September 2005

# West Wight
## Landscape Character Assessment

## FINAL REPORT

Prepared on behalf of
The West Wight Partnership
By Land Use Consultants

# WEST WIGHT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

**Prepared for the West Wight Partnership**
**by**
**Land Use Consultants**

**FINAL REPORT**
**September 2005**

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Land Use Consultants has prepared this report on behalf of the West Wight Partnership with the LUC team consisting of Kate Ahern, Jane Wilson, Frances Curtis and Luke Bristow (authors) and Diana Graham (GIS and graphics).

The study has been steered by members of the West Wight Partnership Steering Group, in particular Matthew Chatfield, Countryside Manager for Isle of Wight Council and Jim Fawcett Agenda 21 Officer for the authority. Considerable assistance has been given by Ollie Boulter, the West Wight Partnership Project Officer, particularly in collating the results of the public consultation. Assistance has also been given by John Brownscombe, the Isle of Wight AONB Officer, and Zoe Cozbeck of the National Trust.

On the historic environment Ruth Waller, County Archaeologist, has contributed the chapter on Human Influences, Rebecca Loader has supplied information on coastal archaeology and Vicky Basford has provided invaluable assistance on historic landscape characterisation.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## THE WEST WIGHT LANDSCAPE

1.1. West Wight makes up approximately one third of the Isle of Wight (covering 10,255 ha). It is a surrounded on three sides by the sea with the Solent to the north and English Channel to the south and a total coastline in the region of 48 km. To the east lies the rest of the Isle of Wight including the main centres of population at Newport, Cowes, Ryde and Sandown.

1.2. West Wight is sparsely settled with the greatest concentration at the large village of Freshwater. Other, smaller settlements are the port of Yarmouth and the villages of Brighstone, Newbridge, Shalfleet, Bouldnor, Mottistone and Brook. Newtown is an unusual settlement, the remnants of an abandoned planned settlement from Medieval times.

1.3. Much of West Wight is highly rural, and in some areas remarkably remote and natural, considering its context in the South East of England. It is a highly varied landscape due to the wide range of the geology which underlies this relatively small area and is rich in biodiversity interest, in historic landscape elements and in cultural associations. The significance of the landscape is emphasised by the fact that 60% of the area is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and 80% of the coastline is Heritage Coast.

## THE WEST WIGHT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

1.4. This study was undertaken by Land Use Consultants on behalf of the West Wight Partnership during the period November 2004 to March 2005. The study examines the landscape character of the western side of the Isle of Wight which consists (for this project) of the following electoral wards in the County of the Isle of Wight: Totland; Freshwater Norton; Freshwater Afton; Salfleet and Yarmouth; and Brighstone and Calbourne. (see **Figure 1**)

1.5. The West Wight Partnership are in the process of making a Landscape Partnership bid for funding to the Heritage Lottery Fund and commissioned this landscape character assessment with the aim of it supporting and informing this bid. The objectives of the assessment which will achieve this aim are:

- to demonstrate how and why West Wight is a valued and distinctive part of the heritage of the UK
- to find out and record what local people and visitors value about the landscape
- to identify forces for change (past and future)
- to provide information to guide and influence those responsible for developing projects and policies to conserve and enhance the West Wight landscape

## METHODOLOGY

1.6. Landscape character assessment is a technique that has been developed to facilitate systematic analysis, description and classification of the landscape. It involves identification of those features or combinations of elements that contribute to the character of the landscape, thereby enabling the special character and qualities of a particular area to be understood.

This information allows reasoned consideration of those issues affecting the landscape, which can be used as a basis for the development of appropriate recommendations for future landscape conservation and management.

1.7. The method for undertaking the landscape character assessment follows the current accepted method promoted by the Countryside Agency as set out in the document *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland* (2002).

1.8. The assessment has been prepared within the framework of the Countryside Agency and English Nature's Countryside Character Initiative as shown on the *Character of England Map* and it also considers the context provided by the Agency's *National Landscape Typology*. The assessment also builds upon *The Isle of Wight Landscape: an assessment of the AONB* (Countryside Commission 1994). Various other documents have informed the study including the *Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan 2004-2009* and the preparatory draft of *Isle of Wight Historic Landscape Characterisation.* A full list of references is given in **Appendix 4** and a detailed description of the assessment methodology is given in **Appendix 2**.

## CONSULTATION

1.9. Involving the public in the assessment has been a key part of the study. The West Wight Partnership have carried out a general consultation exercise on what is valued in the West Wight landscape using a questionnaire and exhibitions at public events. For the specific purposes of the landscape character assessment two workshops were held at Freshwater on the afternoon and evening of 26th February 2005.

1.10. The objectives of the workshops were to:

- explain the process of landscape character assessment
- test the characterisation map – boundaries and names
- understand perceptions of what people value as important/special about West Wight and why
- understand concerns about issues/threats and opportunities affecting the landscape (change)

1.11. The information that emerged from the workshops was used to refine and augment the assessment adding local detail and nuance. An account of the workshop methodology and summary of results is given at **Appendix 3**.

## STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

1.12. The structure of this report is as follows:

**Chapter 1: Introduction**: Introduces the landscape of West Wight and the aims and objectives of the assessment.

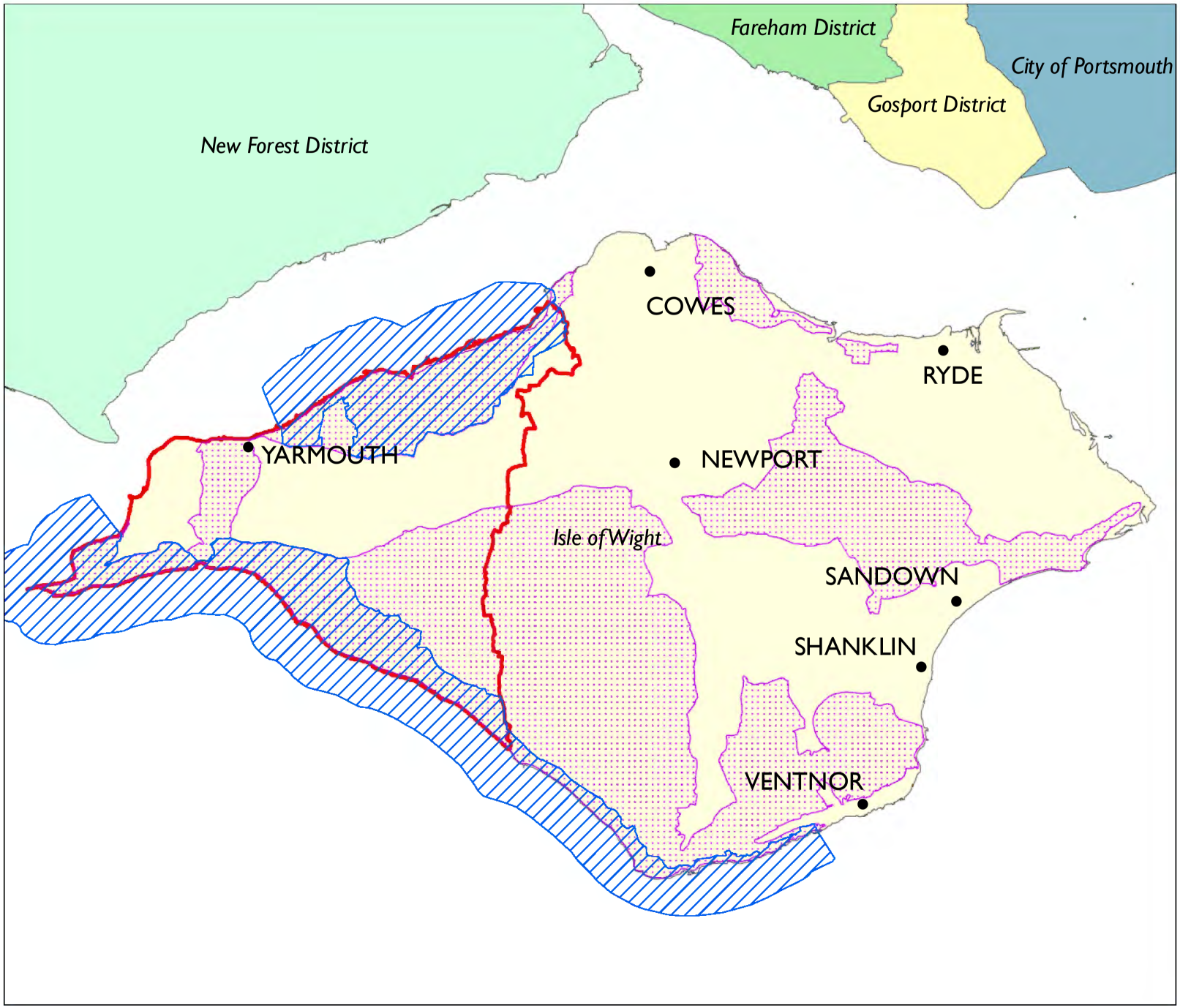
**Chapter 2: Summary of the significance of the West Wight Landscape**: This chapter summarises the importance of the West Wight Landscape locally, regionally and nationally and identifies the elements and aspects of the landscape that create its distinct character.

**Chapter 3: Physical Influences**: Establishes the physical factors that have influenced the character of the area, including geology, topography, hydrology and soils.

**Chapter 4: Ecological Character**: Provides an overview of ecological characteristics across the area that relate to their underlying physical environment.

**Chapter 5: Human Influences**: Establishes the human factors that have influenced the character of West Wight.

**Chapter 6: The Landscape Character of West Wight**: This is the main body of the report and contains an introduction to each landscape type followed by descriptions for each character area and evaluations of the areas including identification of forces for change and a broad landscape strategy leading on to management guidelines.




# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 1:
Location & Context

## Key

- Study area
- Heritage Coast
- AONB

**Borough Boundaries**

- City of Portsmouth
- Fareham District
- Gosport District
- Isle of Wight
- New Forest District

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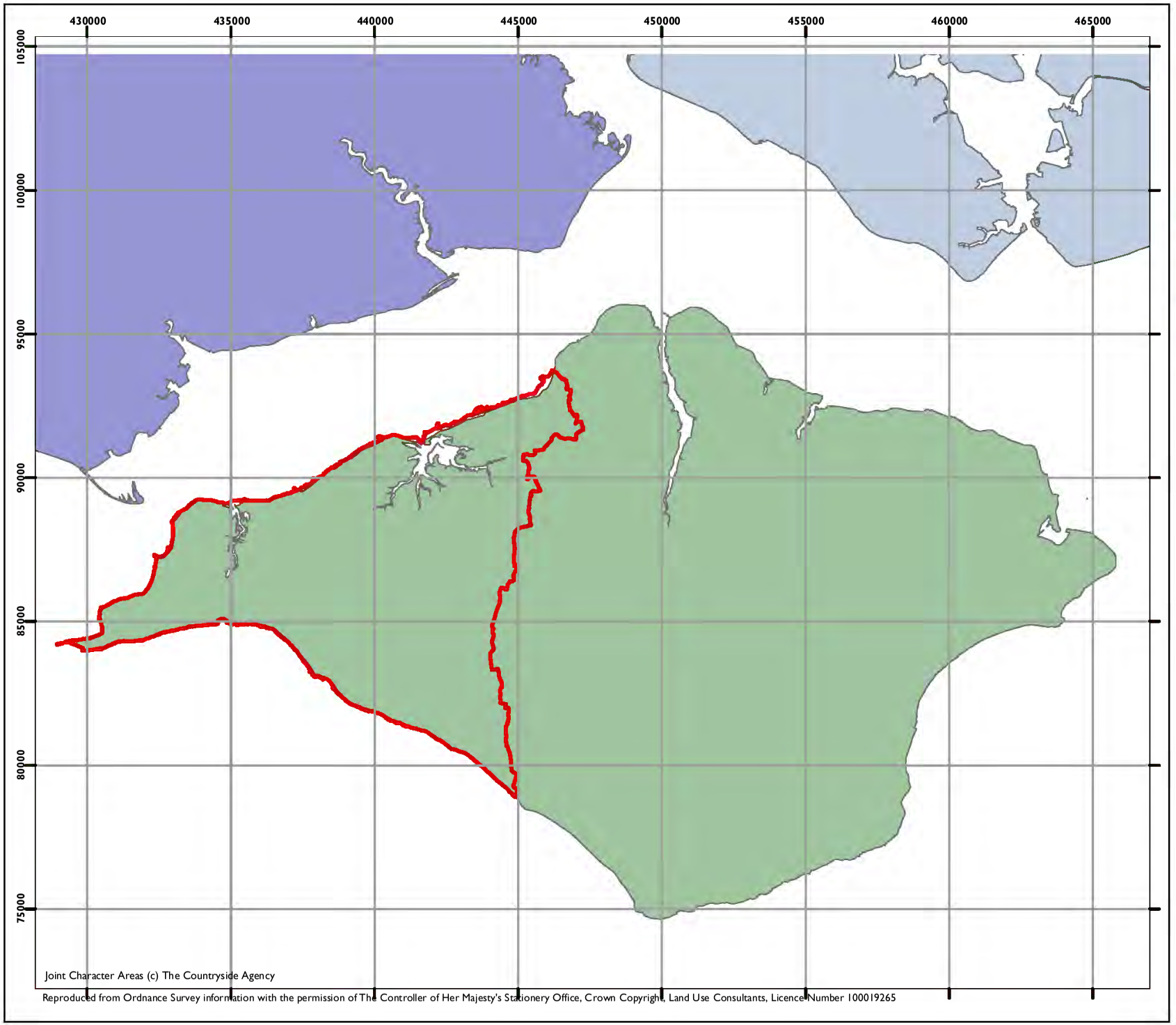


# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 2:
Joint Character Areas

## Key

Study area

## Joint Character Areas

ISLE OF WIGHT

NEW FOREST

SOUTH COAST PLAIN

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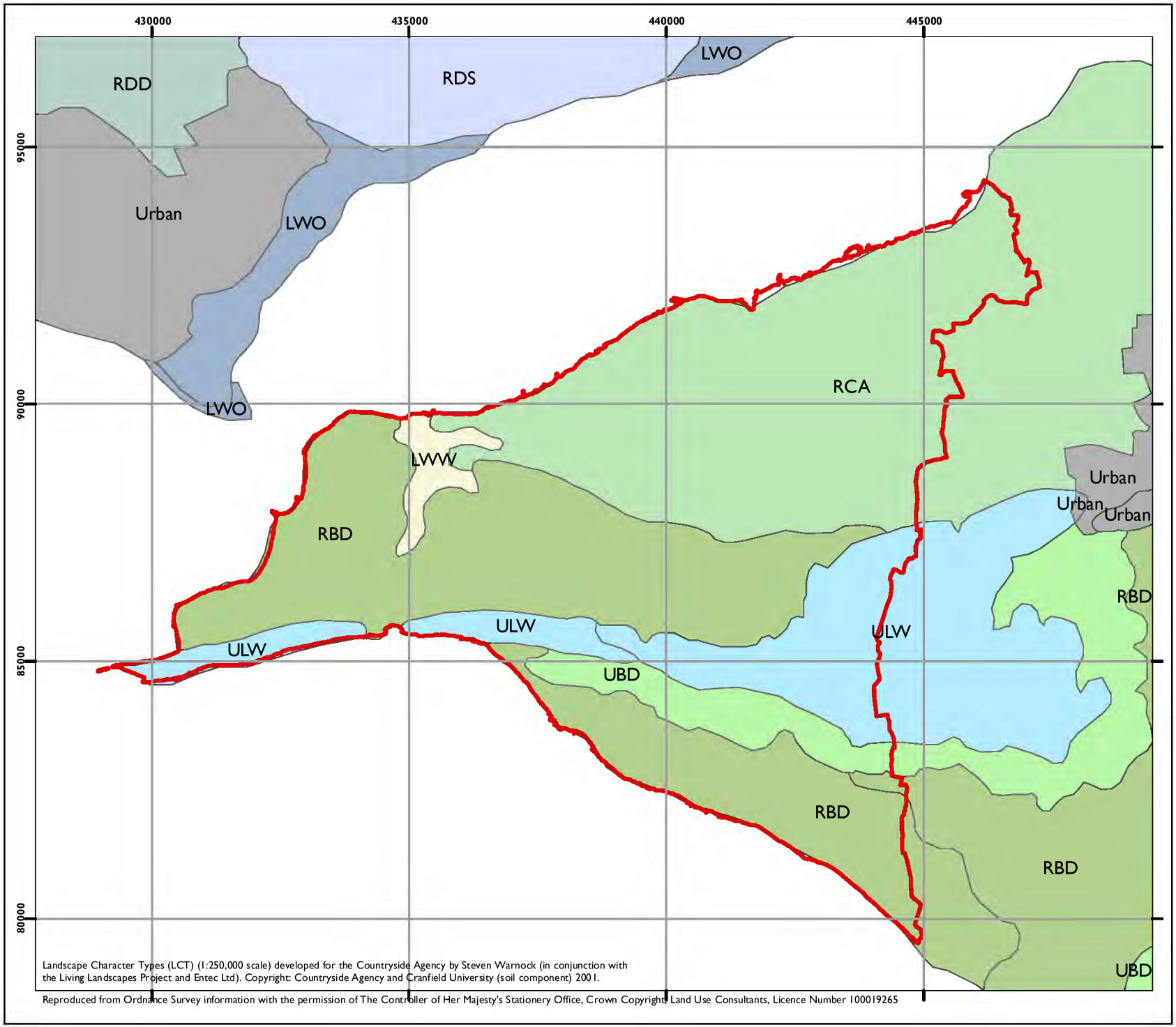


Landscape Character Types (LCT) (1:250,000 scale) developed for the Countryside Agency by Steven Warnock (in conjunction with the Living Landscapes Project and Entec Ltd). Copyright: Countryside Agency and Cranfield University (soil component) 2001.



# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

## Figure 3: National Landscape Typology

### Key

Study area

National Landscape Typology

First Letter (Physiography)
H – High hills
U – Low hills
V – Upland vales & valleys
R – Intermediate
L – Lowlands

Second Letter (Landcover)
W – Wetland
D – Health & Moorland
L – Chalk & Limestone
B – Other Light Land
C – Clayland
P – Other Heavy Land

Third Letter (Cultural pattern)
A - Wooded - ancient woods
E - Wooded - estateland
S - Wooded - secondary
D - Dispersed unwooded
N - Nucleated unwooded
W - Wetland/waste unwooded
O - Unsettled/open land
C - Coalfields
Ur - Urban

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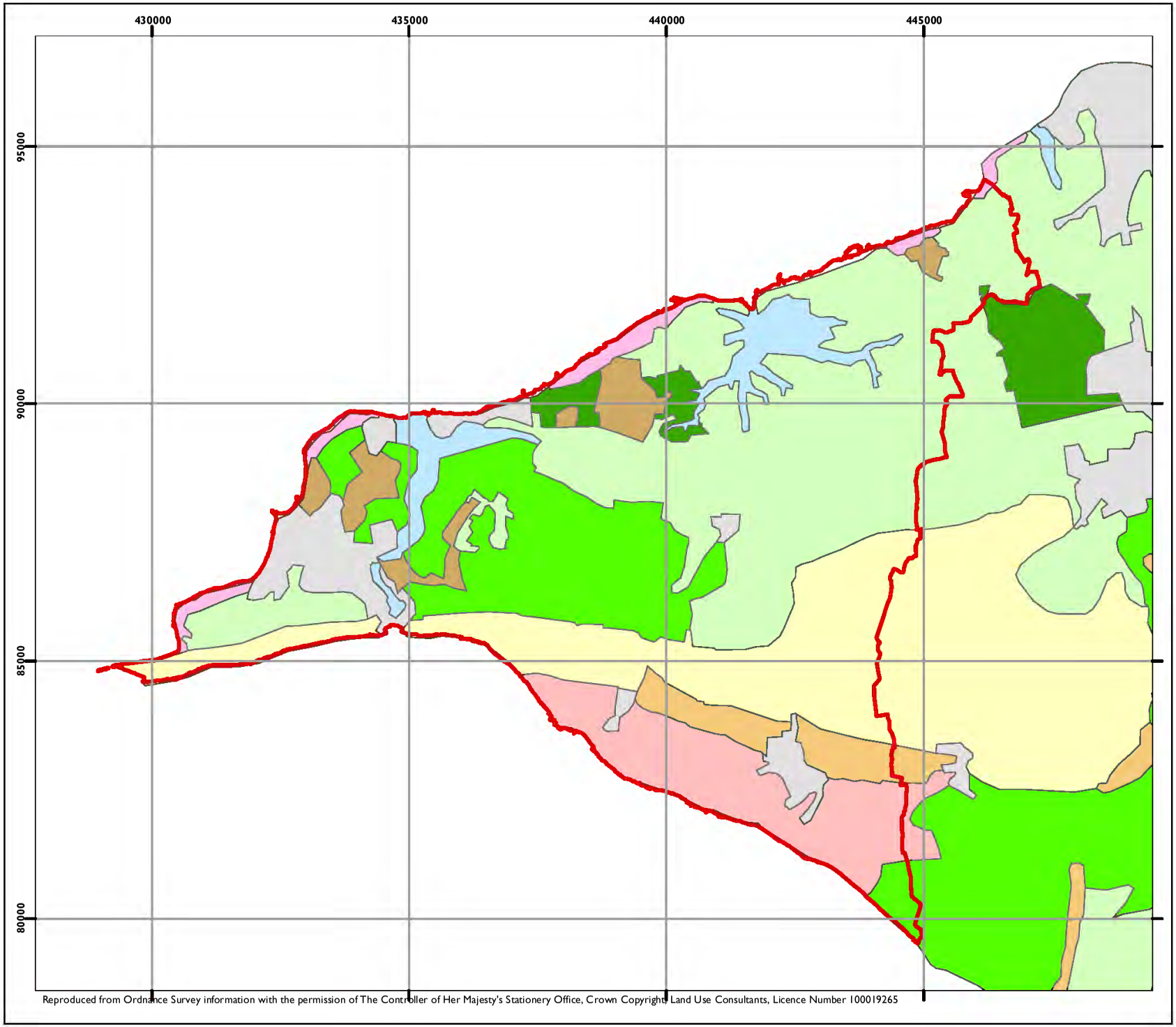


# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 4: Isle of Wight AONB LCA

## Key

Study area

### Landscape Character Types

- Chalk Downs
- Harbours & Creeks
- Intensive Agricultural Land
- Landscape Improvement Area
- Northern Coastal Cliffs
- Northern Woodlands
- Sandstone Hills & Gravel Ridges
- Settlement
- Southern Coastal Farmland
- Traditional Enclosed Pasture Land

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# 2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WEST WIGHT LANDSCAPE

2.1. A statement of significance sets out what matters about a place and why. It includes a description of those features that matter and appraisal of why they are important. This provides information to use in the future management of the place. The following summary sets out what is important about the character of the West Wight landscape as a whole and how the various aspects of landscape contribute to this.

2.2. The natural beauty of the West Wight landscape is acknowledged as of national importance through the designation of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which covers 60% of the area (**see Figure 1**). This encompasses the south and northern areas of West Wight and the Yar Estuary. Similarly 80% of the coast is designated as Heritage Coast with only the area between Yarmouth and Totland Bay not covered by this designation. The area also has a multiplicity of designations for biodiversity, geology and historic interest including internationally significant areas for birds, wetlands and marine life. A table of these designations is given in **Appendix 5**.

2.3. West Wight landscape has highly distinctive qualities: its close relationship with the sea; its small scale highly varied and largely rural landscape; its remarkable geological features; and its peaceful natural, sometimes remote, ambiance. The latter is a particularly precious quality in the crowded south east of England.

2.4. The sea is a dominant presence in much of West Wight. The scale and topography of the area means that this is seen in many different ways – in wide open views from the bays and the high chalk downs, in glimpses from the rolling farmland or as an intriguing contrast on emerging from a dense wooded cliff or enclosed chine onto the narrow shoreline.

2.5. The effect of the sea on the varied geology of the coastline has produced a visually and ecologically rich landscape of bays and cliffs. The soft clay cliffs contain fascinating fossil flora and fauna and form landscapes of strong and highly distinctive character from the 'lost world' atmosphere of Bouldnor Cliff to the vividly coloured and textured heath of Headon Cliff to the secret chines of the south coast. The chalk cliffs rising to the south and ending in the crags of the Needles are a well known and spectacular feature symbolising the Isle of Wight for many. These towering white chalk cliffs are all the more remarkable for the contrast with the highly rural and small scale landscape inland. This contrast and the effect of the sea in views across the landscape was captured by J.B. Priestley, a resident of West Wight in his book *Delight* (1949).

*Down below are downlands and heath, green slopes and gorse in bloom. Lower and nearer the centre are cultivated fields, then beyond, just in the picture, a glimpse of a tiny church, and the ruin of a large manor house…. Further off, but dominating the scene is the long chalk cliff that ends in the Needles. And full in the middle panes of my window is that flashing mirror, that blue diamond or that infinite haze, that window for the mind, which is the sea.*

2.6. Other aspects of the landscape that have arisen from the island nature of West Wight are the seaside resorts – with their Victorian and Edwardian hotels and villas, piers, lifeboat stations, slipways, sea walls and bands of cliff top woodland. There are also harbours – working at Yarmouth and long disused for instance at Newtown where the remnants of a planned medieval port remain. The threat of invasion through the Solent brought the construction of substantial Victorian forts and batteries which dot the west coast and the dangers of the Needles Channel lead to the building of the Needles Lighthouse, an icon of the West Wight and, facing it across the narrow point of the Solent, Hurst Lighthouse. The variety of vessels passing though the channel and in particular the seasonal yacht races, bring life and movement to views of the sea.

2.7. West Wight has considerable areas of remote landscape which are timeless in feel, with little or no settlement or even access in some cases. The soft cliffs, particularly Bouldnor Cliff and the shores of the north coast have a remote, natural, untouched feel. The high chalk downs also remain largely unsettled and with their wide views to sea, and open grassland dotted with ancient burial mounds, retain an almost mystical character. The estuaries of the Yar and Newtown Rivers provide wide open, remote landscapes of wide waters and open skies, havens for birds and abounding in wetland habitats of great variety and biodersity interest and bordered by ancient woodlands. Even farmland areas, particularly at the northern margins of the area provide areas of pasture and small woods that are peaceful, largely unsettled and innaccessible. Settlement thoughout much of West Wight is sparse and traditional in character, often using local stone. The network of rural roads include intimate sunken lanes and with little lighting on roads the dark night skies are a strong feature of the area.

2.8. Intertwined with these themes is that of the small scale of West Wight and the great variety of the landscape. West Wight encapsulates many of the landscapes of southern England in its small area. This is founded on the variations in geology from the high chalk downs ridge running east west like the backbone of the Island to the rolling hills of greensand to the low undulating clay lands of the north. The geology gives rise to land form and soils which in turn have been worked by man in different ways some of which have had a remarkable continuity over hundreds if not thousands of years. The northern claylands were difficult to work so that the productive woodlands, maintained through coppicing, were only slowly cleared and today there remain many ancient wood interspersed with the small scale pastoral fields. Other areas retain contrasting patterns; fragments of the former open fields, commons and hamlets of the Isle of Freshwater, isolated for many years from the rest of West Wight by the river Yar, survive in the network of intricate rural lanes south of Freshwater. The chalk downs still harbour the burial mounds of the Bronze Age on their summits, with the Tennyson Way following an ancient highway through the midst of them. While the crumbling cliffs of the south west coast reveal dinosaurs once as frequent as cattle or sheep in the pastures of today.

2.9. The landscape of West Wight has attracted artists, writers, and scientists for many years, from painters and writers celebrating the picturesque such as Turner, to the dinosaur hunters of the 19th century, to Lord Tennyson, to the avant garde of the

early 20th century, Virginia Woolf and Auden. They were attracted by the tranquillity and peacefulness of the area, the quality of the air and of the landscape.

2.10. The geology, ecology and history of West Wight are distinguished by designations of international, national and local significance and these reflect the importance of these individual elements. However the landscape is far more than the sum of its parts. At its best geology, topography, history and ecology interact in the West Wight landscape to create a timeless quality, an intricacy and magic that is hinted at by Rosamond Lehmann in *The Swan in the Evening: Fragments of an Inner Life*:

*... perhaps the murmuring shade of Alfred, Lord Tennyson still brushes the birds, and the tides; perhaps the vestiges of pre-history scattered over and beneath its turf and chalk and sandstone account for the magical atmosphere of certain woods, downs, valleys, shires and standing stones.*

# 3. PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

3.1. The geology of West Wight is highly varied which gives rise to the rich variety in the character of the landscape of this small area from the open chalk downs to the rolling clay farmlands to the intimate chines of the south coast. The landscape forms a palimpsest of the different influences that have acted upon it, evolving in response to the basic underlying geological characteristics of the land upon which natural processes and human activities have operated, in turn influencing patterns of land use as well as ecological and cultural character.

3.2. This chapter is an introduction to the physical influences that have created the West Wight landscape, describing its geology, soils, and hydrology. The geology of the area is illustrated in **Figures 5: Solid Geology** and **Figure 6: Drift Geology**; **Figure 7** shows topography; **Figure 8** hydrology and **Figure 9** shows the Agricultural Land Classification.

## GEOLOGY AND SOILS

### Cretaceous (145.6-65.0 million years ago)

3.3. The oldest rocks in West Wight (and on the Isle of Wight as a whole) are the Wealden Group. The Wealden Mudstone lies at the eastern side of the south coast of West Wight and its soft clay has been eroded by the sea to form the characteristic steep sided valleys, the chines of this coast. The clay soils here support a mix of arable and pasture.

3.4. To the north of the Wealden Group lie bands of Lower Greensand, Gault and Upper Greensand. These were deposited in a shallow sea which covered much of what is now southern England. The Lower Greensand is a soft, easily eroded sandstone which, where it meets the sea, forms the undulating soft cliffs of Compton Bay. The Upper Greensand, which in West Wight is a narrow band sitting just to the south of the Chalk, is a harder rock and has been quarried for building stone. Trackways running north south across the band of Greensand have eroded the underlying rock to form sunken lanes. The loam soils arising from the sandstone support a mix of arable and pasture with woodland on the steep slopes.

3.5. In the late Cretaceous period rising sea levels progressively inundated the area and calcareous sediments, which eventually became chalk, were deposited.

3.6. During Alpine tectonic phases about 60 million years ago the chalk was folded on an east west axis forming a hump. This was then eroded in the centre, leaving the ridge of chalk across the centre of West Wight. The southern edge of the chalk also remains as the downs at the south of the Isle of Wight outside of our study area. The high chalk downs visually dominate West Wight forming broad domed hills to the east and narrowing to the steep ridge and chalk crags of the Needles to the west. Here the chalk continues under the sea where it forms reefs and sea caves. On the downs the thin covering of well-drained, nutrient poor alkaline soils overlying the chalk bedrock supports a characteristic vegetation of herbs and grasses. To the east drift deposits of Clay with Flints underlie the wooded area of Brighstone Forest.

### Tertiary (65.0 - 1.64 million years ago)

3.7. The folding of the chalk at the end of the Cretacious period left lower areas of chalk to the north of the downs forming the south eastern section of the Hampshire Basin. Here the softer Tertiary rocks were deposited on top of the chalk during a period when the area was covered by shallow inshore seas or deltas, estuaries and lagoons, or occasionally returned to open sea for short periods. This has left the layers of Clay, Silt and Sand, with occasional

Limestone of the Bracklesham Group, and Barton, Bembridge and Hamstead Formations. These rocks are often rich in fossils and have been studied for many years particularly where they are exposed as cliffs for instance at Alum Bay. This underlying geology has given rise to largely clay soils supporting a mixture of improved pasture, arable farming and blocks of woodland.

### Quaternary (1.64 million years ago - present)

3.8. The landscape is also considerably influenced by drift deposits, which overlay the solid geology. The eastern section of the chalk downs is capped with Quaternary deposits of Clay with Flint; pockets of flints set in sand, chalk rubble and reddish brown clay. This heavier clay soil has retained its woodland cover.

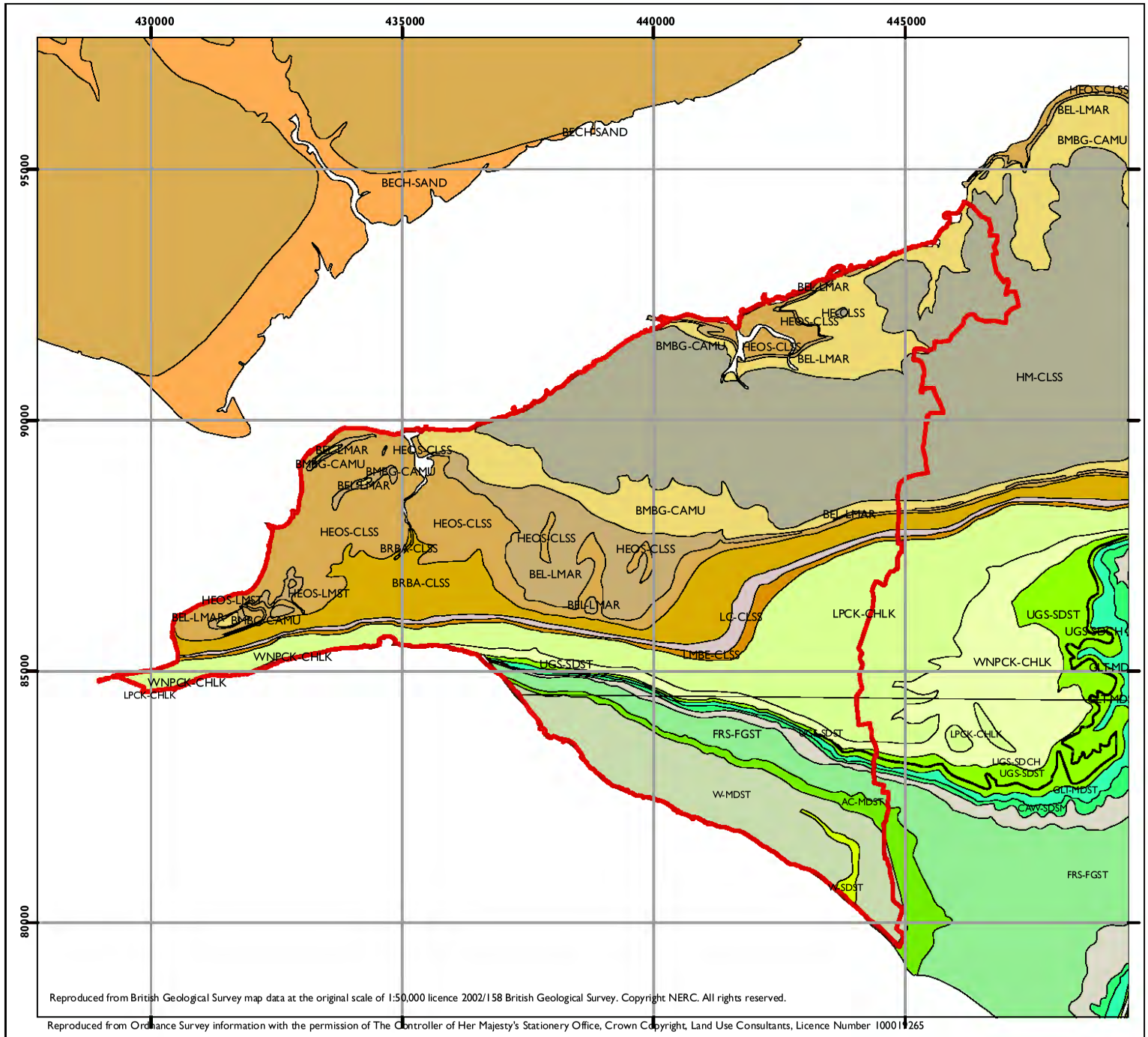
3.9. Tidal Flat Deposits and river Alluvium dominate the floodplains of the Yar and Newtown estuaries. These give rise to rich wetland landscapes and pasture. The southern section of the Yar is fringed by River Terrace Deposits of Sand and Gravel and these also appear in isolated areas for instance on Headon Hill and Cranmore. Beach Deposits of sand and gravel are common around the coast.

## WATERCOURSES

3.10. The pattern of drainage in West Wight is divided by the chalk downs. To the north of these streams meander through the claylands to join the Yar and Newtown Rivers which run north into the Solent. The impeded drainage over this area means that there are many small tributaries, drainage channels and ponds.

3.11. Springs are a feature of the chalk landscape of the downs, issuing at the point where the porous chalk overlies the less permeable rocks. These give rise to the distinctive scalloped coombe landform and occasional spring line villages or settlements such as Calbourne and Shalcombe at the foot of the slope.

3.12. To the south of the downs, one such spring, Buddlehole Spring, is the source of the brook that runs south through Brighstone to Marsh Green and down Marsh Chine to the Channel. The clay farmland at the southern margin of West Wight features other small streams plus ponds and drainage channels. Place names (notably Sud Moor) indicate the wet nature of the land.

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# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

## Figure 5: Solid Geology

## Key

- Study area
- Becton Sand Formation and Chama Sand Form. (Undifferentiated)
- Bembridge Limestone Form., Limestone and (Subequal/Subordinate) Argillaceous Rocks, Interbedded
- Bembridge Marls, Calcareous Mud
- Bracklesham Group & Barton Group (Undiff.), Clay, Silt and Sand
- Headon Formation, Clay, Silt & Sand
- Headon Beds & Osborne Beds (Undiff.), Clay, Silt & Sand
- Headon Beds & Osborne Beds (Undiff.), Limestone
- Hamstead Beds, Clay, Silt & Sand
- London Clay Formation, Clay Silt & Sand
- Lambeth Group, Clay, Silt & Sand
- Atherfield Clay Formation, Mudstone
- Carstone (Isle of Wight), Sandstone, Siltstone & Mudstone
- Ferruginous Sands Formation, Ferruginous Sandstone
- Gault Formation, Mudstone
- Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation, Seaford Chalk Formation, Newhaven Chalk Formation, Culver Chalk Formation and Portsdown Chalk Formation (Undifferentiated) - Chalk
- Sandrock Formation, Sandstone, Siltstone & Mudstone
- Upper Greensand Formation, Sandstone & Chert
- Upper Greensand Formation, Sandstone
- Wealden Group, Mudstone
- Wealden Group, Sandstone
- West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation, Zig Zag Chalk Form., Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and Newpit Chalk Form. (Undifferentiated), Chalk

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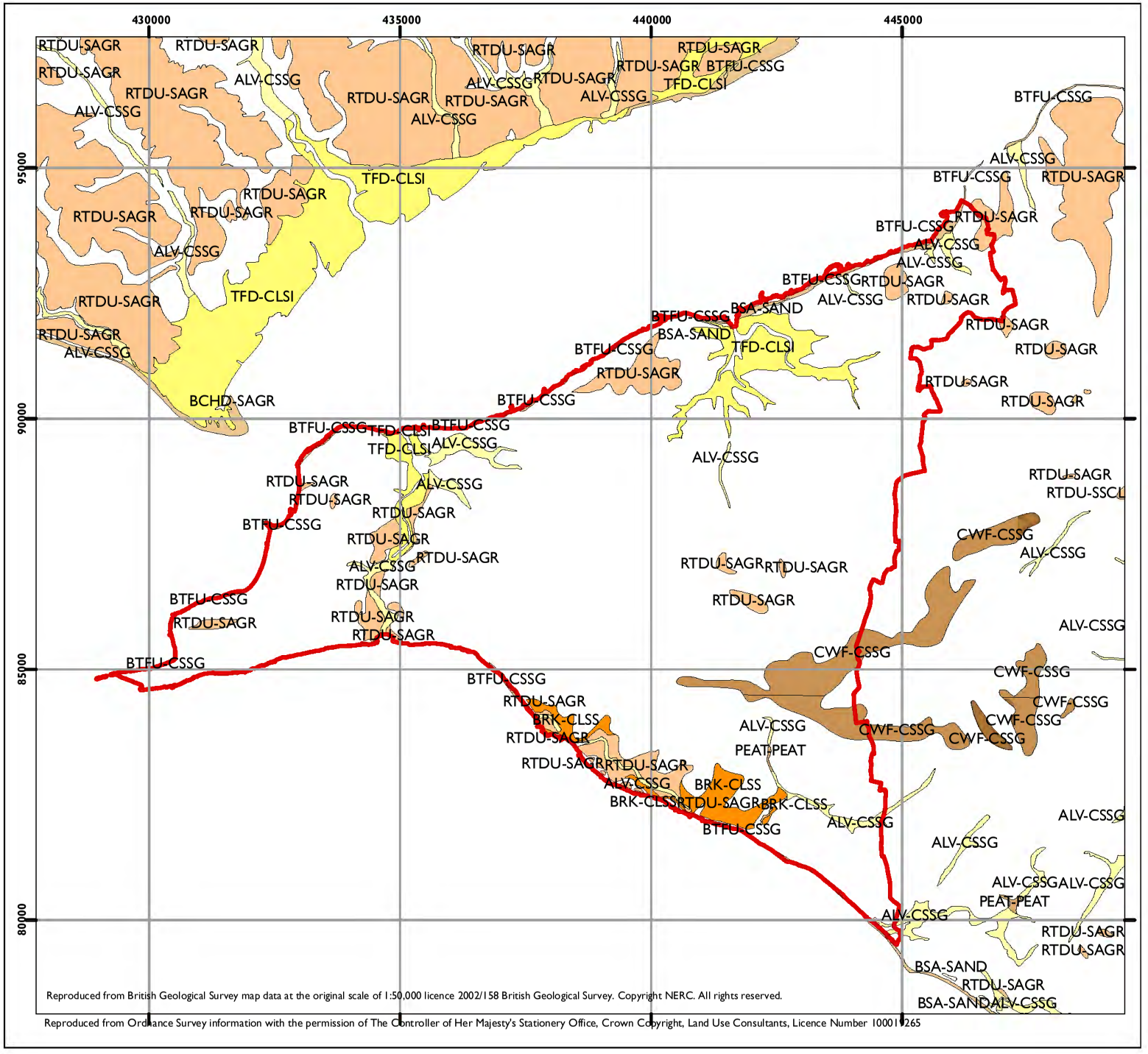




# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 6: Drift Geology

## Key

- Study area
- Brickearth, Clay, Silt & Sand
- Alluvium, Clay, Silt, Sand & Gravel
- Beach Deposits, Sand and Gravel
- Beach Deposits, Sand
- Blown Sand, Sand
- Beach and Tidal Flat Desposits (Undiff.), Clay, Silt, Sand & Gravel
- Clay-with-Flints, Clay, Silt, Sand & Gravel
- Head (Undiff.), Clay, Silt, Sand & Gravel
- Peat, Peat
- River Terrace Deposits, 12, Sand & Gravel
- River Terrace Deposits, 1, Sand & Gravel
- River Terrace Deposits, 2, Sand & Gravel
- River Terrace Deposits, 3, Sand & Gravel
- River Terrace Deposits, 5, Sand & Gravel
- River Terrace Deposits, 6, Sand & Gravel
- River Terrace Deposits (Undiff.), Clay & Silt
- River Terrace Deposits (Undiff.), Sand & Gravel
- River Terrace Deposits (Undiff.), Sand, Silt & Clay
- Storm Beach Deposits, Gravel
- Superficial Deposits not mapped [For Digital Map Use Only], Unknown Lithology
- Tidal Flat Deposits, Clay & Silt

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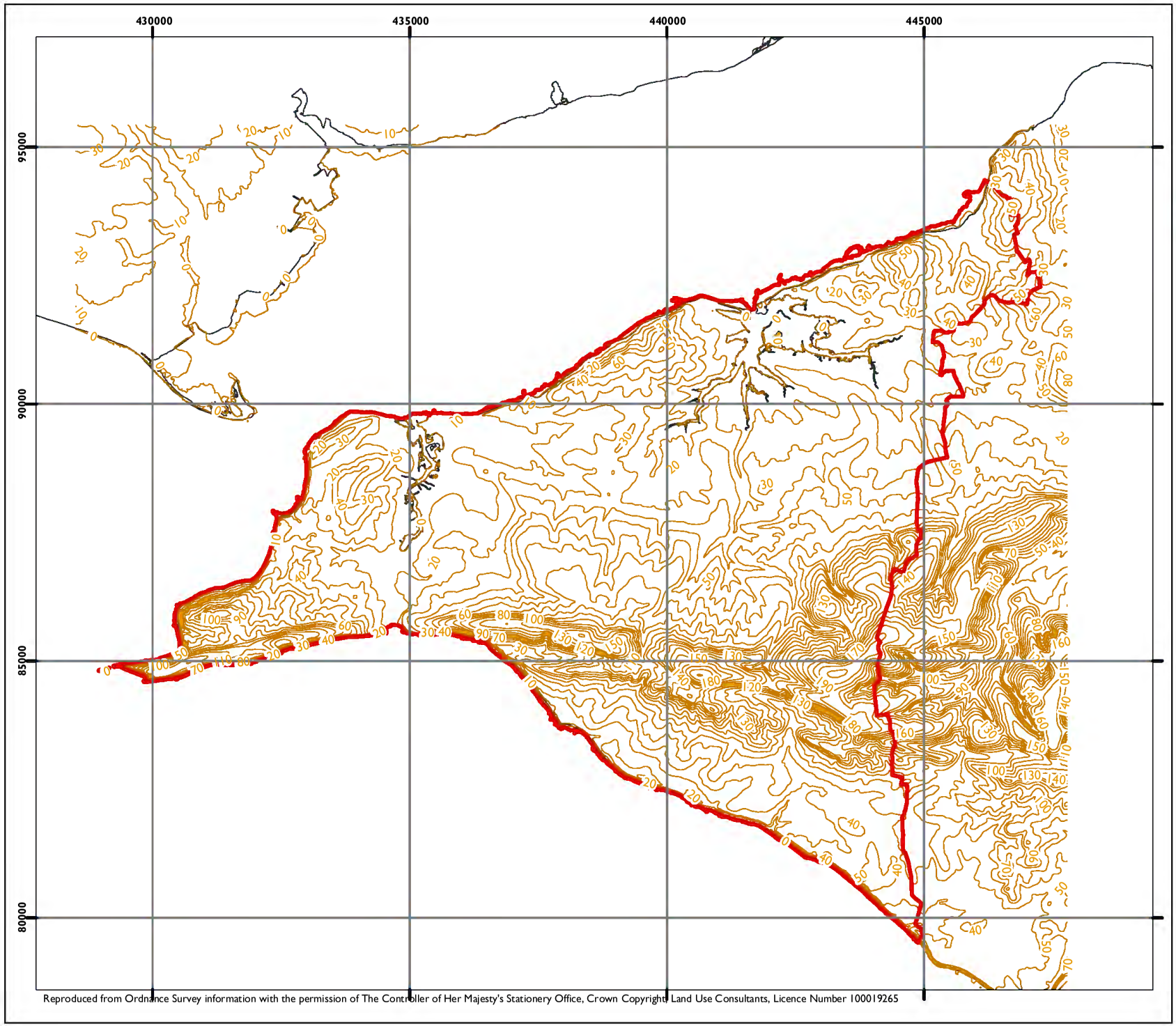


# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 7:
Simplified Topography

## Key

- Study area
- 10m Contour
- High Water Line



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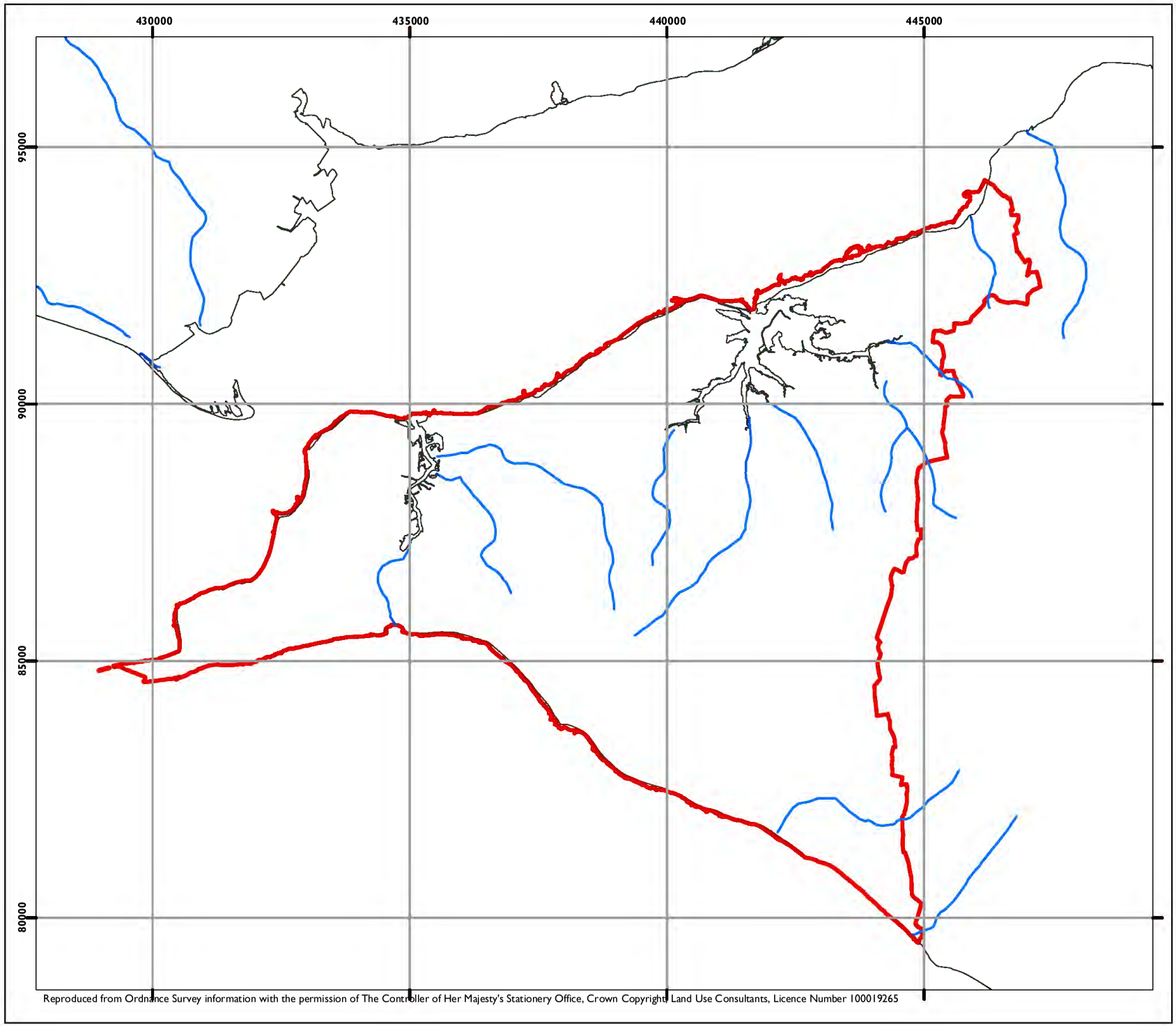


# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 8:
Simplified Hydrology

## Key

Study area

High Water Line

## Rivers

Minor River

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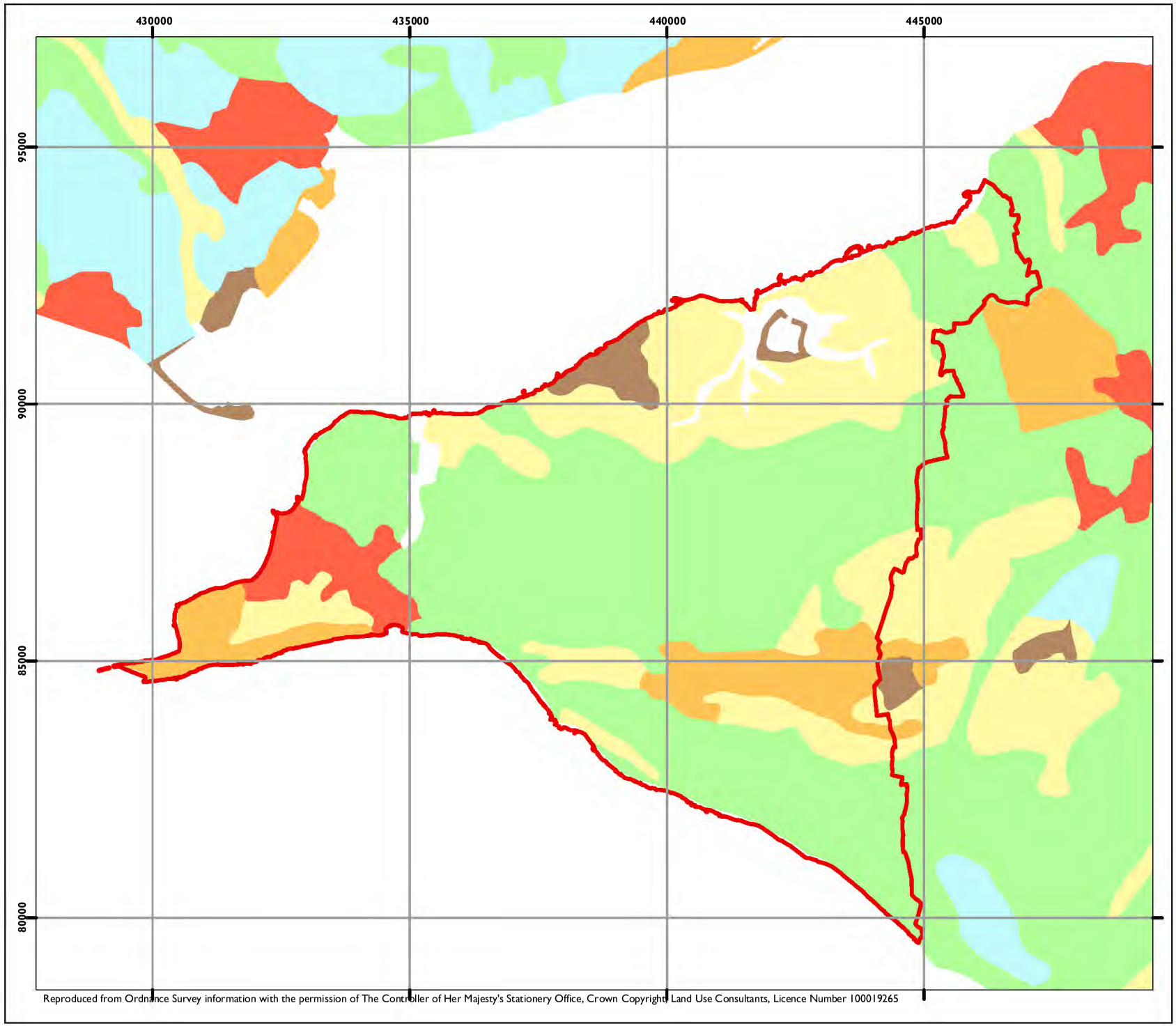


# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

## Figure 9: Agricultural Land Classification

### Key

- Study area

**Agricultural Land Classification**

- Grade 1
- Grade 2
- Grade 3
- Grade 4
- Grade 5
- Non Agricultural
- Urban

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# 4. ECOLOGICAL CHARACTER

## ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

4.1. The landscape of West Wight is determined by a complex geology giving rise to chalk downland, arable farmland, pasture, woodland, small areas of heathland, hay meadows, sea cliffs and estuarine creeks. The chalk ridge, that extends from east to west through the centre of the island, and the high downs at the south of the island, contrast with both the small-scale landscape of the south coast and the open rolling countryside of the southern farmlands and the actively eroding coastline. The coastline is especially important as a result of its geological formations from the Lower Cretaceous to the Lower Tertiary, which have yielded important fossil faunas and floras. In addition the island provides an important example of current coastal processes and geomorphological features.

4.2. NAs are sub-divisions of England identified by English Nature as being unique on the basis of their physical, wildlife, land use and cultural attributes. This approach provides a wider context for conservation action, and offers a framework for setting objectives relevant to nature conservation. A single NA, Isle of Wight, covers the study area. The Natural Area and sites with statutory nature conservation designation within West Wight are shown on **figures 10, 11** and **12**).

## WILDLIFE ATTRIBUTES

4.3. An assessment of local and national BAPs and statutory wildlife site data indicate that a wide range of habitats occur within the study area. The most characteristic and valuable habitat types can be summarised as:

- Maritime cliffs and associated habitats
- Calcareous grassland
- Estuaries and associated habitats
- Woodland
- Farmland

### Cliffs and associated habitats

4.4. The maritime cliffs provide some of the most spectacular landscape features in West Wight, and support a rich diversity of wildlife, much of which is highly specialised, and adapted to the extreme coastal environment. The structure of the cliffs reflects the underlying geology. Those comprised of hard rocks tending to produce sheer cliff faces, for example around the Needles headland, with slumped cliffs developing from softer substrates, for example Compton Bay. A considerable amount of the coastline is undeveloped and undefended, and provides a good understanding of how natural processes of erosion influence the land.

4.5. The vegetation of the cliffs is variable, dependent upon soil chemistry, cliff stability, and water availability; they range from open pioneer assemblages, consisting of a small number of plants, through to species-rich maritime grassland communities. Scrub and woodland are also common components of the cliff habitat in suitable situations, and fen-like vegetation develops around springs and within depressions upon the uneven slumped terraces, the latter among the richest plant communities. On the southern coast under-cliff is a distinctive

feature where land-slip has occurred, giving rise to its own micro-climate, and specialist flora and fauna between the inner-cliff and the sea-washed outer-cliff.

4.6. The complex geology and large, undisturbed, extent of the maritime cliff resource gives rise to a vast array of habit niches that support a rich diversity of wildlife much of which is nationally important key species include:

- **cliff nesting birds** such as raven and peregrine falcon;
- **butterflies and moths** such as the Glanville fritillary and the Isle of Wight Wave;
- **beetles** such as the golden tiger beetle;
- **bees and wasps;**
- **flowering plants** such as early gentian, hoary stock, curved hard-grass and ox-tongue broomrape.

4.7. In recognition of their high wildlife importance the majority of the maritime cliff resource is designated under European and UK wildlife legislation. On the south coast the South Wight Maritime SAC covers the majority of the coastline. The majority of the key sites on the north coast are designated as SSSI.

## Calcareous grassland

4.8. The ridge of chalk, which stretches across the study area from the Needles in the west before leaving the study area and terminating at Culver in the east, supports some of the richest calcareous grassland communities under maritime influence in south-east England. The best downland swards are sheep grazed and typically comprise grasses such as sheep's fescue and meadow oat-grass, together with a large number of colourful herbs that include salad burnet, wild thyme, common rock-rose, rough hawkbit, small scabious, horseshoe vetch, stemless thistle, and squinancywort. Ungrazed stands tend to be less diverse and dominated by the grass upright brome. Less extensive, occupying steep drought-prone soils, are more open communities characterised by the presence of carline thistle, and supporting a number of nationally scarce and rare species, that include early gentian, dwarf mouse-ear, small flowered buttercup, juniper and bastard toadflax. Other communities of note are the chalk grassland lichen communities at Afton Down and Tennyson Down, the latter believed to be the richest of their type in Britain. In addition to their inherent botanical diversity these grasslands also provide important habitat for a host of other wildlife in particular invertebrates such as butterflies, moths and crickets.

4.9. The key chalk grassland sites, such as Tennyson Down, Compton Down and Mottistone Down, are designated under the Isle of Wight Downs SAC.

## Estuaries and associated habitats

4.10. All of the main rivers within the study area discharge into the Solent via the Yar or Newtown estuaries. The Newtown estuary represents one of the best examples in south-east England of a relatively unmodified estuary network containing a diverse range of semi-natural habitats.

4.11. The estuary approaches are guarded by shingle and sand spits. Norton Spit at the mouth of the Yar and Hamstead Spit at the approaches of the Newtown estuary, are both rich sites and support a suite of specialist plants characterised by yellow horned poppy and sea kale, together with a number of nationally scarce species such as bulbous meadow-grass and dune fescue. Sea heath is also found in transitions between shingle and saltmarsh vegetation at

Hamstead Spit. In terms of fauna the shingle supports a specialist assemblage of nationally rare beetles, and birds such as ringed plover and oystercatcher uses the areas as breeding and roosting sites.

4.12. Where sediment from the rivers discharge in to the Solent important areas of saltmarsh and inter-tidal mudflat have developed. The two estuaries combined account for approximately 80% of the Isle of Wight's total resource of saltmarsh. They tend to be dominated by common cord-grass, but richer examples, displaying the full range of lower, middle and upper marsh plant communities occur around the western Yar and within Newtown Harbour. In these situations nationally scarce species such as small cord-grass, perennial glasswort and lax-flowered sea lavender occur frequently in the lower and middle marshes. The upper marshes are characteristically well developed, rarely truncated by sea walls as is common elsewhere in south-east England, they support other nationally scarce species that include golden samphire, marsh mallow, and divided sedge. These areas are also valuable as sites of refuge and a source of food for wildfowl, waders, gulls, and passerine birds, such as wigeon, redshank, Mediterranean gull, and skylark. In addition specialist assemblages of invertebrates are commonly associated with transitions between freshwater and brackish water.

4.13. The two estuaries are of international importance for the large number of wildfowl and waders they support. The key feeding ground for many of the birds are the inter-tidal muds, which possess a rich benthic fauna, and are home to three species of eel grass, all of which are nationally scarce.

4.14. Saline lagoons are another valuable wildlife habitat associated with the Solent estuarine system and two key sites occur at Yar Bridge and Newtown Quay. Only a limited number of specialist plants and animals can tolerate the extreme saline conditions within lagoons. As a result many are nationally important and protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Theses include starlet sea anemone, lagoon sand shrimp, and the foxtail stonewort.

4.15. Wetland habitats, including fen marsh, swamp and reedbed, are, with the exception of the latter, a scarce habitat type within the study area. The most extensive example occur along the Yar River, and include brackish reedbeds in transitions with saltmarsh, as well as freshwater reedbeds dominated by common reed, with a range of fen species such as purple loosestrife, water dock and greater pond-sedge. Relatively rich stands of reedbed of this type occur at Freshwater Marshes, the habitat here supports characteristic wetland wildlife that includes species such as reed and sedge warbler, reed bunting, and water vole. In addition the rare Desmoulins whorl snail (listed on Annex II of the EU habitats Directive) has been found.

4.16. Grazing marsh is an agricultural land type that provides a link between estuary and terrestrial habitats it is similar in character to wet tussock grassland and represents upper saltmarsh that has been reclaimed to provide grazing for stock on coastal farms. It is confined to an area of land that once formed part of the of the original Yar meanders surrounding the Thorley and Barnfield streams. The site contains two nationally scarce plants, marsh mallow and bulbous foxtail. It also provides important winter roosting and feeding for wildfowl and waders.

4.17. The rivers that feed into the estuary systems, despite rising from the chalk, run for much of their length through heavily cultivated farmland on sand soils. As a result of drainage, engineering, poor water quality, low flows, and the geographic isolation of the island, they tend to be poor in aquatic wildlife. However, geographic isolation means the Isle of Wight is the only county in England without a feral mink population. As result water voles are frequent in suitable locations for example Afton Marshes on the Yar River.

4.18. The importance of the north coast estuaries for wildfowl and wading birds, and the general high wildlife value of the semi-natural habitats present, is reflected in the raft of international and national designations that cover the area. These include the Solent and Southampton Water RAMSAR and SPA, the Solent Maritime SAC, and the Newtown Harbour NNR.

## Woodland

4.19. Woodland covers around 10% of the Isle of Wight's land surface a figure close to the national average. No data is available for West Wight alone, but it would appear similarly wooded as the Island as a whole. A significant proportion of the resource is of planted origin often occurring as copses or plantation among farmland, however there are a number of semi-natural stands of both recent and ancient origin. The character of these stands is strongly influenced by the underlying geology, with woodland on calcareous soils tending to be dominated by a canopy of ash, and a shrub layer comprising abundant hazel coppice. The herb layer typically comprises plants such as nettle leaved bellflower and columbine, the parasitic plant toothwort seem particularly associated with calcareous woods. Woods on the sandy acid soils of the south comprise English oak and birch over bracken, and neutral soils tend to support English oak, birch, maple and ash over a shrub layer of hazel. Plantations of non-native conifers and broad-leaved species consist of a variety of commercial trees. They have often replaced former ancient woodland, or have been created in grassland and heathland habitats.

4.20. Wet woodland is present within the Yar and Newtown estuaries, here alder and willow species are typically dominant, and often extend down to the edge of tidal marshes. These stands are of high national importance and represent some of the best examples of succession from coastal vegetation to woodland in southern England. Another characteristic woodland type found within the study area are those located in suitable locations on the soft cliffs, for example the cliff woods at Bouldnor.

4.21. Woodlands of great antiquity (1600AD) are largely confined to the northern half of the study area, and often contain vernal herbs such as bluebell and wood anemone, together with a number of indicator plants that rarely occur outside of ancient stands, such as narrow-leaved lungwort, wild service tree and sessile oak.

4.22. The woodland resource supports a variety of wildlife of national importance. Particularly characteristic of Isle of Wight woodland is the presence of both red squirrel and dormouse, not found together in any other county in Britain. Other species of importance include:

- **Mammals** such as bats;
- **Birds** such as nightingale;
- **Insects** such as pearl bordered fritillary, red necked footman and wood cricket.

4.23. The most important woodland sites in the study area are designated as SSSI. These include a number of copses in the Newtown Harbour SSSI, cliff woods at Bouldnor and Hamstead SSSI, and Thorness Bay SSSI, as well individual stands at Northpark Copse SSSI. In addition a series of wet woodland sites are included within the Yar Estuary and Newton Harbour SSSIs.

## Farmland

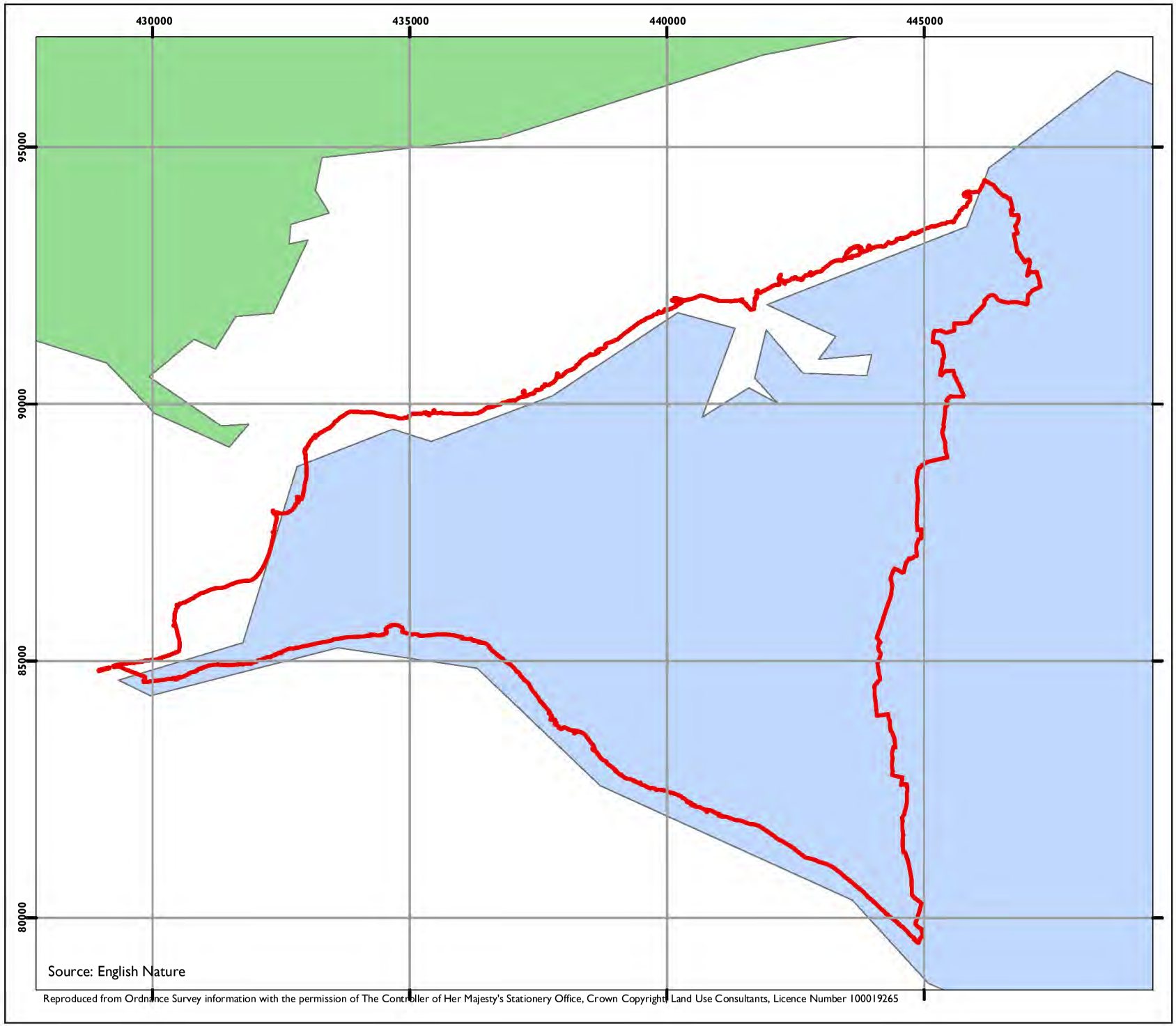
4.24. The farmland of West Wight is a mix of arable and pasture, and despite modern agricultural practices being commonplace, supports a great deal of wildlife typically associated with traditional methods of farming. For example the presence of both chalk and dry sandy soils in

close proximity has produced a rich arable weed flora that contains many uncommon species of plant.

4.25. There is also an extensive network of hedgerows running throughout the farmland landscape, and while many older hedgerows have been grubbed out or replaced by ones dominated by hawthorn or blackthorn, ancient species-rich hedgerow habitat remains; these are particularly well conserved on the clay soils of the north, for example Hart's Farm near Newtown.

4.26. Hedgerows act as a connective corridor for a great deal of wildlife, for example linking larger blocks of semi-natural woodland together, or as a refuge in otherwise barren landscapes. As a result they are important for a number of farmland birds such as corn bunting, linnet, bullfinch, grey partridge, and turtle dove. They also provide key habitat for small mammals such as dormouse, bats and red squirrel, and where a rough grassland strip is left as a buffer between crop and hedge woodland edge flowers and invertebrates can also flourish.

4.27. Another common component of the farmed landscape is improved grassland, managed as pasture for livestock, horses or ponies. It is typically dominated by perennial rye-grass, and botanically is inherently species-poor. However over wintering birds such as lapwing and song thrush are often associated with this habitat, and where grasslands of this type form part a network with other farmland habitats, mammals such as badger, brown hare and bats are likely to be found.






# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 10:
Natural Areas

## Key

Study area

**Natural Areas**

Isle of Wight

New Forest

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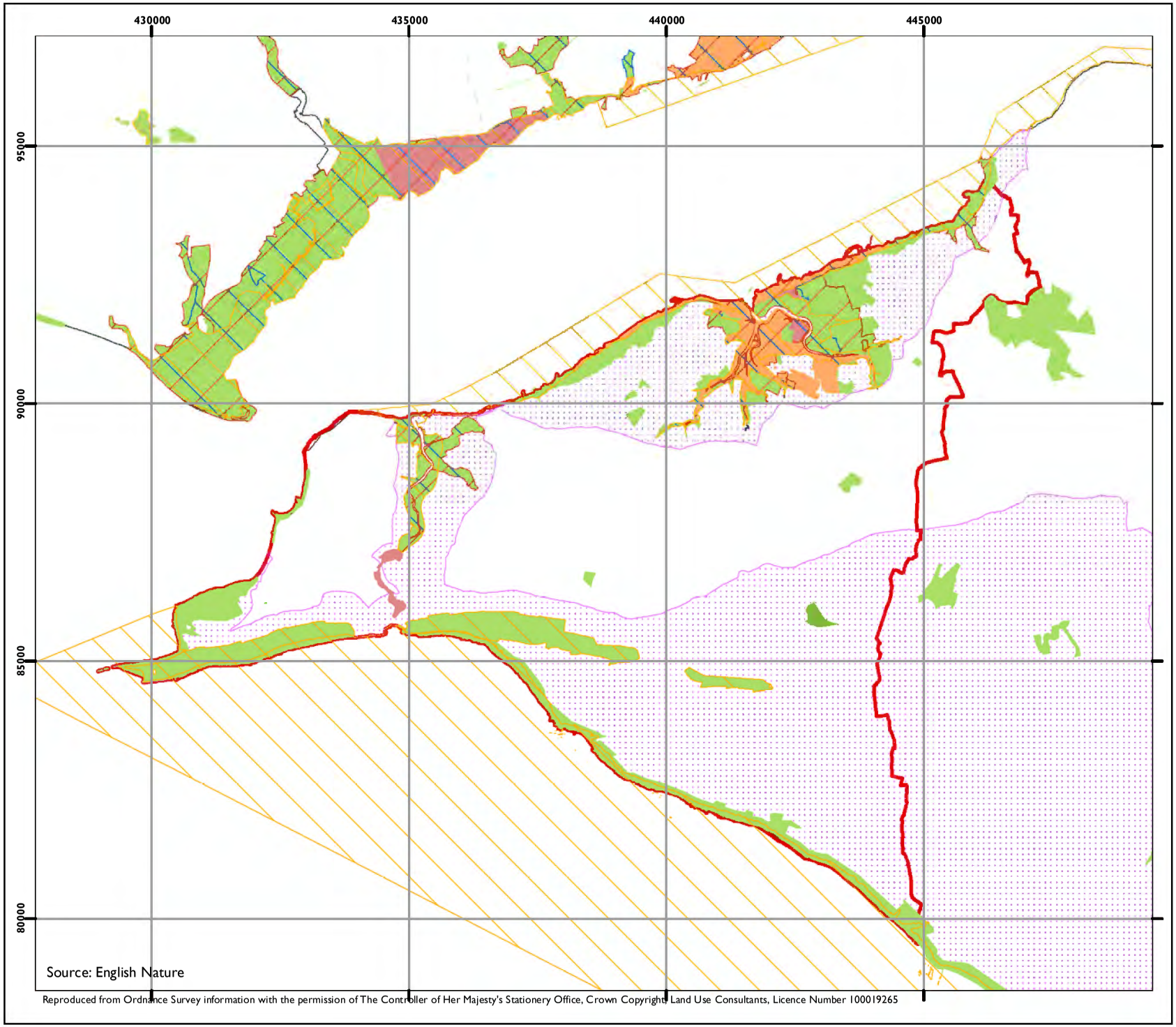
# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 11: Statutory Nature Conservation Designations




## Key

- Study area
- High Water Line
- SAC
- SPA
- Ramsar
- NNR
- LNR
- SSSI
- AONB

Source: English Nature



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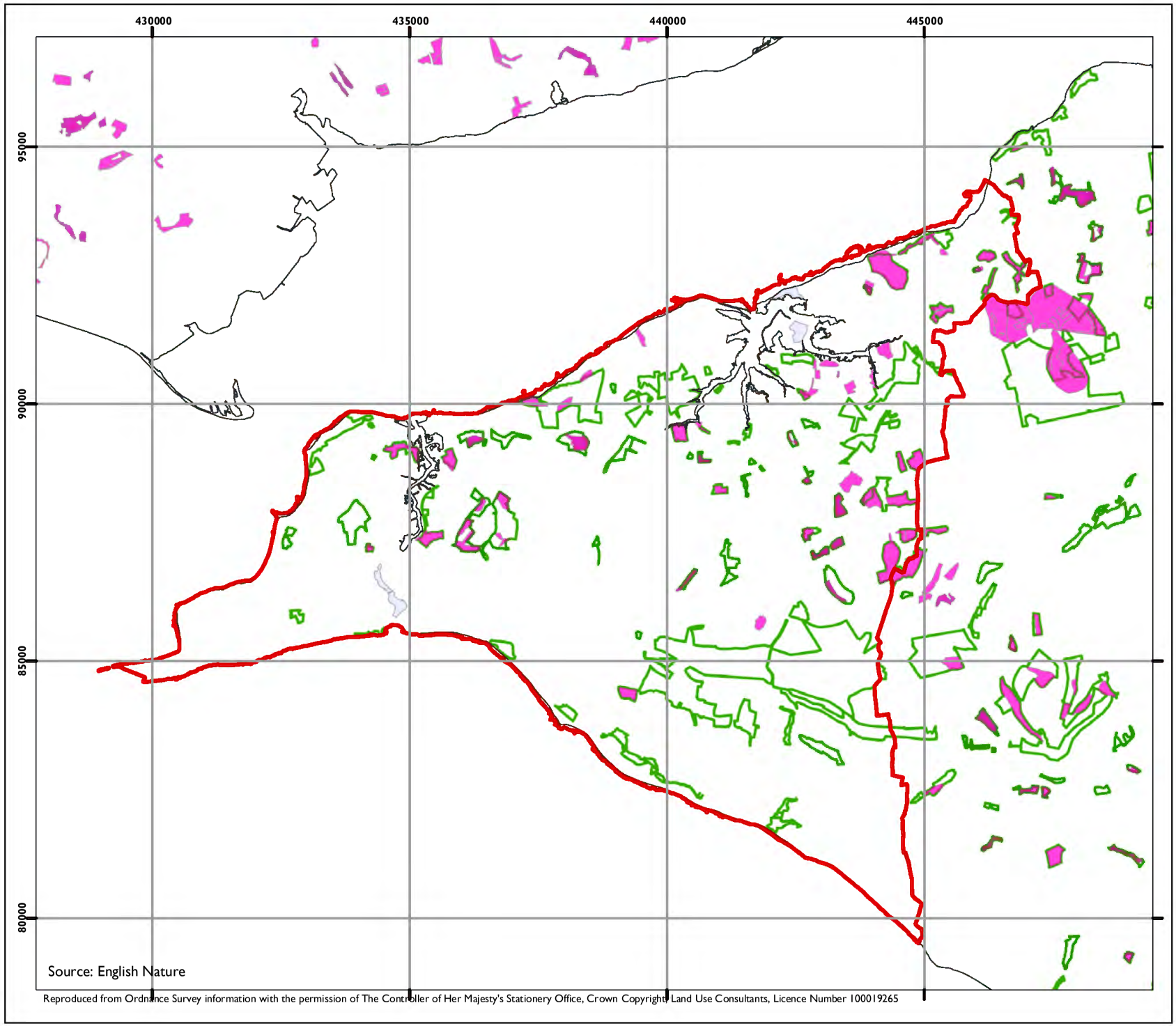


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# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

## Figure 12: Local Nature Conservation Designations

**Key**

- Study area
- High Water Line
- Local Nature Reserves
- Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation
- Ancient Woodlands

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# 5. HUMAN INFLUENCES

5.1. The Isle of Wight was first inhabited around 425,000 years ago in the Palaeolithic ("Old Stone Age") when the Island and Britain were still attached to Europe. These earliest visitors were hunter-gatherers who followed the herds across the interglacial landscapes and who made full use of the West Wight landscapes natural resources, especially the gravel terraces of its rivers and plateaus. The first Islanders did not build permanent settlements and have left behind scatters of worked flint tools to show where they lived in extended family groups, hunted, fished and gathered in the valley of the Old Western Yar, a prehistoric river that has now dried up. Remains can still be seen in the exposed cliff face along the south coast, as well as on High Down. These earliest human remains are of immense importance as they help archaeologists to piece together the landscapes and environments of the land which was to become the Isle of Wight and how early humans adapted and used the natural resources to survive.

5.2. The final separation of the Isle of Wight from the mainland occurred sometime during the Mesolithic period (which began around 10,000 years ago) when the Solent River and its network of ancient valleys was drowned by sea level rise. The Mesolithic ("Middle Stone Age") people were using the rich fishing and hunting grounds and had developed very specialised flint "tool kits" which show just how they were adapting to the environment. The sequence of the natural environmental change and human activities as the modern Island was formed can be pieced together from Mesolithic archaeological remains which still survive, such as hearths, stone tools and environmental deposits, in submerged river estuaries, such as the Old Western Yar. The south west coast is very important for these sites as the layers around Brook show that the landscape was wooded with alder, hazel, oak, ash and yew trees and were used extensively by human family groups.

5.3. Farming was introduced to the Island around 3600 BC in the Neolithic (New Stone Age) period and, because people needed to stay and tend their crops, humans finally began to build the first permanent settlements.

5.4. None of the fragile houses survive, but settlement patterns are shown by the large scale clearance of trees to create crop fields, flint scatters, and ceremonial monuments. Highly organised and complex societies developed as permanent settlement caused the vast forests to be cleared and allowed for communal burial of the dead in large chambers called "long barrows" which were made by erecting stones around a burial chamber and covering with a huge mound of earth. The Longstone on Mottistone Down is part of such a monument and others in the West Wight include a Mortuary enclosure (where the dead were left exposed until their bones had been picked clean before burial) on Tennyson Down and a longbarrow on Afton Down.

5.5. The Neolithic was also the period when great technological advances, such as the introduction of pottery, farming and domesticated animals changed the way of life for humans forever. They also had to cope with changing environmental conditions as sea levels rose with wetlands resulted in the accumulation of peat deposits, which gave way to salt marsh in some coastal areas by around 3500 BC. Archaeological evidence has demonstrated the extent of natural and man made change on the Island's environment during the prehistoric period as the rising sea level was destroying the oak forests in the intertidal zone by around 3000 BC.

5.6. By about 3000 BC, humans on the Island had discovered the use of metals as well as flint for tools and weapons, hence this period of our past is called the Bronze Age. Very complex human communities fashioned ceremonial monuments in the landscape, in order to mark out their different territories and some of these sites are visible as "burial mound cemeteries" in our modern landscape of West Wight. Extensive cemeteries survive on the higher down lands at East Afton Down, Afton Down, Pay Down, Shalcombe Down and Brook Down. As well as these magnificent prehistoric funerary landscapes, the entire West Wight area still contains the ploughed out remains of similar sites which are not visible from the ground, but which survive beneath the modern rural fields.

5.7. From about 800 BC, the new technology of Iron working was introduced and Iron Age communities farmed the Island landscape and the remains of some of their field systems and enclosures survive as earthworks. Occupation sites and other remains show the complicated tribal nature of Iron Age society and it seems that Island tribes had contact with their neighbours on mainland England and on the Gallo-Belgic continent. Very little evidence has been recorded for the Iron Age in the West Wight to date. This is simply because no archaeological work has been undertaken in this area and chance finds seem to show that a sophisticated, complex society on the Island had trading connections to Europe and Britain and were minting coins long before the Romans arrived in AD 43.

5.8. When the Romans invaded Britain in AD 43, it seems that the settlement patterns were not much affected on the Island. The landscape was still filled with small agricultural and market settlements, but the trade and production were taken over by the Roman state and the island was controlled by the occupants of seven Roman villas built along the central chalk ridge, which suggests that the economy may have been based on sheep farming, but there is also evidence for corn growing, pottery production and the transportation of building stone to the mainland.

5.9. By the end of the 4th century AD, the Roman rule in Britain had collapsed and the subsequent settlement of Germanic peoples and adoption of their culture resulted in distinctive settlements and cemeteries of the Anglo-Saxons. The geographical position of the Isle of Wight increases its importance in this process, but is as yet poorly understood. It is clear, however, that the organised Roman market economy was replaced by a dispersed pattern of self-sufficient farmsteads, which developed into the network of 101 settlements, which are mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086.

5.10. During medieval times, the Isle of Wight was a fairly isolated, not very prosperous, rural community. The Norman Conquest is evidenced by the building of Carisbrooke Castle and a complicated pattern of compact nucleated villages, scattered hamlets and single farmsteads grew up within the medieval parishes and manors of the West Wight. Many of these settlements were depopulated in the 14th and 15th centuries as the arable economy changed to pasture with resulting land enclosure. Some 30 deserted medieval village sites survive in the landscape as earthworks. Planned towns were also laid out in the medieval period at Newport, Yarmouth and Newtown but do not seem to have prospered. Archaeological remains such as houses, villages, earthworks, manor houses, Ridge and furrow, priories and many more survive within the West Wight landscape, 2 maps are enclosed which show the distribution of some of these sites. There are also many rural settlement remains which survive as cropmarks (buried remains visible from the air when crops ripen) over the agricultural land of the whole of the West Wight.

5.11. The Medieval site of Newtown, a planned 12th Century town sited on the estuary to take advantage of the medieval maritime trade, is a spectacular example of a failed settlement as economic problems, French raids and environmental change combined with the Black Death

in the 14th Century to cause the town to be abandoned. The earthworks of the medieval streets and houses still survive today and can be visited as part of the National Trust holding.

5.12. After the Tudors gained the British crown in 1485 (the post medieval period), the Island's geographical position gave it political and military significance, which is evidenced by the sixteenth century coastal defences built by Henry VIII in response to French invasion threats. Yarmouth Castle was the first of these in the West Wight which seems to still have been geographically isolated from the rest of the Island.

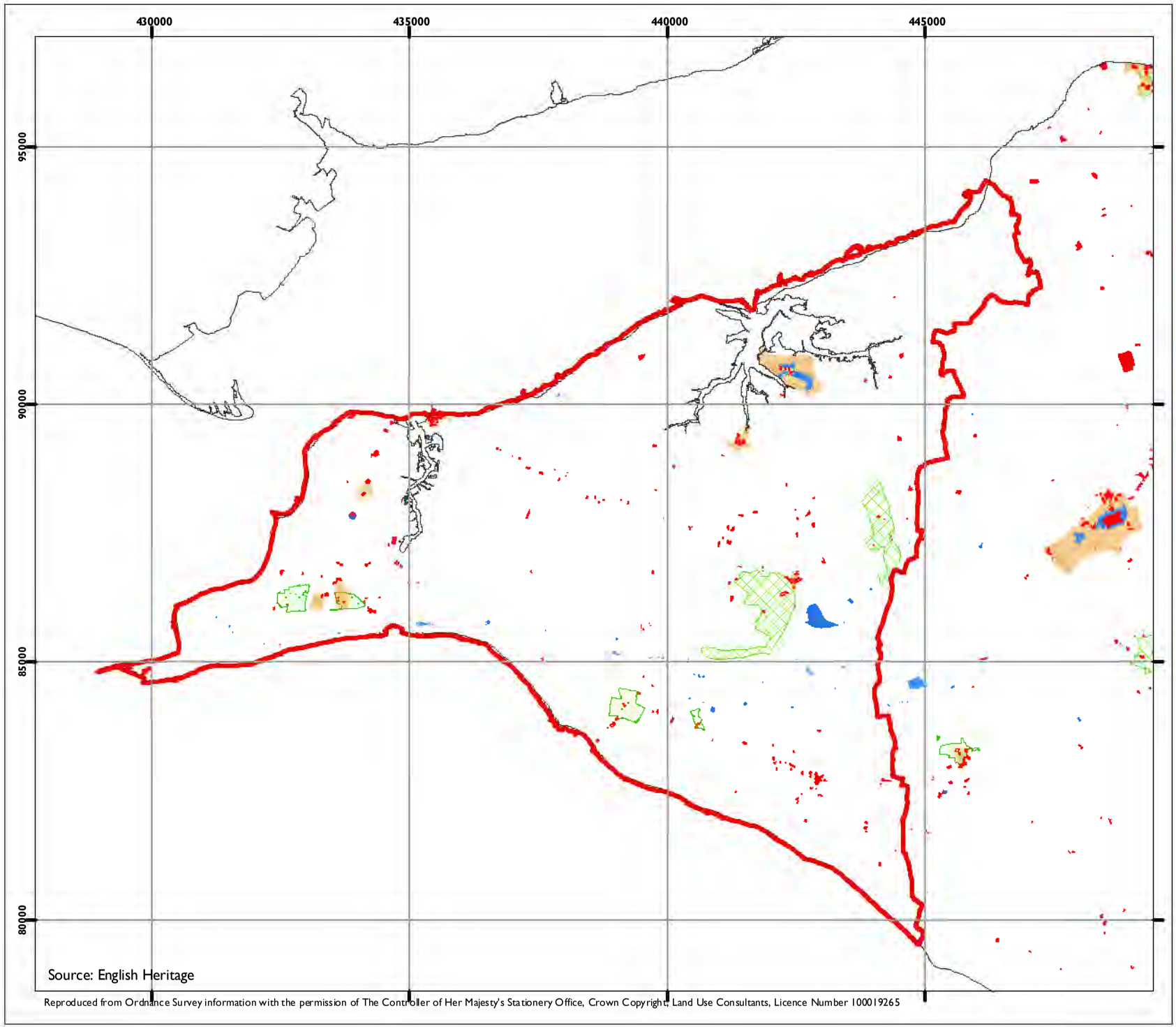
5.13. Whilst towns grew up in the north and east of the Island from the 17th Century, such as Cowes or the late 18th century as at Ryde, and the Island became a popular early nineteenth century tourist attraction, most of this attention was not focussed on the West Wight. However, this period is also important for the development of landscape design, which saw the laying out of many of the Island's historic parks and gardens, many of which are in the West Wight.

5.14. The West Wight coastline played an enormous role in national coastal defences from the 16th Century onwards. As artillery technology improved a series of forts were built to guard the Needles passage and the military road was built along the southwest coast. Many of these forts still survive and show how important the area to national defence. In addition, there are many important sites dating to both World Wars.

5.15. All the physical remains which survive from each period (present day back to the first human arrivals over 450, 000 years ago are classed as archaeological remains. They can survive as buried layers underneath the modern ground surface, as earthworks (visible as humps and bumps), as buildings, structures or even as individual objects found whilst digging a garden. These remains contain information which can tell us about the daily life and landscape of the West Wight for the last 450,000 years, but there has never been any systematic survey of the West Wight area. It is highly likely that the entire West Wight area contains many unrecorded archaeological sites which are yet to be discovered.

# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 13: Historic Landscape




## Key

- Study area
- High Water Line
- Listed Buildings
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Conservation Areas
- Historic Regions

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# 6. PERCEPTIONS OF WEST WIGHT

## INTRODUCTION

6.1. A landscape is significant not only because of its particular character and qualities, but also because of special associations and perceptions attached to it. An examination of the way that others have perceived the landscape over time can provide pointers to a consensus view on why an area is considered special, and what particular features have consistently attracted attention and comment. This chapter considers the perception of the landscape of West Wight both through the views of local people gleaned through the consultation process and through literary and artistic associations. References are listed in **Appendix 4** and a full account of the public consultation is given in **Appendix 3**. Perceptions and literary or artistic association relating to each character area are also noted in the descriptions.

## LITERARY AND ARTISTIC PERCEPTION OF THE LANDSCAPE

6.2. The landscape of West Wight and in particular its coastline, has long attracted writers and artists. William Gilpin in his *Observations on the Western Parts of England relative chiefly to picturesque* beauty of 1798 had reservations on most of the Isle of Wight as he considered the landscape tame and therefore not picturesque due to its widespread cultivation:

*The Isle of Wight is, in fact, a large garden, or rather a field, which in every part has been disfigured by the spade, the coulterer and the harrow.*

However he had a higher regard for the coast, and in particular the chalk cliffs and caves:

*From hence we proceeded to Yarmouth, where Henry VIII built a castle to defend the entrance through the Needles, between the Isle of Wight and the coast of Hampshire; on which coast stands Hurst Castle opposite to that at Yarmouth. Here the island draws nearly to a point. The extreme part of it is almost separated from the main body by a creek, which runs up from Yarmouth almost to the opposite shore. The narrow isthmus is called Freshwater–gate. Here we find outselves among rocks and precipices of wonderful height, and had from this stand a view of an extended range of chalky cliffs, running along the southern coast of the island. Here too we found a perforated cave; which in some positions makes a picturesque foreground, while the sea appearing through it, has a good effect.*

Gilpin also noted the scenic value of the views out from the island:

*the island does not depend on its home scenery. Its views over the Channel and the Hampshire coast are its pride*

6.3. JMW Turner visited the Isle of Wight at the end of the 18th century, his sketchbook of 1795 contains watercolours of Alum, Freshwater and Colwell Bays. By the early 19th century the Isle of Wight was becoming a popular place to visit particularly by well-to-do visitors. Jane Austen in *Mansfield Park* notes the enthusiasm of one of her characters '*she thinks of nothing but the Isle of Wight, and she calls it the Island as if there is no other island in the world*'.

6.4. With the arrival of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in the 1840s the Isle of Wight became even more fashionable attracting eminent visitors such as Charles Dickens who wrote much of *David Copperfield* while staying at Bonchurch in 1849. He is said to have based Peggoty's house boat on those he saw at Yarmouth.

6.5. Alfred, Lord Tennyson moved to Farringford at Freshwater in 1853. He often walked on High Down (now Tennyson Down) and is said to have composed the *Charge of the Light Brigade* while walking there. Although Tennyson wrote little directly about the Isle of Wight aspects of the landscape are evoked in some of his works for instance the following lines from *Maud*:

*...all by myself in my own dark garden ground,*
*Listening now to the tide in its broad-flung shipwrecking roar,*
*Now to the scream of a madden'd beach dragg'd down by the wave,*
*Walk'd in a wintry wind by a ghastly glimmer, and found*
*The shining daffodil dead, and Orion low in his grave.*

6.6. The presence of Tennyson in Freshwater drew statesmen, scientists, painters, writers and artists to the area. A close neighbout was the portrait photographer Julia Margaret Cameron who lived At Dimbola Lodge from 1860. The painter G F Watts also lived nearby and visitors to Farringford included Lewis Carroll, Charles Darwin and Sir Arthur Sullivan.

6.7. Even after the death of Tennyson in 1892 writers continued to visit West Wight. Virginia Woolf was at Freshwater recuperating from a mental breakdown in 1895. Her parents reportedly met at Dimbola Lodge and she later wrote a comic play named *Freshwater* with characters based on Tennyson, Julia Margaret Cameron and others of their circle.

6.8. In the 20th century D H Lawrence holidayed in Freshwater and later wrote *The Trespasser* partly set in Freshwater Bay. W H Auden and Christopher Isherwood also stayed at Freshwater Bay during the 1920s and 1930s while John Osborne lived at Brook in 1939 and Rosamund Lehmann had a cottage in Freshwater. J B Priestley brought a holiday home on the Isle of Wight in 1933 and lived at Brook Hill House for some years. In English Journey (1934) he wrote of the Isle of Wight:

*It is the English south country in miniature – Lilliputian downs and all – with an island quality added, a lightening of the horizon in whichever direction you look...*

## Perceptions of the West Wight landscape today

6.9. The consultation workshops held on 26th February gave an indication of the how the local community perceive the landscape today and what they value about it. The sea, the downland, the bays, rivers and creeks were all pointed out as outstanding features of West Wight.

6.10. Views to the sea, especially from the high downs, were important, and mention was made of the diversity, distance and clarity of the views – particularly panoramic views over the island to both the mainland and the English Channel. The drama of the views over the chalk cliffs was valued as well as the wildlife of the Yar and Newtown Estuaries.

6.11. Landmarks highlighted by consultees were many and varied including natural features such as forests and marshes, streams, bays and estuaries; distinctive settlements and buildings such as

Newtown, the Victorian forts and Yarmouth pier; and archeaological or historic features such as the Long Stone, the Five Barrows, the Needles Battery and Rocket Site.

6.12. Aspects of heritage that were considered significant were people who lived or visited the area (Tennyson, Julia Margaret Cameron, Robert Hooke, G B Priestley and the performers at the 1970 pop festival at Afton), local customs and traditions (including carnivals, smuggling, milling at Calbourne, rural vernacular buildings, and local fishing methods) and the historic built environment (villages such as Brighstone and Calbourne, thatched churches, manor houses and ancient monuments).

6.13. The consultation workshops brought out the value of the unspoilt, rural nature of West Wight to local people. The uncommercialised coastline, with its sandy beaches, spectacular cliffs, forts, coastguard and lifeboat stations, ferries, yachting and fishing was particularly highly prized.

# 7. THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF WEST WIGHT

## INTRODUCTION

7.1. The physical and cultural influences described in the previous chapters have combined to create the unique and distinctive character of West Wight. The area is characterised by a diversity of landscapes and these variations and differences are represented by ten **landscape types**.

1. Chalk Downs
2. Greensand Hills
3. Clay Farmland
4. Bays
5. Estuaries
6. Open Farmland
7. Settled Farmland
8. Soft Cliffs
9. Rolling Farmland
10. Seascape

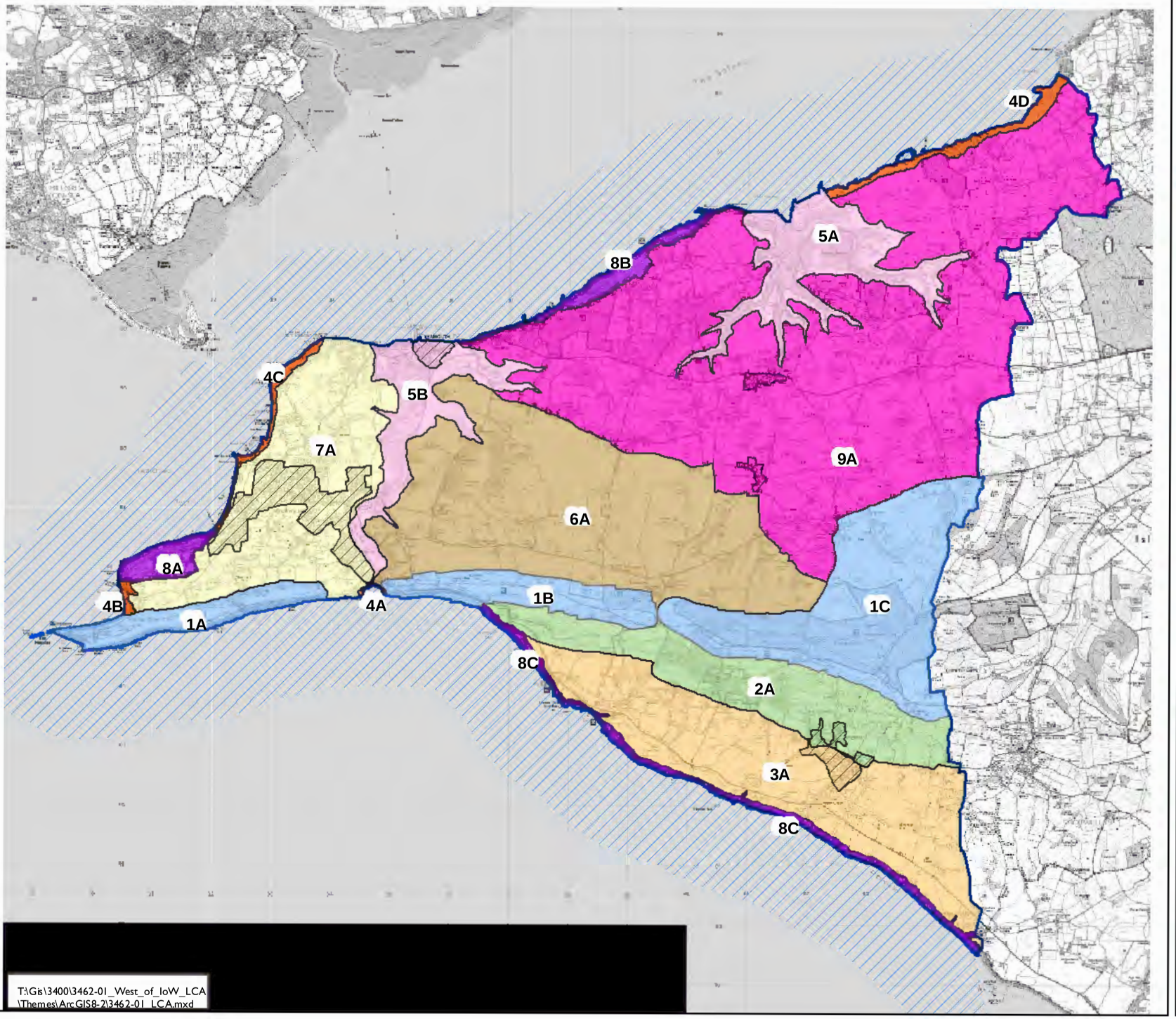
7.2. Each of the generic landscape types has a distinct and relatively homogenous character with similar physical and cultural attributes, including geology, landform, land cover, and historical evolution. The landscape types can be further sub-divided into component **landscape character areas**.

7.3. These are discrete geographic areas that possess the common characteristics described for the landscape type. Each character area has a distinct and recognisable local identity.

7.4. The landscape classification for the District is set out in **Table 1** (overleaf) and illustrated on **Figure 14**. **Figure 14** has been prepared on a Geographic Information System (GIS), with mapping undertaken at a scale of 1:25,000. It should however be noted that there are subtle differences between and within the individual landscape types and character areas. The boundaries illustrated therefore usually indicate transitions rather than marked changes on the ground.

**Table 1: Landscape Classification**

| Character Types | Character Areas |
|---|---|
| Type 1: Chalk Downs | |
| | 1A Tennyson Down |
| | 1B Compton Down |
| | 1C Brighstone Down |
| Type 2: Greensand Hills | |
| | 2A Brighstone Greensand Hills |
| Type 3: Clay Farmland | |
| | 3A Chilton Clay Farmland |
| Type 4: Bays | |
| | 4A Freshwater Bay |
| | 4B Alum Bay |
| | 4C Totland and Colwell Bays |
| | 4D Thorness Bay |
| Type 5: Estuaries | |
| | 5A Newtown Estuary |
| | 5B Yar Estuary |
| Type 6: Open Farmland | |
| | 6A Thorley and Wellow Open Farmland |
| Type 7: Settled Farmland | |
| | 7A Freshwater Isle |
| Type 8: Soft Cliffs | |
| | 8A Headon Cliff |
| | 8B Bouldnor Cliff |
| | 8C Hanover Cliff |
| Type 9: Rolling Farmland | |
| | 9A Calbourne Rolling Farmland |
| Type 10: Seascape | |
| | 10A: West Wight Seascape |




# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

## Figure 14: Landscape Character Areas

### Key

- Study Area
- Urban Areas
- 1: Chalk Downs
  - 1A Tennyson Down
  - 1B Compton Down
  - 1C Brighstone Down
- 2: Greensand Hills
  - 2A Brighstone Greensand Hills
- 3: Clay Farmland
  - 3A Chilton Clay Farmland
- 4: Bays
  - 4A Freshwater Bay
  - 4B Alum Bay
  - 4C Totland and Colwell Bays
  - 4D Thorness Bay
- 5: Estuaries
  - 5A Newton Estuary
  - 5B Yar Estuary
- 6: Open Farmland
  - 6A Thorley and Wellow Open Farmland
- 7: Settled Farmland
  - 7A Freshwater Isle
- 8: Soft Cliffs
  - 8A Headon Soft Cliff
  - 8B Bouldnor Soft Cliff
  - 8C Hanover Soft Cliff
- 9: Rolling Farmland
  - 9A Calbourne Rolling Farmland
- 10: Seascape
  - 10A West Wight Seascape

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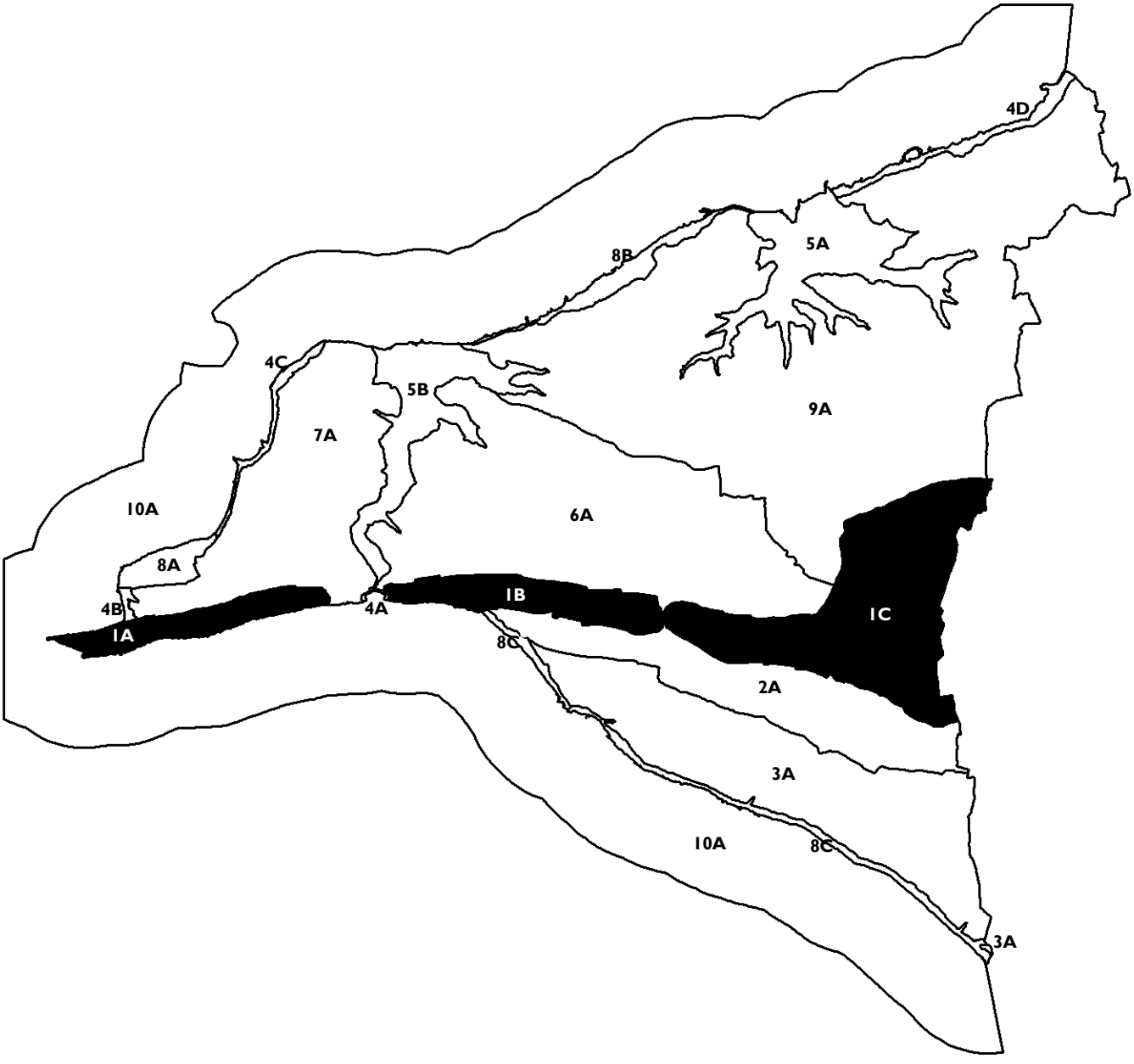
# LANDSCAPE TYPE 1: CHALK DOWNS

# 1: CHALK DOWNS




## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

1A Tennyson Down
1B Compton Down
1C Brighstone Down

Urban Area

# LANDSCAPE TYPE 1: CHALK DOWNS

**Landscape Character Areas**

1A: *Tennyson Down*
1B: *Compton Down*
1C: *Brighstone Down*

## Location and Boundaries

The *Chalk Downs* Landscape Type forms the central belt of the West Wight area. The *Chalk Downs* comprise of a ridge of Upper Chalk which is a prominent feature running east-west across the centre of the island bordered by *Settled Farmland* and *Open Farmland* to the north and the distinctive *Greensand Hills* to the south. The boundaries of the area are defined by the underlying geology with the southern edge of the *Chalk Downs* following the base of the scarp adjacent to the sea.

**Key Characteristics**

- Rolling elevated downland underlain by Upper Chalk
- Steep scarp slopes down to *Greensand Hills* to the south and *Settled* and *Open Farmland* to the north
- Open and exposed, windswept landscape with distant panoramic views out to surrounding farmland and sea to the south
- Landscape distinct from surrounding clay farmland with large areas of calcareous grassland; species rich downland-turf grazed by cattle and sheep and unploughed over long periods of time
- Some scattered trees and areas of hanging woodland along the steeper scarp edges as well as remnants of commons
- Woodland largely restricted to northern slopes, such as Brighstone Forest where a more enclosed character prevails
- A selection of Bronze Age Barrows and Earthworks
- Tennyson National Trail cuts across the *Chalk Downs* from west to east
- The *Downs* are largely unsettled apart from links with the coast and sea, i.e. coastguard cottages, forts and defences, as well as scattered farmsteads
- Disused quarry pits and post-medieval marl pits characterise the base of slopes
- Cultural links, i.e. with Tennyson and other poets and writers including Keats, Gilpin and Priestley

# 1A: TENNYSON DOWN

**Location and Boundaries:** *Tennyson Down* makes up the most westerly *Chalk Down* in West Wight and stretches from Freshwater Bay to the Needles on the south west coast. It forms the narrowest strip of chalk downland in West Wight, with its boundaries defined by contours at the base of the steep scarp slope down to the *Freshwater Enclosed Farmland* to the north and by Mean Low Water where the area abuts the sea to the south.

**Key Characteristics**

- Elevated, narrow, steep landscape set on chalk ridge
- The chalk sea cliffs of the Needles are an instantly recognizable, iconic landscape/seascape feature strongly associated with the yachting tradition of the island
- Vast open, panoramic views towards the sea and Freshwater Bay to the south, and to open clay farmland and the brightly coloured cliffs of Alum Bay to the north creating a sense of drama and delight for visitors to the area
- Extensive areas of grazed species-rich calcareous grassland
- Some hanging woodland and scrub vegetation on the northern slopes
- Areas of gorse, showing signs of remnant commons from the medieval period
- Tennyson Monument forms a landmark which is widely visible in views from the surrounding area
- Bronze Age and Neolithic mounds form a distinctive skyline feature in views from below
- The Old Battery at the Needles and Highdown Cliff are National Trust sites along the Downs
- The Tennyson Trail stretches across *Tennyson Down* from the Needles eastwards
- Sparsely settled with the few built features connected to the area's maritime and military heritage, including the coastguard cottages, the fort and the lighthouse at the Needles
- Disused quarry pits stretch across the northern base of the sloping *Chalk Downs* and are of ecological value, supporting a rich flora and fauna, as well as providing recreational access and areas for parking
- At the southern edge of *Tennyson Down* the sheer drop down Highdown Cliffs creates a unique and breathtaking contrast to the rolling grassland

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

*Tennyson Down* is characteristic of a chalk downland, underlain by upper chalk forming a dramatic elevated rolling hill which stretches to the Needles in the west and Freshwater Bay

in the south. The area is covered by a mosaic of calcareous grassland and gorse with woodland on the steeper slopes to the north and an abrupt cliff edge to the south. The mosaic of vegetation, particularly the unimproved calcareous grassland, creates a rich ecological resource supporting species of invertebrate, butterfly and herb. Sea views, particularly to the iconic feature of the Needles add drama to the landscape. Tennyson Monument and the name of the down itself emphasises the strong associations of the area with Lord Tennyson while Bronze Age and Neolithic earthworks, 20th century military fortifications and redundant quarry pits provide a rich historical resource.

## Physical influences

*Tennyson Down* is defined by the underlying chalk geology forming the rolling downland with steep scarp slopes to the north and exposed chalk cliffs to the south and the far west. The down is underlain by undifferentiated chalk (Newhaven Chalk Formation, Culver Chalk Formation and Portsdown Chalk Formation), a hard pure white Middle and Upper Chalk compared to the softer clayey substrate of the surrounding farmland. Towards the centre of *Tennyson Down* there is also some sand and gravel deposits. The north eastern section of the area, which is formed of a steep sloping scarp, has a more enclosed and intimate character created by young hanging woodland and scrub whilst the remainder of the *Down*, stretching towards the Needles is vast and open with some areas of gorse. The area lies at approximately 60m AOD at its northern base rising to 150m AOD towards Highdown Cliffs where its highest point is marked by the Tennyson Monument. To the north, the scarp descends steeply to the clay farmland forming a dramatic landform feature which is highly visible on the horizon. A number of disused quarry pits also lie along the base of the sloping sides of *Tennyson Down.*

## Ecological character

*Tennyson Down* is of great scientific and nature conservation importance owing to the species richness of its calcareous grassland as well as gorse and scrub influenced by maritime conditions. The whole of *Tennyson Down* is designated as a SSSI.

The calcareous grassland is particularly important in ecological terms; supporting a number of flora and fauna species including invertebrates, butterflies, herbs and orchids. The maintenance of traditional grazing regimes has conserved this landscape's biodiversity value. The north eastern slope of the down is characterised by extensive mature and regenerative hanging woodland clinging to the steep slopes. There is a variety of woodland species, both deciduous and coniferous, as well as scrub vegetation also of ecological value. On the uppermost area of the downs gorse areas are controlled by cyclical cutting and grazing and, along with the chalk grassland and woodland provides a rich ecological resource.

The quarries and cliffs are also rich in flora and fauna species, providing ideal habitats and boosting the ecological value of the down. Highdown Cliff in particular supports colonies of Herring Gulls and Shags whilst the cliff tops support rare plant species such as rock sapphire.

## Historic environment

*Tennyson Down* is an area particularly rich in history, notable not only for its links with Lord Tennyson and its maritime heritage but also its Bronze Age and Neolothic archaeology and centuries old tradition of management by grazing.

A small number of monuments dating from the time when the Isle was first cleared of woodland by Neolithic and Bronze Age farmers is located on the eastern part of the *Down* towards Highdown Cliff. A Neolithic mortuary enclosure is particularly notable on *Tennyson Down*.

The Needles, as the westernmost point of the Island, formed an important site for defence of the entry to the Solent. A coastal fort was built in 1862 to prevent French invasion and in later years tunnels were constructed along with a newer battery higher up the cliff, which still stand today and are open to the public. A very different use of the high down was to test space rockets built by an East Cowes company, Sauders Roe, in the 1950s.

The hazardous western approaches to the Solent caused many shipwrecks, to counter this a lighthouse was constructed on the cliff overhanging Scratchells Bay in 1786. However the light was often obscured by sea mist and so in 1859 Trinity House built the present tower on the outermost point of the Needles at sea level where it still forms a prominent feature.

The exposed chalk cliffs of Highdown Cliff and the disused quarry pits are also of historical significance. In the past livelihoods had been made not only in dairy and wool, but in the quarries and through collecting medicinal plants, hunting birds and taking their eggs from the cliffs. Smuggling was also common in the bays around the Needles.

Victorian times saw an increase in visitors and incomers to the Island. Prominent amongst these was Lord Tennyson who lived close to *Tennyson Down* at Freshwater Bay. On his death in 1892 a great marble Celtic Cross was erected on the down where he had walked, and which now bears his name. The inscription reads: *In memory of Alfred Lord Tennyson this cross is raised as a beacon to sailors by the people of Freshwater and other friends in England and America.*

## Settlement and built character

Settlement on *Tennyson Down* is sparse and limited to a terrace block of coast guard cottages at the westernmost extent of the downs towards the Needles. Distinctive built features include the military development of the Old Battery as well as the lighthouse.

Building materials are simple and include traditional and modern red brick, clay tiles for the roof of the coastguard cottages as well as stone used for the fortifications. The utilitarian nature of these military and maritime buildings and their isolation reinforces the remote character of this area.

## Landscape perceptions

The Isle of Wight is particularly associated with the poet laureate Lord Tennyson, who settled at Farringford, overlooking Freshwater Bay in 1853 and was recorded to have often walked on *Tennyson Down* and took inspiration from the area for his poetry. *'The Biography of an Island'* by P. Hyland notes that Tennyson recommended the air on the Downs be bottled and sold at six pence a pint.

*P*erceptions of *Tennyson Down* vary according to the seasons and the weather and the particular effect the weather has on the sea.

The following quote from J.B. Priestley in *Delight* emphasises the evocative character of the Needles at the end of *Tennyson Down.*.

*…Further off, but dominating the scene is the long chalk cliff that ends in the Needles. And full in the middle panes of my window is that flashing mirror, that blue diamond or that infinite haze, that window for the mind, which is the sea.*

There are many representations of the Needles in art, including paintings by Turner.

*P*erceptions of *Tennyson Down* vary according to the seasons and the weather and the

particular effect the weather has on the sea. However a stakeholder workshop unveiled Tennyson Down as the most valued of the three Chalk Downs. The Needles, the panaromac views from Tennyson Down, Tennyson Monument and the Tennyson Trail were all highly valued and there was a general consensus that Tennyson Down should be maintained as it stands today. There is however a strong concern for the impact that views of the Needles Amusement Park has on the character of the area and also the impact of 4x4 vehicles on the pathways across the downs.

# EVALUATION

## Forces for Change

### *Past Change*

- Cliff erosion
- Tree and scrub encroachment on northern slopes and onto the top of the down
- Increase in leisure use

### *Future Change*

- Possible future changes of use for redundant military infrastructure
- Cliff erosion
- Further scrub and woodland growth on slopes (although the National Trust are addressing this through their management regime)
- Future pressures of increased numbers of tourists and visitors to the area

## Character

*Tennyson Down* exhibits a particularly **strong** character with its dramatic land form of steep scarp slopes and precipitous chalk cliffs, topped by gently rising open downland of calcareous grassland with panoramic views to land and sea. The area is rich in history from neolithic earthworks to Victorian fortifications, with a strong maritime tradition evident in the coastguard buildings and lighthouse, and considerable cultural significance in its association with Lord Tennyson.

## Condition

Tennyson Down is generally in a **good** condition with well managed areas of chalk grassland and gorse, monuments and buildings in sound condition and discrete visitor facilities. To keep this good condition requires continued care in particular in maintaining the active grazing management that ensures the biodiversity value of the grassland and heathland habitats and in balancing the needs of visitors for car parks, paths, and signage, with the natural and open character of the area.

### *Inherent landscape sensitivities*

- Peaceful, undeveloped, remote character of the landscape with night time dark skies
- The high ecological value of calcareous grassland plus the gorse and the woodland on the northern slopes

- Variations and contrast in land cover including areas of gorse and the woodland on the northern slopes
- Open views to the sea and surrounding areas
- Neolithic and Bronze Age earthworks
- Tennyson Monument (and associations with Tennyson), The Old Battery and fortifications

## STRATEGY

### Landscape Strategy

The overall landscape strategy for *Tennyson Down* is to **conserve** the inherent qualities of this area. These qualities include; the open, visually exposed character of the down, with distant, panoramic views, punctuated by distinctive features including Tennyson Monument, and the ecologically valuable calcareous grassland, plus the patchwork of gorse and woodland. Limited enhancements to signage and access would bring benefits but need to be carefully managed to avoid affecting landscape character.

#### *Landscape Guidelines*

- Conserve the open undeveloped character of *Tennyson Down* and the wide views across the cliffs and sea to the south and the farmland to the north
- Conserve the calcareous grassland of high biodiversity value and take opportunities to extend this habitat
- Manage the gorse enrich its value as a habitat and to keep it to current areas and avoid encroachment into grassland
- Encourage management of the woodland on the northern slopes including to enhance its biodiversity value including creation of glades of calcareous grassland where appropriate
- Preserve the historic built features and archaeological remains
- Keep signage, paths and fencing discrete in character
- Take opportunities to increase access where this can be balanced with conservation of the landscape fabric, for instance avoiding excessive wear and tear on paths and grassland
- Consider linked educational and recreational initiatives through West Wight on historical or ecological themes for instance on fortifications

# 1B: COMPTON DOWN

**Location and Boundaries:** *Compton Down* forms the central down in the West Wight area between *Tennyson Down* to the west and *Brighstone Down* to the east and includes Afton Down. Similar in length to *Tennyson Down* it is edged by the sea at Freshwater Bay, at its south western tip, whilst the remaining southern side is bordered by the *Brighstone Greensand Hills* with *Shalcombe Open Farmland* to the north.

**Key Characteristics**

- Elevated, hilly landscape set on Chalk rising in elevation from Freshwater Bay in the southwest to Brighstone Down in the east
- Vast open, panoramic views across the sea and Freshwater Bay to the southwest as well as the *Open Farmland* to the north
- Grazed calcareous grassland covers the majority of the down
- Includes three distinct areas of scrub/heathland, Forestry Commission mixed woodland at the northeastern tip and a golf course on the western side
- Several Bronze Age Barrows are distinctive on the ridgeline
- Tennyson National Trail continues along the upper ridge of *Compton Down* whilst the A3055 cuts around the eastern edge giving access to the golf course
- Riding trails are a feature in this landscape
- Unsettled except for small bungalows and the golf club house at the northwestern tip of area
- Disused quarry pits characterise the base of the northern and southern slopes
- Pop festival at Afton Down in 1970

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

*Compton Down* is characteristic of a chalk downland, underlain by Upper Chalk forming a dramatic elevated rolling hill with panoramic views north and south. *Compton Down* is a textured and varied landscape with three distinct areas of land cover; mature woodland on the eastern tip, an area of calcareous species rich grassland with some remnant heathland on the elevated summit, and the golf course to the west. The mosaic of vegetation, particularly the unimproved calcareous grassland, creates a rich ecological resource supporting species of invertebrate, butterfly and herb. Bronze Age Barrows are distinctive along the ridgeline, along with the route of the Tennyson Trail. Disused quarry pits are found at the base of the downs sloping sides.

### Physical influences

*Compton Down is* defined by the underlying geology forming the rolling downland with sloping sides, rising gently from the west. *Compton D*own is underlain by undifferentiated chalk

(Newhaven Chalk Formation, Culver Chalk Formation and Portsdown Chalk Formation), a hard pure white Middle and Upper Chalk which is edged by the Greensand/Sandstone Formation to the south. The north eastern section of the area has a more enclosed, intimate character as a result of the mature mixed woodland at Shalcombe Down which provides a link between this down and *Brighstone Down* to the east. The remainder of *Compton Down* is characterised by rich calcareous grassland, some heath and scrub vegetation and longer, more amenity style grassland around the golf course, creating a textured landscape. The area lies at approximately 25m AOD at its northeastern base towards Freshwater and rises to 160m AOD towards the east. To the north, the scarp descends steeply to the surrounding farmland forming a dramatic landform feature which is highly visible on the horizon. The bases of steep slopes are marked by a number of disused quarry pits.

## Ecological character

This downland is designated as a SSSI, covered by unimproved calcareous grassland which is important in ecological terms for a number of flora and fauna species including invertebrates, butterflies, herbs and orchids. English Nature has however stated that the area around the golf course is in an unfavourable condition within the SSSI. The north eastern slope of the Down (Shalcombe Down) is characterised by extensive mature and hanging woodland clinging to the steep slopes. There are a variety of woodland species, both deciduous and coniferous supporting a variety of habitats, flora and fauna, such as bats and red squirrels. Remaining areas of scrub and heathland on the northern side of the Down also contribute to the ecological resource.

## Historic environment

Along the ridge line Bronze Age Barrows are distinctive when viewed from below and date from the time when the Isle was first cleared of woodland by Neolithic and Bronze Age farmers. Today the area is still maintained by low density grazing. Disused quarry pits along the north and eastern edge of the Down also provide evidence of the area's quarrying past.

## Settlement and built character

*Compton Down* is devoid of settlement, except at its eastern edge where a linear pattern of small residential bungalows and the golf club house sit into the rising landscape. These are post war buildings of brick with clay tile roofs. They have extensive views across the golf course and down towards the sea.

## Landscape perceptions

*Compton Down* (more specifically Afton Down) is known as the site of the 1970 pop festival which featured a range of artists including Jimmy Hendrix and The Who. The topography of *Compton Down* creates a natural amphitheatre allowing the audience to be spread out on the upper slopes to watch the performers below. The feedback from a stakeholder workshop revealed that Afton Down is also valued as a special Celtic site. The overall view to arise from the workshop was that the wide open spaces on Compton Down are valued but that the golf course was posing a threat to the quality of area as were road trails.

# EVALUATION

## Forces for Change

### *Past Change*

- Introduction of golf course on western side of down
- New tree growth on slopes, under the Forestry Commission

### *Future Change*

- Possible further expansion of scrub and woodland
- Changes in management of golf course to enhance biodiversity value
- Further damage by off-road vehicles
- Possible further expansion of recreational use by increased numbers of tourists/visitors to the area

## Character

Compton Down exhibits a **strong** character. The large scale, open and elevated landform with substantial areas of calcareous grassland and a mosaic of heathland vegetation, scrub and woodland contrasts to the undulating and enclosed nature of the farmland to the north and the Brighstone Greensand Hills and open sea to the south. The rural road cutting through the southeastern tip of the area along with the car parks make it feel less remote and it appears less smooth and pristine in comparison to Tennyson Down. However Compton Down remains a peaceful area with panoramic views to the sea, Freshwater Bay and the surrounding farmland.

## Condition

The landscape is generally in a **good** condition, with the calcareous grassland maintained by grazing, public access infrastructure discrete and low key and respectful management of the Bronze Age Earthworks and the mosaic of woodland and heathland vegetation. The golf course dominates the western end and here management requires enhancement to maximise the grassland biodiversity value while maintaining the playing surface.

## Inherent landscape sensitivities

- The open and exposed nature of the ridge along the down creating a strong skyline
- Peaceful, undisturbed character
- Open views to the sea and *Brighstone Greensand Hills* to the south and farmland to the north
- Ecological value of calcareous grassland
- Archaeological remains
- Mixed woodland block at the eastern edge of the area

# STRATEGY

## Landscape Strategy

The overall landscape strategy for *Compton Down* is to **conserve** the inherent qualities of this area, such as the open, visually exposed character of the down, with distant, panoramic views, as well as the landscape features including the Bronze Age Earthworks and the ecologically valuable calcareous grassland and woodland. Opportunities for enhancement are in the management of the grassland of the golf course, in improvements to access and interpretation and promotion of the ecological value of the disused quarry pits.

## Landscape Guidelines

- Conserve the peaceful, remote feel of the area
- Conserve the open views from *Compton Down* across the sea and *Greensand Hills* to the south and the clay farmland to the north
- Continue to regulate grazing to optimise the ecological value of the chalk grassland and extend this to the golf course
- Take opportunities to enhance the biodiversity and recreation value of the disused quarries
- Encourage sustainable management of the woodland, introducing glades of chalk grassland where appropriate
- Resist expansion and intensification of management of golf course, such as increased irrigation, use of fertilisers or additional bunkers
- Preserve the archaeological remains
- Keep signage, paths and fencing discrete in character
- Take opportunities to increase access where this can be balanced with conservation of the landscape fabric, for instance avoiding excessive wear and tear on paths and grassland

# 1C: BRIGHSTONE DOWN

**Location and Boundaries:** *Brighstone Down* forms the mostly easterly of downs in the West Wight area. It is defined by upper chalk and is edged by the *Brighstone Greensand Hills* to the south and the *Shalcombe Open Farmland* and *Calbourne Rolling Farmland* to the north, with the boundary of the study area defining the eastern side of the down. Boundaries follow the break of slope at the base of the chalk scarps.

**Key Characteristics**

- Elevated, steep, undulating landscape set on Chalk ridge with drift geology of Clay with Flints supporting woodland
- Mature mixed woodland planting dominates the northern side of the ridge, with pastoral farmland on the northern slopes and calcareous grassland at the summit and to the south with some areas of gorse
- Woodland cover creates a sense of enclosure with intermittent views to the north and south
- Areas of open species rich calcareous grassland to the south of the Downs at Mottistone Down support wide views to the south across the *Brighstone Greensand Hills* and towards the sea
- Fields in the pastoral section to the north are generally large and irregular in form with rural fencing and gappy hedgerows.
- Tennyson Trail continues along *Brighstone Down* and is joined by a number of secondary paths and bridleways
- Settlement is sparse and is in the form of nucleated villages and hamlets and scattered farmsteads located at the base of the pastoral farmed northern slopes
- Prehistoric field systems have been recorded at Newbarn Down and numerous Bronze Age burial mounds as well as lynchets and pillow mounds have also been discovered
- Disused quarry pits are dotted along the northern and southern base of the sloping downs

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

*Brighstone Down,* underlain by Upper Chalk with drift geology of Clay with Flints, forms a dramatic elevated rolling hill at the south east of West Wight. Unlike the other areas in the type this area is characterised by areas of woodland and farmland. It is formed by a mosaic of calcareous grassland along the ridge and southern slopes, mixed woodland (largely beech) on the steep northern slopes of the ridge, and, on the gentler slopes to the north, farmland of improved pastures enclosed by hedgerows. This mosaic of land cover forms a rich ecological resource. The woodland serves to create an inaccessible, enclosed landscape in contrast to the more open surrounding areas. There

are a number of Bronze Age burial mounds on the ridge of *Brighstone Down* and redundant quarry pits at the base of the slopes.

## Physical influences

*Brighstone Down* is defined by the underlying chalk geology forming the rolling downland with steep scarp slopes. The down is underlain by undifferentiated chalk (Newhaven Chalk Formation, Culver Chalk Formation and Portsdown Chalk Formation) and Clay with Flints under the woodland, providing a contrast to the softer clayey substrate of the surrounding farmland. At the northern and southern tips of the eastern section of *Brighstone Down* Sand and Gravel Deposits can also be found.

Whilst the steep slopes of *Brighstone Down* are characterised by dense woodland the ridge of the down plus the more gentle slopes and coomb valleys lay host to species rich grassland, grazed by cattle and sheep. *Brighstone Down* lies at approximately 70m AOD at its western edge and rises to 214m AOD at its uppermost summit edged by Tennyson Trail. To the north, the down descends to the clay farmland with the steep wooded slopes forming a dramatic landform feature. The slopes are marked by a number of disused quarry pits.

## Ecological character

In comparison to the other downs in West Wight, *Brighstone Down* has more varied habitats. The southern tip of the area at Mottistone Down is designated as a SSSI. Its unimproved calcareous grassland is important in ecological terms supporting a number of flora and fauna species including invertebrates, butterflies, herbs and orchids, with grazing long having helped to conserve this biodiversity value. *Brighstone Down* also features large areas of woodland with a variety of deciduous (chiefly beech) and coniferous species.

An Audit and Assessment of the Biodiversity of the Isle of Wight (July 2000) identifies Brighstone Forest on the Down as a key plantation woodland, planted since the late 19th century and designated as an SINC. The woodland supports key species of owl, red squirrel, moth, meadow thistle and fungi. It is the Island's largest woodland area, part of which is private and part controlled by Forestry Enterprise. The forest is a mix of conifer and beech but with much of the conifer plantation destroyed by the 1987 storm, with the resultant areas left open to allow the restoration of some of the remnant heath land which provides a habitat for nightjars in the summer.

The farmland in the area is not considered to be of significant nature conservation value although remaining hedgerows provide valuable habitats for birds, such as skylark and partridge as well as invertebrates who also thrive in fields of cereal crop. Non-improved pastures support insects and important and rare species of flowering plant.

## Historic environment

A field system survey in Brighstone Forest (2002) identified ancient earthworks which had been obscured by Brighstone Forest which was planted between the World Wars. During the survey lynchets and pillow mounds were also discovered along with 28 Bronze Age burial mounds dating back to when the isle was first cleared of woodland by Neolithic and Bronze Age farmers.

Disused quarries fringe the base of the steep scarp slopes.

## Settlement and built character

Settlement on *Brighstone Down* is sparse and small scale, with a few dispersed farmsteads and the fringes of the village of Calbourne sitting at the base of northern slope along road edges. In the main building materials are simple and traditional including stone buildings with slate and clay tile roofs. A few farm buildings are showing signs of declining condition.

## Landscape perceptions

This area lacks the strong associations with literary figures and the sea which are evident in the other areas of this type. The stakeholder workshop revealed that this landscape has been widely used in the past for hunting but local people fear that access to the area may be reduced with the hunting ban. The woodland in this area is particularly valued, along with the population of bats and red squirrels that it supports. The distinctive skyline feature that Brighstone Forest provides on the down is also valued. The forest is used for mountain biking with part of the annual Wight Max event covering sections of the forest in June. It is also popular for horse riding.

# EVALUATION

## Forces for Change

### *Past Change*

- Planting of Brighstone Forest in early/mid 20th century and subsequent loss or obscuring of archaeological features
- 1987 storm took out lots of the trees in the north of this area and these areas are being managed to return to heathland
- Introduction of New Forest ponies

### *Future Change*

- Pressures for new woodland growth on slopes and better management
- Restoration or creation of heathland
- Pressure for improved public access to Brighstone Forest for motorcyclists and mountain bikers all year round

## Character

*Brighstone Down* exhibits a **moderate** strength of character. The large scale, woodland blocks with areas of grazed species rich calcareous grassland and of enclosed farmland create a diverse and textured landscape. The Bronze Age Burial Mounds and prehistoric field systems provide another layer of interest to this landscape, although concealed by dense woodland and with many of the traditional field boundaries having been destroyed. In places the area can appear poorly unified and inharmonious. However, the underlying chalk provides a unity with the surrounding downs.

## Condition

The extensively wooded character of *Brighstone Down* appears to have led to destruction of prehistoric field patterns. The hedgerow network in the farmland area also has gaps and sections in poor condition. The woodland is of limited nature conservation value with little understorey and a limited range of species although the loss of trees has lead to restoration of heathland habitats. Access for leisure is also minimal and there is a lack of interpretative signage. Thus this landscape is judged to be in a **moderate** condition.

## Inherent landscape sensitivities

- Peaceful, undisturbed nature

- Open views to the sea and cliffs to the south and intermittent views of the clay farmland to the north
- Open grassland on the ridge, visible in views from the south and enhancing the Tennyson Trail
- Prehistoric field patterns and systems
- Ecological value of calcareous grassland, remnant heathland and woodland vegetation
- Pastoral farmland and remaining hedgerows
- Wooded skyline highly visible from the clay farmland to the north

# STRATEGY

## Landscape Strategy

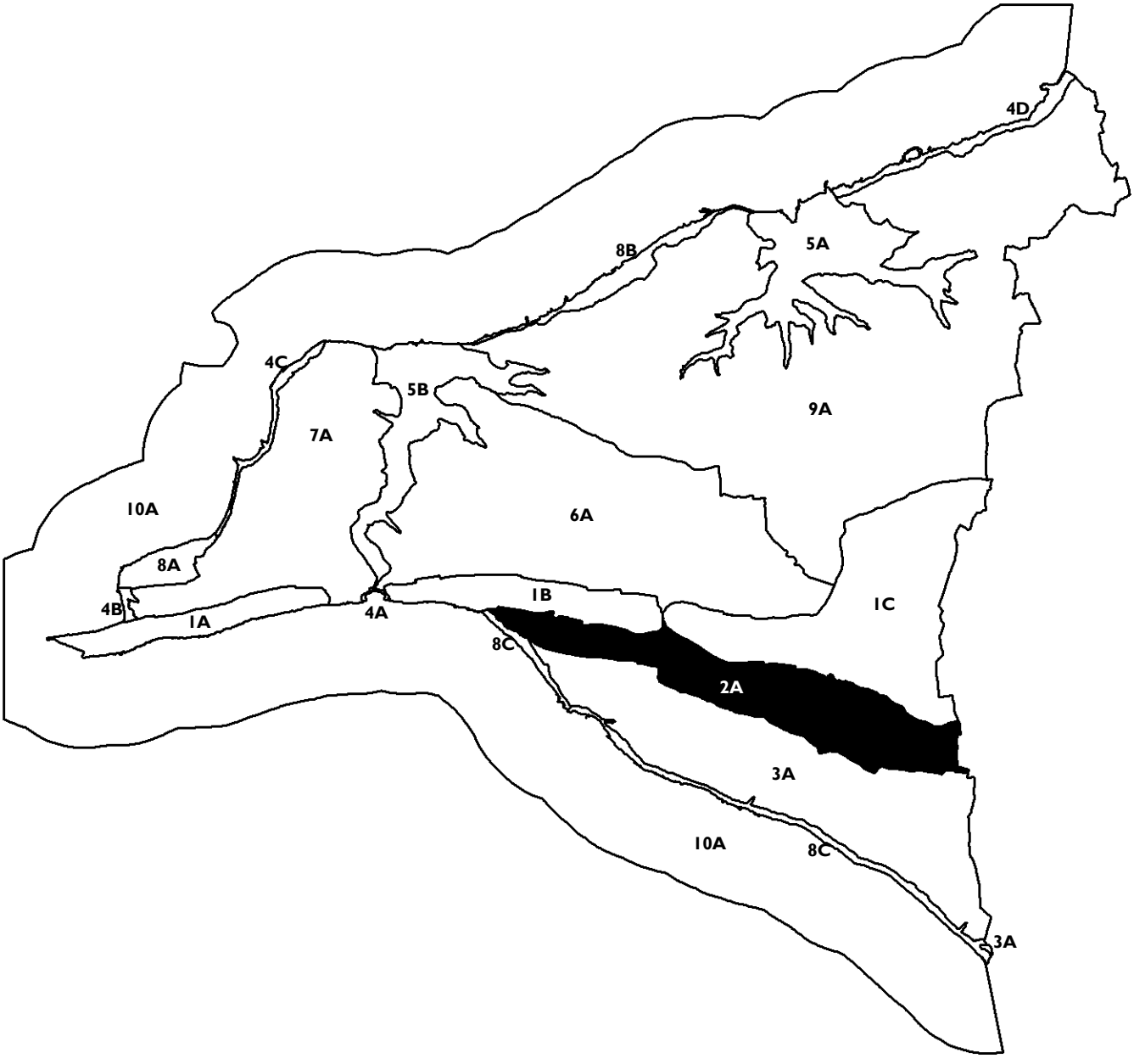
The overall landscape strategy for *Brighstone Down* is to **conserve** the inherent qualities of this area, such as the woodland blocks shaping the undulating skyline of the down and the panoramic views from calcareous grassland to the south. However the area would be **enhanced** by improvements in woodland management to provide more varied and ecologically rich habitats, improved management of the hedgerow network to the north plus increased access and interpretation of this area for leisure purposes.

### *Landscape Guidelines*

- Conserve the peaceful, rural landscape
- Conserve the open views from the chalk grassland of the ridge towards the *Greensand Hills* to the south and the sea beyond
- Continue to regulate grazing to optimise the ecological value of the chalk grassland
- Take opportunities to enhance the biodiversity and recreation value of the disused quarries
- Encourage sustainable management of the woodland, introducing glades of heathland and chalk grassland where appropriate
- Consider restoring areas of chalk grassland around significant archaeological remains such as Bronze Age burial mounds currently obscured by woodland
- Promote sensitive restoration and appropriate use of derelict traditional farm buildings
- Keep signage, paths and fencing discrete in character
- Take opportunities to increase access where this can be balanced with conservation of the landscape fabric, for instance avoiding excessive wear and tear on paths and grassland

# LANDSCAPE TYPE 2: GREENSAND HILLS

# 2: GREENSAND HILLS




## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

2A Brighstone Greensand Hills

Urban Area

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# LANDSCAPE TYPE 2: GREENSAND HILLS

**Landscape Character Areas**
2A: *Brighstone Greensand Hills*

## Location and Boundaries

The *Greensand Hills* Landscape Type forms a belt of land in the south of the island, lying between the *Chalk Downs* to the north and the *Chilton Clay Farmland* to the south. The boundaries follow changes in landform marking the transition from the greensand to the chalk and clay lands to north and south.

**Key Characteristics**

- Open rolling landscape, partially enclosed by downland to the north
- Underlain by Upper Greensand
- Panoramic views of *Chilton Clay Farmland* and the English Channel to the south
- Variable land cover with pasture largely dominant, including horse paddocks but with patches of arable land, scrub, mixed woodland and shelterbelts as well as remnant common and heathland
- A network of footpaths and bridleways, as well as sunken lanes encourage recreational use
- The northern edge of the ridge is marked by a series of disused quarries
- Low density settlement in the form of traditional stone farmsteads as well as linear villages along roads
- Influence of grand houses and manors in views to buildings and remants of historic estates
- Important archaeological sites include a Bronze Age earthwork, the Long Stone and several barrows.

# 2A: BRIGHSTONE GREENSAND HILLS

**Location and Boundaries:** *Brighstone Greensand Hills* make up the undulating strip of land between *Compton* and *Brighstone Down* to the north and *Chilton Clay Farmland* in the south. Boundaries follow contours at the break of slope at the base of the chalk downs to the north and the B3399 which broadly follows the change in geology from Greensand to Chalk to the south. To the west the boundary is the top of the cliffs, and to the east the study boundary.

**Key Characteristics**

- Rolling landscape underlain by Upper Greensand, Sandstone and an isolated area of Alluvium, Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel in the valley to the north of Brighstone
- The distinctive landform of steeply undulating hills and sheltered combes contrasts with the high domed chalk downs to the north and the level clay farmland to the south
- Peaceful, rural area, partially enclosed by downland to the north with occasional panoramic views to the sea to the south
- Land cover is variable, but with pasture largely dominant including some horse paddocks
- There is also patches of arable land, scrub, mixed woodland and shelterbelts as well as some remnant common and heathland at Mottistone
- Hedgerows in variable condition enclose medium and large irregular fields
- Coniferous plantations form skyline of wooded blocks on hills to the north and there is mature decorative coniferous planting around settlements particularly Mottistone
- Rural roads, often sunken, rise up the combe valleys linking the inland areas to the north with the sea
- Settlement on *Brighstone Greensand Hills* is sparse consisting of a few scattered farmsteads and hamlets, the northern section of the village of Brighstone plus Brook House which forms a dramatic feature in views from lower areas to the south
- Buildings are predominantly traditional stone houses with slate and clay tiles roofs, some with thatch; the dark ferruginous sandstone underlying the *Brighstone Greensand Hills* can be seen in buildings throughout West Wight
- A network of footpaths and bridleways encourage recreational use of the area
- Important archaeological sites include the Long Stone long barrow on Mottistone Common and a possible Iron Age enclosure at Castle Hill
- Sand pits and quarries particularly at the north of the area were it meets the Chalk Downs

# DESCRIPTION

## Summary description

*Brighstone Greensand Hills* is an area of rolling hills with a textured mosaic of heathland and woodland on steep valley sides providing a sense of enclosure and secrecy but with intermittent views towards the coast. Pasture and arable land dominates, with some fields still divided by traditional hedgerow boundaries with hedgerow trees. Settlement remains largely in its original stone form as villages and farmsteads. The area is rich in archaeology with the Bronze Age *Black Barrow*, Mottistone Long Stone and Iron Age Enclosure at Castle Hill defining the historic character of this area. The redundant quarry pits on the northern ridge also provide evidence of the history of this area and sunken roads mark historic routes to the coast.

## Physical influences

*Brighstone Greensand Hills* are defined by the Upper Greensand geological formation, Sandstone and Chert with a small area of Alluvium Clay, Silt and Gravel drift geology underlying the valley to the north of Brighstone. This underlying geology forms an undulating landform with broad valleys and a partial sense of enclosure, heightened by the dominance of the downs forming a backdrop to the north. Enclosed, small scale combes run down to the lower ground of the *Clay Farmland* to the south and are often used as routes for roads or paths. Pasture and arable land combined with woodland blocks and common land with heath vegetation create a textured landscape. The landscape area lies at approximately 50m AOD at its western side and undulates between 125m AOD at its highest point. Disused quarry pits mark the broad valley sides at intervals along the edge of the downs.

## Ecological character

Improved pastures and arable land dominate *Brighstone Greensand Hills*. Fields of cereal crops support a range of invertebrates and, along with other types of arable crop, provide for ground nesting birds, such as the partridge. The mature mixed woodland blocks and common land with heath vegetation and gorse provide a number of habitats and fauna include nightjars in the summer, bats and red squirrels.

## Historic environment

*Brighstone Greensand Hills* contains a Bronze Age Barrow on Mottistone Common, dating back to Bronze Age times when farmers first cleared the woodland in this area. There is a possible Iron Age enclosure at Castle Hill while the Long Stone is one of only two long barrows on the Isle of Wight.

The *Greensand Hills* had a similar land use historically to the *Chalk Downs.* On an 1862 Ordnance Survey map Mottistone Common is shown as an area of rough grazing. In the 20th century some areas of Upper Greensand were planted with conifers, which have now been partially cleared, and some areas were used for enclosed grazing. Other areas, which were formerly heathland or rough grazing, were also enclosed and improved in the 19th century.

At Brighstone an open field system was well documented and the present day pattern of interlocking fields in this area suggests some of the existing fields were enclosed from open field furlongs. The area towards Compton and Dunsbury in the west contains a less intricate pattern of fields with two historic farmsteads on the border with *Chilton Clay Farmland*.

The area has a good number of hedged boundaries with hedgerow trees and blocks of woodland, particularly around Mottistone, which have been planted since the mid 19th century and are probably associated with the Seely Estate.

## Settlement and built character

The dark ferruginous sandstone of the upper *Greensand Hills* can be seen in the building materials of houses at Mottistone and Brighstone (on the southern boundary of this area), along with thatch and some traditional red brick and clay tile buildings built. Within the area, Mottistone and Brighstone are historic (medieval) hamlets and villages. Isolated farms and manor houses are also visible.

Brighstone is a substantial nucleated settlement whereas Mottistone and Hulverstone are smaller hamlets, which are arranged along the edges of rural roads and lanes running between Brook, Brighstone and Shorwell. Brook Hill House is a substantial building that forms a landmark seen from below against its dark backdrop of wooded hills. The Manor at Mottistone can be seen at the boundary edge.

A number of trackways, which run south from the settlement areas to the coast, are also historic features in this landscape having long been used to connect farms with the sea.

## Landscape perceptions

A stakeholder workshop identified that this landscape is valued for its unique undulating topography and the special character of its stone buildings. The Long Stone at Mottistone also provides this area with a unique and valued feature as it is the only megalithic monument in the Island with a barrow behind it. The bluebell woods at Mottistone are also valued.

Brook, although largely in the adjacent character area, has expanded into this area over the years and John Osbourne lived there in 1939.

The following quote by J.B. Priestley in *Delight* (1949) (looking down on Brook from his home Brook Hill House) highlights the character of the *Greensand Hills*:

*Down below are downlands and heath, green slopes and gorse in bloom. Lower and nearer the centre are cultivated fields, then beyond, just in the picture, a glimpse of a tiny church, and the ruin of a large manor house…*

# EVALUATION

## Forces for Change

### *Past Change*

- Increased agricultural production resulting in the loss of tree and shrub cover, unimproved grassland and other habitats
- Fencing replacing old hedgerow boundaries
- Small fields joined to form larger areas and field boundaries removed
- Poor hedgerow management
- Expansion of development around Brighstone
- Increasing number of horse paddocks
- Decline in heathland subject to grazing pressures
- Quarry pits having a visual impact on landscape of area

- Plantations of conifers

***Future Change***

- Increased tourist and visitor pressures
- Small scale incremental development (signage, fencing, road improvements) that would impinge on the rural character particularly of the sunken lanes
- Regeneration of heathland
- Increase in management of woodland blocks
- Changing conifer plantations to areas of more mixed woodland

## Character

*Brighstone Greensand Hills* exhibits a **strong** character. The rolling nature of the landscape with its broad valleys and steep narrow combes creates a sense of enclosure and secrecy mixed with the varied texture of heathland, woodland and pasture forming a dramatic and unique landscape. The presence of Bronze Age Barrows, the Long Stone, and the Iron Age enclosure at Castle Hill plus Brook Hill House and the Mottistone Manor creates a landscape rich in archaeological and historical interest accentuated by the sunken roads and tracks which run down to the coast from the traditional stone settlements.

## Condition

The removal of hedgerows to make larger and more easily cultivatable land has led to their replacement with non descript fencing creating a less harmonious character. Mixed woodland blocks, particularly around Mottistone provide texture in the landscape and are of a reasonable quality although there appears to be a lack of directed woodland management. The heathland is however in a good condition and helps to give this area its unique character. The historic settlement is largely of traditional material and pattern although there is some later infill on the edges of Brighstone. Overall this landscape is judged to be of a **moderate** condition.

## Inherent landscape sensitivities

- Peaceful, enclosed, secret nature of the landscape
- Heathland and woodland mosaic and its ecological and recreational value
- Pastoral fields bounded by hedgerows
- Open views to the coast in the south and access via historic track ways
- Traditional stone farmsteads, hamlets, villages and grand houses
- Archaeological remains including the Bronze Age Barrows and the Long Stone at Mottistone, the Iron Age enclosure at Castle Hill and historic field system around Brighstone

# STRATEGY

### Landscape Strategy

The landscape strategy for *Brighstone Greensand Hills* is to **conserve** the inherent qualities of this area, including the undulating and valley topography, the mosaic of heathland, pasture and woodland

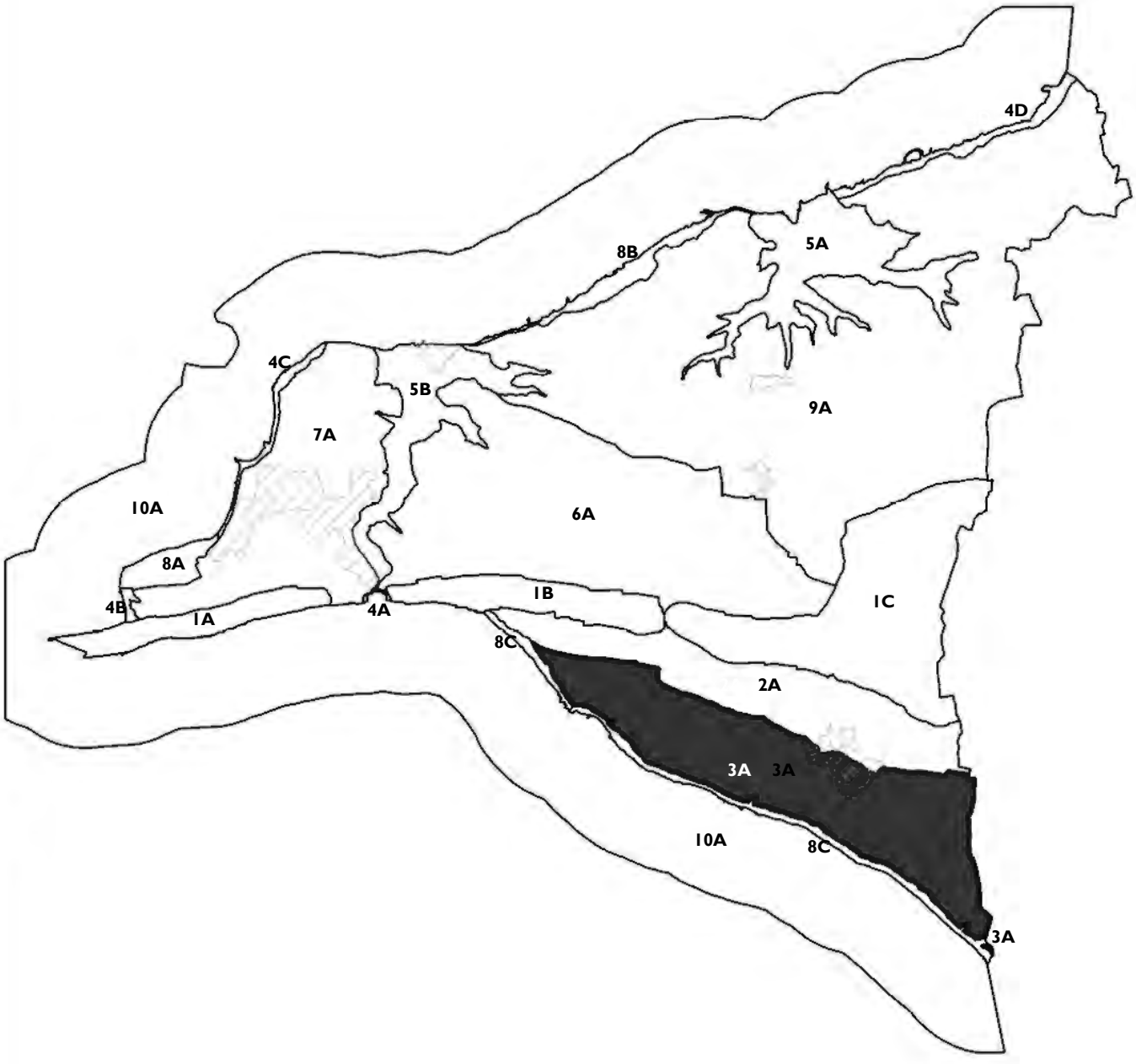
blocks and the traditional settlements and sunken lanes and footpaths. At the same time elements of the landscape in less good condition would be **restored** through improved woodland and heathland management and enhancement of the hedgerow network.

### *Landscape Guidelines*

- Conserve the sense of peacefulness with sparse settlement
- Enhance the ecologically valuable heathland through regulating the level of grazing and take opportunities to extend this habitat
- Encourage restocking of hedgerows and consistent management to reflect historic patterns
- Conserve sites of historic interest, archaeological features
- Encourage sustainable management of woodland using traditional methods such as coppice where appropriate
- Conserve the small scale settlements of historic character and traditional materials
- Minimise small scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network which could change the rural character of the landscape particularly the sunken lanes
- Enhance the ecological and recreational function of disused quarry pits
- Enhance interpretation of the landscape in ways that do not impact on its peaceful rural character (for instance walking trails, leaflets, discrete signage and guided walks)

# LANDSCAPE TYPE 3: CLAY FARMLAND

# 3: CLAY FARMLAND




## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

3A Chilton Clay Farmland

Urban Area

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# LANDSCAPE TYPE 3: CLAY FARMLAND

**Landscape Character Areas**

3A: *Chilton Clay Farmland*

## Location and Boundaries

The *Clay Farmland* landscape type stretches along the south of West Wight between the *Greensand Hills* to the north and *Hanover Soft Cliffs* to the south. The area is defined by the underlying geology of Wealden Mudstone and the boundaries broadly follow changes in geology and landform.

**Key Characteristics**

- Flat clay farmland with gentle undulations underlain by Mudstone and Alluvial Deposits of Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel
- Slight, gentle slope towards soft cliffs and bays in the south with views to sea providing a dramatic contrast with the level farmland
- An open and exposed landscape with extensive areas of arable land and pasture but with some variety provided by mixed woodland blocks and belts
- Distinctive lines of conifers forming screening and shelterbelts around farm buildings
- Network of drainage ditches and channels
- Hedgerows in variable condition forming field boundaries
- Presence of rural roads and lanes as well as footpaths and bridleways which sweep down to the coast and provide a network of recreational routes in this area
- A medieval earthwork and other archaeological features evident towards the cliff edge
- Settlement is sparse and generally in the form of traditional scattered stone farmsteads, villages and hamlets plus some commercial development in the form of visitor and holiday centres

# 3A: CHILTON CLAY FARMLAND

**Location and Boundaries:** The *Chilton Clay Farmland* makes up the southern section of the Isle, towards the coast and Brighstone Bay. It runs west to east from Freshwater Bay to the eastern extent of the study area around Yafford. The *Chilton Clay Farmland* is bordered by the Upper Greensand of the *Brighstone Greensand Hills* to the north, where the boundary follows the B3399 which broadly marks the change in geology. To the south is *Hanover Cliff* and here the boundary follows the top of the cliffs and chines.

**Key Characteristics**

- Flat *Clay Farmland* with gentle undulations underlain by Mudstone and Alluvial Deposits of Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel
- An open and exposed landscape with dramatic views to the soft cliffs and sea beyond
- Slight, gentle slope towards the south, with the *Greensand Hills* and the *Chalk Downs* rising as a backdrop to the north
- Mix of pastoral and arable fields with some hedgerows in variable conditions, and hedgerow trees
- More varied to the west with mixed woodland blocks and belts around Brook and distinctive lines of conifers forming screening and shelterbelts around farm buildings
- Presence of water in the landscape through features such as ditches, drainage channels, small reservoirs, fish ponds, springs and areas of marsh
- The Military Road dating back to the 1860s dissects the area from east to west cutting through a network of rural roads and lanes, footpaths and bridleways, many of which run north south connecting the upland areas of the downs and greensand hills to the sea
- Settlement is sparse and generally in the form of scattered stone built farmsteads and villages and hamlets, but there is also some more modern commercial development of cliff top caravan parks and the Isle of Wight Pearl Museum
- Medieval earthworks are present between Brook Green and Chilton Chine and near Brook, while an historic area of wet grazing is indicated by the name of Sud Moor

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

*Chilton Clay Farmland* is a level, open landscape underlain stretching from the coast in the south to the *Brighstone Greensand Hills* in the north. The area is largely dominated by arable and pastoral farmland but with mixed woodland blocks and belts and marshland providing pockets of variation and enhancing ecological value. A number of historical artefacts have been uncovered in the area and a coastal medieval earthwork adds to the area's historical interest. Settlement in the area is mainly in the form of stone farmsteads but with nucleated development around the village of Brighstone and

tourist developments such as the holiday centres on the cliff tops and the Isle of Wight Pearl museum/shop at Chilton Chine.

## Physical influences

The *Chilton Clay Farmland* is defined by a geology of Mudstone and Alluvial Deposits of Clay, Silt and Gravel which create a generally flat landscape sloping gently towards the coast in the south of the area. The underlying geology and topography of this area gives rise to a simple, open landscape which contrasts to the variety and dramatic land form of the *Greensand Hills* and the *Chalk Downs* to the north. This landscape is dominated by arable and improved pastoral farmland with some horse paddocks but is broken up by mixed woodland blocks to the west around Brook House and Sud Moor. Marshy vegetation towards the coast, although minimal, also provides some diversity. There are a good number of hedgerows with hedgerow trees which provide boundaries for the interlocking pattern of medium and large fields in this area.

The area lies at approximately 20 to 30m AOD at the top of the low cliffs to the south and rises to 55m AOD around Mottistone on the northern boundary. Some drama and contrast is provided in the landscape by the abruptness at which it meets the cliff face and sea along its southern border.

## Ecological character

Across the *Chilton Clay Farmland* a number of hedgerows are likely to support habitats for birds and insects around the farmland whilst traditional ditches and dykes are also of ecological value. Arable land supports ground nesting birds such as partridges as well as brown hares, and cereal crops can support a number of invertebrate species. Although minimal, the grassland around the top of chines may also support cliff top species. The mixed woodland blocks and belts and marshy vegetation to the west may provide ideal habitats for flora and fauna, such as breeding wetland birds, as well as water vole and bats.

## Historic environment

A possible medieval earthwork has been identified at Brook.

In the Middle Ages much of the area contained open fields which survived into and after medieval times with today's pattern suggesting an enclosure of some of the fields from open furlongs.

On the Isle of Wight the word 'moor' is also used to describe an area of rough marshy grazing land, thus 'Sud Moor' between Chilton Chine and Brook Green would appear historically to be a marshy grazing area.

The Seely family created parkland at Brook in Victorian times which had an influence on the farmed landscape around Brook and Mottistone. The majority of woodland in this area has been planted since the mid nineteenth century and is probably associated with Seely Estate

The Military Road, which is the main coastal road in the area, was created in the 1860s to enable troops to move quickly from the forts at the western edge of the island to protect the vulnerable chines from invasion. Under public ownership the road was widened following the First World War and continues to be a popular tourist route across the Isle.

## Settlement and built character

Settlement in the *Chilton Clay Farmland* is in the form of hamlets and villages at Brook, Hulverstone, Mottistone and Brighstone on the border with *Brighstone Greensand Hills*. Isolated farms, sometimes in declining condition, along with manor houses, occur at the base of the *Brighstone Greensand Hills* and are dispersed in the *Chilton Clay Farmland* along spring lines. Compton lies at the western edge of the *Chilton Clay Farmland* on the border with *Brighstone Greensand Hills.* In medieval times Compton

was a manor. Most buildings are of a traditional style, built of stone with thatched or slate roofs reflecting the underlying geology of the Isle (chalk and greensand blocks) and its character. However there are also some 20th century developments of holiday centres, the Isle of Wight Pearl Museum, chalets and caravan parks overlooking the coast with their modern infrastructure, such as masts and poles.

### Landscape perceptions

Writer J B Priestley lived in Brook Hill House and enjoyed the views down to the coast across *Chilton Clay Farmland*. The public consultation brought out views of local people on the level of commercial use of the area, with opportunities pointed up to improve car parks and interpretation and control future development.

## EVALUATION

### Forces for Change

#### *Past Change*

- Widening and realignment of Military Road
- Increased traffic levels
- Increase in commercial/tourist development and pressures
- Expansion of horse paddocks in the area
- Removal of agricultural features such as hedgerows and field boundaries

#### *Future Change*

- Further loss of traditional agricultural features owing to poor management, e.g. hedgerows replaced by fencing
- Possible expansion of Brighstone
- Increased tourist and visitor pressures leading to expansion of holiday and visitor centres and commercial development
- Further realignment of Military Road

### Character

*Chilton Clay Farmland* exhibits a **moderate** strength of character. The open and exposed nature of the farmland contrasts with the more intimate and enclosed nature of woodland blocks. The simple level topography permits dramatic views out to sea with the *Chalk Downs* and *Brighstone Greensand Hills* creating a backdrop to the north. However, in areas the landscape appears poorly unified and tourist development features in this area have had an impact on its rural character.

## Condition

The *Chilton Clay Farmland* is judged to have a **moderate** landscape condition. Fencing is replacing hedgerows to accommodate the rise in numbers of horse paddocks which is affecting the traditional farmland character of this landscape and although there are some hedgerows in good condition, others are gappy and, along with the unmanaged areas of ruderal plants at the roadsides, they lower the perceived quality of this landscape. Footpath access to the coast is good but there is a lack of appreciation of the historic and educational significance of the area and the long term management of the landscape fabric for instance the pathways. Some farm buildings are also showing signs of lack of use and maintenance.

## Inherent landscape sensitivities

- Open views across farmland to the cliffs and sea beyond
- Contrast between open farmland and woodland blocks
- Ecological value of woodland, pasture, marsh and drainage ditches for flora and fauna
- Medieval earthworks and historic remains
- Remaining hedgerow field boundaries
- Traditional stone farmhouses and historic village centres

# STRATEGY

### Landscape Strategy

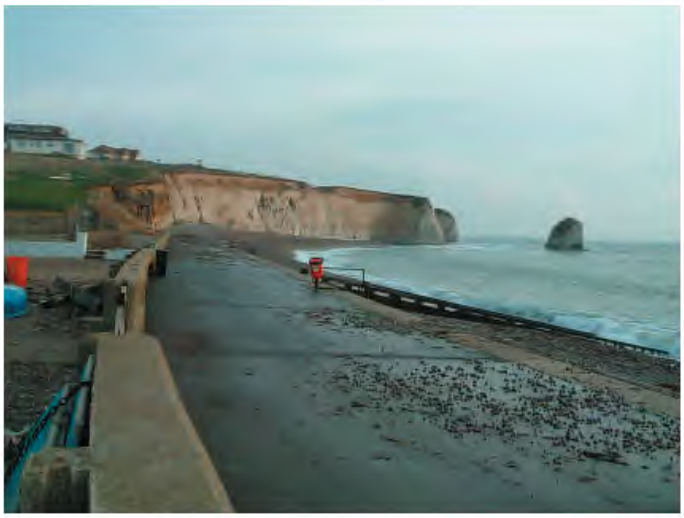
The landscape strategy for *Chilton Clay Farmland* is to **conserve** the inherent qualities of this area including the remnant hedgerow boundaries defining historical field enclosures and providing wildlife habitats, the medieval earthworks and the woodland blocks, marshland and drainage ditches. The traditional agricultural character of this area should be **enhanced** whilst allowing tourist development which respects the historical and ecological qualities of the area for instance by avoiding intrusive, large scale cliff top development. To encourage leisure and recreation in this area will require better management of the landscape fabric which may give opportunities for community involvement.

### *Landscape Guidelines*

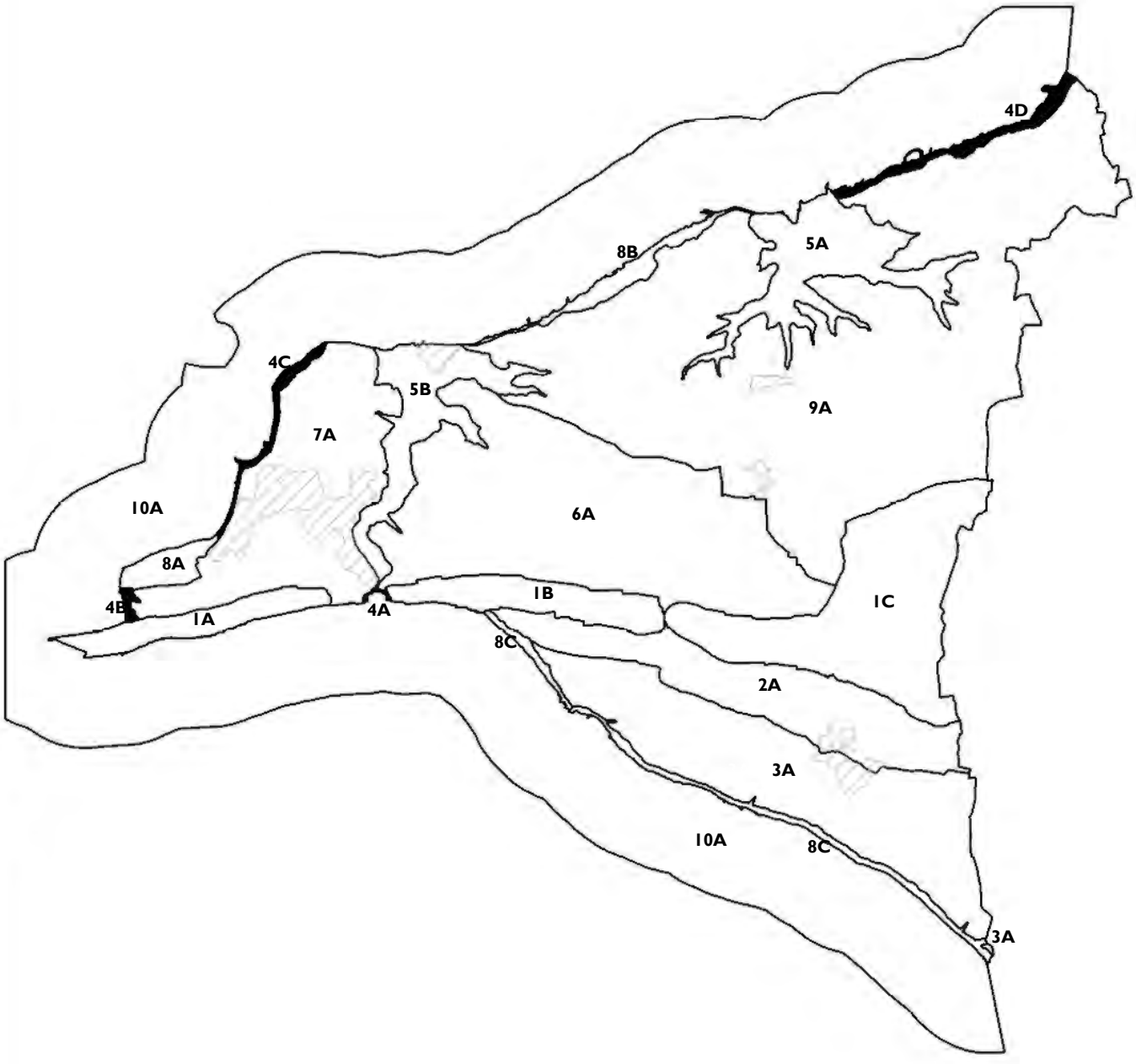
- Encourage conversion of arable to pasture land particularly along the cliff tops to enhance the grassland habitat
- Improve ecological and nature conservation value of mixed woodland and rough marsh grazing through habitat creation
- Promote margins of rough grass around arable fields to enhance the habitat
- Protect traditional agricultural features such as the hedgerow boundaries, restoring these and ensuring consistent future management
- Avoid further intrusive coastal development, and mitigate the visual impact of existing development
- Conserve the historic village centres

- Protect coastal views
- Regulate increased tourist pressures but allow improved recreational facilities through better management of the landscape fabric, such as paths and signage
- Enhance interpretation of the landscape in ways that do not impact on the peaceful, rural character of the area (for instance walking trails, leaflets, discrete signage and guided walks)
- Minimise small scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network which could change the simple open character of the landscape
- Promote sensitive restoration and appropriate use of derelict traditional farm buildings

# LANDSCAPE TYPE 4: BAYS



# 4: BAYS




## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

4A Freshwater Bay
4B Alum Bay
4C Totland and Colwell Bays
4D Thorness Bay

Urban Area

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# LANDSCAPE TYPE 4: BAYS

**Landscape Character Areas**

4A: *Freshwater Bay*
4B: *Alum Bay*
4C: *Totland and Colwell Bay*
4D: *Thorness Bay*

## Location and Boundaries

The *Bays* landscape type consists of four character areas ranging around the coast of West Wight. Boundaries follow Mean Low Water to the sea side and Mean High Water or occasionally the crest of low cliffs to land.

**Key Characteristics**

- Inter-tidal, low lying flat areas of sand, pebbles and mudflats
- Semi-enclosed bays often backed by steep cliffs
- Dramatic changing character with the tide and seasons
- Defined edge against the land with a soft transitional edge to the sea
- Wide views across the Solent and the Channel
- No settlement within the type but views to buildings onshore give a distinctive seaside character with 19th century hotels and 20th century chalet developments
- Strong military heritage of forts and batteries

# 4A: FRESHWATER BAY

**Location and Boundaries:** *Freshwater Bay* is a small area towards the western end of the south coast of West Wight. The boundaries are Mean Low Water to seaward and the top of the cliff and sea wall edge to landward.

**Key Characteristics**

- Semi-circular bay of sand and pebbles and mudflat enclosed by chalk cliffs of moderate height and backed by the rising chalk downs to east and west
- Medium scale bay, semi-enclosed by bright white cliffs and crags with wide open views to sea
- Changing character with the tide and seasons, with summer visitors bringing colour and movement to the landscape
- Defined edge of hard sea wall against the land with a soft transitional edge to the sea
- Caves and tunnels in the chalk cliffs give access to adjacent bays
- Erosion of the chalk is changing the shape of the bay and caused the collapse of the arch, a former landmark in the bay
- No settlement within the type but dominated by views to buildings onshore which give a distinctive seaside character with large scale 19th century hotels and the prominent life boat station
- Stone sea wall and promenade are highly visible along with modern street furniture for instance dog bins and lights
- Literary and cultural associations with Tennyson and Julia Margaret Cameron

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

*Freshwater Bay* is a semi-circular bay, bounded by chalk cliffs with views out to the open sea contrasting with the sheltered, semi-enclosed space of the bay. The sand and pebble beach and chalk cliffs have a natural ambiance but the setting of the bay, the stone sea wall backed by the Lifeboat Station, the slipways, the large Victorian hotels, and the settlement of Freshwater scattered on the tops of the cliffs and the lower slopes of the rising chalk downs make this a tame landscape with a traditional seaside atmosphere.

### Physical influences

The bay is formed by steep cliffs of the Lower and Middle Chalk, rising to 20m AOD. The foreshore consists of gently shelving Beach and Tidal Flat Deposits of Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel. Historical cartographic evidence suggests that the shape of the bay is changing and becoming more concave as the colluvial deposits in the cliff face are less resistant than the solid chalk to either side of the bay. Ongoing changes to the coast is exemplified by a well known feature of the bay, an arch formed of chalk, which was gradually undermined and fell

down in 1992. At the rear of the bay (just outside the character area) the River Yar begins its journey northwards to the Solent through the Afton Marshes.

## Ecological character

The eastern third of this area is designated under the Compton Down SSSI and Isle of Wight Downs SAC. In addition small areas of inter-tidal zone and sea-cliff are designated under the South Wight Maritime SAC. The bay contains tide swept chalk reef, uncommon in Europe with the largest concentrations along the southern coast of England, with those in the Isle of Wight among the best examples. They support a diverse sub-tidal and inter-tidal fauna, as well as rich seaweed flora.

This area includes chalk cliffs little affected by sea defence, that represent the terminus of the east-west chalk ridge of the Isle of Wight. Interesting rock crevice plants are frequent, and include wild cabbage, rock samphire, yellow horned poppy, together with hoary stock in one if its major native locations in Britain. The area also supports assemblages of rare chalk cliff algae.

## Historic environment

Freshwater became a resort for sea bathing during Victorian times, when the buildings that fringe the *Bay* were largely constructed. Military links survive in close proximity to the area, with Freshwater Redoubt overlooking the bay from the west and a World War II pill box in the grounds of the Freshwater Bay Hotel.

## Settlement and built character

There is no settlement within Freshwater Bay itself but the adjacent buildings are visually dominant forming a backdrop to the bay and consisting of large scale dispersed Victorian hotels and later dwellings, of render, brick and stone, with slate roofs. The sea wall is a substantial feature of concrete with metal bollards and railings. Its simple design is in keeping with the ambiance of the bay but small items of street furniture particularly the brightly coloured dog bins and the standard lights are more intrusive.

## Landscape perceptions

The picturesque bay has been a notable sight for visitors for many years, Gilpin writes of it in *Observations on the Western Ports of England* 1798:

*The extreme part of it* [the isle of Wight] *is almost separated from the main body by a creek, which runs up from Yarmouth almost to the opposite shore. The narrow isthmus is called Freshwater–gate. Here we find outselves among rocks and precipices of wonderful height, and had from this stand a view of an extended range of chalky cliffs, running along the southern coast of the island. Here too we found a perforated cave; which in some positions makes a picturesque foreground, while the sea appearing through it, has a good effect.*

J. M. W. Turner had visited the island a few years before and his Isle of Wight Sketchbook of 1795 contains a sketch of the chalk cliffs of Freshwater Bay.

Following Lord Tennyson's long residence at nearby Farringford, some very different writers visited Freshwater Bay, notably W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, who stayed at the Ocean View Hotel in the 1920s.

The consultation exercise emphasised the value that local people put on *Freshwater Bay* as a place for leisure use and an important element in the West Wight landscape for instance in the views from the *Downs*. There was concern over the condition of the area immediately

surrounding the bay with consultees keen to see improvements to amenities such as the small landscaped public areas, the car park, the shelter and the nearby wishing well.

# EVALUATION

## Forces for Change

### *Past Change*

- Erosion of the bay leading to loss of chalk features such as the Arch
- Encroachment of settlement up the chalk downs and cliff tops that overlook the bay
- Small scale incremental changes e.g. proliferation of unsympathetic landscape furniture, clutter and signage associated with development and recreational uses impacting on the naturalness of the area

### *Future Change*

- Continuing erosion of the chalk cliffs and rocks
- Potential small scale landscape enhancements to surrounding area
- Archaeological resource both revealed by and susceptible to coastal forces

## Character

*Freshwater Bay* has elements of a strong natural character in its bright white chalk cliffs forming a horse shoe shaped bay with views out to open sea, and in its maritime and military heritage and connections exemplified by the Lifeboat Station. However the settled backdrop of large scale hotels and dispersed dwellings spreading up the cliff tops have an impact on natural ambiance of the bay the area so that overall it has a **moderate** strength of character.

## Condition

The bay is in **good** condition, with the cliffs and beach subject to the natural forces of erosion but rich in ecological interest for instance in seaweed and rock crevice plants. The landings and sea wall appear to be sound and well maintained, although the beach is subject to litter from the sea.

## Inherent landscape sensitivities

- Sense of naturalness of the bay
- Open views to sea and along the chalk cliffs
- Views to rising chalk downs with unsettled summits
- Active connection with the sea through the presence of the Lifeboat Station
- High ecological value in the inter tidal and cliff habitats

## Strategy

### Landscape Strategy

The landscape strategy for *Freshwater Bay* is to **conserve** the strong form and natural character of the semi-enclosed bay of chalk cliffs and sand and pebble beach, with its rich ecology and maritime connections while **strengthening** the character of the area through sensitive improvements to visitor infrastructure and interpretation.

### *Landscape Guidelines*

- Conserve the natural elements of the character of the bay, the rugged steep cliffs unaffected by sea defences, and the shelving beach of pebbles and sand
- Conserve the ecological resource of the area, the fauna and seaweeds of the tide swept chalk reef, and the cliff vegetation
- Encourage public access to the area but retain sense of naturalness through careful design of routes and infrastructure such as handrails, dog bins, lighting, signage and path surfaces
- Enhance interpretation of the landscape in ways that do not impact on the peaceful, natural character of the area (for instance walking trails, leaflets, discrete signage and guided walks)
- Carry out appropriate monitoring and recording of the archaeological resource

# 4B: ALUM BAY

**Location and Boundaries:** Alum Bay is a small area to the far west of West Wight, lying to the north of *Tennyson Down*. The boundaries follow Mean Low Water to the west and the contour following the top of the cliff to the east.

**Key Characteristics**

- High, steeply sloping broken cliffs with narrow beach of sand and pebbles
- The vividly coloured Alum Bay Sands of the cliffs create a rich visual contrast with the wide views out over the Solent and the white chalk cliffs and outcrops to the south
- High geological interest as part of a complete sequence of rocks showing the evolution of the Isle of Wight and Hampshire Basin, and rich in fossil fauna and flora
- Unsettled, with access via a simple stairway or by a utilitarian chair lift from the cliff top
- Views to the Needles Battery and lighthouse
- Richly coloured landscape with dramatic variations from season to season, a busy tourist attraction during the summer and largely empty and remote in the winter
- Chine to the north of the area has a more intimate and rural character but shows signs of wear from intense visitor use for access

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

*Alum Bay* is a dramatic landscape of high, vividly coloured sloping cliffs of clay and sand with a narrow beach of sand and pebbles. There are wide open views to sea and to the brilliant white chalk cliffs and rocks of the Needles to the south. To the north is Alum Bay Chine, an enclosed vegetated area. Access to the bay is via a pathway through the chine and a wooden stairway or via a chair lift from the cliff top Needles Park (outside the area). The metal and concrete structure of the chairlift, together with the moving chairs, is a visually dominant element in the otherwise unsettled and natural bay. The attraction of the brightly coloured sands and spectacular views have drawn visitors to the bay for many years and the presence of large numbers of tourists during the summer contrasts with the peaceful, remote feel of the bay during the winter.

### Physical influences

*Alum Bay* is well known as a nationally important geological area studied by geologists for over 170 years. It provides an important insight and understanding in to the geological evolution of the Island by showing a complete rock sequence from the Chalk to the Bembridge Limestone which underlies *Headon Cliff* to the northeast. The rocks of *Alum Bay* progress from the edge of the Chalk of *Tennyson Down* through the Lambeth Group, London Clay, Bracklesham Group and Barton Group Clay, Silt and Sand and Headon Formation Clay, Silt and Sand. Most of these rocks harbour important fossil floras. The brightly

coloured sands for which Alum Bay is famous derive mainly from the Bracklesham Group. The cliffs of Alum Bay rise to 70m AOD adjacent to the Chalk Downs in the south.

## Ecological character

The whole of *Alum Bay* is designated under the larger SSSI, Headon Warren and West High Down, with smaller areas of the inter-tidal zone. The bay includes rapidly eroding soft coastal rock formations, sub-littoral caves, cliffs and gullies, and supports a rich sub-tidal and inter-tidal fauna, together with rare cliff algae communities. In addition the area contains cliff-top grasslands that support a number of uncommon sea cliff plants including hoary stock and rock samphire.

## Historic environment

There are no known archaeological remains or historic buildings in the bay but there are views to the Needles Lighthouse and Battery to the south.

Sand from Alum Bay was used for manufacturing glass in the late 18th and early 19th century and a building used for storing the sand on its way to the mainland still exists at Yarmouth Harbour.

## Settlement and built character

There is no settlement in *Alum Bay*. The chair lift, a modest wooden stairway and a landing stage are the only manmade structures. The chair lift is a utilitarian structure of metal and concrete which, although visually dominant, fits fairly well with the natural ambiance of the bay and allows access to this highly distinctive landscape for visitors unable to climb down the stairs. The pathway down Alum Bay Chine is badly worn and of inappropriately urban materials in this rural landscape. The Needles Park, while outside the area itself, is closely connected to it as visitors to Alum Bay access the beach through the Centre and also use the car park there. The style, materials and scale of the park make it visually intrusive in a particularly rural, pastoral section of the *Freshwater Isle* character area.

## Landscape perceptions

Alum Bay has been a noted site for centuries. Painted by J. M. W. Turner in 1795, it was an established attraction for tourists from the mainland by 1830. For some years visitors came by boat from the mainland landing at a pier at the bay.

The consultation workshop made clear the view of local people that there was increasing commercialism attached to the area (in particular the nearby Needles Park) which was seen as a negative influence on character. Improving access to *Alum Bay* was seen as positive in encouraging visitors but having potentially negative impacts on the landscape.

# EVALUATION

## Forces for Change

### *Past Change*

- Erosion of the cliffs
- Incremental changes, particularly construction of the chair lift down to the bay, hard paved route through Alum Chine and signage associated with recreational uses impacting on the naturalness of the area

### *Future Change*

- Continuing erosion of the cliffs
- Further development of access routes and tourist infrastructure
- Archaeological resource both revealed by and susceptible to coastal forces

## Character

*Alum Bay* has a **strong** character with its highly distinctive landform of high sloping cliffs of vividly coloured sands and clays, its wide views out to sea and to the chalk rocks and the lighthouse of the Needles. The intense use of the bay by visitors during the summer contrasts to the area out of the tourist season when it returns to a natural, even remote ambiance. The access infrastructure of the chair lift and the route down through the intimate, rural Alum Chine, have a visual impact on the area and on surrounding sites (such as views from Headon Warren).

## Condition

This area is largely a natural bay subject only to the forces of the weather and the sea and as such, is in **good** condition. The wooden stairway down to the bay is sensitively designed but the path through the chine is worn. There is little interpretation of the outstanding geology and ecology of the bay or the way in which natural forces are affecting it.

## Inherent landscape sensitivities

- The natural, remote ambiance of the bay
- The open views out to sea and to the chalk cliffs to the south
- The outstanding geology of the area including the multi-coloured sands and the fossil flora
- The rural, intimate character of Alum Chine
- The sub-tidal and inter-tidal flora and cliff top grassland of high biodiversity interest

# STRATEGY

### Landscape Strategy

The landscape strategy for *Alum Bay* is to **conserve** the peaceful, natural character of the bay with its high sloping cliffs of coloured sands and clays, narrow beach of pebbles and sand, and its rich ecology while enhancing the area through sensitive improvements to visitor infrastructure and interpretation.

### *Landscape Guidelines*

- Conserve the natural elements of the character of the bay, the tall cliffs and shelving beach of pebbles and sand
- Conserve the ecological resource of the area, the sub-tidal and inter-tidal flora and cliff top grassland
- Encourage public access to the area but retain sense of naturalness through careful design of routes and infrastructure such as path surfaces, handrails, dog bins and signage

- Enhance interpretation of the landscape in ways that do not impact on the peaceful, natural character of the area (for instance walking trails, leaflets, discrete signage and guided walks)
- Carry out appropriate monitoring and recording of the archaeological resource

# 4C: TOTLAND AND COLWELL BAYS

**Location and Boundaries:** *Totland and Colwell Bays* consists of a strip of foreshore and low cliffs on the western coast of West Wight. Boundaries are defined by Mean Low Water to the west and by Mean High Water, the edge of sea walls and the tops of cliffs to the east.

**Key Characteristics**

- Inter-tidal, low lying flat areas of sand, pebbles and mudflats with low broken cliffs of Clay, Silt and Sand
- Large bays semi-enclosed by low rock ledges, with wide views over the Solent to Hurst Castle
- Changing character with the tide and seasons
- Defined edge against the land of sea walls and promenades with a soft transitional edge to the sea
- Strong military heritage with forts prominent in views
- No settlement within the area but buildings with a distinctive seaside character present in views, varying from large scale Victorian and Edwardian hotels and the pier at Totland Bay to beach huts and cafes at Colwell Bay plus encampments of chalets visible on the cliff tops
- Cliff top scrub and mature coniferous woodland partially screens and forms the backdrop to the visible settlement

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

*Totland and Colwell Bays* is a length of sandy and pebbly foreshore backed by soft low cliffs. It consists of two distinct semi-enclosed bay forms plus a straighter area at the north which lies between two Victorian forts, Fort Albert and Fort Victoria. These buildings are prominent in views from the bays while the higher soft cliff of Bouldnor and the chalk cliffs of of *Tennyson Down* and the Needles form landmarks to the south. There is little settlement within the bays apart from distinctive seaside buildings of beach huts, cafes and the pier at Totland Bay, but views to the cliff tops feature large scale Victorian and Edwardian hotels at Totland Bay and modern chalets at Colwell Bay. Large sections of the area are natural in ambiance with roughly vegetated cliffs sloping up from the beaches or dark coniferous woodland crowning the cliffs and reducing the visual impact of adjacent buildings.

### Physical influences

The area is founded on geology of the Headon Beds and Osborne Beds Clay, Silt and Sand. There are outcrops of Limestone at Colwell Bay, notably a cream coloured freshwater limestone, the How Ledge Limestone – named after this feature of the bay. The Headon Hill Formation in this area has an important fossil flora.

The cliffs rise from the beach to around 20m AOD.

## Ecological character

The southern half of this character area south from Linstone Chine is designated under the Colwell Bay SSSI, designated primarily for its molluscan fossil fauna. And fossils of all types can be found frequently along the rapidly eroding shoreline.

Unlike almost all of the rest of the West Wight coastline this area is not designated for its biodiversity implying that the foreshore and the low cliffs with grassland, scrub and wooded vegetation is of comparatively low ecological interest when judged against the unsettled areas along the north and south coasts of West Wight.

## Historic environment

The historic features in *Totland and Colwell Bays* are mainly military ranging from the mid 19th century Fort Albert and Fort Victoria, Warden and Cliff End Batteries and various seachlight emplacements. The former military road between Fort Victoria and Cliff End Battery now forms the coastal footpath. These area is subject to coastal erosion (apart from a protected area at Totland Bay) and some of these features have been lost or damaged through cliff slippage. A few Neolithic and Bronze age artefacts have been found on the beach which may have eroded from the cliff faces. At Totland the pier is a prominent feature along with two lifeboat stations and views to the Victorian hotels at the tops of the cliffs.

## Settlement and built character

There is little settlement within the bays although buildings are visible from most of the area – either the prominent forts, cliff top settlement or the more ephemeral beach huts and cafes fringing the foreshore.

Settlement mainly has a distinctive seaside character, with Colwell Bay lined with timber beach huts and cafes, set upon a stone seawall/promenade. In contrast settlement at Totland Bay is older, with the now dilapidated pier and the substantial hotels on the cliff. There are also cliff top chalet parks which are highly visible due to their bright white colour and geometric design. In some places these are partially shielded from view by scrub or coniferous woodland which grows on the cliff slopes and tops particularly to the north of the area.

## Landscape perceptions

There are no strong literary or cultural links with this area. The public consultation pointed up the value put upon the traditional sea side features of the pier and the grand Victorian hotels at Totland Bay and it was felt that these were in need of restoration. There was a contrast in the perceptions of local people between the two bays, with Colwell Bay seen as a safe sandy beach with simple facilities suitable for families while Totland Bay had been more of an 'upmarket' resort, now rather dilapidated. The Turf Walk at Totland was mentioned as a valued feature.

# EVALUATION

## Forces for Change

### *Past Change*

- Erosion of the cliffs
- Small scale incremental changes e.g. proliferation of clutter, signage associated with development, and recreational uses impacting on the openness and exposure
- Increased encroachment of settlement on the cliff tops affecting the views from the bays

### *Future Change*

- Continuing erosion of the cliffs
- Further development of access routes and tourist infrastructure
- Archaeological resource both revealed by and susceptible to coastal forces

## Character

*Totland and Colwell Bays* exhibits a generally **strong** character, with its landform of wide bays with open views across the Solent and its distinctive seaside ambiance of beach huts, pier, lifeboat stations and views to grand Victorian hotels above Totland Bay. The area has a strong military heritage of forts and batteries from the 19th and 20th centuries. Although the woodland and scrub of the cliffs may not be of high biodiversity value it does provide a natural backdrop to the cliffs and reduce the visual impact of unsympathetic cliff top development.

## Condition

This area is in **moderate** condition, key features such as the pier and the landing stage to the north are dilapidated, the woodland requires active management, and there is a piecemeal approach to landscape furniture such as seats, dog bins and lights.

## Inherent landscape sensitivities

- Open views across the Solent and along the coast to headlands and forts
- Military heritage of Victorian forts, batteries and military road
- Connection with the sea through the presence of the pier and lifeboat stations at Totland and the characteristic seaside development of timber beach huts at Colwell Bay
- Scrubby cliff vegetation and mature mixed and coniferous woodland forming a backdrop and screening cliff top settlement

# STRATEGY

### Landscape Strategy

The landscape strategy for *Totland and Colwell Bays* is to **conserve** the distinctive landform of the bays with their wide views across the Solent and along the coast to the forts and promontories while **restoring** and enhancing elements that are in less good condition such as the pier at Totland, the cliff top woodland and visitor infrastructure such as paths and signage.

### *Landscape Guidelines*

- Conserve the natural elements of the character of the bays, the low cliffs and beaches of sand and pebbles
- Conserve the distinctive traditional seaside buildings such as the pier, landing stages, lifeboat stations, and also the military heritage of forts and batteries
- Encourage public access to the area but retain sense of naturalness through careful design of routes and infrastructure such as path surfaces, handrails, dog bins and signage

- Enhance interpretation of the landscape and in particular the military heritage in ways that do not impact on the peaceful character of the area (for instance walking trails, leaflets, discrete signage and guided walks)
- Encourage active management of the cliff top woodland
- Use tree and shrub planting echoing the style of existing mixed mature woodland to screen and reduce the impact of existing unsympathetic cliff top settlement
- Ensure that new settlement (particularly on the cliff top) is not intrusive in views from the bays
- Carry out appropriate monitoring and recording of the archaeological resource

# 4D: THORNESS BAY

**Location and Boundaries:** *Thorness Bay* is a wide bay to the east of the north coast of West Wight. The boundaries are Mean Low Water to the north and Mean High Water and the tops of cliffs to landward.

**Key Characteristics**

- Inter-tidal, low lying flat areas of sand and pebbles, mudflats with Limestone rocky outcrops and ledges backed by low broken cliffs of Limestone, Marl, Clay, Silt and Sand
- Large open bay with views across the Solent to the main land with the Fawley Oil Refinery prominent
- An undisturbed, peaceful landscape out of the summer season, contrasting with the views across to the industrial buildings on the mainland
- Changing character with the tide and seasons, with large numbers of people using the beach during the summer months
- Soft undefined edge against the land of crumbling cliffs
- Diverse cliff vegetation including newly colonised areas, reeds, scrub and woodland
- Significant fossil flora and fauna
- Unsettled with little access apart from footpaths to the east
- Views to cliff top caravan park to the north
- Important archaeological remains found in the inter-tidal zone including Mesolithic and Neolithic axes, Roman pottery and paleoenvironmental deposits of peats, silts and fallen trees

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

*Thorness Bay* is a long open bay with beaches of sand, pebbles and limestone outcrops backed by low broken cliffs of marl, clay, silt and sand. The area is unsettled and during the winter is remote and peaceful, but in the summer it is popular with holiday makers bringing motion, colour and noise. There are panoramic views the Solent to the mainland with the industrial buildings of Fawley oil refinery prominent. Views inshore to *Calbourne Rolling Farmland* are largely rural but caravan parks are landmarks on the rising ground above the cliffs. The foreshore is rich in geological and ecological interest and the cliffs, constantly eroded and slipping, harbour plant communities ranging from pioneer species to grassland to mature.

### Physical influences

This area is important in geological terms in displaying a full succession of rocks from the Headon Hill Formation through to the Bouldnor Formation. The Bembridge Limestone and Bembridge Marls make up the best exposures and near the base of the latter is a thin limestone known as Insect Limestone which is an outstanding source of the fossils of insects and plants of the Tertiary period.

Fossil flora also occur in other sections of the Bembridge Limestone and Marls making this an extremely important site for fossils of this era.

Limestone outcrops on the foreshore forming ledges amongst the pebbles and sand of the beach, and also at the base of the slipped cliffs of Marls, Clay, Silt and Sand. These rise to 30m AOD at their highest point, to the north of Great Thorness. Elsewere the beach is backed by much lower cliffs or, as at Thorness Marshes, by grassland.

## Ecological character

This character area supports wildlife of national and international importance with various portions of the area designated as SSSI, NNR, SAC, SPA, and RAMSAR.

Along the Solent shore, this section of the coast is largely undeveloped, and comprises significant areas of soft maritime cliffs. The cliffs are structurally diverse, ranging from recently formed cliff slumps that are poorly vegetated, to mature examples that support an interesting assemblage of plants. The vegetation of these areas typically comprise wood small-reed, common reed and giant horsetail, together with chalk grassland plants such as yellow-wort, common restharrow and common centaury. The longest established cliff-slumps often support scrub woodland; with wet areas dominated by alder and sallow, and higher and drier areas characterised by gorse, privet and hawthorn.

Beneath the cliffs are large expanses of inter-tidal sand and shingle, typically interspersed with rocky limestone outcrops. The shingle bar in the Bay supports diverse plant communities dominated in places by sea sandwort, together with a range of other specialist shingle species and plants of open vegetation that include yellow horned poppy, orache species, yellow melilot and henbane. The limestone outcrops provide excellent rocky shore habitat which supports a rich seaweed flora, and marine fauna, with abundant limpets, periwinkles and hermit crabs. The rich flora and invertebrate fauna of the coast, together with nearby brackish marsh, that lies outside of the character area, provides important habitat for a large number of overwintering wildfowl and waders, that include, among others, dark bellied Brent geese, ringed plover, curlew and oystercatcher.

## Historic environment

Numerous axes from the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods have been found in the inter-tidal zone of the Thorness Bay. Roman pottery has been recovered from the eroding cliff and a supposed Roman pottery kiln found at Burntwood along with a Bronze Age cremation. To the north of Thorness Marshes significant paleoenvironmental deposits are present including peats, silts and fallen trees along with posts and hurdles. There are also two middens, one containing Medieval pottery sherds.

## Settlement and built character

Thorness Bay is unsettled but the large scale industrial development of Fawley oil refinery is prominent in views across the sea to the mainland. Ranks of caravans are also visible on the rising ground of the adjacent *Calbourne Rolling Farmland.* There is little access to most of the area with just a single footpath leading to the beach to the west of Burnt Wood but to the west the bay is skirted by the Coastal Path and this area is popular with walkers and summer visitors.

## Landscape perceptions

The consultation workshop brought out perceptions of the area as being very busy during the summer months in contrast to the peaceful remote ambiance of the site during the winter. Views to the oil refinery were considered ugly and the holiday parks were cited as affecting traditional settlement patterns. Consultees also brought up the issue of pollution on the beach affecting birds, walkers and visitors. There were also considered to be a lack of infrastructure for visitors.

# EVALUATION

### *Past Change*

- Erosion of the cliffs
- Encroachment of caravan parks on the cliff tops and large scale industrial development on the mainland affecting the views from the bay

### *Future Change*

- Continuing erosion of the cliffs
- Further development of access routes and tourist infrastructure
- Archaeological resource both revealed by and susceptible to coastal forces

## Character

Thorness Bay has a **moderate** strength of character, lacking the strong landform and peaceful remote character or the maritime or military history of other areas in the type. Views to the mainland and to the rolling farmland of the shore feature intrusive settlement of large scale industrial buildings and holiday parks.

## Condition

This area is in **moderate** condition, Although the foreshore with its sand, pebbles and limestone outcrops and the low cliffs of marl, clay and limestone are rich in biodiversity, geological and archaeological interest the consultation pointed up issues with pollution and the SSSI citation judges the area to be in recovering unfavourable condition. There is also a lack of facilities for the many visitors during the summer.

## Inherent landscape sensitivities

- Open views across the Solent
- Remote, tranquil ambiance outside of the summer season
- Geological interest particularly of fossil insects and flora
- Biodiversity interest of succession of plant communities caused by erosion of cliff
- Archaeological remains such the paleoenvironmental deposits and artefacts such Neolithic axes and Medieval pottery shards

# STRATEGY

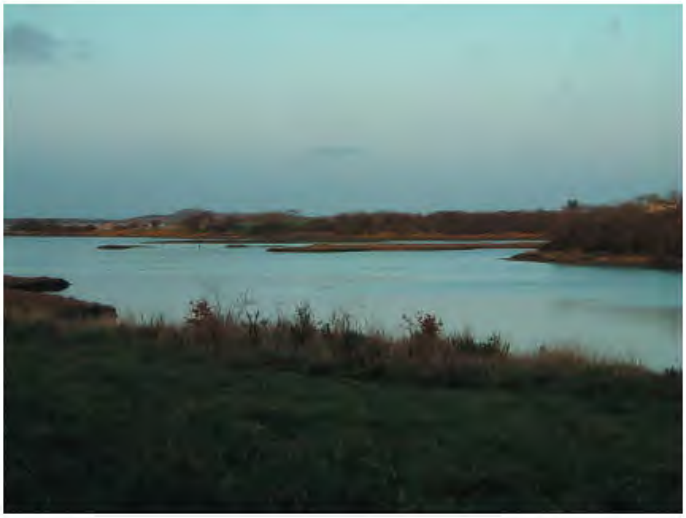
## Landscape Strategy

The landscape strategy for *Thorness Bay* is to **conserve** the natural, peaceful ambiance of the bay with its wide views across the Solent, the biodiversity value of the foreshore and cliff vegetation, and the significant archaeological remains while **enhancing** the area through improving visitor infrastructure and ensuring that new development is not visually intrusive.

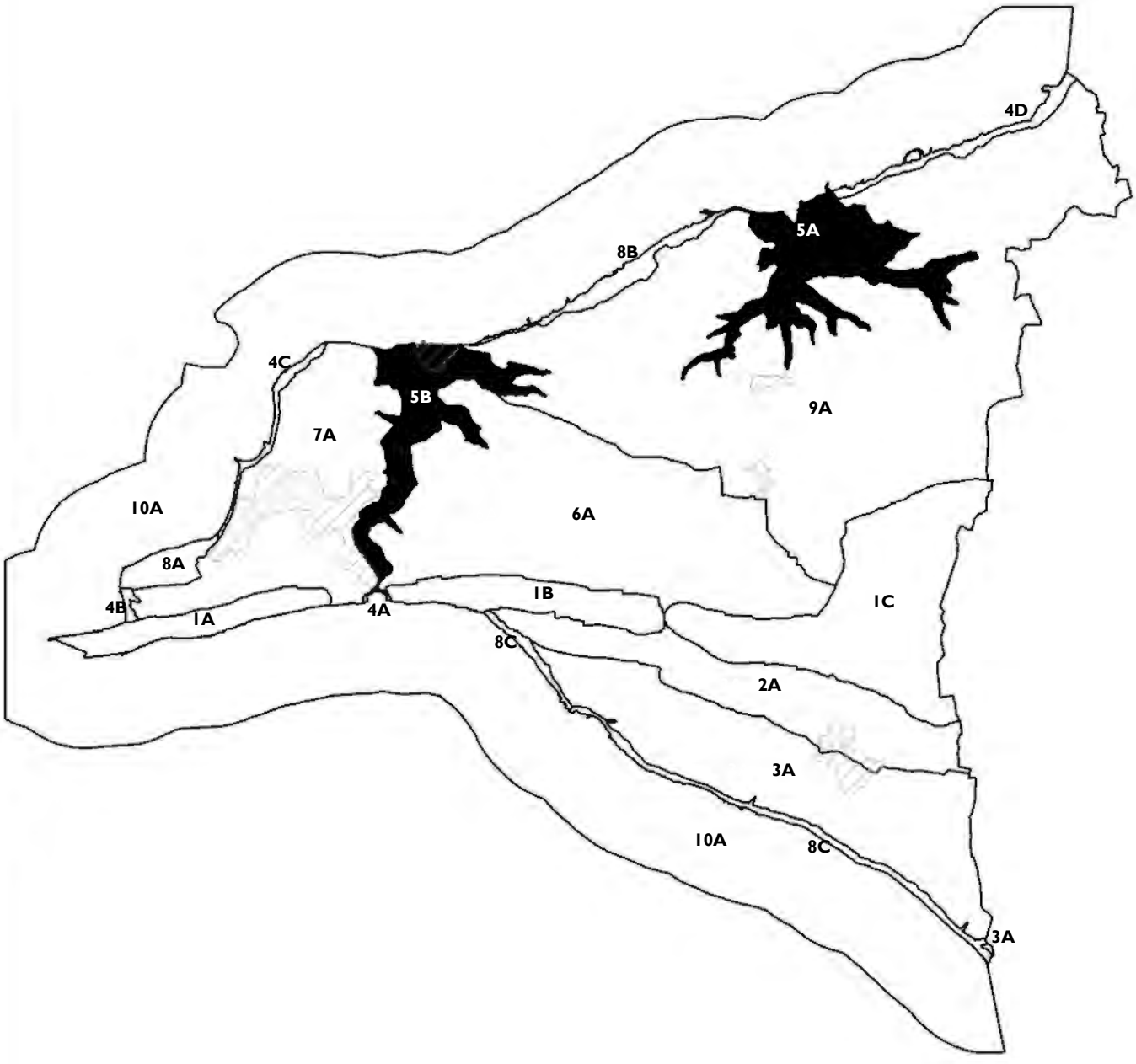
### *Landscape Guidelines*

- Conserve the natural elements of the character of the bays, the low cliffs and beaches of sand and pebbles
- Encourage public access to the area but retain sense of naturalness through careful design of routes and infrastructure such as path surfaces, handrails, dog bins and signage
- Enhance interpretation of the landscape in ways that do not impact on the peaceful character of the area (for instance walking trails, leaflets, discrete signage and guided walks)
- Ensure that new settlement (particularly on the cliff top) is not intrusive in views from the bays
- Carry out appropriate monitoring and recording of the archaeological resource

# LANDSCAPE TYPE 5: ESTUARIES



# 5: ESTUARIES




## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

5A Newton Estuary
5B Yar Estuary

Urban Area

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# LANDSCAPE TYPE 5: ESTUARIES

**Landscape Character Areas**

5A: *Newtown Estuary*
5B*:* *Yar Estuary*

## Location and Boundaries

The *Estuaries* Landscape Type consists of two character areas, centred on the estuaries of the rivers Yar (to the west) and Newtown (to the east) which flow northwards to the Solent. The boundaries of the areas are defined by the 5m contour line which broadly marks the transition from the clay and silt tidal flats underlying the estuaries to the higher ground of the surrounding farmland.

**Key Characteristics**

- Open expanses of tidal flats and river waters meandering slowly towards the sea, known locally as lakes, reflecting the open character of the area
- Defined by drifts of Tidal Flat Deposits of Clay and Silt as well as Alluvium Deposits of Sand and Gravel
- Wide views and open skies, reflected in the calm waters of the estuaries give a strong sense of tranquillity
- Remote and natural landscape of international importance for biodiversity
- Partial enclosure created by blocks and copses of dense, mature deciduous woodland at the edges of the areas
- Abundance of salt pans, freshwater and grazing marsh plus mudflats, unimproved grassland scrub and woodland
- Rich in over wintering wildfowl and wading birds
- Largely unsettled but with some historic buildings
- Maritime heritage and continuing activity with boatyards and harbour
- Archaeological remains include timber trackways and Neolithic axes
- Limited access from a few public footpaths plus views from bridges

# 5A: NEWTOWN ESTUARY

**Location and Boundaries:** *Newtown Estuary* is centred on the Newtown River which runs northwards to join the Solent. The boundary largely follows the 5m contour line marking the change in geology from the Tidal Flat Deposits of the estuary to the clay of the surrounding farmland.

**Key Characteristics**

- Open expanse of tidal estuary meandering slowly towards the sea
- Underlain by a solid geology of Headon and Osborne beds of Clay, Silt and Sand as well as Bembridge Marls and Calcareous Mud and defined by drifts of Tidal Flat Deposits of Clay and Silt as well as Alluvium Deposits of Sand and Gravel
- Wide open views over the level expanse of the estuary and out to sea
- Natural and generally unspoilt landscape, forming a rich ecological resource, designated National Nature Reserve, SSSI, SPA, SAC and Ramsar Site
- Partial enclosure created at the edges of the area by dense mature deciduous woodland blocks
- Edged by unimproved grassland, hay meadow and scrub and with ancient hedgerows and scattered ponds
- Abundance of saltmarsh and mudflats with shingle and sand at the estuary mouth
- One of the richest bird habitats in south east England with many species of wild fowl, including ducks, swans, moor hens, breeding and migratory wading birds and sea birds; also an important area for the red squirrel
- Unsettled area although there are historic links with the abandoned medieval town of Newtown which lies just outside the area
- Maritime character reinforced by presence of yachts and small boat yard near Lower Hamstead
- Access limited to the coastal path to the west of the estuary and the sea wall at Newtown
- Important paleoenvironmental and archaeological sites at the mouth of the estuary including hurdle trackways and timber structures
- A tranquil, remote landscape with a strong sense of solitude

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

*Newtown Estuary* is a level, low lying area of river, salt marsh and wetlands fringed by damp pasture and woodland and underlain by mud and tidal flats of clay and silt. It is an open, secluded and natural landscape with the wide skies reflected in the sheets of water and mud flats. Pockets of texture are

provided by deciduous woodland clumps and belts around the perimeter of the estuary. *Newtown Estuary* is an outstanding area for the variety and number of wild fowl and migratory birds which are supported by the rich wetland habitats. The area is unsettled, with a few farmsteads lying just outside the boundary along with the Medieval settlement of Newtown, which has strong historic links with the estuary. Built structures in the area include the sea wall, bridges over tributaries, jetties and a small boat yard. The coastal path passes along the west side of the area and there is also pedestrian access from Newtown.

## Physical influences

*Newtown Estuary* is founded on the Headon and Osborne Beds Clay, Silt and Sand with Bembridge Marls and Calcareous Mud underlying the margins of the area. Overlying this is the more recent Tidal Flat Deposits of Clay and Silt and, at the mouth of the estuary, Alluvium Deposits of Sand and Gravel. The area is flat forming a floodplain which rises only gradually to 5m AOD at the edge of the estuary where it meets the surrounding farmland. *Newtown Estuary* is also characterised by a number of tributaries which begin as narrow creeks, widening into substantial water bodies and areas of mudflats before joining the Newtown River. The local name for these (lakes) is indicative of their appearance as wide, slow flowing waterbodies.

## Ecological character

*Newtown Estuary* is rich in ecological value, emphasised by the designation of the area as a SSSI, Special Protection Area (SPA) for the conservation of wild birds and SAC, with Newtown National Nature Reserve at its heart. *Newtown Estuary* supports species of common reed along with mammals such as water vole and species of wild fowl such as bearded tit, waders, gulls, terns and osprey. The estuary is one of the richest bird habitats in south east England designated as a Ramsar Site. The woodland, unimproved grassland and scrub at the edge of the estuary also support a number of species, particularly roosting waterfowl. The woodland has a coppice with standards structure and supports understorey species such as bluebells as well as the red squirrel. Newtown Harbour includes a saline lagoon which supports a specialised invertebrate community, including nationally rare species. The site supports eight nationally scarce flora species and three nationally rare invertebrate species, listed in the Red Data Book, along with 14 other nationally rare species.

The Newtown saltmarsh makes up nearly half of the saltmarshes found on the Isle of Wight and hosts a mix of species including sea lavender and cord grass. The mudflats also support an invertebrate fauna, which provides food for the birds. The sand and shingle at the estuary mouth supports a nationally scarce sea-heath whilst the areas of unimproved grassland support hay meadows rich in meadow species and have a number of ponds scattered between them with a number of aquatic species and dragonflies.

## Historic environment

The area in which *Newton Estuary* lies has large areas of surviving ancient woodland. Pressure for timber in medieval times reduced the supply of woodland in the area leaving remnant woodland blocks. The large areas of wet clay heath which surround the estuaries were also a significant component from prehistoric to post-medieval times. During medieval times it appeared that little open-field agriculture took place. However there is evidence of small-scale open fields in Newtown where ridge and furrow survive. There are also some more modern field patterns as a result of woodland clearance and the enclosure of heathland as well as ancient hedgerows separating the meadows at Hart's Farm on the edge of the area.

Salt making has taken place on the coastline and in the estuaries since the Domesday Book whilst marshland reclamation took place at Newtown in the 17th and 18th centuries. Newtown Quay lagoon is the remains of an old salt works. Two salt pans on the east side of the area relate to

medieval Newtown, along with the remnant harbour wall. The lack of success in agricultural and economic activities also led to the survival of archaeological evidence in the failed Medieval Borough at Newtown between the tributaries of the Newtown River.

The area is rich in archaeological sites, particularly at the mouth of the estuary where there are peats, recumbent trees, hurdle trackways and timber platforms and Neolithic axes have been found here. Elsewhere in the estuary a few flint scatters and hearths have been visible where the saltmarsh has eroded back to the natural clay of the river bank.

### Settlement and built character

There is no settlement within the area. A few farmsteads sit on the higher ground just outside the margins of the area while Newtown lies to the southeast linked to the estuary by the sea wall, footpaths and its strong historic ties with the estuary as a Medieval port since shrunken to a small settlement of buildings dating from Georgian times. There is a sparse scattering of jetties, quays and bridges but otherwise little sign of built structures in the area. The footpaths from Newtown are sensitively designed and low key in path materials, signage and fencing.

### Landscape perceptions

Feedback from the stakeholder workshops identified *Newtown Estuary* as a particularly valuable landscape for local people owing to the abundance of wildlife; in particular breeding and migratory birds, as well as wildflowers. Consultees valued the tranquil nature of the area. *Newtown Estuary* is regarded as a valuable ecological and educational resource but local people fear the effect that increased access and tourism in this area would have on conservation. It is however appreciated that more footpath access would be beneficial.

## EVALUATION

### Forces for Change

#### *Past Change*

- Increase in numbers of moorings
- Damage to salt marsh by grazing animals
- Increased tourism pressure

#### *Future Change*

- Improved agricultural methods may lead to opportunities to recreate habitats at edges of estuary
- Erosion of salt marsh due to sea level rise
- Possible increase in recreational use and tourism
- Archaeological resource both revealed by and susceptible to coastal forces

### Character

*Newtown Estuary* exhibits a very **strong** character. The large scale, open unsettled landscape with its mosaic of water, reed beds and mud flats fringed by woodland and scrub creates a remote and

undisturbed area with a strong sense of solitude. The Newtown Estuary is also rich in biodiversity particularly bird life, and in archaeological interest.

## Condition

*Newtown Estuary* is judged to have a **good** landscape condition. The mature oak woodland blocks at the edge of the Newtown River, along with open expanses of water and marsh vegetation create a unified and coherent landscape. The abundance of waterfowl provides evidence of the quality of the condition of this landscape, largely unspoilt by agricultural advances and marina development. The number of moorings and their condition does however need to be monitored. The footpaths giving access to the area are sensitively designed conserving the natural, undisturbed nature of the area.

## Inherent landscape sensitivities

- Sense of solitude, peacefulness and remoteness
- Ecological value of marshes and wetland habitats
- Salt marshes and mud flats
- Variety of wading, migratory and sea birds
- The clear and unpolluted nature of the Newtown River
- Mature woodland blocks providing a greater sense of enclosure and intimacy at the edge of the river
- Archaeological remains

# STRATEGY

## Landscape Strategy

The landscape strategy for *Newtown Estuary* involves **conserving** the inherent qualities of this landscape, the extensive open areas of water with ecologically rich marsh habitats and a strong sense of solitude. It is important to retain the quiet solitude of harbours and creeks and to conserve intertidal habitats by maintaining high water levels, areas of reed beds and grazing marshes. Encouraging more access for leisure use would be positive so long as any changes are carefully considered to avoid negative impacts on the natural, peaceful character of the area and its biodiversity value.

### *Landscape Guidelines*

- Conserve the natural, remote, and unsettled character of the *Newtown Estuary*
- Conserve and enhance the biodiversity value of the area through active management of the estuarine habitats, the surrounding coastal marshes, and the woodland
- Encourage improvements in public access and interpretation that are sensitive to the remote and untouched character of the area and do not cause negative impacts on the ecological value
- Ensure appropriate monitoring and recording of the archaeological resource

# 5B: YAR ESTUARY

**Location and Boundaries:** The *Yar Estuary* covers the course of the River Yar from the mouth of the estuary at the north of the Isle to the marshes at Afton and ultimately to Freshwater Bay in the south. The boundaries are defined by the 5m contour where the land rises to the surrounding farmland.

**Key Characteristics**

- Open expanse of estuary water, mud flats and grazing marsh at the north, narrowing to marshes surrounded by settlement to the south
- Underlain by a solid geology of Headon and Osborne Beds of Clay, Silt and Sand as well as Alluvial Deposits of Sand and Gravel and drifts of Tidal Flat Deposits.
- Largely natural and unspoilt area but fringed by settlement at Yarmouth and to the far south around Afton
- High biodiversity interest, with the northern section designated as a SSSI and Afton Marshes designated as a Local Nature Reserve
- Abundance of marsh vegetation, such as common reeds characterising the edge of the river around mud flats
- Rich in species of wild fowl, such as duck, swan, teal and geese
- Historic buildings and landmarks at the edge of the River Yar, including Yarmouth Pier, Yarmouth Castle and the Mill at Mill Copse, as well as the remnants of St Swithin's Church and Thorley Manor
- Bridges cross the estuary, provide viewing points and a footpath and cycleway fringe the area to the east and west giving limited, but important recreational access
- Historic maritime links with the port of Yarmouth which continue today with the boat moorings at the mouth of the estuary and the modern day Wight Link Ferry

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

The *Yar Estuary,* underlain by clay, silt and sand and with tidal flats, is a level, open area of water and mudflats, fringed by pasture, woodland blocks and settlement. This area varies from the wide, natural and secluded central area with no settlement to Yarmouth Harbour to the north with its historic buildings and modern commercial activity of recreational moorings and the ferry terminal. To the south again the character is different with the enclosed marshland at Afton, backed by suburban development. Despite this variation in character the area is unified by the presence of the river, wetlands of high ecological value, a variety of water fowl, and a peaceful ambiance reinforced by the reflections of the sky in the waters of the Yar.

### Physical influences

The *Yar Estuary* is formed by water passing over a solid geology of Headon and Osborne Beds with drifts of Tidal Flat Deposits of Clay and Silt as well as Alluvium Clay, Sand and Gravel particularly in

the tributaries to the east. The topography in this area is flat, creating a floodplain which rises only gradually to 5m AOD at the edge of the estuary where it meets the surrounding farmland.

## Ecological character

The *Yar Estuary* is a rich ecological resource. It is believed to be the only one of three estuaries on the south coast of England which has not been affected in the past by substantial levels of sewage effluent. Much of the estuary is designated as a SSSI and it also includes land which has been designated under the Ramsar Convention and as a Special Protection Area under the EU Directive for the Conservation of Wild Birds. Afton Marsh is designated as a Local Nature Reserve.

The upper estuary supports extensive areas of common reed, whilst downstream saltmarshes support a number of plant species including sea lavender. The mudflats in the estuary also play host to algal plants which support a number of invertebrate species and at low tide are used by over-wintering wildfowl and waders, including teal and Brent Geese. Sand dunes at the mouth of the estuary support the nationally scarce dune fescue grass and are the only recorded location for 'sand cat's ear' on the island as well as wild asparagus. Shingle and saltmarshes in this area also support three further nationally scarce plants including glasswort and bulbous meadow grass.

At high tide the estuary also supports a number of fish, which are preyed upon by birds such as kingfishers. To the east of the estuary there are low-lying grazing marshes interspersed by drainage channels and small reed beds and which provide important additional areas for roosting wildfowl. There are also areas of woodland with scrub; supporting species of willow and blackthorn, as well as a coppiced layer of hazel supporting understorey species such as dog's mercury.

## Historic environment

Historically the estuary and inlets were exploited as harbours, an activity which continues at Yarmouth. The defensive importance of the northern entry to the Yar is indicated by the castle. A mill at the edge of the River Yar, by the aptly named Mill Copse to the east of the river, in 1954 became the home of AJP Taylor. The remnants of St Smithins Church also lie at Thorley dating back to the 1800s with only the porch surviving, whilst Thorley Farmhouse and Manor by the church further provides evidence of the history of this area. Thorley is also distinctive not only for its open field pattern which was enclosed by the early seventeenth century but also for its brook which until post medieval times was a substantial inlet of the sea known as Thorley Haven. Thorley Haven was drained in the late sixteenth/seventeenth century and became covered by rough pastures. As at *Newtown Estuary* saltmaking is likely to have taken place in the *Yar Estuary* since the time of the Domesday Book.

There is important palaeoenvironmental evidence preserved beneath Norton Spit at the mouth of the estuary and beneath salt marsh in the Western Yar.

## Settlement and built character

Settlement in the *Yar Estuary* area is scarce except for at the northern and southern tips with the largely Georgian buildings of Yarmouth and 20th century residential buildings around the marshes at Afton. In the majority of the estuary there is very little settlement with just a few traditional stone buildings with some thatch roofs near The Causeway at the edge of the River Yar. The large scale port buildings and infrastructure at Yarmouth plus historic buildings such as Yarmouth Castle, the Old Mill, and Church, and the Manor at Thorley, form landmarks in the level landscape.

## Landscape perceptions

Like the Downs, the River Yar and its estuary has been the inspiration for the work of poets and writers. Gilpin wrote of it in *Observations on the Western Ports of England* (1798):

*From hence we proceeded to Yarmouth, where Henry VIII built a castle to defend the entrance through the Needles, between the Isle of Wight and the coast of Hampshire; on which coast stands Hurst Castle opposite to that at Yarmouth. Here the island draws nearly to a point. The extreme part of it is almost separated from the main body by a creek, which runs up from Yarmouth almost to the opposite shore. The narrow isthmus is called Freshwater–gate.*

Charles Dickens's *Peggotty's house boat* is said to be based on boats he saw on the strand at Yarmouth.

A.J.P. Taylor lived in the Old Mill overlooking the River Yar from 1954.

Feedback from the stakeholder workshop identified that the old railway at the estuary boundary is valued for its historical interest and it was suggested that sections be restored to working order. The wildlife in the area is was also highlighted, along with the views across the *Yar Estuary* from The Causeway which are considered to be of particular value in giving a feeling of well being due to the tranquil and unspoilt nature of the landscape. Afton Marshes are also considered to form a landmark in the area.

# EVALUATION

## Forces for Change

### *Past Change*

- Some concentrated management of estuarine vegetation by the National Trust and the Isle of Wight Council, e.g. at Afton Marsh.
- Expansion of marina and port development, i.e. increased numbers of leisure moorings and car parking areas.
- Increased tourist levels
- Adverse agricultural impact on wetland habitats

### *Future Change*

- Further increase in tourist pressures in area, in particular the use of waters around Yarmouth for recreational purposes
- Further increase in mooring numbers
- Further habitat loss
- Possible expansion of residential areas to the south east of Yarmouth and around Afton
- Archaeological resource both revealed by and susceptible to coastal forces

## Character

The *Yar Estuary* exhibits a **strong** character. The area is dominated by the River Yar, reflecting the sky in its still waters, and contrasting with the texture of the surrounding marsh vegetation, mature woodland and mudflats to create a visually rich, remote and unspoilt landscape. The central part of the area is unsettled, tranquil and remote while the mouth of the estuary at Yarmouth has a strong maritime and historic ambiance, and the lower section at Afton Marshes is enclosed and more

intimate in scale. The *Yar Estuary* is a rich ecological resource as well as a recreational one, with moorings at Yarmouth and a number of footpaths and cycle routes running along the edge of the River Yar.

### Condition

The marshy vegetation, mudflats, and an abundance of wildlife in the *Yar Estuary* indicates a landscape which is in a **good** condition. However, unlike Newtown Estuary there is a possibility of pressure for further marine development and increased numbers of moorings owing to the port at Yarmouth. This could lead to a decline in the natural condition of this area. Woodland and scrub management in the area is not consistent although there is active management for instance at Afton Marsh.

### Inherent landscape sensitivities

- Sense of solitude, peacefulness and remoteness.
- The clear and unpolluted nature of the River Yar
- Backdrop of the woodland
- Ecological value of marshes and wetland habitats
- Wildfowl and wader populations
- Salt marshes and mud flats

## STRATEGY

### Landscape Strategy

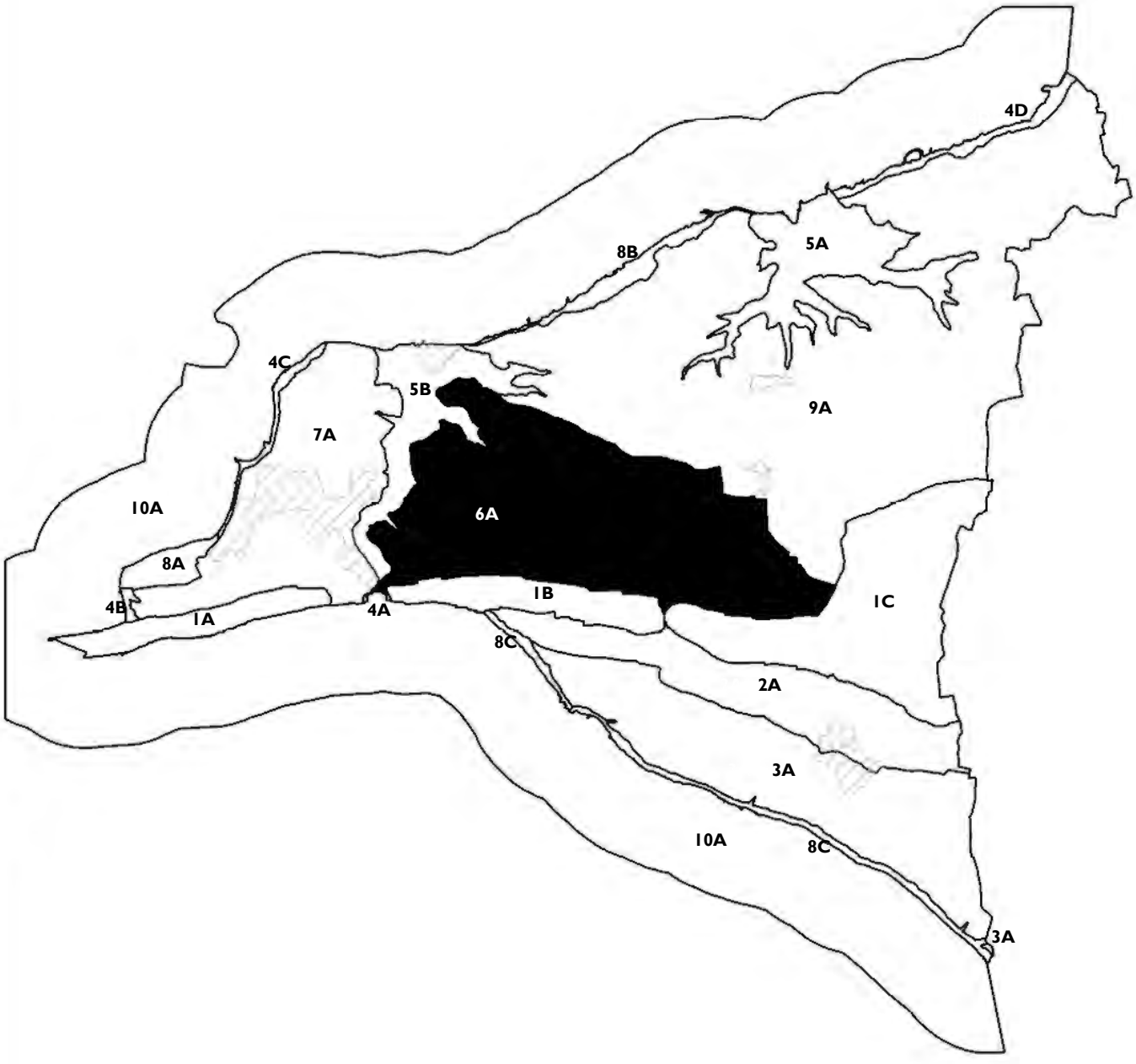
The overall landscape strategy for the *Yar Estuary* is to **conserve** the natural and restful sense of remoteness, the mosaic of woodland, marshy vegetation and mudflats which provide a rich ecological resource, plus the historic buildings and archaeological remains. Opportunities for enhancement are for increased public access through sensitive improvements to facilities ensuring that these do not impact on the peaceful nature of the area.

#### *Landscape Guidelines*

- Conserve the natural, remote, and unsettled character of the *Yar Estuary* and protect it from intrusive new development
- Conserve and enhance the biodiversity value of the area through active management of the estuarine habitats, the surrounding coastal marshes, and the scrub and woodland
- Encourage improvements in public access and interpretation that are sensitive to the remote and untouched character of the area and do not cause negative impacts on the ecological value
- Carry out appropriate monitoring and recording of the archaeological resource

# LANDSCAPE TYPE 6: OPEN FARMLAND

# 6: OPEN FARMLAND




## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

6A Thorley and Wellow Open Farmland

Urban Area

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# LANDSCAPE TYPE 6: OPEN FARMLAND

**Landscape Character Areas**
6A: *Thorley and Wellow Open Farmland*

## Location and Boundaries

The *Open Farmland* landscape type comprises one character area in the centre of West Wight. The boundaries broadly follow changes in the landform and geology from the limestone underlying the area to the surrounding clay or chalk.

**Key Characteristics**

- Elevated, large scale, gently shelving open landscape
- Based on Bembridge Limestone with areas of Headon Beds and Osborne Beds Clay Silt and Sand
- Mix of arable cultivation and pasture
- Large irregular fields, bounded by fences and low, gappy hedges
- General lack of tree cover and woodland allows wide views and creates an open, exposed landscape although mixed woodland plantations give more enclosure in some areas
- Sparse settlement of scattered farmsteads and a few villages
- Some traditional stone houses, with large scale industrial style farm buildings and more modern redbrick dwellings
- Remnants of quarrying
- Presence of prehistoric crop marks indicates early clearance of woodland in the area, Roman and Anglo-Saxon remains are also present

# 6A: THORLEY AND WELLOW OPEN FARMLAND

**Location and Boundaries:** *Thorley and Wellow Open Farmland* lies in the centre of West Wight. Boundaries follow the underlying geology, with the boundary to the south following the break of slope at the base of the chalk scarp while to the west the 5m contour marks the transition to the *Yar Estuary*. Elsewhere the boundaries follow roads and field boundaries broadly indicating the change from limestone to the surrounding *Rolling Farmland* based on clay.

**Key Characteristics**

- Elevated, large scale, gently shelving open landscape with wide skies and distant views to the high ground of the downs to the south
- Based on Bembridge Limestone creating an intermediate area between the lower clay lands to the north and west and the high chalk to the south and east
- Mix of arable cultivation and pasture with cows and sheep grazing particularly in the south of the area adjacent to the chalk downs plus some horse paddocks particularly to the south west
- Large irregular fields, bounded by fences and low, gappy hedges
- General lack of tree cover and woodland in the centre of the area combined with elevation creates a windswept and exposed landscape, emphasised by an occasional thorn tree bent by the wind
- Mixed woodland plantations and copses give some enclosure at the western and the eastern margins of the area
- Few roads cross the area and settlement is sparse consisting of scattered farmsteads and a few villages
- Some traditional stone farmhouses and cottages, with large scale industrial style farm buildings highly visible in the open landscape and more modern redbrick dwellings on the fringes of the villages
- Disused quarry harbours limestone grassland of high biodiversity interest
- Large numbers of prehistoric crop marks indicate early clearance of woodland in the area, Roman-British ceramics and Anglo-Saxon grave goods have also been found here

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

*Thorley and Wellow Open Farmland* is a large scale open elevated landscape founded on Bembridge Limestone. The area shelves gently from the margins of the chalk downs to the south to the lower lying claylands to the north. Large irregular arable and pastoral fields are bounded by low gappy hedges and fences with very few hedgerow trees emphasising the openness of the landscape and the wide views to the *Downs*. To the east and western edges of the area the landscape is more enclosed with mixed woodland plantations and copses. This is a sparsely settled area with a strong sense of

remoteness apart from at its northern margin where the villages of Thorley Street, Wellow and Newbridge straddle the B3401 and at Afton to the south west.

## Physical influences

*Thorley and Wellow Open Farmland* is an elevated area rising gently from the lower ground to the north (10m AOD) and east (5m AOD) to the base of the chalk scarp slope to the south (up to 105m AOD below Wellow Down). The core of the area is founded on Bembridge Limestone and Argillaceous Rocks, a pale limestone, interbedded with greenish clays. The margins of the area to the north and east rise more steeply up to the base of the high chalk downs and here the underlying geology is Clay, Silt and Sand of the Headon Beds and Osborne Beds, and the Bracklesham Group and Barton Group. This also underlies the lower section at the western margins of the area bordering the *Yar Estuary*. Soils in the area are dominated by rendzinas, which over limestone take the form of brown calcareous earths and calcareous pelosols, well drained shallow, stony soils suitable for arable and dairy farming.

## Ecological character

This large character area consists of various sized farms, with a mix of arable and pasture land. Livestock grazing, with some horse paddocks, is particularly prominent in the south, with arable production characteristic of the northern areas. The fields are large and irregular with low, gappy hawthorn and blackthorn hedges and there are also woodland plantations and smaller copses, some of which are ancient semi-natural woodland sites. In West Wight agricultural landscapes of this nature tend to support a relatively diverse range of farmland wildlife. For example arable field margins can support farmland birds, many of which are declining throughout Britain, such as skylark, yellowhammer, and less commonly grey partridge, corn bunting and turtle dove. In addition improved grassland characteristic of enclosed pasture, whilst inherently botanically poor, can provide important foraging areas for mammals such as the badger. The combination of arable, pasture, hedgerows and woodland copses together is likely to provide suitable habitat for other wide ranging species such as bats and brown hare.

There is a single small SSSI in the character area, Prospect Quarry, a disused quarry that supports one of the few fragments of limestone grassland on the Island. However it would appear the quality of the habitat has declined in recent years.

## Historic environment

All of West Wight north of the chalk downs is thought to have still been heavily wooded in later prehistoric times with the exception of *Thorley and Wellow Open Farmland.* A substantial quantity of archaeological crop marks in the area indicate that it had been cleared of trees by the second millennium BC. These marks include ring ditches, sub-rectangular enclosures and linear features. One of the ring ditches has proved to be the remains of the ditch of a ploughed out Bronze Age round barrow. Roman-British and Anglo-Saxon finds have been discovered in the area.

During medieval times, the core of the area to the south of Thorley and Wellow consisted of the arable open fields of these settlements plus adjacent common pasture used for sheep grazing. Most of the open fields of Thorley were enclosed by the early 17th century and Thorley Common was enclosed during the 18th century. The long established land use of arable cultivation and grazing continue today albeit in large scale fields formed to suit cultivation by modern machinery.

## Settlement and built character

The area is sparsely settled with scattered farmsteads and a handful of villages at the margins. Wellow and Thorley lie at the north of the area. These linear villages spread along the B3401. To the south east is Afton with its 18th century manor house and landscape park. Traditional buildings of Bembridge Limestone feature in the village centres and in farmhouses and cottages but there are

also modern redbrick dwellings particularly at the edges of the villages. Large scale industrial style farm buildings form landmarks in the open shelving central plateau area and there are a few derelict farm buildings.

### Landscape perceptions

The *Thorley and Wellow Open Farmland* is a working agricultural landscape without any strong literary or cultural associations. The consultation workshop pointed up local feeling on opportunities to restore derelict buildings, restore and plant hedgerows, and to promote walking in the area.

## EVALUATION

### Forces for Change

#### *Past Change*

- Formation of large scale fields suitable for intensive arable has caused loss of hedgerows
- Ploughing of archaeological remains
- Erosion of building character and settlement pattern by linear expansion
- Requirements for new large scale farm buildings
- Loss of use for traditional farm buildings leading to dereliction
- Loss of traditional uses and maintenance of woodlands
- Quarrying no longer active leaving site (Prospect Quarry) with limestone grassland
- Increase in horse paddocks particularly to south west of area

#### *Future Change*

- Small scale incremental development (signage, fencing, road improvements) that would impinge on the simple, open character
- Pressure for further built development on margins of villages
- Pressure for further expansion of horse grazing

### Character

The *Thorley and Wellow Open Farmland* is **moderate** in strength of character. The central section of the area is an open, exposed landscape with wide views to the downs to the south and a sense of remoteness and exposure. The fringes are more settled and mixed in character with some woodland blocks and horse paddocks particularly to the south west. Some farmhouses and cottages of the local limestone survive alongside modern redbrick dwellings at the margins of the villages and large scale industrial farm buildings which are prominent in the open landscape.

### Condition

The *Thorley and Wellow Open Farmland* is an intensively managed area, with substantial swathes of arable farmland and improved pasture land. There are some sites of archaeological interest; although it is likely that in the past a number of such sites have been lost though ploughing and are not visible on the ground. There has also been significant damage of hedgerows and hedgerow trees due to the

intensification of farming methods. The overall condition of the landscape is perceived to be **moderate**.

### Inherent landscape sensitivities

- The sense of remoteness and isolation
- Surviving historic remains are sensitive to intensive agricultural practices
- The openness of the landscape and long views to the downs have a high visual sensitivity to change
- The traditional stone dwellings and farm buildings

## STRATEGY

### Landscape Strategy

The landscape strategy for *Thorley and Wellow Open Farmland* is to **conserve** the open, remote character of the landscape with its wide views and sparse settlement with traditional stone buildings while **enhancing** the landscape through improved management of the fabric such as the hedgerow network and traditional farm buildings and measures to improve the biodiversity interest of the area.

#### *Landscape Guidelines*

- Conserve the sense of remoteness and isolation, with sparse settlement and road network and limited visible development
- Protect archaeological features and consider opportunities for extending areas of pasture around archaeological remains
- Promote sensitive restoration and appropriate use of derelict traditional farm buildings
- Encourage restoration and replanting of hedgerows and consistent management
- Promote margins of rough grass around arable fields to enhance the habitat
- Promote appropriate management of the important limestone grassland at Prospect Quarry and take opportunities to create more of the habitat throughout the area
- Encourage sustainable management of woodlands including traditional techniques such as coppicing
- Minimise small scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network which could change the simple open character of the landscape

# LANDSCAPE TYPE 7: SETTLED FARMLAND

# 7: SETTLED FARMLAND


## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

7A Freshwater Isle

Urban Area

# LANDSCAPE TYPE 7: SETTLED FARMLAND

**Landscape Character Areas**
7A: *Freshwater Isle*

## Location and Boundaries

The *Settled Farmland* landscape type comprises of a single character area which lies at the western end of West Wight. The boundaries follow the changes in underlying geology, landform and land cover, and are defined by the base of scarp slopes, tops of cliffs, Mean High Water or first contour above flood level. This area is bounded to the east by the River Yar giving the area a historic Isle character reflected in its name.

## Key Characteristics

- Gently rolling landscape underlain by Clay, Silt and Sand geology
- A complex landscape with undulating topography giving varied views including occasional glimpses of the sea
- Highly settled but with areas of pasture and arable cultivation
- Intricate network of rural lanes, some sunken
- Settlements vary with small hamlets, scattered farmsteads, suburban development and holiday chalets with building styles ranging from traditional stone dwellings, through Victorian red brick villas to more recent chalets, bungalows and large industrial buildings
- Largely unwooded landscape with remnants of Medieval open field cultivation still evident
- Strong literary associations and distinctive identity as Freshwater Isle

# 7A: FRESHWATER ISLE

**Location and Boundaries:** *Freshwater Isle* is a distinctive 'island' at the west end of West Wight. It is bounded to the east by the 5 metre contour marking the edge of the *Yar Estuary* Character Area, to the south by the contour at the base of the chalk scarp of the *Downs* and to the north west by the tops of cliffs and mean high water around the *Bays*.

**Key Characteristics**

- Gently rolling landscape underlain by Clay, Silt and Sand geology with some areas of Limestone
- Undulating topography allows views within the area, to the downs to the south and to the sea giving variety to the landscape
- Outside settlements a predominantly pastoral landscape of irregular medium scale fields with some larger arable fields to the north plus horse paddocks associated with settlement
- Fields bounded by thick hedges with frequent hedgerow trees giving a semi-enclosed, wooded ambiance particularly to the central and southern sections of the area
- Mature coniferous shelter belts and garden trees form a distinctive feature particularly to the south of Freshwater
- Intricate network of rural lanes, some sunken with fewer roads to the north and western margins
- Settlement pattern varies, based around farmsteads and hamlets to the south with suburban style dwellings spreading along the lanes, with more sparse scattered farms and nucleated villages to the north
- The influence of the large village of Freshwater is muted due to the enclosed and rolling character of the area and the tree cover which continues into the settlement and helps to integrate it with the rural areas
- Building styles vary from traditional stone dwellings and landmarks such as the Freshwater parish church, through 19th century red brick villas to more recent bungalows and large industrial buildings
- History of Freshwater as a holiday resort evident in the spacious Victorian villas and hotels and more recent developments of chalets on cliff top sites
- Remains of open arable fields and commons still evident today
- Cultural associations with Lord Tennyson and other writers
- Distinctive identity as Freshwater Isle, separated from the Isle of Wight by the River Yar

# DESCRIPTION

## Summary description

*Freshwater Isle* is a varied landscape, which despite being highly settled, retains a rural character. This gently rolling area, with an intricate network of rural lanes bordered by hedges and trees has a sheltered, enclosed character particularly to the south, while on the west and north margins there are more open areas of pasture and arable. The area is generally unwooded although there are areas of shelterbelt along the tops of cliffs, around Golden Hill Fort and next to the *Yar Estuary*. Settlement ranges from traditional stone dwellings to red brick Victorian villas to 20th century bungalow, cliff top chalets and industrial developments. The area has a distinctive historic identity as an "isle" and strong cultural associations with Lord Tennyson, Virginia Woolf and other writers.

## Physical influences

The area is founded on Clay, Silt and Sand of the Headon Beds and Osborne Beds to the north and Bracklesham Group and Barton Group to the south. Underlying higher ground at Hill Farm and Headon Hill, are areas of Headon Beds and Osborne Beds Limestone topped by isolated deposits of Bembridge Marls. While at the margins of the *Yar Estuary* to the east and at Headon Warren there is River Terrace Sand and Gravel. The *Freshwater Settled Farmland* has a rolling landform rising from 5 m AOD at the boundary with the *Yar Estuary* to 95m AOD at Headon Warren.

Soils in this area are more easily worked than those arising from the Hamstead Beds that underlies much of the rest of the northern section of West Wight.

## Ecological character

*Freshwater Settled Farmland* is an agricultural landscape of medium sized pastoral fields and larger arable ones. There is an extensive network of hedgerows many of which contain mature trees. Although there are some (mainly coniferous) shelter belts, woodland in the area is restricted to two stands of ancient semi-natural woodland. Saltern Woods near the Yar estuary is a notable example of coastal woodland, and Plantation woodland in Fort Victoria Country Park is known to be inhabited by red squirrels, one of the island's flagship wildlife species.

The area as a whole would appear to provide important habitat for farmland birds, mammals and plants, and the connective network of hedgerows offers a valuable habitat in its own right. They are likely to harbour a range of uncommon woodland edge species that include butterflies such as brown hairstreak and white letter hairstreak, birds such as bullfinch, linnet and corn bunting, mammals such as dormouse and red squirrel.

In addition to farmland habitats the area encompasses two small coastal zones. The shoreline in the north is largely sand and shingle and in the south around Watcombe Bay are steep chalk cliffs. At Golden Hill Country Park, near Freshwater, uncultivated semi-natural vegetation supports a wide range of plants, including chalk species such as yellow-wort and dwarf thistle, on neutral soils dyer's greenweed, and abundant gorse associated with more acid soils. The varied habitats and rich flora attracts numerous butterfly species.

## Historic environment

*Freshwater Isle* contains little woodland now, and this appears to have been the case in earlier times, as there is no mention of woodland in the area in the Domesday Book. This may be linked to the high proportion of the area cultivated as open fields in medieval and post-medieval times. Enclosure of these fields appears to have been a long and piecemeal process with individual strips still being worked as late as the 1860s. The outlines of former open fields, furlongs and even strips are still evident in the fields today. Along with the arable fields were substantial areas of unenclosed rough

grazing, much of it centred around "Gaulden Common", some of which survives today as the uncultivated land of Golden Hill County Park.

There are few archaeological earthworks in the area, although recent archaeological finds point to possible Iron Age and Roman occupation. Freshwater Parish Church, which stands on a gravel terrace above the Yar, contains Anglo-Saxon architectural remains. The medieval settlement pattern was unusual on the Isle of Wight, comprising a number of hamlets around small greens rather than the scattered farmsteads and nucleated villages found elsewhere. This pattern has now been partially obscured by development associated with the expansion of Freshwater during the 19th and 20th centuries. A prominent landmark is Farringford, the former home of Lord Tennyson (now a hotel) and the surrounding park. The mature trees and decorative coniferous planting around this and the many other Victorian dwellings forms a key part of the current visual character of the area.

In the mid 19th century forts and batteries were built along the coast of the Isle of Wight to protect the Solent, these are mainly coastal installations but Golden Hill Fort lies inland at the centre of *Freshwater Isle*. The Needles Holiday Centre stands on the site of Marconi's early experiments in radio in the 1890s.

## Settlement and built character

This is an area highly influenced by settlement which takes a wide variety of forms from the stone Freshwater Parish Church, and traditional farmhouses and cottages, to the Victorian villas and streets of Freshwater, to 20th century suburban bungalows, to the series of holiday villages along tops of the cliffs. However, even with all this dense and various settlement, areas within *Freshwater Settled Farmland* (particularly to the south) still retain their rural atmosphere due to the rolling, small scale topography and the intricate network of lanes, some of them sunken, and most of them largely devoid of kerbs, signage and other urbanising elements. In other areas, particularly to the north, large scale modern developments of industrial works, large farm buildings and cliff top chalets detract from the rural ambiance. The small section to the south west is less settled however, here, the Needles Holiday Centre is highly visible in the fold of the valley.

## Landscape perceptions

Overlaid on the rural landscape of *Freshwater Isle* is its use as a holiday resort and as a place for peaceful retreat from the bustle of the mainland. After Lord Tennyson settled at Farringford in 1853 and Julia Margaret Cameron came to live at Dimbola in 1860, many distinguished people were drawn to Freshwater, including Garibaldi, Longfellow, Charles and Erasmus Darwin, Lewis Carol and Edward Lear. Various writers and artists visited or had homes in the area including Virginia Woolf, Rosamond Lehmann and D. H. Lawrence, the latter wrote of the area in his novel *The Trespasser*:

*…the sea was gustering unbearably, like a scaled dragon wreaking. The houses of Freshwater slept, as cattle sleep motionless in the hollow valley. Green Farringford on the slope, was drawn over with a shadow of heat and sleep.*

The nature of the area as a section almost cut off from the rest of the Isle of Wight is noted by Gilpin in *Observations on the Western Ports of England* in 1798:

*...Here the island draws nearly to a point. The extreme part of it is almost separated from the main body by a creek, which runs up from Yarmouth almost to the opposite shore...*

Consultation with the local community highlighted concerns over suburbanisation of the area, loss of rural and village character, decline in farming, loss of hedgerows and increase in horse paddocks. Golden Hill Fort, Moons Hill, Farringford and Dimbola Lodge were valued as landmarks.

# EVALUATION

## Forces for Change

### *Past Change*

- Creation of tourist facilities, particularly visually prominent cliff top holiday parks and holiday centre with impacts on rural character
- Erosion of historic building character and settlement pattern through infill along rural lanes and construction of large scale industrial and farm buildings
- Loss of tree cover from Dutch Elm Disease

### *Future Change*

- Pressures for new residential and recreational development that is unsympathetic to traditional character and form of settlements
- Increased tourist and visitor pressures leading to expansion of holiday and visitor centres and commercial development
- Pressure for increase in horse paddocks
- Small scale incremental development (signage, fencing, road improvements) that would impinge on the rural character
- Coniferous tree lines that are a prominent feature to the south of the area are often mature and will require replacement to maintain appearance

## Character

*Freshwater Settled Farmland* exhibits a **moderate** strength of character. The amount of settlement and its mixed character detracts from the rural ambiance of the area although various elements maintain this, particularly the remaining pastoral fields, thick hedgerows and frequent hedgerow and gardens trees and small shelter belts. The rolling topography allows views to fields from most areas, plus glimpses of the sea and the high downs to the south. However also prominent in views are the clusters of caravans and chalets, the large scale holiday centre at the Needles and industrial works near Norton Green.

## Condition

The condition of Freshwater Settled Farmland is **moderate**, with areas of well maintained pasture and arable farmland, bounded by thick hedgerows contrasting with other areas with patchy and overgrown hedges and frequent horse paddocks which fragment the historic field patterns. Hedgerow trees and coniferous shelter belts which are important in maintaining the character of the area are mature and over-mature with little replacement planting in place.

## Inherent landscape sensitivities

- Peaceful, small scale, rural landscape
- Network of rural lanes
- Remnants of historic pattern of small settlements and greens

- Varied stock of buildings including traditional stone and brick built Victorian dwellings
- Tree cover including distinctive mature coniferous linear belts and garden trees
- Network of largely intact hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Pastoral fields
- Areas of woodland and semi-natural vegetation of biodiversity interest

# STRATEGY

## Landscape Strategy

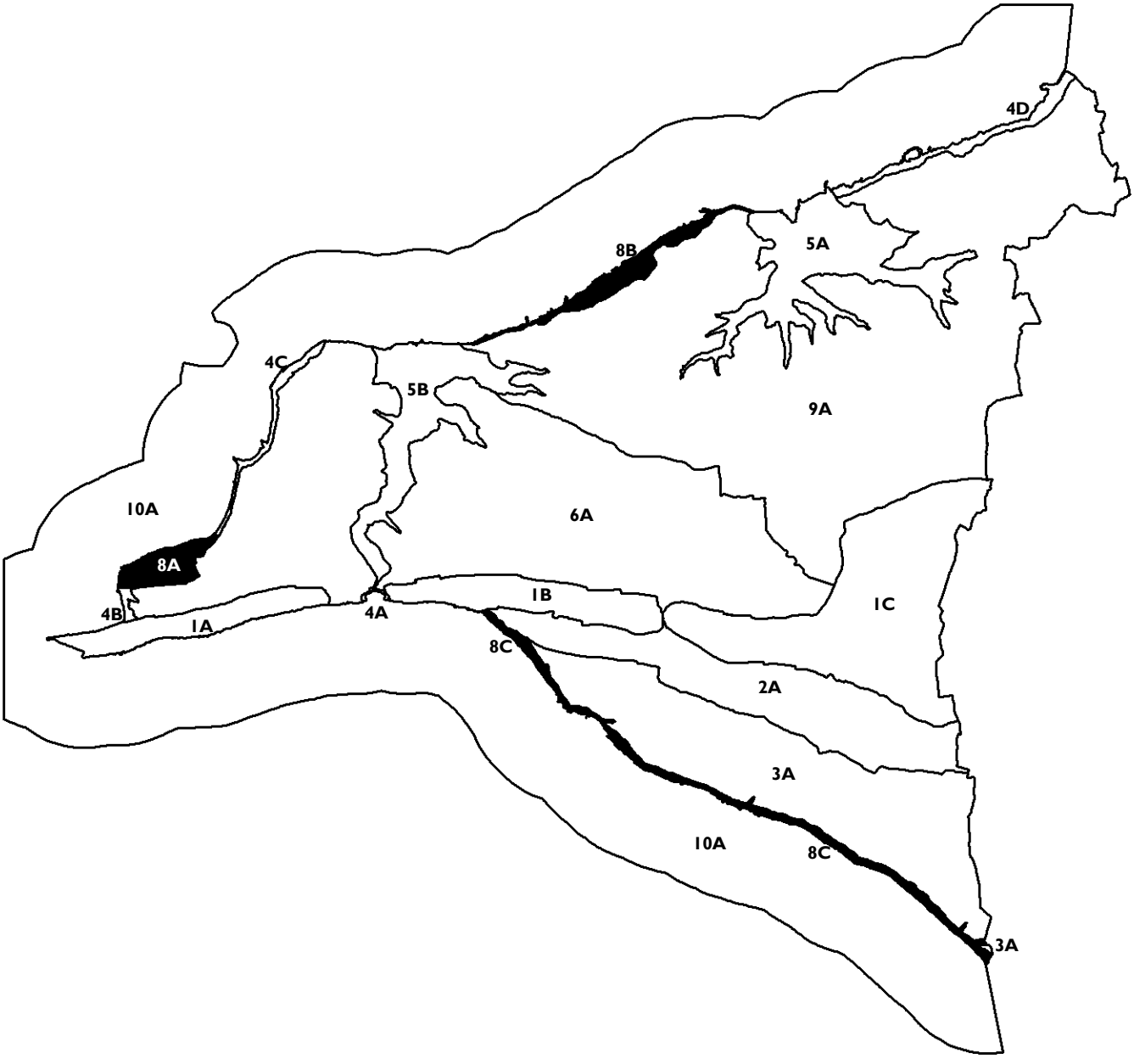
The landscape strategy for *Freshwater Settled Farmland* is to **conserve** the small scale rural landscape with its winding lanes, varied settlement and rich visual legacy of Victorian development such as brick dwellings, large gardens and parks and mature coniferous planting along with the surviving areas of comparatively unsettled farmland. At the same time the areas and elements in poorer condition and weaker character will be **enhanced** through for instance improvements to hedgerow maintenance, ensuring that new development is sympathetic to the character of the area and carrying out new tree planting to maintain the stock.

### *Landscape Guidelines*

- Conserve the sense of a rural, small scale landscape of winding lanes and small settlements
- Ensure consistent management of the hedgerow network and nurture new hedgerow trees to replace mature stock in the long term
- Promote margins of rough grass around arable fields to enhance the habitat for flowers and invertebrates
- Conserve and restore as appropriate the historic parklands and key visual features such as coniferous shelter belts
- Encourage sustainable management of woodlands including traditional techniques such as coppicing
- Take opportunities to improve the visual integration of large scale development leisure developments for instance through planting in the historic character of cliff top shelter belts, or hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Minimise small scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network which could change the rural character of the landscape
- Enhance interpretation of the landscape in ways that do not impact on the peaceful, rural character of the area (for instance walking trails, leaflets, discrete signage and guided walks)

# LANDSCAPE TYPE 8: SOFT CLIFFS

# 8: SOFT CLIFFS




## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

8A Headon Soft Cliff
8B Bouldnor Soft Cliff
8C Hanover Soft Cliff

Urban Area

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# LANDSCAPE TYPE 8: SOFT CLIFFS

**Landscape Character Areas**

8A: *Headon Cliff*
8B: *Bouldnor Cliff*
8C: *Hanover Cliff*

## Location and Boundaries

The *Soft Cliffs* landscape type consists of three areas around the coast of West Wight. The boundaries of these elevated, sloping areas are defined by Mean Low Water and, to the land side, by the break of slope at the top of the cliffs.

**Key Characteristics**

- Sloping broken cliffs with areas of landslip
- Gently domed or sloping land form based on Clay, Silt and Sand or Mudstone subject to erosion by the sea
- Wide views out to sea from the cliffs
- Important in views to West Wight from the sea – giving the appearance of an unsettled, natural coastline
- Changing character with the tide and seasons plus progressive change due to cliff falls and slumping
- Rich in geological interest with important fossil flora and fauna
- Varied land cover with areas of emergent vegetation, grassland, woodland, scrub and lowland heath and all of high biodiversity interest
- Chines provide small scale intimate areas
- Unsettled landscape with varying intensity of use for leisure depending on the level of access
- Evidence of the Mesolithic and Bronze age in the presence of flint implements and round barrows plus fortifications from the 19th and 20th centuries
- Peaceful, undisturbed, sometimes remote landscape

# 8A: HEADON CLIFF

**Location and Boundaries:** *Headon Cliff* is located at the far west of West Wight on the northern coast. The boundaries are defined by Mean Low Water to the north, Mean High Water to the west (boundary with *Alum Bay*) and by the base of the steep slope down to the lower ground to the south which largely follows the 95m contour.

**Key Characteristics**

- Steeply rolling area with broken cliffs falling to the sea to the north forming a dramatic contrast in landform and vegetation to the surrounding farmland and downs
- Underlying geology of Headon Beds and Osborne Beds Clay, Silt and Sand, with Bembridge Limestone, Bembridge Marls and River Terrace Gravel under the dome of Headon Hill
- Intimate, small scale undulating topography within the area is emphasised by the visual contrast of the wide views out over the Solent to the north and to the chalk downs to the south
- A natural, undisturbed area in views from the sea
- Changing character with the tide and seasons plus progressive change due to cliff falls and slumping
- Extensive lowland acid heath vegetation dominated by heather and gorse gives the area biodiversity interest of national significance and visual richness in its intricate texture and vivid colours
- Outstanding source of fossil mammals, reptiles and flora of the Eocene era
- An unsettled landscape but the southern section is crossed by the Tennyson Trail and a network of other footpaths which are sensitively designed and maintained
- Evidence of Bronze age activity in the presence of round barrows, with Hatherwood Battery a sign of more recent, military land use
- A peaceful distinctive landscape visually strongly contrasting with the surrounding landscape

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

*Headon Cliff* is an unsettled, tranquil area of steeply rolling landform. To the north soft, slumped cliffs lead down to the sea while the southern section of the area is a gently domed hill. The intricate undulations of the area and the rich deep colour and texture of the heathland vegetation create a strong contrast with the wide views out across the Solent and to the smooth open downs to the south. The only buildings in the area are the remains of Hatherwood Battery and a ruined cottage, although ancient occupation is indicated by the presence of Bronze Age round barrows. Headon Hill is crossed by footpaths and the coastal path but the northern cliffs have no formal access routes and overall this area retains a highly natural and remote feel.

## Physical influences

*Headon Cliff* has two distinct zones, with the cliffs to north and west founded on the Clay, Silt and Sand of the Headon Beds and Osborne Beds. The cliffs slope down from around 100m AOD to sea level and the soft nature of the rock leads to cliff falls and slumping. This is evident in the gradual loss of Hatherwood Battery and a possible round barrow that has been partially lost to cliff fall. To the south of the area is the level dome of Headon Hill at 120m AOD, founded on Bembridge Limestone and the Calcareous Mud of the Bembridge Marls which are overlain by a drift deposit of River Terrace Sand and Gravel. This gravel gives rise to the distinctive heathland vegetation of the area.

*Headon Cliff* is part of one of the most well known geological localities in Britain and is of great importance for understanding the evolution of the Isle of Wight and Hampshire Basin. It is also rich in fossil mammals, reptiles and flora.

## Ecological character

This area supports one of only two lowland heathland sites in the Isle of Wight. It comprises a flat topped hill with a series of land-slipped under-cliffs sloping down to the coast on its north and west sides. The vegetation of the plateau and upperparts of the under-cliff is dominated by common heather, bell heather and dwarf gorse, with extensive common gorse, together with a range of typical heathland plants and invertebrates. A number of plants uncommon on the island occur in this vicinity such as heath pearlwort, and upright chickweed. In addition a small population of breeding Dartford warblers occur, one of only two such populations on the Island.

## Historic environment

There are a number of Bronze Age round barrows on Headon Hill exploiting its visually prominent position in a similar way to those on the *Chalk Downs*. The past use of the hill for rearing rabbits as a food source is indicated by the name Headon Warren. More recent history is evident in the Hatherwood Battery, built to defend the Solent in the 1860s.

## Settlement and built character

*Headon Cliff* is an unsettled area with only the remains of the battery and a ruined cottage present. Other built structures are low key signage and protective fencing put in place by the National Trust as part of their management of the site. The public footpaths are similarly well maintained with appropriate rural materials and construction methods.

## Landscape perceptions

There are no strong literary or cultural associations with Headon Cliff but consultation highlighted the importance of the area to local people for its sea views, peaceful walking, heathland vegetation and Bronze Age barrows.

# EVALUATION

## Forces for Change

### *Past Change*

- Erosion of the cliff
- Loss of historic remains due to cliff fall

### *Future Change*

- Continuing erosion of the cliff and loss of historic remains
- Increase in demand for leisure access
- Archaeological resource both revealed by and susceptible to coastal forces

## Character

Headon Cliff exhibits a **strong** character as a tranquil, natural area of intricate, undulating geology covered with heathland vegetation. This character is heightened by the contrast of the richly coloured and textured heathland with the wide open views to sea and to the farmland and downs to the south. The remains of the Victorian fortifications and ancient barrows add a historic dimension to the area.

## Condition

This is an area of intact heathland with well maintained and sensitively designed paths and signage. Although the cliff is subject to landslip and collapse and this has affected the historic sites in the area, the nature of the underlying geology and the constant change caused by erosion is an essential part of the character and biodiversity interest of the area. Overall Headon Cliff is in **good** condition.

## Inherent landscape sensitivities

- Remote tranquil ambiance
- Wide open views to sea
- Heathland vegetation and fauna
- Geological interest including fossils

# STRATEGY

## Landscape Strategy

The landscape strategy for *Headon Cliff* is to **conserve** the natural character and the sense of remoteness, protecting ecological and geological elements and providing visitor facilities in a low key style, sensitive to the remote feel, natural habitats and the process of erosion in the area.

### *Landscape Guidelines*

- Conserve the natural, remote character of the cliff
- Protect the views out to sea and across the farmland and downs
- Encourage public access to the area but retain sense of remoteness and minimise the pressure on the heathland vegetation through careful design and placing of routes and infrastructure
- Protect the areas of heathland and geologically important cliff features
- Encourage interpretation for the public of the biodiversity, history and geology of the area including the process of landslip through methods that will not impact on the natural ambiance of the area such as leaflets, trails and guided walks

- Carry out appropriate monitoring and recording of the archaeological resource

# 8B: BOULDNOR CLIFF

**Location and Boundaries:** *Bouldnor Cliff* is located at the mid point of the northern coast of West Wight. The boundaries are defined by Mean Low Water to the north and the break of slope at the top of the cliff, which at its highest point follows the 60m contour.

**Key Characteristics**

- Gently sloping low cliffs with extensive areas of landslip and narrow beaches fringing the base of the slopes
- Underlying geology of Hamstead Beds, Clay, Silt and Sand subject to erosion by the sea
- Panoramic views from the beaches over the Solent towards the mainland contrast with the enclosed woodland and scrub that dominates the cliffs
- Changing character with the tide and seasons plus progressive change due to cliff falls and slumping
- Views to the area from the sea present a highly natural, unsettled character
- Erosion of the cliffs leads to the presence of dead and dying trees which, along with the flotsam and jetsam from the sea, gives a distinctive character to the beaches
- Calcareous clays of the cliff face and acid plateau gravels of the cliff tops along with the collapsing cliff bases give rise to varied land cover of broad leaved woodland, scrub and pioneer plant communities of considerable biodiversity interest
- Oak dominates the woodland including many very old oaks on the acid soils, elsewhere there is ash and, to the east, planted conifers and beech
- High geological importance showing a complete succession through the Hamstead Beds and rich in fossil mammals, reptiles, birds, insects and flora
- Many prehistoric flint implements found along the coast along with Roman and medieval pottery, with more recent signs of military use in the concrete structures on the beach associated with Bouldnor Battery
- Although the coastal path runs along the top of the cliffs in parts of the area, it is otherwise largely inaccessible and unsettled with a strong sense of remoteness

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

*Bouldnor Cliff* is a remote, natural area of low slumped cliff and narrow beaches. It is unsettled and almost inaccessible apart from the coastal footpath. The action of the sea on the calcareous clays of the cliffs causes frequent landslips and consequent rich variety in plant communities from pioneer species to woodland. Dead and dying trees from the areas of landslip plus detritus from the sea litter the narrow sandy and pebbly beaches giving a distinctive desert island atmosphere – highlighted by the contrast with the views across the Solent to the industrial developments of Southampton.

## Physical influences

The area consists of a low, slumping cliff, rising to 60m AOD. It is of great importance for geology, providing a complete succession through the Hamstead Beds of the Oligocene age and containing rich fossil fauna and flora. The Hamstead Beds include coloured clays, loams, sands and shales. At the top of the cliff and occasionally spreading down it are some isolated areas of drift deposits of plateau gravel. The mix of calcareous clay and acid gravels give rise to a varied mix of plant communities.

## Ecological character

This stretch of coastline is of national and international importance for ecology. The shoreline forms part of the Solent Maritime SAC, and the entire area, including the cliffs and cliff-top vegetation is designated under the Bouldnor and Hampstead cliffs SSSI. The importance of the coast's geological formations and fossil deposits are well documented, for example it is the best known locality in Britain for fossil reptiles of the Oligocene age. A small area at the eastern boundary of the character area is designated under the Newtown Harbour SSSI, Solent and Southampton Water SPA, and RAMSAR of the same name. The Newtown Harbour NNR encompasses the shoreline along the eastern half of the area.

In terms of ecology the influence of cliff stability, soil chemistry, and water availability has led to the development of a range of habitat types, from bare ground to mature broad-leaved woodland, that support a rich diversity of wildlife, and make this is an interesting area in which to study habitat succession. English oak woodland dominates much of the cliff face and cliff-top, in some situations on the cliff-top conifers and beech have been planted into the woodlands. Ash joins oak on calcareous soils, together with shrubs such as wild privet and spindle. Elsewhere scrub is frequent and characteristically comprises birch species, grey willow, and gorse. Areas of recent cliff-fall are colonised by giant horsetail, coltsfoot, creeping bent and fleabane.

A stand of ancient semi-natural woodland occurs on plateau gravels on the cliff-top. It contains many plants typically confined to long established woodland, such as primrose and enchanters nightshade.

## Historic environment

A considerable number of prehistoric flint implements have been found along *Bouldnor Cliff* including Mesolithic/early Neolithic picks and axes and Palaeolithic hand axes. Roman and medieval pottery has also been found and in the inter-tidal silt are remains of medieval hurdling and a stone landing stage, thought to have been built when plans were made to construct a new town at Bouldnor in the late 19th century, as well as substantial concrete structures associated with Bouldnor Battery.

## Settlement and built character

There is no settlement in this area and little access apart from the coastal path which skirts part of the southern boundary at the top of the cliff.

## Landscape perceptions

There are no specific literary or artistic associations with this area but consultation with the local community made clear its value as a remote area untouched by development; "the land that time forgot".

# EVALUATION

## Forces for Change

### *Past Change*

- Erosion of the cliff

- Loss of historic remains due to cliff fall

### *Future Change*

- Continuing erosion of the cliff and loss of historic remains
- Increase in demand for leisure access
- Potential effects of sea level rise
- Archaeological resource both revealed by and susceptible to coastal forces

## Character

*Bouldnor Cliff* has a **strong** character, with its natural and richly varied woodland, scrub and pioneer plant communities, its slumped cliff landform, its enclosed woodland contrasting with the wide views out to the Solent to the mainland and the narrow deserted beaches, with their distinctive atmosphere.

## Condition

This is an area in **good** condition in terms of biodiversity interest due to the variety of plant communities present caused by the unstable cliff structure. The thick cover of woodland and scrub is largely unmanaged and shows a succession of types of woodland. This active process of change with little or no intervention from man has created the unique character of the area.

## Inherent landscape sensitivities

- Remote tranquil ambiance
- Wide open views to sea
- Heathland vegetation and fauna
- Geological interest including fossils
- Natural process of landslip
- Views from seaward of a natural, unsettled wooded coast

## Landscape Strategy

The landscape strategy for *Bouldnor Cliff* is to **conserve** the remote, undisturbed nature of the area with its low cliff subject to landslip, its varied woodland, scrub and herb plant life, rich geological resource and its narrow, empty beaches with their special end of the world atmosphere. Enhancements to the area should consist of low key, sensitively designed and placed interpretation and access to allow the public to enjoy and understand the processes forming the area.

### *Landscape Guidelines*

- Conserve the natural, remote character of the cliff
- Protect the views out to sea
- Encourage public access to the area side but retain sense of remoteness and minimise the pressure on the woodland, scrub and beaches through careful design of routes and infrastructure

- Protect geologically important features
- Encourage interpretation for the public of the biodiversity, history and geology of the area including the process of landslip through schemes that will not impact on the naturalness and tranquillity of the area such as leaflets and guided walks
- Carry out appropriate monitoring and recording of the archaeological resource

# 8C: HANOVER CLIFF

**Location and Boundaries:** *Hanover Cliff* is a long narrow stretch of cliff and beach on the south coast of West Wight. The boundaries are Mean Low Water to seaward and the break of slope at the top of the cliff to landward.

**Key Characteristics**

- Steeply sloping broken cliffs and level beach of sand and gravel with low rock ledges
- Peaceful, natural and, in places, remote landscape
- Wealden Group Mudstone underlies the cliffs and is subject to continuous erosion by the weather and the sea
- Semi-enclosed, textured and coloured cliff and shore contrast with the vast wide views to open sea
- Changing character with the tide and seasons plus progressive change due to cliff falls and slumping
- Complex mosaic of emergent vegetation and grassland on the collapsing cliff is of high biodiversity interest
- Unsettled with little access apart from the coastal path
- Chines provides secret and intimate, small scale spaces in contrast to the open shores
- Outstanding fossils particularly of dinosaurs
- Archaeological remains present ranging from prehistoric hearths to World War II fortifications

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

*Hanover Cliff* consists of low broken cliffs and foreshore with a peaceful, natural and in some places remote and secret ambiance. The underlying geology of Wealden and Upper Greensand Mudstone and Sandstone worked on by the actions of the sea forms cliffs of intricate texture and vivid colours contrasting with the simple and open views to sea. The scale of the cliffs grows larger to the west with a substantial dramatically undulating area of grassland at Compton Bay while to the east the lower cliffs and particularly the chines create a more intimate, semi-enclosed small scale landscape. The varied geology and the continual erosion of the cliffs creates a complex range of habitats of high biodiversity value. The area is also rich in history from the fossil remains of dinosaurs, to remnants of prehistoric man, to World War II pill boxes.

### Physical influences

The majority of *Hanover Cliff* lies on the Mudstone of the Wealden Group with a small section at the western end of the area where this is overlain by the Upper Greensand formation. The low cliffs of the Wealden Group (up to 35m AOD) are subject to continuous erosion due to the variety in

strength and permeability of their layers of clay, marl, shale and sandstone. The softness of these rocks has led to the development of a broad shore platform founded on harder, more resistant rocks which are visible on the foreshore for instance at Hanover Point. Chines are a particular feature of this coastline. These are thought to be the consequence of rapid erosion, with the recession of the cliff being faster than the erosive force of the streams, creating waterfalls down the cliff and small enclosed valley land forms. On the foreshore drift geology of Beach and Tidal Flat Deposits of Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel is evident.

## Ecological character

This character area encompasses the majority of the shoreline, under-cliff and cliff face habitat from Compton Bay to Shepherd's Chine. The large majority is designated under the South Wight Maritime SAC, and Compton Chine to Steephill Cove SSSI. Recognised for the national and international importance of its geology, in particular its rich fossil flora and fauna, acknowledged as supporting the richest early Cretaceous dinosaur fauna in the world. In addition it supports species-rich sea cliff vegetation and rocky shoreline.

The cliff vegetation comprises slumping acidic sandstones and neutral clays, the vegetation heavily influenced by the maritime environment and consisting of both neutral and acid grassland species. The distribution of plant communities is complex and influenced by the stability of the cliffs, underlying geology, soil chemistry, and water availability. As a result a range of semi-natural vegetation types are present from bare ground to grassland, dune heath and scrub and include wetland communities around cliff-face springs. The rocky shoreline beneath the cliffs, formed by a range of different exposed bedrocks, provides a diversity of marine habitats for seaweeds, and marine invertebrates such as barnacles and limpets.

Other nationally scarce and rare wildlife typically associated with the unstable soft rocks include nationally rare lichens such as scrambled-egg lichen, the Glanville fritillary butterfly and specialist invertebrates such as mining bees.

## Historic environment

The cliffs and chines provide evidence of the area's history consisting of Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic worked flint, hearth sites and Bronze Age Cremation Urns, along with Iron Age and Romano–British materials.

A sinuous strip of alluvium and a minor stream running from Chilton Chine along the coast indicates the possible course of a former river.

Later history is predominantly military with the 19th century Military Road skirting the area to the west. A sea mark at Hanover Point is said to have been used as a guide for gunners at Fort Redoubt. This is a World War II pill box at Chilton Chine and the remains of a anti aircraft gun emplacement which has fallen to the beach to the West of Brighstone Holiday Camp. This highlights the shifting nature of the coast which means that archaeological remains are frequently discovered, recorded and then lost for instance the Middle Bronze Age cemetery at Barnes High recorded in 1927 and subsequently destroyed by erosion.

## Settlement and built character

There is no settlement in this area. The coastal path runs along the top of the cliff giving access down to the beach at various points. At the higher cliff at Compton Bay, simple wooden stairs lead down to the shore which is popular with surfers.

## Landscape perceptions

This section of coastline is strongly associated with the discovery of the remains of dinosaurs. This association has a long history with the area being studied from the early 19th century. The remains

form the richest collection of early Cretaceous dinosaur fauna in the world with at least 20 different species already recorded. At Hanover Point the "Fossil Forest" is a well known feature and this consists of fossil plants of the Cretaceous era – including ginkgos and conifers which have been crucial to developing knowledge on the plants from this time. The consultation with local people also emphasised the importance of the dinosaurs and fossil forest in perceptions of the cliff and the Isle of Wight as well as the area's value as a tranquil, unspoiled landscape.

# EVALUATION

## Forces for Change

### *Past Change*

- Erosion of the cliff
- Loss of historic remains due to cliff fall

### *Future Change*

- Continuing erosion of the cliff and loss of historic remains
- Increase in demand for leisure access including surfing
- Potential effects of sea level rise
- Archaeological resource both revealed by and susceptible to coastal forces

## Character

*Hanover Cliff* exhibits a **strong character** with its natural, peaceful ambiance, strong visual contrast between the semi-enclosed cliffs and shoreline and the wide open views out to sea and its outstanding biodiversity, geological and historical interest. The essence of the character of the area is its constant change as the soft rocks of the cliffs are eroded by the force of the sea giving rise to rich biodiversity and intricate variations in form, colour and texture.

## Condition

The area is largely formed by natural forces working on the underlying geology to create the cliff and the foreshore. Interventions are few with the coastal path skirting the top of the cliffs and various footpaths and stairways giving access to the shore. These are low key, wooden structures in keeping with the ambiance of the area. There is little interpretation to explain the geological, ecological and historic interest of the area and the chines tend to collect sea born litter which can give an impression of lack of management but overall the area is in **good** condition.

## Inherent landscape sensitivities

- Peaceful natural ambiance
- Biodiversity interest of succession of plant communities caused by erosion of cliff
- Intimate landscape of the chines
- Wide open views to sea
- Geological interest particularly dinosaur and other fossils

# STRATEGY

## Landscape Strategy

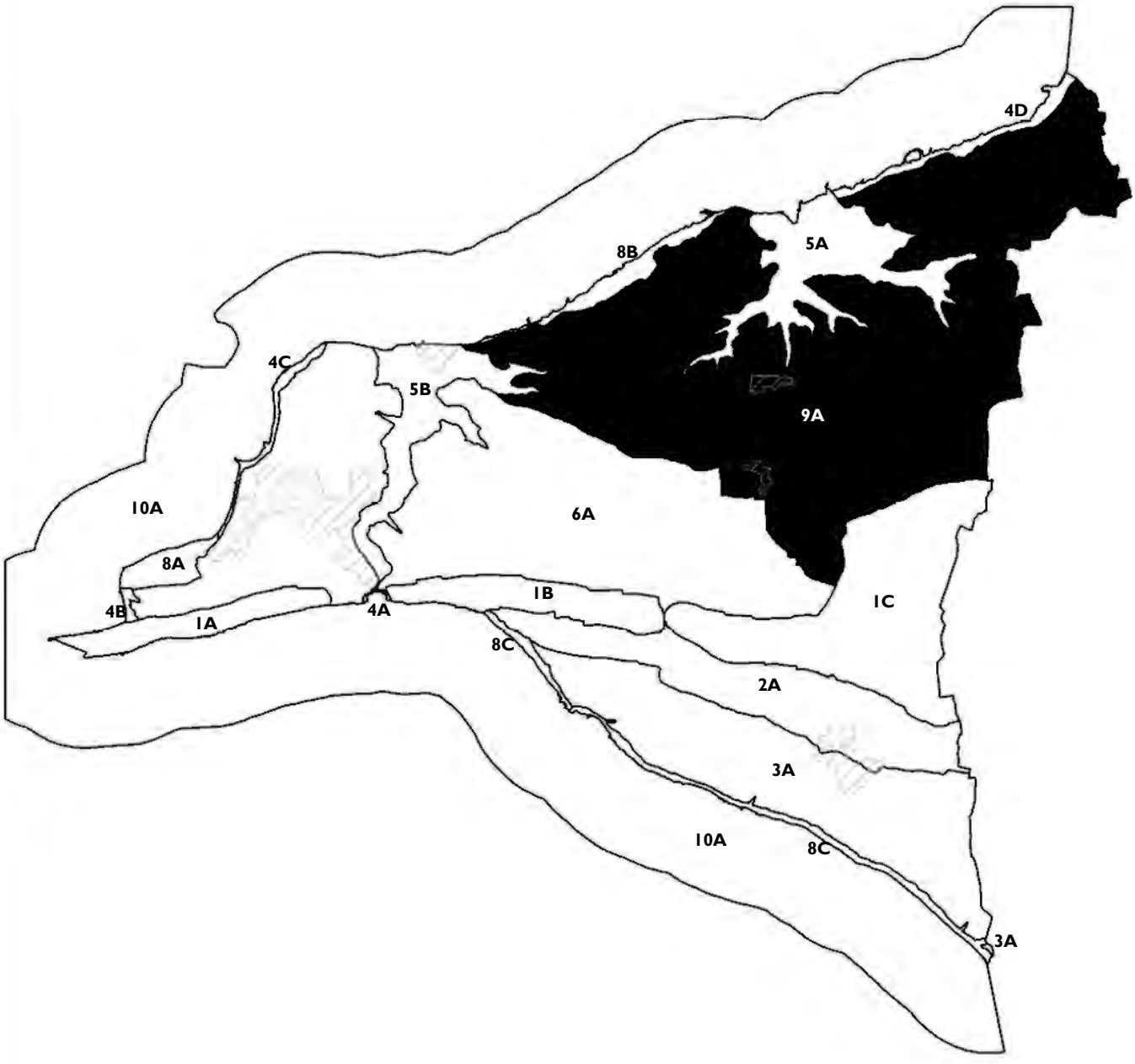
The landscape strategy for *Hanover Cliff* is to **conserve** the tranquil, natural landscape with its constant erosion bringing rich biodiversity and geological interest. Interventions should be minimal with a continuation of the low key design of paths and stairways and with enhanced interpretation to inform the public of the many significant aspects of the landscape and the way in which the erosion of the cliff acts upon it.

### *Landscape Guidelines*

- Conserve the undisturbed natural, peaceful landscape of the cliffs and foreshore
- Enhance litter removal from chines
- Continue to provide low key infrastructure – paths and stairs – to access the foreshore
- Enhance interpretation of the landscape in ways that do not impact on the naturalness of the area (for instance leaflets, discrete signage, guided walks)
- Produce and promote guidelines for fossil and geological collecting
- Carry out appropriate monitoring and recording of the archaeological resource

# LANDSCAPE TYPE 9: ROLLING FARMLAND

# 9: ROLLING FARMLAND




## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

9A Calbourne Rolling Farmland

Urban Area

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# LANDSCAPE TYPE 9: ROLLING FARMLAND

**Landscape Character Areas**
9A: *Calbourne Enclosed Farmland*

## Location and Boundaries

The *Rolling Farmland* landscape type comprises of a single character area covering much of the clay land of the centre and north east of West Wight. The boundaries follow the changes in underlying geology, landform and land cover, and are defined by the base of scarp slopes, tops of cliffs, or first contour above flood level.

## Key Characteristics

- Gently rolling peaceful landscape underlain by the Hamstead Beds Formation Clay, Silt and Sand
- Undulating topography gives variety of views within the area and to the sea
- A rural, pastoral landscape of irregular medium scale fields bounded by thick hedges with many mature hedgerow trees
- Frequent copses and woodland belts including ancient woodland, which along with the strong hedgerow network give a semi-enclosed feel to the landscape
- Areas of high biodiversity interest include woodland, wood pasture, unimproved grassland and scrub
- Presence of variety of water bodies including rivers, streams, ponds, and drainage ditches
- Settlements vary with scattered farmsteads, nucleated villages and linear suburban settlements with varied building styles
- Many historic landscape features survive intact including estate boundaries, medieval woodlands and later parklands

# 9A: CALBOURNE ROLLING FARMLAND

**Location and Boundaries:** *Calbourne Rolling Farmland* is an extensive area covering the central and eastern sections of the northern part of West Wight. The northern edge of the area is bounded by the *Soft Cliffs*, *Bays* and *Estuaries* along the Solent coast with the boundaries following the tops of the cliffs and the 5m contour around the *Newtown Estuary*. The southern boundary marks the transition from clay to the higher ground on the limestone and chalk to the south. Here the boundaries generally follow roads or field boundaries.

**Key Characteristics**

- Gently rolling landscape underlain by Hamstead Beds Clay, Silt and Sand geology
- Undulating topography gives varied views with glimpses of the sea and the downs
- Peaceful, highly rural, pastoral landscape of irregular medium scale fields
- Fields bounded by thick hedges with frequent hedgerow trees giving a semi-enclosed, ambiance and providing important corridors for wildlife such as red squirrels and dormice
- Network of copses and woodland including ancient woodland (some maintained as coppice with standards) and wood pasture of high ecological interest
- Isolated areas of acid and unimproved neutral grassland, lowland heath and scrub of high biodiversity value
- Presence of water bodies including streams, springs and drainage ditches
- Fairly sparse network of roads and rural lanes, with little access to some sections, a dismantled railway track traverses the area
- Settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and a few nucleated settlements with some more recent holiday camps, and linear suburban settlement along unmade roads
- Historic settlements include the abandoned medieval town of Newtown
- Building styles vary from traditional stone dwellings in village centres through more modern brick dwellings to bungalow and chalets
- Long history of woodland land cover and traditional management
- High survival of historic features such as estate boundaries, medieval woodlands and historic parkland for instance at Westover and Swainston

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

*Calbourne Rolling Farmland* is a highly rural, peaceful and subtly varied landscape. The gently rolling topography and full hedges with many hedgerow trees give a sense of enclosure and shelter, reinforced by the frequent small woodlands. There are intermittent views over pastoral fields with

occasional glimpses of the sea to the north and the chalk downs to the south. The long history of the area as woodland and common has left a legacy of ancient woodland, wood pasture, unimproved grassland, heath and scrub of high biodiversity value. Fairly sparse settlement of scattered farmsteads and nucleated villages is varied by the more modern settlements of Cranmore and occasional holiday centres while some settlements, most notably Newtown, have a strong historic character.

## Physical influences

*Calbourne Rolling Farmland* is a gently undulating lowland area rising from 5m AOD around the *Yar Estuary* to the north to around 70m AOD where it meets the chalk of *Brighstone Down* to the south. A network of brooks drains northward to the *Newtown* and *Yar Estuaries* and ultimately to the Solent. The area is largely underlaid by the Hamstead Beds of the Oligocene era which include coloured clays, loams, sands and shales mostly of freshwater origin. The north east area around the *Yar Estuary* is underlain by Bembridge Marls. This geology gives rise to brown earths or argillic brown earths, clayey soils with impeded drainage, often associated with dairy or mixed farming and forestry.

## Ecological character

The area is dominated by agriculture, with irregular medium scale fields bounded by thick hedges that often contain mature trees. There are frequent copses and woodland belts, typically dominated by English oak and ash. They include a number of ancient semi-natural woodland sites, as well as conifer plantations. The hedgerow network and woodland cover provide important habitat for key mammal species such as red squirrel and dormouse. Farmland birds are present in arable margins and extensive areas of pasture, and the patchwork of grassland, hedgerow and arable vegetation offer suitable habitat for brown hare and bats.

Sites of particular importance include Cranmore SSSI, which consists of three separate areas that support a mosaic of acid grassland, neutral grassland, lowland heath, scrub and woodland. Characteristic plants in open areas include grasses such as bents and fescues, replaced by purple-moor grass and tufted hair-grass in damper situations, together with herbs such as common heather, devils-bit scabious and violet species. Saw-wort is abundant and is the sole food-plant for the nationally endangered reddish buff moth, this being its only remaining native site in Britain. In addition dormouse and red squirrel are present.

Northpark Copse SSSI represents one of a very small number of wood-pasture sites, where cattle have been pastured within the woodlands, and the trees managed selectively for timber. This has produced an open canopy comprised of some very old trees. Woodland of this type tends to support rich epiphytic communities of lichens, mosses and fungi, as well as specialist deadwood invertebrate faunas.

Unimproved neutral grassland is a scarce resource in the Isle of Wight, restricted to small number of scattered locations. Locks Farm Meadow SSSI represents one of only six such sites. Characteristic species include grasses such as meadow foxtail, sweet vernal grass and red fescue, together with herbs strongly associated with ancient turf, such as dyer's greenweed, corky fruited water dropwort and adder's tongue fern. In addition there is a large colony of green winged orchid.

A characteristic feature of the character area is the variety of water bodies including rivers, streams, ponds, and drainage ditches, many of which make their way to the Solent Estuarine System. The adjacent character area, Newtown estuary, represents a largely unspoilt network of estuarine habitats, and is covered by a raft of national and international designations including SPA, RAMSAR, SAC, NNR and SSSI. Many of which overlap the Rolling Farmland character area, for example the Solent and Southampton Water SPA includes farmland on MOD land near Shepherd's Hill east of Newtown, which provides important habitat for wildfowl and waders, in particular dark-bellied Brent goose.

The large Newtown Harbour SSSI extends in to the area and includes Hart Farm, south of Newtown, a site that retains traditional, small, species-rich fields enclosed by ancient hedgerows, together with small farm ponds rich in aquatic flora and fauna, such as the emperor dragonfly. The SSSI also encompasses woodlands such as Walters Copse, Fleetlands Copse and Windgate Copse. Much of which as coppice with standards. The canopy dominated by English oak and ash, with a shrub layer consisting of hazel. The ground flora in older stands contains vernal species such as bluebell and wood anemone and ancient woodland indicator plants like butchers broom.

## Historic environment

Woodland was an important part of the landscape of the area from prehistoric times and during the Middle Ages this was managed as wood pasture or coppice. A high proportion of ancient woodland and replanted ancient woodland remains today plus an area of wood pasture at North Park Copse. The difficulty in working the water laden clay soils has allowed the survival of historic features such as estate boundaries, trackways and enclosed medieval woodlands. Interspersed with the woods were clay heaths, most notably Calbourne Heathfield which provided common grazing until it was enclosed in the late 16th and 17th centuries. Virtually all such heathlands have been enclosed and improved with some becoming secondary woodland. *Calbourne Rolling Farmland* had comparatively little arable cultivation during prehistoric and Roman times, there is evidence of some open-field agriculture on a small scale for instance at Newtown where traces of ridge and furrow survive. Modern field patterns show evidence of clearance of former woodland (assarting) but it is likely that a high proportion of field patterns derive from enclosure of heathland and common grazing in Medieval and post Medieval times.

Estate management of the 18th and 19th century and historic sporting uses also influence the field pattern and the woodlands, particularly in the historic parklands of Swainston and Westover.

Historic rural settlement in the area was sparse and dispersed. The planned medieval town of Newtown was connected with the harbour rather than the rural hinterland. The battery at Bouldnor was built to defend the Solent coast.

A dismantled railway line winds through the southern part of the area.

## Settlement and built character

Settlement in the *Calbourne Rolling Farmland* is sparse, scattered and variable in character ranging from traditional farmsteads and cottages of Bembridge Limestone to more suburban linear settlement at Cranmore to a few holiday villages of chalets and caravans. Some sections of the area are almost inaccessible, particularly along the coast and the danger area around Shepherd's Hill. Historic settlements include Newtown which was founded in the 13th century as a port on the Solent, it was destroyed by the French in 1377 and now remains as a few dwellings and the town hall dating from Georgian times.

Building materials include local stone, red brick, render and timber with some thatch and tiles for roofing.

## Landscape perceptions

Lord Tennyson visited Swainston Manor and wrote part of *Maud* there as well as *In the Garden at Swainston.* The following extract from the latter evokes the wooded night-time landscape:

*Nightingales sang in his woods:*

*The Master was far away:*

*Nightingales warbled and sang*

*Of a passion that lasts but a day;*

A well known feature of *Calbourne Rolling Farmland* is Winkle Street, a picturesque part of Calbourne. This has been a tourist attraction since the early 20th century and is described in *This Garden Isle* a publication dating from the 1930s by Peter Norris:

*A row of little cottages looks out across a rough stone lane to a stream babbling between grassy banks where wild flowers bloom in abundance. All about the cottage walls are beautiful flowering creepers, and in front of each window is a plot of flowers so carefully tended and loved...Despite the advent of charabancs and trippers, this piece of Calbourne still retains its air of peace and seclusion*.

The consultation with local people indicated that Calbourne is valued as a historic village, along with its water mill to the west. Newtown, Swainston Manor and the old railway line were also mentioned as landmarks in the West Wight landscape.

# EVALUATION

## Forces for Change

### *Past Change*

- Residential and recreational development that is unsympathetic to traditional character and form of settlements
- Erosion of building character and settlement pattern
- Increase in horse pastures degrading visual amenity
- Loss of traditional uses and maintenance of woodlands

### *Future Change*

- Increased tourist and visitor pressures leading to expansion of holiday centres and commercial development
- Small scale incremental development (signage, fencing, road improvements) that would impinge on the rural character
- Further encroachment by equine development
- Hedgerow trees are often mature and will require replacement to maintain the stock
- Demand for more access for leisure use such as walking and cycling

## Character

*Calbourne Rolling Farmland* is a peaceful, sometimes secluded landscape of pastoral farmland, frequent small woodlands many of them ancient, and scattered farmsteads and small villages. There are variations in character throughout the area with some sections being more settled or with more arable cultivation. Settlement is highly mixed in style and materials from historic villages of local stone to holiday parks and linear suburban style settlement. Although there are elements of strong character – the pastoral farmland with intact hedgerows, the frequent woodland and the traditional stone settlements - the variation in character means that overall *Calbourne Rolling Farmland* is **moderate** in strength of character.

## Condition

This is an area of well maintained pasture land with largely intact hedgerows with many mature hedgerow trees. The woodlands are variable in condition with active maintenance by coppicing in some areas. Overall condition of the Calbourne Rolling Farmland is **good**.

## Inherent landscape sensitivities

- The peaceful, secluded pastoral landscape
- Small scale scattered settlement of farmsteads and villages
- Largely intact hedgerow network with frequent hedgerow trees
- Historic and archaeological features such as Newtown and historic parklands
- Historic and biodiversity interest of ancient woodlands and wood pasture
- Areas of unimproved grassland

# STRATEGY

## Landscape Strategy

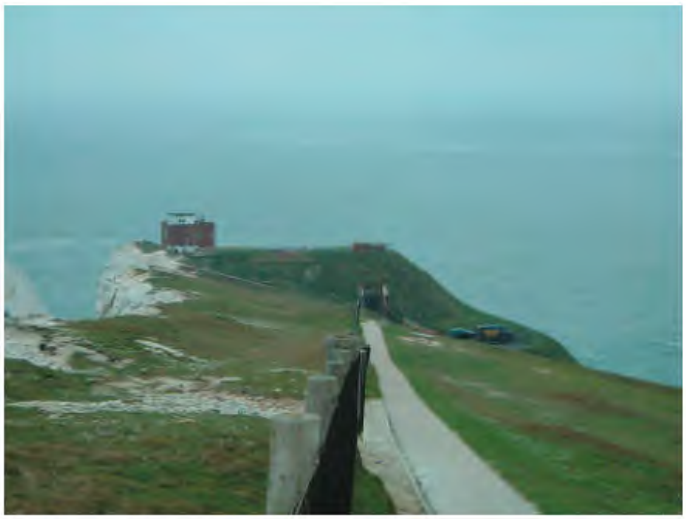
The landscape strategy for *Calbourne Rolling Farmland* is to **conserve** the tranquil, rural landscape of medium scale pastoral fields with the strong hedgerow network, good coverage of hedgerow trees, many small woods and areas of grassland, heath and scrub of high biodiversity value. Other elements for conservation are the stone farmsteads and historic village centres and the archaeological remains for instance of estate boundaries and parkland features. Alongside this aspects of the landscape will be enhanced to **strengthen** its character for instance through improved woodland management, woodland planting to screen unsympathetic developments and increasing habitats for birds and mammals within the mosaic of pasture and woodland.

### *Landscape Guidelines*

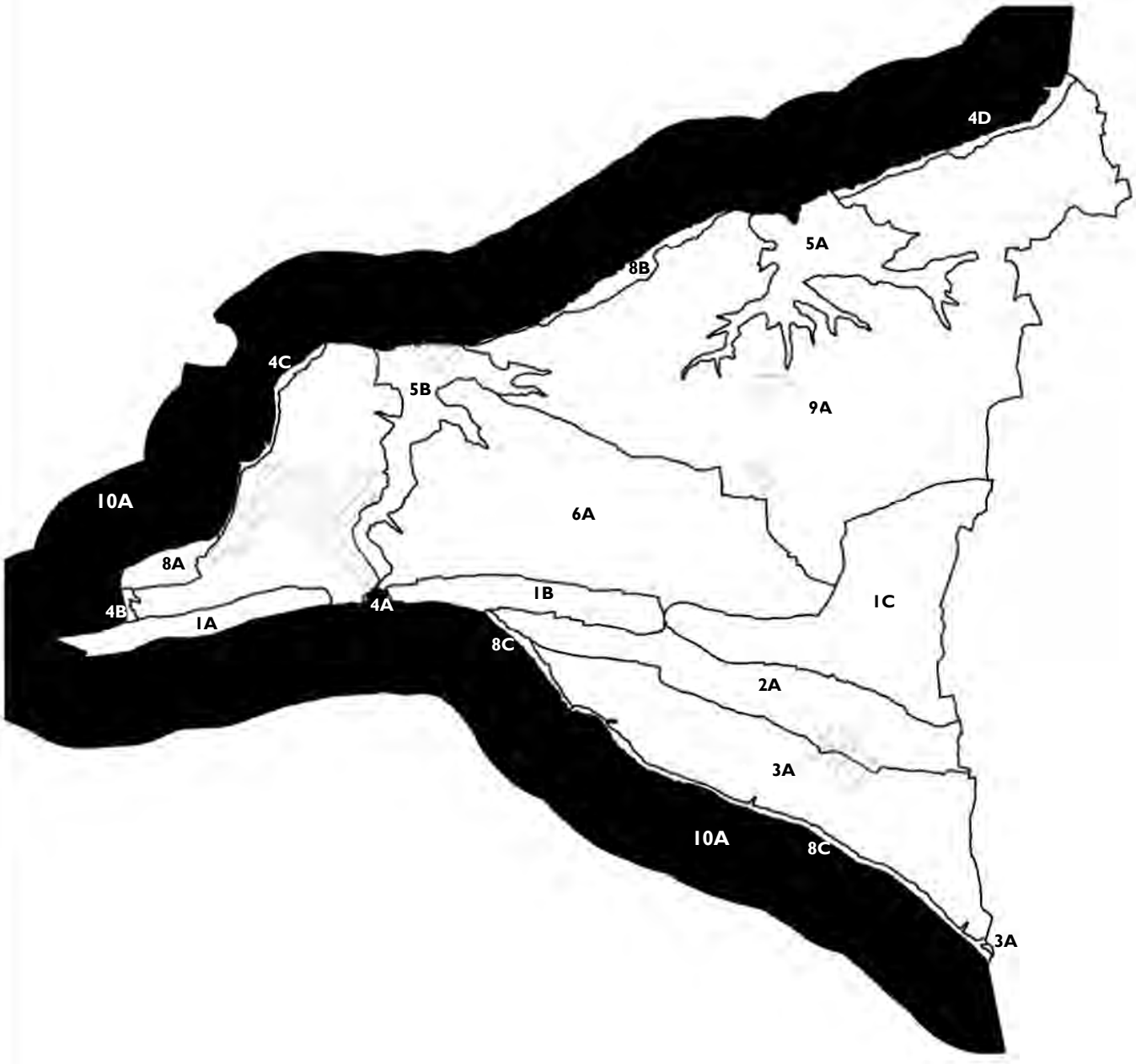
- Conserve the sense of peacefulness, with sparse settlement and road network and limited visible development
- Ensure consistent management of the hedgerow network and nurture new hedgerow trees to replace mature stock in the long term
- Leave margins of rough grass around arable fields to provide enhanced habitats for mammals, invertebrates and birds
- Take opportunities to restore areas of neutral grassland and heathland habitats
- Protect the sites of historic interest and above and below ground archaeological features
- Conserve historic landscape features such as estate boundaries, medieval enclosed woodland and wood pasture
- Restore historic features where appropriate for instance designed landscape of the parklands
- Encourage sustainable management of the woodland using traditional maintenance methods such as coppice where appropriate
- Conserve the small scale settlements of historic character and traditional materials

- Take opportunities to improve the visual integration of large scale development leisure developments for instance through planting in the historic character of woodland blocks linked by hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Minimise small scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network which could change the simple open character of the landscape
- Take opportunities for enhance recreational access for instance using the disused railway track for cycling and walking
- Enhance interpretation of the landscape in ways that do not impact on the peaceful, rural character of the area (for instance walking trails, leaflets, discrete signage and guided walks)

# LANDSCAPE TYPE 10: SEASCAPE



# 10: SEASCAPE




## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

10A West Wight Seascape

Urban Area

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# LANDSCAPE TYPE 10: SEASCAPE

**Landscape Character Areas**
10A: *West Wight Seascape*

## Location and Boundaries

The *Seascape* Landscape Type skirts the coast of West Wight with the shoreline boundary defined by Mean Low Water.

**Key Characteristics**

- Extensive area of open sea to the south and enclosed waters of the Solent to the north
- Views to the mainland, with major cities and large scale port and industrial installations contrast with the views to the largely wooded and unsettled coast of West Wight
- Underlying geology varying from Silts and Muds near shore and in sheltered harbours to Sand, Gravel and Pebbles to outcrops of Chalk around the Needles
- Variations of the seasons, tides and weather
- Marine species likely to include porpoises, dolphins and whales as well as fish, molluscs and algae plus sea birds
- Ships ranging from container vessels, naval vessels, regular ferry services, to shoals of yachts make a lively scene particularly in the busy shipping lanes of the Solent
- Lighthouses, buoys and seamarks
- Historic interest of shipwrecks

# 10A: WEST WIGHT SEASCAPE

**Location and Boundaries:** *West Wight Seascape* consists of the coastal waters around West Wight. The boundary between the s*eascape* and the cliffs and bays of West Wight is defined by Mean Low Water.

**Key Characteristics**

- Extensive area of open sea to the south and enclosed waters of the Solent to the north
- Varying geology, with Silt and Mud in sheltered areas, Gravel and Pebbles in the fast flowing Western Solent and ledges of Chalk off the south coast which harbour important underwater caves and form a hazard to shipping
- Effects of the seasons, tides and weather are fundamental to the character of the *seascape*
- Views to the shores of the mainland with their large scale settlements and port and industrial developments contrast with views to the largely unsettled and wooded cliffs of West Wight
- Marine species include porpoises, dolphins and whales as well as various fish, molluscs and algae
- Large numbers and many varieties of sea birds in the area due to the sheltered estuaries, harbours and wetlands that fringe the Solent
- Shipping from container vessels, naval vessels, ferries, fishing boats to motor boats and yachts crowd the waters of the Solent, while to the south vessels traverse the deeper waters of the Channel
- Presence of seamarks: beacons, buoys and lighthouses, including the Needles and Hurst Point Lighthouses
- Historic interest of many shipwrecks around the ledges off the south of West Wight and in the crowded waters of the Western Solent

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary description

*West Wight Seascape* is the area of sea surrounding West Wight. It is a varied *seascape* with the northern section consisting the western Solent, a busy shipping lane with views to the docks and industrial areas of Southampton while the southern section forms part of the English Channel, with views to open sea. Viewed from the *West Wight Seascape* the coast of West Wight presents a natural and unsettled appearance particularly along the long stretch of the *Hanover Cliff* on the south coast and along *Bouldnor Cliff* on the north coast. Buildings on promontories such as Fort Albert and Fort Victoria form landmarks and the lighthouses of the Needles and Hurst Point are key features, along with smaller seamarks; beacons and buoys. Ships and boats abound in the Solent from massive container vessels, to ferries, naval ships, fishing boats to shoals of yachts with their brightly coloured sails. In contrast the southern section of the area has little shipping due to its dangerous rock ledges. The Chalk that is such a feature of West Wight onshore continues to be important in the *seascape* where it forms underwater reefs and caves of high ecological significance. Elsewhere the sea floor is

founded on Silt and Mud, Sand and, in the fast flowing western Solent, on Gravel and Pebbles. The *West Wight Seascape* has a rich biodiversity including sea birds, dolphins and porpoises as well as the specialised fauna of the underwater chalk caves and reefs.

## Physical influences

The Solent is unique in Europe in having double tides, in addition the ebb tide is of short duration and this creates an unusually fast flowing tide. The sea is fairly shallow in the *West Wight Seascape* with maximum depth of around 30m to the south of the area with most of it at less than 20m depth. In sheltered areas of the near shore and harbours sediments of fine silts and muds form the ocean floor, grading into sands, gravels, pebbles and cobbles. In the western Solent where the tides are particularly fast flowing pebbles and gravel predominate. The chalk outcrops around the Needles are highly varied topographically with under water cliffs, caves, gullies and boulder slopes, supporting a great range of subtidal fauna.

## Ecological character

The southern section of *West Wight Seascape* largely falls within the South Wight Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The habitats within the *seascape* area that are a primary reason for this designation are the Chalk reefs around the Needles and Freshwater Bay and the Chalk sea caves which host many rare algal species plus a range of molluscs such as limpets. The area of *seascape* hugging the north coast of the West Wight forms part of the Solent Maritime SAC which is designated for its estuarial, cordgrass and Atlantic salt meadow habitats. The *West Wight Seascape* supports a wide range of marine birds, as well as cetaceans such as the harbour porpoise, bottle-nosed dolphin and long-finned pilot whale and many species of fish and shellfish.

## Historic environment

The *West Wight Seascape* has been the site of many shipwrecks and the remains of these vessels still litter the seabed. The southern coast of West Wight is particularly inhospitable, presenting a long face of steep broken cliffs with only a few chines giving access to the land above. Around a mile and a half offshore from this coast are the Brook and Brighstone Ledges and these rock outcrops have caused many vessels to founder. The channel between the Needles and Hurst Point is another dangerous area within the *West Wight Seascape* where the combination of a narrow channel and very fast flowing tides have caused many ships to be lost. This has been marked since the late 18th century by the Needles and Hurst Lighthouses.

## Settlement and built character

The area is unsettled but views to buildings on land influence the character of the *Seascape* ranging from the mid 19th century forts of the west end of West Wight, lighthouses, piers and landing stages, castles at Hurst and Yarmouth and the large scale port and industrial installations of Southampton.

## Landscape perceptions

The picturesque qualities of the chalk cliffs and crags of the Needles form a focus for the *West Wight Seascape* and are celebrated in visual art from Turner's paintings to innumerable postcards and calendars. The consultation workshop highlighted the value put upon the *Seascape* by local people. In particular they noted the views from the sea to the coloured cliffs of Alum Bay, the Needles and to the high downs. Wildlife including sea birds, corals, reefs and oyster beds were mentioned along with manmade structures such as piers and forts. The interaction of man and the sea was highlighted including the coastguard, beacons, lifeboats, ferries, the visiting paddlesteamers the Waverley and Balmoral, yachting and fishing. The views out to sea from the downs were considered outstanding along with sunsets over Totland Bay.

# EVALUATION

***Forces for Change***

### *Past Change*

- Dredging of channels through the Solent
- Over-exploitation of fish stocks
- Coastal erosion

### *Future Change*

- Dredging of channels through the Solent
- Over-exploitation of fish stocks
- Increasing demand for leisure activities such as yachting, motor boating and sea sports
- Coastal erosion
- Changes to sea level due to global warming
- Archaeological resource both revealed by and susceptible to coastal forces

## Character

*West Wight Seascape* exhibits a **strong** character with open sea to the south and the busy enclosed shipping channel of the west Solent to the north. Fringed by remote cliffs and bays with views to forts, castles and lighthouses it is rich in biodiversity interest from sea birds to dolphins and whales and in the underwater archaeology of numerous wrecks. The many vessels of all sizes and functions including fleets of colourful sailing vessels make the Western Solent a particularly lively and varied scene which changes with the seasons and the tides.

## Condition

This is an area of overall **good** condition as indicated by its high biodiversity value and the designation of the majority of the West Wight Seascape as parts of the South Wight Maritime and Solent Maritime SACs.

## Inherent landscape sensitivities

- Views to the remote and natural cliffs and bays of West Wight
- Ecologically important habitats and species particularly the chalk caves and reefs, the many varieties of birds and marine species
- Presence of shipping from container vessels to yachts with the latter a particular feature of the West Solent adding colour and movement to the area
- Historic forts and lighthouses that fringe the area
- Archaeological remains of wrecks

# STRATEGY

## Landscape Strategy

The landscape strategy for *West Wight Seascape* is to **conserve** its qualities as a varied seascape of a busy shipping channel to the north and open sea to the south, with views of the unsettled coasts of West Wight, plus to the historic coastal forts, piers, and Yarmouth castle along with the famous seamark of the Needles Lighthouse. Also to be conserved are the habitats and species of ecological significance including chalk caves and reefs, sea birds, cetaceans and other marine species.

### *Landscape Guidelines*

- Conserve the views to the remote and natural cliffs and bays of West Wight
- Conserve the ecologically important habitats and species particularly the chalk caves and reefs, the many varieties of birds and marine species
- Protect the historic forts and lighthouses that fringe the area
- Encourage conservation of significant archaeological remains of wrecks
- Carry out appropriate monitoring and recording of the archaeological resource

# APPENDIX 1: Strategy Map

# APPENDIX 1: STRATEGY MAP

This assessment has confirmed the landscape of West Wight as of largely strong character and good condition as would be suggested by the substantial proportion of the area designated as AONB and/or Heritage Coast.

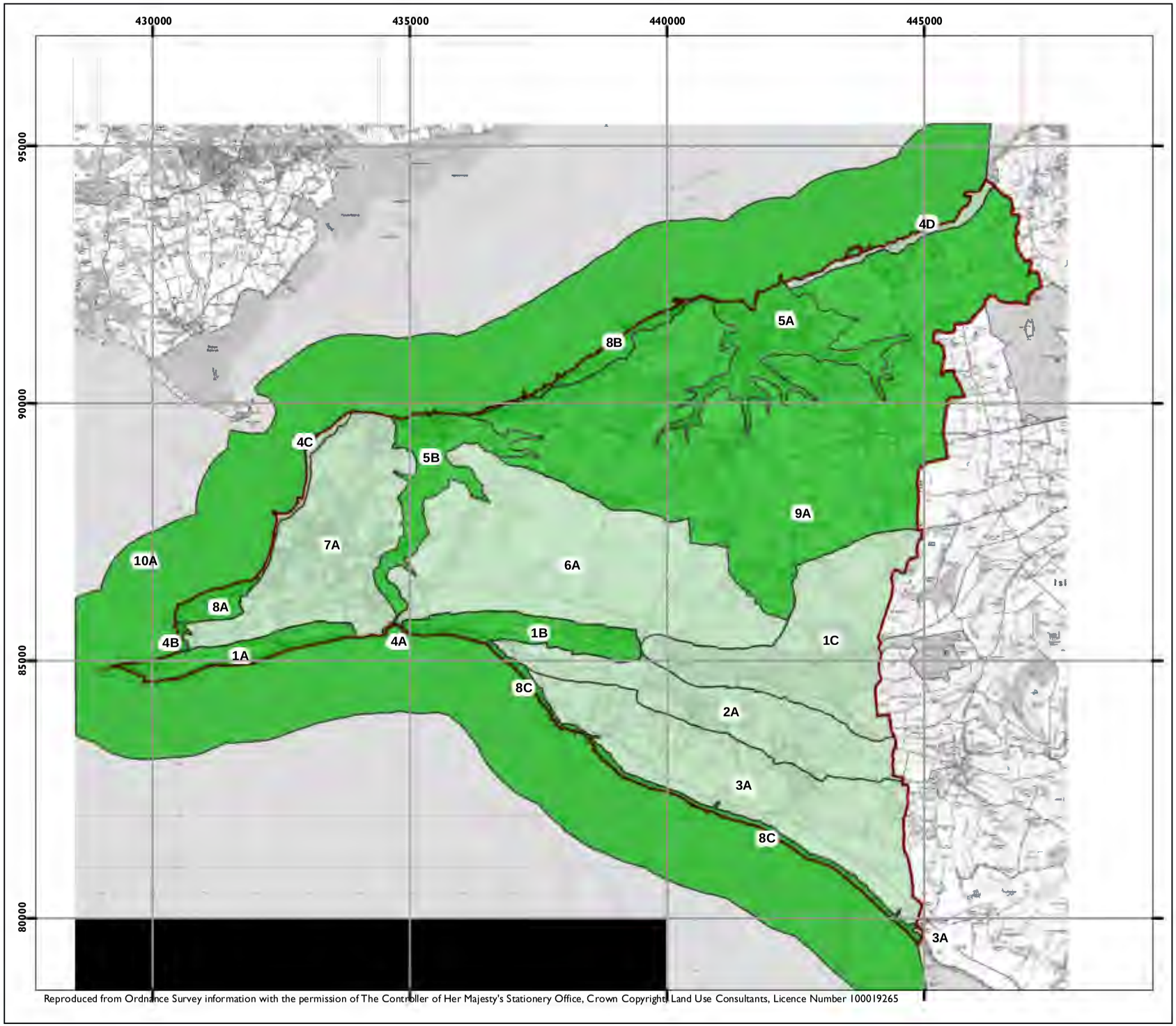
**Figure 16: Strength of Character** and **Figure 15: Condition** summarise these aspects of the West Wight landscape by character area. From these it can be seen that a significant area of the landscape is strong in character, the rest moderate with none considered to be of weak character. The chalk downs, greensand hills, bays, estuaries and cliffs are generally highly distinctive and strong in character while the clay farmlands are moderate.

Similarly the estuaries, bays, cliffs and downs are mainly in good condition along with some of the farmland while other areas of the various types are in moderate condition. There are no areas in poor condition.

Combining these two measures of landscape character determines the strategies for individual landscape types and these are shown in graphic form in **Figure 17: Landscape Strategy**. The methodology for determining the strategy is outlined in **Appendix 2**. This map is a summary of the strategy over the whole of West Wight; the text for each landscape type gives the detailed strategies for the areas with the specific characteristics and features that require conservation, restoration, strengthening or improvement.

As will be seen from **Figure 17** in large areas of the West Wight, particularly the estuaries, cliffs, seascape and some of the bays and the chalk downs, the strategy is to conserve these landscape of strong character and good condition. Here the emphasis is on conservation of existing character and of the particular features that contribute to this character. The aim should be to continue the current management regime and/or adopt best practice approaches. New characteristics should be introduced only with great care. These areas contain many of the features and landscapes local people particularly value and that draw visitors to the Isle of Wight. To conserve these areas and allow them to continue to be enjoyed by local and tourist alike access and interpretation needs to be sensitive to the visual, ecological and historic character of the landscape.

Elsewhere either the character of the landscape is less strong or the condition is moderate and in these areas the policies are of conservation combined with restoration, strengthening or improvement. Here the emphasis is on restoring elements that have been lost or are declining and on improving and enhancing character. This may include improvements to landscape management practices and the introduction of positive new elements or features.




# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 15:
Condition of Landscape

## Key

Study area

**Condition of Landscape**

Good

Moderate

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0 0.5 1 2 3 km

N



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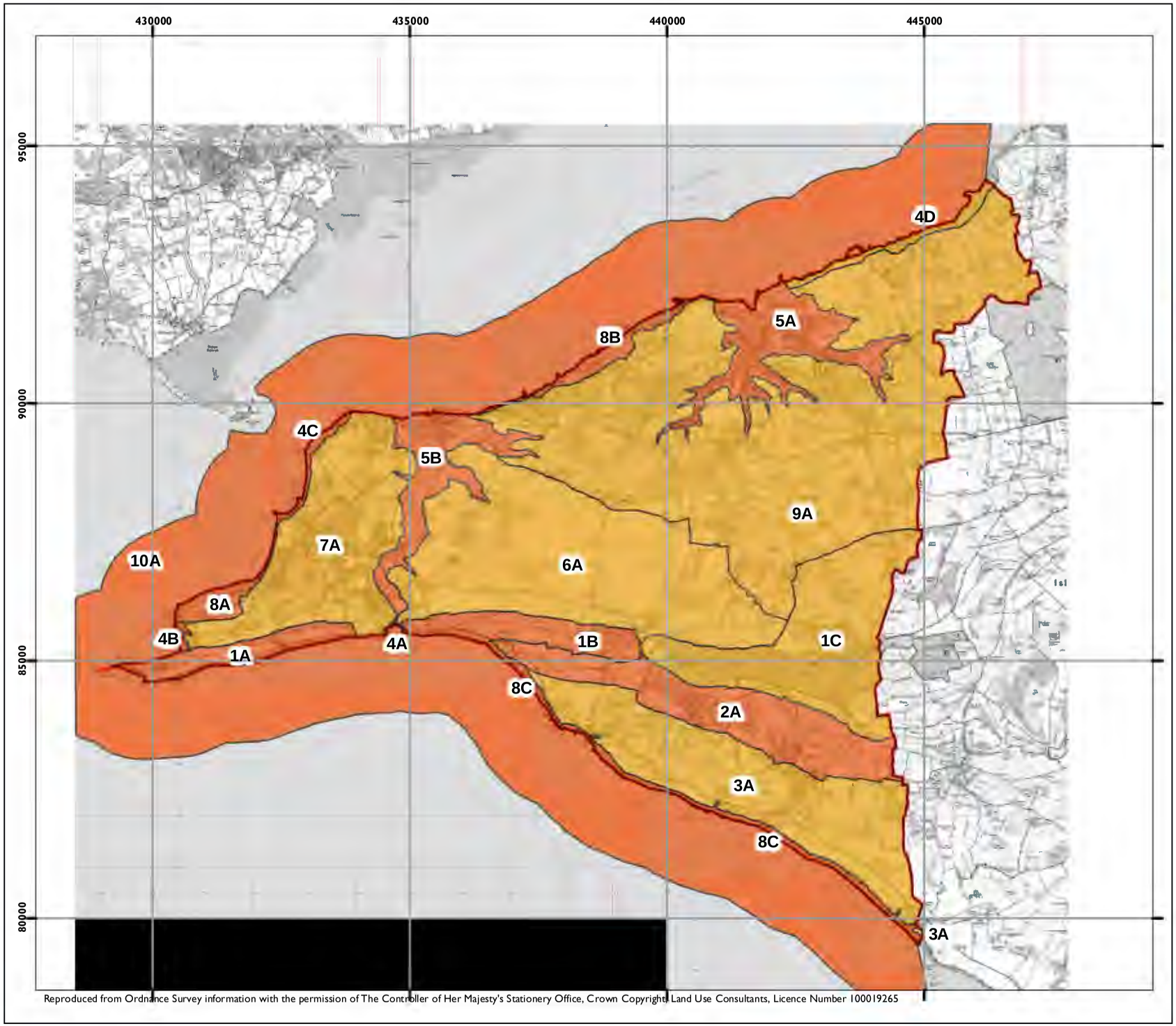


# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 16:
Strength of Landscape Character

## Key

Study area

**Strength of Landscape Character**

Moderate

Strong

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N

0 0.5 1 2 3 km

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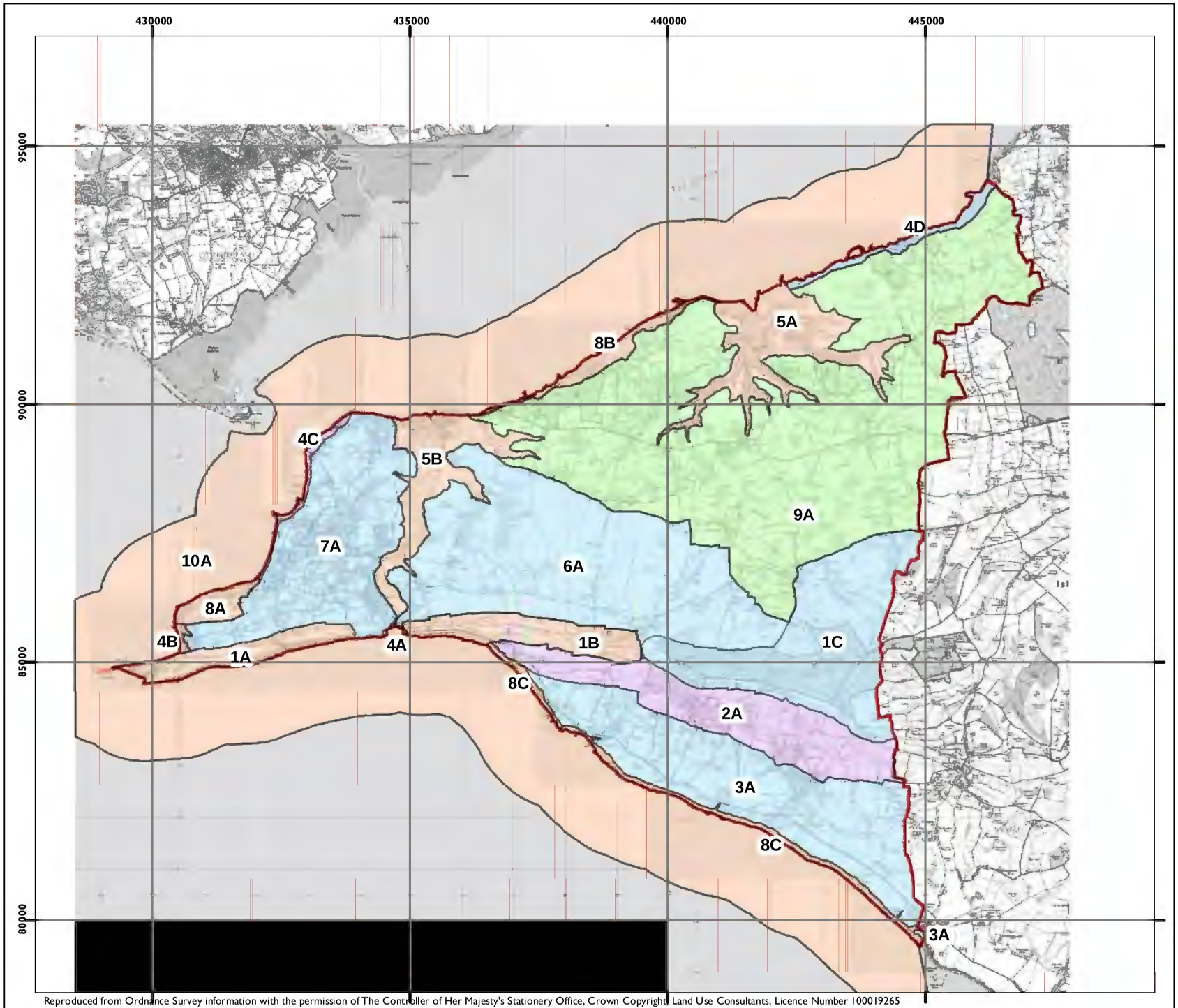
# West Wight Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 17:
Landscape Strategy




## Key

- Study area

**Landscape Strategy**

- Conserve
- Conserve and Restore
- Conserve and Strengthen
- Conserve and Enhance

T:\Gis\3400\3462-01_West_of_IoW_LCA\Themes\ArcGIS8-2\3462-01_Figure-17_Strategy_A4.mxd

0 0.5 1 2 3 km

N



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# APPENDIX 2: Methodology

# APPENDIX 2: ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

8.1. The method for undertaking the landscape character assessment follows the current accepted method promoted by the Countryside Agency as set out in the document *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland* (2002).

8.2. The assessment has been prepared within the framework of the Countryside Agency and English Nature's Countryside Character Initiative as shown on the *Character of England Map* and it also considers the context provided by the Agency's *National Landscape Typology* and the Landscape Assessment of the Isle of Wight AONB (1994).

8.3. The process for undertaking the study involved five main stages, described below, namely:

- Data Collation
- Characterisation
- Field survey
- Evaluation
- Consultation

8.4. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) was used throughout the study as the tool for collating, manipulating and presenting data.

## Data Collation

8.5. **Baseline Data**: This stage involved the collation and mapping of a wide range of existing information on the characteristics of West Wight from a variety of sources including baseline maps of geology, topography, soils and hydrology; schedules of designated and protected areas and features; and a review of technical literature including Environment Agency information, English Nature's Natural Area Profiles etc. It also included collation of information relating to the 'perceptual' characteristics of the landscape, such as literary references or as a source of artistic inspiration. The Isle of Wight Archaeology Service's Draft Historic Landscape Characterisation was used to inform the historic and archaeological aspects of the study.

8.6. **Landscape Character Context:** The characterisation works within the existing framework. At this stage we collated and mapped relevant information from the Countryside Character Area Description of the Isle of Wight (ref. **Figure 2**) and the The National Landscape Typology (ref. **Figure 3**). At this stage we also reviewed the Landscape Assessment of the Isle of Wight AONB (1994).

## Characterisation

8.7. The process of characterisation drew together all the information outlined above, to develop a draft classification. The approach follows best practice as promoted by the Countryside Agency in the *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland* (2002) in maintaining a distinction between landscape types and character areas, and developing a hierarchical approach as follows:

- **Landscape Types** - which are generic and share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation and human influences, e.g. 'Chalk Downs' or 'Estuaries';

- **Character Areas** - which are single and unique, discrete geographical areas of the landscape type, e.g. 'Tennyson Down' or 'Newtown Estuary'.

8.8. For the purposes of this assessment emphasis has been placed upon the definition and subdivision of the landscape at a scale of 1:25 000 and at the Landscape Character Area scale i.e. the identification of particular geographical areas of distinctive landscape.

8.9. The study specifically **excluded** an analysis of the area within development limits. Therefore, although the smaller villages *were* considered as a part of a wider landscape context and character, no specific townscape or urban character assessments were undertaken of the more built-up areas such as Yarmouth and Freshwater.

## Survey

8.10. A field survey was undertaken to appraise the draft characterisation. This specifically focussed on:

- verification and fine-tuning of the classification of the landscape character areas (and types) identified;

- making refinements to landscape character area (and type) boundaries and names;

- recording landscape character,

- assessing condition, key trends and forces for change.

8.11. A systematic and rigorous approach was adopted for the survey, with information recorded on 1:25,000 scale maps and a Field Record Sheet. A comprehensive photo record was also made. The final classification encompasses ten landscape types, including a total of eighteen character area subdivisions.

8.12. **A note on boundary lines**: The precision of boundaries drawn around landscape character areas and types varies with the scale and level of detail of the assessment. This assessment has been mapped at a scale of 1:25,000 which means that it is suitable for use at this scale.

8.13. In reality landscape character rarely changes abruptly and the boundaries indicated in the West Wight Landscape Character Assessment therefore sometimes represent zones of transition in character relating to changes in topography, geology, soils, cultural patterns, land use etc. rather than marked changes on the ground. In practice boundaries of this nature have frequently been drawn to follow physical or mappable features such as roads, lanes or field boundaries which provide 'best fit', for example the boundary between *2A Brightstone Greensand Hills* and *3A Chilton Clay Farmland* whichs follows the line of the B3399.

8.14. **A note on character areas:** Character Types and Areas and have been mapped at a scale of 1:25,000 and are suitable for use at this scale.

8.16. The Character Areas share generic characteristics with other areas of the same Landscape Type but have a particular 'sense of place'. Therefore Character Areas defined and described in this report have distinct patterns of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field pattern etc. which contribute to their particular character. However, it is important to be aware that Character Areas are not homogeneous and that there is

variation within them, for example an area of parkland found within a character area would have different characteristics to, say, an adjoining pastoral field but the Character Area overall may be unified by the presence of a number of parklands set within pastoral fields or a distinctive landform.

8.17. **A note on built areas:** This is an assessment of the rural landscape. The land within the development limits of villages and settlements was not studied in detail as part of the LCA. The smaller villages have been considered and form part of the description on landscape character. However, no specific townscape or urban character assessments were undertaken of the more built-up areas such as Yarmouth and Freshwater and where these occur within the boundaries of Character Areas it is the undeveloped area surrounding the settlement to which the description is referring.

## Method for the Evaluation

### *Introduction*

8.18. There is no current accepted methodology for evaluating Landscape Character. As the Countryside Agency's Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland states *'The use of Landscape Character Assessment in making judgements is a fast-moving scene amongst practitioners'*. The approach for the evaluation undertaken as part of the West Wight LCA aims to follow current best practice and is set out below.

8.19. The purposes of the West Wight Landscape Character Assessment Evaluation are to inform the Landscape Partnership bid for West Wight by demonstrating how and why the landscape of West Wight is valued and distinctive and to provide the basis for strategic landscape planning and management. In order to achieve these aims the evaluation needs to develop judgements on:

1. the ongoing processes of **change** that are/will affect the future landscape
2. the **condition** and **strength of character** of the landscape
3. inherent landscape **sensitivities**
4. an overall guiding **landscape strategy**
5. **recommendations for managing change**

8.20. The logic, terminology (as set out by the Countryside Agency guidance, where possible) and rationale behind the evaluation in this assessment are set out below.

### *Forces for Change*

8.21. The purpose of this section is to identify the factors that have affected landscape change (over the last 20 years) and those likely to affect the landscape in the future. These are both positive and negative forces for change that are known to or have potential to act on the landscape, including agricultural management issues, policy and development pressures. The list has been determined in discussion with the client and stakeholders.

### *Strength of Character*

8.22. A description of how the combination of individual components and their contribution to landscape character. It is connected to distinctiveness and landscape integrity. Strength of character is determined by judging how distinct and recognisable the pattern of elements is

that defines the character of the landscape. This includes the combination of physical and cultural attributes and the sense of place that they evoke. It is defined on a three-point scale of weak, moderate or strong.

### *Condition*

8.23. A description of how the condition and intactness of the different components create a perception of the overall condition of the landscape. It is defined on a three-point sale of poor, moderate or good.

### *Inherent Landscape Sensitivities*

8.24. This section outlines the sensitivity of each Character Area and its key attributes and features to landscape change.

### *Landscape Strategy*

8.25. The following table is used to determine an overall landscape strategy for the character area. It is based on a consideration of strength of character and condition.

| CONDITION | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **good** | Strengthen | **Conserve and Strengthen** | **Conserve** |
| | **declining** | Strengthen and Enhance | **Conserve and Enhance** | **Conserve and Restore** |
| | **poor** | Creation | Restore and Enhance | Restore |
| | | **Weak** | **moderate** | **strong** |
| | | **STRENGTH OF CHARACTER** | | |

8.26. The strategy is presented for the character area as a whole and identifies any particular management needs for specific elements. These are developed further in the guidelines. The aim is not just to give a blunt prescription for the whole area, but to identify the specific features to which the strategy applies. The aim is to set out broad principles to manage and direct landscape change for example in order to protect the highest quality and most sensitive landscapes from adverse change and to encourage positive change in weak or degraded landscapes. The strategy objectives are combinations of different aims ranging from preserving the current landscape (conservation) in the areas of strong character and good condition to encouraging positive change (creation) in the landscapes of weak character and poor condition. These are illustrated in the box below.

**Landscape Strategies**

**Conserve:** Landscapes of strong character in good condition and therefore judged to be of high quality where emphasis should be on conservation of existing character and of particular features that contribute to this character. The aim should be to continue the current management regime/adopt best practice approaches. Great care will need to be taken in the introduction of new characteristics.

**Enhance/restore:** Landscape character is strong/positive but becoming weakened and individual features may have suffered decline or damage. Within these landscapes the emphasis should be on restoring elements that have been lost or declined and on enhancing character. This may include improvements to landscape management practices and the introduction of positive new elements or features.

**Create:** Landscape character is weak and is not highly valued and its condition is declining/poor. Here the objective is to form a new and different landscape or accelerate change towards a new character with positive benefits for people and the environment. This should be proactive rather than reactive and it may be appropriate to develop plans or strategies in consultation with stakeholders to determine appropriate new character.

### *Landscape Guidelines*

8.27. For each character area a set of guidelines has been developed based upon the changes identified. The guidelines indicate the actions required, with reference to the overall landscape objective in order to ensure that distinctive character is maintained.

## Consultation

8.28. Involving the public in the assessment has been a key part of the study. Two consultation workshops were held at Freshwater on the afternoon and evening of 26th February 2005.

8.29. The objectives of the workshops were to:

- explain the process of landscape character assessment
- test the characterisation map – boundaries and names
- understand perceptions of what people value as important/special about West Wight and why
- understand concerns about issues/threats and opportunities affecting the landscape (change)

8.30. The information that emerged from the workshops was used to refine and augment the assessment adding local detail and nuance. An account of the workshop methodology and summary of results is given at **Appendix 3**.

# APPENDIX 3: Consultation

# APPENDIX 3: PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Two public consultation workshops on the draft landscape characterisation were held in West Wight on the 26th January 2005. An invited audience included wildlife groups, civic societies, parish councils, local history groups etc. with the main focus on interested local residents – who can add local knowledge to the assessment process.

The objectives of the workshops were to:

- explain the process of LCA;
- test the characterisation map – boundaries;
- understand perceptions of what people value as important/special about West Wight and why;
- understand concerns about issues/threats and opportunities affecting the landscape (change).

The information that emerged from the workshops was used to refine and augment the assessment adding local detail and nuance.

The format and results of the workshop is summarised below.

## 1. Icebreaking Exercise

An initial ice breaking exercise gave an outline of the profile of participants; age, sex, location, connection with landscape and initial consideration of outstanding features of West Wight.

**Age**

| | |
|---|---|
| <25 | 1 |
| 26-40 | 2 |
| 41-60 | 14 |
| >60 | 18 |

**Gender**

| | |
|---|---|
| M | 20 |
| F | 17 |

**Time lived in Isle of Wight**

<5 years 12

<10 years 4

11-25 years 7

>25 years 13

**Outstanding features of the West Wight landscape**

Afton marsh and estuary
Beauty
Coastal downland
Compton beach
Country to sea with limited development x2
Country walks x2
Cranmore
Freshwater Bay
Fort Victoria
Landscape and Sea x2
Tennyson down x3
The Downs x2
Newtown creek
River Yar
Sense of space unpolluted by industrial complexes
Skylines
Totland bay
Views
Walters copse

## 2. What is valued in the West Wight Landscape and why

After an introduction to landscape character assessment as a process and to the West Wight Assessment draft landscape types and areas the consultees took part in a exercise considering what is valued about various aspects of the West Wight landscape. Responses are summarised below.

### Views

| What? | Why? |
|---|---|
| • South West from Turf Walk | Accessible / sunset |
| • Downs | Views in all directions |
| • From Broad Lane looking SW, NE and NW | |
| • From Tapnell | |
| • To Tennyson Monument | |
| • Gotten Leaze footpath leading | |

to Brighstone Forest
- From Headon Warren
- Compton Beach
- To chalk cliffs
- Newtown Creek from all edges and small bridge near Town Hall — Boats / saltpans / wildlife
- From Causeway to All Saints Church and Yarmouth
- From my kitchen window looking towards Shalcombe down when skeins of geese fly over
- From Maidenscroft in line with
- Watching owls with Afton Down and 2 burial mounds up on Warren Farm
- From sea to all coastline esp Heritage Coast in N
- From Totland esplanade to sea — Sunset
- From Dimbola Tower to Freshwater Bay
- White cliffs from Military road — Unique
- Headon Warren towards Yarmouth and Needles
- Bluebell woods at Mottistone continuing downhill from down and Crainges Copse
- Brook Down — Views to sea and land
- Five Barrows at Brook down — Can see lots of the Island
- From Headon Warren — View to mainland/ watching boats
- Top of Mottistone — Sea on both sides – feels like an Island!
- NT car park on Military Rd — Looking at white cliffs
- From Freshwater Bay — Peaceful in winter
- From All Saints church down the Causeway and Yar estuary
- From Golden Hill Fort over Totland and to Newport — Good all night
- From top of hill on Military Road — Unspoilt
- Brook Down into 'Greensand Valley'
- West High Down — Views
- From Fort Vic coastal path and beach — Views to Hurst Castle & mainland

| | |
|---|---|
| • Yarmouth Bridge to downs | Diversity and unspoilt |
| • Headon Warren to Needles | Iconic, dramatic |
| • Causeway to Yarmouth | River, rural, ecology/ wildlife |
| • Turfwalk (Stone's Green) to Alum Bay | Tidal changes, wildlife, sunset |
| • Tennyson Down Panorama | Diversity, distance, clarity, Inspiring |
| • Newtown Estuary | Wildlife, flowers, history, field structure |
| • Yar Estuary | Wildlife, feeling of Yar! |
| • Mottistone Down | Rolling hills, farmland, views |
| • Cranmore | Unique, wildlife |
| • Coastguard cottages at the Needles | Dramatic |
| • Brook /Compton Downs | Panoramic views of land/sea |
| • Brighstone Down | |
| • Headon Warren to Colwell | Settlement pattern and ridgeway at Brook Hill |
| • Compton Bay from Afton Down | Patterns of waves, shape of Bay |
| • Brook Hill looking west | Coastline and landuse |
| • Totland Bay at low tide | Sand shapes, Hurst Spit |
| • Freshwater Bay | Iconic view |
| • Afton Down panorama | Can see all WW 360° |
| • Watcombe Bay | Remote, unique |
| • Scratchell's Bay | Height, depth |
| • Top of Tapnell | |
| • Compton Bay | |
| • Yarmouth Mill | |
| • Kings Manor looking east | Dog Kennel Cottage |

**Landmarks**

What?

Afton Down
Afton Marshes
Alum Bay and Needles Old Battery
Beacon
Bouldnor Forest
Burnes High
Churches (thatched)
Compton Farm
Dimbola
Fort Albert
Fort Victoria
Freshwater Bay
Golden Hill
Hanover Point – Navigational Point

Hill House, Brook
Manor Houses
Military Road
Pubs
Stag Rock
Tennyson Monument – Navigational Point
Tennyson Trail
Totland Pier
Watcombe Bay
Yarmouth Castle
Yarmouth Harbour
Yarmouth Mill
Yarmouth Pier
Yarmouth wreck buoys(?)
Newtown Village
Farringford
The Longstone
Brook Down Barrows
Radio Mast
Headon Warren Barrows
Winkle Street
Calbourne Mill and Village
Brighstone
Cycle track / walking
Needles Rocket Site
Beaches
Memorial Hall
Old Coastguard cottages
Thatches
Moons Hill
Stream through Freshwater
Five Barrows
Barrows
Brighstone Forest
Brook Hill House
Churches (thatched and others)
Colwell Bay
Compton Bay – stone in the sea (thimble) Hanover Point
Compton Beach – submerged wreck
Coombe Farm – smugglers cottage
Dimbola
Farringford
Fort Albert
Fort Redoubt
Fort Victoria
Freshwater Bay
George
Golden Hill Fort

| | |
|---|---|
| | Hanover House |
| | Longstone |
| | Marconi |
| | Manor Houses (Mottistone etc) |
| | Memorial Hall |
| | Needles |
| | Needles Battery |
| | Needles Rocket Site |
| | Newtown and Town Hall and Estuary |
| | Old Farm Houses and barns |
| | Old Freshwater Village |
| | Old Railway Route |
| | Pepper Pots |
| | Sand Hard Yarmouth |
| | Stone Kilns (beehives) Moons Hill |
| | Swainston Manor |
| | Tennyson Monument |
| | Totland and pier |
| | Walkways and Cycleways |
| | Yar Estuary |
| | Yarmouth Castle |
| | Yarmouth Harbour |
| | Yarmouth Mill |
| | Yarmouth Pier |
| | Yarmouth Town Hall |
| Why? | Navigation |
| | Traditional style |
| | Visual |
| | Fabulous views |
| | Heritage |

**Heritage including Built Character**

Identified within this topic are three main areas: people, customs and traditions, and the historic environment.

The people include Marconi at Alum Bay, Tennyson who was inspired by the landscape, Julia Margaret Cameron the pioneer female Victorian photographer, Robert Hooke the inventor who was born in Freshwater, the 1970 Festival at Afton and all those who performed there, the three Bishops at Brighstone (Wilberforce, Ken and Moberley), Garibaldi who visited Brook amongst other places, also at Brook JB Preistley lived at Brook Hill House and GF Watts the famous painter.

Under the topic of customs and traditions there are the Mollyshag (*local expression for certain caterpillars*), carnival traditions, Old Gaffers Weekend in Yarmouth, Newtown Randy – a local fair, the literary tradition of the area, smuggling, milling at Calbourne (recorded in the Doomsday Book) Lower, Yarmouth and Yafford Mills, pottery at Chessell, farming and the

associated buildings such as Middleton Farm, the local rural vernacular, the Space Programmes of the 1950's at the Needles, local fishing and its techniques such as localised lobster pots and the Mottistone Jazz Festival.

The historic environment included the Military Forts also known as Palmerstone's Follies, the rural vernacular architecture of the area such as villages like Brighstone and Winkle Street in Calbourne, thatched churches such as St Agnes' and churches in general, the prisoner of war camp at Cranmore, manor houses such as Hanover House and Mottistone House, the village greens and commons. The abandoned medieval town on Newtown (*Francheville as it was known then*), Ancient Monuments such as the barrows on the downs but under potential threat from motor vehicles, Farringford House – home of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Dimbola Lodge – home of Julia Margaret Cameron, the piers, boat buildings

## Access and Recreation

Both groups identified two types of recreation; indoors and outdoors. Both are well catered for in the West Wight. Outdoor recreation activities mentioned include marine sports, paragliding, tennis, horse riding, recreation grounds, Local Nature Reserves, Art on the Turf Walk, Arts Away, the West Wight Festival of Sport, walking and cycling. Indoor recreation facilities incorporated the Sports Centre and leisure facilities, the libraries, village halls and historic buildings such as Fort Victoria.

This led on to issues over access to these facilities. In general the feeling was that there was very access to the landscape, although problems were identified. Sustainable access was highlighted as a must for the future and there was a call for better car parking, particularly at the point of access to outdoor recreation sites (Compton Bay, for example). Disabled access was an issue that was prominent, again particularly in relation to outdoor recreation.

The age of the West Wight population was mention in relation to recreation. There is a large population of pensionable age who are maintaining recreation activity. This places pressures on our recreational facilities over how people wish to use them. This is a particular problem in outdoor recreation and issues such as the right to roam and the Crow report were mentioned. This was also linked to the use of bridleways (especially Afton Down) by off road motor vehicles, which it was felt created ecological pressure on the facility whilst spoiling the enjoyment of others. The upkeep of open space for recreational value was also discussed and it was felt that more could be, in fact, needs to be done.

In terms of access, physical access was identified as a major problem for visitors and residents alike. The ease of getting to a point a recreation, condition of the roads, lack of signage, unsympathetic bus service and a large number of visitor coaches clogging narrow lanes. Perceived access was also recognised as an issue and the groups called for more school involvement to help remedy this.

## Natural Environment

| What? | Why? |
|---|---|
| • Alum Bay | |
| • Afton Down | Special Celtic site, pop Festival |
| • Badgers | |

- Beaches
- Bird migration (marshes) Diversity
- Butterflies – Painted Ladies

In Newtown Copses, White Admirals, Duke of Burgundy

- Causeway/around estuaries
- Chalk Downs and flora Lots compared to other places (unique)
- Climate, weather
- Dark skies
- Development on sand
- Dinosaurs
- Door mice Preserve & protect
- Dutch Elm Disease Has changed LSP
- Early Gentian
- Effect of infill/ribbon development
- English Channel & Solent Surf beaches
- Erosion
- European site (SPA, SAC)
- Flooding – importance of dykes
- Footpaths
- Fort Victoria Country Park
- Freshwater Bay
- Geographical variety of environment
- Heath land – Headon Warren Wildlife
- Hedgerows, copses & wildlife corridors Wildlife habitats
- Heritage coast
- Little Auk
- Livestock, Agriculture
- Loss of mixed farming, loss of hedges, ploughed land. More hedgerows needed
- Mill Copse
- Need better planning
- Newtown Estuary Waterfowl, ancient Settlement
- NNR – Yar, Newtown & Afton Marsh Special
- Orchids in Freshwater and Newtown
- Owl (redevelopment of farm buildings is issue)
- Red Squirrel Unique
- Reinstate hedgerows
- Road widening – destroying hedges, verges, etc Loss of distinctiveness
- Ravens on cliffs of Tennyson Down Rare

| | |
|---|---|
| • Sea and coastal views/features | Unique |
| • Seabirds on estuary | |
| • SSSI – Afton Marsh, LNR | |
| • Tennyson Downs | Unspoilt, monument |
| • Tennyson trail & shepherds | |
| • Too many magpies | |
| • Totland Bay | Over Headon Warren – views |
| • Tranquillity | |
| • Trees and small woodlands | |
| • Turfwalk | |
| • Uniqueness of AONB | Unique |
| • Watercourses and ponds | |
| • West Wight coastline | sea level risen by arch. remains rich |
| • White Cliffs – open | Breath-taking, uplifting |
| • Wide open spaces | |
| • Woodland and flora | |

**Seascape**

There are a couple of prominent themes to come out of the seascape topic. People identified certain elements of the coastline into broad categories such as natural geography, wildlife, manmade structures and activities.

In no particular order the Thimble and fossil forest at Hanover Point, Black Rock, the east and west of the Solent and south coast, big waves, the undeveloped south west coastline, Compton Beach, cliff falls and erosion, salt beds, the Yar and Newtown rivers, Stag Arch and Mermaid rocks at Freshwater Bay, the Bouldnor seascape, the Needles, the coloured sands at Alum Bay, Chines and Totland Bay are all examples of the natural geography identified by local residents. The wildlife included seabirds, marine life, wild flowers, wintering birds, Scratchells Bay and exciting important marine environments such as corals, reefs and oyster beds.

People also mention the unspoilt rural nature of the area. It is seen as a plus that it is uncommercialised with old fashioned big sandy beaches. But there also is acceptance that it is changing through natural and manmade causes such as climate change and aggregate dredging.

Manmade structures include piers, old farm boundaries and irrigation ditches, historic settlements, Newtown, the Military Road, Yarmouth and in particular Henry VIII's castle and the Victorian forts (Victoria, Albert and Redoubt).

Also mentioned is the relationship and interaction between man and sea, especially in terms of coastguards, beacons, lifeboats and their stations, ferries, visits of the Waverly and the Balmoral, shipping, surfing, yachting, fishing and the unique lobster pots that are used in the West Wight.

Activities cover cycling, cod fishing competitions off the Needles, watching sunsets especially at Totland Bay. People also enjoy the views of the seascape in particular from the downs,

towards Hurst Point and to Studland Bay. In general there are views that go on for miles!. There is also appreciation of the historic culture of the seascape with mentions of shipwrecks, Marconi, dinosaur bones, and that it has inspired poets, artists, authors and golfers!

## 3. Testing the assessment plus ideas on change and opportunities

Participants were given the chance to comment on the draft assessment map and the draft key characteristics for each area and then to consider change in the areas and opportunities. The comments are shown below by character area (some areas have changed since the draft assessment and these are noted below).

### 1A Tennyson Down

Change:
Reintroduced bird species
Over managed to date

Opportunities:
Needles fun park needs improvement

### 1B Compton Down

Change:
Wind farms will ruin views from here.
Off road vehicles spoiling tracks – bans put in place to preserve environment
Threats from golf club to archaeological burial mounds and features

Military Road
Golf course expansion
Off Road trails, eg bikes, horse riding
Used by walkers – expansion of trails

Opportunities:
SSSI to protect archaeological sites
Develop wind surfing opportunities
Sports Centre

Car park above Afton Down needs resurfacing
More / improve interpretative signage

### 1C Brighstone Down

Change:
Tree clearance (wind damage?) – not much replacement
Woodland, since the turn of the 19$^{th}$C
Currently used for hunting, so what if no hunting?
Gun shoots instead which would restrict access

Opportunities:
Woodland conservation and replanting
Re-establish chalk grassland (in selective areas)

But woodland valued

### 2A Brighstone Greensand Hills

Change:
- Erosion at Compton
- Increase of use of farmland
- Forest fires
- Forest Plantations – loss of F.C. plantations and re-creation of heathland
- Housing development
- National Trust influence
- Military road protection

Opportunities:
- Planting indigenous woodland (in appropriate situations)

### 3A Chiltern Clay Farmland

Change:
- Landslip
- Oil Slick – dumped
- Dolphins
- Erosion – South west wind causes problems
- Brighstone built development in past 20-30 years
- Threat to Military Road
- Holiday Camps
- Commercial Development
- Car Parks

Opportunities:
- No more commercial exploitation along the coast
- Larger car park at Brook
- Ice cream (Minghella's) van in summer
- Tea rooms?
- Further development
- Working with what West Wight has
- Avoid further commercial development
- Control planning
- Improve car parks and interpretation signage

### 4A Compton Bay (now part of 8C Hanover Cliff)

Change:
- Seaside decline

Opportunities:
- Restore Totland Pier
- Revitalise resorts, shops, local farms and rural crafts
- Conserve for tourism
- Forts – fort museum

### 4B Alum Bay

| | |
|---|---|
| Change: | Tourist destination<br>Became more commercialised<br>Increase in size and change in style of 'pleasure park'<br>More commercialised<br>Loss of coloured sand |
| Opportunities: | Showcase local produce and crafts<br>Farmer's Market<br>Commercialise more, so people will stay longer, spend more etc<br>Make it better<br>Educational opportunities<br>Improve access to Alum Bay - threat or opportunity? |

### 4C Totland and Colwell Bays

| | |
|---|---|
| Change: | Coastal erosion<br>Drainage and landslips<br>Pier |
| Opportunities: | Pier Restoration<br>Public ownership for Totland<br>Can beach become a village green?<br>Tourism potential at Fort Victoria |

### 4D Thorness Bay

| | |
|---|---|
| Change: | Holiday camps have blighted 'normal' settlement patterns<br>Views of Fawley's industrial landscape ugly – so no quality building there<br>Pollution on beach restricts birds, walkers, visitors<br><br>Holiday camp – avoid expansion<br>Change in open view to mainland |
| Opportunities: | Remove holiday camps and develop 'new village' with good infrastructure<br>Affordable housing |

### 4A Freshwater Bay

| | |
|---|---|
| Change: | Erosion of rocks<br>More sand, less pebbles<br>Road separates marshes (Yar) bridge<br>Car park<br>Erosion of cliffs<br>Arch rock fell 1983(?) *1982 actually!*<br>Car park replaced lost buildings |

| | |
|---|---|
| Opportunities: | Conserve what we have<br>Promotion of ecology/nature<br>Promote natural landscape as tourist attraction<br>Potential – Golden Hill Fort<br>Promote in right way<br>Improvement to car park<br>Landscaping<br>Mole to stop erosion and give shelter for boats<br>Restoration of shelter (re-roofing and glazing)<br>Breakwaters to keep sand<br>Improvements to wishing well |

**5A Newtown Estuary**

| | |
|---|---|
| Change: | Potential impact of turbines on birds on the estuary<br>Birds fly Newtown to Western Yar<br>Increased use by boats = negative impact<br>Increased tourism – potential conflict with conservation<br>Erosion into double-entrance mooring (prediction – not certain)<br>Climate change<br>Possible extension of estuary as sea level rises?<br>Changed water table on increase of recreational usage can damage bird populations<br>Amount of water and loss of salt marsh – increase water levels<br>One of country's best salt marsh environment |
| Opportunities: | To improve access for walkers (very limited)<br>Educational opportunities<br>Sensitive increase in tourism on edges eg farm parks<br>Recreation – educational resource for ecology/history<br>Try to manage status quo |

**5B Yar Estuary**

| | |
|---|---|
| Change: | Harbour Authorities - regulated?<br>Old Railway Line<br>Railway<br>Bridges<br>Larger ferries – a threat or opportunity? |
| Opportunities: | Re-introduction of a short stretch of railway<br>Tourist based<br>Scientific designations that protect the area<br>Wildlife corridor |

**6A Shalcombe Open Farmland**

| | |
|---|---|
| Change: | Derelict buildings<br>Farm proposals<br>Wind Farm possible |
| Opportunities: | Put derelict buildings back into use<br>Hedgerow planting/restoration<br>Traditional management (create jobs/training)<br>Promote walking<br><br>Protect from windfarms<br>More hedges |

### 7A Freshwater Settled Farmland

| | |
|---|---|
| Change: | Suburbanisation / loss of village character<br>Loss of hedgerows<br>Decline in small farms – loss of grazing (foot and mouth)<br>Loss of railway<br>Decline – empty shops<br>Sub-urban development<br>Loss of enclosed farmland and meadow land<br>Change of tourism patterns (loss of holiday camps, growth of farm tourism)<br>Urbanisation<br>Massive deforestation (90% Dutch Elm Disease)<br>Edge of settlement pressure<br>Equestrian pressure/paddocks<br>Collapse of agriculture in south, centre. Empty fields<br>Decline of woodland, hedges, ditches, fences, rural management.<br>Growth of car use |
| Opportunities: | Revitalising centre of village/shops etc<br>Get people to spend money in it<br>Retain and manage remaining rural pockets<br>Needs to support small farms<br>Rural crafts<br>Regeneration of urban infrastructure<br>Retail investment<br>Protection of enclosed farmland<br>Restoration of historic character of landscape<br>Affordable housing. Local employment. Local production<br>Establish local community sustainability<br>Development is inevitable<br>Local vernacular – village design statement<br>Transport for tourism. Non-car tourism – cycling, horses, coaches<br>Tourist park and ride scheme |

### 7B Calbourne Rolling Farmland

| | |
|---|---|
| Change: | Previously woodland – Parkhurst Royal Park etc<br>Changes due to population needs and agricultural techniques<br>War – loss of woodland in WW II<br>Loss of hedgerows<br>Change of agricultural practises<br>Possible wind turbines? |
| Opportunities: | Tourism – how would it be affected<br>Oil deposits – threat or opportunity?<br>Wind farms – threat or opportunity? But more of a threat<br><br>Sustainable farming practices<br>Replanting hedgerows, trees and coppicing<br>Stewardship schemes<br>Thorness bay – improve/upgrade? |

**8B Bouldnor Cliff**

| | |
|---|---|
| Change: | Coastal erosion (always happening)<br>Growth of secondary woodland |
| Opportunities: | Leave well alone!<br>Access?? |

# APPENDIX 4: References

# APPENDIX 4: REFERENCES


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# APPENDIX 5: TABLE OF DESIGNATIONS

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## Summary Table of Designations

| **Landscape** |
|---|
| 60% of West Wight is an Area of Outstanding Natural beauty (AONB) |
| 80% of the coastline is Heritage Coastline |
| **Biodiversity** |
| **35 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)** |
| **3 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)** |
| • Solent Maritime |
| • Isle of Wight Downs |
| • South Wight Maritime |
| **1 Ramsar Site** |
| • Solent & Southampton Water |
| **1 Special Protection Area (SPA)** |
| • Solent and Southampton Water |
| **1 National Nature Reserve (NNR)** |
| • Newtown Harbour |
| **2 Local Nature Reserves (LNR)** |
| • Afton Marshes |
| • Newtown marshes |
| **14 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)** |
| • Headon Warren & West High Down |
| • Colwell Bay |
| • Yar Estuary |
| • Freshwater Marshes |
| • Compton Down |

| |
|---|
| • Compton Chine to Steephill Cove<br>• Mottistone Down<br>• Prospect Quarry<br>• Calbourne Down<br>• North Park Copse<br>• Newtown Harbour<br>• Bouldnor and Hamstead Cliffs<br>• Locks Farm Meadow<br>• Cranmore |
| **Historic Environment** |
| • 70 Scheduled Monuments<br>• 707 Unscheduled Monuments<br>• 4 Historic Parks & Gardens of county importance. |

## Table of designations by Landscape Types and Character Areas

| Landscape Types | Character Areas | National and international nature conservation and landscape designations partially or wholly covering the area |
|---|---|---|
| Type 1: Chalk Downs | | |
| | 1A Tennyson Down | Headon Warren and West High Down SSSI<br>Isle of Wight AONB<br>Heritage Coast<br>Isle of Wight Downs SAC<br>South Wight Maritime SAC |
| | 1B Compton Down | Compton Down SSSI<br>Isle of Wight AONB<br>Heritage Coast<br>Isle of Wight Downs SAC |
| | 1C Brighstone Down | Mottistone Down SSSI<br>Calbourne Down SSSI<br>Isle of Wight AONB |
| Type 2: Greensand Hills | | |
| | 2A Brighstone Greensand Hills | Compton Chine to Steephill Cove SSSI<br>Isle of Wight AONB<br>South Wight Maritime SAC |

| Landscape Types | Character Areas | National and international nature conservation and landscape designations partially or wholly covering the area |
|---|---|---|
| Type 3: Clay Farmland | | |
| | 3A Chilton Clay Farmland | Compton Chine to Steephill Cove SSSI<br>Isle of Wight AONB<br>South Wight Maritime SAC |
| Type 4: Bays | | |
| | 4A Freshwater Bay | Isle of Wight AONB<br>Heritage Coast<br>South Wight Maritime SAC |
| | 4B Alum Bay | Headon Warren and West High Down SSSI<br>Isle of Wight AONB<br>Heritage Coast<br>South Wight Maritime SAC |
| | 4C Totland and Colwell Bays | Colwell Bay SSSI<br>Heritage Coast |
| | 4D Thorness Bay | Newtown Harbour National Nature Reserve<br>Newtown Harbour SSSI<br>Thorness Bay SSSI<br>Isle of Wight AONB<br>Heritage Coast<br>Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar<br>Solent and Southampton Water SPA<br>Solent Maritime SAC |
| Type 5: Estuaries | | |
| | 5A Newtown Estuary | Newtown Harbour National Nature Reserve<br>Newtown Harbour SSSI<br>Isle of Wight AONB<br>Heritage Coast<br>Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar<br>Solent and Southampton Water SPA<br>Solent Maritime SAC |
| | 5B Yar Estuary | Yar Estuary SSSI<br>Isle of Wight AONB<br>Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar<br>Solent and Southampton Water SPA<br>Solent Maritime SAC |
| Type 6: Open Farmland | | |
| | 6A Thorley and Wellow Open Farmland | Prospect Quarry SSSI<br>Isle of Wight AONB |
| Type 7: Enclosed Farmland | | |
| | 7A Freshwater Isle | Isle of Wight AONB<br>Heritage Coast |
| Type 8: Soft Cliffs | | |

| Landscape Types | Character Areas | National and international nature conservation and landscape designations partially or wholly covering the area |
|---|---|---|
| | 8A Headon Cliff | Headon Warren and West High Down SSSI<br>Isle of Wight AONB<br>Heritage Coast<br>South Wight Maritime SAC |
| | 8B Bouldnor Cliff | Newtown Harbour National Nature Reserve<br>Bouldnor and Hamstead Cliffs SSSI<br>Isle of Wight AONB<br>Heritage Coast<br>Solent Maritime SAC |
| | 8C Hanover Cliff | Compton Chine to Steephill Cove SSSI<br>Isle of Wight AONB<br>Heritage Coast<br>South Wight Maritime SAC |
| Type 9: Rolling Farmland | | |
| | 9A Calbourne Rolling Farmland | Cranmore SSSI<br>North Park Copse SSSI<br>Locks Farm Meadow SSSI<br>Newtown Harbour SSSI<br>Isle of Wight AONB<br>Solent and Southampton Water SPA |
| Type 10: Seascape | | |
| | 10A: West Wight Seascape | Heritage Coast<br>Solent Maritime SAC<br>South Wight Maritime SAC |