NORTH DARENT: DARENT VALLEY

**PHOTOGRAPH**

[Image]

**CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES**

Rural and secluded. Intensively farmed scarp foot with hedges and shaws. Thick belts of trees along valley bottom along river, rail and road. Unenclosed pasture and chalky arable fields in the north - occasional woods and overgrown hedges. Urban influences - horseculture and golf courses.

**LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS**

This open valley is rural and is coherent as an intensively farmed chalk scarp foot with pastures on the higher slopes. In the lower valley, fragmented and mixed land use, in addition to the well-vegetated rail corridor disturbs the visual unity of the area, however, there are few really detracting features. Hedgerows to the upper pastures are also fragmented and wooded ridges are receding. Due to the intensity of the land use, and the changing cultural perspective of land used for amenity use such as a golf course, the cultural integrity of the area is moderate, and the ecological integrity is weak.

Sensitivity

The wide curve of the valley is a dominant element in this area, which is has a mixed use and an intermittent tree cover. Visibility is high. The rural landscape has many historic elements. Exceptional mill villages clustered on the river and farms scattered throughout the valley frequently display vernacular building styles and materials, including flint and brick. Unique features such as a mature beech avenue occur along roads leading up the valley sides. The appeal of the built form and settlement pattern in this area tends to mask the breakdown of the historical landscape features. More recent features such as conifer plantations and embanked transport corridors have introduced the less distinctive elements into the landscape.

**LANDSCAPE ACTIONS**

This landscape requires the restoration of unifying landscape elements to the lower slopes of the valley. This involves the restoration of a strong field pattern around farms and settlements with well-vegetated boundaries. Ecological value may also be restored by ensuring the sensitive management of these hedgerows, and links to enhanced riparian woodland.

**CONSERVE AND RESTORE.**

Conserve the landscape pattern
Conserve and restore hedgerows
Restore riparian vegetation and copses
Restore sympathetic land use within the field system

**SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS**

**Condition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Pattern of elements</th>
<th>Detracting features</th>
<th>Visual Unity</th>
<th>Cultural integrity</th>
<th>Ecological integrity</th>
<th>Functional Integrity</th>
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**Sensitivity**

- Distinctiveness: Unique/Rare.
- Continuity: Historic.
- Sense of Place: Strong.
- Landform: Dominant.
- Extent of tree cover: Intermittent.
- Visibility: High.

**SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

- CONSERVE & RESTORE.
- CONSERVE & CREATE & RESTORE.
- CONSERVE & CREATE.
- CREATE & CONSERVE & RESTORE.
- CREATE & RESTORE & CREATE.
- CREATE.
This forms a small landscape area around and to the east of Canterbury, based on the Thanet Beds, River Gravels Head Brickearths and small areas of Woolwich Beds. It is located from the 20m to above the 40m contour.

The soils associated with the silty drifts of the Brickearths are deep silty soils, affected by groundwater, on which cereals, potatoes and field vegetables were traditionally grown. The soils deriving from the Thanet Beds are deep, better-drained, good quality, silty soils on which most of the fruit and horticultural crops, as well as field vegetables, cereals, potatoes, and some hops can be grown.

There is much evidence of early Roman settlement along the A2 and around Canterbury. Roads first led to Canterbury from the ports of Reculver and Richborough, and thence to London via Watling Street. The Turnpike Trusts helped to raise the funds to establish new roads and maintain the old ones across parish boundaries. The A2 and a Canterbury to Margate route were funded in this way, as well as a link to Dover, although not until after 1780. The Canterbury to Sandwich road was not turnpiked until the 19th century.

To the north of the city, the university buildings are founded within the old parkland of Hales Place.

Nowadays, the small-scale fields and vertical structure of the shelterbelts and orchards gives an unspoilt secluded landscape with a strong sense of enclosure and verdure. This landscape can be viewed most dramatically from the A2 corridor between Dunkirk and Canterbury which gives long and varied views south over the fruit farms towards Chartham Hatch, and on the lanes between the orchards a distinctive, intimate effect is obtained. This landscape is under pressure to farm diversification plans, however, especially for recreation sites such as golf courses with uses such as dry ski slopes being proposed on old orchard land.

Elsewhere, the spread of villages such as Chartham Hatch has despoiled the landscape by unattractive 'fringe' uses and bland housing. East of Canterbury this Fruit Belt has been eroded more seriously. West of the Nailbourne up to Littlebourne there are many redundant shelterbelts but few orchards survive; the red-soiled fields being prepared for more profitable arable or horticultural use.

On the edge of this character area and the Kent Downs AONB, Patrixbourne is a delightful village in a Conservation Area.

West of Littlebourne, running down to the Great Stour and the outskirts of Canterbury is the ghost of a park that used to stretch from St Augustine's Abbey on the eastern outskirts of Canterbury to the small port at Fordwich. This area is still known as Old Park and much of the land remains open.

In this area too are the woodlands at Trelleypark Wood, east of Fordwich, which have been identified with one of the parks listed as 'Wickham' in the Domesday Book and which may represent the oldest emparked land in England. By Henry VI's reign it had already been disparked, however. These woodlands, associated with a stream and its adjoining carr, are a large ancient woodland complex on the ridges and valleys to the east of Canterbury. Although a mix of chestnut coppice, conifer plantation and richer coppice with standards, it has a rich and varied ground flora.

The setting of Canterbury is an area of high landscape value because of its attractive valley side topography, views to the cathedral and rural character. The Pilgrim's Way approaches Canterbury within this character area. Pressure for development beyond the urban confines of Canterbury into this landscape are acute.

The road capabilities around Canterbury are often stretched to meet the needs of an excessive volume of traffic. This problem has formerly resulted in proposals being made for alternative new vehicular routes around Canterbury, but traffic congestion may now have to be addressed in more innovative ways.
Northern Kent Fruit Belt

Functional Integrity: Weak.
Sense of Place: Weak.
Visibility: High.
Condition: Moderate.
Sensitivity: Moderate.

Summary of Actions
Conserve the scale and pattern of settlement
Conserve views to the cathedral
Conserve patterns and management of field enclosure

Context
Regional: North East Kent

Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
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Sensitivity

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Landscape Analysis
The landscape has a coherent pattern of elements: well enclosed and well-managed fields with farmsteads and oasts over the rolling landscape. This pattern is interrupted by some large areas of arable cultivation and post and wire fencing, but there are few other visual detractors. The intensity of the fruit and arable farming weakens the ecological interest of the farmland, which has limited woodland, few hedges or any other opportunity for semi-natural habitat. Culturally, there are areas which exhibit an intact framework of well-maintained hedges and shelter belts around large farmsteads and oasts. The area is considered to be in moderate condition.

Landscape Actions
Conserve historic settlement patterns and isolated settlements on minor ridges in the landscape.
Conserve the enclosure and well-managed attributes of the medium scale field pattern.
Create small woodlands to link with existing copses.

Characteristic Features
Well enclosed, medium scale field pattern. Rolling, quiet, picturesque. Traditional Kentish elements such as hops and orchards are characteristic. Well managed, simple form. The edge of the Canterbury urban area influences views, landuse and circulation. The views towards the Cathedral are very important. Outlying villages are quiet and rural, but with an increasing suburban influence.

Summary of Analysis

Pattern of elements: Coherent.
Detracting features: Few.
Cultural integrity: Variable.
Ecological integrity: Weak.
Functional Integrity: Weak.
The landscape of North Sheppey has a particularly distinctive character brought about mainly as a result of its coastal island situation. A sense of remoteness is accentuated by the physical separation of the island from the mainland by the Swale and is strongest in the more rural eastern part of the island. This is coupled with a pervasive sense of exposure which results from the lack of shelter and elevated, coastal position. The atmosphere can be both invigorating and bleak, depending upon weather conditions.

Geology has a significant influence on the character of North Sheppey, which is underlain by a belt of London Clay giving it a distinctive, elevated relief above the surrounding alluvial marshes. The ground rises quite rapidly from the marshes to the south and west and forms an area of complex topography before dropping steeply to the sea on its northern side. These slumped, clay cliffs are of significant geological and landscape interest. At its western end the landform of Furze and Barrows Hill, behind which the ground drops down to an area of low-lying alluvium which is also included within the local character area.

Traditionally, land use was predominantly pasture with occasional orchards but the area is now mainly under arable cultivation. The combined effects of Dutch Elm Disease, coastal exposure and the removal of hedgerows and orchards have all contributed to a very sparse covering of trees which gives the landscape an open and exposed character. Pockets of scrub woodland (such as on Furze Hill and around Brambledown), occasional shelterbelts of poplar around existing or former orchards and overgrown hedgerows (mainly in sheltered valleys within the more complex relief to the north) provide some localised enclosure and shelter.

Urban and industrial development to the north-west has had a significant influence on landscape character and much of the development is visually exposed and poorly integrated. An isolated pocket of remnant marshland separates Sheerness from Minster and is mostly under grazing management, although under extreme pressure from the influence of urban/industrial expansion. Elsewhere, settlements, hamlets and farms mostly retain a predominantly rural character, but some insensitive residential and holiday development is poorly integrated and has an intrusive, sometimes urbanising effect.

Many wildlife habitats have been lost to intensive agriculture or urban/industrial development but important areas of remnant marshland between Sheerness and Minster provide a suitable habitat for birds, including waders, wildfowl and raptors, the presence of which contribute significantly to the more ‘natural’ landscape qualities of these areas. These marshes are included within the North Kent Marshes Environmentally Sensitive Area, and Minster Marshes and parts of the cliffs along the northern shoreline are designated as non-statutory sites of nature conservation importance.

This area has strong associations with maritime and naval history, in particular the naval towns of Sheerness and Queenborough. Relics of the medieval salt making industry in this area can still be found today.
NORTH SHEPPEY

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS
The north of the island supports much arable cultivation and very little tree, hedgerow or other semi natural habitat. The marshes have some ecological interest but also attract amenity and suburban use such as golf course and pony paddocks, therefore despite some sites of note, the area does not function as a strong ecological network. The location and form of traditional hilltop farms are obscured by residential development. In general, built development has a negative impact. Rural heritage features of hedged field boundaries and woodland are poor-this area has suffered a significant loss of tree cover due to Dutch elm disease.

Sensitivity
Views are open across the exposed hillside and over the flat marshland. The varied land form is apparent in the view and there is very little tree cover. Visibility is therefore high. Settlement is overwhelmingly recent in form. There are many new residential areas, and these urban edges are very visible in the landscape view. Although there are notable heritage sites such as the Minster, the time depth is not apparent in the rural landscape; the most characteristic features are of recent origin. The sensitivity of this area is considered to be moderate.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Restore integrity to the remaining farmland: create narrow cross-contour shaws linked to wooded ridge tops.
Restore woodland to hilltops, and hedgerow with mature standards to the road which delineates the base of the slopes and the edge of the marshes.
Create urban edges which promote intermittent views of built development beyond. Create urban planting to soften wide views of hillside developments. Restore open views across the marshland.
Create and restore ecological networks within the low-lying areas in accordance with inherent drainage patterns.

CONTEXT
Regional: Thames Gateway

Condition
Condition

Pattern of elements: Coherent.
Detracting features: Many.
Visual Unity: Interrupted.
Cultural integrity: Variable.
Ecological integrity: Weak.
Functional Integrity: Weak.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

REQUIRE
CONSERVE
CREATE
RESTORE

RESTORE AND CREATE.
Restore woodland to ridge tops
Restore mature standards and hedgerow to the highway
Encourage urban planting within built development
Create urban edges
Restore the prominence of heritage features in the view
Restore and simplify selected open views on the marshland
Restore ecological networks within the remnant marshland. Delineate edges between marshes and higher land by enhancing inherent characteristics.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

View across the exposed hillside and over the flat marshland. The varied land form is apparent in the view and there is very little tree cover. Visibility is therefore high. Settlement is overwhelmingly recent in form. There are many new residential areas, and these urban edges are very visible in the landscape view. Although there are notable heritage sites such as the Minster, the time depth is not apparent in the rural landscape; the most characteristic features are of recent origin.

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Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
This character area is a gently undulating landscape characterised by extensive coppiced broadleaf and mixed plantation woodlands, such as Orlestone, linked by small to medium sized fields and paddocks. Hornbeam can be dominant as the coppice layer with wood anemones carpeting the ground in spring, and conspicuous ditch and bank at the laneside.

As the land rises towards the south and south east, it begins to divide into a distinct pattern of ridges and valleys until the woodlands open out at the edge of the Old Romney shoreline, giving spectacular views over Romney Marsh as far as Dungeness. The land drops steeply down through an open arable landscape towards the expansive low-lying flat farmlands of the marsh and Shirley Moor.

The landscape between Woodchurch, Kenardington and Appledore is more undulating with a smaller scale landscape pattern similar to the High Weald due to the underlying Tunbridge Wells sands. Settlement is scattered and consists mainly of farmsteads and small suburban-style villages such as Bromley Green and Shadoxhurst that cluster round a few vernacular buildings of more historic origins. Appledore stands out architecturally in the locality, but with the old shoreline too marked by a number of churches of historic origin. The Royal Military Canal is a remarkable historic feature at the edge of the character area, valued now as much for the wildlife it supports.

Generally the feeling is of a remote and unpopulated landscape. The area has a less prosperous ambience than the London-orientated western Low Weald, with occasional vernacular buildings in poor repair.

The traditional land use pattern has been affected by mechanisation to give the large hedgeless fields on the south-east slopes, by the creation of conifer plantations within the broadleaf woods and through the linear creep of development in the past from the few villages along the otherwise unspoilt lanes. Rusting, overgrown cars are testimony to a time when dumping in the woodlands was locally a problem. A strong sense of concord is maintained in most places, due to the enclosure provided by the large tracts of woodland and many small fields and lanes at their margins. Where this pattern breaks down on the south facing slopes a different although bleaker identity is in harmony with the cultivated and open landscapes of Romney Marsh.
### OLD ROMNEY SHORELINE WOODED FARMLANDS

#### CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Flat, or gently undulating with distinctive ridges and valleys dropping down to Romney Marsh. Large broadleaf or mixed woodlands. Small-scale pattern of pastoral fields. Scattered settlement. Historic churches along the Old Romney Shoreline. Remote feel.

#### LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

**Condition**
- **Good**
  - REINFORCE
  - CONSERVE & REINFORCE
  - CONSERVE
- **Moderate**
  - CREATE & REINFORCE
  - CONSERVE & CREATE
  - CONSERVE & RESTORE
- **Poor**
  - CREATE
  - RESTORE & CREATE
  - RESTORE

**Sensitivity**
- Low
- Moderate
- High

**Pattern of elements:** Coherent.
**Detracting features:** Few.
**Visual Unity:** Unified.
**Cultural integrity:** Good.
**Ecological integrity:** Strong Network.
**Functional Integrity:** Very Strong.

**Condition**
- **High**
  - ENCLOSURE
  - ENHANCE
  - CONSERVE
  - RESTORE
  - REINFORCE

**Sensitivity**
- Low
- Moderate
- High

**Distinctiveness:** Characteristic.
**Continuity:** Ancient.
**Sense of Place:** Strong.
**Landform:** Apparent.
**Extent of tree cover:** Enclosed.
**Visibility:** Low.

#### LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Conserve the woodland cover.
Reinforce the low intensity and diversity of land use within small farming areas.
Reinforce wooded areas to arable areas.
Reinforce local vernacular detail in built form - identify emergent styles.
Conserve the narrow winding characteristics of highways with wide verges, shallow ditches and well maintained hedges.

#### SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
**CONSERVE AND REINFORCE.**
- Conserve woodland characteristics - broadleaf with oak standards
- Conserve highway characteristics
- Reinforce local vernacular built form
- Reinforce wooded edges
- Reinforce small scale non-intensive land use

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**Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie**
OXNEY: LOWER ROTHER VALLEY

OXNEY
The final retreat of the sea, and the gradual draining of the resultant mud-flats, has left a distinctive landscape here. The flat Rother levels contrast strongly with the ancient cliffs, which rear up from the edge of the floodplain whilst the Isle of Oxney seems almost to float above the smooth green levels which surround it. The valley bottom is punctuated by gnarled willows and thorns, and the scrubby bushes which cling to the edges of the fields give a wild, remote feel to the area. There is an almost unkempt appearance to this valley, reinforced by the remnant hedges, the leaning post and wire fences and the reed filled ditches which divide the fields from each other. In winter, these elements combine to produce a bleak, untamed landscape, intensified by the bitter winds and sometimes horizontal rain, which can lash across the valley. The lack of a coherent structure to the landscape, provided elsewhere in the High Weald by the strong network of hedge and shaw, extends across the lower slopes of the valley and the Isle of Oxney, only gradually re-asserting itself around Northiam, Ewhurst Green and Wittersham. Oxney itself seems to remain an island, isolated by the farmland which now surrounds it, instead of sea. It is a strange patchwork of tiny landscapes, where neglected pastures and overgrown hedges in the west contrast with large arable fields, edged by post and wire in the north. The dense hedgerows and brick and tile houses, typical of the rest of the AONB, are in evidence around Wittersham, whilst a few small orchards still pattern the gentle slopes. From the edges of the 'island', long views open out across the levels to the ridges beyond.

LOWER ROTHER VALLEY
Oxney lies within the Lower Rother Valley character area.

The Lower Rother Valley runs east from Robertsbridge to Rye, stretching as far north as Tenterden and as far south as Peasmarsh. The Rother was one of the most important rivers in the High Weald, and still dominates the eastern end of the AONB.

This area has historically been subject to alternate flooding and silting and the river has changed its course several times over the centuries. During the Roman occupation, tidal estuary and mudflats extended far up the valley and the Isle of Oxney was a true island. The ancient sea cliffs at Rye, Playden and Oxney are a constant reminder that here, as in Brede, the shape and role of this landscape has changed dramatically over time. The river levels are drained by a network of small ditches and flecked by patches of scrub and stunted trees. Although the Brede and Rother valley floors contain most of the best agricultural land in the AONB, the intensively farmed, arable fields are still interspersed with considerable areas of sheep grazed pasture. The gentle open slopes which rise up onto the enclosing ridges support a network of large, regular fields, surrounded either by overgrown hedgerows closely trimmed, gappy hedges and sporadic trees. Both the river levels and the valley slopes have a bleak, wind-swept feel, despite the intensive agriculture.

Further west, around Bodiam and Sandhurst, the valleys close in. Despite the large fields, there are more small woodlands and thicker hedges, although many are unmanaged and in decline. The terracotta coloured soils of the Hexden valley still support occasional orchards and most of the red-brick or timber framed farms have a pair of redundant oasthouses. In the villages, such as Northiam and Sandhurst, weatherboarding is common, whilst very occasionally a thatched cottage can still be found, a reminder of the days when reeds from the river-levels were a valued roofing material.

The Lower Rother Valley is a wide, flat bottomed valley, whose rolling valley slopes are drained by small ghylls. At the mouth of the valley, where it opens onto Walland Marsh in the east, the Isle of Oxney forms a gentle mound on the flat levels, around which the River Rother and the Reading Sewer flow.
OXNEY: LOWER ROTHER VALLEY

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Sandstone ridge "island" surrounded by floodplain. Wild, remote, bleak and unkept feel. Long views. Small scale orchards and pasture on "island". Large arable fields, scrub willows and thorns, post and wire fencing on levels.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS
The Isle of Oxney and the lower floodplain have coherent landscape patterns based on small-scale enclosures on the upland, opening out to larger arable fields with ditches on the floodplain. The visual unity is interrupted by gaps in over-mature and unmanaged hedgerow, and the dis-use of ditches. The few visual detractors include some small but intrusive settlement edges and WW2 bunkers. The extent of semi-natural habitats ranges from woodlands to wetlands and pastoral grasslands, but is modified by some large areas of intense arable. The condition of field boundaries and tree cover varies. Heritage ponds are not widespread but remain a notable feature. Built form has a moderate positive impact due to its small scale and occasional vernacular detail. The area is considered to be in good condition.

Sensitivity
The limited woodland has ancient qualities; standard oak and hornbeam coppice are prevalent. Most key elements, however, have an historic time depth such as the hedgerow with standards and lines of pollard willows. The reclaimed floodplain is also historic. These features contribute a distinctiveness and continuity which results in a moderate sense of place. The landform is apparent and enclosure of views is intermittent. Visibility is therefore moderate.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Conserve the small scale, pastoral influences of upland landscape, replanting broadleaf woodland to promote the enclosure of fields and of the edges of settlement. Encourage the replanting and long term management of hedgerow with standards. Reinforce the visual impact and ecological interest of the lowland ditches by extending non-intensive management to the ditch margins. Reinforce the heritage features of pollard willows by replanting on embankments.

CONSERVE AND REINFORCE.
Reinforce woodland on the upland areas
Conserve the small scale of the uplands
Reinforce hedgerow with standards on upper slopes
Reinforce mature/pollard planting on water courses
Reinforce the diversity of vegetation in ditches

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

PREVIOUS <<

Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
PEMBURY: CENTRAL HIGH WEALD

This is a small, secretive pocket of woodland, mature parkland and pasture. Despite the proximity of Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge, there are surprisingly few houses, but the presence of the towns is felt through the roar of the traffic on the A21, which slices through this area, and the looming industrial estates which stalk the northern boundary of the AONB.

Nevertheless, the thick woodland cloaking the little valleys below Southborough and the gentle sweeps of parkland around Pembury Hill give this area a remote, leisured quality. The small scale of the landscape and the frequent thicket of laurel and rhododendron, allow the area to absorb considerable numbers of people walking or cycling, without detracting from the peacefulness. Along the north-eastern boundary, towards Tudely and Capel, the fields flatten out into the Medway valley and coppiced woodlands give way to Kentish orchards.

CENTRAL HIGH WEALD

Pembury lies within the larger character area of the Central High Weald.

The Central High Weald surrounds Tunbridge Wells, which exerts a strong influence on the neighbouring countryside. It extends south to Crowborough, west to Chiddingstone and east to Pembury and Bayham.

This is the landscape of the great estates, such as Penshurst Place, where dignified expanses of parkland impart a genteel appearance to the countryside. Much of this landscape can be seen from the Mark Cross to Tunbridge Wells ridge, from where the overall impression is of large commercial woodlands and unintensive pastures, interspersed with sweeps of parkland and occasional orchards. Along the northern reaches of the Medway valley beyond Penshurst, the woodlands are replaced by wide arable fields, whilst the steep valleys around Speldhurst and Bidborough are a patchwork of tiny meadows and strips of ghyll woodland.

Despite the peaceful, timeless quality of this landscape, this was an industrial district in the later Middle Ages, with major iron-workings at Eridge Park and Bayham and, in the 19th century, paper mills at Chafford. Many of the houses, especially those belonging to the large estates, are built of local sandstone, whilst the farms which nestle into the valley slopes off the ridge are frequently of warm red brick and tile, sometimes partially timber-framed. Many of these farmsteads are actually a group of several buildings, including barns and cottages, where several farm workers' families would have lived. In the 18th and 19th centuries, when hops became widely used in beer, almost every farm in this area had a hop garden. Nowadays they have almost all gone, but the red-tiled, white-cowled oast-houses still haunt the farmyards and in springtime, wavering, green arms of naturalised hops still reach up from the hedges, as if searching for the long-lost hop-poles.

Tunbridge Wells, founded in 1606 around one of the local iron-rich springs, has gradually influenced the character of this part of the High Weald. As wealth and employment have been created, so the pressure on this landscape has increased. Developers are eager to build on the surrounding fields, commuters use the tiny lanes to avoid the busy main roads and the local population find recreation and escape amongst the gentle slopes of this area.

Tunbridge Wells lies on a ridge. Around the edges of this ridge, especially at Speldhurst and Bayham, steep ghylls descend into the more open, rolling valleys of the River Medway and River Teise. In the north beyond Penshurst, the landscape flattens out towards the valley of the River Eden.

Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
PEMBURY: CENTRAL HIGH WEALD

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Ridges and small valleys. Wooded valleys, mature parkland and pasture. Coppice woodland, thickets of laurel and rhododendron. Some orchards. Noise and influence of A21

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
The area is a heavily wooded, unified landscape, interrupted by the relatively narrow corridor of the A21. The functional integrity of the area is strong; acid woodland reflects the soil conditions, and rural heritage features are in good condition although some estate farmland is variable and some of the open ridgetops sustain arable cultivation. Landscape use is not intensive. The condition of the landscape is therefore very high.

Sensitivity
Woodland is a dominant element which has an ancient time-depth and also has the more recent characteristics of plantation woods and rhododendron. The landscape pattern is historic and includes woodland estate roads and isolated farms and large houses. The vernacular use of yellow sandstone is distinctive, but not widespread. The scale and detail of historic buildings contributes to the continuity of the landscape. The ridged landform is apparent in the view, but views are generally well enclosed. Visibility is therefore low and the landscape is considered to be of low sensitivity.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Reinforce the enclosure and density of woodland, ensuring that farmland is small-scale and non-intensive.
Reinforce the time-depth of the area by encouraging the planting and management of broadleaf acid woodland.
Reinforce the dominant woodland characteristics along the road corridor.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Pattern of elements: Unified.
Detracting features: Some.
Cultural integrity: Good.
Ecological integrity: Moderate.
Functional Integrity: Strong.

Sensitivity
Low.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

REINFORCE.
Reinforce broadleaf woodland
Reinforce the ecological bases
Resist wider impact of the road corridor
Reinforce the use of vernacular materials and local detail in building

CONTEXT
Regional: High Weald AONB

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low moderate high

Sensitivity

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Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babbie
PENShurst: CENTRAL HIGH WEALD

The influence of the River Medway pervades this area. The tiny tributaries which feed into the river have eroded the sandstone ridge around Speldhurst and Southborough. Most of this land is unintensively grazed and woodland is largely confined to the deep ghylls which dissect the edges of the ridge. This area is criss-crossed by a number of small lanes, lined by villas and cottages creeping out into the countryside. As the Medway passes Penshurst, it joins the River Eden. The valley widens out and the surrounding land gradually flattens, encouraging arable cultivation, in large fields, enclosed by trimmed hedges. In the north, around Bidborough, magnificent views stretch across Kent to the Greensand Ridge and North Downs.

This is a densely populated area of small villages and farmsteads, where the local sandstone is frequently used for building. The combination of available local materials and the patronage of the local estates during the 19th century, produced a distinctive style of sandstone and decorative timber-framing, often embellished with ornamental estate emblems and date-stones.

The same sandstone protrudes naturally around the western edge of Tunbridge Wells, ranging from the dramatic outcrops at High Rocks to small patches of exposed stone along the roadside, hidden under a tumble of gorse and bracken. In the north and west, away from the sandstone ridge, timber-framing and tile-hanging are more common and the valley slopes are dotted with red-brick oast-houses and weatherboarded barns.

CENTRAL HIGH WEALD

Penshurst lies within the larger character area of the Central High Weald.

The Central High Weald surrounds Tunbridge Wells, which exerts a strong influence on the neighbouring countryside. It extends south to Crowborough, west to Chiddingstone and east to Pembury and Bayham.

This is the landscape of the great estates, such as Penshurst Place, where dignified expanses of parkland impart a genteel appearance to the countryside. Much of this landscape can be seen from the Mark Cross to Tunbridge Wells ridge, from where the overall impression is of large commercial woodlands and unintensive pastures, interspersed with sweeps of parkland and occasional orchards. Along the northern reaches of the Medway valley beyond Penshurst, the woodlands are replaced by wide arable fields, whilst the steep valleys around Speldhurst and Bidborough are a patchwork of tiny meadows and strips of ghyll woodland.

Despite the peaceful, timeless quality of this landscape, this was an industrial district in the later Middle Ages, with major iron-workings at Eridge Park and Bayham and, in the 19th century, paper mills at Chafford. Many of the houses, especially those belonging to the large estates, are built of local sandstone, whilst the farms which nestle into the valley slopes off the ridge are frequently of warm red brick and tile, sometimes partially timber-framed. Many of these farmsteads are actually a group of several buildings, including barns and cottages, where several farm workers’ families would have lived. In the 18th and 19th centuries, when hops became widely used in beer, almost every farm in this area had a hop garden. Nowadays they have almost all gone, but the red-tiled, white-cowed oast-houses still haunt the farmyards and in springtime, wavering, green arms of naturalised hops still reach up from the hedges, as if searching for the long-lost hop-poles.

Tunbridge Wells, founded in 1606 around one of the local iron-rich springs, has gradually influenced the character of this part of the High Weald. As wealth and employment have been created, so the pressure on this landscape has increased. Developers are eager to build on the surrounding fields, commuters use the tiny lanes to avoid the busy main roads and the local population find recreation and escape amongst the gentle slopes of this area.

Tunbridge Wells lies on a ridge. Around the edges of this ridge, especially at Speldhurst and Bayham, steep ghylls descend into the more open, rolling valleys of the River Medway and River Teise. In the north beyond Penshurst, the landscape flattens out towards the valley of the River Eden.

Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
PENSHURST: CENTRAL HIGH WEALD

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Sandstone ridge with pasture flattening to open valley with arable cultivation.
Views north to Greensand ridge and North Downs. Small villages and farmsteads.
Buildings of local sandstone. Estate buildings.
Red brick oasts and weatherboarded barns.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
There is an intact landscape pattern with a strong woodland element and few visual
detractors. The volume of integrated broadleaf woodland, shaws, hedgerows and streams is
ecologically robust. Culturally, the pattern of small villages runs along the ridges amidst
steep rolling pastures. Farms are found on the slopes. The arable land is found along more
gentle slopes and retains many mixed hedgerows, although some of the estate farmland is
opening out. The condition of this landscape is considered to be very high.

Sensitivity
The landscape has a strong time-depth due to the small-scale enclosed pastures and
mature and varied broadleaf woodland. In addition to this, the vernacular details in buildings
are distinctive. Despite the viewpoints to the Greensand and North Downs, it is well-enclosed with many small shaws and wooded lanes, and visibility is generally low.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Conserve broadleaf woodland cover, ensuring that long-term management retains the
mature element of the woodlands.
Conserve small shaws and wooded edges to roads.
Retain the pastoral use of the land.
Conserve the small-scale rural pattern and vernacular details in built form. This ensures that
the landscape retains a strong time-depth.
Reinforce the hedgerow network in the lower fields.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE AND REINFORCE.
Conserve the frequency of small broadleaf woodlands
Conserve wooded edges to roads
Conserve small-scale field patterns
Reinforce hedges

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Context
Regional: High Weald AONB

Condition
Pattern of elements: Unified.
Detracting features: Few.
Visual Unity: Strongly Unified.
Cultural integrity: Good.
Ecological integrity: Strong Network.
Functional Integrity: Very Strong.

Sensitivity
Distinctiveness: Unique/Rare.
Continuity: Ancient.
Sense of Place: Very Strong.
Landform: Apparent.
Extent of tree cover: Enclosed.
Visibility: Low.

حنط للعربية: penhurst_central_high_weald_page.jpg

prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
PETHAM: EAST KENT DOWNS

PETHAM
To the east of the Stour Valley is an intimate, remote landscape of long, rolling valleys and widely scattered farms. Blocks of deciduous woodland crown the narrower ridges or sweep along the upper valley slopes, providing a sense of enclosure and emphasising the curving landform. There are frequent tantalising views into secluded coombes and extensive areas of traditional chalk grassland, such as Winchcombe Downs, supporting colonies of rare orchids and butterflies.

Although the hedgerow network is more fragmented and generally less diverse than around Elham, many hedges are overgrown or contain significant numbers of hedgerow trees, producing strong lines of vegetation across the otherwise smooth folds of the valleys. Many of the valley sides have a narrow strip of rough grassland, scrub or woodland along their steepest slopes, where cultivation has never been possible. Known locally as shaves, they are often rich wildlife havens and provide a valuable contrast with the otherwise intensively farmed valley landscapes.

This was once an area of widespread hop cultivation, but although frequent redundant oast houses dot the landscape, there are almost no hop gardens still in production.

EAST KENT DOWNS
Petham lies within the larger character area of the East Kent Downs.

This is a remote, peaceful area of downland, which ends in the dramatic white cliffs of Dover. Above the southern scarp, the broad back of the chalk hills is furrowed by a series of long narrow, parallel valleys running north east. In these dry valleys, the valley bottom streams or nailbournes are underground, only flowing at the surface occasionally, during very wet winters.

The western valley systems are branching and intricate. The steep, rounded slopes are crossed by thick shaws or overgrown hedges, often swathed in the white seed-heads of wild clematis. Large arable fields on the ridge-top plateau are visually contained by long strips of deciduous, ancient woodland along the valley sides or ridge-top conifer forests, west of Elham. Towards the coast, however, the landscape becomes more exposed. There is less woodland and the strongly linear pattern of parallel ridges and valleys is more distinct.

The countryside here is criss-crossed by a maze of tiny, sunken, one-track lanes. Houses are widely scattered and many villages, traditionally built of local flint, brick and tile, are still little more than a church, a manor and a pair of farm cottages - an important characteristic of this landscape. However, this area is best known, not for its beautiful dry valleys or remote churches, but for its long association with the defence of the realm The "White Cliffs of Dover" and the widely scattered military remains, such as pill-boxes and gun-emplacements, still exert a strong cultural influence on the landscape.
CONTEXT

Regional: Kent Downs AONB

Condition

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Sensitivity

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SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

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Sensitivity

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SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE.

Conserve settlement patterns, avoiding ridgeline development
Conserve woodland cover and localised characteristics
Conserve grasslands
Conserve shaws
Conserve highway characteristics of narrow cross-contour and ridgeline roads

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Conserve woodland cover, ensuring that the characteristic species mix (beech, oak, ash, yew) hazel coppice and beech standards remain distinctive features.
Conserve beech avenues on cross-contour roads and promote their replanting to become a more frequent feature.
Conserve the settlement patterns, avoiding ridgeline development.
Conserve shaws and apply long term management to ensure their continuance.
Conserve and enhance species rich grasslands.
Conserve hedgerows along roads.

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Intimate, remote, long rolling valleys.
Deciduous woodland on ridges.
Chalk grassland/rough grass shaws/rare species.
Overgrown hedgerows with many trees.
Scattered farms and redundant oasts.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

There is a coherent pattern of strong landform and wooded ridges and grasslands. The few visual detractors involve development on the ridgeline and suburban land uses. Ridgeline woods, hedges and shaws provide the moderate network of semi-natural habitats within intensive arable and pasture land. Heritage features of woodland and hedges/shaws vary in condition; hedgerows are declining in use and many are over-mature. Built form has a moderate positive impact overall as large farms with many outbuildings are the slightly negative influence.

Sensitivity

There is a distinct settlement pattern of villages within valleys and large farms on the plateau. Built form itself is also distinct and includes some minor estate houses. Many such characteristics are historic, but the broadleaf woodland and the highways have a greater time depth. There is a moderate local sense of place. The sensitivity of this area is considered to be high, mainly due to the dominant landform and the subsequently high visibility.
This local area is centred on the land to the north of the Rhee Wall known as ‘Romney Marsh proper.’ It constitutes the calcareous clayey marine alluvium laid down in the tidal lagoon which persisted for a few hundred years at the centre of the emergent grazing marsh.

Soils are stoneless silty clay, and are extremely fertile, Grade 1 agricultural land. Drainage ditches transect the farmland as in other areas of the marsh, but are visually subdued where they are rigorously cleared and surrounded by cereal crops. The effect of the reduction in visible boundaries in the landscape is the appearance of vast arable fields, despite the actual field sizes being moderate. Crops are predominantly cereals and legumes with a wide seasonal variation in colour. There is a small proportion of pasture which supports sheep.

The old villages of Burmarsh, Ivychurch, St Mary in the Marsh are located in the adjacent character area on the edge of the mixed farmlands. The only village to be founded in this area is Newchurch, whose name indicates that it was ‘new’ to the surrounding settlements in earlier times. It is situated on sandier land, surrounded by sheep pasture, and this pattern is repeated with the outlying scattered farmsteads, such as Pickney Bush Farm and Willow Farm. Roads are narrow and winding, generally following old sea defences and ditches, and tend to run in a north-south direction across the area, possibly indicating lines of reclamation drawn between the existing areas of dry land to either side. Blocks of field patterns are contained within the road framework.

Farmsteads are typically single 20th century houses with a cluster of large agricultural buildings. They are a main detractor in the landscape.

Tree cover is rare, limited to the groups of mature trees which typically surround settlements. There are vestiges of pollard willows along some ditch lines; often a single willow is the only survivor of what may have been a more widespread landscape feature. The forms of the few tree groups near settlements are irregular but the tall pale-grey foliaged willow and poplar are the most recurrent. The views are such large scale that the scattered tree groups combine to line the horizon. Short stretches of single species elm hedgerow are fairly common.

The Canal Cut runs through this area, draining the Royal Military Canal to the sea. It is a large engineered channel which cuts straight through the landscape, differing widely from the usually irregular ditch network. A line of visually intrusive transmission towers also cuts across the centre of the mixed farmlands.

The village of Newchurch is nucleic in form, with low weatherboarded, brick and white-painted houses surrounding the stone church and more recent housing on the edges of the village. The belt of pasture around the village is very distinct.

This is a unified landscape with a dominantly flat landform and a few detracting features. Ecologically, it is less sound as the drainage ditches have been modified by agricultural practice and by the increase in the arable cultivation of the land. The landscape framework of ditches in this section of the reclaimed marsh is moderately distinctive. Because of the scarcity of tree cover and the wide views, this landscape is sensitive to any changes.
### Characteristic Features
- Flat, open, long views.
- Agricultural: arable crops, large agricultural buildings.
- Clusters of willow and poplar around settlements.
- Open, cleared ditches

### Landscape Analysis
#### Condition
The landscape has a unified pattern of elements, but with some visual detractors; transmission towers and agricultural buildings are highly visible in the open landscape. There is a moderate extent of semi-natural habitats as the value of the ditch network is becoming weak in intensively farmed land. Built development has a moderate negative impact; the isolated farms are mostly unremarkable in design and large agricultural buildings are prevalent within farmsteads. The heritage feature of timber fencing is in disuse and there is some unsympathetic recent detailing of bridges and sluices. Traditional pollard willows are also a diminishing feature. The area is considered to be in moderate condition.

#### Sensitivity
Visibility is very high over the dominant landform, resulting in the high sensitivity of the landscape. The landscape pattern and many features have an historic time depth.

### Landscape Actions
- Conserve the isolation and infrequency of built form.
- Restore a sense of local detail to engineering works such as bridges and sluices.
- Conserve the setting and vernacular emphasis of Newchurch.

### Summary of Analysis

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### Summary of Actions

**Conserve and Restore.**
- Conserve the open landscape
- Restore a sense of local detail to fencing, bridges and sluices
- Restore pollarded willows and poplars associated with settlements
- Restore ecological networks and ditches
The initial settlements on the marsh grew up on the horseshoe-shaped land which bridged the tidal zone between the old shoreline and the offshore shingle bar.

Most of the Romney Marsh Settlements character area follows the sandier substrata of this older marshland, which was not inundated by the storms of 1287, in contrast to the old marshland south of the Rhee Wall.

To the south, the Rhee Wall is a visual and physical boundary. To the north and east, the area is contained by the old cliff line and the coast, respectively. Views are distantly enclosed by the cliff line and by tree-lined horizons.

The landform is low lying with undulating creek ridges. Field patterns are irregular, and have the appearance of being large due to the lack of immediate enclosure. Farming is predominantly cereals but there are some potatoes, soft fruit and blocks of pasture, especially around Snargate and nearer the old cliff line at Hamstreet.

The pasture often appears very ragged; different colours and textures of grasses grow in patches on old creek ridges and fencing is a mixture of old timber and new metal and wire. In contrast, the arable fields have a uniform appearance and are seasonally variable in colour and movement, although there are still sheep fencing and gates to be seen. Farmsteads are dispersed, mostly single dwellings close to a larger group of big agricultural buildings.

The villages of Burmarsh, St. Mary in the Marsh, and Ivychurch are some of the ancient settlements which sit on the edge of the area, formerly round the edge of an inland lagoon. The circuitous road which links them would have followed the edge of the lagoon. These are very compact, small villages; each centred on a church and sheltered from view, and from the weather, by groups of trees.

Ditches are an integral part of the landscape, some reed fringed, describing straight lines through the middle of fields; many cleared or grazed to the edge of the water level by sheep. Hedgerows are an occasional feature as field and road boundaries, more frequent towards the old cliff line. Roads are tortuous and narrow, following the top of banks and dykes with narrow grass verges and ditches to either side.

Groups of willow remain from the lines of pollard willows which are thought to have been a more widespread feature of the ditch system. Occasional clusters of trees around buildings and in hedgerows give some sense of enclosure, although on a large scale, and the views are still distant.

Running parallel to the northern boundary of the character area is the Royal Military Canal, designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). In some stretches, such as south of Hamstreet, it goes almost unnoticed as the arable crops are taken up to the canal edge. This is in stark contrast to other stretches of the canal which have mature trees and grassy earth banks to emphasise its presence. Bridges, sluices and pumping stations are regular elements all over the character area, but are especially noticeable at junctions around the canal.

The landscape in the Romney settlements is largely unified, despite the introduced seasonal variations of arable cultivation. Its great potential to support wetland habitats is limited by the influence of the current farming methods which are supported by the European Common Agricultural Policy.

The Rhee Wall is a very large distinct earthwork, behind which the landscape of the Romney Settlements sinks. The ditch along the north side of the Rhee Wall is very wide, suggesting that it was the source of material for the earthwork. The sides of the bank itself are grassy with occasional scrub vegetation and are high enough to afford long views over the adjacent farmlands.

Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
ROMNEY MARSH SETTLEMENTS

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

The condition of the area is considered to be high. The landscape elements are unified and there are few detractors in the view. Irregular fields are delineated by ditches and the remote settlements on minor sandy ridges are accentuated by clusters of willow and poplar. The extensive network of ditches has high ecological potential but the habitats are modified by reduced water levels, unsympathetic management and the intensity of arable and pastoral fields. This remote area has a strong cultural integrity. There are few obvious vernacular styles, but the built form has a moderate positive impact.

This historic landscape is generally distinct and also has some locally distinct elements, such as the churches and sheep fencing. This area is comparatively rural and has fewer recent features than some of the marsh areas. Visibility is very high over the dominant landform.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Conserve the ditch network and enhance it by managing water levels to support wildlife habitats and incorporating adjacent banks. Conserve the wildlife potential in arable and pastoral areas by selecting key areas for sensitive management. Conserve open views. Conserve clusters of vegetation around settlements, and the isolation of farmsteads and villages.

CONSERVE.
Conserve the ditch network
Conserve wetland habitats
Conserve wildlife potential in arable and pastoral fields

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE & CREATE

CONSERVE & RESTORE

CONSERVE & RESTORE & CREATE

CONSERVE & RESTORE & CREATE & RESTORE

previous <<

Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
ROMNEY MARSH
The AONB includes a small part of the vast, flat expanse of Romney Marsh, which stretches down to Rye. The name 'Marsh' is misleading, as this area is now highly productive arable land and pasture. Nevertheless, it still retains an extensive network of drainage ditches or 'sewers' which regulate the water table, and support characteristic fringes of feathery reeds between the fields. There are almost no hedges on the Marsh and the occasional scrubby, windblown trees which dot the landscape are largely the result of 19th century attempts to create shelter.

The flatness and remote qualities of the Marsh make it very vulnerable to the intrusive effects of development, which are often worsened by inappropriate measures to conceal the damage, such as conifer shelterbelts.

LYMPNE
The area of the Romney Marsh within the AONB is part of the larger character area of Lympne.

The most southerly part of the AONB extends from Hythe west to Aldington. The character area includes part of the Hythe escarpment, which overlooks Romney Marsh. Until the early Middle Ages, this scarp formed the edge of a large, marshy lagoon. Gradually, however, the lagoon was reclaimed, through a combination of the natural accumulation of silt and shingle, the construction of sea defences and sustained drainage. The resulting land now forms one of the most fertile areas in Kent, with a particularly long growing season.

Most of the Hythe escarpment is the eroded face of the greensands and in particular of the calcareous Kentish ragstone. Over the centuries the surface has gradually slipped to form a steep, uneven slope, enclosing the northern edge of the marsh. The vulnerability of the coast to attack has left a legacy of old military defences scattered across the area, from the tumbled walls of the Roman fort of Lemanis, to the 19th century Royal Military Canal at the foot of the escarpment and the last of the Second World War 'Sound Mirrors' behind Burmarsh, 'listening' for approaching aircraft.

The scarp is highly visible from the flat marsh, forming a long hillside of rough grassland, dotted with scrub. Several large deciduous woodlands break up the sweep of the landform, being more characteristic in the west around Aldington. Between these woodlands, there are spectacular views across Romney Marsh and the English Channel.
CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Drainage ditches and canal. Reed vegetation.
Flat remote.
Rich arable and pasture.
Scrubby, windblown trees around settlements.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS
Condition
The flat and remote landscape has a coherent pattern of elements but with many visual
detractors, although some of these are small scale, such as temporary buildings. The long
views permit the intrusion of large scale elements such as lines of pylons. There is a very
strong ecological interest, based around the network of ditches and wetlands associated with
the canal.
The rural elements of the landscape are strong, but there is a lack of coherence in built form,
e.g. bridges and farmhouses, and these have a moderate negative impact on the
landscape. This area is considered to be in moderate condition.

Sensitivity
Visibility is high in the open landscape and, although flat, the landform is less dominant due
to the varied relief of the adjacent slopes. The historic land pattern traced by ditches and
embankments is characteristic, but there are more recent inherent features which define the
local character, such as highways, built form and scrub vegetation. The sense of place is
relatively weak and the sensitivity of the area us therefore considered to be moderate.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Conserve the historic landscape pattern by managing ditches so that they retain their visual
significance in the landscape.
Conserve the ecological interest by sensitive management of banks and water levels.
Create a sympathetic and coherent design code for built form and engineering details and
agricultural built form.
SALTWOOD
Around Saltwood, the landscape takes on a more intimate and enclosed character. There is a significant amount of deciduous woodland, especially along the valley sides, and the small pastures are surrounded by dense hedges and hedgerow trees. The towered gatehouse of Saltwood Castle, built in ragstone from former quarries at Hythe, stands in a tiny area of ornamental parkland on the edge of a typical unspoilt valley. These little valleys bring valuable pockets of rural landscape up to the very edge of the town. Further east, however, there are fewer hedges and trees and most field boundaries have been replaced by wire fence. The high, open land above the Sene Valley offers long views across the town and out to sea.

POSTLING VALE
Saltwood lies within the larger character area of the Postling Vale.

Folkestone lies at the most easterly end of the Greensand Belt, on a narrow tongue of land contained by the Downs in the north and the flat expanse of Romney Marsh in the south. These physical constraints have resulted in a considerable amount of activity and development being confined within a small area, on the very edge of the Kent Downs AONB.

The landscape here is dominated by major roads and by the new Channel Tunnel Terminal, all of which are situated on the edge of the AONB between north Folkestone and the Downs. These landscape developments are set against the dramatic backdrop of the steep scarp, which supports botanically rich chalk grassland. A series of remote coombes in the scarp towards Etchinghill overlook the now rare coppiced ash woodland of Asholt Wood. Scrub extends up some of the lower slopes and thick hedges draw attention to the route of the Pilgrim’s Way along the scarp foot. Beyond this, the landscape is gently undulating, with large fields and substantial blocks of woodland.

Further south, around the outskirts of Hythe, this open, large-scale landscape gives way to a more intimate countryside of steep stream valleys, small woodlands and pasture. In the west, around Pedlinge, tracts of mixed woodland enclose flat arable fields, which form the edge of a larger area of intensively cultivated farmland, extending beyond the AONB.
SALTWOOD: POSTLING VALE

PHOTOGRAPH

[Image of landscape]

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Intimate and enclosed valleys.
Deciduous woodland on valley sides.
Small pastures, dense hedgerows.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
The landscape features form a coherent pattern which is occasionally interrupted by the loss of hedgerows and the imposition of the motorway corridor on the boundary. Some detracting features can be seen in the view; these reflect the developing use of adjacent areas and the transport corridor. The mixed arable and pastoral landscape is interspersed with a network of woodland clusters, but field boundaries are a vulnerable part of this network. The castle and farm buildings have a strong positive impact on views, promoting a localised vernacular style.

Sensitivity
This historic landscape has some unique elements which contribute to a strong sense of place, mostly associated with the built form. The historic rural details are less distinct, although the woodland is a characteristic feature. Views are intermittent over the land form; visibility is therefore moderate.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Restore key areas of small scale field pattern in existing open areas where this is appropriate, e.g. at viewpoints and access points.
Conserve the broadleaf woodland cover by sensitive management to ensure a mixed age structure of trees.
Restore distinctive characteristics of the peripheral and estate roads in a consistent approach which defines the area.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

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CONSERVE AND RESTORE.
Conserve woodland cover
Restore areas of dense hedgerow and small scale pastures
Restore the characteristics of the estate roads and peripheral highways

CONTEXT
Regional: Kent Downs AONB

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On the Head Brick earths that overlie the often flat plateau of Hythe, Sandgate and Folkestone Beds in this area, deep silty soils have developed that are dominated by cereals, potatoes and other field vegetables. It is a large scale landscape of open fields with the small sprawling settlement of Sellindge and Folkestone racecourse at the centre.

The M20 and the Ashford to Folkestone railway bisect the character area from east to west affecting the landscape aurally over a wide area and causing discontinuities and discordance in the landscape.

South of the A20, around Westenhangar and Moorstock large areas of pasture persist. The land south of the A20 rises up above 70 metres AOD towards the Hythe escarpment with small marshy pasture edging the small streams. The hedgerows are gappy or missing.

North of Sellindge the land again rises as the brick earths cloak the Folkestone Beds below, into a smaller-scale more wooded landscape of pastures, old mineral sites, small lanes and bushy hedgerows. Views extend from the top of the rise at Hyham Hill back to the Downs in the north. Occasional attractive farmsteads of red brick and tile add to the varied rural nature of the scene.
SELLINDGE PLATEAU FARMLANDS

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Flat to undulating plateau farmlands on good quality soils. Open arable landscape with pasture locally important on more undulating ground. Small copses and gappy hedgerows on undulating ground.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
This is a fragmented landscape with little clear pattern and many visual detractors associated with road and rail transport corridors and linear development. Agricultural buildings and fences also detract from the view. The area is predominantly covered with intensive arable farmland with very limited potential for natural habitats. The condition of rural heritage features such as tree cover is poor and built form has a high negative impact on the area. Ragstone and brick vernacular buildings are overshadowed by recent built development.

Sensitivity
Historic land patterns are generally obscured or have no real function in the present landscape, with the notable exception of some estate landscape to the north of the character area. The flat landscape is apparent and has long views: visibility is therefore high. The sensitivity of the area is considered to be moderate.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Create a new framework for this transitional landscape which respects the open, arable use, transport corridors and adjacent small scale character area patterns. Existing built form and settlement edges need to be defined, and the impact of the many visual detractors needs to be controlled. This landscape presents opportunity to create new landscape features. Restore ecological interest to selected areas of arable land by sensitive management.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition
- Pattern of elements: Coherent.
- Detracting features: Many.
- Visual Unity: Interrupted.
- Cultural integrity: Poor.
- Ecological integrity: Weak.
- Functional Integrity: Very Weak.

Sensitivity
- Distinctiveness: Indistinct.
- Continuity: Historic.
- Sense of Place: Weak.
- Landform: Apparent
- Extent of tree cover: Open
- Visibility: High

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

RESTORE AND CREATE.
Create a view landscape framework using small woodland and copses
Create ecological diversity within arable farmland
Restore historical landscape framework in key areas immediately around the remaining farming settlements
Create landscape features to define linear settlements and transport corridors

PREPARED FOR KENT COUNTY COUNCIL BY JACOBS BABTIE
Shirley Moor is an attached body of floodplain which lies between Tenterden and Appledore. The routes of the Wealden creeks which drained into the Wittersham Levels and thence out onto the marsh are now the main drainage channels in Shirley Moor, known as the Tenterden Sewer and the Cradlebridge Sewer.

The landform within the character area is flat, but has a more undulating appearance due to the gentle hills either side. Woodland and hedgerows on top of the old shoreline, such as Great Heron Wood near Appledore, enclose the flat, ditch-lined fields of the Moor.

In comparison to most other areas of the Marsh, this is a smaller-scale landscape with more hedges and trees, and more immediate enclosure. The fields are large and fairly regular. The trend in the last 30 years has been towards arable cultivation, and the use of the land is now almost wholly arable, creating the appearance of a rural wetland as opposed to a tidal marsh. The area is a large, rolling patchwork of fields with no farm buildings or settlement. Large farm buildings, however, dominate the horizon from neighbouring areas.

Old farmsteads, like Shirley Farm, are located on the edge of the Moor, their former pastures stretching out into the flat plain. There are few roads crossing the area; most skirt the plain, following the edge of the surrounding higher ground. Some older farms still retain a network of weathered timber sheepfolds around the farm buildings, although they are seldom in use.

Within the fields, the ditches are insignificant features, except where the main sewers have reed heads showing above the edge of the banks. There are some scrubby hedgerows along ditches, and isolated oaks along former field boundaries which are now ploughed or neglected.

Single species willow stands occur in patches, such as at the junction of roads and river crossings. The white-green foliage is very distinctive and provides unexpected pools of enclosure in an otherwise open landscape.
SHIRLEY MOOR

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Flat centre to tidal basin between gently rolling hills.
Open agricultural landscape with patchwork of fields and visually insignificant ditches.
Remnants of sheep farming activities, remnant hedgerows.
Few roads, no settlement.
Willow stands and isolated mature oaks.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
The landscape has a coherent pattern of elements within the dished landform. The visual unity is interrupted by the loss of the visual significance of ditches on field boundaries, and the loss of mature vegetation. The few visual detractors involve agricultural silos on the horizon. This is an intensive arable landscape in which the wetland corridors are a weak basis of ecological interest. Rural heritage features of willow stands and mature oaks are limited and over-mature, and are considered to be vulnerable. The condition of the area is considered to be moderate.

Sensitivity
Key characteristics of hedges and ditch field boundaries have become indistinct and do not generally contribute to the sense of place. The landscape pattern is historic, but the historic vegetative features are in decline and the sense of place has become weak. Visibility is moderate as the dished landform is apparent. Views are intermittent and small-scale as a result of small clusters of trees and scrub vegetation obscuring wide views.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Reinforce the routes of natural water courses by allowing woody vegetation to regenerate in corridors along the lines of natural drainage.
Reinforce the visual impact of existing streams by clearing woody growth and managing the ditches and margins to promote diverse marginal vegetation.
Reinforce standard tree planting and hedgerow along the highway and in fields on the upper contours.
Create tree cover on the lower contours, such as willow or poplar plantation.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
CREATE AND REINFORCE.
Create woodland on the lower slopes
Reinforce existing hedgerow and standard trees along the highway and upper pastures
Reinforce the sensitive management of existing streams
Allow regeneration of woody vegetation along natural drainage routes

CONTEXT
Regional: Romney Marsh

Condition

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SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Pattern of elements: Coherent.
Detracting features: Few.
Cultural integrity: Poor.
Ecological integrity: Weak.
Functional Integrity: Very Weak.
The character area of Shorne is essentially a wooded ridge within a flatter rural setting that has been severed from the more extensive landscape of similar character to the south by the A2 road corridor. This is a discrete tract of landscape lying between the extensive built-up areas of Rochester and Gravesend. It is bounded to the north by open arable farmland of the Hoo Peninsula.

The extent of woodland is the key distinguishing feature in combination with the ridge landform. This significant landform feature provides an attractive backdrop to views from the north.

The settlements of Shorne and Shorne Ridgeway are spread out along the minor roads running north and east through this area. Much of this residential ribbon development is absorbed by existing woodland and therefore does not have an extensive influence. This area has a distinctly rural character.

Geology has a significant influence on the grain of the landform. Bands of Oldhaven, Woolwich and Blackheath Beds, Thanet beds and chalk run in the same direction as the predominant ridge landform which runs in a south westerly to north westerly direction through its landscape context.

The predominant landcover is deciduous woodland dissected by the linear settlement of Shorne/Shorne Ridgeway. The woodland is bounded by agricultural land, generally under arable cultivation with some pasture, and orchards. A quarry is located on the fringe of Randall Wood.

All but a few small blocks of woodland are designated for their nature conservation value. Shorne and Great Crabbles Wood are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as well as being listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory Court and Starmore Woods are designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs). All the above woods are also listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory. Such recognition clearly indicates that woodland is a key nature conservation resource in this area as well as being a significant landscape feature.
SHORNE

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS
The few visual detractors in the landscape are associated with the motorway and approaches. Otherwise, the landscape elements are coherent, dominated by the wooded ridge. The semi-natural habitat extends from the woodland into coppice within the farmland, but there is some loss of hedgerow links in the peripheral arable land. Heritage landscape elements which are associated with the farmland are in decline, but the woodland and built development have a positive effect on the landscape. This area is considered to be in a good condition.

Sensitivity
Views are generally enclosed due to the high proportion of woodland in the landscape - visibility is considered to be very low over the unremarkable landform. Other elements, apart from the woodland, do not contribute greatly to the distinctiveness of the area, and the overall sense of place is weak. Historic settlements have some distinguishing features, but recent development has little local distinction.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
The dominance of the woodland and the ecological interest of this feature may be reinforced by creating woodland links within existing arable areas. Reinforce the character of historic settlements by controlling highway approaches into villages and creating sympathetic designs to fringe development, and sympathetic treatment to built form and highway detail within the historic core.

CONTENTS

Context

Condition

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SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Pattern of elements: Coherent.
Detracting features: Few.
Cultural integrity: Variable.
Ecological integrity: Moderate.
Functional Integrity: Coherent.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Reinforce.
Reinforce the ecological interest of the woodland, and reinforce woodland links throughout the farmland.
Reinforce the character of historic settlements.
Reinforce the external elements of the historic cores to settlements.
SISSINGHURST WOODED FARMLANDS

Sissinghurst Wooded Farmlands lies between the Teise Valley, Staplehurst and Headcorn Pastures, Biddenden and High Halden Wooded Farmlands of the Low Weald, and the Cranbrook, Oxney and Kent Fruit Belt areas of the High Weald.

This area shows a varied topography between 30 to 100 metres above sea level. It is gently undulating with some open views northwards to the Low Weald. Towards the east, approaching Tenterden, the terrain becomes more undulating and enclosed, with very few long views.

On the upper slopes, enclosure is sustained by areas of woodland around the small to medium-sized fields of rough grassland and pasture. Grazing and horse pasture are the dominant land uses. Larger, more open, undulating fields on lower slopes are generally used for arable production. The traditional orchards of this area are in decline, however some hop production persists on the upper slopes.

Other characteristic features include numerous field ponds and large tracts of broadleaf woodland and coniferous plantation. There are extensive tracts of mixed woodland across the slopes and isolated patches of mature coppice woodlands on upper slopes.

Most internal field boundaries are post and wire fencing. However, mature hedgerows with strong form are found along the winding lanes around Tenterden. Mature hedgerow trees are an important element. Shelterbelts are a feature around existing and former hop fields.

Settlements are small, and mainly situated on the flatter land, above slopes, where the landscape is more open. However, there are dispersed settlements, or individual properties scattered along roads and narrow winding lanes. This is traditionally an area of isolated farmsteads and small settlements in wooded clearings.

Roadside verges are noticeably wider along some of the larger lanes.
SISSINGHURST WOODED FARMLANDS

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Multicoloured enclosed patchwork of fields, well-wooded. Long views to greensand. Small scale hops and orchards, oasts and weatherboarded barns. Slopes to north from ridge, undulating into wooded ghylls and enclosed pastures.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS
Condition
This is a strongly unified landscape with a small scale patchwork of hedged fields combined with a heavily wooded backdrop on an undulating landform. Woodland and the occasional plantation is interspersed with pastures, orchards and hop gardens, and some arable land. Narrow wooded roads have no verges. There are relatively few visual detractors which include prefabricated farm buildings and post and rail fencing replacing hedgerows. The area has a strong functional integrity with a strong network of ecologically important woodland corridors, streams, and only a moderate intensity of land use. Hedgerows form a strong network and heritage features include a possible deer park, Sissinghurst Castle and Garden, and many attractive traditional buildings such as oast houses, manor houses, mills and barns with local vernacular dwellings in Kent peg tiles or weatherboarding. Built development has a positive impact. The condition of the landscape is very high.

Sensitivity
Sense of place is very well developed with characteristic features such as hop gardens (sadly in decline), orchards, ancient oak standard woodland and chestnut coppice, hedgerow trees, large specimen mature oaks and species-rich ancient hedgerows. Sissinghurst Castle, with its famous gardens and unique literary association, and the wealth of characteristic historic buildings add to the distinctiveness of the landscape. The ancient origins of the landscape are displayed in sunken lanes winding through ancient woodlands and the irregular hedged field boundaries adjoining them. Visibility is low, with the landform apparent but balanced by the enclosing tree cover. Overall, the sensitivity is moderate.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Conserve the ancient woodland and the hedgerow framework through suitable management, especially to maintain the ecological diversity. Reinforce hedgerows through suitable replanting in gaps by traditional management such as hedge-laying. Conserve the historic buildings and reinforce their impact by ensuring that any new developments respect their setting, are sensitively designed, and use local materials such as Kent peg tiles and weatherboarding. Resist the effects of suburbanisation and offer design guidance for the conversion of redundant buildings to appropriate uses. Conserve the character of farms by encouraging the restoration of existing buildings and the careful design, siting and screening of new farm buildings where existing buildings cannot be used. Protect distinctive standard oaks and plant new ones as future successors.

CONTEXT
Regional: Low Weald/High Weald App

Condition

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SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Pattern of elements: Unified.
Detracting features: Few.
Visual Unity: Strongly Unified.
Cultural integrity: Good.
Ecological integrity: Strong Network.
Functional Integrity: Very Strong.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE AND REINFORCE.
Conserve ancient woodland and hedges. Reinforce hedges and maintain traditionally Conserve historic buildings Resist suburbanisation and offer guidance on re-use of existing buildings Conserve the character of farms Protect distinctive standard oaks and plant successors

prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
Rearing straight up out of the English Channel, the 'White Cliffs of Dover' form one of the country's most famous landmarks. Behind the cliffs, the landscape of this small, separate pocket of the AONB epitomises the windswept Channel coastline of the imagination - tufts of windblown thorn and scrub cling to the edges of the huge, rolling fields and the landscape is dominated by the vast horizons of sea and sky.

Edward Hasted, writing in the 1790s, described the area around West Cliffe thus:

"The height and continuance of the hills and the depth and spacious width of the valleys, added to a wildness of nature, which is a leading feature throughout this part of the country, contribute altogether to its pleasantness; and the variety of prospects, as well over the adjoining country, as the sea, and the coast of France beyond it, are very beautiful."

The gentle valleys which furrow the landscape between Dover and Kingsdown still show the pattern of enclosure, much of which was imposed upon the landscape in the 19th century. Before then, the landscape was largely one of unenclosed downland or arable fields. Modern farming, with its lack of need for hedges and trees, is beginning to return this character to the landscape, leaving only occasional overgrown hedges to contain and emphasise the openness.

The sparse tree cover and the rolling, open countryside allow landmarks such as Dover Castle, St. Margaret's Lighthouse and the cliff-top War Memorial to stand out. It also results in a landscape which is very vulnerable to any form of development. The radio masts, which tower above Broadlees Bottom, dominate the locality, drawing the eye to the clutter of wires and sheds which surround them. These structures lack even the softening effect of the scrub and windblown trees that traditionally surround the scattered farm buildings in this area.

The South Foreland Heritage Coast lies between Kingsdown and Dover and, despite the intensive agriculture, still contains some strips of ecologically rich chalk grassland and scrub along the cliff tops. These areas are not only important for their scientific interest but also form a major contribution to the sense of naturalness of this small undeveloped stretch of coastline.
PHOTOGRAPH

White Cliffs of Dover. Exposed hilltop, open, rolling cultivated fields.
Landmarks visible. Vast horizons of sea and sky.
Sparse tree cover.
19th century enclosure pattern breaking down.
Radio masts intrude into views.

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

White Cliffs of Dover. Exposed hilltop, open, rolling cultivated fields.
Landmarks visible. Vast horizons of sea and sky.
Sparse tree cover.
19th century enclosure pattern breaking down.
Radio masts intrude into views.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
The pattern of elements is coherent, with open cliff top views of landmarks such as Dover Castle and the lighthouse, and large rolling fields with a windswept feel with low thin remnant hedgerows and patches of scrub. Visual detractors include radio masts and sheds, the Dover Harbour Approach Road and the holiday camp at St. Margaret's Bay. The ecological integrity is moderate with only sparse hedgerows and scrub, and narrow bands of cliff top chalk grassland, increasingly subject to encroaching arable cultivation. Field boundaries are in decline, being sparse and overgrown. Built development consists of unremarkable scattered brick built farmhouses in the valleys with associated trees around.

Sensitivity
Distinctiveness is fairly well expressed but in decline. The ecologically rich chalk grasslands, the huge white chalk sea cliffs and the views of the unique Dover Castle, together with sunken roads with hawthorn hedges, are the most distinctive elements with at least an historic or ancient time depth. The landform is dominant but tree cover is largely open. Sensitivity is therefore high.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Restore a network of hedgerows, concentrating on the roadside and other existing strands to create a bolder landscape pattern and create linking corridors for wildlife.
Encourage larger areas of species-rich chalk grasslands on the cliff top edge.
Conserve pockets of scrub and trees, and recreate similar scrubby pockets to at least soften the impact of sheds and wireless masts.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Pattern of elements: Coherent.
Detracting features: Some.
Visual Unity: Coherent.
Cultural integrity: Poor.
Ecological integrity: Moderate.
Functional Integrity: Weak.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

RESTORE.
Restore a new bold network of hedges to create wildlife links.
Encourage species-rich grassland.
Conserve and recreate scrubby vegetation to screen intrusions.
SOUTHFLEET ARABLE LANDS

This local landscape area forms part of the county-wide character area of the North Kent Agricultural Belt developed on the good quality soils of the sands, gravels and clays of the Tertiary Beds overlying the chalk. It is a mix of flat and undulating landform which is sloping generally towards the Thames estuary at Gravesend and Dartford from the edge of the Darenth Downs at Betsham.

On the remnant wooded hill-tops the lanes are deeply cut and old villages such as Betsham nestle in a seemingly tranquil rural landscape. Elsewhere, the landscape is more open with a mix of remnant orchards and a few shelterbelts, but increasingly the landcover is a mix of cabbages and arable crops. The flatter land is particularly open with many hedgerows removed or neglected.

This openness results in the busy A2(T) dominating both visually and audibly over a wide area extending into the northern tip of the Ash Downs. Elsewhere, in the elevated, wooded farmlands to the east of the area, it is the noise that is the most intrusive and detracting element. Some attractive views looking back towards the Downs can be seen from this higher land.

North of Southfleet, the landscape is heavily influenced by transmission lines and development on the rises at Northfleet and the Gravesend suburbs. With many hedges removed, the arable fields, old windbreaks and roadside lighting all stand out. Southfleet and Hook Green retain their tiny vernacular centres, partly due to their conservation status, but a gradual clutter of 20th century development has spread out along the lanes.

Before the 6th century the North Kent Agricultural Belt was substantially forested, although much of the good quality soils were subsequently cleared and cultivated. By the 1960’s most of the land north of the railway line was a mix of arable land combined with a high percentage of orchard around Betsham and south-west of Green Street Green. By 1990, the arable land had grown at the expense of the orchard, which has almost disappeared.

The Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) is located adjacent to the A2, skirting Gravesend, before swinging north to travel under the Thames. This has resulted in a trapped section of land (termed the ‘sandwich land’) between the road and the rail-link. A spur route down the disused railway linking Gravesend to the Longfield line passes close to Southfleet and Betsham. The rail link impacts on these communities on the eastern boundary of this character area.
SOUTHFLEET ARABLE LANDS

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Good quality soils developed on the Tertiary Beds overlying the chalk. A generally open arable landscape. Open landscape allowing transport routes, pylons and settlement to dominate many areas. Remnant unkept hedgerows, shelterbelts and woodland copses giving a scruffy and unmanaged feel. Long views to the busy A2 (T) and Kent Thames-side beyond

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS
This is a coherent landscape where the large-scale rural land use reflects the good quality soils. There are, however, many visual detractors which dominate the view, such as transmission pylons, trunk road, and CTRL. Remnant rural heritage features such as hedgerows, orchards and shelterbelts are few and are in poor condition. The 20th century development of historic village edges gives a high negative impact on the view. This area is considered to be weak ecologically - there is much intense arable cultivation which is relieved only by minimal, unmanaged patches of remnant hedgerow. The condition of this area is considered to be very poor.

Sensitivity
The undulating landform is apparent in the open views over the landscape area. Visibility is therefore high. The main inherent characteristics which make up the landscape pattern have become indistinct. The historic features of hedgerow enclosure and the more recent shelterbelts are now indistinct elements of the landscape. Building forms on the edge of settlements do not contribute to local distinctiveness and there is very little time-depth to the landscape's current dominant features. The routes of established highways, which are considered to be of ancient origin, no longer have a great impact on the landscape.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
This is a large-scale landscape which has become fragmented with redundant and diverse elements, and denuded of characteristic features. It requires simplification, but also acknowledgment of new functions. Create a large-scale landscape based on large blocks of woodland and large blocks of arable cultivation. Create ecologically-rich corridors along transport routes. Create an urban edge which restores some characteristic enclosure features, using appropriate species which may be innovative. Restore the impact of the original highway network, creating appropriate management plans to restore 'managed' characteristics to the landscape.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
CREATE & RESTORE
RESTORE & CREATE
CREATE & RESTORE
CONSERVE & RESTORE
CONSERVE & CREATE
CREATE & CONSERVE
REINFORCE
CONSERVE & REINFORCE
CONSERVE
CREATE

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS
Condition

Pattern of elements: Coherent.
Detracting features: Many.
Visual Unity: Interrupted.
Cultural integrity: Poor.
Ecological integrity: Weak.
Functional Integrity: Very Weak.

Sensitivity
Distinctiveness: Indistinct.
Continuity: Historic.
Sense of Place: Weak.
Landform: Apparent
Extent of tree cover: Open
Visibility: High.

CONTEXT
Regional: North West Kent

Condition

low
moderate
poor

Sensitivity

Good quality soils developed on the Tertiary Beds overlying the chalk. A generally open arable landscape. Open landscape allowing transport routes, pylons and settlement to dominate many areas. Remnant unkept hedgerows, shelterbelts and woodland copses giving a scruffy and unmanaged feel. Long views to the busy A2 (T) and Kent Thames-side beyond

PREVIOUS <<

Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
This is an extensive character area from Staplehurst in the west to Smarden in the east of mainly flat land, extending northwards to where the land starts to swell as it rises up towards the Greensand. Although this landscape is substantially flat it provides a varied and enclosed landscape of intimate beauty characterised by small to medium sized fields produced by a strong pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, mainly oak. A striking characteristic feature of the area is the numerous small field ponds, often fringed with willow, especially south of Smarden, where they are found in nearly every field.

The sparse network of tranquil lanes, a legacy of the old drover’s routes leading north-east to south-west to the High Weald, weave around this pattern of fields. They are usually broad-verged with flowery ditches patterned with ladies smock and primroses in the spring or fringed with rushes and sedges. Many are of high nature conservation value. Occasional small broadleaf copse add to the wooded, intimate scale of the landscape.

The land use is typically one of sheep-grazed pasture, with arable farming locally important. The landscape opens out north of Frittenden, however, with more substantial open fields of arable and improved pasture. This pattern is also repeated around Headcorn, notably east of Waterlane Farm and around Summerhill Farm, where the hedgerows have been removed or replaced by post and wire.

Near Headcorn the pattern is disturbed by the Weald golf course’s uncharacteristic bunds, and other schemes have changed the rural pattern. Concern is mounting that some of these diversification projects will fail leaving the land neglected.

The settlement pattern is again traditionally dispersed, being one of historic farmsteads and small hamlets. The most prominent villages, Staplehurst and Headcorn, with their vernacular centres, have been enlarged by the coming of the railway in the 19th century, with further linear, suburban growth developing earlier this century along the A229 and A274 respectively.

Despite these local areas of intrusion, most of the area has a tranquil and forgotten atmosphere with an intimate pattern of fields and lanes.
STAPLEHURST-HEADCORN PASTURELANDS

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Flat, low lying and wet, small scale intimate landscape of pastoral farming. Small to medium sized fields enclosed by hedgerow and hedgerow trees. Numerous field ponds. Winding historic lanes, broad verges and flowery ditches. Dispersed settlement including historic farmsteads and villages.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS
This is a coherent landscape in which the scale of the dispersed settlement and the relationship of the flat, sometimes watery landform to the landscape elements is apparent, but becoming less definite as the small-scale fruit/pastoral field system encompasses wider arable or more intensive pastoral use. Built development has a positive impact, but the condition of heritage features such as internal field boundaries is variable. Hedgerow remains intact along highways which have additional interest along the very wide grassy verges. Woodland cover is considered to be particularly poor, but in general the landscape is considered to be in good condition.

Sensitivity
This area is considered to be of low sensitivity. The unremarkable landform is not a dominant part of the view: visibility is moderate because it is an open landscape. The distinctiveness of the historic landscape is due very much to the importance of the rural landscape features and the seasonal importance of roadside flora, and as many of these are either in decline, or dependent on sensitive management, the sense of place has become weak.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
As the landscape is considered to be in good condition, the characteristic features require reinforcement to retain and enhance the local distinctiveness. The continuity of small-scale historic field patterns may be reinforced where it is appropriate to land use such as small-scale pastoral enclosures.

The small-scale enclosure may also be effected by the encouragement of woodland regeneration in naturalistic form along wetlands.

The ecological interest of the area may be reinforced by enhancing the management of existing wetlands and by the less intensive management of grasslands and pastures. Large, mature trees are a characteristic feature of hedgerows and the occurrence of these should be reinforced in field boundaries and along highways.

The perception of the landscape structure may also be enhanced by specific management plans for drainage ditches and roadside verges to increase their habitat potential.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
REINFORCE.
Reinforce the ecological interest by enhancing the wildlife potential of wetlands, grasslands and ditches
Reinforce the landscape structure by managing drainage ditches and wide verges to provide a full seasonal range of flora, and maintaining dense, tall hedgerows
Reinforce existing areas of small-scale landscape
Encourage the regeneration of small-scale woodland in naturalistic form along existing wetlands
Reinforce the occurrence of large mature trees within hedged field boundaries and highways
Reinforce small scale pastoral use

Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
STOWTING: POSTLING VALE

STOWTING
West of Tolsford Hill and Summerhouse Hill is a more open, intensively farmed agricultural landscape, which extends out of the AONB towards Ashford. Large arable fields are surrounded by small shaws or overgrown hedges or by trimmed remnant hedges. Although the scarp is largely grassland, there are occasional blocks of deciduous woodland on the top, such as Postling Wood or Brockman's Bushes on Tolsford Hill. These distinctive features draw the eye away from scarp-foot developments such as the motorways, and provide a means of orientation in the landscape. In the west, towards Brabourne, the scarp becomes shallower and some areas have been cultivated. This has marred the characteristic 'natural' appearance of the eastern slopes, which is further compromised by gradual ribbon development and pockets of suburbanisation along the scarp foot.

In contrast, the flat farmland around Pedlinge is broken up by large blocks of woodland and small ditches. A significant amount of hedgerow loss has occurred in this area and windblown trees straggle along the overgrown channels.

POSTLING VALE
Stowting lies within the larger character area of the Postling Vale.

Folkestone lies at the most easterly end of the Greensand Belt, on a narrow tongue of land contained by the Downs in the north and the flat expanse of Romney Marsh in the south. These physical constraints have resulted in a considerable amount of activity and development being confined within a small area, on the very edge of the Kent Downs AONB.

The landscape here is dominated by major roads and by the new Channel Tunnel Terminal, all of which are situated on the edge of the AONB between north Folkestone and the Downs. These landscape developments are set against the dramatic backdrop of the steep scarp, which supports botanically rich chalk grassland. A series of remote coombes in the scarp towards Etchinghill overlook the now rare coppiced ash woodland of Asholt Wood. Scrub extends up some of the lower slopes and thick hedges draw attention to the route of the Pilgrim's Way along the scarp foot. Beyond this, the landscape is gently undulating, with large fields and substantial blocks of woodland.

Further south, around the outskirts of Hythe, this open, large-scale landscape gives way to a more intimate countryside of steep stream valleys, small woodlands and pasture. In the west, around Pedlinge, tracts of mixed woodland enclose flat arable fields, which form the edge of a larger area of intensively cultivated farmland, extending beyond the AONB.

Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
STOWTING: POSTLING VALE

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Relatively open. Intensively farmed, grass-scarp slopes and wooded hilltops. Motorway and ribbon development at foot of scarp on edge of area.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
This landscape has a coherent pattern of elements with very few detracting features. Ecologically, rich grasslands and small woodlands combine with the open arable fields at the scarp foot to give a moderate ecological value to the area. Rural heritage features - woodland, hedges, small villages - are in good condition, built development in general has a moderate positive impact on the area. The landscape has strong cultural links.

Sensitivity
The landform is a dominant element of the view and visibility is very high over the open landscape. There is an historic time depth to landscape elements and landscape pattern, although field boundaries are becoming indistinct. The rounded chalk hills contribute to the sense of place which is also influenced by characteristic woodland, beech stands and cross contour roads. Built form is a less distinct element of the landscape. This is considered to be a highly sensitive landscape.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Conserve existing woodland on hilltops. Conserve views of the dominant landform.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

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<th>Sense of Place</th>
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SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE.
Conserve existing woodland on hilltops. Conserve views of the dominant landform.

CONTEXT
Regional: Kent Downs AONB

Condition

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Sensitivity

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<td>Sensitivity</td>
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Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babbie
This is a gently undulating or distinctly inclined landscape, stretching from Sutton Valence in the west to beyond Mundy Bois in the east on the boundary with the Greensand Ridge. These south west facing farmlands are dominated by the steep, often densely wooded Greensand scarp to the north.

The mixed farmlands consist mainly of improved pasture but orchards are locally important. The effect is of a well managed sheep-grazed landscape. Occasionally abandoned traditional orchards break with this pattern, with their remnant windbreaks giving a fragmented and rather forlorn appearance.

There is a strong hedgerow pattern in places, albeit these are sometimes tall and unkempt, but where lost on the lower, flatter, slopes around Mundy Bois, for instance, an open landscape with a denuded feel results. Beyond Grafty Green are some areas of very intensive agriculture of mainly open fields where the lack of woodland on the ridge above adds to the sense of openness. At Pluckley Thorne this lack of woodland leaves exposed to view the village development that has encroached on the ridgeline. There has been a spread of dull 20th century housing, generally, around the small settlements along the scarp foot.

Where the intimate pattern of enclosed fields is intact, wide-vedged lanes, of high historic and landscape value, with flowery ditches at their margins enhance the scene.

These have evolved from the old sheep drove roads that crossed the Greensand Ridge to the north en route from Teynham and the Faversham Road. The broad width of the verges in the clay vale derives from the constant need to move the route sideways as the unsurfaced tracks disintegrated into muddy quagmires.

A distinctive feature of most of this local character area is the spectacular rural views from the valeside back over the flatter areas of the Low Weald.
PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Undulating or sloping landform. Enclosed to north by Greensand ridge with extensive views to the south. Mixed farmland including sheep-grazing and remnant orchards, shelterbelts and hedgerows.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS
Condition
There are few detractors in this tranquil, rural landscape. The landscape elements of tall hedgerows and shelterbelts are intact and enclose a variety of low-intensity agricultural uses. The area is visually encompassed by the Greensand Ridge to the north. The intact hedgerow network links with pastures and small copses to form a strong network of semi-natural habitats. Built development also has a positive impact. The cultural integrity of this area appears intact - landscape features have a purpose in the current use of the land, and settlements reflect the rural use of the area. The overall condition is considered to be very good.

Sensitivity
The historic time-depth of the area is a dominant factor in the local distinctiveness. The historic features are characteristic but not considered to be rare in the Kent landscape, and therefore evoke a moderate sense of place. Key characteristics of mature standard oak and orchards are vulnerable and becoming indistinct. Although overlooked by the Greensand Ridge, the landform within the landscape character area is unremarkable with intermittent tree enclosure. Visibility is therefore low.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
As the condition of the landscape is very good, it is the continuity of the landscape which may be reinforced to maintain and enhance local distinctiveness.
Reinforce the incidence and management of broadleaf woodland which will maintain the sense of enclosure
Reinforce the highway characteristics of wide verges and tall hedges
Reinforce local detail in built development and in settlement patterns, ensuring that settlement relates to existing landscape features i.e. reinforce the rural nature of the landscape and resist suburban features
Reinforce rural tranquillity and the emphasis on a variety of non-intensive agricultural land uses.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
REINFORCE.
Reinforce and replant small patches of broadleaf woodland
Reinforce historic landscape patterns
Reinforce wide verges and tall hedges
Reinforce sympathetic detail and scale within built development
Reinforce rural tranquility
The Swale estuary separates the Isle of Sheppey from the mainland and is flanked on either side by extensive coastal marshes. Despite localised differences in landscape character, the essential marshland character prevails throughout, epitomised by open, flat grazing land with broad skies, few landscape features and an overriding sense of remoteness, wildness and exposure. The Swale Marshes have a predominantly agricultural and particularly tranquil, unspoilt character in contrast with the Medway and Thames Marshes which are more heavily influenced by industry.

Landform and geology have a profound influence on the character of the marshes which, having been formed from marine alluvial deposits, have a distinctively flat relief. Localised outcrops of chalk or London Clay produce landform features (e.g. the Isle of Harty) which have a prominence out of proportion to their modest relief.

A thin ribbon of tidal saltmarsh persists along the outer edges of the Swale Marshes but the traditional landcover of this area is coastal grazing marsh. The rough grassland of the grazing marshes is patterned by a complex system of natural and man-made drainage dykes and fleets which provide a water supply for stock. There is virtually no tree cover and the landscape is generally devoid of features, placing a greater significance on the presence of grazing animals and wetland birds.

More recently, extensive areas of the Swale grazing marshes have been converted to arable cultivation. This results in the loss of the characteristic drainage patterns, removing livestock and wildlife interest and simplifying the textures and colours of the marshland landscape. Localised industrial development has had a direct impact on the marshes in certain areas (e.g. Kemsley) but exerts a much wider influence in long-distance views across the flat, open marshes in certain parts of the Swale.

The grazing marshes, dykes, saltmarshes and mudflats of the Swale are designated as a site of special scientific interest and provide a habitat for internationally significant numbers of wetland birds, qualifying for designation as a wetland of international significance under the Ramsar Convention and under the EC Birds Directive. Extensive areas of marshland on Sheppey are managed by nature conservation organisations, including the RSPB and English Nature, which owns and manages part of the area as a National Nature Reserve.

There is evidence of Iron Age and Roman occupation on the southern part of Sheppey, but this would appear to be fairly sparse. There is also evidence of extensive Roman salt workings and pottery industry at Chetney Marshes whilst the Medieval period the eastern parts of Sheppey became important for their salt workings, the remains of which can still be seen today. St. Thomas Church on the Isle of Harty dates from 1200 and is considered to be the remotest church in Kent.
SWALE MARSHES

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
The coastal and cultivated marsh is strongly unified with a recurrent irregular pattern of open grassland, ditches and wetland. Visual detractors such as the development at Ridham Dock are generally large scale but appear few in the wide view and are mainly due to unsympathetic farm buildings, overhead cables or the industrial and urban skyline. The marshes themselves remain tranquil and inaccessible. The network of ditches, creeks, marsh and wetland form a notable ecological base which is linked with other important natural habitats in North Kent. Settlement is limited to historic locations on small hills, although the built form generally has a moderately negative impact. The general condition of the area is very good.

Sensitivity
Views are extremely wide across the open landscape and the extent of the flat landscape is a very dominant feature. Visibility is therefore considered to be very high in this area. Species associations within the natural habitat are recognised as unique or rare features. In addition, the structural form and existence of the island crossing is a locally distinctive and uniquely significant feature within the landscape. Other characteristics such as the landform of reclaimed marshland, are historic; it is their extent which contributes to local distinctiveness. High visibility and the high importance of natural habitats combine to make this an area of very high sensitivity.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Conserve the openness, inaccessibility and tranquillity of the landscape, resisting the introduction of any additional built-form to the view. Retain existing long views and existing undeveloped skyline. Conserve the pattern of sparse settlement, maintaining or reducing the visual emphasis of built form within the landscape area and maintaining areas of undeveloped land intact. Maintain the simplicity of the landscape and of forms within the landscape. Conserve the importance of existing unique and locally distinctive structures. Conserve natural habitats by supporting the sensitive management of ditches and grassland and promoting the value of these within the island.

PREVIOUS <<

CONSERVE.
Conserve the existing sparse settlement patterns
Conserve existing open areas intact and retain long views
Conserve natural and cultivated grassland habitats
Conserve saltmarsh
This character area includes land between 60 to 100 metres to the west of the River Darent on the sands, gravels and clays of the Tertiary Beds. It
extends westwards over the boundary into the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley down to the Cray Valley, but within Kent it includes the area
from Joydens Wood south to Swanley and Crockenhill, and East to Farningham Wood. The good quality soils have led to intensive cultivation, as in
the Southfleet area, but there are also remnants of extensive ancient or ancient replanted woodlands at Joydens and Farningham Woods and those
north of Hook Green.

The landscape is greatly affected by the proximity to London, contributing to the dominance of roads, such as the A20(T) and M25, and suburban
influences in the development of the residential settlements of Joydens Wood and Hextable and the enlargement of Crockenhill and Swanley.

The lane from the A20 to Swanley Village is enclosed with vegetation and intensely rural but then opens out below Farningham Wood to allow noisy
intrusion from the M25. Swanley Village has an attractive but tired centre that merges at its edges with bland urban development. Swanley is barely
separated from Crockenhill by the A20(T). Although at one time this area was characterised by fruit growing as part of the economy, the few remaining
orchards are neglected and will undoubtedly be grubbed up.

Towards Joydens Wood too, there were many orchards but these are now all gone. The land south of the wood is now a golf course. Innovatively, fruit
trees have been used as a screen at the roadside. Excellent views of Joydens Wood can be had from the A20(T) and B2173. An ancient earthwork,
thought to date from about AD 450, called the Faesten Dyke runs through the wood.

More recently, the Joydens Wood Estate has been carved out of the woodland and is a mix of residential styles, materials and sizes, but with
bungalows predominating.

Much of the woodland has heathy plant associations, such as ling, tormentil, broom and gorse, developed on the sands and gravels of the Blackheath
Beds that overlie the chalk. This creates a very distinct woodland character with dark edges and understorey, and contrastingly light overhead canopy
of foliage, especially where there is a predominance of oak and birch.
SWANLEY FRINGE

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Good quality soils leading to intensive cultivation including orchards in the past. Several ancient and broadleaf woodlands with heathy character. Substantial suburban and transport influence.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
The pattern of this landscape is coherent, with wooded ridges to hilltops and hedgelined roads outlining large arable fields. However, the irregular field pattern of the former varied agricultural and fruit-growing landscape is well into decline, and there are many detracting features associated with suburban land uses, urban development, road junctions and the loss of elm hedges. There is substantial ecological interest in the ancient and replanted woodland, some of which has a distinctive heathy character due to acid soils. Otherwise, the functional integrity of the existing landscape is low as the emphasis on agricultural and settlement patterns decline and intensive arable cultivation or neglected land become prevalent.

Sensitivity
The landform is not a dominant feature in the Swanley Fringe, and the sensitivity of the area is further reduced by the effect of intermittent tree cover. There are few distinct historic landscape features - much of the landscape is overlain with recent features such as road corridor planting, built development and suburban land uses. Tall, hedgelined roads are still a feature, but many contain dead elm. The ridgeline woodland retains a strong time-depth.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
The landscape pattern no longer reflects the use of the land. Positive landscape elements need to evolve which enhance the setting of residential settlements, provide for amenity uses and realise the ecological potential of the natural conditions. More distinctive vegetation is required to replace the effect which elms would formerly have had on the landscape.
Create small pockets of diverse horticultural and amenity use around settlements on the good quality soils, providing enclosure with small copses.
Recreate woodlands on higher land, especially on sandy soils, using the distinctive local mix of species.
Create an open, large scale agricultural landscape on undulating land between settlements.
Widen ecological corridors associated with the transport network and create rich ecological habitats along these such as grasslands or scrub vegetation.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
CREATE.
Create an enclosed, rural setting for settlements
New landscape to reflect amenity uses, transport needs
Create and extend woodland
Create habitats along transport corridor landscape
A narrow Y-shaped character area created by the alluviums of the two channels of the River Teise from close to Laddingford and Horsmonden, down to the confluence with the Beult near Benover. Here a landscape of open arable fields and horticultural crops has evolved, with residual tall poplar or alder shelterbelts at the margins marking the position of traditional orchards now removed. Occasionally, more recent dwarf fruiting stock has been planted in their place.

The river edge vegetation has often been removed to increase field size right up to the river channel. Where the hedges have been retained they give unity and variety within the floodplain, but where some are missing or gappy the resulting scene is fragmented.

The character of the Teise valley is wholly rural, with little settlement or other intrusions from urban life in the floodplain itself, and crossed only infrequently by small, old bridges.

East of Horsmonden the river nestles among the orchards, the rolling hills forming strong enclosure. This visual influence peters out nearer Marden, however, and the views from the river from here northwards are of the pleasant farmlands of the Fruit Belt, until it joins the River Beult near Benover.
TEISE VALLEY

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Flat, low-lying land. Open rural landscape of arable crops. Sparse settlement or road access giving tranquil atmosphere.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS
Condition
This small watercourse lies amongst an open, flat, predominantly arable landscape. The river itself is often unnoticeable except when one is directly over the watercourse and the area is therefore largely incoherent as a river course and floodplain. The narrow character area remains tranquil and largely inaccessible, with minor detracting features such as wire fencing. Occasional bridging points are low-key, using recent materials such as concrete and RS railings. The stream and associated ditch network within the rural landscape form a narrow ecological corridor. Wetland areas within the managed floodplain are limited and much of the arable cultivation runs right up to the banks of the water course. There are occasional groups of willows, but these do not form a coherent whole. On the edges of the area, the remnant mature oak and ash are senescent and some enclosed orchards remain on the fringes of the arable core.

Sensitivity
The flat open landscape is rarely distinguishable from the surrounding Low Weald. Historic and ancient elements of the landscape such as riparian vegetation on the stream and field enclosures on the fringes of the floodplain are indistinct. Visibility within the area is low due to the insignificant landform and intermittent tree cover.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Accentuate the course of the river and realise the broader ecological potential of the floodplain, setting it in the context of surrounding farmland.
Create new areas of shallow banks within the watercourse to promote bankside habitats.
Identify areas along the stream where it is possible to promote low-intensity grazing on open banks and sympathetic methods of cultivation near the stream.
Reintroduce Black poplar and create a new framework for adjacent farmland by using willow lines along the stream and creating a visible intermittent edge to the higher contours of the floodplain with hedgerow and standard trees.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS
Condition
Pattern of elements: Incoherent.
Detracting features: Few.
Visual Unity: Coherent.
Cultural integrity: Poor.
Ecological integrity: Moderate.
Functional Integrity: Weak.

Sensitivity
Very Low.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
CREATE.
Create riverside plantings of willow and black poplar
Create riparian woodland
Create wetland areas
Create enclosure to upper stretches of farmland
Create bankside habitats

Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
Thanet forms a distinct landscape area defined by the former limits of the island that was cut off from the mainland by the Wantsum Channel; until it silted up approximately 1000 years ago. The island quality is preserved in the way that Thanet rises out of the marshes to a modest height of about 50 metres. The landscape falls into two distinct types, based on the local topography. These are the flat plateau top above the 40 metre contour and the sloping backdrop to the marshes between the 20 and 40 metre contours. This sloping edge runs around the south and west of the chalk outlier from Cliff End, Minster and Monkton to Sarre and St. Nicholas at Wade. The slope and plateau top of the character area give long views over Pegwell Bay and the Chisleth and Worth Marshes. On the seaward side Thanet is characterised by steep chalk cliffs and small sandy bays.

The geology of the Upper Chalk which underlies most of the area is a soft white chalk with abundant flint horizons, hence the use of the latter material for building. The soils of Thanet are nearly all Grade 1 except for small pockets of woodland which mark tiny areas of Grade 3 land.

The Thanet landscape has been an arable one for generations, the good quality easily-worked soils lending themselves to cultivation. Around 1700 BC, the Beaker people discovered the ease with which the Thanet soils could be cultivated where the chalky soils were exposed. Remains of small fields and lyncheots can still sometimes be seen. Other relics of the Bronze Age include hoards of implements such as the one found at Minster in Thanet. Much later, it was on this relatively well-populated and cultivated island that St. Augustine landed in 597 AD.

With the exception of Monkton, settlements are nucleic, centred on mills and former small ports or ferry landings at the edge of the Wantsum Channel, now located on the edge of the marsh. Downbarton and Minster still retain some evidence of their harbours which are thus important monuments. Those located on the seaward side of the island were originally fishing villages but have now burgeoned into an urban network that follows the coastline with few undeveloped breaks. The road pattern encircles the plateau and crosses it in fairly straight routes with large open spaces in between.

Since 1960 there has been a marked increase in the extent of urban land, notably in the coalescence of Ramsgate with both Broadstairs and Margate. Ramsgate-Margate-Broadstairs now forms the largest conurbation in East Kent. This has been, in part, at the expense of some of the few remaining grasslands, for example at what is now Northwood industrial estate. Arable land has also been lost between Cliftonville and Kingsgate at Northdown, St. Lawrence in Ramsgate and through infilling at Birchington. Pasture has been lost to arable land south and west of Garlinge, north of Stone House on the outskirts of Broadstairs and around Manston Aerodrome and Sarre. A few pockets of orchard west of Cliff End have been removed, as have those west of Minster.

Separation of settlements is now enforced through local policy, encouraging the idea of open arable fields or country parks as a way of retaining the intrinsic character of the landscape.

Views on the plateau are wide, simple and unrestricted and there is a sensation of being on elevated ground. One of the most striking characteristics of Thanet are the long views both to the 'island' from the main routes onto it, and back from Thanet over the old Wantsum Channel, now the Chisleth Marshes. It is important that these long views over the flat marshlands are not obscured or marred by development. Already the existing power lines form a significant visual intrusion in the open landscape, as do the new lighting columns of the improved Thanet Way, notably at night. When the Richborough power station is decommissioned it may be possible to remove the power lines as far west as Monkton.

Also distinctive on the coastal side are the dramatic chalk cliffs which are designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) with their narrow strip of remnant grassland alongside. At Kingsgate Bay this drama is enhanced by the striking stacks. Perhaps the most characteristic aspect of Thanet's landscape, however, is its open nature. The lack of vegetation is in part historic, due to early intensive agriculture. It is thought that the centre of Thanet, for instance, would originally have been heavily wooded.

The unenclosed nature of the landscape has been exacerbated since the last war by the loss of elm trees and hedgerows to Dutch elm disease. This loss of vegetation has allowed the suburban edges of the seaside towns to spill into the landscape visually. Further proposals, such as the Manston Business Park and Allan Grange Park, may intensify the sense of intrusion into the rural landscape. Undoubtedly a buffer strip of hedgerows, shaws, woodland and copses would soften and green these edges.

Thanet and Pegwell Bay have strong connections with William Dyce and Charles Dickens. The seaside scenes in David Copperfield were set around Ramsgate and Pegwell Bay, and Charles Dickens himself lived in Broadstairs for a time. Christina Rossetti wrote the evocative In the Bleak Midwinter Christmas carol on a very cold day in Birchington.
THANET

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Open, large scale arable fields with predominance of brassicas. Long views. Central domed ridge to the island, with the aerodrome dominant on the crest. Exposed landscape, historically long denuded seaside/coastal influence with big skies. Suburban character to towns. Open cliff-tops, bleak, grassy spaces.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
Despite visual detractors such as high rise coastal development, main roads and lighting, the large-scale open landscape is considered to be coherent in its pattern of elements. This, however, is an intensively farmed landscape with limited natural habitats; and the effect of coastal and commercial development overwhelms the local vernacular building styles of historic villages, although there are important heritage sites such as abbeys and windmills. The vulnerability of the farmed landscape, the lack of natural habitats and the negative impact of recent development leaves the landscape in poor condition.

Sensitivity
The sense of place in Thanet is very strong, in part due to the island quality, accentuated by the dominant landform and long views. The area has both historic and ancient characteristics associated with settlements and road patterns, farming and cultural use. The open views contribute to the high sensitivity of the Thanet landscape.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
The cultural associations need to be restored in this landscape. This entails the definition and enhancement of the settlement pattern, some of which is historical and some more recent. This is a straightforward strategy for small, historic villages on the marsh edge, but is a more complicated issue for the coastal conurbations. The restoration of coastal influences, historically graphically represented by windmills, piers, marshes and sea defences, should be considered in new design and in the management of coastal zones. Although it is recognised that access throughout the island is important, the perception of access and circulation responding to the domed, island landform should be restored: the main circulation linking the coastal settlements; developments and circulation within the domed centre of the island should be minimised and simplified to ensure an uncluttered landscape. Formal blocks of localised screen planting should be avoided; any planting associated with built development should accentuate and respect the landform and be applicable to the wider landscape. The perception of reduced interest in the arable areas may be addressed by the less intensive cultivation of some arable land, and the re-introduction of field boundaries such as boundary mounds. The central, open landscape is a particular feature to maintain.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Pattern of elements: Coherent.
Detracting features: Some.
Visual Unity: Coherent.
Cultural integrity: Variable.
Ecological integrity: Weak.
Functional Integrity: Weak.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

RESTORE.
Restore the importance of historic and ancient features
Restore the scale and containment of small settlements on the edge of the marshes
Restore coastal and sea-edge influences in the location and detail of the built form
Restore areas of scrub planting on areas of marginal vegetation and marsh edges
Restore semi-natural habitats along cliff-tops which are not developed
Restore and enhance views/sea views from key locations
Ensure that development and associated planting respect and enhance the landform
THE BLEAN

Character Area Description

This local area is defined by the limits of an outcrop of London Clay that includes Whitstable and Herne Bay on the north coast and the domed landscape of the Blean woodlands which drops down to the outskirts of Canterbury. The landscape rises to over 80 metres in the west around the village of Blean, gradually dropping eastwards to the 20 metre contour, towards the Wantsum and lower Stour Marshes and the coast.

The clay is blue-marine clay weathering to brown with a renowned fossil association as part of its makeup. It outcrops as cliffs on the coast near Herne Bay and is very susceptible to erosion; sometimes at the rate of three metres per year. Fossils are often found exposed at the coast near Herne Bay.

The soils derived from the clay are slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged clayey soils mostly with brown sub-soils. Some are silty or loamy soils over clayey base soils with better drained soils on the slopes. The traditional use of these soils has been for dairying with some cereals, deciduous or coniferous woodlands. Between Blean and the coast behind Whitstable and Herne Bay there still exists a well developed field system, but much has been opened to arable uses.

The domed high ground, known as 'The Blean' is dominated by ancient woodland or ancient replanted woodland, most of it designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and it is also a candidate Special Area for Conservation (SAC). It remains as one of the most extensive semi-natural woodlands in Kent and the south east of England. The most densely wooded landscapes correspond to poorer soil, although the perimeter areas have been cleared for agriculture. The acid soil conditions support a significant area of dense heathy woodland, much of which is managed as hornbeam and chestnut coppice and which harbours the last few colonies of the rare Heath Fritillary butterfly. Other woodland types include single-age stands, regenerative birch and scrub, and oak standards within the coppice. Views from the cleared edges of the woodland can be long-reaching and dramatic, for instance the view of the conurbation and seascape of Herne Bay from Thornden Wood. Looking south, the city of Canterbury can be surveyed from the higher ground of Tyler Hill.

Wooded areas include Thornden, Clowes, and Honey Wood near Tyler Hill, Church Wood and East Blean Wood. Small pockets of Grade 2 land reflect the overlying drift deposits such as Head Brickearth found around Amery Corner and Cutballs Farm, and those deposited in the old channel of the Sarre Penn through Chislet Park, Rushbourne Manor and Hoades Court.

The landscape varies from the flatter land close to Whitstable, north of the A299, to the rising, rounded, often wooded heights of the Blean woods to the south. Whitstable itself is a mix of white painted clapboard, seaside villas, bungalows and colourful beach huts. Most noticeable is the wind, the sky, the muddy sand flats and the openness of the seaside space.

Brett Gravels are the last remaining industrial function within the town harbour, although the Seasalter Fish Company still runs a whelk operation. The famous Whitstable oysters are also still farmed and brought ashore here, sadly not in the numbers that they once were. The harbour is very much alive even though the railway, the Whitstable Harbour Branch, from Canterbury, was closed in the late 1950s.

The centre of the town is very 'unspoiled' having local shops and individual merchants rather than the big chains, but it suffers from heavy traffic. It has a thriving local artist population.

The new Thanet Way cuts through Clapham Hill above Whitstable south of the A299. Over Clapham Hill the landscape rolls down the valley and up to Pean Hill.

Along the coastline, holiday chalets and insubstantial housing, a mix of horse pasture or grazing goats, cast a suburban air but the backdrop of wooded hills provides a remote setting. The occasional square oast implies the presence of hops in the past, with some evidence of orchards in the place names and in the presence of residual poplars, but no orchards or hops are present now. Diamond spile fencing is used in both Whitstable and on individual rural cottages.

Some open areas still exist between Herne Bay and Whitstable which are currently protected by local planning policy.
THE BLEAN

PHOTOGRAPH

Densely wooded, rounded hilltops with sparse nucleic settlements and few roads within the woodland. Flat coastal plain. Haphazard seaside and leisure development. Neglected pasture near the coast- a high proportion of unfarmed land.

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
The landform of the Blean is clearly defined from the open, flat coastal plain to the rounded, wooded hills in the south of the area. The landscape elements are coherent, but piecemeal development and unsympathetic land use interrupts some of the woodland, and coastal development with road links detract from some open views. The ecological value is strong in the woodland and at the coast, but weaker in intermediate areas, despite areas of rough grassland - links between the two are also weak. Built development has a moderately negative impact on the area as a whole. There is also much unfarmed land near the coast. In general the land use is not intensive, and access remains limited across the large wooded ridge. Overall, the condition of the area is high.

Sensitivity
The Blean has one of the largest areas of ancient woodland within Kent and retains a very strong time-depth. The type of tree cover is very distinctive, but other historic features such as small pastures within the woodland, and wet-fenced pastures on the coastal strip, are becoming indistinct. Recent built form is also indistinct. Tree cover is widespread on the hill tops but stops abruptly at the top of lower slopes. Visibility is therefore considered to be moderate.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Conserve the ancient characteristics of the woodland including the density and management of the characteristic species. The limited access of the woodland lanes should also be conserved. The hedged farmland on the lower slopes requires reinforcement of the landscape pattern, and also requires reinforced links with the woodland on higher ground so that the woodland character extends towards the coastal plain. This may also encompass the route of the Thanet Way which currently bisects the character area. The natural landscape features of the coastal plain -such as open grassland and wet fencing - should be reinforced and linked with the wooded characteristics of the southern Blean where there is natural drainage.

CONSERVE AND REINFORCE.

Conserve tree cover and specific mix of species - oak, hornbeam and chestnut coppice
Reinforce the field pattern and enclosure on the lower slopes
Reinforce the links between coastal plain and wooded ridge
Reinforce natural habitats on the coastal plain

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE
CREATE
RESTORE
CONSERVE & CREATE
CONSERVE & RESTORE
CONSERVE & REINFORCE
RESTORE & CREATE
REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

Pattern of elements: Coherent.
Detracting features: Some.
Visual Unity: Coherent.
Cultural integrity: Good.
Ecological integrity: Moderate.
Functional Integrity: Strong.

Sensitivity

Distinctiveness: Characteristic.
Continuity: Historic.
Sense of Place: Moderate.
Landform: Apparent.
Extent of tree cover: Intermittent.
Visibility: Moderate.

REGIONAL: North East Kent

Condition

good

CREATE & REINFORCE
CONSERVE & CREATE
CONSERVE

moderate

CREATE & CREATE
CONSERVE & CREATE
CONSERVE

poor

CREATE
RESTORE & CREATE
RESTORE

low moderate high

Sensitivity

PREVIOUS <<
THE EASTERN SCARP

The pattern of intensively farmed scarp-foot fields and dense woodland above is continued on the eastern side of the valley. In the north, a small area of flat, riverside marshes is included within the AONB. Despite being dominated by overhead wires and pylons, the narrow, scrub-flecked ditches and rough tussocky grass give the area a sense of wildness.

The hedges here are in poor condition, but the woodlands on the upper slopes give weight and emphasis to the scarp, helping to contain the influence of the valley developments outside the AONB. There have been cement works on the river here since the 19th century and cement blocks have been used locally since that time. A good example of this can be seen at Borstal Court Farm, on the edge of Rochester.

MEDWAY

The Eastern Scarp character area is part of the larger Medway character area of the Kent Downs AONB.

The Medway Valley, running between Maidstone and Rochester, divides the AONB into two sections. In common with the other river valleys crossing the Downs, this was one of the earliest areas of permanent settlement in Kent. The long history of human activity in this area is illustrated by the group of prehistoric sites, such as Kits Coty standing stones, which form the most important group of Megalithic monuments east of the Berkshire Downs. There are several Roman sites here and the ancient trackway, now known as the Pilgrim's Way, passes through this area.

The AONB covers the scarp and scarp foot within the Medway Valley character, but excludes the industrial valley bottom. Despite the urban developments, however, the Medway Valley provides an important rural buffer between the Medway towns and Maidstone.

The steep scarp slopes, which enclose the river valley, rise sharply up behind rolling, intensively cultivated fields. There has never been a strong hedgerow network on the lower part of the scarp foot and the few hedges that do exist are mostly narrow and gappy. It is characteristic, however, to find thicker, overgrown hedges surrounding the fields on the upper slopes, above which swathes of dense, mixed woodland dominate the skyline, separating the valley and the Downs. These woodlands, and the mosaic of unimproved grassland and scrub associated with them, are of national nature conservation importance, both for their flora and fauna.
THE EASTERN SCARP: MEDWAY

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Lower slopes of scarp and wild riverside marshes in AONB. Intensive open arable fields, woodlands on upper slopes. Views of adjacent cement works, overhead wires and pylons.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
The landscape elements are coherent, but are interrupted by the decline in field boundaries and the lack of contour-related shaws. There are many visual detractors; industrial farm buildings, landfill sites and overhead cables are highly visible. Longer views are interrupted by the industrial development of the lower valley. The ecological interest of the area is very weak as there is very little natural vegetation within the intense arable farmland. Built form has a highly negative impact. Rural heritage features are not readily apparent.

Sensitivity
Ancient highways and historic farmsteads form the basis of the landscape, but now contribute little to the local distinctiveness. Hedgerows have suffered additionally from the loss of elms. The local sense of place is very weak. Sensitivity is considered to be moderate due to the high visibility over the open landscape.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Restore woodland links from the higher wooded ridge to the land-folds of the lower slopes, Replant shaws. Restore hedgerow along highways. Create appropriate settings for historic farmsteads and more recent settlements.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS


SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

RESTORE AND CREATE.
Restore hedges along roads. Restore wooded shaws. Create settings for settlements.

CONTEXT
Regional: Kent Downs AONB

Condition

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Sensitivity

The only major area of residential growth on Romney Marsh is found on the coastal strip between Hythe and Dungeness. But this area also incorporates the natural coastal features of sand dunes, shingle and intertidal mudflats, many of which are of international ecological importance.

If left to natural forces, the coastline would be inundated by the sea. Response to this increasing pressure has already occurred as the present sea wall at Dymchurch, built in the 19th century, is set back some 50 metres from the earlier coastline. Kentish ragstone was the core material in its construction and there are a few fine construction details associated with the marsh drainage sluices which empty at low tide. On the seaward side, massive structures to combat powerful wave action have been engineered in concrete.

Land use is the dominant element in this character area. The linear form of the 20th century coastal settlements follow the sea wall in a string of undistinguished houses and caravan parks. These have developed around the only original coastal settlement of Dymchurch, and continue all along the previously unsettled shoreline. Where the sea wall has been constructed around Dymchurch, the new housing sits behind the structure; only the pitches of roofs showing above the steep grassy banks.

The grander forms of early 20th century guesthouses do exist, but the main expression of the coast as a holiday location is holiday camps and caravan parks, the former having become prevalent in the 1930s. Built form lines the coastal road, with no distinction of individual developments or communities. Some heritage features provide focal points of interest, such as the early 19th century installations of robust, squat Martello towers, two of which survive as tourist attractions along the Romney Coast. Even more imposing is the Dymchurch Redoubt, built in the same era on a massive earth bank, now situated just behind the sea wall, visible from inland.

In contrast to the statuesque military features, the coastline also displays its fishing heritage; boats are drawn up on the shingle beaches, and some fishing huts survive.

One of the most renowned features of the holiday coast is the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway - a working steam-powered railway on a miniature scale which runs along the edge of the urban area. Some residential developments have been built around the line, incorporating special miniature bridges over the track. It is an unorthodox, but real, method of transport, and says much about the individuality of the marsh.

The natural landscape of the coast is a recognised haven for birds which is of international status. The seafront can be bleak and exposed, but the landform is flat, as elsewhere on the marsh, and views are exhilarating. Various conditions of tidal mudflats, shingle and aeolian sand dunes provide a variety of breeding grounds and landfall sites for migrating birds.

Romney Warren Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which falls in the coastal area, is a stabilised dune system; grassy and open, now used as a golf course. It is notable for its grasses and clovers. It is also the only open stretch of coast in this area where building has not reached the shore, and as such retains the natural quality of the landscape where sand, stone and special colonies of grasses merge with the sea.

In the summer, the extensive sandy beaches can heave with holidaymakers from the caravan sites, or day-trippers. Uncoordinated and unrestrained advertising and signing, which is linked with the tourism, undermines the inherent quality of this area.
THE ROMNEY COAST

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

The coastal landscape is coherent as linear settlements and coastal defences follow the beach and tidal zones, but it is interrupted by restricted views to the sea, and development into the marshland. There are many visual detractors which include a proliferation of overhead cables, general road furniture and fencing, and unsympathetic commercial development. The built form is varied and has a moderate negative impact, in some cases due to the poor repair of buildings. The ecological integrity of the grasslands and tidal zone is mainly undisturbed and remains strong. Other heritage features of historic military defences and the major sea defences and drainage outlets have a positive impact on the area.

Sensitivity

This area has some unique and rare features which include the dune, grassland and coastal vegetation, and more notably the individualistic built form, some of which is recent. The area itself has a recent time depth overall. The sense of place is considered to be moderate. Visibility is very high and this results in the landscape being highly sensitive.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Conserve coastal habitats; grasslands, dunes and intertidal zones. Conserve individualistic built form. Restore the sense of place to the coastal road. Restore appropriate settings to historic buildings. Restore appropriate approaches to access to the sea wall, where views of the sea are limited.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE AND RESTORE.
This is a low-lying, flat to gently undulating farmed landscape associated with the well-drained Head Brickearths west of the Great Stour to the north of Ashford. Most of the land use is a mix of cereal and field vegetables with a small percentage of orchards and grassland developed on the mainly deep high quality soils.

Generally, because of the prevalence of arable farming, the fields are large and the landscape is open as a result. This contrasts with the Stour Valley itself, which is still pastoral on the wetter soils close to the river.

Woodland is not a feature of this character area, although small copses and clumps do occur. The railway to Canterbury runs along the eastern boundary to the site but does not impinge to any great extent. From most places the presence of the North Downs encloses views over the landscape to the north-east. Beyond Boughton Corner, this enclosure is more marked and the sliver of character area from this point is included in the North Downs AONB.

A notable feature just north of Ashford are the parklands of Kennington Hall. Kennington itself can be viewed from the Stour farmlands. Considerable development is proposed south-east of Kennington at Little Burton Farm which could have an impact on farmland to the north as well as on the Stour Valley character area to the south.

The Stour Gap has changed considerably since the 1960's when well over half the land use was either pasture or orchard. What must have been then a varied landscape of small hedged fields and flowery orchards has changed to one of open monocultures of cereals and vegetables. The landscape would be enhanced if some of the characteristic valley hedgerows or shelterbelts could be restored within the existing land uses.
**THE STOUR - STOUR GAP**

**PHOTOGRAPH**

**CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES**
Low-lying flat or gentle undulating landscape with highest quality soils. Open arable farmland enclosed by Downs to the north.

**LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS**

**Condition**

The pattern of landscape elements is fragmented by mixed land use and industrial development. Visual detractors include the intrusion of the urban edge, industrial farm buildings and suburban influences. The network of ditches and streams provides a moderate ecological base within arable areas. Heritage features such as hedgerows and orchards are declining and built form has a moderate negative impact over the whole area. Culturally, the area is in transition and reflects neither the natural drainage or the farmstead bases in the area. The condition is considered to be very poor.

**Sensitivity**

Landscape features tend to be indistinct in character and do not contribute to a strong sense of place, with the exception of some localised details in historic buildings such as steeply pitched roofs and arched mullioned windows. Riparian vegetation and hedgerows are notably indistinct.

**LANDSCAPE ACTIONS**

Create riparian framework for fields within the lower contours, and small copses and shaws in the more elevated arable farmland.
Create a new setting for this stretch of the Pilgrims Way which reflects the rich farming heritage and links adjacent farmland.
Create an urban edge - this could focus on streams and water courses.
Create a design code which reflects the strengths of the local built form.

**SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS**

**Condition**

Pattern of elements: Incoherent.
Detracting features: Some.
Visual Unity: Interrupted.
Cultural integrity: Poor.
Ecological integrity: Moderate.
Functional Integrity: Weak.

**Sensitivity**

Distinctiveness: Indistinct.
Continuity: Historic.
Sense of Place: Weak.
Landform: Insignificant.
Extent of tree cover: Open.
Visibility: Moderate.

**SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

CREATE.

Create riparian vegetation
Create small copses and shaws
Create an appropriate framework for the Pilgrims Way, including selected areas of farmed land
Create an urban edge
Create a design code for built form
The Great Stour flows through a flat, narrow valley of floodplain alluviums that are generally clayey or silty and subjected to seasonal waterlogging. The river is shallow, clear and fast-flowing and is characteristically well vegetated, both within its channel and on its banks. In several places the river’s course can be tracked from afar via the pollarded willows on its banks.

The low lying river landscape is of lowland clay character, and is a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) from Ashford downstream. Whilst unimproved pasture is virtually non existent alongside the river now, some semi-improved pastures do remain including the narrow, flat fields north of Lee’s Farm up to the boundary with the AONB south of Wye. Most of the rest of the land in the valley is now arable although the soils are not of the highest quality.

In recent decades, low water flows during the summer months have led to concern over the habitats and wildlife within the river valley.

Little building occurs on the valley alluviums because of their liability to flooding, and the river is not crossed again by a vehicular bridge until Wye. The outskirts of this village stand up rather starkly over the farmland.

Over the length of the valley, the Downs are visible to the north.
THE STOUR - STOUR VALLEY

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Flat, low-lying valley with alluvial soils subjected to seasonal waterlogging. Shallow, clear fast-flowing river with generally well-vegetated banks of high nature conservation value. Mixed farmland of irregular sheep-grazed pasture and larger arable fields. Sparse settlement and crossing points. Long views to North Downs.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
This is a coherent landscape in which farmland within the flat valley leads down to the river channel itself. The pattern is interrupted due to the reduced emphasis on riparian vegetation and the reduced visual quality of drainage ditches within the agricultural land. The strong semi-natural habitats of the river corridor runs through farmland which has some intensive use, and therefore the ecological integrity of the whole area is moderate. Culturally, the area remains generally unsettled and the land use reflects the nature of the soils. It is considered to be in moderate condition.

Sensitivity
The flat valley is the dominant part of the open view, and visibility is therefore very high. There are few features which contribute to a locally distinct sense of place, with the exception of the river itself. Ditches on field boundaries are characteristic. The lack of settlement is also characteristic. There are few elements which indicate time depth; there are occasional recent agricultural buildings in the view.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Create habitat diversity within ditches in farmland, ensuring that this also increases the visual quality of the ditches.
Create a riparian vegetated corridor, including areas of wetland grasses and wetland tree plantations.
Conserve the sparse settlement pattern and integrity of river crossings.
Conserve the river course and banks.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
RESTORE AND CREATE.
Conserve the river corridor and banks
The Stour Valley incorporates the flat-bottomed floodplain of the Great Stour and Little Stour rivers. It is a narrow character area which runs from south west of Canterbury, then through the city itself and on to Grove at the edge of the Chislet marshes. The Little Stour drains a small area from Wickhambreaux and Wingham down to its outlet on the marsh of West Stourmouth.

The valley is well contained as the fertile, well cultivated sides rise resolutely on either side of the flat valley floor. Near Canterbury, the banks are steeper and accentuated by woodland on the tops. At Chartham and Stamford Street the slopes are dramatically steep.

The course of the river winds through wet, marshy and reed fringed land which has scrub and dense riparian vegetation along the river margins. Agriculturally, it is classified as poor, the alluvial soils being generally waterlogged with some peat.

Wetland pasture is still much in evidence although larger arable fields sweep up the valley sides, such as near Trenleypark Wood. The pasture still exists in small pockets either side of the meandering river, where it is drained by a close network of regular ditches. A variety of scrub vegetation and trees, including poplars and willows, line the ditches and enclose small spaces within the valley.

Original settlements were built at the edge of the fluvial marshland, such as the villages of Westbury and Fordwich. Roman roads followed the edge of the floodplain or the higher ground. The city of Canterbury, which was founded on the edge of the Stour, has now spilled out into the Stour Valley in the form of housing estates, light industry and car retail units. Pylons are also much in evidence along the Great Stour near Sturry and the outskirts of the city. The river itself becomes lost in a unmanaged strip between developments, except where the heavy detailing the highway bridges makes it apparent.

There are few routes which cross the two valleys, but busy feeder roads to the industrial units and the main routes out of Canterbury traverse the length of the Great Stour. A railway line enforces the impact of the transport corridor, and inhibits access across the valley. Near the urban areas, the valley is noisy and fragmented.

Both rivers are characterised by the old watermills which can be found along their courses. At Wickhambreaux, the tall weatherboarded mill house provides a striking feature at the edge of the picturesque village. Mill ponds and mill races are part of the watercourse, now redundant and overgrown in many cases, such as in Milner Close near Fordwich.

The much shorter course of the Little Stour runs through a banked canalised section through the tiny hamlet of Seaton. The river was diverted during the 18th century to serve a purpose-built mill and now follows a shallow depression through wetland pasture.

Gravel extraction has been a major influence on the valley landscape. Wet pits cover vast areas of the valley floor from Chilham to Upstreet. Old pits with open water, spits and islands, and the surrounding marshland, provide Kent's most extensive water and wetland habitats at Westbere Marshes, Stodmarsh and Preston Marshes.

Stodmarsh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) includes the lakes at Westbere. Its marsh is also protected as a National Nature Reserve. Visually, it is an intriguing watery plain which widens as it approaches the Chislet marshes into a colourful spread of grassland, reedbeds and scrub. There are also some mono-species tree plantations associated with the gravel workings.

The underlying peaty soils have given rise to very large reedbeds (Phragmites australis) and fen plants where the reeds have been cut. Rich habitats are also found where the ditches between wetland pastures are sensitively maintained and cleared of reeds: the rare rootless duckweed (Wolffia arriza) and sharp-leaved pondweed (Potomageton acutifolius) have been found at Stodmarsh.

The wide valley mouths can be viewed either side from the gentle rise of Grove Hill in the East Kent Horticulture Belt. Both plains have been affected by coal mining activities; Stodmarsh contains central lagoons caused by mining subsidence in the Chislet colliery, and the Little Stour has been polluted with saline water from Tilmanstone colliery, reducing its diversity of aquatic plants. The sites attract many breeding and wintering birds, some rare such as Cetti’s warbler which breeds here in significant numbers.

To the south west of Canterbury, around Stamford Street and Chartham, the Great Stour Valley is far more traditionally rural. It is well enclosed by the steep sides of the valley and is inherently small scale; outside the urban areas of Canterbury, shady pastures on the flat.
THE STOUR VALLEY

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Flat valley floor, widening towards the river mouth. Long distance views of Canterbury Cathedral. Valley sides are steep, dropping in height as the valley widens towards the river mouth. Wetland pasture drained by well vegetated ditches and dykes; small scale, well enclosed field pattern. Marshland, colourful reeds and grasses, lakes and open water. Rich and diverse habitats. Settlement on river at edge of floodplain and linear settlement surrounding the valley. Watermills.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS
Condition
The flat valley floor and pastoral landscape is coherent, but interrupted by linear settlements along the road and around existing hills. Visual detractors include transport corridors and the urban edge. The river is the basis for a strong ecological corridor with a surrounding network of ditches, and some unfarmed marsh, wetlands and open water. The extent of tree cover is poor, although there is some plantation woodland - tree lines along water courses are generally mature. Historic cores to enlarged settlements, vernacular details and historic water mills are noticeable within more recent development. Built form has a moderate positive impact. The condition of the area is considered to be moderate.

Sensitivity
Visibility is high in the open landscape and this influences the high sensitivity of the area. The dominant time depth is historic, although an ancient highway follows the valley floor. Mills, river crossings and tree lined ditches confirm the historic influences which are characteristic of the area and give a moderate sense of place.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Conserve ditches and the pattern of sinuous pastures. Conserve the strong ecological corridor of the river, wetlands and ditch network, and enhance it with sensitive management. Conserve areas of non-intensive use within farmland. Restore managed tree cover in and around areas of settlement. Conserve and restore tree lines along water courses.

CONTEXT
Regional: North East Kent

Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>SENSITIVE FEATURES</th>
<th>CONSERVE</th>
<th>CREATE &amp; CONSERVE</th>
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Sensitivity

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS
Condition

<table>
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<th>Condition</th>
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<td>Visual Unity</td>
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Sensitivity

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE AND RESTORE.
Conserve and manage ditch network, wetlands, marsh and wet pastures
Conserve and restore tree lines and managed riparian trees near settlement.

previous <<

Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
The marshlands around the north-east Kent coast are the reclaimed and silted up course of the Wantsum Channel and the former mouth of the River Stour. The flat and open landscape continues around the coast to the Sandwich flats and the Lydden valley, which is located between Sandwich and Deal. The flat landform dominates and the landscape is large-scale with very long views, but it is bordered by the gentle slopes of the Thanet chalk and the horticultural belt. This adjacent higher ground abuts the marsh in a very irregular pattern, softening and adding interest to an otherwise uniform expanse; all views contain some background element of landform. From a viewpoint at Upstreet, the eye is drawn to the twin towers of the Richborough power station and the wind turbine, and to the church tower of St Nicholas at Wade, on Thanet. Centrally located in the marsh are the banked and snaking forms of the Stour and Wantsum rivers which are now surrounded by open fields. Archaeological evidence of activity in the Iron and Bronze Ages has been found here, but is known that the sea and river channels were navigable during the Roman occupation.

The present field pattern is fairly small and regular, described by a network of drainage ditches, dykes and flood control banks. Where these are intensively cleared and managed, they are almost imperceptible from any distance. Where the clearance is less intensive, the watercourses are reed-fringed and give a sense of scale and some enclosure to the land. Reed-fringed dykes can still be found near Grove Ferry. Current farming practices tend towards the removal of some open drainage ditches. This is noticeable in the Chislet marshes where remnant lines of reeds and pollard willows can be seen.

Soils are heavy alluvial clay, generally poor quality and subject to flooding and waterlogging. The land was originally reclaimed as summer pasture for sheep, for each of the adjacent parishes and this is reinforced in the place names in the marsh. The Ash Levels were gradually reclaimed and used in the drier seasons by the inhabitants of Ash - there are also the Monkton, Minster and Chislet marshes, each associated with their various parishes. Much of the land was owned and reclaimed by the wealthy abbeys in the area. Parish boundaries continue down on to the marshland, encompassing the reclaimed territory up to the banks of the Stour. Currently, arable farming is the major land use on the plain around Thanet due to agricultural improvements and drainage. The reclamation continues; areas of the Stour near Upstreet and Grove have been reclaimed for farming within the last 30 years. Evidence of the former pastoral use, such as sheep fencing and gates, has almost totally disappeared. Small patches of unimproved grasslands still exist, such as on the edge of the Ash levels. Former salt works are also evident.

There is no settlement within the marsh. Roads across it are still limited to the few original crossing places; these link the routes that follow the edge of the adjacent higher ground. Drove roads (reputedly to be former groynes associated with reclamation) leading from the villages into the marsh end abruptly, thus reducing the accessibility of the marsh and enforcing its remoteness. Settlements on the edge of the area are usually the sites of original ferry crossings, such as Grove Ferry which persisted as a ferry crossing until the late 1950s.

The eastern marshes, around Sandwich and Worth, have more of a coastal influence. Views are open to the sea. This is a comparatively smaller-scale marshland which was also systematically reclaimed by ecclesiastical landowners around Sandwich. It is bordered by sand dunes and the coastal mudflats of Sandwich Bay. In particular, the Lydden Valley (near Sandwich), which is drained by the North Stream, is quiet and relatively pastoral; the watercourses are still prevalent and it appears to be less intensively farmed where there are arable crops. It is extremely inaccessible and remote, although transected by the Minster to Deal railway line. The remote marshes are predictably rich in wildlife where they are not intensively farmed and drained. The rich habitats of the Lydden Valley and the Hacklinge Marshes are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The banks of the North Stream are included within the designated area. Around Hacklinge, the dykes and marshland support an unusual fen vegetation on alluvial and peat soils, and they attract a variety of breeding birds; some rare, such as the Cetti's Warbler.

Sandwich itself is located in a loop of the River Stour within the marshland. It was formerly an important port and still has a remarkably complete medieval town centre which adjoins the river. Richborough has been strategically important since the Roman invaders built the castle on a promontory within the marshes. The last 100 years has seen the area evade the development of a major port, but it has become a repository for large industrial buildings (including the electricity power station) and for waste materials. Large buildings are in scale with the open landscape, but they are served by wide, fast roads and are enclosed with incongruous security fencing and cosmetic planting, thus detracting from this atmospheric location. Weatherlees Hill at Richborough is noted for its orchids. Along the coast, there is a long barrier of aeolian sand dunes which lie between the marshes and the sea. They form a small but individual character area on the edge of the marsh with their characteristic grasses and maritime influences. The dunes are used almost exclusively as golf courses, and as such are protected from use by the wider public. About 40 species of grass have been found in the sandy coastal grassland, and there are other numerous rare plants such as the lizard orchid, which can be found at the Royal St George Golf Links. The coastal mudflats of Pegwell and Sandwich Bay are designated within the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which covers the Hacklinge marshes and the sand dunes. They are also internationally important for bird life, providing a landfall for migrating birds and breeding grounds for a range of rare summer and winter bird populations.
THE WANTSUM AND LOWER STOUR MARSHES

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Flat, open and remote. No settlement on marshland.
Reculver Towers and Richborough Fort mark the end of the Wantsum Channel.
Regular field pattern fringed with dykes and drainage ditches. Flood defences are characteristic elements.
River courses, flooding and waterlogging.
Coastal influences—climate, sand dunes and seabirds.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
The flat landscape of the former sea channel retains its characteristic long views and isolated stretches of farmland crossed by drainage channels. It is coherent as reclaimed marsh but few natural grasslands now exist and the intensive use for arable cultivation—with intensive management of ditches—have reduced the visual and ecological interest. There are very few visible lines of vegetation associated with drainage. Built development is encroaching on some edges and detracting features such as the urban edge, fencing and farm buildings and road bridges are increasing and become prominent in the flat landscape.

Sensitivity
Visibility is generally high in the flat, open landscape. The area is otherwise slightly contained by the low rises of Thanet and the East Kent Horticultural Belt to the north and south respectively, opening out to the sea at Sandwich. The historic pattern of ditches and sea defences are becoming indistinct where there are new road patterns and new uses.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Restore the visual interest of drainage channels by restoring grasses and reeds.
Restore the ecological diversity of ditches by sensitive management.
Create ecologically rich wetland/marsh/grasslands. Linear and marginal habitats at the upper edge of the marshland and along flood defences could reinforce the edge of the low-lying land where the distinction is weakest.
Restore land patterns governed by historic sea defences and land drainage, noting the hierarchy of natural drainage channels and the subsequent man-made reclamation.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

RESTORE AND CREATE.
Restore ecological and visual interest of drainage channels
Create wetland/marsh/grassland
Create new reed beds
Restore land patterns of drainage and sea defences
THE WESTERN SCARP: MEDWAY

THE WESTERN SCARP
The intensively cultivated belt of arable land along the scarp foot is the result of the slow but constant washing of light chalky soils from the scarp. The resulting land is very fertile and many of the apparently modern, huge ploughed fields along this belt have, in reality, scarcely changed in appearance for over a century. Nevertheless, there is a sense of ‘prairie farming’ here, which is increasingly accentuated by the gradual loss or decay of hedges, especially along the roadsides. The lower slopes of the scarp bear the scars of former chalk quarries, whose clear affinity with industry threaten the integrity of the rural character of the AONB.

MEDWAY
The Western Scarp lies within the Medway Valley character area.

The Medway Valley, running between Maidstone and Rochester, divides the AONB into two sections. In common with the river valleys crossing the Downs, this was one of the earliest areas of permanent settlement in Kent. The long history of human activity in this area is illustrated by the group of prehistoric sites, such as Kits Coty standing stones, which form the most important group of Megalithic monuments east of the Berkshire Downs. There are several Roman sites here and the ancient trackway, now known as the Pilgrim's Way, passes through this area.

The AONB covers the scarp and scarp foot within the Medway Valley character, but excludes the industrial valley bottom. Despite the urban developments, however, the Medway Valley provides an important rural buffer between the Medway towns and Maidstone.

The steep scarp slopes, which enclose the river valley, rise sharply up behind rolling, intensively cultivated fields. There has never been a strong hedgerow network on the lower part of the scarp foot and the few hedges that do exist are mostly narrow and gappy. It is characteristic, however, to find thicker, overgrown hedges surrounding the fields on the upper slopes, above which swathes of dense, mixed woodland dominate the skyline, separating the valley and the Downs. These woodlands, and the mosaic of unimproved grassland and scrub associated with them, are of national nature conservation importance, both for their flora and fauna.
THE WESTERN SCARP: MEDWAY

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Fertile base of chalk scarp.
Historically large open arable fields with further loss of enclosure by hedgerow removal.
Chalk quarries and industry.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
There is a coherent pattern of elements within this landscape area as the fertile base of the chalk scarp opens to large arable fields below the wooded scarp. Visual detractors include tipping, quarries and views of the motorway and industry beyond. The ecologically-rich clusters of small woods and streams and wet pits are curtailed in areas of intensive arable cultivation; the ecological integrity of the landscape area is therefore moderate. Heritage features are variable; urban development overlooking the river does not respect local character, but there are historic farmsteads which demonstrate the vernacular and enhance the sense of place. Field boundaries are few and vulnerable within areas of intensive cultivation.

Sensitivity
Visibility is high due to the dominance of the scarp slope landform. The sense of place has become moderate due to the intensity of land use on the lower slopes and the resultant loss of rural landscape features. The sensitivity of the area, however, remains high. Historic farmsteads and villages contribute to the time-depth and distinctiveness - ragstone is widely used as a distinctive local material. Settlement patterns based on large farmsteads, the Pilgrim's Way and spring line villages are becoming obscured. Remaining woodland and hedgerow are of distinctive species, but are in decline. Narrow, ancient highway routes, are characteristic features which enhance the continuity of the area.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Conserve the distinction between the wooded scarp and the lower arable fields, ensuring that the wooded edge remains dense.
Restore the wooded edge to the lower scarp in areas of urban development.
Introduce areas of less intensive arable cultivation associated with the wooded shaws.
Conserve the narrow routes of highways, following contours.
Conserve and restore the characteristics and enclosure of ancient highways.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Pattern of elements: Coherent.
Detracting features: Some.
Visual Unity: Coherent.
Cultural integrity: Variable.
Ecological integrity: Moderate.
Functional Integrity: Coherent.

CONSERVE AND RESTORE.

Conserve the large-scale of open arable fields
Restore ecological interest to arable areas
Conserve broadleaf woodlands and the strong wooded edge to the lower slopes
Restore some wooded shaws to the arable land
Conserve and restore the characteristics and enclosure of ancient highways
Restore hedgerows and shaws, and hedged enclosure to roads

Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
A flat generally open landscape of the Great Stour and East Stour rivers, the land use is one of mixed farming with crest top woodlands, as at Godinton Park, enclosing views in the middle distance. These hills are formed from Greensand outliers which intrude into the clay vale in this area. These low ridges also include Hothfield, the site of Godinton House itself, and the outlier that forms Hurst Hill, Clap Hill and that at Great Chart. Occasionally, east of Ashford, there are views north-east over the low rise of the Greensand to the North Downs beyond.

Clumps of field trees and copses provide interest as does the irregular presence of riparian vegetation along the river. Where the river has lost its associated vegetation, however, it is often inconspicuous. Hedgerows are relatively infrequent and often gappy, with many of the field trees being of a similar age with no sign of renewal of the stock. A more intimate enclosed landscape of hedged fields can be found south of The Forstal, on the East Stour, and several old mills add to the historic scene. The loss of hedgerows is associated with the conversion of unimproved pasture to vast, arable or improved pastureland and it is likely that the remaining pasture may be vulnerable to further conversion. The advent of under field drainage and improved mechanisation has allowed this blurring of the traditional land use boundaries between the river floodplain, the clay soils and the freer-draining Greensand.

The loss of hedgerows and trees contributes to a loss of visual unity, and is eroding the traditional wildlife corridors along the river and between the fields.

Diversity is limited to the tree copses, hill top woodlands beyond the character area and residual riverside vegetation, but often the fragmentation of these elements contributes to a discordant sense of change, coupled with an increasingly bland picture, starved of variety, formed by the flat, arable and improved grass fields.

The landscape around the South Willesborough dykes is similarly open but has long views to the suburbs of Ashford. Fingers of pasture and neglected farmland extend right up the A2042 to the town centre. The Ashford to Folkestone railway line cuts across to the north of the area, rarely impinging on the landscape, but this may change significantly when the Channel Tunnel Rail Link is constructed. A major part of the remaining valley character is under pressure for a mixed development at Cheeseman’s Green and Conscience Farm which may be contributing to the sense of neglect and degradation.
UPPER STOUR VALLEY

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Flat, open valley landscape enclosed by outliers of Greensand. Mixed farming including a high percentage of arable. Historic mills on river.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

The flat, arable landscape is showing increasing fragmentation as a result of the loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. The landscape is interrupted by intensive cultivation and visual detractors such as post and wire fencing, overhead cables, transport corridors, industrial development and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. The loss of hedgerows and the intrusion of development contributes to a loss of visual unity. Ecological integrity is moderate, with a network of ditches and streams, although many ditches adjoining agricultural land have been cleared of natural vegetation. Although there is much intensive arable cultivation, there are some areas of neglected land. Field boundaries of ditches and roadside hedgerows are vulnerable. Heritage features contributing to cultural heritage include large red brick farms, estate parkland, ragstone walls and bridges. These have a moderate positive impact on the landscape, although large farm buildings, silos and recent village enlargements detract.

Sensitivity
Strength of character is weak with an indistinct sense of place. The ditch system is not visible except where marked by characteristic pollarded willows and hedgerows are fragmented. Landform is insignificant and the lack of significant tree cover gives a moderate visibility. Overall, the sensitivity of the area is low.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Create a new landscape structure building upon the existing ditches and hedgerows to create linked corridors for wildlife.
Ensure that the important roadside hedgerows are gapped up and reinforced with standard trees to give structure to the landscape.
Create new hedgerows and copses to screen intrusive elements such as the urban edge and transport corridors.
Create new waterside and ditch vegetation using native wetland species and pollarded willows to reinforce the riparian character.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CREATE.
Create a new landscape structure of linked ditches and hedgerows
Gap up roadside hedgerows and reinforce with standard trees
Create and reinforce new hedges and copses to screen intrusions
Create new waterside vegetation including pollarded willows
This undulating landscape of parkland and mixed farming bridges the boundary of the Weald Clay vale at its junction with the Greensand, the parkland straddling this higher, better-drained land from Oxon Hoath in the west to Linton and Boughton Monchelsea in the east.

The farmlands include orchards, a few hop-gardens, pasture, arable and horticultural crops, but further east beyond Linton, the frequency of the pasture increases. The landscape here is composed mainly of small hedged fields of both pasture and arable, with narrow lanes, broad verges and flowery ditches, as this area merges with the Valeside Farmlands beyond. The landscape opens out along its length with its junction with the Beult Valley, however, where the land becomes flatter and larger machinery can be used. This is particularly noticeable between Hunton and Linton.

The distinctive historic parklands of Linton and Hunton, although affected by the 1987 storm, provide stands of majestic trees in rolling, grazing land. The fringes of the old deer park at Oxon Hoath and Royden's Hall also traverse the character area boundary, with the remaining woodlands and pasture at Nettlestead Green Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) nearby perhaps being the remnant of some great medieval park. Together, these parklands supply a rich component in the composition of the landscape, even more so where hedgerow and trees have been removed from the surrounding farmlands, and sheep have given way to static crops.

Many large groups of oasts, scattered in the landscape, bear testimony to the greater distribution of the hop-gardens in earlier years. Most oasts have been converted for housing but occasionally one is used for storage.

Extensive views open out between the parkland and hedgerow trees over the flat main vale of the Low Weald and the Beult Valley below. Northwards, enclosure is given by the Greensand Ridge with its strong pattern of orchards or woodland.

Although in places the traditional mixed farming is being lost to more open arable fields, overall visual unity is conserved by the remaining pleasing mix of pasture, hop and orchard. Where arable dominates, however, it produces a scene with little visual variety, and blurs the boundaries between the Beult valley and these Valeside Farmlands and Parkland. Where the vegetation structure is lost the pylons and main roads, such as the A229 become more intrusive.
VALESIDE FARMS AND PARKLAND

PHOTOGRAPH

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<th>CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES</th>
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<td>Undulating mixed farmlands, residual orchards, hop gardens and pasture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historic parklands straddling the Greensand boundary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong enclosure from Greensand Ridge</td>
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<td>Views over the Beult Valley</td>
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<tr>
<th>LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
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<tr>
<td>This is a tranquil, rural landscape with very few visual detractors. It appears to be an ordered, medium scale rolling landform in which the varied land use is a secondary feature. The estate landscape features are vulnerable, but the area is culturally and visually coherent. The extent of semi-natural habitats is moderate, running through a diverse but limited network of streams, shaws and roadside hedges. Existing woodland trees in general are felt to be vulnerable. Standard oaks in hedgerows are also a mature feature characteristic of the area. This area is considered to be in good condition.</td>
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| Pattern of elements: Coherent |
| Detracting features: Few |
| Visual Unity: Unified |
| Cultural integrity: Variable |
| Ecological integrity: Moderate |
| Functional Integrity: Coherent |

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<th>LANDSCAPE ACTIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reinforce the emphasis on estate layout and boundaries, identifying the distinctive cultural attributes of the estate farms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforce the incidence of mature oaks alongside the highway network and agree long-term management and replanting plans.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reinforce the ecological interest by sensitive management of stream courses and encourage the planting of small copses.</td>
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<th>SUMMARY OF ACTIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>REINFORCE.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reinforce estate parkland characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reinforce and maintain oak trees within the hedgerow network</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reinforce riparian features</td>
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<td>Encourage the planting of small copses</td>
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Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babinie
Some of the most recently reclaimed farmland within Romney Marsh as a whole lies within Walland Marsh on the land which was one of the later channels of the River Rother. This land was opened to the sea after the 13th century storms destroyed the natural coastal defences and was then reclaimed by the marsh inhabitants from marine conditions.

Views on the Walland Marsh Farmlands are not restricted by any landform or feature. It is an exceptionally open, large scale landscape with seemingly infinite horizons. Its southern boundary, which is the sea and coastal sand dunes, is not visible from within the character area. The land is flat, and there is no shelter from any of its extreme weather conditions.

Scrubby forms of willow trees on the horizon are exceptional, but do intimate that this too might once have been a more enclosed farmland. The irregular patterned ditches are further apart, and the field pattern is therefore larger than elsewhere on the Marsh. The impression gained is of total arable cultivation, although there is some pastoral use in the most inaccessible areas.

The potential for selected parts of the marsh to support significant wildlife is demonstrated by the Romney Marsh Nature Reserve; an area of remote farmland which is now actively managed to encourage the development of wetland and grassland habitats. The land within the Nature Reserve is relatively low lying and, although much of it was formerly under arable cultivation, has quickly taken on a wetland character. Banks of old sea walls surround the grassland, some of which has been surface-scraped to provide areas of standing water and reed beds. The area now attracts mixed populations of farmland birds in large numbers, and is also used for summer grazing.

Within Walland Marsh Farmlands there are no through roads, with the exception of concrete farm tracks, and almost no settlements apart from a few large, isolated farms. Farmsteads are located on the ancient settlement areas of the former islands in the saltmarsh - those of Scotney, Agney and Cheyne.

The presence of World War II structures is relatively prominent in this remote, agricultural landscape. The few military houses, old concrete surfacing to tracks and the old wire fences are indicative of the use of Walland Marsh during the war.
WALLAND MARSH FARMLANDS

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Big skies, distant horizons, intense light or weather conditions, very flat. Arable crops, large unenclosed fields, seasonal contrasts in landcover. Very few settlements, no roads, inaccessible. Vestiges of military use—wire fences and concrete roads and fence posts some former military housing.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
This is a simple, large, strongly unified landscape with very few visual detractors. Pylons and isolated agricultural buildings are visible within the wide view. There are some areas of ecologically-rich wet pastures, and an extensive ditch network, but also vast areas of intense arable cultivation with little margin for semi-natural habitats. The network of ditches also constitute a heritage feature, the condition of which varies, but is particularly poor in intensively-managed farmland. Built form is extremely sparse and includes isolated farmsteads on former sandy islands in the marsh, and intriguing vestiges of military use. It has a moderate positive impact on the area due to the isolated setting. The overall condition of the landscape is considered to be moderate.

Sensitivity
This is an extremely open landscape in which the flat landform and large skies are the dominant influence. The land pattern is historic, but there are also more recent time depth elements of remote structures and land use, all of which contribute to a strong sense of place. The sensitivity of the area is considered to be very high.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Conserve open, uncluttered views, ensuring that structures are isolated and limited. Conserve the isolation of settlements. Conserve wildlife habitats. Restore additional grassland habitats. Restore the ecological integrity of the ditch network by the sensitive management of water levels and less intensive cultivation of ditch margins.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Conserve and restore. Conserve open views. Restore grassland and wetland habitats. Restore the ecological interest of the ditch network. Conserve the isolation of settlement.
WEST DARENT
The West Darent conforms to the typical scarp-dominated pattern of landscape which characterises the Kent Downs. The woodlands of the upper scarp are bordered by extensive pastures on the slopes below them. These, in turn, are contained by the bank of intensively cultivated arable fields on the fertile strip of soil along the scarp foot. Below this strip the heavy gault clay of the valley bottom supports a more mixed agricultural landscape. The tradition of intensive arable cultivation on the scarp foot has resulted in a sparse network of narrow hedges, which contrasts with the smaller, more irregular pastures, surrounded by thick hedges and hedgerow trees, which characterise the clay valley. Several areas of historic parkland abut the ancient trackway, the Pilgrim's Way, which enters Kent along the scarp foot above Westerham, and the A25, which runs along the foot of the greensand beside the river.

In recent years, the building of the M25 and M26 motorways through the middle of this vale, while continuing the tradition of this area as a transport corridor, has damaged the visual integrity of the landscape, and altered the focus of the valley away from the river and its historic villages.

DARENT VALLEY
West Darent lies within the larger character area of the Darent Valley.

The Darent is the most westerly of the three rivers cutting through the Kent Downs and is strongly contained throughout its extent in the AONB by steep, often wood-topped, scarps and by the Greensand Ridge to the south. It has been called one of the earliest cradles of English settlement in Kent, and its long history of habitation and passage has clearly shaped its present character. There is a rich legacy of Roman remains, including Lullingstone Roman Villa, and several historic tracks run through the valley. In fact its peaceful, rural character today belies a busier and more industrial past. By the time of the Norman Conquest, the natural course of the river had already been diverted to power watermills, a tradition which continued until the beginning of the 20th century. Today only converted mill-houses and occasional ditches remain to indicate the former nature of the valley.

The name ‘Darent’ comes from the Celtic for ‘oak river’ and the river still meanders for much of its length through a narrow, tree-lined corridor. From Westerham, it flows east through the wide, clay vale between the chalk and the greensand, before swinging north at Sevenoaks to cut through the Downs. Once, it supported an extensive area of seasonally flooding water meadows, but over abstraction of river water, changes in farming practice and gravel excavation have virtually eradicated such features and much of the floodplain is now arable. North of Shoreham the chalk scarps widen out, supporting large, undivided arable fields which reveal the open, curving back of the chalk downs.
WEST DARENT: DARENT VALLEY

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Scarp-dominated landscape with wooded top.
Intensive arable at base of scarp with sparse hedgerows.
Pastures on intermediate slopes.
Historic parklands around Pilgrim’s Way.
M25, M26 motorways alter the focus of the area.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS
Condition
This area is in a moderate condition. The landscape pattern is coherent, flowing from the wooded ridge of the Downs, through the large arable fields of the lower slopes, down to the pastures and parklands nearer the river itself. Wetland nature reserves, and the small area of wet-fenced pasture near the river, provide strong clusters of ecological importance. Outside these areas of particular interest, the loss of hedgerow and intensive arable cultivation on the lower slopes of the chalk scarp reduce the potential for natural habitats. The embanked and vegetated motorway is a recent element in the rural landscape.

Sensitivity
The historic land use pattern is becoming indistinct as hedges and ditches disappear and the villages expand. The core villages retain a distinctive character in which vernacular building styles and materials are very evident. This area also benefits from the visual strength and historic nature of the parkland and the strong visual and cultural feature of the Pilgrim’s Way.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Conserve the features of the estate parkland such as mature tree groups, boundaries and entrances. Manage existing mature trees and programme replanting to sustain the feature. Small copses are a distinct but declining feature of the lower clay slopes. Conserve existing copses and encourage the creation of new small copses in this area, where possible linking to the vegetated embankment of the motorway to reduce the isolated linear effect of the road corridor. Create occasional vegetative links/shaws from the wooded ridge, down the scarp slope to provide intermittent enclosure, to reduce the effect of the more exposed arable fields and to enhance ecological interest. Conserve the remnant small pastures in the valley bottom. These occur around settlements and could be adapted to create a rural setting, or ‘urban edge’, to the existing residential development. Conserve and enhance the network of ditches within the floodplain, retaining their use as wet fencing to the pastures, ideally involving the positive management of the ditches as part of the land drainage system. Conserve the narrow, hedged, route of the Pilgrim’s Way, ensuring that the hedges are well-maintained. Create an urban edge to existing settlement along the river valley, containing the built form with copses, ditches, and wetlands linked to the existing nature reserves.

CONSERVE AND CREATE.
Conserve the form and features of the historic parklands
Create wooded links to the base of the scarp from the wooded ridge
Create an edge to urban areas and riverside villages
Conserve the features of the Pilgrim’s Way
Conserve and create small copses on the clay vale
Create wooded links to incorporate the motorway corridor

Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
WESTERHAM GREENSAND
The Westerham greensand rises gently up from the Darent Valley in the north to its highest points along the top of the southern scarp, such as Toys Hill and Goathurst Common. Many of these areas are owned by the National Trust and open to public access. This is an area of dense woodland, where thickets of birch and gorse are interspersed by tall stands of oak and beech, conifer plantations or old chestnut coppice. These woodlands enclose the landscape, concealing the small lanes which criss-cross the area and hiding the sinuous pastures which line the valley sides or bottoms. Larger fields are often edged by thick strips of mature trees or dark walls of woodland, their old internal hedges removed or replaced by fences. This hedgerow removal is gradually opening up small areas of the landscape. Scattered farms hug the sheltered valleys throughout this area and many substantial modern houses are surrounded by pony paddocks.

The southern boundary of this area is formed by the dramatic scarp, which drops down to the extensive pastureland of the Low Weald. The woodlands which characteristically clothe these slopes are predominantly deciduous and suffered extensive damage in the 1987 storm, in particular along the top of the slopes, leaving in places only a thin fringe of wind-battered trees against the skyline.

SEVENOAKS RIDGE
The Westerham Greensand area lies within the larger character area of the Sevenoaks Ridge.

The ridge around Sevenoaks is the product of the underlying acidic sandstone, which in the south rises up from the clay vale of the Low Weald in a steep, tree-covered scarp between Crockham Hill and Shipbourne. Offering panoramic views towards the High Weald and Tonbridge, the Greensand Belt reaches over 245 metres at Toys Hill, while its gentle northern slopes are scarred by series of deeply cut valleys. Much of the ridge is covered by dense, mixed woodland, producing an intimate, secretive landscape, shaded by swathes of beech and conifer forest. The poor soil of the sandstone, however, discouraged early settlers and, while the river valleys and fertile vales of Kent had been settled for centuries, this area remained dense forest interspersed with occasional summer pastures until the 10th and 11th centuries. Today, the dominant characteristics of this landscape are still the thick woodland and heathy commons, within which small pockets of farmland lie.

The acid greensand provides a variety of sandstones, which have been quarried since pre-Roman times. This abundance of stone has given rise to an alternative name for the area-the Chartland. Chart derives from the Scandinavian kart, meaning stony ground and still occurs in several place names, such as Brasted Chart. Historically, these stones were widely used for construction and can still be seen in buildings around Sevenoaks.
WESTERHAM GREENSAND: SEVENOAKS RIDGE

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
High greensand scarp slope with dense woodland. Enclosed, sinuous pastures at valley bottom, scattered farms and concealed small lanes. Large modern houses and pony paddocks.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

This is a strongly unified landscape with very few apparent visual detractors. The woodland is a dominant and distinct element which runs down into wide shaws around managed pastures, accentuating the landform. The intensity of land use is moderate and there is much ecological value in the widespread acid woodland and grasslands.

Original ridge top settlements around commons were formerly concealed but some village enlargements and new development are no longer totally contained, appearing in long views. New ridge top settlement can be unsympathetic in materials.

Overall, the settlements, including historic and recent, have a moderately positive impact on the area. There is also a strong time-depth to the landscape with highway routes following ancient track ways, and the use of vernacular materials (ragstone, brick and hung tile) in historic settlements, and settlement located around historic commons. The south-facing ridge itself is a very dominant feature; visibility within the area is reduced by the dense tree cover, but the sensitivity remains high.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Conserve the dense and widespread nature of the woodland, respecting the mix of tree species and understorey which accentuates the acid nature of the soil. The wide shaws are also an important part of the landscape; the mixed age-structure of the vegetation within the shaws requires special management to conserve this feature. Small, nucleic settlements within the woodland cover are characteristic. Linear or piecemeal development should therefore be resisted, especially where there are near and distant views of a development site. Highways are also very distinctive with oblique angle junctions and cross-contour routes. These characteristics should be conserved where possible.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE.
Conserve the area and characteristics of the woodland
Conserve nucleic settlement characteristics and woodland enclosure around settlements
Conserve highway characteristics
WESTERN LOW WEALD: THE LOW WEALD

Stretching from Crockham to Sevenoaks Weald, this is a typical area of Low Weald landscape. A patchwork of medium-sized pastures is surrounded by a strong network of trimmed hedges, producing a distinctive field pattern across the gentle slopes. Mature hedgerow trees and small deciduous woodlands are scattered throughout the area, giving the countryside a deceptively densely-wooded appearance. The dramatic bulk of the greensand scarp dominates the northern horizon, still conspicuously wooded despite extensive storm damage. Views from the scarp top stretch away to the High Weald, south of Tonbridge, across a seemingly unspoilt mosaic of small-scale farmland.

THE LOW WEALD

The Western Low Weald forms part of the larger character area the Low Weald within the Kent Downs AONB.

The clay of the Low Weald meets the scarp of the Greensand Ridge between Crockham Hill in the west and Ivy Hatch in the east. Small springs, seeping out from between the upper layers of greensand, have cut a series of deep furrows into this scarp, before draining eventually into the flat Eden Valley in the south.

In contrast with the wooded greensand, the Low Weald is an open, pastoral landscape. Although there are areas of arable cultivation, the heavy, wet clay favours grassland and the emphasis here is on intensively grazed fields, separated by shaws. Between these woods, piecemeal hedgerow removal has left a considerable number of former hedgerow trees isolated in fields abutted by fences. However, the increasing number of horses kept in this area is reintroducing smaller fields into the landscape, but these paddocks are usually bounded by temporary fences, rather than new hedges. The clays of the Low Weald were traditionally used to construct the timber-framed buildings so typical of this area. Nevertheless, the underlying sandstones were also widely used and combinations of these materials are not unusual.
WESTERN LOW WEALD: THE LOW WEALD

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS
Condition
This is a unified landscape with very few visual detractors. The strong and varied semi-natural habitats of hedgerow, woodland and wetland are slightly reduced in value by isolated areas of more intensive farming. The condition of heritage features is generally good - the rural landscape pattern currently retains functional integrity and the impact of built development is positive, however, vegetative heritage features such as mature hedgerows are considered to be vulnerable due to over-maturity and lack of long-term management objectives.

Sensitivity
This is considered to be a characteristic historic landscape with overtones of ancient woodland, and the sense of place is therefore considered to be moderate. The intermittent tree cover allows limited views throughout the area. Overall sensitivity is rated as low due to the limited visibility.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
This landscape is considered to be vulnerable to the over-maturity of it's main features - such as the characteristic hedgerow network with mature oaks. It is important to reinforce this feature by ensuring that land use and arable cultivation techniques are sympathetic to the growing conditions for hedgerows, and that long-term plans exist for the continuous replacement of senescent vegetation. It is also felt that the area would benefit from the reinforcement of existing natural wetland habitats. The effect of streams and watercourses could be enhanced and reinforced as an inherent part of the clay landform. The rural nature of this unified landscape is an important perception to reinforce.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS

Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babilie
The landscape is essentially low-lying, flat, open marshland adjacent to the River Thames that has become fragmented into isolated remnants by extensive urban and industrial development, creating a discordant character. The landscape is still undergoing change and is often degraded by neglect as much as by the proximity of industrial or urban influences, although some parts still retain a distinctively marshland character. The marshes are distinguished from others within the East Thames Corridor by their predominantly urban, estuarine context and the varied skyline created by the complex, often discordant, mix of industry, urban development, river uses (shipping channels and port facilities), remnant grazing marsh and arable farmland.

Dartford, Swanscombe and Botany marshes are formed from alluvium deposits and Stone Marshes are predominantly with overlying alluvium deposits. As a result there is a distinct lack of landform features and the whole area is low-lying at or below five metres AOD.

There has been a steady and significant loss and degradation of the once predominant landcover of grazing marsh, resulting from conversion to improved grassland, arable and urban/industrial use (e.g. mineral workings, industrial buildings). Only a few scattered tiny pockets of grazing marsh habitats remain, principally on Dartford and Botany marshes and saltmarsh is confined to a thin strip beyond the tidal defences. Improved grassland (converted grazing marsh) is now the dominant land use on Dartford marshes whereas arable is more typical of Swanscombe and Broadness Marshes. Isolated pockets of scrub woodland are a valuable but localised feature. Stone Marshes have been substantially modified by large-scale development and tipping with large areas of bare or built ground but contain remnants of semi-improved grassland, scrub and open water habitats. Localised wetland and scrub vegetation are also associated with the flooded gravel pits at Littlebrook, to the south-east of Joyce Green Hospital.

Few wildlife habitats remain within this area but dykes, ditches, remnants of traditional grazing marsh, wetlands and scrub are important localised features. The majority of Dartford Marshes is designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) as well as an area to the east of Joyce Green Hospital, with key habitats listed as estuarine mosaic, ditches/river, grassland and scrub.

The density of Palaeolithic archaeological finds in the area is perhaps the highest in Kent. The peninsula north of Swanscombe contains significant numbers of finds dating from Mesolithic and Neolithic times.

This area of the Thames has strong cultural associations with maritime painting. In the 17th century the landscape of the southern shore of the Thames formed the setting for the work of important artists such as Isaac Sailmaker and William van de Velde, younger and elder; and later with painters such as Charles Dean, Alexander Maitland and William Wyllie and in more recent years with the work of the Wapping Group of painters. Literature is also linked to this maritime setting with such writers as Joseph Conrad.
WESTERN THAMES MARSHES

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition
These small areas of low-lying, open marshland are greatly fragmented by views of industrial and housing development, creating discordant fragments of the character area. Views out are limited by sea defences and development. There are many large-scale visual detractors such as quarries and industrial parks, with associated access roads and signage some instances of tipping. Localised ditches, wetlands and scrub raise the ecological profile of the area, but only operate as weak networks, with the ditches being generally unmanaged and scrub vegetation becoming more prevalent. Some former grazing marsh has been converted to improved grassland. There is very little evidence of the cultural elements of the former estuarine grazing marsh or of natural links with adjacent areas - the functional integrity of this area is very poor.

Sensitivity
The built form and general land use within the area has a high negative impact. Many elements within the landscape such as roads and structures are recent and have become characteristic of the area, but are not locally distinct. Urban skyline features can be said to be recent characteristics. The original sea defences and drainage patterns, which are the remnants of the historic character of the area, are generally overwhelmed by large engineering bunds and have become degraded through lack of appropriate management of watercourses. This is potentially a very distinctive landscape which currently has a poor sense of place. The openness of the area means that visibility is high.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Create a new framework for the remaining area of marshland and open pasture, incorporating adjacent areas of commercial or residential development. In degraded areas, create a new landforms which incorporate new managed wetland and drainage features, but also enhances the existing historic features of the landscape such as ditches and dykes. Restore habitats by enhancing the management of existing semi-natural grazing marsh and drainage systems. Create new habitats such as reedbeds and salt marsh. Create a visual containment to the remaining undeveloped marshland using features of land drainage and marsh e.g. a major peripheral drain which also serves as a natural habitat.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Pattern of elements: Incoherent.
Detracting features: Many.
Visual Unity: Significantly Interrupted.
Cultural integrity: Poor.
Ecological integrity: Moderate.
Functional Integrity: Weak.

Sensitivity
Distinctiveness: Characteristic.
Continuity: Recent.
Sense of Place: Weak.
Landform: Apparent
Extent of tree cover: Open
Visibility: High.

CONTEXT

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Regional: Thames Gateway


PREVIOUS <<

Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babtie
A distinctly undulating pastoral landscape of small to medium sized fields, including old meadows, partially enclosed by small, broadleaf coppice woodlands, such as the Dunk’s Green Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), often with ancient coppice stools and pollards as in Clear Hedges Wood, North Frith. Shaws and hedgerows, with their distinctive field oaks, provide further enclosure and intimacy to the landscape. Some enlargement of field size has taken place to allow for the conversion of grassland to arable causing the loss of traditional boundaries. Post and wire fencing now fills the gappy hedgerows. Otherwise there is little to detract from the traditional scene.

The pattern of ridges and small valleys is enhanced by many small streams, that have created the valleys as they work their way to the River Eden to the south, and the network of winding ditch-lined lanes. Over a wide area the distinctive Greensand Ridge to the north, with its shattered woodlands from the 1987 storm, gives a dramatic backdrop to the farmlands below.

The settlement pattern is generally scattered, being composed of historic farmsteads, such as Bore Place or those of medieval hall house origins, such as Broxham Manor, with small hamlets carved out of the original wooded landscape. At Bore Place, traditional skills such as brick-making and coppice crafts have been revived, and the local community involved in creating an imaginative sculpture, the Wood N Horse, from some of these coppice products. Elsewhere attractive groups of oasts give evidence to a time when hop growing extended into this part of Kent.

Small ponds are still characteristic of these farmlands and the reservoir at Bough Beech stands out as a distinctive, man-made feature that has now acquired enormous value for wildlife with part of it being managed as a nature reserve.

20th century expansion of towns such as Edenbridge has contributed to the blurring of landscape patterns, causing visual intrusion locally. Hedgerows and trees could be used to incorporate this sort of post-war built development, as well as changes to crop patterns, in the landscape. The Redhill to Ashford railway cuts across the southern edge of the character area, encouraging past development such as at Marlpit Hill, but is rarely intrusive in the landscape. Proposals to widen the line for freight may affect this status quo.
WESTERN WOODED FARMLANDS

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Undulating landform bisected by many small streams. Small woodlands, shaws, hedgerows and hedgerow trees enclosing small, historic pastoral fields. Strong enclosure from the Greensand ridge. Scattered small settlements including historic farmsteads.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

This is a mature, enclosed landscape of well-defined lines, with a dense, generally well managed hedgerow network and small copses. The frequent occurrence of mature oaks is currently a very strong element of the view, although it is vulnerable due to the single age of the mature trees and the arable cultivation of land within the root zone. Land use within the landscape framework is mixed, but intensive arable and cattle farming detracts from the general ecological value which is otherwise good. Scattered farmsteads are the basis for this rural landscape which has a clear cultural identity.

Sensitivity
The maturity and prevalence of high-forest woodland species and the small-scale pastoral pattern emphasises the strong time-depth element of this landscape. Although well enclosed to the north by the Greensand Ridge, the relief of the character area is unremarkable, gently undulating. Intermittent lines of mature trees and small woodlands allow limited views through the rural landscape.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Reinforce the mature tree framework by the sensitive management, conservation and replanting within hedgerows and along highways. Explore management techniques which are sensitive to the root zones of the trees. Reinforce the wetland corridors and the natural habitats of the unfarmed landscape such as the woodland. Conserve and manage the woodlands, hedgerow pattern, hedges and narrow grass verges on highways. Conserve the cultural emphasis on historic scattered farmsteads as a basis for the land use.

CONSERVE AND REINFORCE.
Conserve hedgerow pattern and woodland cover Reinforce mature tree cover - predominantly oaks Reinforce natural habitats Conserve historic settlement pattern

CONTEXT

Regional: Low Weald

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Sensitivity

CONDITION

Pattern of elements: Unified.
Detracting features: Few.
Visual Unity: Strongly Unified.
Cultural integrity: Good.
Ecological integrity: Moderate.
Functional Integrity: Strong.

SENSITIVITY

Distinctiveness: Characteristic.
Continuity: Ancient.
Sense of Place: Strong.
Landform: Insignificant.
Extent of tree cover: Intermittent.
Visibility: Low.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
This is an undulating landscape focused on the water courses of the river Darent and on a small stream feeding the Medway near Wrotham. In many ways this area is dominated by the transport corridor of the M20/A20/M26 and the railway. In particular the traffic levels along the A20 and A25 have caused a loss of character of Wrotham Heath and the merging of Platt with Borough Green along the A25. Here, the traditional boundaries are replaced with conifers and close-board fencing that suburbanises the roadside, with garish petrol stations adding to the busy roadside scene. Between the main roads, however, the free-draining soils of the Folkestone Beds support small areas of broadleaf woodland, a high percentage of cattle-grazed pasture bounded by hedgerows and small arable fields in an enclosed and varied pattern.

The woodland is typified by that at High Haugh and Valley Wood at Wrotham Heath, Sites of Nature Conservation Interest and together an Area of Local Landscape Importance. Although little of the sessile woodland remains, a small area of ancient oak coppice remains with bilberry, ling and cow-wheat present. The sandy Folkestone Beds also support remnant heathy grasslands such as those that can be seen at the Wrotham Golf course with bell heather, ling and the delicate harebell all present in the roughs. Visually the course is largely well-contained, eastwards, the solid geology is overlain by acid drifts which supports remnant mixed broadleaf woodlands such as Leybourne Wood, which will be affected by the proposed by-pass.

The small woodlands help screen the motorway and provide enclosure to the hospital at Addington, and to the outskirts of Wrotham Heath and Borough Green, but extraction sites such as the one at Nepicar Farm are still visible through a thin tree cover. The noise from the motorway is still audible as well. Woodlands provide enclosure to the tiny wooded lanes, such as St. Vincent’s Lane that defines the boundary of Addington Park, much of which is now West Malling Golf Club.

Around Sevenoaks, the landscape character is dominated by flooded mineral workings which have become valuable wildlife habitats.

At Wrotham Heath the centre is dominated by the road junction of the A20 and A25, although Platt has an historic centre of Ragstone buildings that climb attractively up a narrow wooded lane towards the better quality soils of the Hythe Beds. The character area as a whole is generally attractively enclosed to the south by these wooded slopes with occasional glimpses to the Downs available from the A20 and broad views from the M20. Close to the A20, however, there is a clutter of roadside sellers, petrol stations, lorry stops, conifer hedges and eroded verges that dominates the roadside views. Closer to Leybourne cluttered pony paddocks can also be found.
CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS
Condition
This undulating rural landscape of small-scale mixed use is historically and currently well-settled. It is fragmented by the motorway corridor and impoverished by suburban land uses, some of which are associated with new residential and leisure developments. These have also resulted in some loss of enclosure and a change in road and settlement characteristics. The frequency of small copses and the occasional heathy grasslands retain some ecological interest. However, large-scale intrusions in the landscape, such as mineral workings, and the fragmented landscape elements, leave the landscape in poor condition.

Sensitivity
The generally undulating landscape frequently displays strong, localised relief giving a moderate visibility through intermittent tree cover. Although the transport corridor now tends to dominate the area as a whole, the historic character of the frequent small farms and villages, many with ragstone details, retain a moderate sense of place. The area is considered to have a moderate sensitivity.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Restore small-scale rural enclosure to land around settlements using appropriate hedgerow species where these can be well managed. The restoration of small broadleaf copses to steeply undulating land and stream corridors would enhance both the natural habitats of the area and the overall enclosure, and can be used to incorporate the visually detracting features into the wider landscape. It would restore the perception of the ancient character of the area. The restoration of parkland features may be incorporated into new amenity uses for open space.
Create a clear landscape pattern which recognises the transport corridors and mineral workings, creating cohesive elements around these dominant land uses and ring-fencing historic settlements. The function of these cohesive elements should recognise the amenity requirements of the open space.
Create a new woodland framework to the transport corridor.
Create links or corridors of agricultural land between settlements, with a small-scale pattern and enclosure to restore the setting of the villages.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
RESTORE AND CREATE.
Restore parkland features
Restore rural setting to villages
Restore woodland to steep slopes and water courses
Create landscape pattern around transport corridor and mineral workings
Create new agricultural links between settlements

PREVIOUS <<
WYE: STOUR VALLEY

Around the ancient town of Wye, whose Georgian facades reflect a period of 18th century prosperity, the Stour passes through a wide, flat floodplain before cutting north into the Downs. There is little woodland here, but narrow lines of trees, or overgrown hedges around field boundaries, cast veils of light vegetation across the open landscape. Below the great expanse of Challock Forest in the west, the slopes are open, still bearing traces of ancient field systems. On the eastern scarp, however, the slopes are much steeper and more convoluted, producing a series of enclosed coombes, dominated by the rough grassland, scrub and deciduous woodland of the Wye and Crundale National Nature Reserve. These areas of 'natural' vegetation are in sharp contrast with the ornamental tree planting at Eastwell Park and Planting.

Nevertheless, there is a gradual decline in the condition and extent of the former hedgerow network. In some areas, ploughing extends right up to the riverbanks and some riverside trees have been removed. In the parks and woodlands storm damage has caused considerable damage, requiring extensive replanting and management.

STOUR VALLEY

Wye lies within the larger Stour Valley character area of the Kent Downs AONB.

The Great Stour is the most easterly of the three rivers cutting through the Downs. Like the Darent and the Medway, it too provided an early access route into the heart of Kent and formed an ancient focus for settlement. Today the Stour Valley is highly valued for the quality of its landscape, especially by the considerable numbers of walkers who follow the Stour Valley Walk or the North Downs Way National Trail.

Despite its proximity to both Canterbury and Ashford, the Stour Valley retains a strong rural identity. Enclosed by steep scarps on both sides, with dense woodlands on the upper slopes, the valley is dominated by intensively farmed arable fields interspersed by broad sweeps of mature parkland. Unusually, there are no electricity pylons cluttering the views across the valley. North of Bilting, the river flows through narrow, pastoral floodplain, dotted with trees such as willow and alder and drained by small ditches. To the south around Wye, however, the floodplain widens out and the pastures along the immediate riverside are surrounded by intensively cultivated arable fields on the rich, well-drained brick-earth soils. The field pattern is picked out by a network of narrow, trimmed hedges and lines of mature trees, such as poplars.

On the valley sides, many of the arable fields are surrounded by thick shaws or dense, overgrown hedges which extend down from the woodlands on the upper slopes. Hedgerow trees, in particular oak and ash, are frequent and much of the woodland along the east side of the valley is of national importance for its plant, insect and other animal communities.
WYE: STOUR VALLEY

PHOTOGRAPH

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Wide, flat floodplain.
Lines of trees and overgrown hedges.
Steep slopes in east with rough grass, scrub and deciduous woodland.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS
Condition
This is a mixed landscape of small fields with hedgerows in decline, and small plantation woodlands. There is much arable cultivation, with pasture and arable near the riverside but with some distinctive willows remaining. On the side slopes, the old field systems are in decline as arable cultivation becomes dominant. This creates an incoherent landscape and there are several detractors, especially the railway line and the post-war linear development of existing villages. Ecologically, there is only a limited extent of habitat associated with the woodlands and the rive corridor. Tree cover is patchy and field boundaries are in decline. This is a landscape in very poor condition, although the historic settlements at Wye and Godmersham, historic flint churches and the distinctive large barns and houses with long sloping roofs have a positive impact.

Sensitivity
There is a moderate sense of place, with the distinctive pattern of historic settlement being the major contributor. Hedgerows are mainly located on roadsides, but the traditional historic pattern of internal field boundaries, hedgerow trees and woodlands is becoming indistinct. The river itself has lost its strength of character since arable cultivation often stretches to the very edge of the water, with the distinctive alders and willows and aquatic vegetation having been removed. Historic buildings, hamlets and villages are often characteristic and add to both time depth and distinctiveness. Landform is apparent and tree cover is intermittent, giving a moderate visibility.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS
Create and reinforce the ecological importance and visual impact of the river corridor by replanting where possible with willows and alders, establishing marginal aquatic vegetation and broad areas of bankside vegetation, including tall grassland and scrub.
Create floodplain wetlands adjoining the river to increase ecological diversity and a distinctive river-side character.
Manage existing hedgerows, especially the remaining road-side hedges and hedgerow trees, including gapping up and planting new trees.
Establish small blocks of woodland to create a new sustainable landscape structure to offset the loss of hedgerows and trees to soften the impact of the railway and linear developments.
Encourage the planting of rows of poplars and other windbreak trees to create a landscape structure where internal field boundaries have been removed.
Conserve historic buildings and improve their setting in the landscape through appropriate planting and reducing clutter.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
CREATE & REINFORCE.
Create and reinforce the ecological and visual impact of the river corridor Manage roadside hedgerows and plant hedgerow trees Establish small woodland blocks to soften development

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS
CONTEXT
Regional: Kent Downs AONB

Condition
Condition

Sensitivity

LOW MODERATE HIGH

Low Moderate High

Moderate

Summary of Actions

CREATE & REINFORCE.
Create and reinforce the ecological and visual impact of the river corridor
Manage roadside hedgerows and plant hedgerow trees
Establish small woodland blocks to soften development
Plant poplar windbreaks to create a new landscape structure
Conserve and improve the setting of historic buildings

Prepared for Kent County Council by Jacobs Babbage
The methodology used to undertake judgments on the landscape assessment is based on the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage’s ‘Landscape Character Assessment Guidance’.

Local character areas have previously been identified across the county. These are described in the following reports that are collectively referred to as the Landscape Assessment of Kent.

- The High Weald (1994)
- The Kent Downs (1995)
- The Low Weald Landscape Assessment & Guidelines (1997)
- The Greensand Belt Landscape Assessment & Guidelines (1998)
- North West Kent Landscape Assessment & Guidelines (1998)
- North East Kent Landscape Assessment & Guidelines (1998)
- Romney Marsh Landscape Assessment & Guidelines (1998)

These studies were undertaken over a number of years whilst landscape assessment methodologies were developing and therefore there is a need to bring them together on the same basis. The character areas have been revisited and minor amendments have been made to the boundaries to align with features on the ground to update them to conform to the current guidance. Field Assessment Sheets were then carried out; these have been designed to analyse the component factors of the landscape and to reach a series of decisions on the **Condition** and **Sensitivity** of each character area.

**Condition** is strongly influenced by the impact of external factors. The assessment of condition evaluates the pattern of the landscape and the presence of incongruous features on the unity of the landscape. It also evaluates how well the landscape functions as a habitat for wildlife and the condition of cultural or ‘man-made’ elements such as enclosure, built elements and roads. Urban fringe areas are often under pressure that can frustrate other land uses. This often means that these areas are described as being in a poor condition whilst other more remote areas may still have the same basic features but be in a better condition. It is therefore practical to assume that condition may vary throughout a character area so that any conclusions should be regarded as a summary of the overall situation. **Condition** is defined by an analysis of **Visual Unity** and **Functional Integrity** and is classified as very poor, poor, moderate, good and very good.

**Visual Unity** is the result of an analysis of the **Pattern of Elements**, for example the pattern of vegetation, enclosure, settlement, and the relationship of these to the landform etc., weighed against the number of **Detracting Features** in the landscape.

**Functional Integrity** is an assessment of how the landscape functions and considers both the influence of man (**Cultural Integrity**) and nature (**Ecological Integrity**).

**Sensitivity** is a measure of the ability of a landscape to accept change without causing irreparable damage to the essential fabric and distinctiveness of that landscape. The term change refers to both beneficial changes such as a new woodland as well as change that
may be brought about by new land uses. **Sensitivity** is defined by an analysis of *Sense of Place* and *Visibility* and ranges from very low through low, moderate, high and to very high.

**Sense of Place** balances *Distinctiveness* with *Time depth*. Distinctiveness is defined by how much the key characteristics contribute to a sense of place. For example in a landscape where hedgerows are a key characteristic if the network is intact the landscape can be described as distinct or ‘characteristic’. Some landscapes have features that may be considered unique or rare and these will obviously contribute to a strong sense of place. Time depth ranges from recent, through historic to ancient and reflects how long that landscape has taken to establish. Ancient landscapes are uncommon in Kent but include those that have had very little intervention by man or contain ancient or prehistoric features. Historic landscapes are generally from the medieval period onwards. This is when the pattern of most landscapes in Kent was established and is generally discernible today (although overlain with modern features). Recent landscapes are those where historic elements have been replaced with new elements or land management. They include reclaimed landscapes.

**Visibility** addresses the issues of *Landform* and the intercepting feature of *Tree cover*. For example an open hilltop landscape has a higher visibility than an enclosed lowland landscape.

The conclusions reached regarding each of the character areas are expressed using a matrix that encompasses Condition and Sensitivity. This analysis gives a broad indication of each area’s ability to accommodate a change in management or use without loss of overall integrity. The matrix helps to assist in the direction of any policy that might be applied to the land in question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>REINFORCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>CONSERVE &amp; REINFORCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high</td>
<td>CONSERVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>CREATE &amp; REINFORCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>CONSERVE &amp; CREATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high</td>
<td>CONSERVE &amp; RESTORE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>CREATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>RESTORE &amp; CREATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high</td>
<td>RESTORE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The combination of condition and sensitivity assessments has generated appropriate actions for each character area:

Although conclusions have been reached for each of the character areas, it is not the purpose of this study to rank one character area against another. Likewise this study is not intended to identify in detail areas suitable for development. It may however offer guidance to both the local planning authority and developers when deciding the type and scale of development that may be appropriate whilst respecting the character of the landscape.

**Conserve** - actions that encourage the conservation of distinctive features and features in good condition.

**Conserve and reinforce** - actions that conserve distinctive features and features in good condition, and strengthen and reinforce those features that may be vulnerable.

**Reinforce** - actions that strengthen or reinforce distinctive features and patterns in the landscape.

**Conserve and restore** - actions that encourage the conservation of distinctive features and features in good condition, whilst restoring elements or areas in poorer condition and removing or mitigating detracting features.

**Conserve and create** - actions that conserve distinctive features and features in good condition, whilst creating new features or areas where they have been lost or are in poor condition.

**Restore** - actions that encourage the restoration of distinctive landscape features and the removal or mitigation of detracting features.

**Restore and create** - actions that restore distinctive features and the removal or mitigation of detracting features, whilst creating new features or areas where they have been lost or are in poor condition.

**Reinforce and create** - actions that strengthen or reinforce distinctive features and patterns in the landscape, whilst creating new features or areas where they have been lost or are in poor condition.

**Create** - actions that create new features or areas where existing elements are lost or in poor condition.

It has to be recognised that whilst the process adopts a complex but logical critique of the landscape many of the individual decisions are still based on the trained but subjective judgments of the assessors. However by simplifying the conclusions into a series of generic actions it is possible to reach informed and well supported judgments on the landscape character.

Actions are offered that are locally appropriate to the character area and respond to the generic actions that have been identified. Many of these actions are not within the remit of the Local Authority to implement directly as they are not responsible for managing the land in most cases. Such references are included with the view to influencing opinions, generating support and guiding policy. In many instances certain forms of land management have a strong influence on the landscape character. These are often dependent on market forces and land management practices for their retention e.g. sheep grazing on marshland and fruit production.
7.0 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Character
A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.

Characteristics
Elements, or combinations of elements, which make a particular contribution to distinctive character.

Elements
Individual components that make up the landscape, such as trees and hedges.

Features
Particularly prominent or eye catching elements, like tree clumps, church towers, or wooded skylines.

Characterisation
The process of identifying areas of similar character, classifying and mapping them and describing their character.

Condition
The assessment of condition evaluates the pattern of the landscape and the presence of incongruous features on the unity of the landscape. It also evaluates how well the landscape functions as a habitat for wildlife and the condition of cultural or ‘man-made’ elements such as enclosure, built elements and roads.

Sensitivity
This is a measure of the ability of a landscape to accept change without causing irreparable damage to the essential fabric and distinctiveness of that landscape. The term change refers to both beneficial changes such as a new woodland as well as change that may be brought about by new land uses. Landscape assessment considers sensitivity on an areas sense of place and its visibility.

Sense of Place
Sense of place is the term used to describe the individuality and distinctiveness of a particular place or area. It is about the common identity and perception of a particular place to groups or individuals.

Time depth
Time depth reflects how long that landscape has taken to establish. Ancient landscapes are uncommon in Kent but include those that have had very little intervention by man or contain ancient or prehistoric features. Historic landscapes are generally from the medieval period onwards. This is when the pattern of most landscapes in Kent was established and is generally discernible today (although overlain with modern features). Recent landscapes are those where historic elements have been replaced with new elements or land management. They include reclaimed landscapes.
Enclosure

Enclosure is the term applied to the joining of strips of open field systems to make larger compact units of land. These were then fenced or hedged off so that farmers had land in one farm rather than in scattered strips. Prior to 1740 most land was enclosed by agreement, which often meant larger farmers buying off smaller farmer to get rid of opposition. In areas where there was sufficient opposition or a number of smaller farmers an Act of Parliament to enclose than land had to be obtained. This became the accepted procedure after 1750.

Kent differs from other parts of England in its lack of open field systems. It is not clear whether this is due to pastoral traditions and a distinct inheritance custom or to the complexities of Kent's peninsular geology. Whatever the reason the Enclosure Acts did not affect Kent and the field systems found in today’s landscape maintain their medieval origins.
### 8.0 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AOD</td>
<td>Above Ordnance Datum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AONB</td>
<td>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTRL</td>
<td>Channel Tunnel Rail Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td>Environmentally Sensitive Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LNR</td>
<td>Local Nature Reserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNR</td>
<td>National Nature Reserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSPB</td>
<td>Royal Society for the Protection of Birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAC</td>
<td>Special Area of Conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNCI</td>
<td>Site of Nature Conservation Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPA</td>
<td>Special Protection Area for Birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSSI</td>
<td>Site of Special Scientific Interest</td>
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</table>
## 9.0 OTHER USEFUL PUBLISHED INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th><strong>Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans – A Guide</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copyright / ISBN</td>
<td>Countryside Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published by</td>
<td>Countryside Agency 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Can be ordered or downloaded from the Countryside Agency website: <a href="http://www.countryside.gov.uk">www.countryside.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>The purpose of this guide is to assist local authorities, AONB staff units, AONB partners and others concerned with the production and implementation of AONB Management Plans.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><img src="image" alt="Image" /></th>
<th><strong>Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A Policy Statement 1991</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Published by</td>
<td>Countryside Commission 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Can be ordered from the Countryside Agency website: <a href="http://www.countryside.gov.uk">www.countryside.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>The Countryside Commission's policies for improving the administration and management of AONBs, prior to the 1997 consultation on funding and management of AONBs.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><img src="image" alt="Image" /></th>
<th><strong>Greensand Belt – landscape assessment and guidance</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copyright / ISBN</td>
<td>Kent County Council/ ISBN 1 901509 10 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published by</td>
<td>Kent County Council 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>The document provides an objective rural assessment of landscape character for the whole of Kent. The assessment is intended for use by the County Council to inform landscape policies in the review of the Medway and Kent Structure Plan and by District Councils as an input to policy in their Local Plans.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><img src="image" alt="Image" /></th>
<th><strong>High Weald</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Published by</td>
<td>Countryside Agency 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Can be ordered from the Countryside Agency website: <a href="http://www.countryside.gov.uk">www.countryside.gov.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>A landscape assessment of the High Weald</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><img src="image" alt="Image" /></th>
<th><strong>High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004 – A 20 year Strategy</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copyright / ISBN</td>
<td>High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published by</td>
<td>High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Can be ordered or downloaded from the Kent Downs AONB website: <a href="http://www.highweald.org">www.highweald.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>The management plan is primarily for all local authorities, statutory undertakers, utilities and public bodies who have a new duty of regard for the purposes of the AONB designation in their functions and operations. Consultation Draft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Heritage Coasts: A Guide for Councillors and Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Published by</td>
<td>Countryside Commission 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Can be ordered from the Countryside Agency website: <a href="http://www.countryside.gov.uk">www.countryside.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>This advisory booklet provides information on all aspects of Heritage Coasts. It is invaluable to local authority councillors, officers on committees involved in the running of Heritage Coast management services and anyone with a general interest in Heritage Coasts.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Heritage Coasts in England: policies and priorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Published by</td>
<td>Countryside Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Can be downloaded from the Countryside Agency website: <a href="http://www.countryside.gov.uk">www.countryside.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>The Countryside Commission's policy on Heritage Coasts. It also includes statements of commitment to Heritage Coast objectives by the Government and interested organisations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Kent Design - a guide to sustainable development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Copyright / ISBN</td>
<td>Copyright Kent Association of Local Authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published by</td>
<td>Kent Association of Local Authorities, March 2000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Ten objectives and principles are identified in this Guide against which development can be judged. A sustainability checklist is offered to test proposed development. Principle 10 covers biodiversity interests and reaffirms the need to conserve, create and integrate open space, landscape and natural habitats as part of development. For adoption as supplementary planning guidance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Kent Downs</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Can be ordered from the Countryside Agency website: <a href="http://www.countryside.gov.uk">www.countryside.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>A landscape assessment of the Kent Downs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copyright / ISBN</td>
<td>Countryside Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published by</td>
<td>Countryside Agency 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Can be ordered from the Countryside Agency website: <a href="http://www.countryside.gov.uk">www.countryside.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>This guidance document provides advice on how to identify the different components of landscape character that makes it unique, for example, woodlands, hedgerows, moors, mountains and farmland, building styles, and historic artefacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Management Plan for the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty 2004-2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copyright / ISBN</td>
<td>Kent Downs AONB Joint Advisory Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published by</td>
<td>Kent Downs AONB Joint Advisory Committee 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Can be ordered or downloaded from the Kent Downs AONB website: <a href="http://www.kentdowns.org.uk">www.kentdowns.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>The management plan is primarily for all local authorities, statutory undertakers, utilities and public bodies who have a new duty of regard for the purposes of the AONB designation in their functions and operations. Consultation Draft.</td>
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10.0 WHERE TO GO FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Countryside Agency</td>
<td>The Countryside Agency is the statutory agency responsible for improving quality of life in the countryside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>01242 521381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>01242 584270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@countryside.gov.uk">info@countryside.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.countryside.gov.uk">www.countryside.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defra</td>
<td>The Government Department primarily concerned with creating a better environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>08459 33 55 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>020 7238 3329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk">Helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
<td>Public body responsible for protecting and enhancing the environment in England.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>01732 875587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk">enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk">www.environment-agency.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
<td>Determines Minerals, Waste School and Highway Schemes plus has a view on strategic applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>01622 221537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>01622 221636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:biodiversity@kent.gov.uk">biodiversity@kent.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kent.gov.uk/environment/careenv/safeguarding/biodiversity">www.kent.gov.uk/environment/careenv/safeguarding/biodiversity</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Kent Downs AONB Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance to Planning Process</td>
<td>Provide landscape design guidance in partnership with local authorities represented in the AONB, comment on forward / strategic planning issues major planning applications by virtue of their scale, precedence etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>01622 221522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>01622 221636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Kentdowns@kent.gov.uk">Kentdowns@kent.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kentdowns.org.uk">www.kentdowns.org.uk</a></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Kent High Weald Countryside Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Relevance to Planning Process                    | The Kent High Weald Project was established in 1991 to: 

• conserve and enhance our natural heritage, providing opportunities for people to become actively involved in practical conservation. |
| Phone                                            | 01580 715919                                                                          |
| Fax                                              | 01580 712064                                                                          |
| Email                                            | kenthighweald@kent.gov.uk                                                             |
| Website                                          | www.kenthighweald.org                                                                 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Kentish Stour Countryside Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance to Planning Process</td>
<td>The Kentish Stour Countryside Project works closely with landowners and local communities to promote both landscape and nature conservation, and develop opportunities for appropriate countryside access and informal recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>01233 813307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>01233 812532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kentishstour@kent.gov.uk">kentishstour@kent.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kentishstour.org.uk">www.kentishstour.org.uk</a></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Medway Valley Countryside Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance to Planning Process</td>
<td>The Medway Valley Countryside Project aims to: maintain and enhance the Medway valley from Tonbridge to Rochester as a green corridor for the benefit of wildlife and the local community, through the promotion of community awareness and action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>01622 683695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:matthew.davey@kent.gov.uk">matthew.davey@kent.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kentdowns.org.uk/medway_valley.html">www.kentdowns.org.uk/medway_valley.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>North West Kent Countryside Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance to Planning Process</td>
<td>The North West Kent Countryside Project works to: conserve and enhance the wildlife, landscape and cultural heritage of the countryside in both a rural and urban context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>01322 294727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:nwkentcp@kent.gov.uk">nwkentcp@kent.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kentdowns.org.uk/north_west.html">www.kentdowns.org.uk/north_west.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Romney Marsh Countryside Project</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevance to Planning Process</strong></td>
<td>The Romney Marsh Countryside Project aims to: <em>care for the special landscape and wildlife of the Romney Marsh and Dungeness, encouraging people to enjoy and understand the countryside through guided walks, cycle rides, countryside events and children's activities.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>01797 367934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>01797 367934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mail@rmcp.co.uk">mail@rmcp.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rmcp.co.uk">www.rmcp.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>White Cliffs Countryside Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevance to Planning Process</strong></td>
<td>The White Cliffs Countryside Project was launched in 1989 to: <em>help care for the special coast and countryside of Dover and Shepway districts.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>01304 241806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tic@doveruk.com">tic@doveruk.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.whitecliffscountry.org.uk">www.whitecliffscountry.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>