

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE:

### Wooded Downland Plateau

Only found in the high downland areas of central east Hampshire.



#### SIMILAR AND ASSOCIATED TYPES HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT AND BOROUGH LEVEL ASSESSMENTS

<b>Basingstoke:</b>	Semi Enclosed Clay Plateau Farmland, Enclosed Clay Plateau Valley Farmland.
<b>East Hampshire</b>	Clay Plateau
<b>Eastleigh</b>	n/a
<b>Fareham</b>	n/a
<b>Gosport</b>	n/a
<b>Hart</b>	n/a
<b>Havant</b>	n/a
<b>New Forest</b>	n/a:
<b>Rushmoor</b>	n/a
<b>Test Valley</b>	n/a
<b>Winchester</b>	Chalk and Clay Farmland (very small overlap with East Hampshire)

#### SIMILAR AND ASSOCIATED TYPES IN NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITY ASSESSMENTS

<b>Dorset</b>	
<b>West Berkshire</b>	n/a
<b>West Sussex</b>	n/a
<b>Wiltshire</b>	Wooded Downland (but also similar to Downland Mosaic types)

## KEY IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS AND BOUNDARY DEFINITIONS

- Elevated gently undulating plateau deep clay over chalk, resulting in poorly drained heavy soils.
- Single extent of this landscape type at the County scale.
- A landscape, unusually with chalk geology, dominated by pasture and horse grazing and few areas of arable.
- High proportion of biodiversity interest is associated with Ancient woodland and survival of small areas of pre 1700 woodland connected by a strong often treed hedgerow network.
- There are few streams.
- Varied periods of field enclosures from irregular wavy boundary and early formal enclosure from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century – particularly fields bounded by tracks and lanes to 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century formal enclosure.
- Very little evidence of pre medieval archaeology and sense that this has always been marginal land.
- Historical associations with clay pits and brick kilns.
- Settlements tend to be small, often hamlets and small villages located at the edge of the character area or in elevated locations within the area with prominent church spires marking settlement location amongst the wooded landscape.
- A landscape of contrasting views, from panoramic and far reaching to very enclosed, but always heavily wooded.

## PHYSICAL

### GEOLOGY, LANDFORM, ELEVATION:

**Bedrock and Superficial Geology:** The chalk in this type is capped by a deep virtually continuous deposit of clay, often with flints. The Seaford and Newhaven Chalk Formations are the predominant underlying bedrock. However it is the almost total cover of clay with flints superficial geology that has the determining effect on type boundary. Whilst the dry valley bottoms are of sand, silt and gravel head deposits.

**Landform and Elevation:** This is not a plateau in the purest sense. The higher areas are broad gently domed, sloping and undulating gradually towards the shallow valleys. Occasionally at the edge with its junction with the underlying chalk there are steep slopes.

### SOILS TYPES:

**Typical soil type pattern:** Fine silty over clay clayey and fine silty often very flinty – predominantly type 581d. The high clay content means the soils were traditionally hard to farm. Well drained flinty fine silty soils occur in the valley bottoms – type 571m.

### FUNCTIONS:

**Hydrological function:** Overlies minor groundwater protection zone, with substantial coverage of predominantly grade 3 source protection zones and occasionally grade 1 and 2

**Food and Biomass:** Predominantly grade 3 agricultural land, and significant areas of land classed as other, associated with woodland.

**Biodiversity potential:** Significant areas of semi natural ancient woodland reversion opportunity. Very little chalk grassland creation opportunity (compared with other downland landscapes) apart from in the dry valleys.

**LANDCOVER AND LAND USE PATTERN:**

A characteristically much higher proportion of improved grassland and less arable than other downland mosaic types and large blocks of woodland, all occurring with relative frequency. In the mixed species hedgerows mature oaks line the narrow lanes. Limited settlement cover comprising dispersed farmsteads and occasional nucleated villages / hamlets.

**HYDROLOGY:**

Impeded drainage compared with other downland landscapes. Very few streams and surface water. Springs often on the fringe of this type.

**EXPERIENTIAL****ACCESS AND TRANSPORT ROUTES:**

There is a lack of open access land compared with other downland landscapes. Comparatively dense network of RoW (bridleways and footpaths) with good internal connections, supplemented by a dense network of winding narrow lanes.

**TRANQUILLITY:**

Elevated and very rural with a strong sense of enclosure and intimacy created by the heavily wooded landscape – very little modern development.

**BIODIVERSITY**

The Wooded Downland Plateau landscape character type is an agricultural landscape comprising mainly arable land and improved grassland with blocks and strips of woodland.

The proportion of improved grassland increases in this landscape character type in the east of the county. Within this agricultural land there are patches of unimproved grassland which varies in character from acidic to calcareous. In the north west, unimproved grassland tends to be acidic and often associated with the presence of heath or acid mires. Calcareous grasslands exists in the north east, and represents a scarce and vulnerable habitat that is internationally valued. Further south, grassland tends to be neutral but has generally been semi-improved. This diversity is unusual.

This is a wooded landscape with woodland blocks and strips of varying size. Woodlands interlink and the woodland type varies. There is broadleaved woodland, some of which is ancient and semi-natural woodland, particularly in the north. There are also broadleaved plantations, mixed plantations and coniferous plantations. Small areas of active coppicing with standards and a small patch of wood pasture and parkland exist in the north. Active coppicing can support a rich flora and butterfly populations which are reliant on regular cutting for the continuation of habitat.

Hedgerow cover is reduced in places in this landscape, creating larger areas of arable or improved grassland and reducing potential species movement through the landscape. It is also very dense in parts where there are small holdings – which is unusual for a downland based landscape and more like a clay lowland one.

Dispersed throughout the type are patches of moderate potential for chalk grassland creation and re-creation but not as expected not as continuous and extensive as other chalk based geology landscapes.

Herriard Wooded Downland Plateau BOA exists within the north of this landscape character

type. There are opportunities to create and enhance the following habitats: lowland calcareous grassland, lowland meadow and lowland mixed deciduous woodland.

## HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

### ARCHAEOLOGY

The clay capping has meant that this area has not been intensively farmed and settled. It is likely to have been highly wooded through the ages. There is only weak evidence of early prehistoric exploitation. Bronze Age burial mounds are peripheral only and Iron Age and Roman settlement is marginal.

### HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

There is a very mixed pattern of enclosures in this landscape. Overall the fieldscape evolved fairly late (post medieval) from a mix of woodland, some early enclosures and open fields near nucleated settlement and substantial areas of common wood pasture and woodland management. The latter is likely to have played a significant role in the medieval and post medieval local economy. Fields are frequently bounded by tracks – presumably leading to common wood pasture and between fields. There are some of the oldest formal enclosures in the northern part where this landscape occurs. There is a sense that this landscape formed a historic divide pre Saxon between the Weald to the east and the downs to the west.

### HISTORIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT

**Settlement types by form:** A lightly populated and settled area. Most historic settlements tend to be located on the periphery of the area. Settlements typically located on locally higher ground and church spires peep above the wooded canopy.

**Building materials and type;**

Historically clay brick and tile and flint – especially on the periphery of this landscape.

## VISIBILITY

**Prominency:** Prominent from surrounding lower landscapes.

**Enclosure:** The significant amount of woodland and treed hedgerows curtails the visibility of this landscape quite dramatically. There are occasional very long views which emphasise the sense of remoteness.

**Public perceptions:** A landscape type which occurs in relatively remote locations and not a particularly strong focus/draw for countryside access and tourists,