

Overall Character

The Eastern Low Weald within Mid Sussex and Horsham Districts comprises a lowland mixed pastoral and arable landscape with a strong hedgerow pattern. It lies over low ridges and clay vales drained by the upper Adur streams. In the east, the area has experienced high levels of development centred on Burgess Hill.

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating low ridges and clay vales.
- Views dominated by the steep downland scarp to the south and the High Weald fringes to the north.
- Arable and pastoral rural landscape, a mosaic of small and larger fields, scattered woodlands, shaws and hedgerows with hedgerow trees.
- Quieter and more secluded, confined rural landscape to the west, much more development to the east, centred on Burgess Hill.
- Biodiversity in woodland, meadowland, ponds and wetland.
- Historic village of Cowfold and suburban village development at Partridge Green, Shermanbury and Sayers Common.
- Mix of farmsteads and hamlets favouring ridgeline locations, strung out along lanes.
- A modest spread of designed landscapes.
- Crossed by north-south roads with a rectilinear network of narrow rural lanes.
- London to Brighton Railway Line crosses the area through Burgess Hill.
- Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timber-framing, weatherboarding, Horsham Stone roofing and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging.
- Major landmarks include Hurstpierpoint College and St Hugh's Charterhouse Monastery at Shermanbury.
- Principal visitor attraction is the Hickstead All England Equestrian Showground.

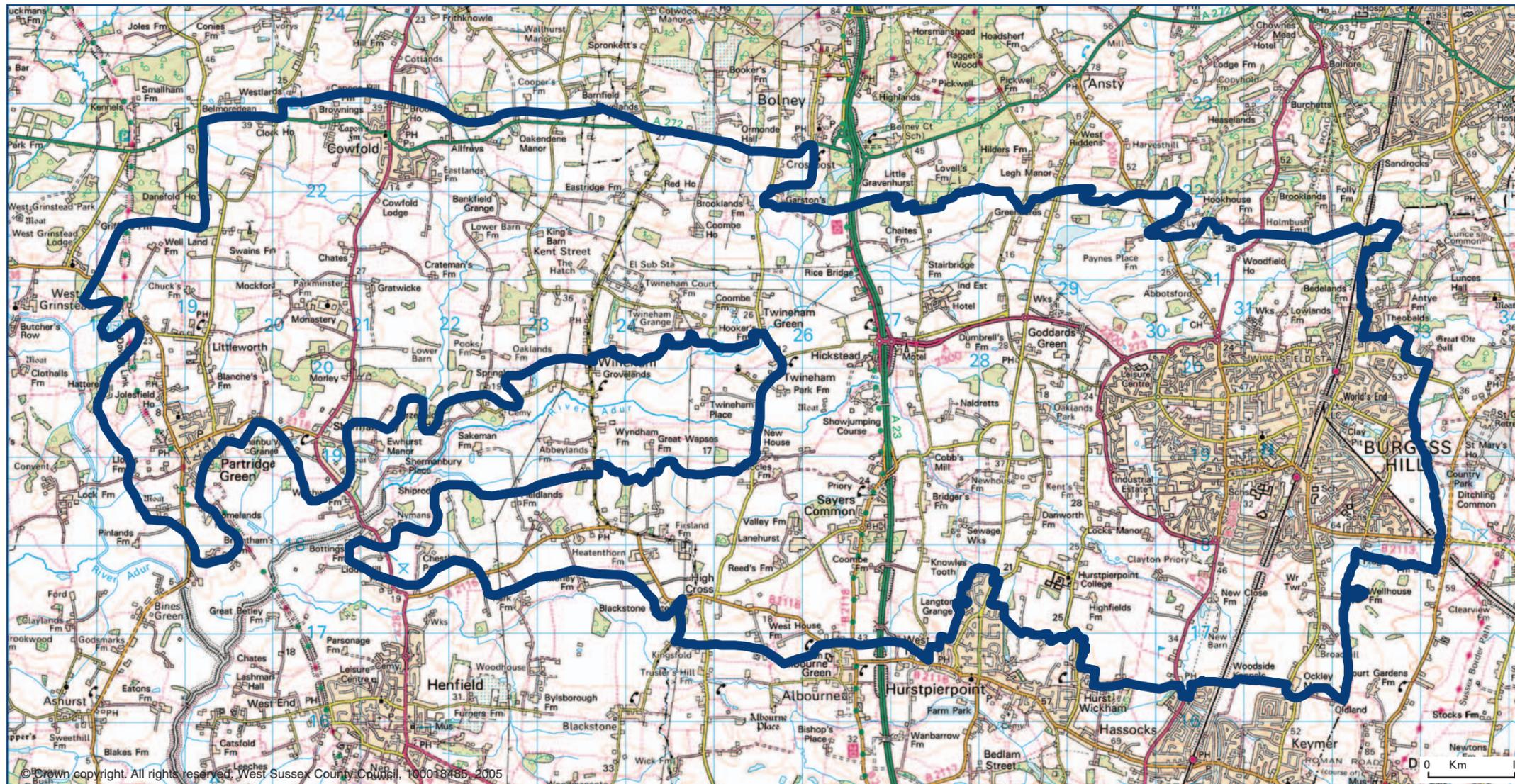
Eastern Low Weald

Low Weald

The area covered by the Sheet includes:

The Hickstead Low Weald (Area 4) Landscape Character Area in Mid Sussex District.

The Cowfold and Shermanbury Farmlands (Area G2) defined in the unpublished **Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment** (October 2003).



Historic Features

- Post-medieval landscape of mixed field sizes and boundaries.
- Line of Roman road.
- Old droveways.
- Historic country houses, farmsteads and parkscapes.

Biodiversity

- Remnant coppice woodland.
- Species-rich hedgerows.
- Lakes, farm and field ponds, meadowland and wetland.
- Woodland and marginal vegetation along stream banks.

Change - Key Issues

- Growing impact of development in the east.
- Continuing amalgamation of small fields, severe hedgerow loss, and the ageing and loss of hedgerow and field trees.
- Visual impact of new urban and rural development including modern farm buildings, horse riding centres and paddocks.
- Introduction of telecommunications masts on ridges.
- Increasing pervasiveness of traffic movement and noise, particularly around Burgess Hill, and busy use of some rural lanes.
- Perceived increased traffic levels on small rural lanes with consequent demands for road improvements.
- 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

- High level of perceived naturalness and a rural quality in the quieter, rural landscape to the west of the A23 Trunk Road.
- Woodland cover and the mosaic of shaws and hedgerows contribute strongly to the essence of the landscape.
- Pockets of rich biodiversity are vulnerable to loss and change.
- Parts of the area are highly exposed to views from the downs with a consequently high sensitivity to the impact of new development and the cumulative visual impact of buildings and other structures.



View south to Cobbsmill



Pellings Barn, Hurstpierpoint

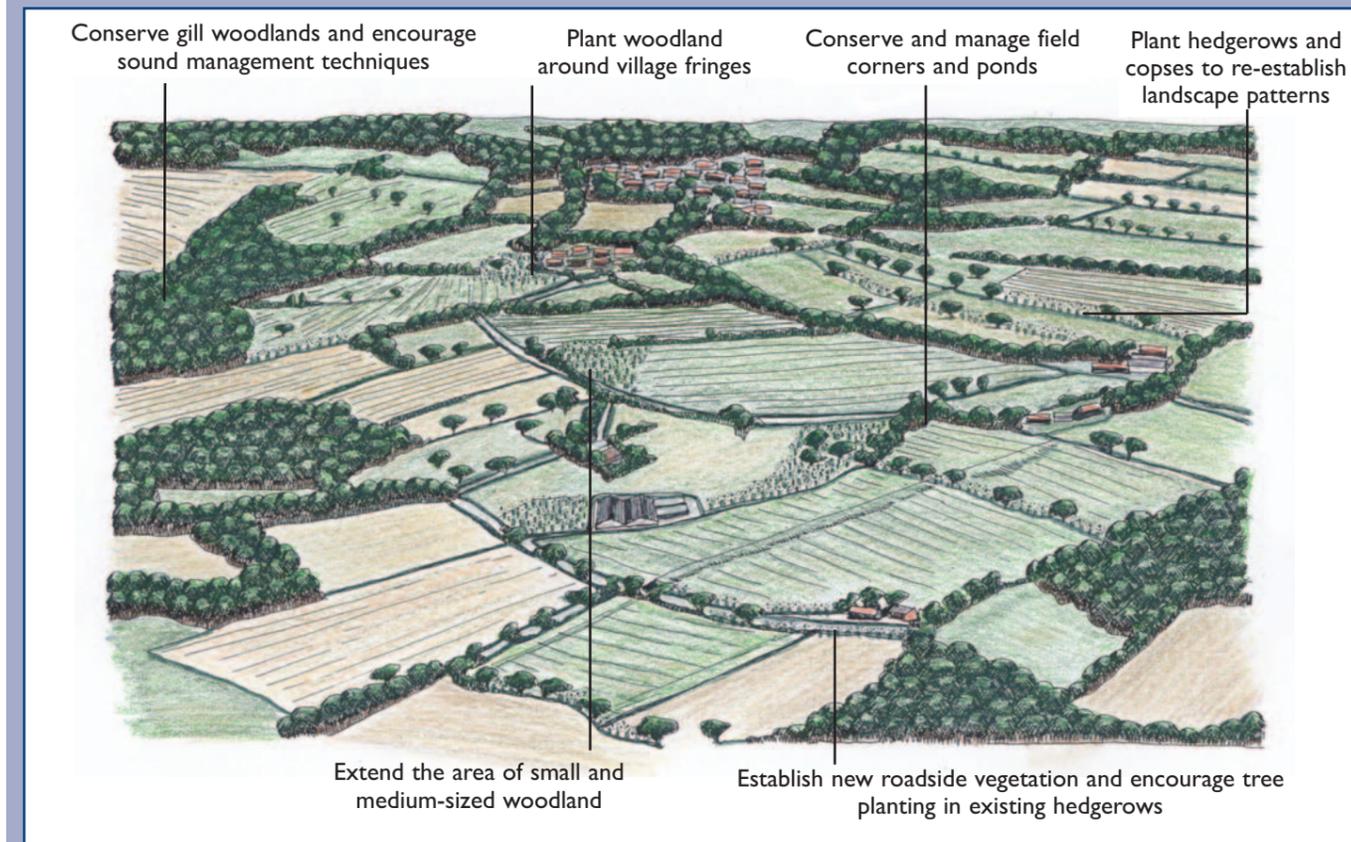


Arable farmland



Pasture

Land Management Guidelines



Conserve and enhance the quiet, rural qualities of the western part of the area, encourage landscape restoration and woodland management, and ensure that new development is well-integrated within the landscape.

- Maintain and restore the historic pattern and fabric of the agricultural landscape including irregular patterns of smaller fields.
- Plan for long-term woodland regeneration, the planting of new small and medium-sized broad-leaved farm woodlands, and appropriate management of existing woodland.
- Promote the creation of arable field margins and corners including alongside the sides of streams.
- Avoid skyline development and ensure that any new development has a minimum impact on views from the downs and is integrated within the landscape.
- Pay particular attention to the siting of telecommunications masts.
- Where appropriate, increase tree cover in and around villages, agricultural and other development and on the rural urban fringe of suburban areas and Burgess Hill, including along the approach roads to settlements and along busy urban routes including the A23 Trunk Road.
- Conserve and replant single oaks in hedgerows to maintain succession and replant parkland trees.
- Conserve, strengthen and manage existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees, especially around irregular fields, and replant hedgerows where they have been lost.
- Maintain and manage all lakes and ponds and their margins for their landscape diversity and nature conservation value.
- Protect the character of rural lanes and manage road verges to enhance their nature conservation value.
- Reduce the visual impact of stabling and grazing for horses.
- Minimise the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.

The Guidelines should be read in conjunction with:

- County-wide Landscape Guidelines set out in *A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape* (November 2005) published by West Sussex County Council.