

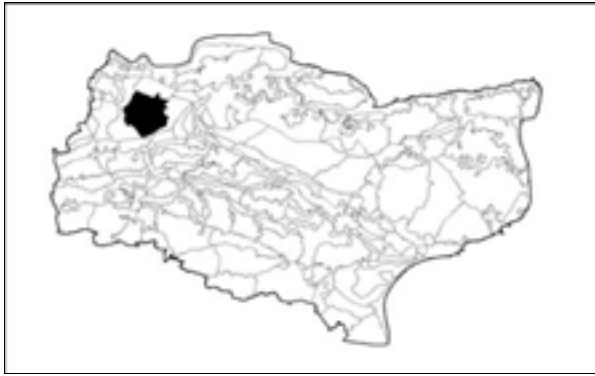


Appendix 12.3 – Published Character Extracts

The Landscape Assessment of Kent

October 2004





A mix of deep, dry valleys with wooded ridges and broad plateau tops, containing a mix of small villages and larger 20th century settlement, this landscape extends broadly from the A20 to the A227 in the east, and north past Horton Wood to the London to Chatham railway line, incorporating the settlements of Meopham and Longfield.

The land use is a mix of grassland with extensive arable farmland, notably on the plateau tops where larger machinery can be used and the hedgerows have been removed. Along the winding lane network the bushy hedgerows are largely intact which, with the remaining woodlands, helps retain the sense of this being an enclosed Downland landscape.

The fragmented pattern of small woodlands includes Horton Wood near Fawkham Green, an ancient woodland developed on the Clay-with-flints above the dry valley floor. Hartley Wood is also an ancient mixed broadleaf woodland, formally managed as coppice with standards and with old woodbanks.

Amongst this pattern of undulating landform and enclosing trees and hedgerows are contained many scattered farmsteads, villages and larger, more recent settlements such as New Ash Green and Hartley. Further away from the main roads such as the A20, in narrow wooded lanes, such as Scratcher's Lane, the effects of the concentration of this settlement can be seen in the erosion of the lane edges and the presence of scattered litter in the woodlands.

At New Ash Green, although the settlement is well-screened by the remaining woodland, the intensity of traffic has led to carriageway problems and pedestrian erosion of woodland edges. The village centre itself is developing a muddled appearance with some of the distinctive exposed aggregate surfacing replaced with bland concrete pavers. The village green too is disjointed by unsympathetic choices of brick.

Between New Ash Green and Longfield the mix of housing styles and eroded hedgerows, fences and lanes gives a more chaotic element to the landscape. From New Ash Green to Hartley and Longfield the lanes have become more degraded, being used for short-cuts. Occasional unsightly uses, such as car-breakers, are frequent but incongruous elements in the landscape.

In contrast to these 20th century settlements, the remaining historic villages are dispersed on the flat dip slope of the Downs, cut by its dry valleys. Fairseat is an attractive flint, brick and clapboard village. Stansted too, which is further down the same dry valley, is in a dramatic wooded setting enclosed by the steeply sloping valley sides.

Frequently, the winding lanes are closely wooded or enclosed with high bushy hedgerows containing Old Man's Beard, and a profusion of holly and hazel, hawthorn and field maple.

Further east, Meopham Green clusters around an historic core, a pre-Domesday settlement, birth-place of an Archbishop of Canterbury and the famous John Tradescant, traveller and collector, notably of plants overseas. The land use is a mix of grazing and arable fields, which after cultivation exposes the flinty soils. The fields are framed with attractive shaws and hangers of beech on the low ridge tops. As the land rises towards the scarp, nearer to the A20, the landscape flattens and opens out and there are occasional tremendous views north to the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge.

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

A pleasant mix of deep, dry pastoral valleys enclosed by wooded ridges and species rich hedgerows, with broad plateau tops beyond.
Small valley-bottom villages and large 20th century settlements on plateau.
A winding network of narrow, historic lanes often eroded by traffic

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

The pattern of landscape elements is coherent and in most cases reflects the underlying landform. Some visual detractors such as commercial buildings and unsympathetic land uses intrude into some of the views. The high ecological value of the area in general, supported by the wooded network on ridges and shaws, is reduced by the intensity of arable cultivations on the plateau. The condition of heritage features such as field boundaries and vernacular buildings is good, however, much recent isolated development using unsympathetic materials has a negative impact. Overall, the area is considered to be in good condition.

Sensitivity

The characteristic features of this landscape are strongly represented and portray both an historic and ancient time-depth. Recent development of urban areas has a localised effect; the area retains local distinctiveness and a strong sense of continuity. The existing highways and the evidence of vernacular materials (such as flint) in historic buildings, in particular, enhance the sense of place. Visibility is moderate due to the intermittent tree cover. The area is considered to be of high sensitivity.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Conserve the small scale of the agricultural use of the valley slopes, retaining hedged enclosure and applying long-term management plans for this purpose.
Conserve the wooded edge to the arable plateau which encloses the landscape and contains the wider views.
Conserve and enhance the use of vernacular materials and the scale of historic built form.
Resist the intrusion of large-scale buildings or groups of buildings into the view.
Conserve the settlement pattern with isolated, small villages on valley bottoms and hamlets on the plateau.
Conserve the dominance of the broadleaf woodland in the landscape.

CONTEXT

Regional: North West Kent

Condition	Sensitivity		
	low	moderate	high
	good	moderate	poor
	low	moderate	high
good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

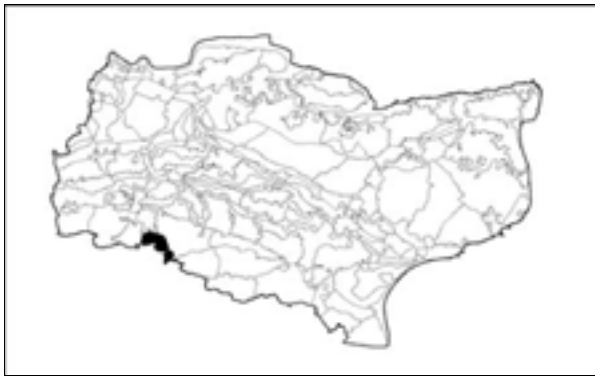
Condition	Good.
Pattern of elements:	Coherent.
Detracting features:	Some.
Visual Unity:	Coherent.
Cultural integrity:	Good.
Ecological integrity:	Moderate.
Functional Integrity:	Strong.

Sensitivity	High.
Distinctiveness:	Characteristic.
Continuity:	Ancient.
Sense of Place:	Strong.
Landform:	Apparent.
Extent of tree cover:	Intermittent.
Visibility:	Moderate.

CONSERVE.

Conserve broadleaf woodland cover
Conserve small scale field pattern on valley sides
Conserve wooded edges to arable plateau
Conserve the impact of vernacular materials and the historic scale of built form
Conserve the enclosure of settlements within wooded areas
Conserve original highway characteristics

BAYHAM: CENTRAL HIGH WEALD



BAYHAM

The traditional pattern of Wealden land use is still to be found in this area. On the shallower slopes, sheep graze the pastures, whilst the steeper hill-sides are clothed by large areas of deciduous woodland. In these woods, when the winter trees are bare, the whine of chainsaws and the acrid smell of wood smoke give away the presence of small gangs of coppice-workers cutting out the young poles to be used for fencing or firewood. The short cycle of cutting and regrowth, taking place in the sweet chestnut stands perhaps every 15 - 20 years, changes the appearance of this area from year to year, so that the open glade of one spring becomes the dense thicket of the next. Constant throughout the seasons, however, are the tall oaks and Scots Pines, which remain unharvested between the coppice-stools. Below the woodlands, in the Teise valley, lies Bayham Park, originally designed by Humphrey Repton. Within this landscape, the ruined walls of Bayham Abbey rear up from the flat valley bottom like an ancient skeleton washed clean by the nearby river.

Most of the farms here have oast-houses, a reminder of the wide-spread hop-gardens in the 19th century, none of which now remain. Today, ease of access to Tunbridge Wells has seen most of these farms and oast-houses climb the social ladder under the influence of non-agricultural wealth and the release from the necessity of farming.

Throughout this area, tiny roads squeeze between small fields and thick hedges, and secretive green lanes entice the passer-by onto a maze of sunken footpaths and almost forgotten tracks.

CENTRAL HIGH WEALD

Bayham 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.

[next >>](#)

BAYHAM: CENTRAL HIGH WEALD

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Rolling hills and ridges. Large areas of deciduous woodland on hillsides. Chestnut coppice with pine and oak standards. Farmsteads, oasts, narrow small roads, fields, thick hedgerows.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

Landscape features are intact and clearly reflect the landform in this landscape. There are very few significant visual detractors amongst the rolling hills and ridges. The large areas of deciduous woodland, which include standard trees, are linked to tall hedgerows and wooded ghylls, and therefore provide a very strong ecological network. Farmed areas are generally non-intensive and pastoral, and therefore contribute to the ecological strength of the area. The condition of heritage features is very good, woodland and thick hedgerow are widespread, although slightly vulnerable to over-maturity. Overall, the landscape is in very good condition.

Sensitivity

The ridged landform is very apparent in the landscape, but is generally dominated by the dense enclosure of the tree cover. Visibility is low. Unique landscape features associated with the Bayhall and Bayham Estates give the area a very strong sense of place. The highways and woodlands have an ancient time-depth. Other characteristics associated with land use and built development tend to be historic in character; the infrequent oasts and brick farmhouses are a distinctive historic element. Due to the low visibility of the area, the sensitivity of the landscape is considered to be moderate.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

Conserve the extent and diversity of tree cover, reinforcing woodland on denuded hilltops. Reinforce the incidence of standard trees - oak, ash and beech - within managed woodland, coppice and hedgerows. Conserve the estate parkland features such as open grasslands and mature standard trees. Conserve the infrequency of built development, ensuring that the woodlands and pastures retain their distinctive tranquillity and isolation.

CONTEXT

Regional: High Weald AONB

Condition

good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
moderate			
poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
	low	moderate	high

Sensitivity

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

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

Sensitivity

Moderate.

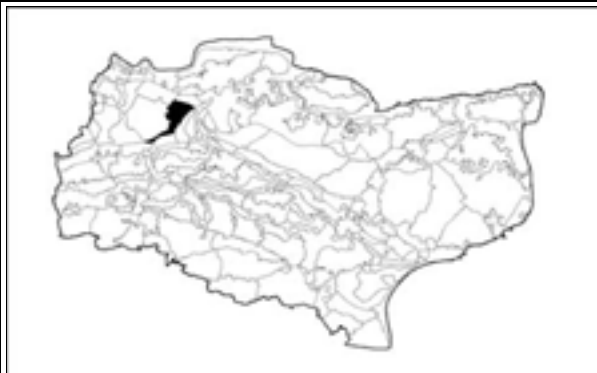
Distinctiveness:	Unique/Rare.
Continuity:	Ancient.
Sense of Place:	Very Strong.
Landform:	Apparent.
Extent of tree cover:	Enclosed.
Visibility:	Low.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE AND REINFORCE.

Reinforce tree cover, ensuring the long-term incidence of standard trees within the woodland. Conserve and manage parkland, maintaining the proportion of mature standard trees. Conserve the infrequency of built development.

LUDDESDOWN: WEST KENT DOWNS



LUDDESDOWN

This is a rich agricultural patchwork of rolling, valley-side pastures and extensive, undulating arable fields. Large areas of mixed woodland dominate the skyline, and form thick walls around fields, giving a strong definition to the fields. Extensive hedgerow removal, for arable cultivation, has increased the importance of these woodlands in giving structure to the landscape.

Threatened from the west by creeping suburbanisation and from the east by urban and industrial influences, it is still a peaceful, rural area. The thick belt of woodland along the eastern and southern scarp top plays an important role in preserving this atmosphere by sheltering the area from the Medway towns and factories.

WEST KENT DOWNS

Luddesdown lies within the larger character area of the West Kent Downs.

The south-facing, chalk scarp between the Medway and the Darent provides a strong visual boundary, dividing the Kemsing Vale from the deep, dry valleys and wooded plateau of the West Kent Downs. This sense of separation is increased by the extensive tracts of ecologically valuable deciduous woodlands along the top of the scarp.

Woodland is very significant in this landscape, providing an important backdrop for the rolling landform, the network of small country lanes, the scattered settlements and the extensive valley pastures. In the east, around Luddesdown, the fields are contained by thick walls of woodland, and strips of remnant coppice, or shaws, occur frequently along the steeper valley sides. Hidden away among trees are several medieval buildings, such as Luddesdown Court, constructed from the local Kentish ragstone, while the villages of Vigo and West Kingsdown are set deep in the woodlands themselves.

The clay-with-flints soil on the plateau and ridge tops is reflected in the pasture and woodland dominating these areas; in the valleys, the extent of the finer silt soils is reflected by the predominance of arable cultivation. The downland becomes increasingly open in the north, where the intimate character of the scarp top gives way to a large-scale landscape of intensively farmed, rolling valleys and large blocks of deciduous woodland. West of Rochester, the mature woodlands and historic parkland of Cobham Hall are severed from the deciduous coppice woodlands of Shorne Wood Country Park by the busy A2 trunk road and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL).

[next >>](#)

LUDESLOW: WEST KENT DOWNS

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Rolling valleyside pasture and extensive undulating arable fields. Large areas of mixed woodland dominate skyline. Peaceful and rural, but threatened by suburban influences and industrial developments. Many hedgerows removed.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

The unity between landform and landscape elements is slightly interrupted by loss of hedgerow and the intensity of some areas of cultivation. However, there are very few visual detractors - some unsympathetic farm complexes and pylons amongst other minor detractors. The strong and extensive ecological base of wooded ridges is modified by the intensive agricultural use within arable areas on the lower slopes. The condition of heritage features is variable: tree cover is good, but field boundaries are few and declining. The scattered and isolated historic farmsteads are dominated by piecemeal residential development in the west of the character area. Characteristic building styles are of mixed age and have a moderate positive impact. The condition of the area is considered to be good.

Sensitivity

The area has a strong time-depth, reinforced by the distinctive ridgeline woodland and ancient highway routes. The historic hedgerow pattern is in decline and no longer contributes to the local distinctiveness. Many of the characteristic narrow, banked roads are open within arable areas, having lost their hedged boundaries. However, where they persist, they have a distinctive mix of species and are characteristically tall. Visibility is moderate as the landform is apparent and tree cover is intermittent. Sensitivity is considered to be high.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

It is the ancient characteristics which are the strong element of this landscape, which should be conserved and enhanced. The unity between landform and the landcover is another very positive attribute. The loss of hedgerow in the arable areas may be addressed by conserving and extending remaining hedges along the highway, but this is possibly not appropriate within arable fields. The isolation and small-scale of farmsteads and hamlets should be conserved.

CONTEXT

Regional: Kent Downs AONB

Condition	Sensitivity		
	low	moderate	high
	good	moderate	poor
good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

Good.

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

Sensitivity

High.

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

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE.

Conserve the ancient characteristics of the landscape such as woodland cover and the isolation of settlements. Conserve woodland on ridges, and enhance woodland by extending wooded shaws into lower slopes. Conserve mix of hedgerow species and management of tall hedgerow. Conserve the characteristics and enclosure of ancient highways

previous <<

Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment

May 2009



JACOBS

Gravesham
Borough Council



8. Meopham Downs



Landscape Description

Meopham Downs is a large character area, stretching from the centre to the south of Gravesham Borough along the eastern edge of Sevenoaks District.

The majority of the geology comprises Upper Chalk and a wide band of Clay with Flint, stretching from north to south. An area of Blackheath / Oldhaven Beds sits beneath the large village of Meopham and an area of Claygate Beds sits west of the neighbouring village Meopham Green. Soils across the character area are silty, with loam to clay across high areas.

The topography is gently undulating with clear views across the immediate landscape and occasional wider views from the main road towards the residential settlements of Istead Rise and New Barn. The dominant land use is agricultural, with a mixture of grazed pasture and arable use. Small clumps of woodland, neglected orchards and commercial horticulture exist in parts. There is a presence of horse related activity scattered throughout the landscape.

Field shape and size differs, with a neat pattern of small square fields in the south and broader irregular shaped fields to the north. Field boundaries are distinctly formed by native hedgerows, with hedgerow trees.



The large village of Meopham is located to the north of the area, with Meopham Green located at the centre of the area and Culverstone Green to the far south. Traditional architecture surrounds village greens in both Meopham and Meopham Green, providing a strong sense of place and local vernacular. All three settlements comprise dense clusters of buildings that have formed along the A227 that runs from north to south and links all three villages. In addition the small recent settlement of South Street is located to the north-east.

Small traditional clusters of isolated farmsteads can be found to the east and west. Small traditional Victorian red brick architecture and elements of flint are common, reflecting their locality within the Kent landscape. Meopham Windmill, located along Wrotham Road, provides a unique and

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating topography with a mixture of arable and pasture farmland
- Neat pattern of small square fields in the south
- Broader irregular shaped fields to the north
- Narrow lanes and roads lined with hedgerows
- Three large settlements located along A227 running east and west
- Traditional architecture surrounding village greens provide local vernacular



traditional attraction within the area. Overhead wires run across the landscape near the small settlement of Henley Street.

The A227 is the areas largest highway and acts as a busy link between the north and south. Narrower, winding, hedge lined roads and lanes run east and west from the A227 into the adjacent landscape.



Condition: Good



The pattern of landscape elements is coherent, with few visual detractors. Established hedgerows and small woodland clumps limit the visual impact of detractors. Hedgerows are native and in good condition, providing ecological corridors along field boundaries. Woodland clumps are mostly native and mature and vary in condition, whilst the remains of orchards are in poor condition. In general the ecological integrity of the area varies.

Both Meopham and Meopham Green have Conservation Areas at their centres with traditional buildings and village greens. In

general the uses of the landscape are traditional, however the quality of the landscape and land development to the south is of a lower quality than that to the north. Taking into consideration the traditional architecture, land use, coherent pattern of elements and the lack of visual detractors the condition of the landscape can be assessed as being good.

Sensitivity: Moderate

The key characteristic elements of the landscape are distinct, providing coherency and a strong sense of place within the landscape. Although woodland is restricted to small woodland clumps, hedgerows that run along field boundaries are historic and distinct. Both the settlements of Meopham and Meopham Green have distinct traditional village centres. In addition, traditional vernacular architecture can be found scattered across the landscape. The other two remaining settlements have more recent architecture that is less in keeping with the local vernacular. Strength of character and visibility are moderate, providing a moderate sensitivity overall.



Guidelines: Conserve and Reinforce

The key landscape elements characteristic of the Meopham Downs should be conserved and reinforced.

- Conserve and reinforce the traditional landscape structure and where necessary introduce new elements they should respect and enhance the pattern.
- Conserve characteristic narrow winding lanes and dense native hedgerows.

- Conserve traditional character of built environment by drawing on traditional building materials and techniques for new development.
- Reinforce village identity, keeping villages distinct and separate from one another.
- Reinforce the enclosure of settlements within wooded areas.
- Conserve and reinforce broadleaf woodland cover and wooded edges to arable plateau.
- Encourage the use of local produce to support traditional land uses such as orchards.
- Explore new horticultural land uses.
- Conserve and reinforce agricultural land use.

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		