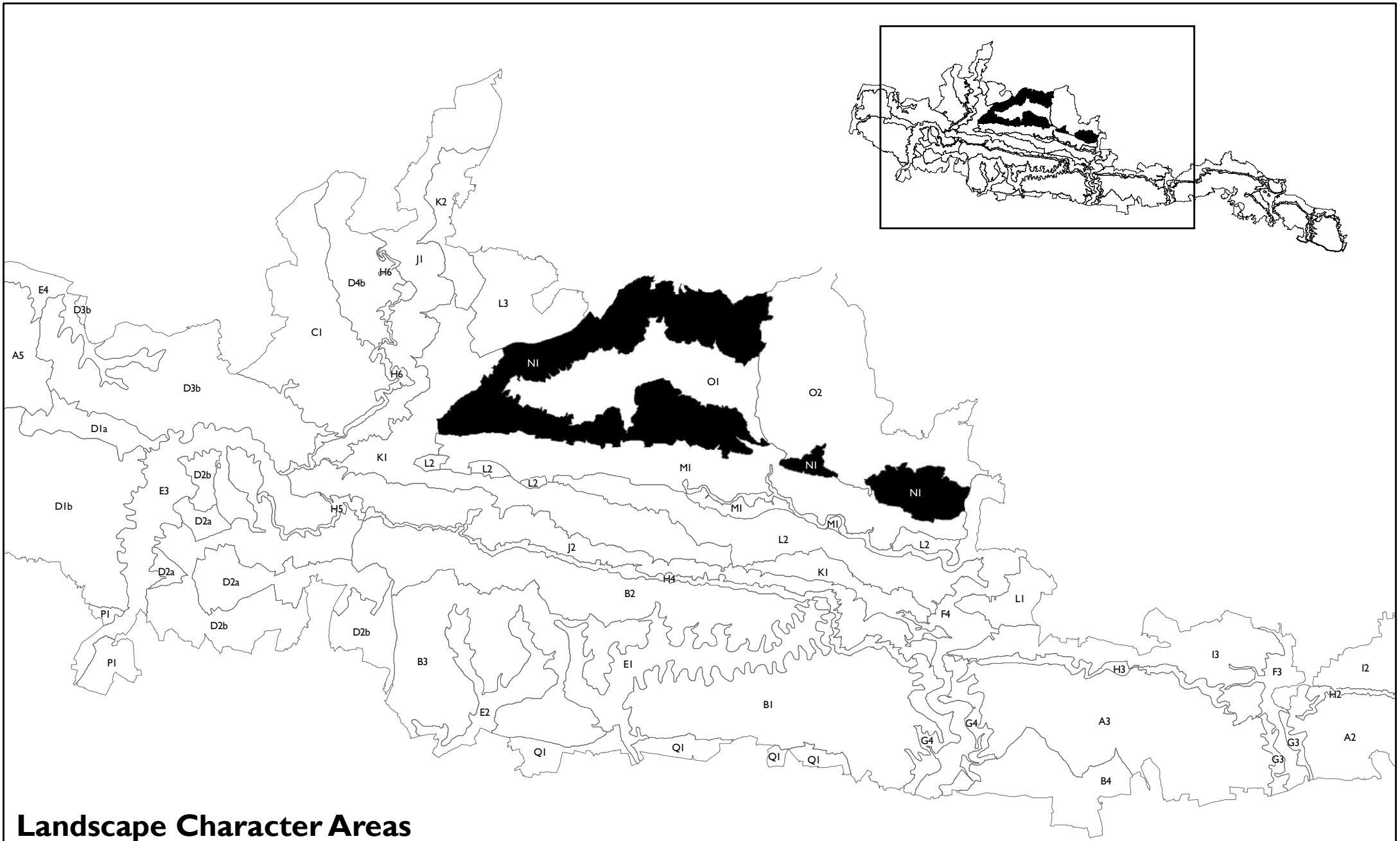
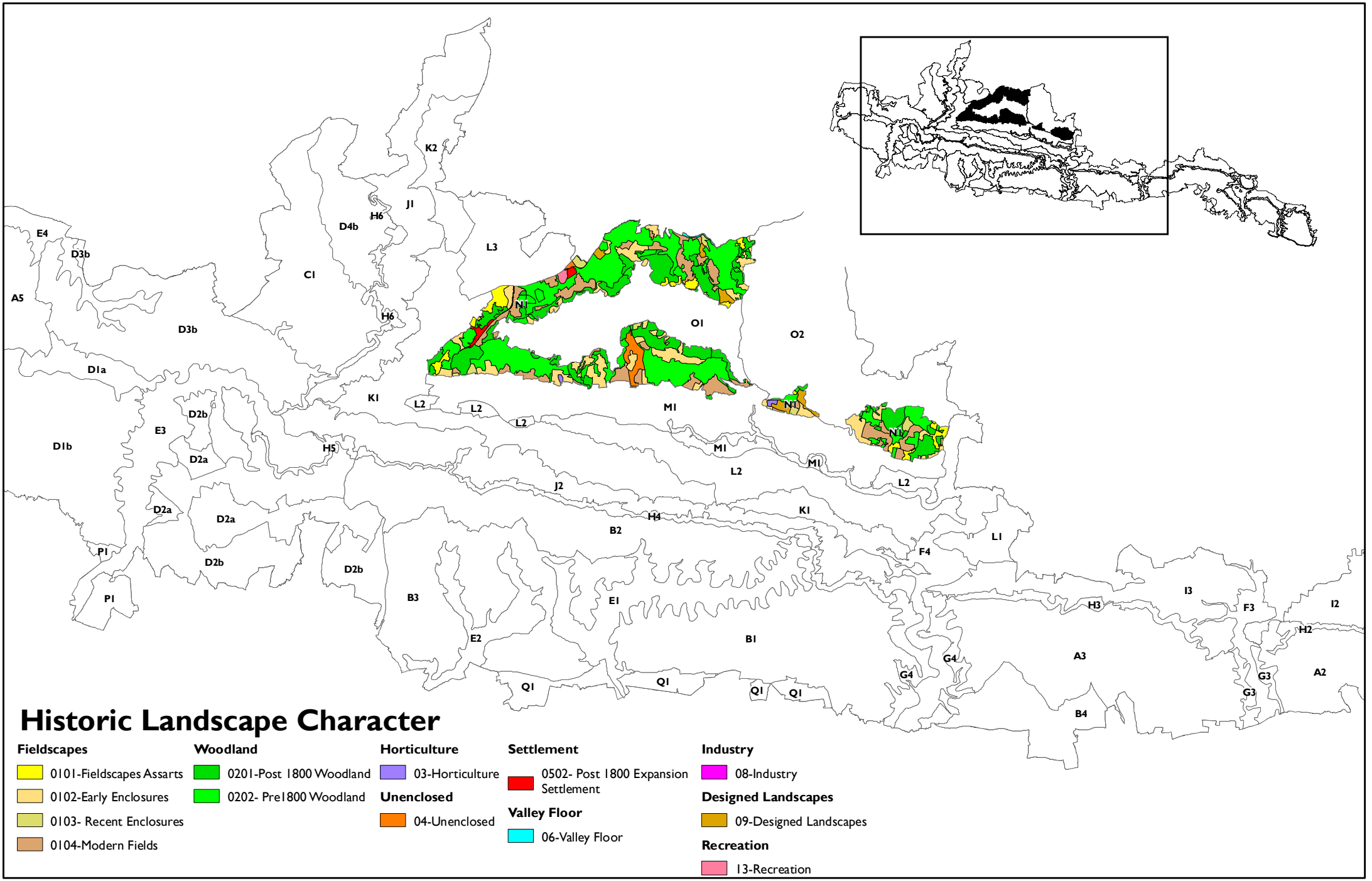


Landscape Character Areas

N1 Blackdown to Petworth Greensand Hills

N: Greensand Hills



Historic Landscape Character

Fieldscapes

- 0101-Fieldscapes Assarts
- 0102-Early Enclosures
- 0103- Recent Enclosures
- 0104-Modern Fields

Woodland

- 0201-Post 1800 Woodland
- 0202- Pre1800 Woodland

Horticulture

- 03-Horticulture

Unenclosed

- 04-Unenclosed

Settlement

- 0502- Post 1800 Expansion Settlement

Valley Floor

- 06-Valley Floor

Industry

- 08-Industry

Designed Landscapes

- 09-Designed Landscapes

Recreation

- 13-Recreation

N: Greensand Hills

LANDSCAPE TYPE N: GREENSAND HILLS

N.1 The *Greensand Hills* are steep, prominent hills formed by the resistant sandstones of the Hythe Formation. They form a horseshoe-shaped escarpment enclosing the Milland Basin, located in the northernmost part of the South Downs.

DESCRIPTION

Integrated Key Characteristics:

- Prominent hills formed from sandstones and cherts of the Lower Greensand group with a steep escarpment at their inner edge.
- Streams drain the hills in deep ravine-like valleys.
- Significant woodland cover comprising an interlocking mosaic of different woodland types and structures - oak-birch woodland, beechwoods, mixed woodland and coniferous plantations on former commonland.
- Woodland clearings support heathy unenclosed commons including ecologically rich habitats - open heather heath, acid grassland, bracken, gorse, woody scrub, and oak-birch woodland.
- The irregular pattern of fields within clearings and woodland edges support rough grazing.
- Narrow, deeply sunken lanes wind up hillsides linking isolated farmsteads.
- Dispersed medieval settlement form with scattered early piecemeal enclosures around the edge of former commons.
- Extensive network of public rights of way and unenclosed commons open to public access.
- Hammer ponds along the foot of the hills associated with the former Wealden iron industry.
- Extensive panoramic views from open hill tops.
- Characterised by a sense of enclosure, mystery and remoteness.

Physical Landscape

N.2 The *Wooded Greensand Hills* are created by the sandstones of the Hythe formation which form part of the Lower Greensand group. The rocks are a greenish grey sandstone with beds of chert which is resistant to erosion. The Hythe Beds are particularly thick along their northern and western limits where they give rise to a prominent ridge of hills with steep escarpments that enclose the Wealden Basin. A series of streams have eroded deep ravine-like valleys into the sandstone creating an undulating landform.

N.3 The hills are unified by their dense tree cover in the form of conifer plantations, mixed woodland, oak-birch-chestnut broadleaved woodland, beech hangers and chestnut-hazel coppice. Irregular patterns of fields of pasture are found in woodland clearings where the acidic grassland is often used for horse grazing. Marshy grassland and ponds are also features of these clearings. The sandstone geology gives rise to well drained coarse loamy and sandy soils that are locally stony and support heathland.

N.4 Steep, winding lanes accessing the hills have been eroded over many years to deep sunken lanes where tree roots as well as the underlying sandstones are exposed.

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape

N.5 The hills provide contrasting experiences. A strong sense of enclosure is provided by the high proportion of woodland and the deeply sunken lanes while a sense of openness and exposure is experienced on the open heaths, particularly where these occur on hill tops from where there are panoramic views. The tree cover also contributes to the sense of mystery and remoteness that characterises the hills. At a detailed level the intimate winding lanes and narrow valleys form a contrast to the large scale swathes of woodland and open heathlands. The landscape is essentially still as a result of the low population density and lack of movement.

N.6 The hills are highly tranquil and have a high level of perceived naturalness (due to the presence of native deciduous woodland, heathland and wetland habitats), lack of visible overt human impact, low density of settlement, and associated dark skies and low noise levels.

N.7 Although the hills are highly rural, there is generally good access to the countryside provided by an extensive network of public rights of way, including woodland walks. There are also a large number of commons with open access as well as areas of land managed for recreation by the National Trust and Forestry Commission.

N.8 Some of the earliest descriptive writings, by William Camden in the 16th century, describe the hills as an industrial heartland '*a great deal of meadow ground is turned into ponds and mills for the driving of mills by the flashes, which, beating with hammers upon the iron, fill the neighbourhood about it, night and day with continual noise*'. This clearly illustrates the changes that have occurred in the perceptual aspects of the landscape.

N.9 The Poet Laureate, Alfred Lord Tennyson, lived in a house on the slopes of Black Down. The views from Black Down inspired his poem '*View eastward over the Weald*' which was written in 1880. The poem celebrates the spacious vistas and scenic beauty of the landscape. Speaking of the Greensand Hills, Cobbett declared "*I have never seen the earth flung about in such a wild way as round Hindhead and Black Down*".

N.10 The landscape has been a great source of inspiration to painters. Turner was a regular visitor to Petworth in the early 1800s painting pictures of the house and its parkland. Ivon Hitchens (1893-1979) painted in West Sussex throughout the 1930s and returned to settle at Lavington Common where he continued to paint.

Biodiversity

N.11 This landscape is heavily wooded and supports large areas of ancient woodland, which together with remnant areas of open heath, acid grassland and meadow/pasture contribute to the rich and varied ecological character of the landscape. Many sites carry statutory and/or non-statutory wildlife designation.

N.12 The character of the woodland resource is varied and includes a range of semi-natural woodland types including those dominated by oak-beech, oak-ash, oak-birch, and sweet chestnut, as well as broadleaved, mixed and coniferous plantation. Of particular note are the large areas of ancient semi-natural woodland which support a diverse assemblage of flora and fauna, particularly invertebrates, bryophytes and lichens. The network of smaller woodlands, both ancient, secondary and plantation are also of significant ecological value and provide important corridors between core woodland areas.

N.13 Remnant areas of lowland heath also occur, together with occasional areas of wet heath, acid grassland and secondary woodland. These heathland habitats are characteristic of the area, and are particularly notable for their invertebrates and breeding birds such as woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler.

Key Biodiversity Features	***Importance***
Significant ancient woodland cover, with good connectivity, including examples of oak, beech, birch and sweet chestnut woodland.	• These woodlands support a diverse range of flowering plants, and are particularly notable for their invertebrates, breeding birds, bryophytes and lichens.
Important areas of lowland heath and occasional patches of wet heath and acid grassland.	• Lowland heathland supports a characteristic invertebrate fauna and is important for breeding birds such as woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler. • Where heathland occurs in association with other habitat types such as wet heath/flushes, acid grassland, scrub and secondary woodland, this habitat diversity is a key ecological attribute.

Historic Character

N.14 The generally low fertility and marginal character of the sandy soils is evident in a historic land-use which, for several millennia, has been dominated by woodland and heathy unenclosed commons, with earlier activity restricted to prehistoric exploitation of the woodland resources. The presence of an Iron Age hillfort at Hammer Wood indicates activity at this time in the vicinity, although the focus of any settlement is likely to have been the adjacent Rother valley. Evidence of Roman roads reinforces the marginal nature of the area as a landscape to traverse rather than settle.

N.15 Extensive blocks of pre-1800 woodland are still evident within the landscape, largely, but not exclusively, grouped along the steep scarp slope overlooking the Low Weald. Much of this woodland is likely to be of medieval origin, probably involving areas of coppicing, a practice that would have continued into the modern period.

N.16 The areas of commonland were originally cleared in the prehistoric period and utilised for centuries by communities based on more favoured soils as pasture, wood pasture and as a source of fuel. Most of the commons have, since 1800, been appropriated for plantations, many of them coniferous. These, together with the earlier blocks of ancient woodland, produce the overwhelmingly wooded character. Some of the commonland land was enclosed for agricultural use, with some early enclosures present around medieval settlement and in woodland clearings. There are also modern enclosures (*i.e.* post-1910) which fall into two types. The first type comprises modern fields derived from 20th century amalgamations of earlier field systems for arable cultivation which occur on the dipslope of the wooded ridge (the south-facing side of the Rother valley). The other type comprises areas of small-holdings associated with detached houses set within large gardens.

N.17 The landscape supports a number of gentry houses and landscape parks, some of which are 'anchored' in adjacent character areas with richer natural resources.

Key Features of the Historic Environment	***Importance***
Marginal nature of the landscape	Provides a continuing sense of remoteness
Survival of significant blocks of pre-1800 woodland on the steep scarp slopes overlooking the lower Weald	Provides evidence of medieval and early post-medieval woodland exploitation, *e.g.* coppicing and charcoal burning
Remnant unenclosed common	Provides an indication of historic land use e.g. survival of small area of common
Extensive areas of post-1800 woodland plantations covering areas of former commonland	Indicates the location of areas of former common which would have been open/less wooded
Scattered early piecemeal enclosures around the edge of commons	Important evidence for early post-medieval use of marginal land in response to increasing competition for land resources
Presence of designed landscapes	Provide evidence of gentry houses and landscape parks of the wealthy population of the past

Settlement Form and Built Character

N.18 The settlement pattern in the *Greensand Hills* is characterised by a high density of dispersed settlement. This conforms to English Heritage's rural settlement designation of Weald Sub-Province within the South-eastern Province. The typical settlement form comprises isolated farmsteads of medieval origin set within areas of early enclosure surrounded by woodland.

N.19 Post-medieval enclosure of the commons created new settlement types, represented by both straggling semi-nucleations/agglomerations of settlement and isolated farmsteads or small-holdings, situated around the edges of the former commons.

N.20 Modern (late 19th-20th century) settlement is characterised by the spread of small-holdings and detached houses with gardens.

N.21 Building materials are typically local sandstone, red brick and clay tiles.

EVALUATION

Sensitivity

N.22 This landscape has many sensitive natural, cultural and aesthetic/perceptual features that are vulnerable to change. Key landscape sensitivities include:

- High level of perceived naturalness and lack of visible overt human impact.
- The sense of remoteness arising from the low density of settlement with associated dark skies and low noise levels.
- Remnant areas of heathland which are important in providing a sense of time depth, a high perceived naturalness, opportunities for countryside access, and a rich biodiversity.
- Ancient deciduous woodland which provides a sense of enclosure and mystery, a high perceived naturalness, woodland walks, and rich biodiversity.
- Patterns of early enclosures which provide a sense of time depth, and contribute to the intimate scale of the landscape.
- A dispersed settlement pattern which is important in maintaining a rural and tranquil character.

N.23 The high proportion of woodland cover limits visual sensitivity of the landscape. However, the prominent undeveloped ridges and skylines that are visible from adjacent landscapes are visually highly sensitive.

Change – Key Issues and Trends

Past Change

N.24 Observable changes in the past include:

- Planting of conifers on heathland after 1800 (this has now ceased) with areas now being bought forward for heathland re-creation.
- Encroachment of scrub onto remaining areas of heathland in areas of low grazing pressure.
- Spread of introduced invasive species such as rhododendrons and laurel, which thrive on the acidic sandy soils, within deciduous woodland.
- Decline in traditional woodland management techniques (coppicing) as forestry has concentrated on coniferous rotations.
- Expansion of built development in a woodland setting including suburban development along roads.
- Increasing recreational use of the area, indicated by the presence of horse riding centres and golf courses.

- Increase in hobby farming or private stables resulting in sub-division of fields with additional fencing, tracks, hardstanding, jumps and other paraphernalia.

- Hedgerow loss around field enclosures and replacement with fencing.

Future Landscape Change

N.25 In the short term (5 years) change is likely to be on a small-scale basis. Individual changes may not be immediately apparent or have a clear (visible) landscape impact. It is likely that tree cover will continue to change, particularly in relation to commercial forestry plantations with sensitive management required to minimise the impact of felling regimes and replanting particularly where this occurs on prominent skylines. While extensive new development is not envisaged, local change in relation to individual properties such as lighting or introduction of (sub) urban style fencing and boundaries, or increased traffic pressures on rural lanes, plus increased demand for leisure land uses such as horse riding and golf may cumulatively start to erode the perceived rural, remote character of the area, which is an especially sensitive and vulnerable characteristic.

N.26 It is difficult to be prescriptive about long term change (20 years) as this will be dependent on prevailing policies and incentives. The South Downs Management Plan will be a key tool in managing change and ensuring a positive future for the area. Some potential changes and key vulnerabilities within the *Wooded Greensand Hills* are outlined below.

Climate Change: Potential adverse change could include changes in the streams, which are characteristic of the area with high water flows and increased erosion contrasting with periods of drought and low flows. There may also be a change in the species composition of habitats particularly affecting the heathlands and ancient woodlands. Wind damage, due to increases in severe gales is another concern in this wooded area - the predominance of the older age classes may increase the susceptibility of woodland to damage from droughts and storms. In response to climate change, the pursuit of renewable energy may results in demand for wind energy development along the prominent sandstone hills which could alter the sense of tranquillity and remoteness associated with this landscape. Future improved management of woodlands for fuel may also be a positive benefit.

Agricultural Change and Land Management: Agricultural management will be driven by the changes in the world market and the CAP. In this area of low fertility sandy soils, it is possible that marginal farms may cease active agricultural production. The land will be vulnerable to purchase as hobby farms or for horse grazing and these uses will require active management to ensure the distinctive rural, remote character of the area is retained. Positive landscape change could result from regimes to promote enhanced environmental management of woodland and especially on going work to restore, manage and link heathland sites.

Development: In this area the characteristic most vulnerable to adverse change is the remote, rural character. Although extensive development is not envisaged, this characteristic could be eroded by incremental small scale change and further loss of dark skies and tranquillity. Increasing traffic pressures on the narrow rural roads and sunken lanes that characterise the area is a key future issue.

Broad Management Objective and Landscape Guidelines

N.27 **The overall management objective should be to conserve the rich mosaic of natural habitats, the sense of remoteness and history, and panoramic views over the surrounding countryside**.

Landscape Management Considerations

- Conserve pre-1800 woodland, monitor/ check the spread of introduced invasive species in ancient deciduous woodland, and plan for long term woodland regeneration.
- Encourage re-introduction of traditional woodland management techniques, such as coppicing, and promote interest in, and marketing of, local wood products, including wood for fuel.
- Manage existing heathland to prevent encroachment of scrub and assess potential for creating new, interconnected heathlands. Conserve the mix of ancient woodland, heathland and pasture on acidic grassland.
- Reinstate former field boundaries in the pastoral clearings.
- Safeguard early enclosures that represent post-medieval use of marginal land in response to increasing competition for land resources.
- Reduce the impact of forestry by encouraging sensitive forestry practice, for example mixing different species and felling small coupes.
- Plan for climate change, researching appropriate species mixes and designing woodlands to minimise damage as a result of increased storms.
- Encourage and support the development of soil management plans to reduce soil erosion.
- Encourage sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, hardstanding, jumps and other paraphernalia that are associated with hobby farms or private stables and that fall outside planning control.

Development Considerations

- Conserve the low density of dispersed settlement which contributes to the tranquil rural character of the area.
- Maintain the characteristic loose agglomerations of common-edge settlement and avoid infill or extensions which would create a more compact, solid settlement form along roads.
- Ensure that any built development reflects the local vernacular - resist suburban style garden boundaries, kerbs, and lighting. Conserve the remote rural character of the landscape.

- Ensure recreational facilities, such as horse riding centres and golf courses, do not erode sense of tranquillity. Avoid use of excessive lighting, signage and 'suburban' features.

- Minimise use of signage in this rural landscape. Where necessary, use signage that fits with the rural character of the landscape, drawing on vernacular designs.

- Conserve the character of the ancient sunken lanes – resist pressure for road improvements which would alter the experience of travelling through the landscape.

- Monitor the effects of incremental change to buildings and land, and minimise such change by providing design guidance and encouraging applicants to enter into discussions at and early stage in the preparation of their proposals.

- Consideration should be given to the potential impact of any proposals for wind turbines or communication masts. Particular attention should be paid to views from key viewpoints as well as impacts on the less tangible aspects of character such as the special sense of remoteness and tranquillity associated with this area.

Character Areas	
The *Greensand Hills* occur to the north of the Rother Valley, forming a horseshoe-shaped escarpment between Blackdown and Petworth.	
N1:	Blackdown to Petworth Greensand Hills

N1: BLACKDOWN TO PETWORTH GREENSAND HILLS

Location and Boundaries

N1.1 The *Blackdown to Petworth Greensand Hills* form the westernmost extent of the Lower Greensand where it curves around to enclose the western end of the Weald. The *Blackdown to Petworth Greensand Hills* character area forms part of a larger complex of Greensand hills which extends northwards across the proposed National Park boundary into Surrey. Contours which represent the base of the steep scarp slope define the inner boundary of the hills. The outer southern boundary represents a transition between the dipslope of the Greensand hills and the Rother Valley and is drawn along a combination of woodland edges, field boundaries and contour lines. There are panoramic views from the open hilltops over adjacent landscapes.

Integrated Key Characteristics:

- Prominent hills formed from sandstones and cherts of the Lower Greensand group with a steep escarpment at their inner edge from where there are panoramic views.
- Sandstone geology has resulted in eroded deeply sunken lanes and deep ravine like valleys containing streams.
- Sandy soils have given rise to heathy unenclosed commons (many are open to public access).
- Rich biodiversity created by the mix of ancient woodland, heathland and pasture on acidic grassland.
- The settlement pattern is typically dispersed and density of settlement is low – this contributes to the rural nature of the hills.
- Scattered post-medieval piecemeal enclosures, present around the edge of former commons, represent use of marginal land in response to increasing competition for land resources.
- The hills contain an extensive network of public rights of way and the area provides good countryside access in the form of open access land and land managed by the National Trust and Forestry Commission.
- The significant amount of woodland cover, including both ancient woodland and plantations on former common and heath, contributes to the sense of enclosure, mystery and remoteness that characterises the hills.

Specific Characteristics Unique to the Blackdown to Petworth Greensand Hills

N1.2 The *Blackdown to Petworth Greensand Hills* form a prominent ridge of hills with steep escarpments that enclose the Milland Basin. This ridge of hills includes Black Down which, at 280m, is the highest point in the South Downs. The prominence of the

hills provides opportunities for magnificent panoramic views from open hills, such as Woolbeding Common. The thickness of the Greensand deposit reduces to the east and, correspondingly, the hills are less dramatic to the east. Here the hills are cut by tributaries of the River Rother which have formed breaks in the ridge, for example at Lodsworth and Petworth.

N1.3 There is evidence of Iron Age activity in the form of an Iron Age hillfort at Hammer Wood, on the southern edge of the character area. Evidence for Roman activity is in the form of a mansio (posting station) and two stretches of Roman road (all now Scheduled Ancient Monuments) which were built to service people passing through the area. These sites reinforce the marginal nature of the area as a landscape to traverse rather than settle.

N1.4 The coarse loamy and sandy soils of the *Blackdown to Petworth Greensand Hills* support some significant areas of commonland which were originally cleared in the prehistoric period and utilised for centuries by communities based on more favoured soils as pasture, wood pasture and as a source of fuel. These sites now support extensive areas of open heathland, together with mosaics of acid grassland, wet heath and oak-birch woodland, for example at Woolbeding and Pound Commons SSSI and Chapel Common SSSI. Many of the commons also provide open access, for example Blackdown Common, Chapel Common, and Woolbeding Common.

N1.5 This character area supports over 1500ha of ancient semi-natural woodland, although over 600ha of this, has been replanted. Of particular note are The Mens SAC (204ha) which falls partly within the character area, and Northpark copse to Snapelands copse SSSI (101ha). These sites support a diverse assemblage of flora and fauna, and are particularly notable for their invertebrates, bryophytes and lichens.

N1.6 Typical of their type, the *Blackdown to Petworth Greensand Hills* reveal some areas of early enclosures, most notably the linear block of fields around the hamlet of Henley which may represent Tudor enclosures at the edge of the former Great and Lord's Commons. Early enclosures are also seen around the medieval settlement of Linchmere, probably originating as assarts from the woodland.

N1.7 Although the *Blackdown to Petworth Greensand Hills* are highly rural, they lie in close proximity to Haslemere, Liphook, Petersfield, Midhurst and Petworth. They are therefore highly accessible by large populations who use the woodlands, heaths and commons for informal recreation. The settlement pattern in this area is typical of the landscape type (characterised by a high density of dispersed settlement), the proximity of Haslemere and Liphook means this area has seen a spread of small-holdings and detached houses with gardens, particularly in the north of the character area.

N1.8 An exception to the dispersed pattern of settlement is the medieval village of Linchmere, which may be related to the nearby monastic site of Shulbrede Priory, perhaps as a dependent settlement.

N1.9 The *Blackdown to Petworth Greensand Hills* contain a number of landscape parks, including Blackdown Park, Pitshill Park, King Edward VII Hospital ground, the grounds of Hollycombe House, and part of Petworth Park. These are all on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens. In addition there are a number of additional

parks that are recognised by West Sussex County Council as 'parkscapes', for example Coldharbour Park.

Sensitivities Specific to the Blackdown to Petworth Greensand Hills

N1.10 All of the landscape and visual sensitivities listed in the landscape type evaluation apply to this character area. Specific to this character area are:

- The sense of remoteness and tranquillity despite its location close to centres of population.
- The large number of historic parkland and designed landscapes.
- Important areas of lowland heathland and ancient woodland.

Change Specific to the Blackdown to Petworth Greensand Hills

N1.11 Past change specific to this area includes:

- Spread of small-holdings and large detached houses with gardens, particularly in the north of the character area and along the B2070.

N1.12 The designation of the area as AONB and future designation as National Park (if confirmed) is likely to limit pressure for large scale built development within this landscape. However, since this character area is close to Haslemere, Liphook, Petersfield, Midhurst and Petworth it is likely that the area will experience pressures for additional built development over the next 20 years. There may also be increased demand for leisure land uses and continued spread of smallholdings and use of land for horse paddocks.

Landscape Management/Development Considerations Specific to the Blackdown to Petworth Greensand Hills

N1.13 In addition to the generic landscape management and development considerations for this landscape type, the following landscape management considerations are specific to this character area:

- Conserve the large number of historic parklands and designed landscapes. Recognise and protect locally important parks and gardens, such as Coldharbour Park, as well as those listed on English Heritage's Register.
- Conserve the sense of remoteness and tranquillity of this character area, which is particularly valued in close proximity to areas of dense settlement.

N1.14 The following development considerations are specific to this character area:

- Seek to limit the further spread of small-holdings and detached houses with gardens, particularly in the north of the character area, which could erode the sense of tranquillity and remoteness associated with this area.
- Seek to reduce fragmentation of farmholdings for leisure use and provide guidance to new landowners raising awareness of the special landscape characteristics of the area.

Extensive, areas of open heathland on sandy soils.

Narrow, deeply sunken lanes wind up hillsides.

Significant woodland cover contributes to the scale of enclosure, mystery and remoteness of the hills.

Woodland is interspersed with open heathland.

Open hilltops provide extensive, panoramic views across adjacent, lowlying areas.

Tall, Scots pine are a feature of the sandy soils, and create a strong sense of dense enclosure.