areas up to areas of former common and wood pasture. Heathy commons provide the most open access land, some given over to MoD land with managed access availability and Forestry.

TRANQUILLITY:

The hills are highly rural and have a high degree of perceived naturalness dues to the presence of semi natural habitats..

CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS:**BIODIVERSITY**

The Greensand Hills landscape character type is a wooded agricultural landscape. Habitats in the Greensands Hills comprise arable land, improved grassland, woodland and acid grassland associated with heath. Within the agricultural landscape, hedgerows enclose fields providing habitat and connectivity for species to move through the landscape.

Woodland habitats vary, with broadleaved woodland, some of which is ancient semi-natural woodland, mixed woodlands, mixed plantations and coniferous and broadleaved plantations. Plantation woodlands are a feature of this area, particularly sweet chestnut plantations and coniferous plantations. These are often located on former heathlands or former ancient woodland sites. Within such woodlands, rides and openings often still support relict heathland. These relict sites can provide breeding habitat to nightjars and woodlarks. Smaller areas of woodland habitat also exist, including: active coppice, often hazel coppice, with and without standards; trees over grassland, which often represents habitat rich wood pasture, and; scrub, including forestry scrub and dense scrub.

In the North, on Ludshott Common, there is a mosaic of acid grassland and heath habitats, with further areas of continuous dry heath. Continuous areas of bracken exist in the Greensand Hills landscape character type, often associated with the periphery of lowland heath/ acid grassland mosaics. Dry heath and acid grassland mosaic provides an important habitat, supporting typical dry heath species such as ling, bell heather, bristle bent, European and dwarf gorse and fauna such as the sand lizard, stonechat and natterjack toad. Acid grasslands support many species associated with lowland dry heath along with other including cross-leaved heath, moor mat grass, creeping bent and Yorkshire fog grasses.

The Wealden Heaths BOA exists within this landscape character type. This BOA identifies opportunities for lowland dry acid grassland, lowland heath, wet woodland and lowland mixed deciduous woodland creation and enhancement.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

ARCHAEOLOGY

This area has a limited amount of archaeological evidence. It is peripheral to the main Mesolithic activity on the heath. In the Neolithic, Iron Age and Roman periods there is as yet no existing evidence. However, in the Bronze Age there are some burial mounds, and it seems likely that this was a landscape that was exploited for hunting or grazing through time, but that it was not being settled or farmed until quite late

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Evolved from extensive exploitation of common and wood pasture. Lower slopes have early informal enclosure field characteristics of wavy field boundaries frequently bounded by tracks. There are regular small holding enclosures from the 19th and 20th century especially close to settlement. The predominant landscape is open in form given over to modern uses of military training areas, commercial forestry and are managed specifically for nature conservation objectives.

HISTORIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Settlement types by form:

Dispersed, isolated and scattered farmsteads and cottages of low density. Recent 20th century expansion of settlements and detached buildings associated with small holdings

Building materials and type;

Use of carstone – rough block work – generally smaller units and discrete distribution pattern from malmstone of the Upper Greensand a few miles to the west. This sandstone together with red brick and clay tile are the vernacular materials. Buildings tend to be of modest stature.

VISIBILITY

Prominency: Distinctive ridgeline and very prominent from the lowland vale landscape to the west as well as from the main South Down ridge .

Enclosure: There is a mixture of mystery, remoteness, intimacy and enclosure induced by the presence of woodland *and* sense of prospect, by glimpsed occasional views through breaks in the woodland cover and from open heathy commons over the surrounding landscape especially to the east over the Weald and west over to the East Hampshire hangers