

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE:

Woodland and Plantation Heath

Occurs in north east and east Hampshire mainly 19th and 20th century conifer plantations and also the New Forest where it includes 18th century inclosures of deciduous species.



SIMILAR AND ASSOCIATED TYPES HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT AND BOROUGH LEVEL ASSESSMENTS

Basingstoke:	Primary association: Forest on Heath, Mixed Heathland and Forest. Secondary association: Continuous Woodland:
East Hampshire	Wealden Farmland and Heath Mosaic, Greensand Hills
Eastleigh	n/a
Fareham	n/a
Gosport	n/a
Hart	Primary association: Extensive Open Heathland, Mixed Heathland and Woodland, Coniferous Forest on Heath Secondary association: Disturbed Ground, Parkland Estate or Farmland.
Havant	n/a
New Forest	Primary association: Timber Enclosures/Plantations, Ancient and Ornamental Woodland. Secondary association: Ancient Forest Farmlands, (where they appear as areas too small to be defined as a specific different type at the County level assessment)
Rushmoor	Heathland and Forest, Farnborough aerodrome
Test Valley	Heathland
Winchester	n/a

SIMILAR AND ASSOCIATED TYPES IN NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITY ASSESSMENTS

Dorset	Heath/Forest Mosaic (Forest part)
West Berkshire	Forested Sands,
West Sussex	Wooded Ridges
Wiltshire	Forest-Heathland Mosaic

KEY IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS AND BOUNDARY DEFINITIONS

- Predominantly light sandy and sand and gravel based soils, with thin humic surface horizons, often on locally high ground.
- Mostly vast, conifer plantation cover but also broadleaved ancient woodland, scrub and some open heathland.
- Seasonally boggy ground with areas of impeded drainage, plantations often on drier areas.
- Associated with internationally important heathland related habitats such as the Wealden heaths, Thames Basin heaths and New Forest.
- Large areas of open access land with few lanes and roads.
- Often regarded as being highly tranquil.
- Well enclosed wooded landscapes.
- Tend to have associations with large parishes.
- Mineral rich areas for sand and gravel open cast extraction.
- Since the late 19th century these landscapes have been targeted by the M.O.D for training areas.
- Very few settlements- occasional farmsteads, buildings associated with military training in east and north east Hampshire

PHYSICAL

GEOLOGY, LANDFORM, ELEVATION:

Bedrock and Superficial Geology: The sandy bedrock geology is a key determinant in the boundary of this type. In the New Forest the underlying geology formations are composed from the Barton Sands Group of which the Becton and Headon formations are most prevalent. Where this type occurs in north east Hampshire the Bracklesham Group is dominant, of which the Camberley sand is the most prevalent formation. In the Western Weald this type overlies The Lower Greensand Group, composed of the Folkestone, Sandgate, and Hythe formations. The sandstones from these were used for traditional building materials The superficial deposits tend to be sandy and gravelly head and river terrace deposits, often of limited extent in valley bottoms.

Landform and Elevation: The landform generally consists of flat or gently locally elevated undulating plains, or flat to gently sloping plateaux, with shallow, occasionally steep sided valleys. In the Western Weald, the undulating landform of the Lower Greensand is variable, but becomes particularly steep and dramatic in the deeply eroded valleys of the higher ground near the county boundary with Surrey and West Sussex.

SOIL TYPES

Typical soil type pattern: Easily leached, very acid podzolic soils. Naturally very acidic sandy over clayey with peaty surface horizons. North east Hampshire predominantly 634 and 643a. In the New Forest areas the acid soils, which include 643 a and c, 631c and 572j the distribution is mixed with occasional presence of clayey soils. Whilst where this LCT occurs in the Weald it is predominantly 631c.

FUNCTIONS:

Hydrological function: This is of very limited importance in this LCT, apart from the Lower Greensand areas which are predominantly major groundwater vulnerability zones and have low coverage of grade 3 source protection zones.

Food and Biomass: Associated with very low agricultural grade, 4 or 5. There is a strong relationship with woodchip and paper production from conifer plantations, the former is a Biomass fuel source.

Biodiversity potential: Undoubtedly the heathland opportunity function is the major soils function in this LCT.

LANDCOVER AND LAND USE PATTERN:

This is a landscape which is dominated by woodland which can be both plantation and semi natural and ancient in origin. In some cases the ancient semi natural woodland was historically associated with wood pasture. The landscape is mainly unfenced but closely linked with back up grazing land in the adjoining Lowland Mosaic Heath Associated type. However, woodland 'inclosures' are included in this category, these originate from 1700 to 1968 and are generally fenced to keep commoner's livestock out. In the new Forest, some of the Inclosures were opened up in 1969 which lead to dramatic changes to ground flora. This LCT has supported small scale soft sand and sand and gravel extraction, particularly in north east Hampshire. Modern intervention by man in this landscape is a key feature. Late 19th and the first half of the 20th century saw the exploitation of this landscape for conifer plantations and the Forestry Commission manages vast tracts of this landscape. There is a strong link with the M.O.D. as training land especially where this LCT occurs in north east Hampshire and the east Hampshire.

HYDROLOGY:

Locally raised or perched water tables provide intermittent boggy and marshy ground and small areas of standing water. Streams restricted to lower areas and relatively narrow and due to the peaty stream bed, have characteristically dark water.

EXPERIENTIAL

ACCESS AND TRANSPORT ROUTES:

These LCTs provide significant recreational space and places which attract visitors; the Forestry Commission public access promoted sites with interpretation, way marked routes, and other facilities such as car parks are the most popular. There is restricted access on MOD sites. Most of the roads and lanes are unfenced and together with the fact that the majority of land has been designated as open access, gives many different users a vast accessible area. There is a very strong relationship with a very low density road and lane network density and this LCT. Where this type occurs in the New Forest and north east Hampshire there are several disused airfields.

TRANQUILLITY:

This type is consistently mapped at a local scale, as amongst the most tranquil areas, in the CPRE 2006 national mapping. These high levels are attributable to the perceptions of quietness and remoteness and where broadleaved woodland persists there is an overwhelming sense of wildness. The woodland landscape absorbs visitor pressures, visually, very well and imparts a sense of remoteness and intimacy.

BIODIVERSITY

The Woodland and Plantation on Heath landscape character type is a well wooded landscape which supports a range of woodland types.

Coniferous, mixed and broadleaved plantations all occur frequently but there are also natural woodlands: in the New Forest there is a significant proportion of ancient and semi-natural woodland, much of which is pasture woodland, rich in lichen, fungi and bryophyte species. Where the Woodland and Plantation on Heath landscape character type exists elsewhere in Hampshire, the resource of ancient semi-natural woodland is generally lower. An exception to this is Pamber Forest in the north west of the county. Pamber Forest represents an area of continuous ancient woodland linked with patches of trees planted over grassland/ parkland associated with the tradition of woodland management supporting grazing deer, domestic livestock and natural grassland and scrub. This is mainly an acid oak/ birch woodland with smaller areas of coppiced hazel and sweet chestnut as well as areas of open, more heath associated woodland.

Scrub growth, including forestry scrub, dense and scattered scrub, is associated with larger areas of woodland, along with patches of tall herbs and bracken. In the New Forest, bracken stands can support rare plants such as heath lobelia and the only population of wild gladiolus in Britain.

There is a significant heathland character existing in open parts of this type, often associated with woodland habitats. Heathland character varies in this landscape with wet, humid and dry heath all represented. Dry heath support species such as gorse, ling and bell heather whereas wet heath (acid mires) support species such as sphagnum moss, cross leaved heath and purple moor grass. In some areas, particularly in the north of the county, dry heath and acid grassland exist together in a mosaic. Acid grassland in Hampshire supports species such as common bent, wavy hair grass and sheep's fescue. These species are also associated with dry heath.

There are improved grasslands and some arable land associated with this landscape, these tend to exist as isolated patches, rather than continuously.

Three BOAs exist within this landscape character type:

- New Forest BOA identifies opportunities for lowland heath, lowland dry acid grassland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, purple moor grass and rush pastures, lowland meadows and wet woodland habitat creation and enhancement.
- Ringwood Forest BOA identifies opportunities for lowland heath, lowland dry acid grassland and lowland mixed deciduous woodland creation and enhancement.
- Thames Basin Heaths BOA identifies opportunities for lowland dry acid grassland, lowland heath, purple moor grass and rush pastures, lowland meadows creation and

enhancement.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

ARCHAEOLOGY

The weak and acid soils seem not to have been preferred for settlement and farming. There is a general exploitation in the Mesolithic, with a notable concentration in the north east. The presence of burial mounds and absence of settlements in the Bronze Age suggests that this landscape was extensively used, such as for grazing, and the continuation of this pattern in the Iron Age is implied by the hillforts in landscapes without settlement or field systems. Notable exceptions occur with the development of the Iron Age settlement and subsequent Roman town and landscape at Silchester, and the Roman kilns and activity on the west of the New Forest.

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Varying from ancient woodland with wood pasture origins in the New Forest and Weald which have been very stable and unchanged from a historic land management perspective to later inclosures of oak plantations, semi ornamental and secondary woodland particularly in the New Forest. A later trend which predominates in North east Hampshire is conifer plantation from the mid 19th century and throughout the 20th century.

HISTORIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Settlement types by form: Very few settlements- occasional farmsteads, buildings associated with military training in east and north east Hampshire

Building materials and type;

VISIBILITY

Prominency: Often located on locally high ground and plateaux.

Enclosure: Truncated and short views with woodland backdrops. Glimpses at edge of type over lower lying landscapes. Full visual extent of these wooded plantations from surrounding often lower lying / more open landscapes.

Public perceptions: These LCTs provide significant recreational space and places particularly those Forestry Commission sites that promote public access.