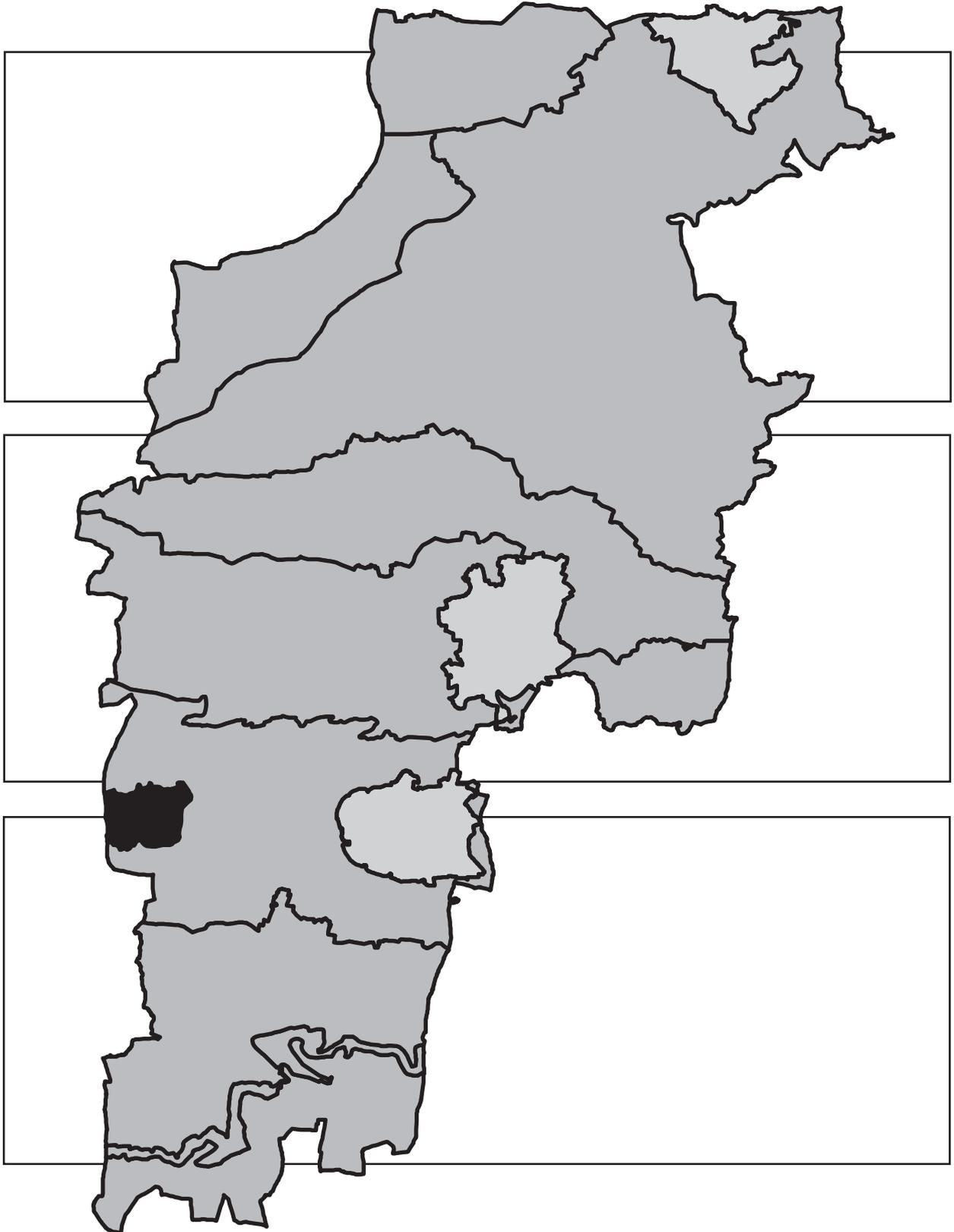


Landscape Character Area 5  
**Upper Adur Valley**



## Upper Adur Valley

### CHARACTERISATION

#### Summary and key characteristics

**Small part of the extensive upper catchment of the River Adur drained by a network of long, leisurely streams in confined narrow, shallow valleys.**

- Network of hedgerows with hedgerow trees.
- Smaller pastures in the valley bottoms and mixed arable and pastoral farming, medium to large-sized fields on the valley sides.
- Wildlife corridor with pockets of biodiversity.
- Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including flint, timber-framing and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging.

### Description and experience of the landscape

#### The Adur Valley

**8.1** The River Adur is one of two major Wealden rivers lying wholly within West Sussex, the other being the River Arun. Both have similar drainage characteristics and patterns. Both rise in the Low Weald (although the Adur has its headwaters rooted in the fringes of the High Weald) and comprise broad catchments enclosing a branching main river and branching, filigree streams in the low-lying Weald Clay country. Both have extensive alluvial water meadows ('wild brooks') in the middle portion, and both cut a meandering path and flood plain through the chalk of the Downs on their journey to the sea (the Arun has a long, lower section crossing the South Coast Plain, this section much shorter in the case of the Adur, where the Coastal Plain all but disappears in the vicinity of Shoreham-by-Sea). In their lower reaches, both rivers are tidal and are canalised with embankments (levees).

#### The upper Adur reaches in Mid Sussex

**8.2** In the Mid Sussex Low Weald, the eastern arm of the main river crosses the entire District, from just within East Sussex at Ditchling, through Keymer to Hickstead, to the District boundary at Wineham. The upper reaches of this eastern arm flow south from the High Weald fringes around Cuckfield and drain the clay vale north of Burgess Hill. To the south, a long stream drains the Gault Clay vale south of Hurstpierpoint and another, shorter stream the clay vales west of Poynings.

**8.3** Only between Wineham and Twineham (around Twineham Place and Great Wapses Farm) do these streams begin to take on a characteristic profile, of a winding course along narrow water meadows enclosed by low, gently convex pastoral valley sides with streamside reed beds. The underlying geology is river terrace deposits, alluvium, head and, on the higher ground, the Weald Clay bedrock. The Landscape Character Area covers only this small part of the characteristic valley system. The area of the long stream (Cutlers Brook) within Mid Sussex (at Albourne) with these characteristics is tiny, and the definition of this valley as a separate Landscape Character Area in the *Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment* has not been carried over into Mid Sussex District.

## **Biodiversity and historic character**

**8.4** The biodiversity and historic character of the area is essentially the same as that for the wider Low Weald. The coverage of these topics in the *Hickstead Low Weald Landscape Character Area (Area 4)* therefore applies. The area contains a Site of Nature Conservation Importance and a small historic parkscape.

## **Settlement form and local distinctiveness**

**8.5** The settlement form and local distinctiveness of this almost wholly agricultural area is essentially the same as that for the wider Low Weald. The coverage of these topics in the *Hickstead Low Weald Landscape Character Area (Area 4)* therefore applies.

**8.6** The parish church of *St Peter* at Twineham stands alone, close to the infant Adur. This is a brick church with a shingled spire, entirely early Tudor. Close by is *Slipe*, a compact timber-framed farmhouse of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Change - key issues**

- Importance of retaining the unique identity of the valley including its floor and current drainage pattern, and as an important landscape and wildlife corridor.
- Continuing field amalgamation in some places into a pattern of medium and large-sized fields, with hedgerow loss and the ageing and loss of hedgerow and field trees.
- Visual impact of new urban and rural development including modern farm buildings.
- Gradual loss of locally distinctive building styles and materials.
- Gradual suburbanisation of the landscape including the widespread use of exotic tree and shrub species.

### **Landscape and visual sensitivities**

- Quiet, rural quality in the tributary valleys.
- Pockets of biodiversity are vulnerable to loss and change.
- Settlement pattern currently sits well within the rural landscape although there is a danger of the cumulative visual impact of buildings and other structures.

*[continues]*

## MANAGEMENT

### Management Objective

***Conserve and enhance the tranquil, secluded character of the valleys and their setting.***

### Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the undeveloped character and pastoral qualities of the valley and the character of the river including its drainage pattern.
- Conserve, strengthen and manage existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees, especially around irregular fields, and re-plant hedgerows where they have been lost.
- Promote the creation of arable field margins and corners including alongside the sides of streams.
- Minimise the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.

This small area is part of the extensive Upper Adur Valley lying mainly in Horsham District. The Management Objective and Land Management Guidelines above have been incorporated into the ***Planning and Land Management Guidelines Sheet LW9 (Upper Adur Valley)*** included in Part Three. As part of the set of County-wide Land Management Guidelines, the area covered by the Sheet is therefore much wider than the area of the Adur Valley in Mid Sussex and includes:

The *Upper Adur Valley (Area 5)* in Mid Sussex District.

The *Steyning and Henfield Brooks (Area O3)* and the *Upper Adur Valleys (Area P2)* Landscape Character Areas defined in the unpublished ***Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment*** (October 2003).