



# **Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Sensitivity Assessment**

**January 2015**

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Maidstone Borough Council has commissioned Jacobs to undertake a report to determine the broad comparative sensitivity of landscape character areas within the borough to possible development.

The report will form part of a robust evidence base to the Local Plan and will be used to inform the Sustainability Appraisal of any land allocation proposals, assisting the Council in meeting the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

### Objective

The objective is to assess the comparative sensitivity of the borough's landscapes to development. The study excludes the general urban area of Maidstone and the nationally designated Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as these are afforded protection through other policies, but includes the fringe landscapes of both areas.

The landscape character areas used in this assessment are as defined in the published Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012 (excluding the Kent Downs AONB and urban area of Maidstone).

### Methodology

The methodology used to undertake this study is derived from the *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland: Topic Paper 6 Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity (The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage)*.

Topic Paper 6 outlines alternative approaches describing how to assess the overall landscape sensitivity of the landscape and/or the landscape sensitivity to particular types of change or development. For this study the type of development is undefined

therefore the former approach has been adopted. Topic Paper 6 defines **overall landscape sensitivity** as follows:

*'This term should be used to refer primarily to the inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself, irrespective of the type of change that may be under consideration.*

*Relating it to the definitions used in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, landscape sensitivity can be defined as embracing a combination of:*

- *the sensitivity of the landscape resource (in terms of both its character as a whole and the individual elements contributing to character);*
- *the visual sensitivity of the landscape, assessed in terms of a combination of factors such as views, visibility, the number and nature of people perceiving the landscape and the scope to mitigate visual impact.'*

Topic Paper 6 further defines this as a combination of landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity:

- *Judging the sensitivity of the landscape as a whole, in terms of its overall character, its quality and condition, the aesthetic aspects of its character, and also the sensitivity of individual elements contributing to the landscape. This can be usefully referred to as landscape character sensitivity;*
- *Judging the visual sensitivity of the landscape, in terms of its general visibility and the potential scope to mitigate the visual effects of any change that might take place. Visibility will be a function particularly of the landform of a particular type of landscape and of the presence of potentially screening land cover, especially trees and woodland. It will also be a reflection of the numbers of people who are likely to perceive the*

landscape and any changes that occur in it, whether they are residents or visitors.

The meanings of these terms and the types of factors that need to be considered in each case are summarised in Figure 1 below.

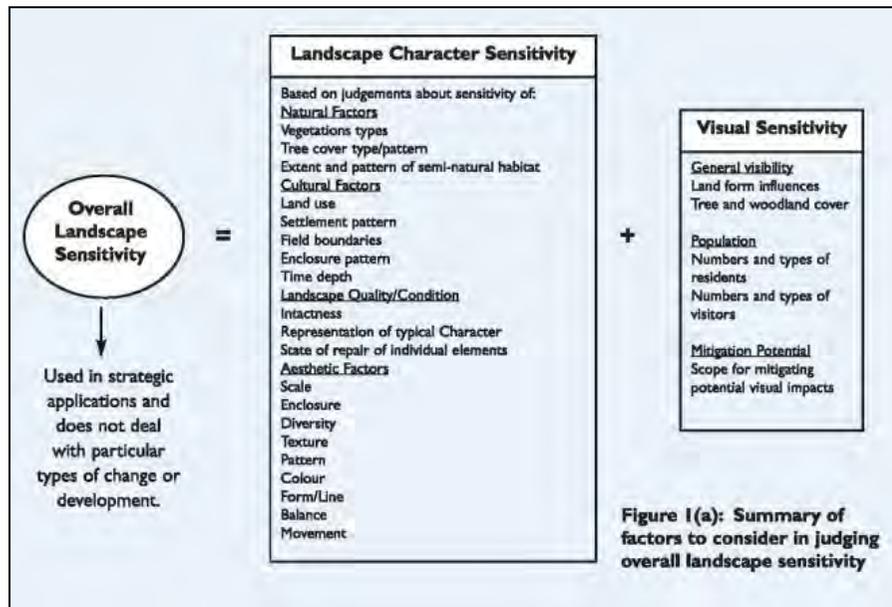


Figure 1: Topic Paper 6 Figure 1(a)

The assessment draws upon data in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012, supported by a desktop study and field verification to provide a description of the factors that contribute to landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity for each landscape character area within study area. A value of high, moderate or low **landscape character sensitivity** and **visual sensitivity** is assigned to each character area and combined in the matrix below to provide a value for **overall landscape sensitivity**.

Landscape character sensitivity defined within this assessment differs to landscape sensitivity defined with the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment (Jacobs, March 2012 amended July 2013) because the methodologies are different for the two assessment types.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity Matrix**

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

The combination of landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity assessments identifies each landscape character area's capacity to tolerate change which is categorised into three main groups:

- High overall landscape sensitivity/landscapes sensitive to change
- Moderate overall landscape sensitivity/landscapes with scope for change with certain constraints
- Low overall landscape sensitivity/landscapes tolerant of change

Although conclusions have been reached for each of the character areas enabling them to be grouped into these categories it is not the purpose of this study to rank one character area against another. For example those landscapes that fall in the 'sensitive to change' category are sensitive in different ways and different actions are appropriate. Likewise this study is not intended to identify in any detail areas suitable for development. It may however provide guidance to the local planning authority when deciding the type and scale of development that may be appropriate within Maidstone Borough whilst respecting its character.

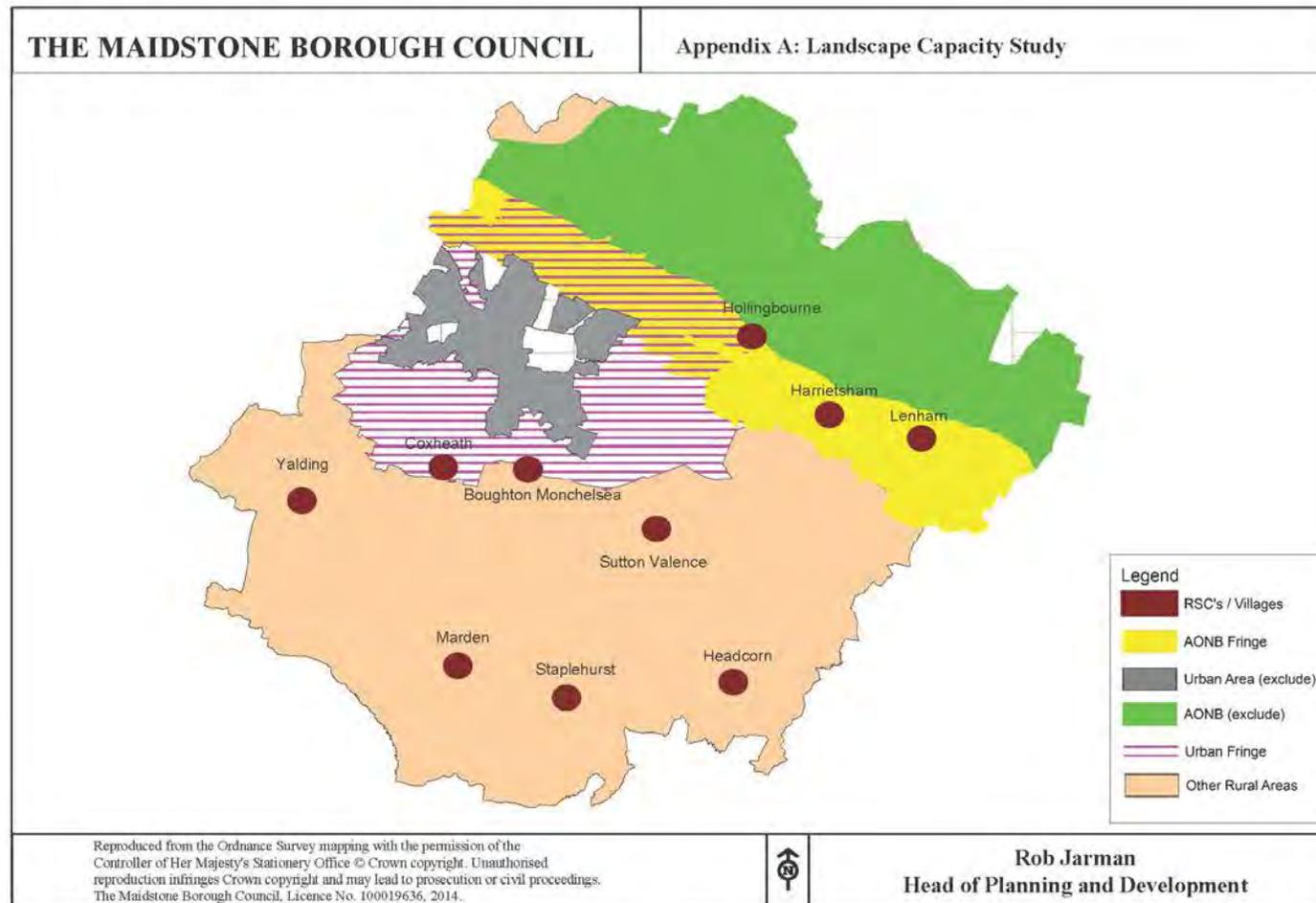
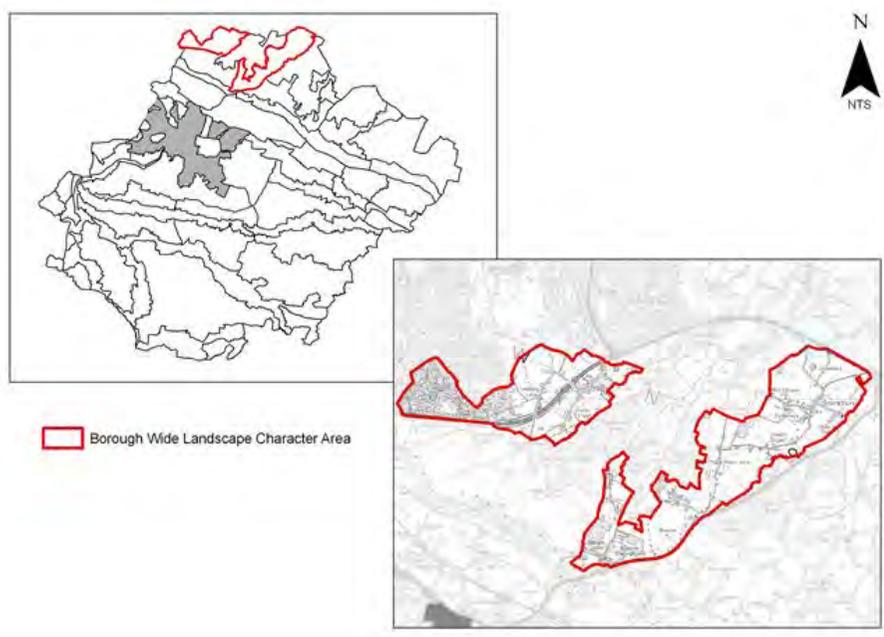


Figure 2: Study Area



The Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs landscape character area is divided into two parts. The first part is the Stockbury Valley which lies entirely within the Kent Downs AONB and is not included within this study. The second part abuts the Medway Council boundary in the north west of the Borough. The southern part of this area (south of the M2 motorway) falls within the AONB, leaving the remaining area under consideration in this study.

#### Key Characteristics:

- The majority of the landscape forms part of Kent Downs AONB, while the remainder forms part of the setting to the AONB
- Level to gently sloping landform of the North Downs upper plateau
- Mixture of arable fields, paddocks, remnant orchards and small to medium blocks of woodland

- Mixture of historic and recent buildings within the villages and farmsteads
- Traditional materials include yellow stock and red brick, Kent peg ties, flint and weatherboarding
- Predominantly very narrow lanes, in addition to the engineered roads within Bredhurst and the M2 motorway

#### Landscape Character Sensitivity: Low

This is a fragmented landscape of arable fields, paddocks and small blocks of woodland. There is not a strong network of hedgerows and woodlands within the area and the intensity of land use is variable, with higher intensity areas where there are arable fields. Tree cover is intermittent, comprising small to medium size blocks of woodland, with a good age structure, and mature specimens within the remnant cherry orchards. The north-western corner of the character area includes part of Walderslade suburbs, comprising relict wooded dry dip slope valleys with large blocks of suburban development in between the woodlands. The suburban houses within Walderslade include bricks in shades of red to yellow, as well as weather boarding and hung tiles.

#### Visual Sensitivity: High

Overall visibility is moderate throughout the area. There are views across the fields, but these are limited where there are blocks of woodland. Views are also limited along parts of the lanes, where the hedgerows are taller. Because the majority of trees and hedgerow species are broadleaved and the arable crops are seasonal, the area would appear more open in the winter. There are also longer views, looking towards the Isle of Grain and the Medway Estuary. These views include large industrial features.

The urban edge of Walderslade means that there are high numbers of receptors in the north western corner with potential views.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Moderate**

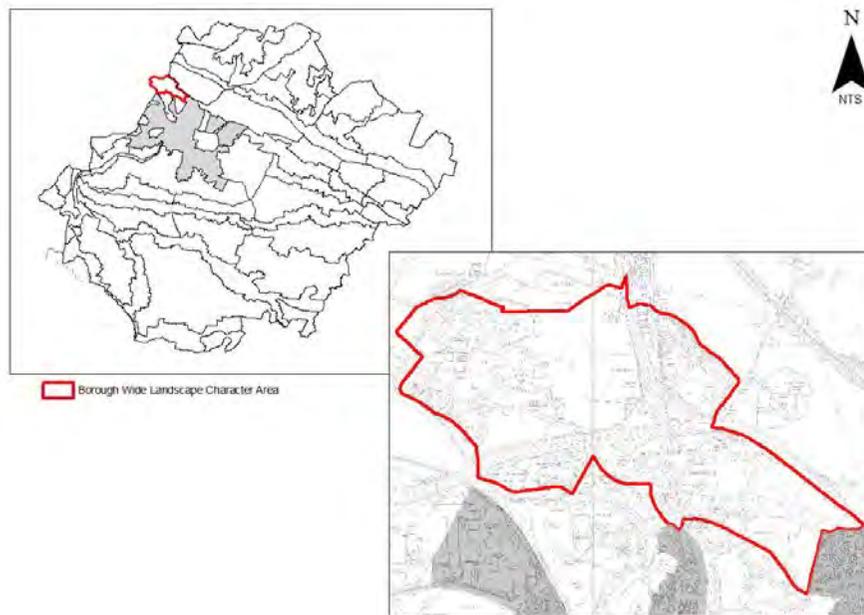
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>				

Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs is partly situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint.

Outside of the AONB the landscape is assessed as being of moderate sensitivity and therefore there is **scope for change with certain constraints**. Change in this area needs to consider the role that the area plays as part of the green wedge between Maidstone and the Medway Towns, and as part of the setting of the AONB. As such, extensive or significantly visually intrusive development would be inappropriate, whereas landscape changes such as changes in land management, woodland planting or recreational use may be appropriate.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Dry Valleys and Downs in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019
- Improve the condition of field boundaries, avoiding the use of barbed wire
- Conserve the historical buildings and features that remain
- Avoid further built development which is out of context in terms of materials and design
- Conserve the blocks of ancient woodland
- Restore and improve the woodlands within the area by improving management within historical coppice
- Improve the management of fields and land generally by removing rubbish and caravans and discouraging fly tipping
- Restore and improve the network of hedgerows, filling in gaps where there are no boundaries and improving the management generally



### Key Characteristics:

- Chestnut coppice and mixed woodland blocks
- Parkland landscape
- Industrial estate
- Recent linear development along Chatham Road
- Mill ponds and weir along Boarley Road
- M20 and major highway infrastructure

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: Low

The area is heavily influenced by major infrastructure routes, large scale industrial development at Aylesford and recent infill development which have fragmented the landscape and are visual detractors.

Whilst woodland cover, parkland, the frequent clusters of native vegetation, water bodies and streams at Sandling provide a strong habitat network, the extent of major infrastructure severs connectivity.

The cultural integrity is variable. Whilst woodland, parkland and traditional buildings appear to be in good condition, the setting and integrity of some of the historic features has been degraded by the proximity of the major infrastructure and more recent development.

Built development has a negative impact on the landscape. Although there are some examples of local vernacular, recent development which does not respect the sense of place is prevalent.

There are some very distinctive elements, such as the ancient woodland, parkland, ragstone buildings and mill ponds at Sandling, and the remaining field pattern at Lower Grange Farm. However, the overall sense of place is weakened significantly by the major roads and recent development.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Within the area views are often restricted by intervening vegetation, and as such there are no clear views of the urban edge of Maidstone. There are some longer views out of the area along the Medway Valley to the south from higher points of the golf course at Cobtree Manor Park.

There are relatively few houses within the area, apart from the housing east of the A229 so that there are only low numbers of residents with potential views of the landscape. However the golf course and country park are popular with visitors enjoying outdoor recreation.

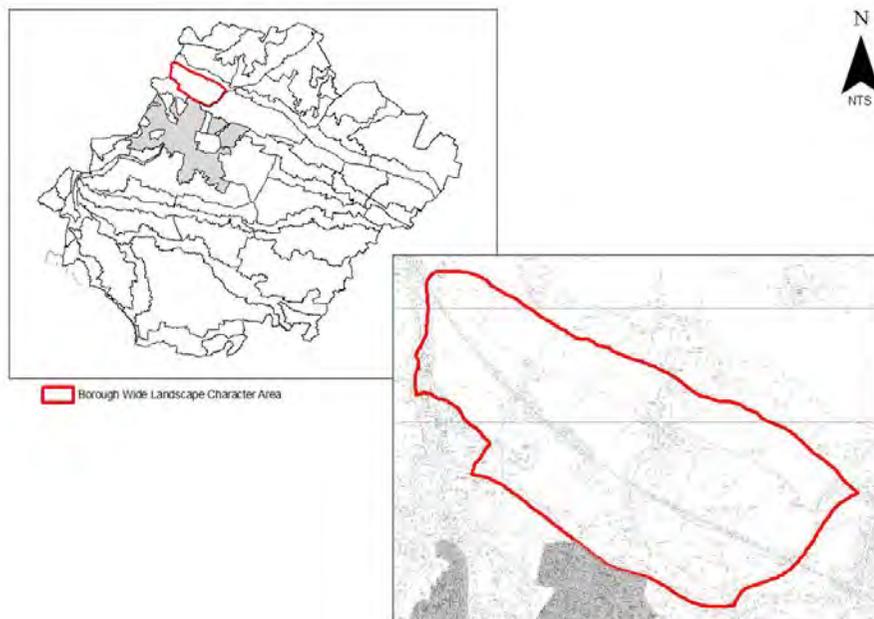
**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Low**

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

The low overall landscape sensitivity indicates that this is an area **tolerant of change** and could support further development. To maintain a defined urban edge and protect the open countryside, it is recommended that future development is contained to the south of the M20 motorway. This would protect the setting of the town by restricting urban sprawl and maintain the open, rural character between Maidstone and other settlements.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vale in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Consider views from and the setting of the Kent Downs AONB in the design and siting of future development, including the impacts of lighting
- Maintain and improve the distinctive and characteristic woodland and parkland through appropriate management, to provide a landscape framework
- Improve habitat diversity through restoration of exposed sandstone outcrops and open habitats such as heath and acid grassland
- Maintain and enhance the extent of vegetation cover which restricts views of the urban edge and softens views of the heavy infrastructure and future development
- Improve the visual quality and habitat connectivity within the industrial area through creating a framework of native planting
- Avoid encroachment of development into adjacent woodland and parkland



- Distinctive traditional buildings with chequered red and grey bricks, whitewashed bricks, Kent peg tiles, ragstone and exposed timber framing
- Small, winding lanes

### **Landscape Character Sensitivity: High**

This is a unified landscape with gently undulating arable farmlands, tree belts, woodlands and spring line villages and farmsteads. There are some visual detractors, including HS1, electricity pylons and the urban edge of Maidstone. Frequent and substantial belts and blocks of trees are of habitat value but the large scale of un-hedged arable fields weakens the connectivity. A strong pattern of parkland trees, tree belts and blocks, as well as the many vernacular heritage features that are in good condition add to the cultural value. The traditional narrow and winding lanes are predominantly intact and distinct, although HS1 and the M20 detract from the sense of place locally.

### **Visual Sensitivity: Moderate**

To the north there are rural views to the upper parts of the distinctive North Downs scarp, contrasting with the urban views to the south, across Maidstone and to the dip slope of the Greensand Ridge. Overall visibility is intermittent, with wide open views across the large arable fields, limited by belts of trees and blocks of woodland in places.

The main residential area is Boxley village with other properties widely scattered throughout the area, although the urban edge of Maidstone abuts the area in the south. However there are relatively low numbers of people in residential properties with potential views of the landscape. However there are a number of public footpaths including the Pilgrim's Way and the North Downs Way which attract walkers. There is also a riding centre.

### **Key Characteristics:**

- Landscape forms part of Kent Downs AONB
- Gently undulating lower North Downs scarp foot severed by Channel Tunnel Rail Link
- Blocks of woodland, parkland trees and linear tree belts, including beech avenues
- Arable cereal fields
- Spring line villages and farmsteads
- Distinctive ragstone walls

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

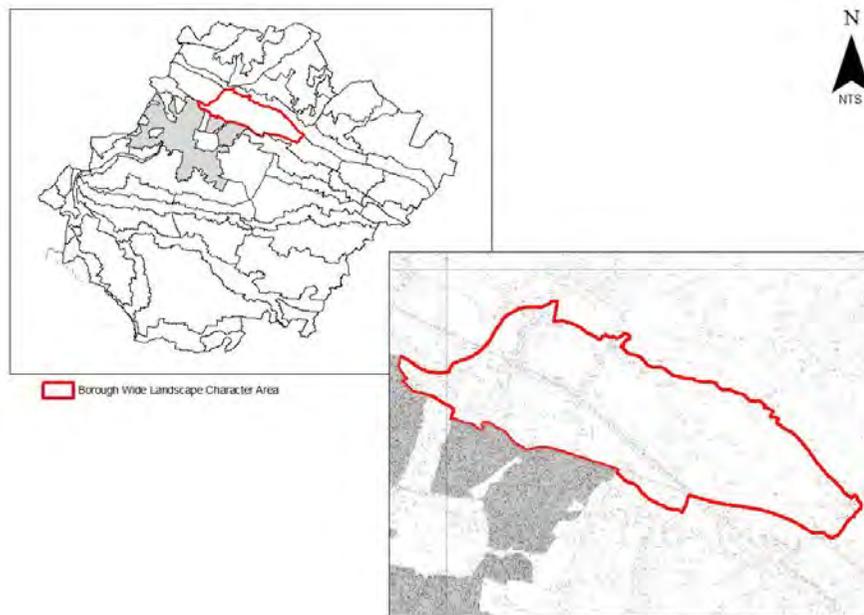
**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

Boxley Vale is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint.

The area is **sensitive to change**. Development should be limited to infill within the village boundaries.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vale in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019
- Consider the impact of development on views from and the setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve the distinctly undulating landform of the scarp foot
- Conserve the remaining pattern of tree belts, avenues and parkland trees and plant new beech, horse chestnut and oak standards to replace ageing specimens
- Conserve and enhance the blocks of woodland, in particular where ancient woodland is found
- Conserve, enhance and manage the many ponds within the area
- Conserve the undeveloped rural landscape, which forms an appropriate setting to the spring line settlements
- Conserve the local heritage buildings and features, such as ragstone walls within the Conservation Areas, but also elsewhere
- Conserve the narrow winding lanes



### Key Characteristics:

- The landscape either forms part of, or the setting to, the Kent Downs AONB
- Gently undulating North Downs scarp foot severed by the M20 and HS1
- Large blocks of woodland and belts of trees, including ancient woodland
- Large arable, irregularly shaped fields
- Ponds in association with Hollingbourne Village and Bearsted Golf Club
- Villages, farmsteads and spring line settlements between the chalk and Gault Clay
- Conservation Areas featuring strong use of local materials

- Narrow, winding lanes, including the ancient Pilgrim's Way which is defined by high native hedgerows

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

Thurnham Vale has a coherent pattern of arable fields, large blocks of woodland, narrow winding lanes, and historic villages and farmsteads. The M20 is the main detractor together with the recent development close to Junction 7. HS1, electricity pylons and recent buildings, particularly in Detling, are also detracting to some degree. The large blocks of woodland are of ecological value, but due to the lack of hedgerows between the intensely cultivated large arable fields the habitat network within the area is weakened. Cultural integrity and sense of place is variable, mainly due to the variable condition of field boundaries, the large scale of arable fields and the adverse impact of modern built development and transport corridors.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Views within Thurnham Vale are limited by the large blocks of woodland, but there are many open views across the arable fields and rolling landform. The upper scarp of the North Downs is also visible from much of the area and there are longer views to the urban edge of Bearsted. Views from the Pilgrim's Way are generally limited to areas where there are gaps in the tall hedges. The gently undulating landform is an apparent feature, with the many intermittent woodland blocks and belts making overall visibility moderate.

The population is concentrated within the key settlements of Detling and Hollingbourne, with scattered properties and farmsteads in the area. This means there are moderate numbers of people in residential properties with views of the landscape. The area is well used for walking, with the Pilgrim's Way and a network of narrow lanes and footpaths which link to the adjoining North Downs Way, White Horse Wood Country Park and

Thurnham Castle. Recreational facilities also include Bearstead Golf Course and equestrian facilities.

### Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High

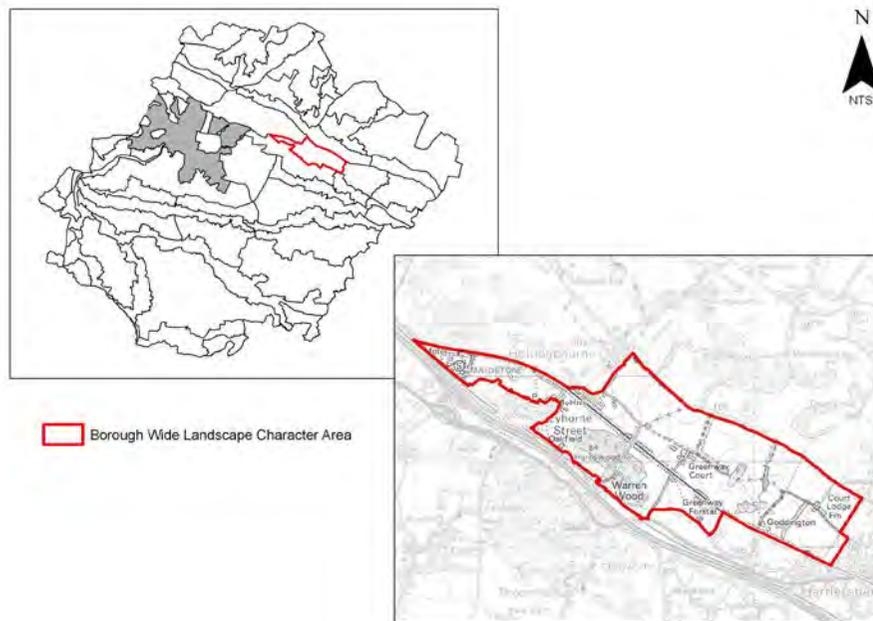
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Thurnham Vale is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint.

The area is **sensitive to change**. Development should be limited to infill within the village boundaries.

### Guidelines:

- Consider the generic guidelines for Gault Clay Vale in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019
- Consider the impact of development on views from and the setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve the gently undulating landform of the scarp foot and rural setting of the AONB
- Conserve the rural views to the North Downs scarp
- Conserve and improve the woodland blocks and belts, particularly where ancient woodland is present
- Conserve and improve the Gault Clay scrub and woodland under-storey
- Conserve and improve the network of hedgerows
- Conserve and improve the orchards
- Conserve and improve the ponds and streams
- Conserve and improve the few areas of pasture and meadow within the area
- Improve recent development, particularly within Detling, to be more in keeping with local vernacular
- Conserve the rural setting of Conservation Areas and listed buildings
- Conserve the narrow and winding lanes



□ Borough Wide Landscape Character Area

### Key Characteristics:

- Landscape to north of the railway line is situated within the Kent Downs AONB
- Mixed woodland belts and blocks
- Willow trees mark the location of drains and ditches
- Narrow lanes which generally run against the contours south west to north east
- Distinctive brick railway bridges
- Major infrastructure routes along the south western periphery

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

This is a landscape with a simple pattern and relatively few components which is in generally good condition apart from the major infrastructure corridor along the south western periphery, where the audibility of traffic on the M20 has a major impact on the tranquillity of the immediate landscape. Arable intensification has resulted in some large scale fields which also detract from the overall condition. Additionally some mature hedgerow oaks appear to be in poor condition and although there is little built development, some is in poor condition.

Despite these detracting features, overall this is a visually unified landscape which is functionally coherent. Pockets of traditional small fields of pasture are enclosed by intact hedgerows and vegetation lined ditches which provide good habitat connectivity to the significant tract of mixed ancient woodland. Hedgerows with mature hedgerow oaks, the pattern of vegetation lined ditches with localised pockets of willow, the series of brick railway arches and narrow lanes all provide local distinctiveness and a moderate sense of place.

### Visual Sensitivity: High

Visibility is high. Although immediate views are sometimes enclosed by woodland and hedgerows, the landform evidently forms parts of the rising foreground of the Downs and there are extensive panoramic views of the wooded higher downland landscape to the north. From some sections of the Pilgrim's Way to the north, dramatic views unfold of the open downland landscape and across the Len Valley to the Greensand Ridge.

The population is generally very sparsely scattered although there is recent housing development north of Eythorne Street. This means there are relatively low numbers of people in residential properties within the character area with views of the landscape -

although the edges of Eyhorne Street, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham adjoin the area.

There is a strong network of well used footpaths within the area, including the North Downs Way/Pilgrim's Way and footpaths linking to the North Downs so that walkers are important visual receptors.

### Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High

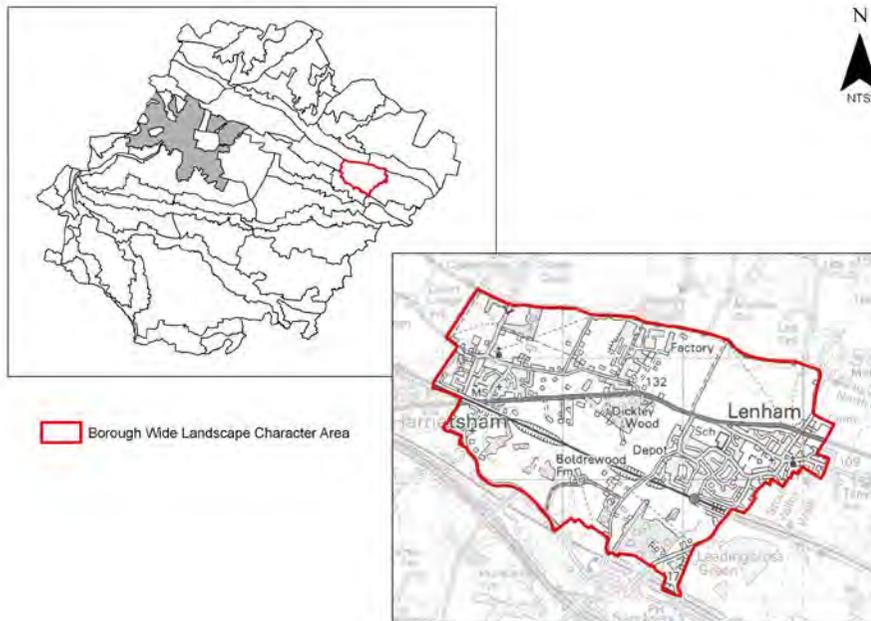
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	Moderate	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
	<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>			

North of the railway line, the landscape is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint.

The area is **sensitive to change**. Development should be limited to infill within the village boundaries.

### Guidelines and Mitigation:

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vale in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019
- Consider the impact of development on views from and the setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve the undeveloped foreground and rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve distinctive brick railway arches and maintain using like for like materials
- Avoid screening with coniferous planting
- Conserve characteristic oak, ash and beech hedgerow trees and isolated oaks within arable land, and plant new hedgerow trees and isolated specimens to replace ageing examples
- Conserve distinctive willow trees along ditches, and avoid planting new species of willow that are not considered to be locally appropriate species
- Conserve the traditional setting of listed buildings and soften the impact of recent farm buildings through native planting
- Avoid infill development and expansion across the downland at Harrietsham and Hollingbourne



### Key Characteristics:

- Landscape to the north forms part of the Kent Downs AONB
- Topography slopes upwards to the north across the foothills and lower slopes of the North Downs
- Mosaic of mixed farmland divided by non rectilinear hedgerow boundaries
- Pocket of lowland dry acid grassland
- Small field pattern and equestrian grazing north of Harrietsham
- Series of drains running south, often defined by ribbons of native vegetation
- Blocks of native woodland

- Large scale industrial and commercial development

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: Moderate

The landscape is reasonably intact, with a consistent geology and landform. Although some fragmentation is caused by the railway line and the busy A20, the pattern of landscape elements is generally coherent. However there are some significant visual detractors, comprising the extensive industrial site at Marley Works and Lenham Storage Depot. The ecological integrity is moderate with development and intensive arable production weakening opportunities for wildlife, although woodland blocks and interlinking hedgerows provide good connectivity. The cultural integrity is variable. Heritage features generally appear to be in very good condition, although 20<sup>th</sup> century infill development and other detached recent housing along peripheral roads, does not respect the local vernacular. Overall the condition of the landscape is moderate. The pattern of woodlands, hedgerows and the mosaic like field pattern is very distinctive, as is the location of Harrietsham and Lenham, situated on the spring line at the foot of the Downs. Traditional buildings add to the sense of place, although extensive infill development and expansion of the village centres weakens this slightly.

### Visual Sensitivity: High

Visibility is high, with some long views of the Downs from the northern area and open views across the landscape to the south of the Pilgrim's Way. To the south of the A20, views within the area are generally restricted by vegetation and built development

There are a moderate number of potential visual receptors from residential properties situated in the large villages of Harrietsham and Lenham and other scattered properties. The Pilgrim's Way/North Downs Way and other footpaths to the north are attractive to walkers adding to the number of sensitive receptors.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

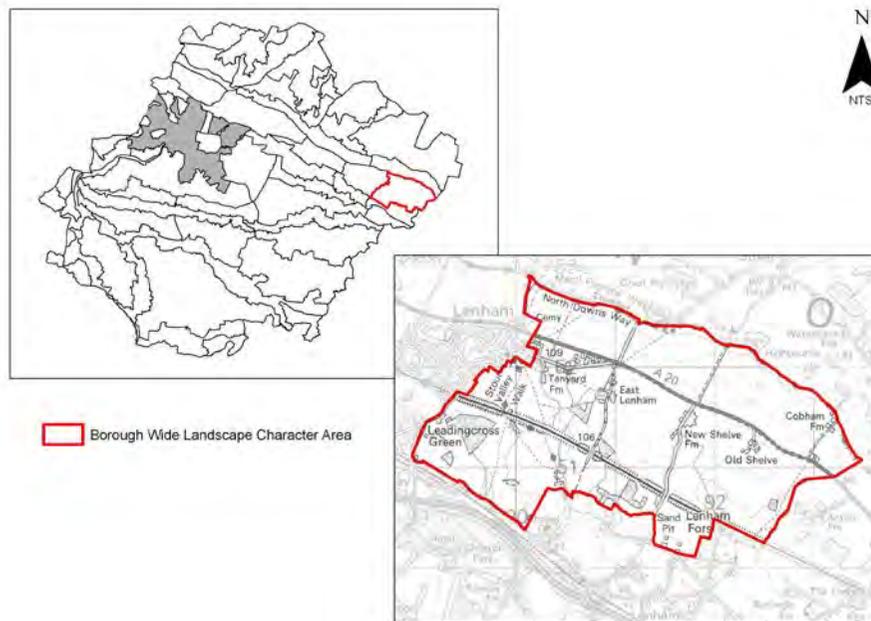
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
	<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>			

Harrietsham to Lenham Vale is partly situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint.

The area is **sensitive to change**. Development should be limited to infill within the village boundaries.

**Guidelines:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vale in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019
- Consider the impact of development on views from and the setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Maintain the separation between Lenham and Harrietsham, resisting ribbon development along the A20 Ashford Road
- Conserve the setting of traditional listed buildings and Conservation Areas
- Resist further development along the A20 corridor
- Resist further expansion of, or any new, industrial/commercial developments



### Key Characteristics:

- Landscape to north of A20 is situated within the Kent Downs AONB
- Series of springs and drains run south towards the Great Stour
- Medium to large sized fields of arable and pasture
- Field boundaries and roads run against and along the contours
- Isolated farmsteads
- Railway line cuts through landscape with arched brick underpasses

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

This is a unified landscape where the consistently undulating topography, frequent woodland blocks and hedgerow enclosed fields provide a coherent pattern of elements. There are few visual detractors, comprising sewerage works to the south (although this is not widely visible), and warehouses and a business park along the A20. There is a good hedgerow network, frequent woodland blocks and also a network of drainage ditches. Oxley Wood and pasture and ponds at Lenham Forstal are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. However, the significant amount of arable intensification means that the ecological integrity is moderate. The cultural integrity is variable. Whilst some trees are over mature and there are some gaps in hedgerows, the overriding condition of remaining hedgerows, woodland and the built environment is good. However, the setting of some historic farm buildings has been degraded slightly by large scale agricultural barns.

The location at the foot of the Downs, evidenced by the sweeping views of the elevated downland to the north, is a distinctive feature. The field pattern, hedgerow network, woodland blocks and vernacular style farmhouses are very characteristic and contribute both to local distinctiveness and continuity.

### Visual Sensitivity: High

Overall, visibility is high in this location at the foot of the Downs. Whilst immediate views are often enclosed by intervening vegetation, there are striking long distance views of the North Downs.

The population is concentrated within the hamlet of East Lenham, with few properties and farmsteads in the wider landscape. This means there are low numbers of people in residential properties with views of the landscape. The eastern edge of Lenham abuts

the character area which may increase the number of visual receptors slightly.

There are well used recreational footpaths including the Stour Valley Walk and North Downs Way as well as promoted Long Distance Paths so that numbers of walkers viewing the landscape will be relatively high.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

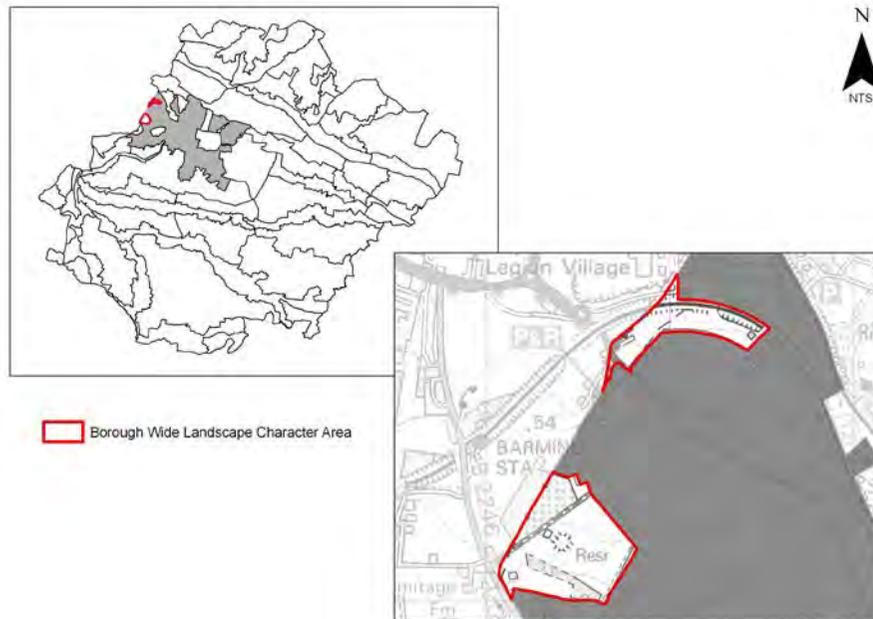
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	high	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
	<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>			

North of the A20, the landscape is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint.

The area is **sensitive to change**. Development should be limited to infill within the village boundaries.

**Guidelines:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vale in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019
- Consider the impact of development on views from and the setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve the undeveloped foreground and rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve and enhance hedgerows and tree belts and restore hedgerow boundaries where practicable
- Plant new oak standards in hedgerows to replace ageing specimens
- Conserve the traditional setting of historic buildings and Conservation Areas, and soften the impact of recent farm buildings through native planting
- Conserve the crisp boundary between Lenham's compact settlement and the surrounding rural area



### Key Characteristics:

- Arable land
- Orchards
- Sweet chestnut coppice woodland
- Regenerating scrub
- Sports ground
- Reservoir

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: Low

This is a fragmented landscape where the proximity to the urban edge has led to the landscape being influenced by recreational land uses. However there are few visual detractors comprising security fencing and glimpses of the residential urban edge where these are available. The ecological integrity is moderate. Although there is some intensively farmed arable land, there is a significant amount of regenerating scrub vegetation, a woodland belt and mature boundary vegetation, which together provide a good habitat network. The cultural heritage is poor because the recreational land uses and the encroachment of the urban edge have led to a general demise in traditional land use and field pattern. Whilst The Old Hermitage comprises a traditional building, the overriding style of development is recent and contributes little to the sense of place.

This landscape is largely indistinct because of its proximity to the urban area of Maidstone which has impacted the land use and fragmented the traditional landscape characteristics. There are, however, some fragments of very distinctive character, such as the orchards and The Old Hermitage.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Visibility is generally low because immediate views are often interrupted by intervening vegetation, although there are some longer views of the North Downs.

The population is concentrated within the urban edge of Maidstone directly adjoining this character area. This means there are relatively high numbers of people in residential properties with potential views of the landscape. Pedestrian tracks and paths, many of which are informal, have developed throughout this landscape which is so readily accessible from Maidstone's urban area, indicating a relatively large number of recreational visual receptors.

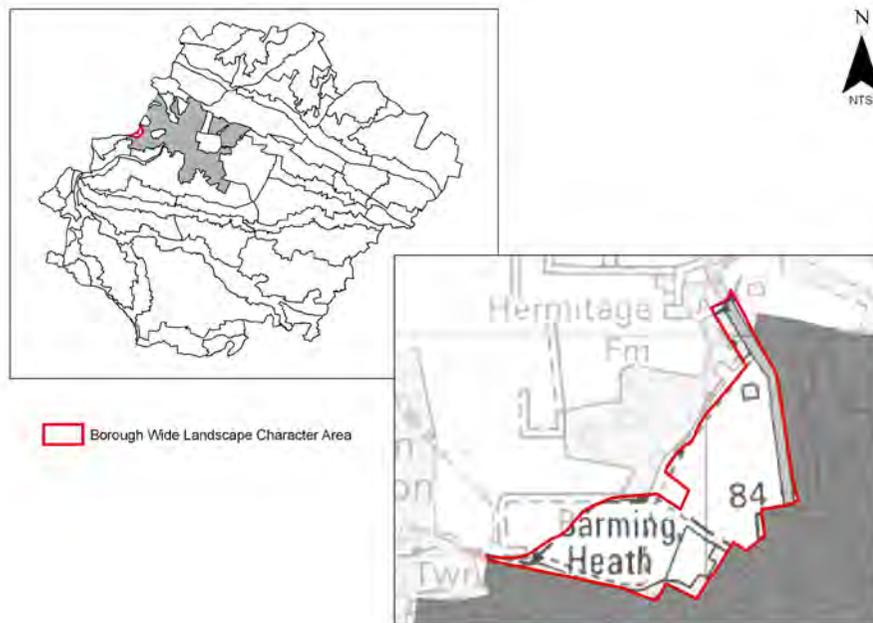
**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Low**

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Barming Greensand Fruit Belt is assessed as being of low overall landscape sensitivity and is **tolerant of change**. Potential development in this area should be set within a landscape framework to define the urban edge of Maidstone, whilst considering the potential impacts development could have on the rural area to the west and on views from the Kent Downs AONB.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Maintain and improve the extent of vegetation cover which restricts views of the urban edge, creating containment to the urban area and a buffer with the adjacent rural area
- Maintain key views of the elevated North Downs, and consider the effect the extension of the urban footprint would have on views from the Downs, including night time impacts
- Consider the potential landscape and visual effects of extending the urban footprint into the rural landscape to the west that lies within Tonbridge & Malling
- Maintain the integrity of the settlements of Barming and Allington, by retaining remaining open space between the two settlements
- Maintain the linear vegetation belt along the railway line and improve with further native planting to improve ecological connectivity
- Improve the sense of place by creating positive land uses within unmanaged areas whilst retaining the habitat opportunities for small mammals, invertebrates and birds of prey



### Key Characteristics:

- Apparently unmanaged arable land
- Cemetery with place of worship
- Small paddocks of equestrian grazing
- Sweet chestnut coppice and broadleaf woodland
- Reservoir

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: Low

This is a fragmented landscape where the proximity to the urban edge has perhaps led to a decline in actively managed agricultural land, and some varied and disjointed land uses. There are many visual detractors including views to Maidstone Hospital, a large commercial warehouse on the urban edge and security fencing.

The ecological integrity is strong. Arable land appears to have been left unmanaged, and Fullingpits Wood and mature native vegetation throughout the area provide good habitat value. The cultural integrity is poor. The traditional field pattern appears to have been compromised by other fragmented land uses, and the ragstone place of worship and walling around the cemetery are in a poor state of repair. There are some fine examples of mature firs and cedars within the cemetery, but there is no evidence of new planting and some of these trees may be over mature. This landscape is largely indistinct because of its proximity to the urban area of Maidstone, which has impacted on the land use and fragmented the traditional landscape characteristics. Although the ragstone place of worship and walling around the cemetery are historic, they fail to contribute significantly to the sense of place because they are in a poor state of repair.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Visibility is low because immediate views are generally interrupted by intervening vegetation and the urban edge of Maidstone. However it should be noted that parts of this landscape are visible from the residential edge of Maidstone, and there are also some longer views of the North Downs.

The population is concentrated within the urban edge of Maidstone. This means there are relatively high numbers of people in residential properties with views of the landscape. There are footpath links to Oaken Wood and Fullingpits Wood which indicate that this urban fringe area may be popular with local walkers from nearby properties. Overall numbers of visual receptors are likely to be high.

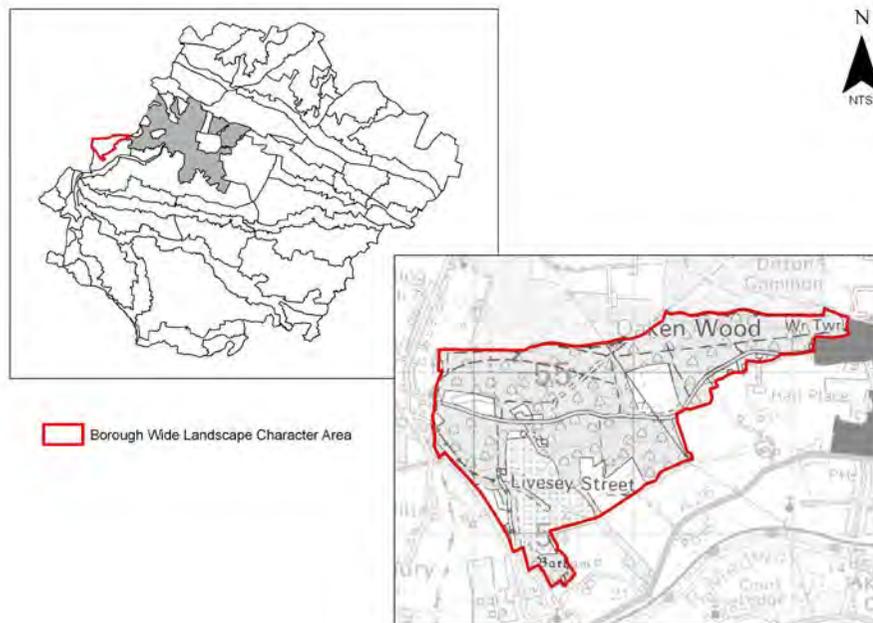
**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Low**

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Barming Heath Arable Land is assessed as being of low overall landscape sensitivity and is **tolerant of change**. Potential development in this area should be set within a landscape framework to define the urban edge of Maidstone, whilst considering the potential impacts that development could have on the rural area to the west.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Maintain and improve the extent of vegetation cover which restricts views of the urban edge, creating containment to the urban area and a buffer with the adjacent rural area
- Maintain key views of the elevated North Downs, and consider the effect that the extension of the urban footprint would have on views from the Downs, including night time impacts
- Consider the potential landscape and visual effects of extending the urban footprint into the rural landscape to the west that lies within Tonbridge & Malling
- Improve the built heritage through sensitive renovation
- Improve boundaries by gapping up native hedgerows



### Key Characteristics:

- Sweet chestnut coppice with native standards
- Coppice rotation provides various heights of coppice, and some clearings with isolated native standards and woodland ground flora
- Access points and tracks through woodland
- Narrow, enclosed, dark and winding road through woodland
- Few properties within woodland
- Disused mineral extraction site
- Minimal woodland clearance for crop production

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

The sweet chestnut coppice woodland and pattern of rides provide strong continuity and there are few detracting features. Occasional coppiced areas create more open and floristically diverse areas. Although large pylons are detracting features which run across the area, these are largely screened by the woodland. The ecological integrity of the landscape is strong. It is a Local Wildlife Site and designated as Ancient Woodland. The few scattered buildings throughout the woodland are generally in good condition. Although some may not respect local vernacular, they do not cause a significant impact because of the low visibility.

The continuity of sweet chestnut coppice woodland, the lack of development and the sheer uniformity of the woodland provides a strong sense of place and local distinctiveness.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

This is a highly visually unified landscape due to the extent and consistency of the woodland cover. However because of the density of woodland cover, visibility within the area is much localised and minor change can be well screened. Where coppice has been harvested the clearings are small and heavily enclosed by adjoining woodland. This area would be particularly sensitive to large scale woodland clearance opening up views.

There are very few residential properties in the area, and although housing at Teston and Barming abuts the area, extensive views are likely to be restricted by the dense tree cover. Residential visual receptors are therefore relatively few. However the area appears well used by local walkers on public footpaths and along the woodland rides.

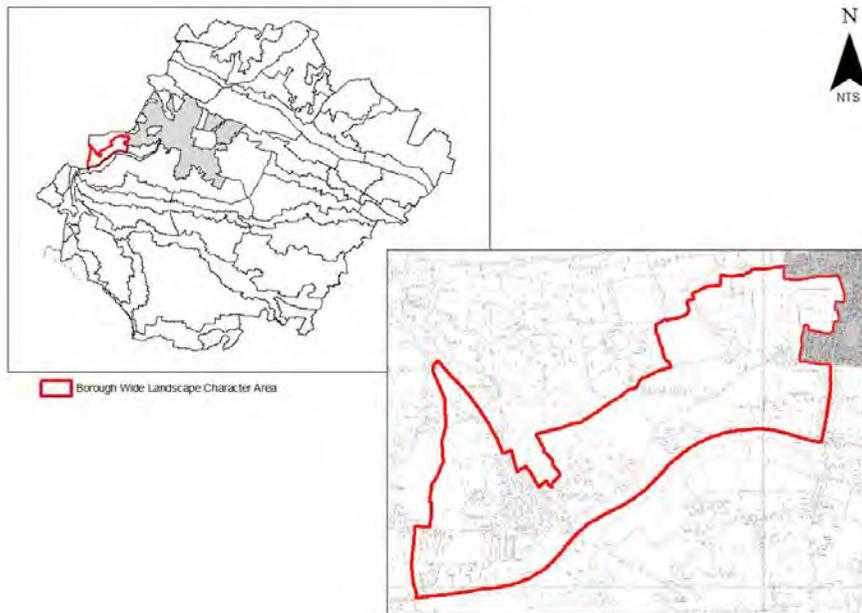
**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

The overall landscape sensitivity of Oaken Wood is assessed as high, indicating that the area is **sensitive to change**. The overriding distinctiveness and sensitivity of the woodland outweighs potential for anything other than very minor development to support existing scattered settlements and farmsteads.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Conserve the extent of this large tract of ancient woodland and continue management through rotational coppice
- Conserve the ecological diversity throughout the woodland
- Conserve the uniformity of the landscape and the limited palette of elements, and avoid fragmentation
- Use subtle timber vehicle abstraction methods where necessary to help reinforce the simplicity of the landscape



### Key Characteristics:

- Landform comprises the valley side of the River Medway, inclining gently in a northward direction
- Large arable fields
- Busy A26 Tonbridge Road cuts through the area
- Woodland to the north provides strong enclosure
- Dramatic and distinctive spire of an ancient church lies isolated within fields
- Long views across the Medway Valley to the opposite valley side

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: Moderate

The consistent landform which inclines northwards and the open, arable land use give coherency throughout the landscape. However, recent housing development on the edge of Maidstone, pylons and the A26 Tonbridge Road form significant visual detractors. There has been loss of historic field boundaries and orchards. Traditional landmark buildings, trees and vegetation generally appear to be in good condition, and there is some new planting within Teston.

Whilst the land is intensively farmed and there has been an extensive loss of hedgerows, blocks of woodland provide connectivity with Oaken Wood to the north. Vegetation along the railway to the south also provides a long habitat corridor. The ecological integrity is moderate.

The sense of place is largely indistinct. Although historic aspects include the 12<sup>th</sup> century isolated church, long views to the opposite valley side and the traditional, distinct core of Teston, these aspects are largely compromised by insensitive infill development and the severance caused by the A26.

### Visual Sensitivity: High

Views are wide and expansive, although they are contained to the north by the strong boundary of Oaken Wood. To the east, there are some views to the urban edge, although these are frequently intercepted by intervening vegetation. There are attractive long views to the south across the Medway Valley, over woodland belts alongside the railway, of the opposite rural valley side. Visibility is generally high, owing to the dominant landform of the sloping valley side and intermittent tree cover.

The population is concentrated within the key settlement of Teston, and the urban edge of Maidstone abuts the area's eastern

boundary. This means there are moderately high numbers of people in residential properties with potential views of the landscape. However there are few public footpaths in the area so that the number of walkers is likely to be low.

### Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High

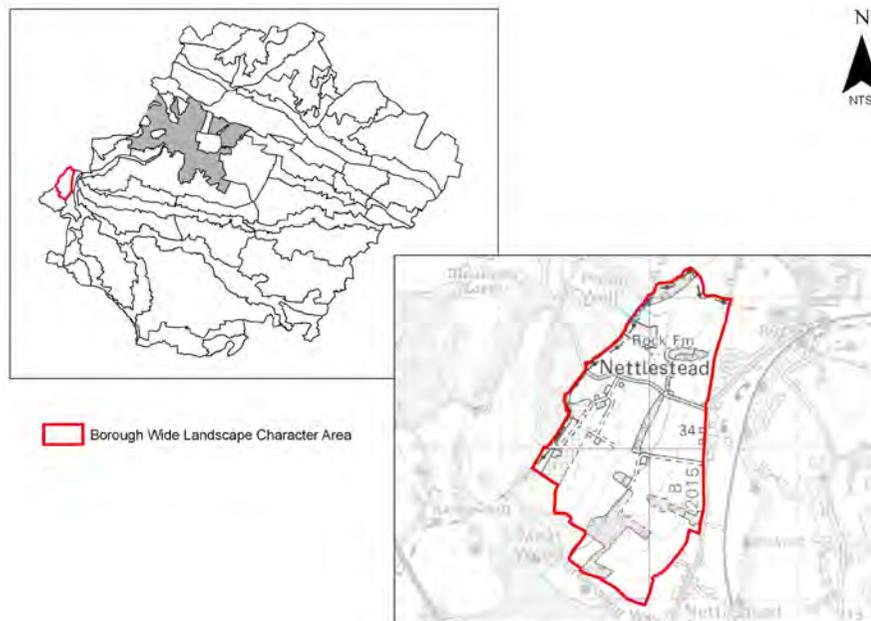
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
	<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>			

The overall landscape sensitivity of the Teston Valley Side is assessed as high, indicating that the area is **sensitive to change**.

The openness and aspect of the valley side limits development potential to infill within the existing scattered settlements and farmsteads. Extensive or large scale development would be inappropriate.

### Guidelines and Mitigation:

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Conserve traditional buildings and the isolated setting of the 12th century St. Margaret of Antioch Church
- Conserve and respect the setting of the characteristic traditional central core of Teston
- Conserve the connectivity between Oaken Wood and woodland belts throughout this landscape, and improve by adding further woodland belts where practicable
- Conserve and improve the quality of existing boundaries by reinstating/gapping up hedgerows where practicable
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials



### Key Characteristics:

- Landform comprises the upper valley side of the River Medway, inclining gently in a westward direction
- Arable landscape with medium to large sized fields, enclosed by hedgerows and tree belts
- Views out across the Medway Valley to the east
- Blocks of sweet chestnut coppice woodland
- Some traditional orchards and poplar shelterbelts remain

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

Generally, there is a sense of visual unity throughout this landscape. The inclining landform and consistency in terms of field size and land use provide an element of continuity and therefore

coherency throughout the landscape. There are few visual detractors, although traffic along the busy Maidstone Road detracts from the rural character. The ecological integrity of the area is moderate. Whilst the arable land use is intensive, retained hedgerows, tree belts and woodland clumps provide habitat corridors and clusters and east of Rock Farm a deciduous tree belt, including a notable amount of willow, surrounds a series of small ponds. The cultural integrity of the area is variable. Although some post and wire fencing replaces former hedgerow boundaries in places and the traditional field pattern has largely been lost, where hedgerows have been retained they generally appear to be intact and in good condition. The built environment generally comprises traditional buildings, which are in good condition. Hedgerows provide continuity throughout the arable landscape, and contribute towards the character and distinctiveness of the narrow Gibbs Hill.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Where intervening vegetation allows, there are views across the extensive arable fields to enclosing boundary vegetation. However, the higher ground affords open panoramic views eastwards across Nettlestead and the Medway Valley to the opposite rural valley side. The sloping landform and intermittency of tree cover provides high visibility, which makes this a sensitive landscape in terms of views in from the opposite valley side.

The area is sparsely populated and although the small village of Nettlestead adjoins the area, there is likely to be a relatively low number of people in residential properties with views of the landscape. There are also relatively few public footpaths so that numbers of walkers are likely to be low.

### Overall Landscape Sensitivity

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

The overall landscape sensitivity of the Nettlestead Wooded Farmlands is assessed as high, indicating that the area is **sensitive to change**. The openness and aspect of the valley side limits development potential to infill within the existing scattered settlements and farmsteads.

### Guidelines and Mitigation:

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Conserve the rural character of the landscape in views from the opposite valley side, and avoid further extension of Nettlestead across this landscape as the ground rises and becomes more visible
- Conserve and reinforce the setting of traditional buildings.
- Avoid proposals which would be detrimental to the setting of traditional buildings
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve and enhance retained hedgerows, and reinforce the field pattern through hedgerow reinstatement where practicable



### Key Characteristics:

- Landform comprises the valley side of the River Medway, inclining gently in a westward direction
- Arable landscape with medium sized fields enclosed by hedgerows and tree belts
- Recent housing and caravan parks within Nettlestead, concentrated to the west of Maidstone Road
- Distinctive Saxon ragstone church and medieval Nettlestead Place

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

The landform provides a sense of visual unity and coherence. There are few visual detractors, comprising traffic along the busy Maidstone Road, large agricultural barns south of Nettlestead Place and metal fencing between Maidstone Road and the railway

line. Mature vegetation around Nettlestead Place appears to be in good condition. Arable land use is intensive. Vegetation along the railway line and around Nettlestead Place, and allotments to the north of The Old Rectory, provide a reasonable habitat network to give a moderate ecological integrity. The cultural integrity of the area is variable.

Former hedgerow boundaries have been replaced with post and wire fencing and a traditional orchard lies derelict. Traditional buildings at Nettlestead Place and within the Nettlestead Conservation Area are in good condition, however the setting of some of these buildings has been compromised in places by inappropriate renovations and the poor siting of further recent development.

Nettlestead Place and the adjoining ragstone church provide strong local distinctiveness and are very sensitive elements within the landscape, but the recent development lessens the overall sense of place.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Immediately west of Nettlestead, and around Nettlestead Place, there are open panoramic views towards the Medway Valley. Views across the immediate landscape are restricted by built development in Nettlestead, the rising landform and intervening vegetation. Generally though the sloping landform and intermittency of tree cover provides high visibility, which makes this a visually sensitive landscape.

The population is generally concentrated within the settlement of Nettlestead. This means there are moderate numbers of people in residential properties with views of the landscape. The footpath network is not strongly developed and the railway provides a barrier to the Medway Valley Walk, so the numbers of walkers experiencing views of the landscape will be low.

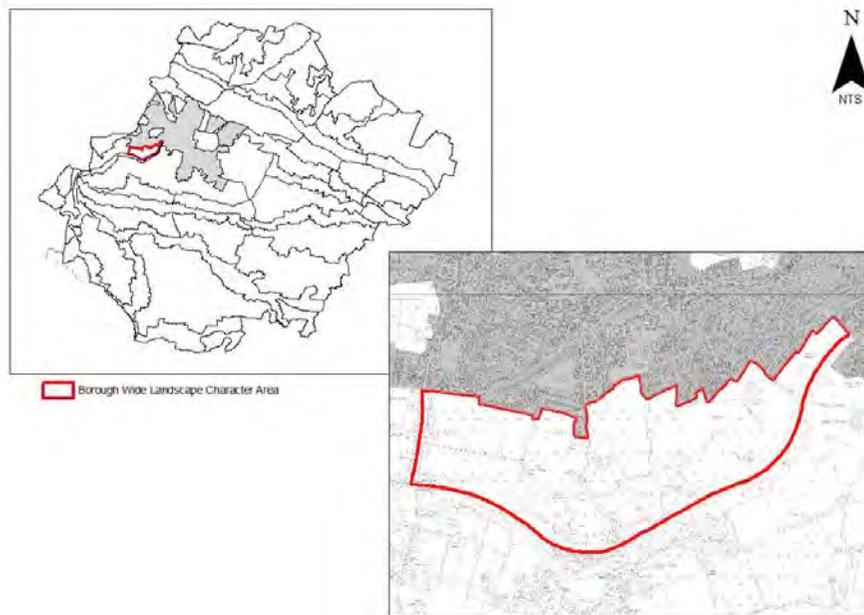
**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

The overall landscape sensitivity of the Nettlestead Valley Side is assessed as high, indicating that the area is **sensitive to change**. There is some minor development potential within the existing village, although further expansion of the village footprint or caravan park should be resisted.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Conserve and reinforce the setting of traditional buildings
- Avoid proposals which would be detrimental to the setting of traditional buildings and encourage sensitive renovations
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Consider views from the opposite valley side and avoid further encroachment of caravan parks across the landscape
- Conserve the rural skyline in views from within the valley
- Conserve and enhance retained hedgerows, and reinforce the field pattern through hedgerow reinstatement where practicable
- Conserve and reinforce the habitat network through gapping up linear vegetation along the railway line
- Avoid the use of coniferous species



### Key Characteristics:

- Landform slopes southward towards the River Medway
- Orchards
- Conversion to arable farmland to the east
- Strong use of ragstone in buildings and walls
- Southern edge of Maidstone forms a strong, crisp boundary

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

The sloping landform, the pattern of orchards, the built elements of ragstone and chequered brickwork form a coherent pattern of elements. There are few visual detractors except the harsh urban edge of Maidstone and fencing along the top of the traditional

ragstone wall along Rectory Lane. The ecological integrity is moderate, because the orchards, shelterbelts and hedgerows provide a reasonable habitat network although there has been a significant conversion to arable land to the east. The cultural integrity is variable because the traditional pattern of orchards is fragmented and diminishing and hedgerow boundaries are gappy. The condition of heritage features is generally better in the west than the east. Built development demonstrates local vernacular and contributes significantly to the sense of place, although this is compromised by recent infill development in places.

The sense of place is moderate. The orchards and the use of ragstone and chequered red and grey brick in traditional buildings are distinctive elements which contribute positively. However, traditional land use patterns are diminishing slightly to the east where orchards have been grubbed up and the traditional field pattern is weaker.

### Visual Sensitivity: High

Generally the sloping landform gives rise to views across the orchards and out across the Medway Valley to the opposite valley side and visa-versa. Nearer Maidstone, the periphery of the urban edge forms a strong boundary to the adjoining rural area. Visibility is generally high in this character area.

Within this character area the population is concentrated along South Street which leads down to Barming Bridge, sparsely scattered houses, East Farleigh and the extensive urban edge of Maidstone abutting the northern edge. This means there are relatively high numbers of people in residential properties with potential views of the landscape. The River Medway which adjoins the character area is popular with walkers and the area has several footpath links indicating that it is likely to be a popular area for local people to enjoy the countryside on foot.

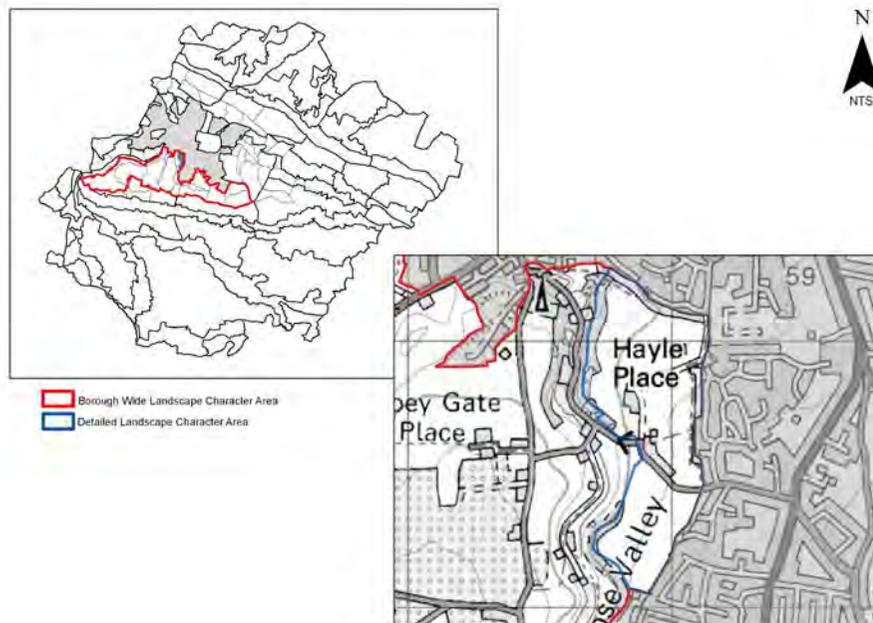
**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>				

The overall landscape sensitivity of the East Barming Orchards is assessed as high, indicating that the area is **sensitive to change**. The openness and aspect of the valley side limits development potential to very minor opportunities within the curtilage of existing properties and farmsteads. Extensive or large scale development would be inappropriate.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Conserve the remaining pattern of orchards
- Conserve the rural setting of traditional buildings
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the undeveloped rural landscape between the edge of Maidstone and East Farleigh
- Conserve the use of ragstone in walling and buildings
- Conserve the crisp transition between the urban and rural areas



### Key Characteristics:

- Dip slope of the Greensand Ridge
- Hythe Beds incised with Atherfield Clay river valleys
- Orchards dominate the land use
- Frequent broadleaf and coppice woodland blocks
- Frequent settlements

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

This is a landscape with a coherent pattern created by the regular landform, orchards and ragstone buildings. There are some detracting features such as commercial businesses, large agricultural barns, a golf course, recreational areas, polytunnels, recent development on the periphery of Maidstone, pylons and

equestrian grazing. The condition of field boundaries is varied, with some gappy hedgerows and post and wire fencing in some locations. Functional integrity is strong. The orchards, frequent woodland vegetation, watercourses, hedgerows and shelterbelts provide a strong habitat network. Some orchards appear to be unmanaged on the periphery of Maidstone and some have been lost to more intensive farming which indicates a vulnerability to change. As a strong heritage feature, ragstone walling is in good condition. Built development has a moderate impact on the landscape because whilst some traditional development demonstrates strong local vernacular, recent linear development along roads does not.

There is a moderate sense of place created by the strong field pattern of orchards with a network of woodland planting defining valleys. Settlements are often historic and there are numerous examples of traditional buildings. There is continuity within the built environment, provided by the frequent use of ragstone as a building material. However there is a significant amount of recent development on the periphery of Maidstone.

### Visual Sensitivity: High

Overall, visibility is high, because the undulating topography and intermittency of tree cover allow some long views to the opposite valley side of the River Medway and to Maidstone's urban extent. From some vantage points such as from Forge Lane and Small Prophets there are extensive views of the urban area where the land rises across Maidstone with the scarp of the North Downs visible in the distance. However, visibility is contained within valleys and where there is a strong field pattern of traditional orchards.

The area is well populated with farmsteads and small settlements scattered throughout the area together with linear development along some roads. The area is bounded to the north by the extensive urban edge of Maidstone. Coxheath and Boughton

Monchelsea adjoin to the south. This is an area with a reasonable network of footpaths and small lanes which link the urban edge of Maidstone to the area and also to the Medway Valley. Overall a high number of visual receptors are likely.

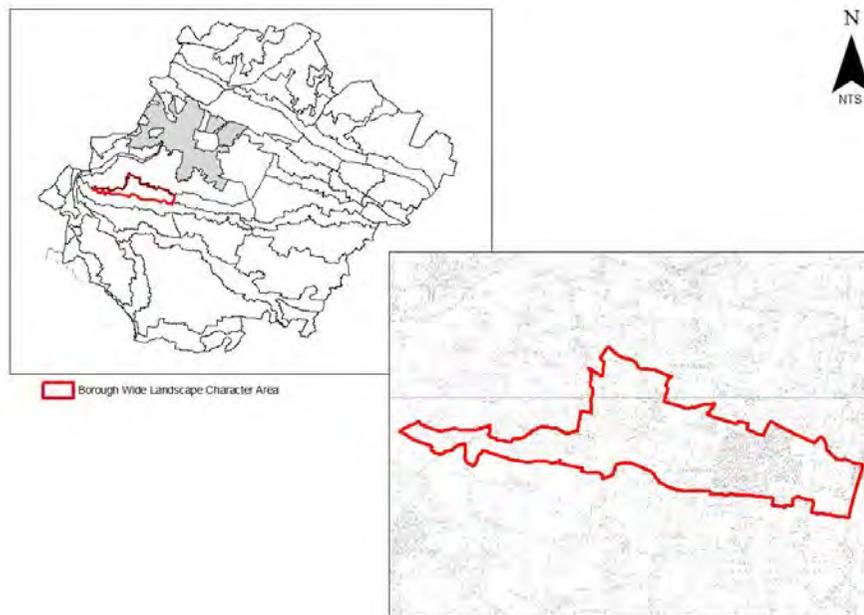
### Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	Moderate	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
	<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>			

The overall landscape sensitivity of the Farleigh Fruit Belt is assessed as high, indicating that the area is **sensitive to change**. There is some minor development potential within the existing villages, and associated with the scattered properties and farmsteads, although further expansion of the village footprint should be resisted.

### Guidelines and Mitigation:

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Conserve the special landscape quality provided by the rural valley location and the meandering River Medway
- Conserve the rural setting of historic buildings and settlements
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Promote the use of local materials in boundary treatment and access points, and design gates and stiles in simple clean styles
- Resist the introduction of contrasting visual elements in association with the railway



### Key Characteristics:

- Plateau above Greensand Ridge
- Orchards and soft fruit production
- Broadleaf woodland with sweet chestnut coppice
- Extensive recent development at Coxheath
- Long distance views across the Medway Valley to the North Downs

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: Moderate

There is a unified landscape with a consistent pattern of orchards and woodland. There are few visual detractors comprising pylons, polytunnels and scattered minor commercial development. The extensive ancient woodland cover, orchards and areas of soft fruit production, poplar shelterbelts and hedgerows provide a reasonable habitat network which is weakened by some conversion to arable land. Whilst tree cover and hedgerow boundaries generally appear to be well managed and in good condition, some orchards have been grubbed up. The sense of place is moderate with orchards and poplar shelterbelts occurring throughout this area, providing a consistent landscape pattern. Hedgerows also form a regular pattern across the landscape, enclosing the roads. However, buildings and the larger extent of settlement at Coxheath are mostly recent and indistinct with relatively few examples of historic and vernacular buildings.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Visibility is moderate because whilst there are some extensive views from the northern periphery of the area across the Medway Valley to the North Downs beyond, intervening vegetation and buildings at Coxheath restrict visibility throughout much of the landscape. From the southern periphery of the area, there are long views across the Low Weald.

The population is concentrated within the settlements at Coxheath and Linton crossroads, together with some scattered clusters of development. This means there are moderate numbers of people in residential properties with potential views of the landscape. The footpath network is moderately well developed and links with the nearby Greensand Way promoted footpath. Overall numbers of visual receptors are moderate.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Moderate**

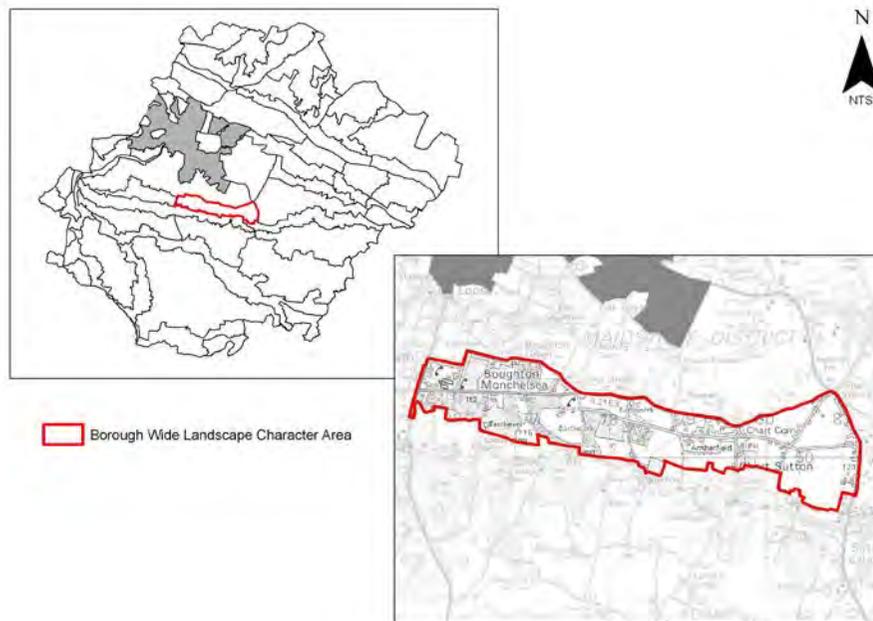
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Coxheath Plateau is assessed as being of moderate overall landscape sensitivity and therefore has **scope for change with certain constraints**.

Housing development potential should be focussed within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements in keeping with existing. Other development could be considered to support existing rural enterprises, although extensive, large scale or visually intrusive development would be inappropriate.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the remaining pattern of orchards and resist further conversion to arable land
- Conserve and reinforce woodland blocks
- Remove unnecessary fencing along woodland edges where possible
- Conserve and reinforce enclosing roadside vegetation



□ Borough Wide Landscape Character Area

### Key Characteristics:

- Plateau above the Greensand Ridge
- Sweet chestnut coppice woodland
- Orchards
- Arable land
- Recent infill development
- Grid like road pattern

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: Low

The pattern of elements is much fragmented by recent development, which creates a suburban character. The varied condition of orchards and scattered equestrian grazing further interrupts the landscape. There are numerous visual detractors,

comprising much recent development, equestrian grazing and associated facilities and polytunnels. The ecological integrity is moderate. Whilst the orchards, particularly where they have been left unmanaged, woodland and hedgerows create a good habitat framework. The extent of recent development and intensively farmed arable land to the east weaken the extent of, and connectivity between, habitats. The cultural integrity is poor. Whilst some orchards remain well managed and some have been replanted with new stock, a certain vulnerability to change is evident where many have been left unmanaged and are now overgrown. The traditional field pattern and hedgerow boundaries have been lost to the east where the land has been opened up for arable production. Where traditional hedgerow boundaries remain, they are often gappy and in poor condition. Although there are some scattered examples of traditional buildings, recent and extensive infill development detracts from their prominence and original setting and it is this recent development which dominates the built environment.

Overall this landscape is indistinct. There are a number of very distinct elements throughout this landscape, including the dense woodland and the regular pattern of orchards where they remain intact. However, the settlements and buildings are largely indistinct and both fragment the continuity of the landscape and weaken the local distinctiveness.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Views both within and out of the landscape are very much restricted by intervening woodland and orchards, and by development. Visibility is low.

The population is concentrated within the settlements at Linton crossroad, Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton together with development concentrated along main roads. This means there are relatively large numbers of people in residential properties with views of the landscape. The footpath network is reasonably

well developed and links with the nearby Greensand Way promoted footpath. Overall numbers of visual receptors are high.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Low**

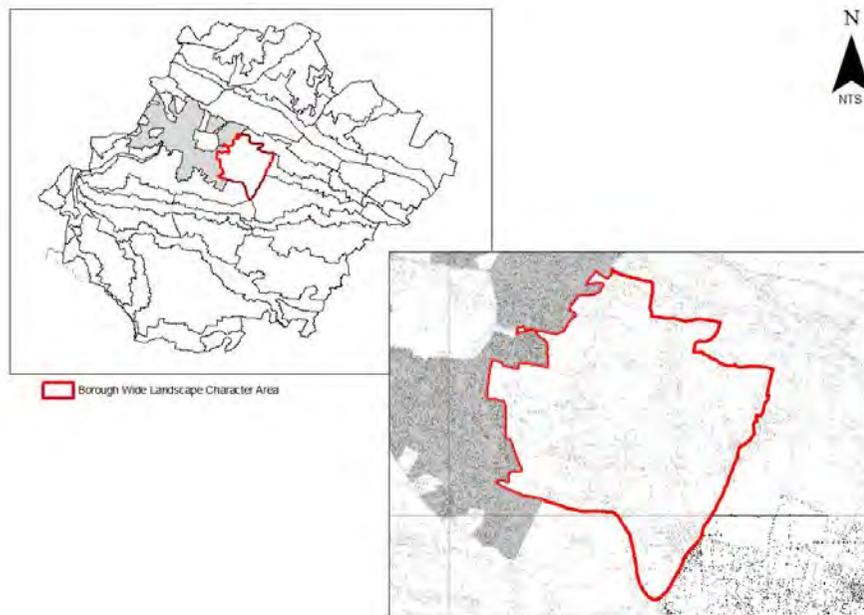
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
	<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>			

The Boughton Monchelsea to Chart Sutton Plateau is assessed as being of low overall landscape sensitivity and is therefore **tolerant of change**.

Housing development should be focussed within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements in keeping with existing. Other development could be considered to support existing rural enterprises, although extensive, large scale or visually intrusive development would be inappropriate.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve and improve the extent of woodland cover
- Improve hedgerows and therefore habitat connectivity and landscape structure by gapping up where practicable
- Improve the sense of place by maintaining remaining open space between swathes of development
- New development should respect and reinforce the existing field pattern rather than sub-divide or amalgamate existing land parcels



### Key Characteristics:

- Small scale field pattern for orchard and soft fruit production
- Grazed pasture
- Species rich native hedgerows
- Small mixed woodland blocks
- River Len situated in shallow valley to the north
- Numerous vernacular style buildings and use of local materials
- Pockets of high density, recent development

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

There are very few visual detractors so that the strong pattern of undulating topography, hedgerow lined lanes, vernacular style buildings and the small scale field pattern of orchards create a unified landscape.

Both ecological and cultural integrity is strong, with very little intensively farmed arable land and a comprehensive habitat network provided by the frequent woodland blocks, hedgerows and the River Len. Much of the woodland is ancient, hedgerows are generally intact and the built environment mostly respects local vernacular and promotes a very strong sense of place.

### Visual Sensitivity: High

Visibility is high owing to the frequent undulations and intermittent nature of tree cover. There are wide and attractive views across parts of the undulating landscape, often where the land is grazed around the River Len to the north. Where views are more open, there are some longer distance views of the elevated North Downs. Where the field pattern is very small and enclosed however, poplar shelterbelts often restrict the view.

As well as many scattered residential properties there are small settlements at Otham, Langley Heath and Leeds. The urban edge of east Maidstone abuts the edge of the character area. This means there are relatively high numbers of people in residential properties with views of the landscape

Stoneacre in Otham is a National Trust property and is a particular draw for tourists. Recreational use also includes a golf course and there is a well-developed footpath network.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

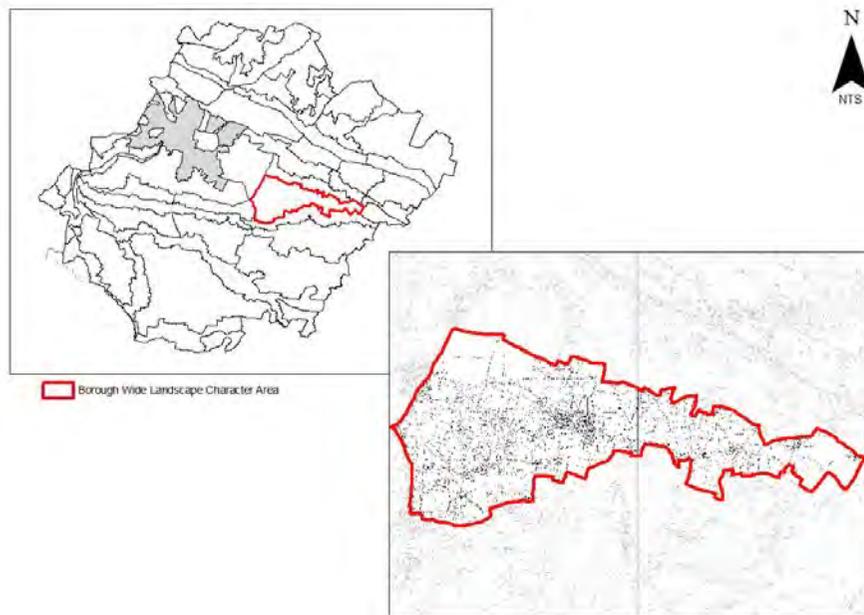
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
	<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>			

The Langley Heath Undulating Farmlands is an intimate small scale landscape and is assessed as **sensitive to change**.

Development should be focused around existing settlements and farmsteads. The effect on the visually sensitive valley sides and potential views to and from the Kent Downs AONB should be taken into consideration.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve and enhance the species rich hedgerows
- Conserve the small scale, historic, enclosed field pattern and areas of fruit production
- Conserve the remote qualities of the Len Valley and its setting, and strengthen vegetation along the River Len and adjoining ditches to improve habitat connectivity
- Conserve the traditional, rural setting of vernacular style buildings and Conservation Areas
- Conserve and enhance poplar shelterbelts and other vegetation which softens polytunnels and large agricultural barns and provides a landscape framework
- Avoid junction improvements which detract from the distinctive narrow country lanes



### Key Characteristics:

- Extensive tracts of mixed and sweet chestnut coppice woodland
- Plateau of Greensand Ridge and dip slope to east
- Deep loam to clay soils with extensive deposits of head
- Strong sense of enclosure
- Extensive recent development

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: Moderate

The large blocks of woodland and sweet chestnut coppice, provide a strong pattern throughout the area. However, arable land, equestrian grazing and recent development interrupt the pattern, but the low visibility caused by the woodland reduces the apparent fragmentation. Field division for equestrian grazing and recent development which does not respect the local vernacular are the main detracting features. The woodland provides extensive habitat opportunities, and vegetation belts across arable land provide corridors for wildlife. The woodland appears to be in good condition and is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Despite the indistinct character of the built environment, which does not respect the local vernacular, the ancient woodland provides strong local distinctiveness and a distinct sense of place.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

The woodland provides a strong sense of enclosure both as a boundary in cleared areas, and along roads where it creates tunnel like routes. Visibility is therefore generally low. Views are more open along the valley from a section of Lenham Road between Kings Wood and Runham Wood where the North Downs are visible in the distance.

Settlement is concentrated at Kingswood and Platts Heath but with many other properties frequently scattered along the roads in the area. There is a golf club and a strong footpath network so that potential numbers of people viewing the landscape is high.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

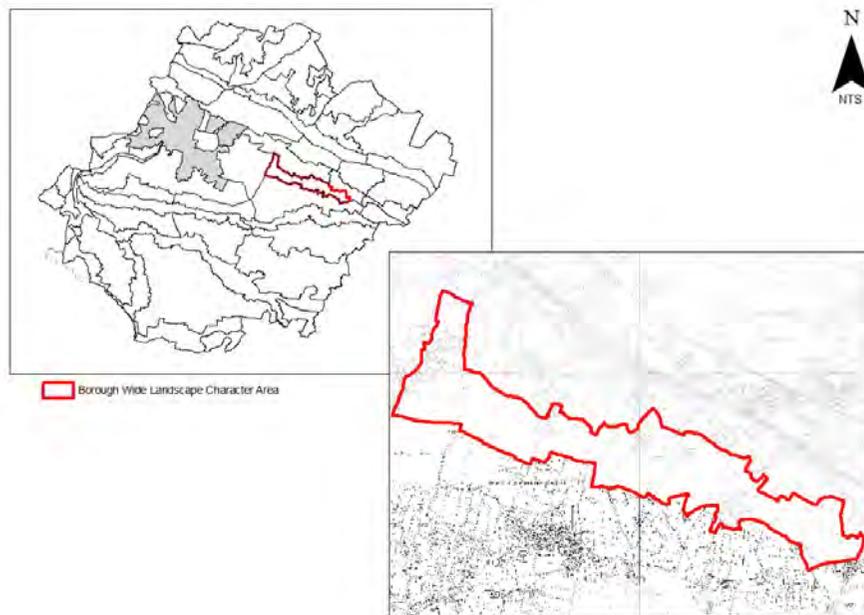
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

The Kingswood Plateau is assessed as being of moderate overall landscape sensitivity and to have **scope for change with certain constraints**.

There is scope for some housing infill within the wooded areas where visibility is low, although clearance of woodland for development should be resisted both for nature conservation and also as it forms a buffer/screen for views from the Kent Downs AONB. The expansion of the urban footprint into the open land north of Abbey Wood should be resisted as this area provides separation between Leeds and Langley, maintains the distinctiveness of the villages and prevents ribbon development.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the ancient woodland and resist significant erosion for development, arable land and equestrian grazing
- Conserve and reinforce the ecological integrity through promoting vegetation corridors within cleared areas
- Conserve and reinforce the range of ecological habitats provided through continued rotational coppice
- Reinforce the sense of place through encouraging use of local styles and materials



### Key Characteristics:

- Landscape forms part of the wider foreground to the Kent Downs AONB
- Undulating landform, rising to the south away from the Len Valley
- Scattered mixed woodland blocks
- Series of springs and streams running north towards the River Len
- Isolated farmsteads and manor houses
- Traditional vernacular style buildings
- Narrow, sunken, tree lined lanes

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

This is a strongly unified landscape, with few detracting features. The strong pattern of elements consists of the undulating topography, woodland blocks, hedgerows, the distinctive pattern of narrow sunken lanes, springs and streams, and the unique collection of vernacular buildings. Some recent infill development, modern farming barns and silos slightly detract. Although there is a significant amount of arable land, this is balanced by the considerable amount of woodland, some of which is ancient. St Nicolas's Churchyard, Leeds, is ecologically important. The condition of heritage features is mostly good.

The key features of this landscape provide very strong local distinctiveness. The numerous scattered vernacular style buildings, use of ragstone, frequent and enclosing woodland blocks, and the narrow sunken lanes in particular, are very distinctive elements which provide a very strong sense of place.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Visibility is moderate because whilst there are some long views out to the North Downs, woodland cover and the undulating landform restrict views throughout the immediate landscape.

The population is relatively low and is located within small villages such as Leeds and Broomfield and a few scattered properties. The footpath network is well developed across the area and the number of walkers experiencing views of the countryside is potentially high. Overall the potential number of sensitive visual receptors is moderate.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

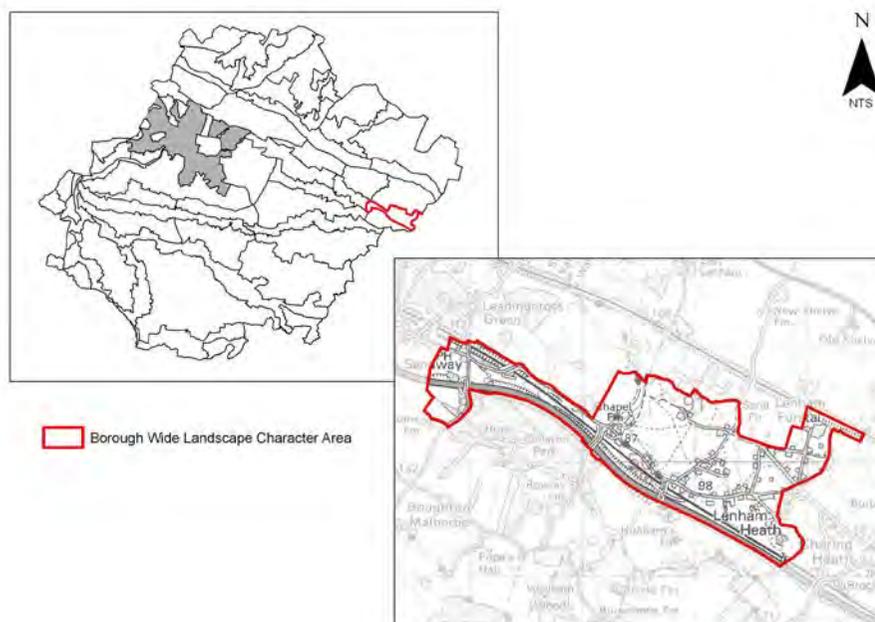
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Broomfield Undulating Farmlands is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and is **sensitive to change**.

Development potential is limited to within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing. Other development could be considered to support existing rural enterprises, although extensive, large scale or visually intrusive development would be inappropriate, and views from the Kent Downs AONB should be considered.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the wooded enclosure provided by woodland blocks and hedgerows
- Conserve the rural and traditional setting of vernacular style buildings
- Resist infill development within the distinctive rural hamlet of Broomfield
- Resist widening of distinctive narrow sunken lanes



### Key Characteristics:

- Landscape forms part of the wider foreground to the Kent Downs AONB
- Poor acidic soils
- Severance caused by HS1 and the M20
- Sand extraction
- Artificial landform resulting from infrastructure mitigation
- Headwaters of the Great Stour
- Loss of traditional hedgerow boundaries
- Equestrian grazing with temporary electric fencing

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: Low

Visual unity is significantly interrupted by recent subdivision into small land parcels, and the intrusive major transport corridor to the south. There are many visual detractors in addition to this infrastructure, including agricultural buildings, factory buildings, sand extraction, poor boundary treatment, electric fencing and unsympathetic recent development. This is largely a grazed landscape, with some limited arable land. Scattered woodland (some designated as a Local Wildlife Site), orchards, and hedgerows/tree belts create a moderate network for wildlife. The cultural integrity is poor because traditional field boundaries are reduced and few orchards remain. Overall there is a very weak sense of place, largely because many traditional elements have been removed or diminished. Whilst there are some examples of local vernacular styles, with some scattered listed buildings, the dominating style throughout the built environment is recent and indistinct. Lenham Heath has a fragmented character and no definitive central core or sense of arrival.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Although the undulating landform and intervening vegetation restrict views throughout the immediate landscape, there are some open views of the North Downs. Visibility is moderate. Whilst there are some longer views across larger and more open arable fields, intervening garden vegetation generally restricts views within and around Lenham Heath.

The population is concentrated within the key settlement of Lenham Heath, and located at a few scattered properties and farmsteads throughout the area. This means there are only moderate numbers of people in residential properties with potential views of the landscape. The Stour Valley Walk skirts the western corner and the network of footpaths is well developed so that the number of walkers in the area are likely to be high.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Low**

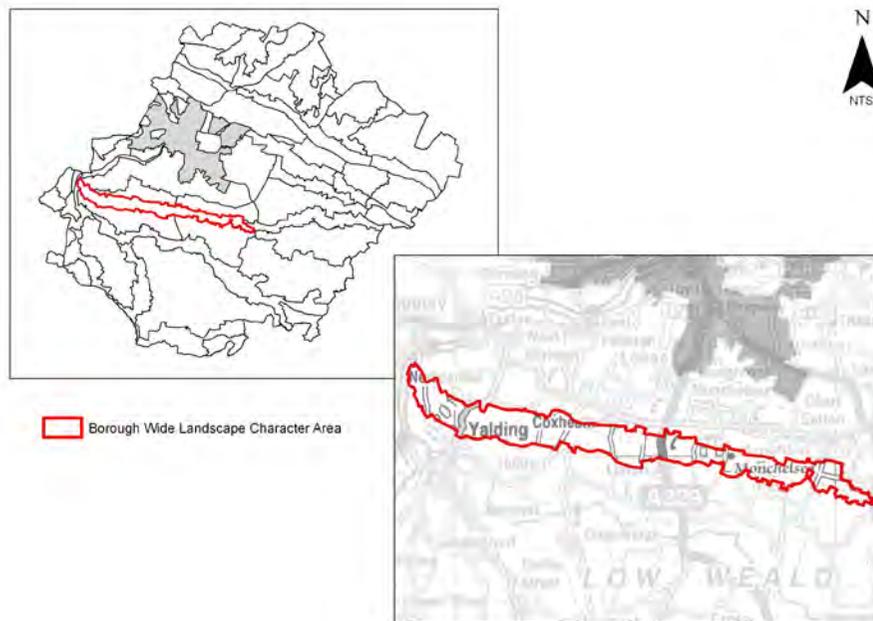
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Lenham Heath Farmlands has been extensively damaged by the transport corridors of the M20 and HS1, which intrudes into and fragments the wider landscape. The overall landscape sensitivity is assessed as low and the area is **tolerant of change**.

Housing development potential should be focussed on existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing in type, scale and pattern. Opportunities should be sought to create a new landscape framework to offset the adverse impacts of the existing transport infrastructure. The impact on potential views from the Kent Downs AONB should be considered.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Improve boundary treatment by reinstating native hedgerows where practicable
- Avoid the use of coniferous species
- Encourage sympathetic redesign of former quarry sites, with organically shaped water bodies and integrated vegetation
- Where development is permitted, buildings and structures should be sensitively designed and should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Where additions to transport infrastructure are required, associated fencing and elements visible in the wider landscape should be sympathetically designed
- Soften large agricultural barns and other buildings with native planting
- Improve the sense of arrival within settlements by creating definitive central areas
- Protect and improve the ecological integrity of the headwaters of the Great Stour through promotion of wildlife 'buffer' zones



### Key Characteristics:

- Scarp face of the Greensand Ridge
- Extensive views across the Low Weald to the south
- Orchards set within small scale field pattern
- Historic parkland
- Very distinctive and historic built environment
- Series of narrow lanes that run against the contours

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

The landscape is strongly unified because of the continuity of the scarp face landform, the panoramic views, the scattered traditional buildings, ragstone walling and the regular small scale orchard field pattern. There are few visual detractors comprising barns, heavy traffic on Linton Hill, pylons and polytunnels. The ecological integrity is good with a strong connectivity provided by the orchards, shelterbelts, woodland blocks (some of which are ancient) and hedgerows, springs and ditches. The cultural integrity is good. Orchards, hedgerows, shelterbelts and ragstone walling are intact and in good condition. The numerous striking examples of traditional buildings respect local vernacular and there are historic parklands at Linton Park and Boughton Monchelsea Place. Landscape elements combine to create a very strong sense of place.

### Visual Sensitivity: High

There are extensive, panoramic views across the Low Weald to the south from this elevated landscape along the Greensand Ridge. Views within the area are restricted at times by intervening vegetation, although there are some views within the area across orchards with the backdrop of the Low Weald beyond.

The population is predominantly located within the small village of Linton, but also within sparsely scattered properties throughout the area. Larger settlements at Coxheath and Yalding abut the area. This means there are moderate numbers of people in residential properties with potential views of the landscape. The Greensand Way passes through the area which is likely to result in large numbers of walkers enjoying the countryside.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

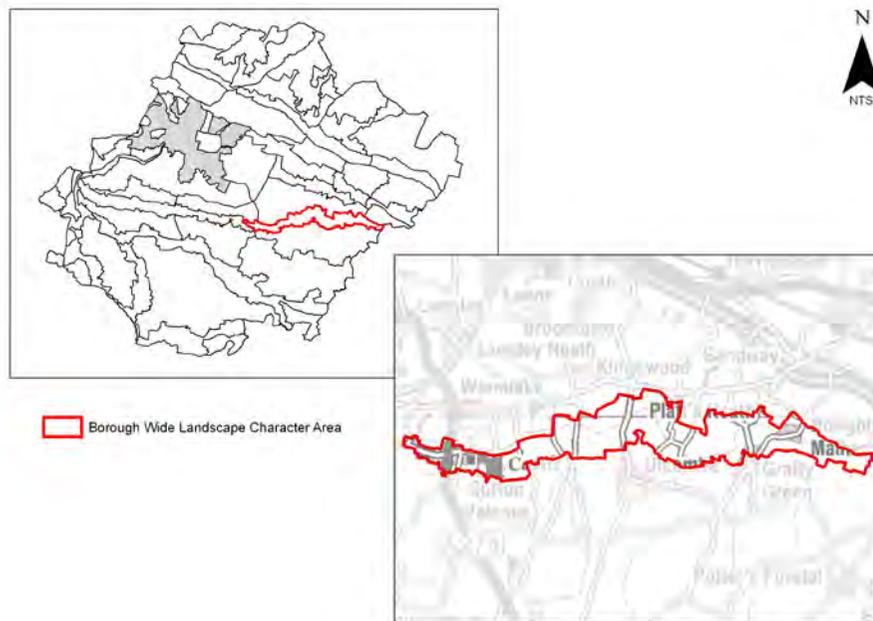
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Linton Greensand Ridge is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity, and in particular of high visual sensitivity due to its ridgeline location. The area is considered to be **sensitive to change**.

Development potential is limited to within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing. However development on the visually sensitive ridge should be resisted, in particular extensive or large scale development or developments with strong or high vertical elements.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Greensand Ridge in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve orchards and the traditional small scale field pattern
- Conserve the historic parkland of Linton Park and Boughton Monchelsea Place
- Conserve the rural setting of traditional buildings
- Conserve distinctive ragstone walling
- Conserve the undeveloped character of the landscape
- Avoid linear infill development along roads
- Soften the impact of agricultural buildings and fruit equipment storage areas with native planting
- Consider this exposed landscape in views from the Low Weald to the south



### Key Characteristics:

- Scarp face of the Greensand Ridge
- Extensive views across the Low Weald to the south
- Frequent small blocks of coppice and deciduous woodland
- Extensive orchards and some remaining hop gardens
- Very distinctive built environment with frequent oasts and timber framed houses
- Strong use of ragstone in walls and buildings

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

This is a coherent landscape with an undulating landform, frequent orchards, distinctive built environment and strong use of local materials, such as ragstone. Detracting features such as large agricultural buildings are few. The frequent woodland blocks, hedgerows and scattered orchard blocks provide a reasonable extent of habitat connectivity. Extensive orchard planting remains, with both historic examples of traditional orchards and widespread new orchards. Overall there is a very strong sense of place, provided by the very distinctive built environment set within orchards and hop gardens with enclosed, sunken roads. The small scale field pattern is also important. On the upper scarp of the Greensand Ridge there are extensive views across the Low Weald which contribute significantly to the sense of place in this area.

### Visual Sensitivity: High

Within the area, views across orchards and pasture are often reasonably enclosed by intervening vegetation. From various vantage points across the ridge, however, there are extensive rural views.

The population is concentrated within the key settlements of Sutton Valence and Boughton Malherbe, and within scattered properties, farmsteads and hamlets throughout the area. The villages of Ulcombe and Grafty Green adjoin the area to the south. This means there are relatively low numbers of people in residential properties with views of the landscape.

The Greensand Way and a network of public footpaths cross the area which means there are potentially high numbers of walkers in the area.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

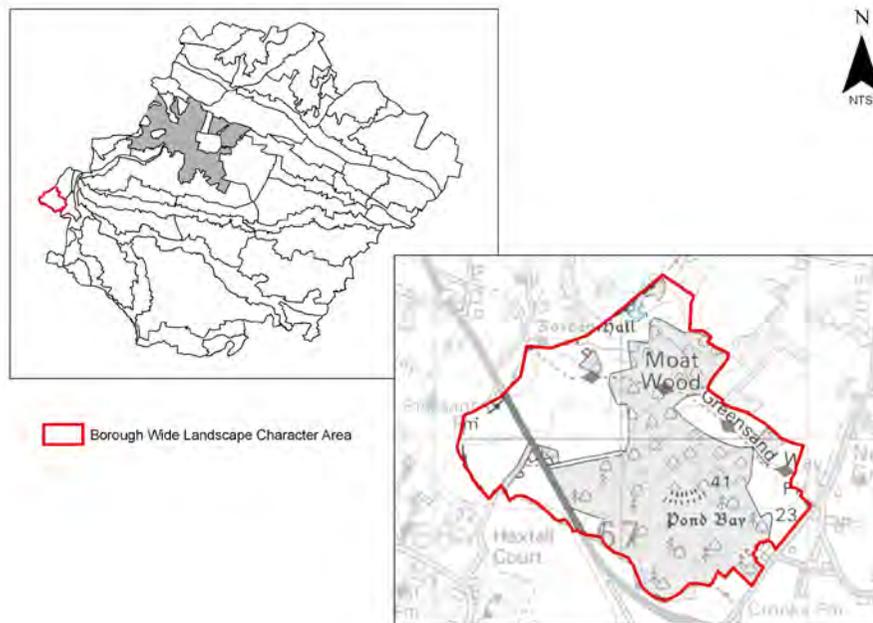
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Sutton Valence Greensand Ridge is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity, and in particular of high visual sensitivity due to its ridgeline location. The area is considered to be **sensitive to change**.

Development potential is limited to within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing. However development on the visually sensitive ridge should be resisted, in particular extensive or large scale development or developments with strong or high vertical elements.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Greensand Ridge in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve orchards and hop gardens and the traditional small scale field pattern
- Resist further conversion to arable land
- Conserve the scattered pattern of development and the rural character of this landscape
- Conserve the rural setting of traditional buildings and settlements
- Conserve the narrow, enclosed lanes and design any necessary highway improvements to reflect this characteristic
- Conserve the tiny scale of Boughton Malherbe
- Consider this exposed landscape in views from the Low Weald to the south



### Key Characteristics:

- Undulating landscape
- Large arable fields enclosed by strong woodland edges
- Large mixed woodland blocks
- Little development
- Extensive views across the Medway Valley to the opposite horticultural valley side

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

This is a strongly unified landscape because there are few visual detractors and the undulating landform, large arable fields, strong wooded field boundaries and large woodland blocks provide a simplistic and consistent pattern of elements. Major roads detract audibly, but the well wooded character of the landscape prevents views of these roads. There are large, intensively farmed fields, but woodland cover is dominant and its value is recognised through its designation as a Local Wildlife Site. Woodland is well managed and appears to be in good condition, although some hedgerow boundaries have been removed or are gappy. The built environment generally respects local vernacular. The simplicity of this wooded landscape, with its few very distinctive characteristics, provides continuity and a strong sense of place.

### Visual Sensitivity: Low

Visibility is generally low because of the enclosing nature of the woodland which provides strong boundaries and an attractive backdrop, although there are long views towards this landscape from east of the River Medway.

The population is low with a few scattered properties in the area, although Nettlestead and Nettlestead Green abut the area. This means there are relatively low numbers of people on residential properties with potential views of the landscape. Public footpaths are infrequent although the Greensand Way lies close by.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

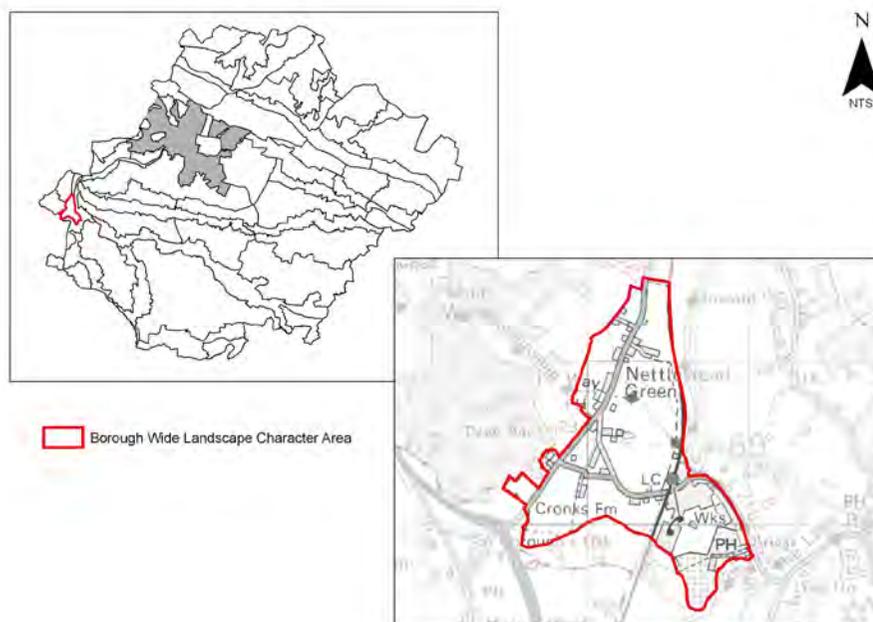
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

The overall landscape sensitivity of Nettlestead Woodlands is assessed as high, indicating that the area is **sensitive to change**.

The overriding distinctiveness and sensitivity of the woodland limits potential to very minor development to support existing scattered settlements and farmsteads.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the extent of ancient woodland and reinforce through continued appropriate management
- Conserve hedgerow boundaries and reinforce through gapping up
- Conserve the Scheduled Monument in Millbay's Wood
- Conserve the rural undeveloped character of the landscape, with limited development



### Key Characteristics:

- Reasonably flat and low lying landscape
- Native hedgerows of beech and hawthorn
- Fruit orchards
- Caravan park
- Extensive former chemical works
- Small field pattern comprising private plots

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: Low

This landscape is in poor condition overall. The few traditional elements are fragmented by much recent infill development and other visual detractors such as an extensive former chemical industrial site. Habitat opportunities are provided by the small pocket of remaining orchards to the south east, hedgerows, ditches and small woodland blocks. Whilst a small orchard still survives, many trees are dead and it does not appear to be well managed. Although many hedgerows remain intact, some have been replaced by fence line boundaries. Modern housing and caravans do not respect the local vernacular and detract from the setting and sense of place provided by other traditional properties, such as Parsonage Farmhouse, Cronks Farm and Green Farm. Overall the sense of place is weak.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Visibility is moderate because whilst the landscape is mostly enclosed, there are some longer views across the canal and from Hampstead Lane to the opposite valley side.

The population is concentrated within Nettlestead Green and within clustered properties throughout the area. This means there are relatively low numbers of people on residential properties with potential views of the landscape. However the Greensand Way crosses the area and the Medway Valley Walk is close by. The canal, marina and Twyford Bridge which abut the area form a locally very popular destination for visitors close to the south east corner of the character area.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Low**

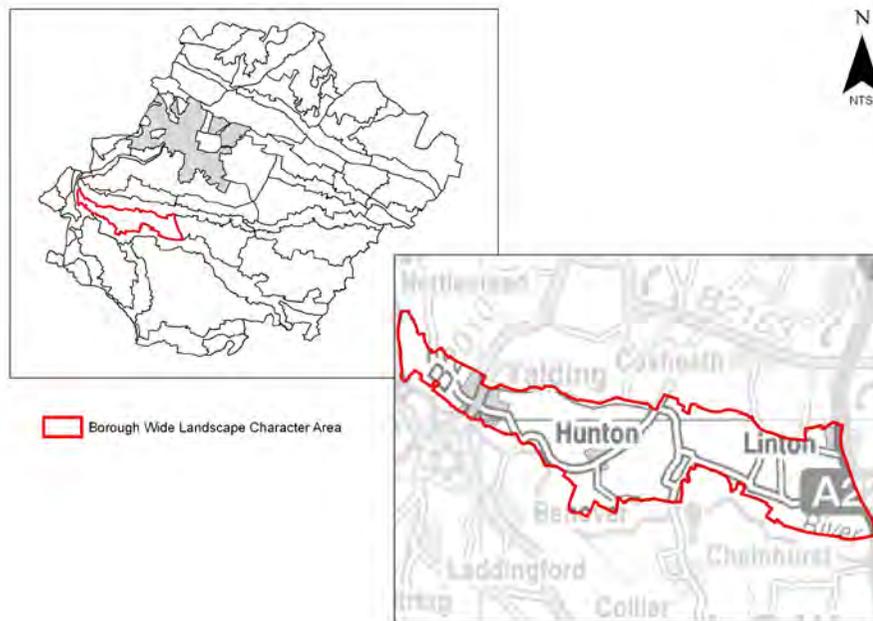
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Nettlestead Green Farmlands is assessed as low overall landscape sensitivity and is **tolerant of change**.

Development potential should be focussed on existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing in type, scale and pattern. Opportunities should be sought to create a new landscape framework to restore landscape structure and pattern.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Improve strength of character through promoting the use of local materials and style of development
- Replace coniferous species with native planting where possible
- Improve the condition of orchards around Parsonage Farmhouse
- Improve habitat connectivity through replacing fencing with native hedgerows where possible
- Protect the remaining traditional setting of vernacular style farmhouses and buildings



### Key Characteristics:

- Low lying landscape which forms part of the Low Weald
- Reservoirs and water bodies along the foot of the Greensand Ridge
- Drains running southwards towards the River Beult
- Enclosed pasture
- Frequent orchards
- Parkland landscape surrounding Hunton Court
- Historic settlement of Yalding

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

The frequent orchards, hedgerows, woodland blocks, ditches and water bodies provide a coherent landscape pattern and habitat network, with very little arable land. Orchards appear to be well maintained and in good condition, illustrating low vulnerability to change. The parkland around Hunton Court appears to be in good condition and although there has been some removal, hedgerows are mostly intact. Existing built development has a positive impact on the landscape. There is a strong sense of place, provided by the characteristic use of local materials and local vernacular within settlements and throughout the rural landscape.

Water bodies are often defined by clusters of vegetation and hedgerows line the lanes and enclose orchards to provide a strong sense of enclosure. The narrow, winding lanes are also characteristic because they broadly follow the contours along the foot of the Greensand Ridge and along the periphery of the Beult Valley.

The situation of Yalding, positioned along the River Beult with its characteristic mixture of traditional style buildings demonstrates strong local distinctiveness. The wider pattern of isolated farmsteads and the historic Hunton Park provide a very rural character which has not been significantly altered by recent development or land use changes.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

There are views of the steep scarp slope of the Greensand Ridge, which rises immediately to the north of this area. There are extensive views to the south across the Low Weald where intervening vegetation allows, and from Linton there are some views east across Linton Park. Within the area there are long views across the parkland landscape of Hunton Court, and from Linton across orchards, although many intermediate views are restricted by hedgerows and boundary vegetation.

The population is predominantly located within the key settlements of Yalding and Hunton, and also within scattered properties and farmsteads throughout the area. This means there are relatively low numbers of people on residential properties with potential views of the landscape. Yalding is a particular draw with visitors enjoying views of the river and countryside. The footpath network is moderately well developed and the Greensand Way crosses the area

### Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High

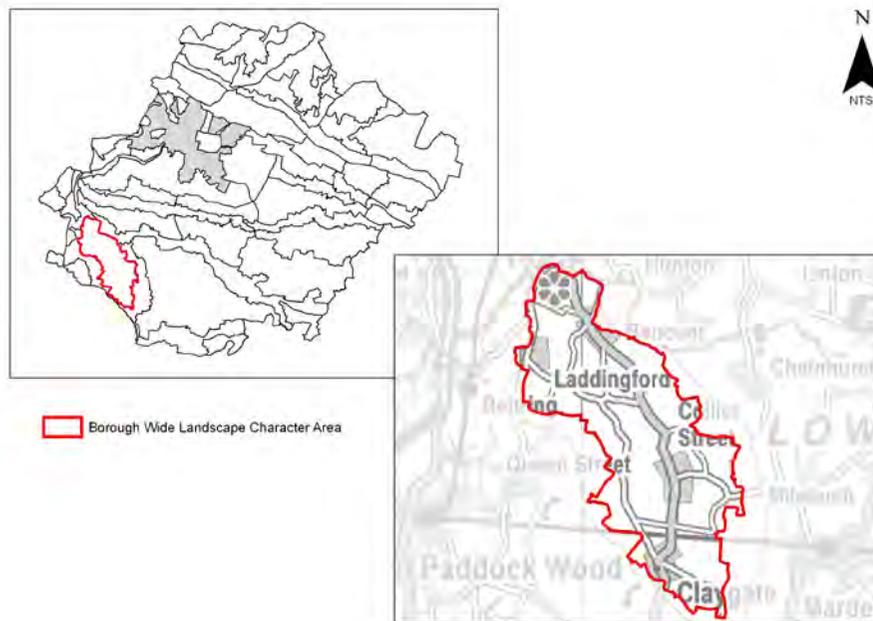
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
	<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>			

Yalding Farmlands is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and is **sensitive to change**.

Development potential is limited to within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing. Other development could be considered to support existing rural enterprises, although extensive, large scale or visually intrusive development would be inappropriate.

### Guidelines and Mitigation:

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve orchards and the traditional small scale field pattern
- Conserve the largely undeveloped rural landscape and the remote quality of existing development
- Conserve the historic parkland landscape around Hunton Park
- Conserve the rural setting of traditional buildings and farmhouses
- Conserve distinctive ragstone walling
- Conserve the undeveloped character of the landscape
- Resist conversion to arable land
- Avoid linear infill development along roads
- Soften the impact of agricultural buildings and fruit growing equipment storage areas with native planting
- Increase habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting a framework of vegetation in these areas
- Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural barns through native planting



### Key Characteristics:

- Landscape forms part of the wider Low Weald landscape
- Low lying landform
- Intricate network of ditches, ponds and reservoirs
- Small and mostly broadleaf woodland blocks
- Orchards, hops and pasture surround settlements
- More expansive arable land within surrounding landscape
- Much linear settlement with clusters of development at road junctions

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: Moderate

This is a coherent landscape where the pattern of elements is provided by linear development along the roads and the regularity of field pattern, which becomes larger scale away from the settled areas. Visual detractors comprise large barns and silos, polytunnels, pylons and fencing. Whilst the network of ditches and frequent ponds, hedgerows and shelterbelts provide a coherent habitat network, this is weakened by extensive arable fields and hedgerow boundary removal. Although there is evidence of some new orchard planting, others are derelict. Built development has a moderate impact on the landscape, with a strong contrast between traditional properties and more recent development. Sense of place is provided by the orchards and hops, ditches and ponds. Although linear development provides continuity throughout the landscape, the individuality of separate settlements has been lost. Similarly whilst there are some striking examples of local vernacular, recent development often degrades the setting of traditional buildings, reducing the sense of place.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Generally views are contained by the small scale field pattern with hedgerows and tall shelterbelts often enclosing orchards. However views from the wider landscape are more extensive across large scale arable fields. Vegetation belts across the flat landscape largely restrict longer views, although there are some long distance views of the elevated Greensand Ridge to the north.

The population is predominantly concentrated within the key settlements of Laddingford and Benover, there is also development along the road network. Yalding is adjacent to the north. This means there are moderate numbers of people on residential properties with potential views of the landscape. However the public footpath network is not particularly well developed.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Moderate**

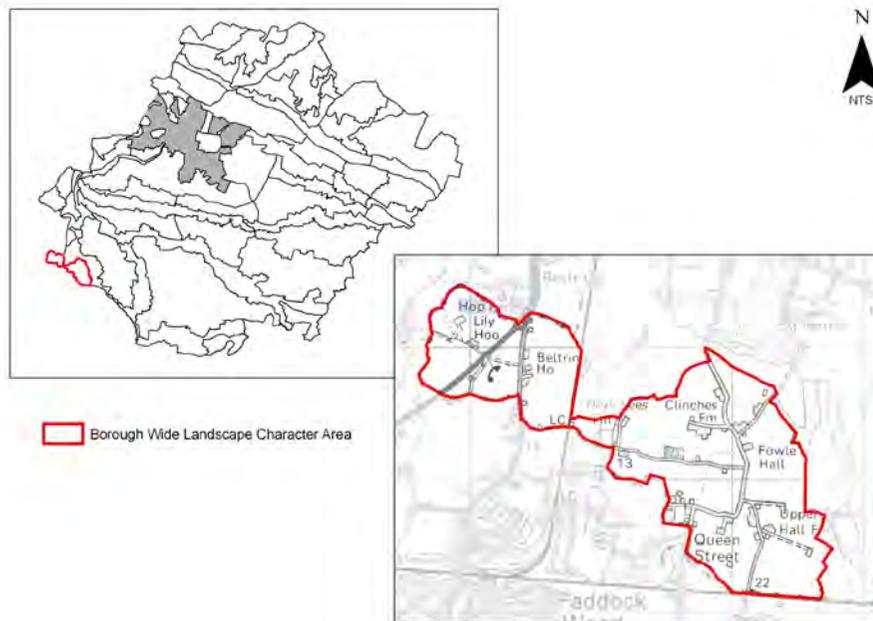
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Laddingford to Low Weald is assessed as being of moderate overall landscape sensitivity and therefore has **scope for change with certain constraints**.

Housing development should be focussed within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements in keeping with existing. Other development could be considered to support existing rural enterprises, although extensive, large scale or visually intrusive development would be inappropriate.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the network of ponds and improve habitat connectivity with native vegetation corridors and maintain a landscape framework
- Reinstate traditional hedgerow boundaries and gap up existing hedgerows where they are in poor condition
- Improve the sense of arrival and individuality of separate settlements by avoiding further development between them
- Soften the visual impact of large agricultural barns and silos with native planting



### Key Characteristics:

- Flat, low lying landform
- Narrow ditches and ponds
- Grassland and pasture
- Tree belts with much willow
- Orchards
- Clusters of farmsteads along narrow, ditch lined roads
- Frequent oast houses

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

There is a coherent pattern of elements and only a few detract. There is a consistent network of ditches, a dominance of grassland and pasture and a frequency of willow. An element of fragmentation is caused by the sporadic nature of development and, in the west, the major roads that dissect the landscape. Ecologically the grassland and pasture, the ditches, hedgerows and tree belts provide good connectivity. There are few remaining orchards and no evidence of new orchard planting, implying that traditional land use is in decline. There has also been some removal of traditional field boundaries. There are numerous converted farm buildings, with a particularly high number of distinctive oast houses throughout the landscape. However, recent development and large barns sometimes degrade the setting of these buildings. The narrow lanes form a particularly distinctive element because they are ditch lined, with tree belts that often contain a significant amount of willow. Overall the functional integrity and sense of place are strong.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Visibility is moderate because tree belts often contain long views across the landscape. Where intervening vegetation allows, there are some glimpses of the elevated Greensand Ridge to the north. Within the area, views across grassland and pasture are contained by strong tree belts which cross the landscape.

The population is dispersed in scattered farmsteads and hamlets, resulting in relatively low numbers of people in residential properties with potential views of the landscape. The footpath network is only moderately well developed.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

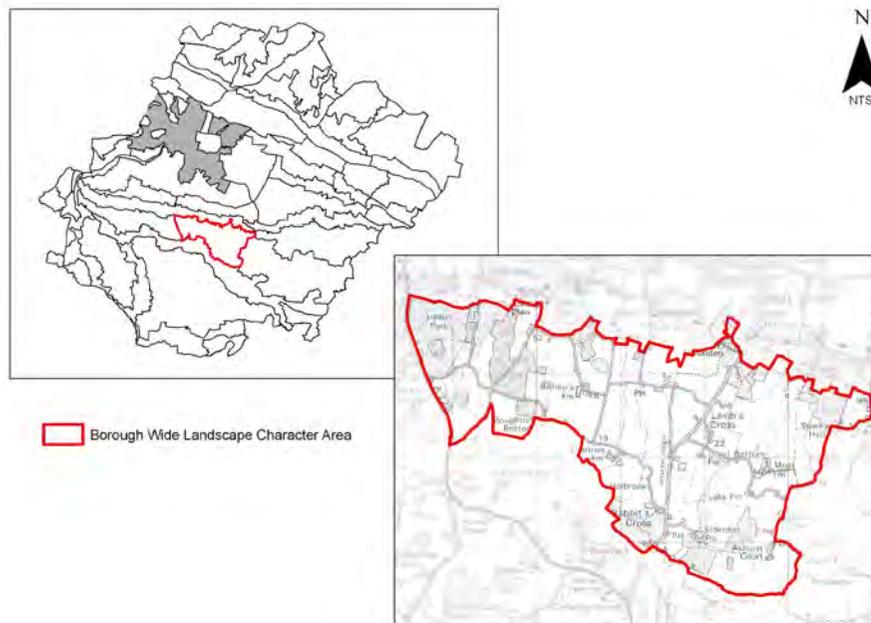
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Beltring Grasslands is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and is **sensitive to change**.

Development potential is limited to within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing. Other development could be considered to support existing rural enterprises, although extensive, large scale or visually intrusive development would be inappropriate.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve and enhance grassland and pasture
- Conserve and enhance the tree belts and hedgerows which provide a sense of enclosure and define the field pattern
- Avoid commercialisation along the main roads to the west
- Soften the prominence of large agricultural buildings with native planting
- Conserve the rural setting of traditional farmhouses



### Key Characteristics:

- Low lying landscape which forms part of the Low Weald
- Reservoirs along the foot of the Greensand Ridge
- Drains running southwards towards the River Beult
- Enclosed pasture
- Parkland landscape of Linton Park and Boughton Monchelsea Place
- Sparse development with scattered farms and small hamlets
- Dominance of oak trees within pasture and as mature hedgerow trees

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

The frequency of oak in the landscape, together with the reservoirs and ditches along the foot of the Greensand Ridge, provide a consistent pattern. A few large barns detract from this pattern. The parkland, reservoirs, drains, hedgerows and woodland provide a strong habitat network, although there is some intensive arable farmland. Hedgerows are generally intact and in good condition. The historic parkland landscape also appears to be in good condition, and there is ancient woodland to the east of Linton Park. The many traditional farmhouses and farm buildings in the area are very distinctive but there has been some recent development which does not always respect local vernacular. The location at the foot of the Greensand Ridge is made evident by panoramic views of the elevated landform to the north. Overall, there is a strong sense of place.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Visibility is moderate. Whilst there are some long views across the Low Weald to the Greensand Ridge to the north, intervening vegetation encloses some views across the very gently undulating landform.

The population is focused, dispersed in scattered hamlets and farmsteads throughout the area, resulting in relatively low numbers of people in residential properties with views of the landscape. The footpath network is moderately well developed.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

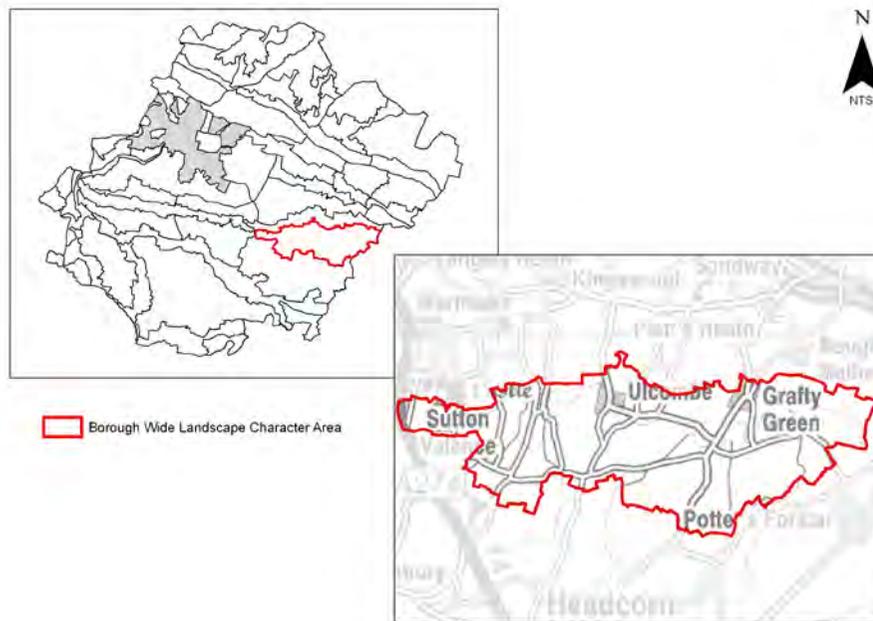
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Linton Park and Farmlands is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and is **sensitive to change**.

Development potential is limited to within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing. Other development could be considered to support existing rural enterprises, although extensive, large scale or visually intrusive development would be inappropriate.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the historic parkland landscape
- Conserve the abundance of oak as a dominant species, and plant new isolated oaks within pasture and oak standards within hedgerows to replace ageing specimens
- Resist further conversion to arable land
- Conserve the largely undeveloped rural landscape and the remote quality of existing development
- Conserve the rural setting of traditional farmhouses
- Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural barns through native planting
- Enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting a framework of vegetation in these areas



### Key Characteristics:

- Undulating landscape with wide views
- Scattered orchards and mixed woodland blocks
- Isolated oak trees within pasture and mature oak hedgerow trees
- Limited arable land
- Field ponds
- Linear settlements and strong local vernacular

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

The undulating topography, regular mature oak trees, pasture and scattered orchards and woodland blocks provide a coherent pattern of elements. Large farm buildings and large glass houses form detracting elements. Regular ditches and field ponds, frequent mature oak trees, hedgerows, woodland blocks and the limited amount of intensively farmed arable land provide a coherent habitat network. There are some remaining blocks and fragments of ancient woodland, and some evidence of new orchard planting. Most hedgerows are in good condition. Built development generally respects local vernacular and there are historic oasts and timber framed houses. Overall there is a strong and consistent sense of place.

### Visual Sensitivity: High

Visibility is high, with long views reaching across parts of the Weald and of the higher Greensand Ridge to the north

The population is concentrated within the settlements of Ulcombe, The Harbour (part of Sutton Valence) and Grafty Green, and also within scattered hamlets, properties and farmsteads throughout the area. This means there are relatively low numbers of people in residential properties with potential views of the landscape. The Greensand Way passes the northern tip of the area above Ulcombe and in general the footpath network is moderately good so potentially the number of walkers with views of this area is moderate to high.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

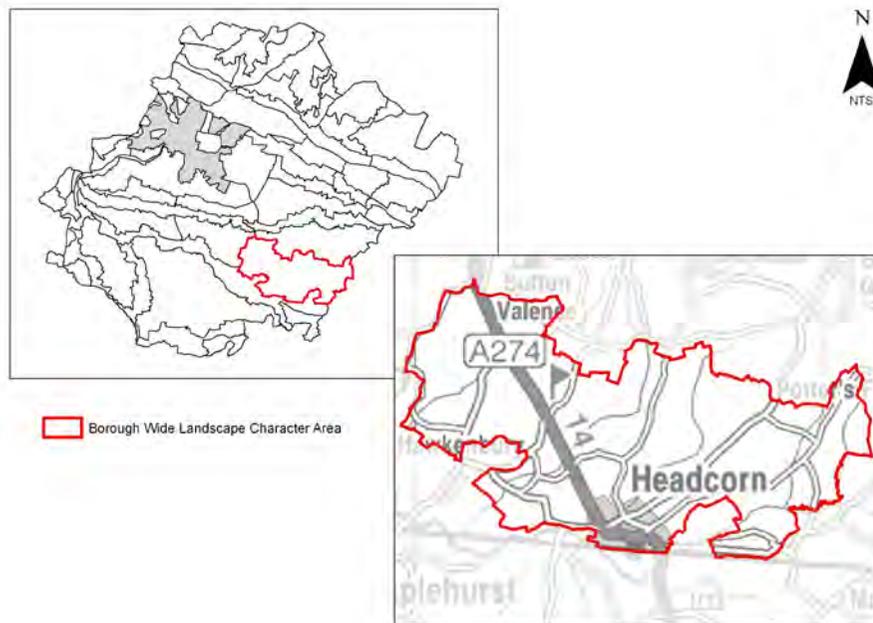
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Ulcombe Mixed Farmlands is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and is **sensitive to change**.

Development potential is limited to within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing. Other development could be considered to support existing rural enterprises, although extensive, large scale or visually intrusive development would be inappropriate.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the extensive tree cover provided by frequent woodland blocks, orchards and oak trees
- Conserve the pastoral land use and resist conversion to arable land
- Conserve the parkland at East Sutton Park
- Conserve and enhance the small scale, mosaic like field pattern
- Avoid further field segregation using post and wire fencing and encourage the reinstatement of native hedgerow boundaries where these have been removed
- Conserve the distinctive amount of oak trees within the landscape, and plant new isolated specimens and hedgerow standards to replace ageing specimens
- Conserve the distinctive linear pattern of settlements
- Conserve the rural setting of traditional buildings and settlements
- Soften the visual impact of large scale agricultural buildings with native planting



### Key Characteristics:

- Low lying landscape which forms part of the Low Weald
- Reservoirs along the foot of the Greensand Ridge
- Drainage ditches running southwards towards the River Beult
- Enclosed pasture
- Sparse development with scattered farms and small hamlets
- Dominance of mature oaks within pasture and as mature hedgerow trees

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

Oak is notably dominant and the low lying landscape, with its ditches and ponds, provides a consistent pattern. There are some visual detractors, such as large scale barns, the busy Maidstone Road and recent linear development along its route. Habitat strength and connectivity are good with small scale hedged pasture with frequent ditches and water bodies. The traditional field pattern, mature standard oak trees, pastoral land use, isolated historic farm buildings and traditional buildings within the central core of Headcorn provide a strong sense of place. However there is a significant amount of recent and indistinct development which dilutes this slightly.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Visibility is moderate. Whilst there are some long views across the Low Weald to the Greensand Ridge to the north, and open views of this landscape from the Ridge, intervening vegetation encloses many immediate views across the flat to very gently undulating landform.

The population is concentrated within the key settlement of Headcorn and along Headcorn Road/Maidstone Road. There are also scattered properties and farmsteads throughout most of the area. This means there are relatively low numbers of people in residential properties with potential views of the landscape. There is a golf course and a well-developed footpath network. Overall there are moderate numbers of potential visual receptors.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

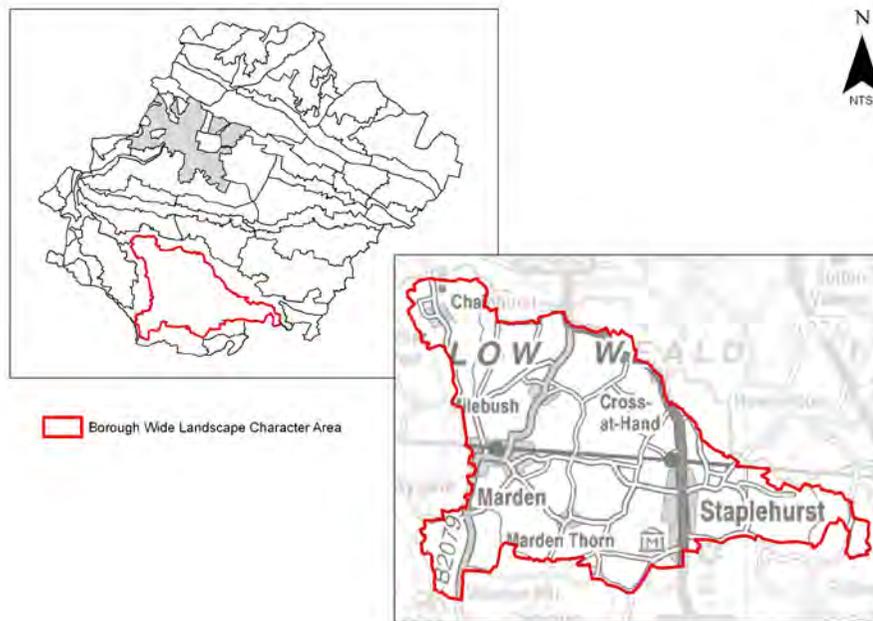
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Headcorn Pasturelands is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and is **sensitive to change**.

Development potential is limited to within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing. Other development could be considered to support existing rural enterprises, although extensive, large scale or visually intrusive development would be inappropriate.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the abundance of oak as a dominant species, and plant new isolated oaks within pasture and hedgerows to replace ageing population
- Conserve the pastoral land use and resist conversion to arable land
- Conserve and enhance the small scale field pattern and sense of enclosure
- Conserve the largely undeveloped rural landscape and the remote quality of isolated farmsteads
- Resist infill linear development along Maidstone Road
- Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural barns through native planting
- Enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting a framework of vegetation in these areas



- Historic buildings scattered through the landscape and in the historic cores of Staplehurst and Marden

### **Landscape Character Sensitivity: High**

The coherent pattern of elements include the low lying landform, small fields with mature oaks, orchards, pasture, ponds, watercourses and the enclosure provided by thick native hedgerows. However the A229, large barns, large arable fields, static caravan developments, horse grazing paddocks and stables detract slightly.

The ecological integrity is relatively strong because hedgerows, verges, ditches and watercourses provide a strong and well connected network. The cultural integrity is also good although the land use has changed in some areas to more extensive arable cultivation and hop gardens have been lost. Although many scattered farmhouses and hamlets respect the local vernacular and provide a very strong sense of place, recent and indistinct development at Staplehurst and Marden dilutes this slightly.

### **Key Characteristics:**

- Low lying gently undulating clay landscape of the Low Weald
- Small fields with orchards, pasture, ponds and watercourses enclosed by thick native hedgerows create an intimate atmosphere
- Dominance of mature oak trees as imposing hedgerow trees and sometimes within fields where hedgerows have been lost
- Large scale open fields where hedgerows have been removed for intensive arable cultivation
- Sparse scattered small woodlands
- Winding roads with wide verges bounded by ditches and mixed native hedgerows

### **Visual Sensitivity: Moderate**

Whilst there are occasionally some long views to the Greensand Ridge to the north and the High Weald to the south, intervening vegetation encloses many immediate views across the gently undulating landform, except where hedgerow removal has created large open fields. Overall visibility is moderate.

Population is concentrated within the key settlements of Staplehurst and Marden, along with scattered properties and farmsteads throughout the area. This means there are relatively low numbers of people in residential properties with potential views of the landscape. Marden Meadow Nature Reserve and the network of footpaths are likely to attract moderate numbers of people with potential views.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Staplehurst Low Weald is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and is **sensitive to change**.

Housing development potential is limited to within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing. Other development could be considered to support existing rural enterprises and existing commercial parks, although extensive, large scale or visually intrusive development would be inappropriate.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the abundance of oak as a dominant species, and plant new isolated oaks within pasture and oak standards within hedgerows to replace ageing species
- Conserve and enhance the hedgerows, ensuring that they are correctly managed and gaps replanted
- Conserve the pastoral land and orchards and resist conversion to arable land
- Conserve and enhance the small scale field pattern and sense of enclosure, encouraging restoration and management of historic field boundaries
- Conserve the landscape setting of historic settlements
- Conserve the largely undeveloped rural landscape and the remote quality of isolated farmsteads and hamlets
- Resist further linear development and intrusive elements along the A229
- Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural barns through native planting and encourage native hedgerows around commercial and housing developments
- Enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting and managing a framework of vegetation in these areas



### Key Characteristics:

- Low lying and gently undulating clay Low Weald landscape with many ponds, ditches and watercourses
- Large irregular blocks of ecologically important ancient woodland interspersed with pasture, orchards and arable fields
- Species rich native hedgerow field boundaries with mature oak trees as imposing hedgerow trees and sometimes within fields where boundaries have been removed
- Historic buildings scattered throughout the landscape

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

This is a visually unified landscape with a strong pattern of ancient woodland, standard oaks, orchards, thick native hedgerows, sunken lanes and historic buildings on undulating topography with few visual detractors, although hedgerow loss has caused some loss of pattern. There are large areas of species rich ancient woodland together with pasture, hedgerows, verges, ditches and watercourses which provide a well-connected habitat network. The land use has changed to arable in some places; orchards have modern dwarf trees and hop gardens are now extremely rare. However the scattered farmhouses, oasts and cottages are mostly listed and contribute, with the typical characteristics of the landscape, to provide a very strong sense of place.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

The wooded backdrop of the High Weald is an important element in many views and from the more elevated areas there are occasionally some long views over the Low Weald to the north, but in general, intervening vegetation often encloses many immediate views across the lower lying areas with a gently undulating landform. Overall visibility is moderate.

The population is mostly dispersed in scattered properties and farmsteads, although the edge of Staplehurst adjoins the area resulting in relatively low numbers of people in residential properties with potential views of the landscape. The footpath network is not well developed, although the location of Sherenden Wooded Hills adjacent to the High Weald AONB may increase the likelihood of visitors.

### Overall Landscape Sensitivity

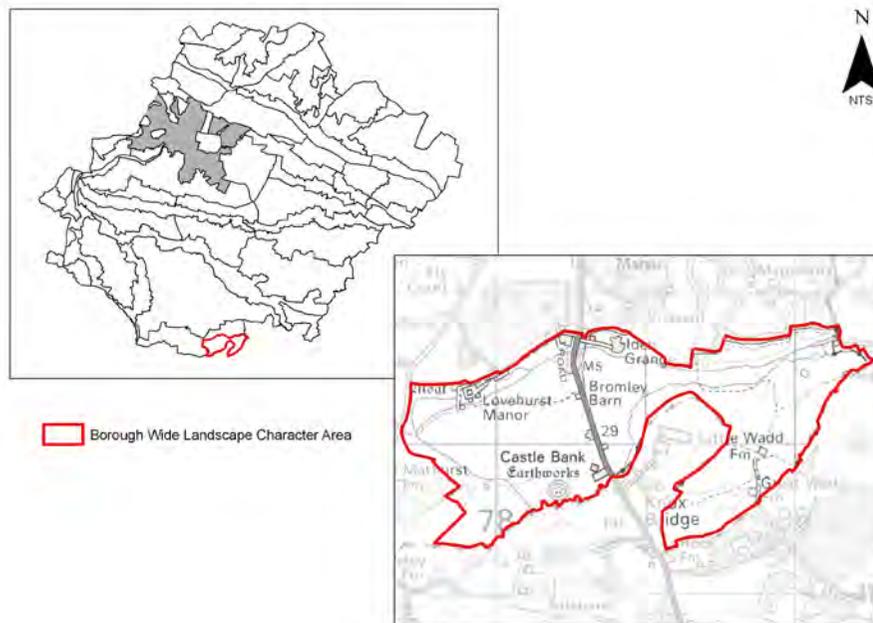
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Sherenden Wooded Hills is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and is **sensitive to change**.

Development potential is limited to within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing. Other development could be considered to support existing rural enterprises, although extensive, large scale or visually intrusive development would be inappropriate.

### Guidelines and Mitigation:

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- Conserve the setting of the foreground to the High Weald AONB
- Conserve the abundance of ancient woodland blocks and enhance through sensitive management for nature conservation and woodland products
- Conserve oak as a dominant hedgerow tree species, and plant new oak standards within hedgerows to replace ageing species
- Conserve and enhance the species rich hedgerows, ensuring that they are correctly managed and gaps replanted
- Encourage the restoration of lost hedgerow boundaries
- Conserve the pastoral land, hop gardens and orchards and resist conversion to arable land
- Conserve the wealth of historic buildings
- Conserve and enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting and managing a framework of vegetation in these areas



### Key Characteristics:

- Low lying flat landscape of the Low Weald
- Large fields with arable cultivation, ponds and watercourses enclosed by thick native hedgerows
- Dominance of mature oak trees as imposing hedgerow trees and sometimes within fields where hedgerows have been lost

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

Mature oaks, native hedgerows and the low lying clay landscape, with its ditches and field ponds, provides a consistent pattern. There are few visual detractors including the nearby large scale egg production unit and unsympathetic developments strung out along the A229. There has been some loss of ecological connectivity as a result of arable intensification but tree belts, hedgerows, pasture and watercourses still provide a reasonably robust habitat network. Land use has changed from a predominantly pastoral river valley setting to intensive mechanised arable production. There are some traditional farmhouses, monuments and other buildings which respect the local vernacular. Overall, the typical characteristics of the Low Weald landscape provide a moderately strong sense of place.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Visibility is generally high. Whilst intervening vegetation encloses many immediate views across the gently undulating landform, there are occasionally some long views to the Greensand Ridge to the north and the High Weald to the south. Agricultural intensification and hedgerow removal have also created a more open landscape.

The population is located in scattered farmsteads and hamlets. This means there are relatively low numbers of people in residential properties with potential views of the landscape. There is a reasonable footpath network potentially attracting moderate numbers of walkers.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

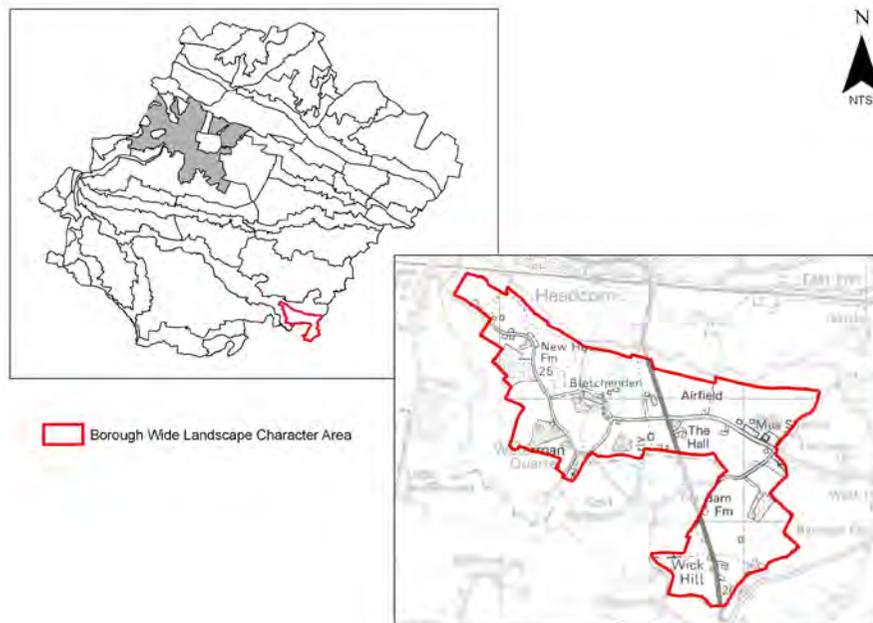
Landscape Character Sensitivity	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>				

Knoxbridge Arable Lowlands is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and is **sensitive to change**.

New development should be closely associated with existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Low Weald in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the abundance of oak as a dominant species, and plant new oaks within hedgerows to replace ageing specimens
- Conserve the pastoral land and resist conversion to arable land
- Conserve and enhance the small scale field pattern and sense of enclosure, encouraging restoration of historic field boundaries with new plantings
- Conserve the archaeological features throughout this landscape, and their rural setting
- Resist further linear development along the A229
- Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural buildings through native planting and encourage native hedgerows around commercial and residential developments
- Enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by creating and managing a linked framework of vegetation in these areas



□ Borough Wide Landscape Character Area

### Key Characteristics:

- Low lying gently undulating clay landscape of the Low Weald with many ponds and watercourses
- Small to medium sized fields but predominantly pasture, with some arable cultivation and occasional orchards
- Thick native hedgerows create an intimate atmosphere
- Dominance of mature oak trees as imposing hedgerow trees
- Winding roads with wide verges bounded by ditches and mixed native hedgerows

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

This is a unified landscape, where the frequency of oak and native hedgerows combined with the low lying landform, ditches and distinctive field ponds provide a consistent pattern. There are few visual detractors, but some large scale agricultural buildings, more recent residential buildings, horse grazing paddocks and stables, and mobile homes can appear incongruous. Headcorn Airfield, in the north, despite its large extent is relatively low key in appearance.

Although there has been some minor loss of hedgerows, generally ecological integrity is relatively strong. The hedgerows, verges, ditches, water bodies, watercourses and occasional blocks of woodland provide a strong network. The cultural integrity is reflected in the traditional pastoral land use. Although many scattered farmhouses and hamlets respect the local vernacular and provide a strong sense of place, there is some scattered indistinct development and a large mobile home park which are less attractive. Overall, the typical characteristics of the Low Weald landscape provide a strong sense of place.

### Visual Sensitivity: Low

Visibility is generally low. Whilst there are some rare long views to the Greensand Ridge, intervening vegetation encloses most views across the very gently undulating landform.

The population is dispersed in small hamlets and farmsteads throughout the area, resulting in relatively low numbers of people in residential properties with potential views of the landscape. The footpath network is only moderately well developed.

### Overall Landscape Sensitivity

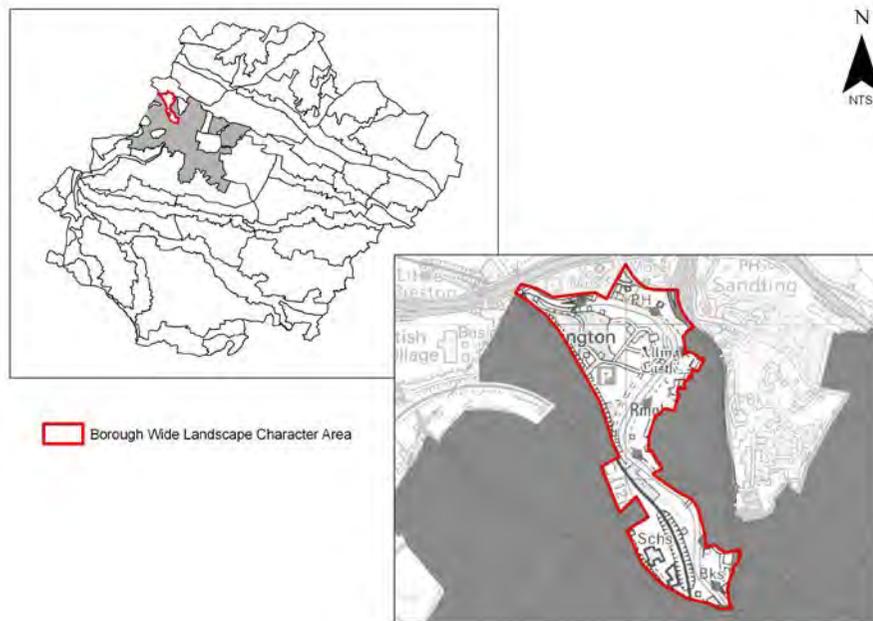
Landscape Character Sensitivity	High	Moderate	Moderate	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Waterman Quarter Low Weald is assessed as being of moderate overall landscape sensitivity and therefore has **scope for change with certain constraints**.

Housing development should be focussed within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing. Other development could be considered to support existing rural enterprises and the airfield, although extensive, large scale or visually intrusive development would be inappropriate.

### Guidelines and Mitigation:

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the abundance of oak as a dominant species, and plant replacement oaks within pasture and hedgerows to reinforce the network
- Conserve and reinforce the pastoral land and orchards and resist further conversion to arable land
- Conserve the small scale field pattern and sense of enclosure, encouraging reinforcement of gappy field boundaries, and woodland belts especially in arable areas
- Conserve and reinforce the largely undeveloped rural landscape and the remote quality of isolated farmsteads and hamlets
- Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural buildings through native planting and encourage native hedgerows around other developments
- Enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting, reinforcing and managing the network of vegetation in these areas



### Key Characteristics:

- Valley landscape containing the River Medway
- Boats and associated features, such as Allington Lock, boatyards and mooring facilities
- Medway Valley Walk Recreational Route follows the river
- Low lying rough pasture with scrub
- Recreational land
- Allington Castle

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

Although the River Medway provides a consistent feature throughout the landscape there are a many visual detractors along this section of the river, including boating facilities, a large range of construction styles and materials and security fencing. Jetties, vessels, boatyards, steel piled revetments, fencing types and buildings along the river combine to present a significantly interrupted landscape. The ecological integrity is strong. Despite this section of the river being heavily influenced by its proximity to the urban area of Maidstone, the river and adjoining vegetation provide good wildlife connectivity. The cultural integrity is variable. Much of the landscape has been influenced by recent development, although Allington Castle and associated grounds comprise historic elements which are in good condition. This is a distinct landscape, largely because of its location along the River Medway. The waterside location and the accessibility to the river along the Medway Valley Walk are distinctive features. However, whilst Allington Castle and woodland comprise distinctive and historic features, development within the valley is largely recent.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Although this is clearly a valley landscape, the perception of the landform is softened by development along the valley and intervening vegetation; the overall visibility is moderate.

The urban edge of Maidstone encloses this area. However despite the proximity of a significant population, views into the area are largely limited to those closest to the area due to the screening effects of other properties and developments. Users of the river and of the surrounding landscape also have views over the area.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

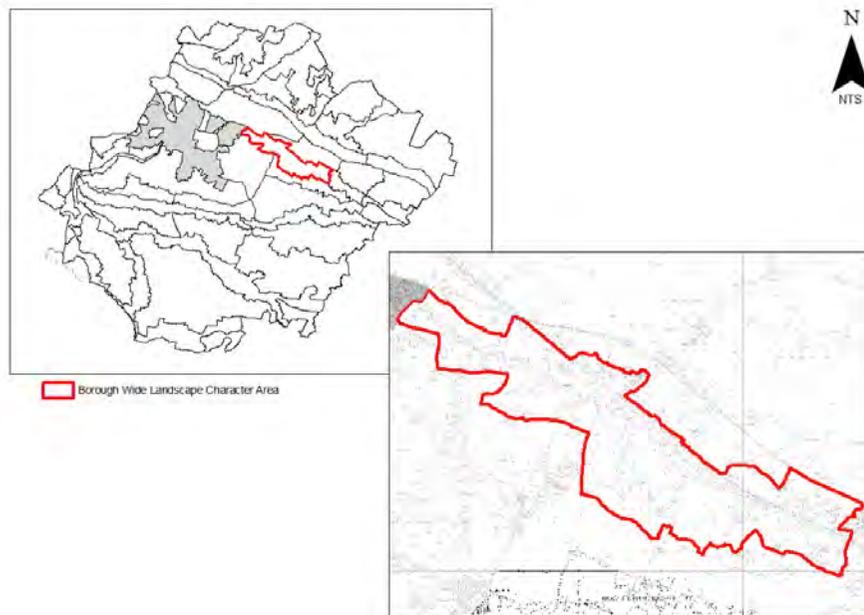
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Medway Valley Allington is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and **sensitive to change**.

Pressure for development to spread from the adjacent urban edge onto the floodplain should be resisted to maintain its open character. Landscape Improvements to soften the urban edge and improve amenity value could be considered.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the open area of high landscape quality around Allington Castle
- Create a palette of appropriate materials and finishes for development along the valley and for the interface between the river and solid ground
- Resist the introduction of further detracting construction features and building styles
- Improve linear native planting belts along the tow path and reinforce the habitat network by introducing further planting where appropriate



### Key Characteristics:

- Artificial landform as part of golf course at Leeds Castle
- Historic Leeds Castle and surrounding parkland
- Pocket of lowland dry acid grassland
- Mature parkland trees including oak, horse chestnut and pine
- River Len to the south
- Severance caused by the M20, HS1 and A20

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

The major infrastructure routes of HS1, the M20 and A20 cause a significant degree of fragmentation to this landscape and in particular the audibility of traffic degrades the rural character. In addition, there are many other visual detractors including caravan parks, equestrian grazing and facilities, and numerous commercial developments along the A20. Many parts of the landscape are recognised for their ecological diversity. Woodland and other native vegetation is scattered across the landscape, particularly around Leeds Castle and its golf course, and isolated mature trees and vegetation belts along roads provide a reasonable habitat network. Tree cover appears well managed. Traditional field boundaries comprising woodland blocks and tree belts are also generally in good condition. There are many examples of local vernacular buildings, which bring an element of consistency to the landscape. Local distinctiveness is fragmented by the transport corridors but the characteristic vernacular styles of the traditional buildings and Leeds Castle with its mature parkland create a very strong sense of place overall.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Visibility is moderate, with much screening provided by intervening vegetation, and with some wider views of the North Downs from higher vantage points.

The population is generally located in scattered properties and farmsteads throughout the area, with denser development to the west where the boundary abuts the urban edge of Maidstone. Harrietsham abuts the boundary in the east. Overall the number of residential receptors is likely to be low. Although the footpath network is not particularly well developed, Leeds Castle and its golf course attract large numbers of visitors, giving a high number of potential receptors.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

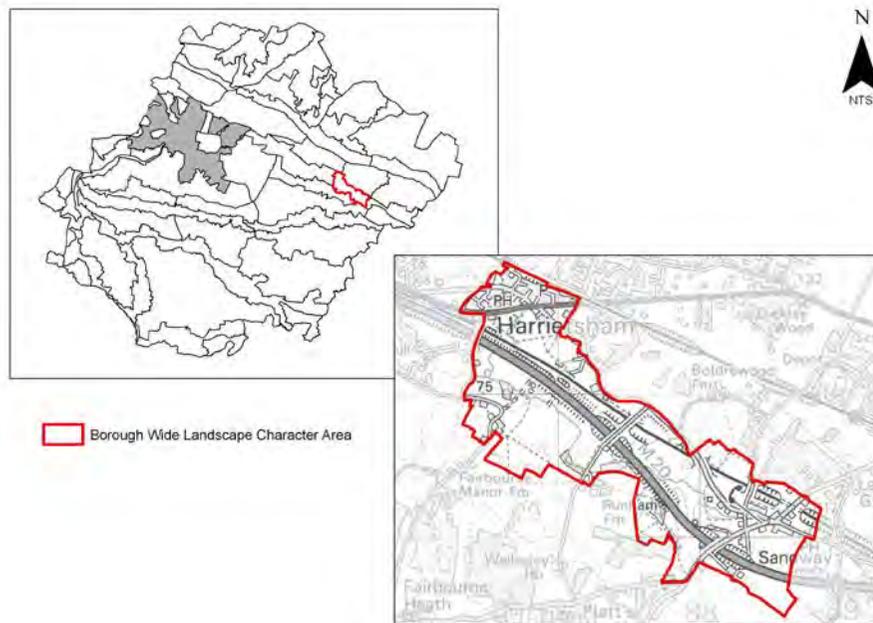
Leeds Castle Parklands are assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and **sensitive to change**.

Development potential is limited to within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing. Other development could be considered to support existing rural enterprises, although extensive, large scale or visually intrusive development would be inappropriate. To avoid further piecemeal degradation from the infrastructure network, opportunities should be sought to restore the landscape structure and pattern. Any new development should take account of the impact on potential views from and setting of the Kent Downs

AONB, including seeking opportunities to mitigate existing impacts where practicable.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the traditional parkland character of the landscape
- Conserve the remote qualities of the Len Valley and its setting, and strengthen vegetation along the River Len and adjoining ditches to improve habitat connectivity
- Conserve and restore tree cover, which helps to screen views of major infrastructure routes
- Ensure continuity of mature isolated trees through planting new stock
- Restore hedgerow boundaries where they have been removed
- Resist field segregation, avoiding fenceline boundaries



### Key Characteristics:

- Poor acidic soils
- Pocket of lowland dry acid grassland
- Sand extraction
- Severance caused by HS1 and the M20
- Artificial landform and ponds resulting from infrastructure mitigation
- Spring which forms the source of the River Len, running in a westward direction
- Loss of traditional hedgerow boundaries
- Equestrian grazing with temporary electric fencing

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: Low

The M20 and HS1, pockets of commercial buildings industrial works and mineral extraction cause significant visual detraction and fragmentation. The ecological integrity is moderate. Although many traditional field boundaries have been lost, established woodland blocks, recent mitigation planting, drainage ditches and ponds provide a reasonable network for wildlife. This is, however, compromised by heavily grazed equestrian areas, intensive arable production and the severance caused by infrastructure routes. There is an extensive range of traditional listed buildings within the central core of Sandway and along West Street Harrietsham. However the setting of traditional buildings and settlements is sometimes compromised by adjacent recent development, and some buildings are in a poor state of repair. Recent development is extensive at Harrietsham and does not respect local vernacular or the setting of traditional buildings. Although parts of this landscape are distinctive and historic, the sense of place is very weak.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Visibility is high owing to the intermittent tree cover and the undulating landscape, albeit artificial in places.

The population is concentrated within the key settlement of Harrietsham and within other scattered properties resulting in relatively low numbers of people on residential properties with potential views of the landscape. The footpath network is reasonably well developed.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Low**

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

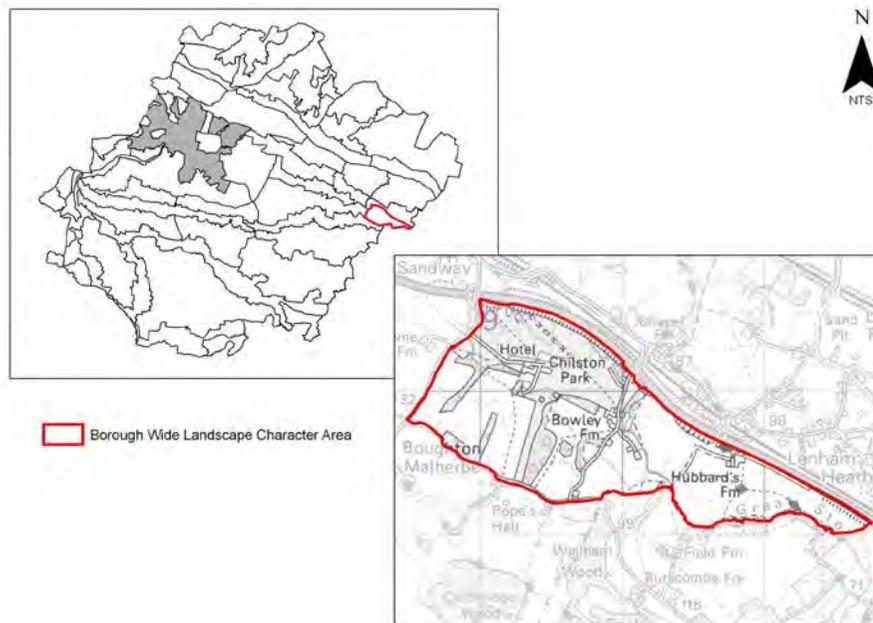
Harrietsham Vale is assessed as low overall landscape sensitivity and is **tolerant of change**.

To avoid further piecemeal degradation of this area, development potential should be focussed in and around existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing in type, scale and pattern. Opportunities should be sought to create a new landscape framework to restore the landscape structure and pattern and to offset adverse impacts of the existing transport infrastructure and new development. Any new development should take account of the impact on potential views from and

setting of the Kent Downs AONB, including seeking opportunities to mitigate existing impacts where practicable.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the remote qualities of the Len Valley and its setting, and strengthen vegetation along the River Len and adjoining ditches to improve habitat connectivity
- Conserve the small scale field pattern around, and the traditional setting of, Sandway Conservation Area
- Conserve and appropriately manage the pocket of lowland dry acid grassland north east of the M20. Refer to Maidstone's local Biodiversity Action Plan Phase 1: 2009 – 2014 HAP 2 Lowland Dry Acid Grassland and Heath
- Encourage sympathetic redesign of former quarrying sites, with organically shaped water bodies and integrated vegetation
- Restore and improve traditional hedgerow boundaries where practicable
- Encourage sympathetic fencing in association with transport infrastructure
- Restore traditional buildings sympathetically
- Resist further infill development which detracts from the setting of traditional buildings and settlements
- Improve mitigation and visual softening of visual detractors where possible through further planting



### Key Characteristics:

- Dip slope of the Greensand Ridge
- Valley side of the Great Stour
- Large arable fields
- Coppice and broadleaf woodland blocks
- Chilston Park manor house and rural parkland
- Extensive, panoramic views of the North Downs

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

The undulating topography and the predominantly arable land use create a unified landscape. There are very few visual detractors, although it is unfortunate that traffic on the M20 is prominent within the foreground of long distance views of the North Downs and also adversely affects tranquillity. Although there is a high proportion of arable land, a large section of Chilston Park is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Sections of the Great Stour and the valley, and woodland at Bowley Mill and Park Wood are also designated as Local Wildlife Sites, demonstrating the extent and frequency of wildlife habitats. Although there are some missing hedgerows and dying parkland trees, woodland, parkland and the built environment are generally in good condition. The range of vernacular style properties is very distinctive and provides a strong sense of place. Chilston Park and its surrounding parkland setting are locally distinct, and the secluded character within the Great Stour Valley evokes a very strong sense of place. The local distinctiveness is further promoted by the valley side landform, and the resulting extensive views of the North Downs.

### Visual Sensitivity: High

Visibility is high, particularly to the south, owing to the elevated landform and subsequent views.

There are some scattered residential properties. Visual receptors also include tourists at Chilston Park Hotel and its parkland. The Stour Valley crosses the area and the footpath network is reasonably well developed. Overall the number of potentially sensitive visual receptors is moderate.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

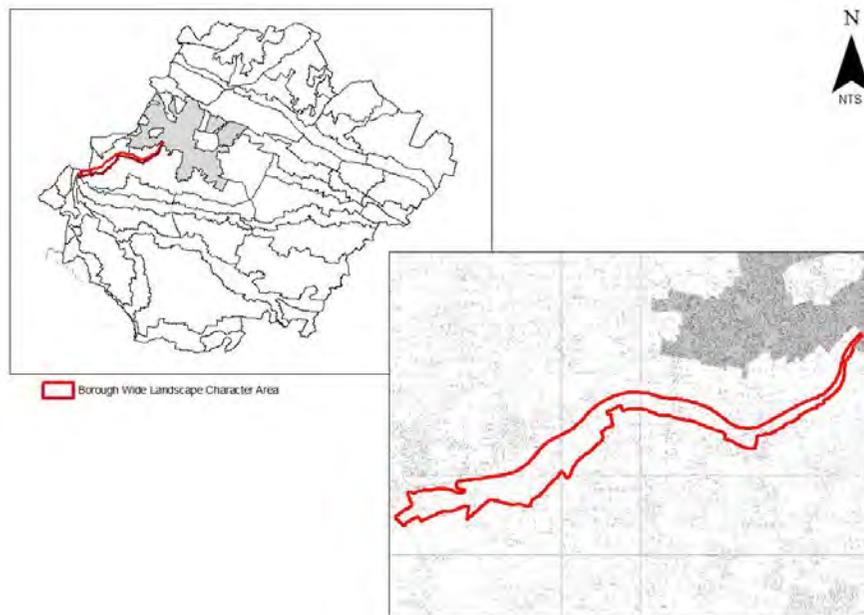
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

Chilston Parklands are assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and **sensitive to change**.

Housing development potential is limited to being associated with existing residential properties and farmsteads in keeping with existing. Within the registered park consideration should be given to retaining the integrity of the remaining parkland. Other types of development should be resisted, particularly extensive, large scale or visually intrusive development.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve blocks of ancient woodland
- Conserve the remote qualities of the Stour Valley and its setting
- Conserve the good water quality within the Great Stour and the diverse range of species and habitats along the river corridor
- Conserve pockets of traditionally grazed landscape along the Great Stour Valley
- Conserve the rural and isolated setting of Bowley Farm and Bowley Mill
- Conserve characteristic isolated mature trees within parkland and plant new specimens to succeed ageing examples
- Conserve the parkland character, and avoid further severance of Chilston Park



### Key Characteristics:

- Valley landscape containing the River Medway
- Frequent groups of willow trees and small native woodland blocks
- Grazed pasture
- Distinctive ragstone bridges
- Medway Valley Walk promoted Long Distance Path follows the river
- Recreational land use with picnic site at Teston, fishing and mooring facilities at East Farleigh and Wateringbury

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

The valley topography and the regular pattern of vegetation create a unified pattern of elements with few visual detractors. Detracting features include obtrusive water control structures, temporary fencing around over grazed equestrian pasture, caravans, mooring and marina related features, and poor detailing of some recent bridges and signage. The river and adjoining vegetation provide a major habitat corridor. The lack of intensively farmed arable land, clusters of new planting and the traditionally grazed valley floor further enhance habitat opportunities. The distinctive medieval ragstone bridges, the inclining valley sides, the river, the frequent pattern of willow trees and the lack of development provide a strong sense of place with a tranquil and remote character.

### Visual Sensitivity: High

Despite restricted views within the area, visibility is high because of the dominant valley landform and the resultant prominence of the skyline.

The population is sparse within the valley, although East Farleigh overlooks the area, overall there are relatively low numbers of people in residential properties with potential views of the landscape. However the Medway Valley Path and the towpath are important public footpath routes for visitors enjoying views of the river and countryside. There is also the popular Teston Country Park and a marina. Overall the visual sensitivity is high.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

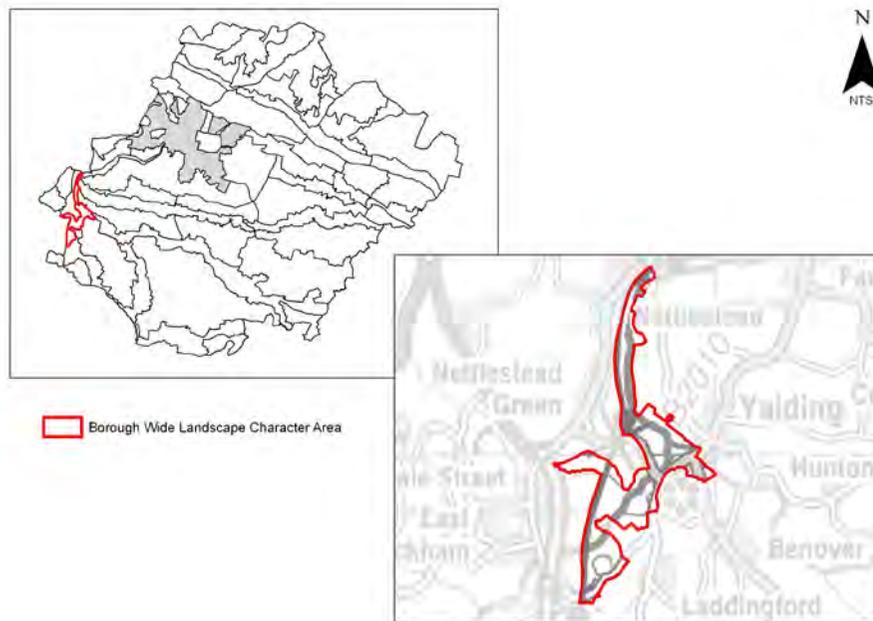
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
		<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>		

The Medway Valley - Maidstone to Watlingbury is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and is **sensitive to change**.

Development on the visually sensitive valley floor should be resisted to maintain the open character of the floodplain. Minor development to support existing scattered settlements and farmsteads could be considered.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the special landscape quality provided by the rural valley location and the meandering River Medway
- Conserve the grassland and pastoral land use with native vegetation and avoid arable land use
- Conserve the dominance of willow as a key species along the river
- Encourage the planting of isolated native trees to conserve the parkland character
- Respect the setting of traditional bridges
- Resist over complication and the use of too many varied materials at weirs and jetties
- Promote the use of local materials and avoid the cumbersome design of gates and visitor facilities
- Conserve the rural skyline in views from within the valley
- Conserve the open, unenclosed boundary between the land and river
- Soften chainlink fencing along the railway line where necessary with clusters of native planting



### Key Characteristics:

- Broad valley landscape containing the River Medway
- Extensive grassland alongside the river
- Linear native woodland vegetation
- Numerous marina developments and a boat yard west of Twyford Bridge
- Frequent caravan parks
- Ragstone bridges

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

The frequent orchards, hedgerows, woodland blocks, ditches and water bodies provide a coherent landscape pattern and habitat

network, with very little arable land. Orchards appear to be well maintained and in good condition, illustrating low vulnerability to change. The parkland around Hunton Court appears to be in good condition and although there has been some removal, hedgerows are mostly intact. Existing built development has a positive impact on the landscape. There is a strong sense of place, provided by the characteristic use of local materials and local vernacular within settlements and throughout the rural landscape.

Water bodies are often defined by clusters of vegetation and hedgerows line the lanes and enclose orchards to provide a strong sense of enclosure. The narrow, winding lanes are also characteristic because they broadly follow the contours along the foot of the Greensand Ridge and along the periphery of the Beult Valley.

The situation of Yalding, positioned along the River Beult, with its characteristic mixture of traditional style buildings demonstrates strong local distinctiveness. The wider pattern of isolated farmsteads and the historic Hunton Park provide a very rural character which has not been significantly altered by recent development or land use changes.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

There are views of the steep scarp slope of the Greensand Ridge, which rises immediately to the north of this area. There are extensive views to the south across the Low Weald where intervening vegetation allows, and from Linton there are some views east across Linton Park. Within the area there are long views across the parkland landscape of Hunton Court, and from Linton across orchards, although many intermediate views are restricted by hedgerows and boundary vegetation.

The population is concentrated within the key settlements of Yalding and Hunton, and within scattered properties and

farmsteads throughout the area. This means there are relatively low numbers of people in residential properties with views of the landscape. Yalding is a particular draw with visitors enjoying views of the river and countryside.

**Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High**

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
	<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>			

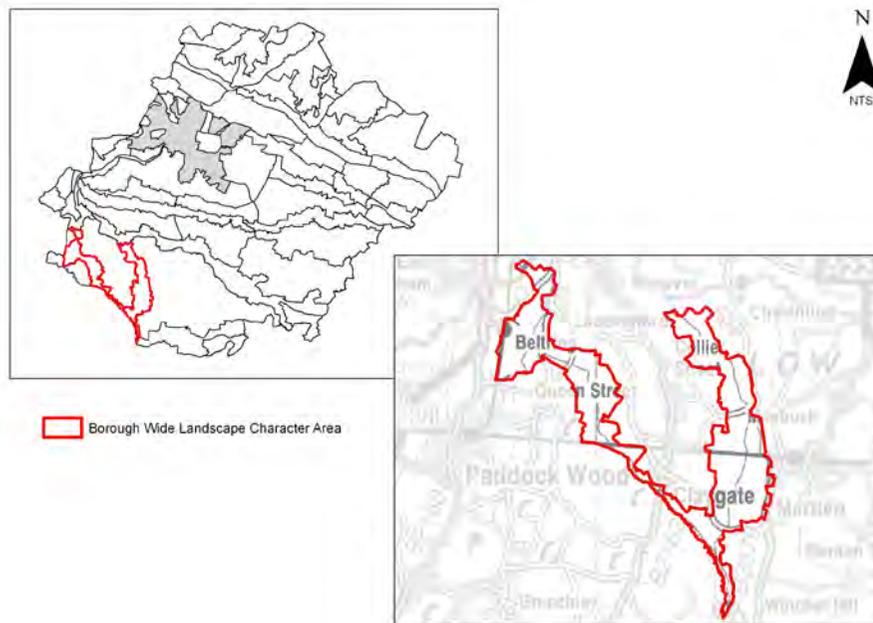
The Medway Valley Yalding is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and is **sensitive to change**.

Pressure for development to spread from Yalding and other settlements onto the visually sensitive valley floor should be resisted to maintain the open character of the floodplain. Minor

development to support existing scattered settlements and farmsteads could be considered.

**Guidelines and Mitigation:**

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the special landscape quality provided by the rural valley location and the meandering River Medway
- Conserve and enhance the meadows and blocks of native vegetation and avoid arable land use
- Conserve the dominance of willow and oak as key species along the river, and plant new specimens to replace ageing examples
- Respect the setting of traditional bridges and maintain using like for like materials
- Resist over complication and the use of too many varied materials at weirs, jetties and locks
- Conserve the rural skyline in views from within the valley
- Conserve the open boundary between the land and river
- Soften chainlink fencing along the railway line where necessary
- Promote a limited palette of materials throughout marina developments and caravan parks



### Key Characteristics:

- Flat, low lying landform
- Narrow rivers, ditches and ponds
- Rivers and ditches lined with native vegetation belts comprising much willow
- Large open arable fields and pasture
- Isolated oak trees within arable fields and pasture
- Scattered orchards
- Very little development and few roads

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

This is a simple landscape with very few interruptions. Key features include the flat, low lying topography, the rivers and ditches, the large open field pattern and the undeveloped character. There are few visual detractors comprising some fencing and weirs along the rivers, large pylons and a small number of polytunnels. Whilst the tree belts and ditches provide a coherent habitat network there are large swathes of intensively farmed arable land. There are some new orchards, and the sparsely scattered built elements respect local vernacular and evoke a distinct sense of place. However there is little evidence of a traditional field pattern.

The open largely undeveloped character of the landscape with its few narrow lanes, and its low lying situation which is evidenced through the series of tree belt lined ditches, is distinctive. The style of development, which mostly comprises converted farm buildings, contribute to the sense of place. Visibility is high, because of the large, open field pattern which extends across the flat landscape.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

There are long distance views of the elevated Greensand Ridge to the north, which is covered in orchards and polytunnels. Within the immediate landscape, views extend across large open fields of pasture and arable which are enclosed by tall tree belts. The white cowls of oast houses rise above the vegetation, drawing the eye in many directions.

Settlement within the Teise Valley is largely limited to a few scattered farmsteads. This means that over the vast majority of the area there are relatively low numbers of people in residential properties with views over the valley. The exception to this is at Marden where the western village edge abuts the valley floor,

allowing views out across the open valley. There are also numerous footpaths throughout the area.

### Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High

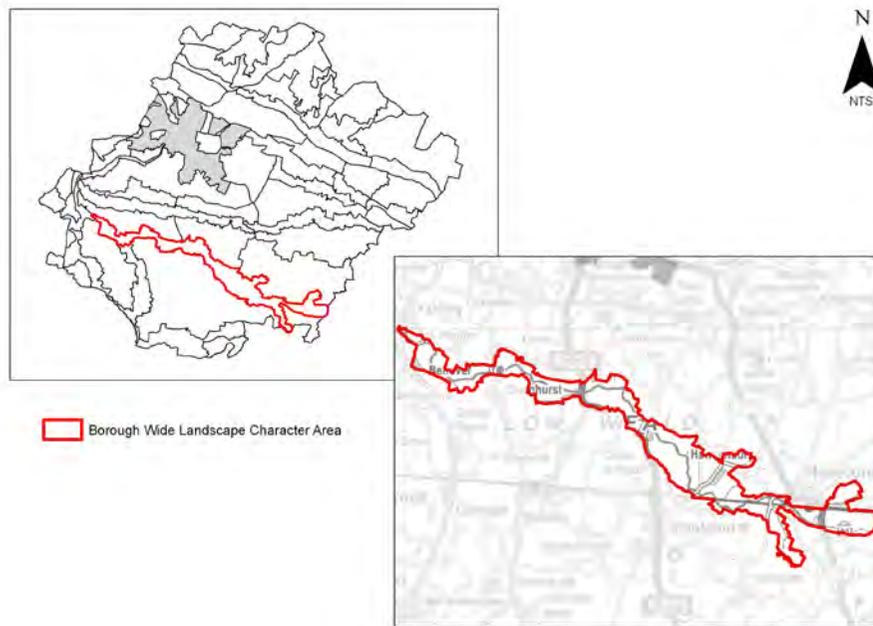
<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	High	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
	<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>			

The Teise Valley is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and is **sensitive to change**.

Pressure for development to spread onto the visually sensitive valley floor, notably at Marden, should be resisted to maintain the open character of the floodplain. Minor development to support existing scattered settlements and farmsteads could be considered.

### Guidelines and Mitigation:

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve and encourage grassland and pasture to improve water quality and biodiversity within ditches
- Conserve native tree belts, ensuring that they are correctly managed and gaps replanted
- Encourage the restoration of lost hedgerow boundaries in arable areas
- Conserve isolated oaks within arable land and pasture, and plant new specimens to replace ageing examples
- Create stronger features at crossing points along the rivers, utilising local ragstone for bridges
- Conserve remoteness by avoiding the development of new buildings and roads



### Key Characteristics:

- Low lying broad shallow valley of the meandering River Beult and Hammer Stream within the Low Weald
- Many ponds and watercourses with important ecological interest
- Species rich native hedgerow field boundaries with mature oak trees as imposing hedgerow trees and sometimes within fields where boundaries have been removed
- Mixed agriculture with large fields supporting arable cultivation and small riverside fields with pasture
- Sparsely scattered small woodlands

- Historic north-south crossing points with ragstone bridges over the River Beult

### Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

Overall, the typical characteristics of the landscape create a strong sense of place. Distinctive elements include the river itself, historic buildings and bridges, mature oak trees within species rich hedgerows, pasture, ditches and ponds. The large arable fields are much less distinctive and the river is not always a distinctive feature within the flat arable landscape. Away from the river banks, loss of hedgerows to allow more intensive arable cultivation has caused loss of pattern and some ecological connectivity; although the river itself is highly valued.

The traditional small field pattern and hedgerow boundaries are reasonably intact in some areas, but elsewhere the land use has changed from predominantly pastoral land uses to larger arable fields and man-made fishing lakes. Built development has a generally positive impact on the landscape with many traditional farmhouses, cottages and bridges. However the development south east of Headcorn at New Bridge is poorly screened. Although the London mainline railway runs through part of the area it is generally unobtrusive and well contained by wooded belts.

### Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Views are variable, being intimate and small scale along the river, but open and exposed within some arable areas. The backdrop of the Greensand Ridge is an important element in many views.

There are no significant settlements within the valley itself. The population is mostly limited to scattered properties and farmsteads, although the key settlements of Headcorn and Yalding abut the area. This means there are relatively low

numbers of people in residential properties with views of the landscape. Overall visual sensitivity is assessed as moderate.

### Overall Landscape Sensitivity: High

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	high	Moderate	High	High
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
		Low	Moderate	High
	<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>			

The Beult Valley is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and is **sensitive to change**.

Pressure for development to spread onto the visually sensitive valley floor, notably at Yalding and Headcorn, should be resisted to maintain the open character of the floodplain. Minor development to support existing scattered settlements and farmsteads could be considered.

### Guidelines and Mitigation:

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the river and its corridor by promoting improved water quality and reducing nitrogen-rich runoff from nearby arable fields and discharges
- Conserve oak as a dominant hedgerow tree species, and plant new oak standards within hedgerows to replace ageing species
- Conserve the species rich hedgerows, ensuring that they are correctly managed and gaps replanted
- Encourage the restoration of lost hedgerow boundaries in arable areas
- Conserve the pastoral land and occasional orchards and resist conversion to arable land
- Conserve and restore the fabric of historic bridges and traditional agricultural buildings
- Conserve and restore habitat features around water bodies and ditches by promoting and managing a framework of vegetation with links to the river
- Integrate the fishing ponds into the landscape by using more appropriate plant species. Resist further artificial earthworks

## Summary of Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity

Landscape Type	Landscape Character Area	Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Tolerance to Change
Dry Valleys and Downs	1. Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs	Moderate	Scope for change with certain constraints
Gault Clay Vale	12. Sandling Vale	Low	Tolerant of change
Gault Clay Vale	13. Boxley Vale	High	Sensitive to change
Gault Clay Vale	14. Thurnham Vale	High	Sensitive to change
Gault Clay Vale	15. Eyhorne Vale	High	Sensitive to change
Gault Clay Vale	16. Harrietsham to Lenham Vale	High	Sensitive to change
Gault Clay Vale	17. East Lenham Vale	High	Sensitive to change
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	18. Barming Greensand Fruit Belt	Low	Tolerant of change
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	19. Barming Heath Arable Land	Low	Tolerant of change
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	20. Oaken Wood	High	Sensitive to change
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	21. Teston Valley Side	High	Sensitive to change
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	22. Nettlestead Wooded Farmlands	High	Sensitive to change
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	23. Nettlestead Valley Side	High	Sensitive to change
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	24. East Barming Orchards (locally known as Medway Valley Orchards)	High	Sensitive to change
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	27. Farleigh Greensand Fruit Belt	High	Sensitive to change
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	28. Coxheath Plateau	Moderate	Scope for change with certain constraints
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	29. Boughton Monchelsea to Chart Sutton Plateau	Low	Tolerant of change
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	30. Langley Heath Undulating Farmlands	High	Sensitive to change
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	31. Kingswood Plateau	Moderate	Scope for change with certain constraints
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	32. Broomfield Undulating Farmlands	High	Sensitive to change
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	33. Lenham Heath Farmlands	Low	Tolerant of change
Greensand Ridge	34. Linton Greensand Ridge	High	Sensitive to change
Greensand Ridge	35. Sutton Valence Greensand Ridge	High	Sensitive to change
Low Weald	36. Nettlestead Woodlands	High	Sensitive to change
Low Weald	37. Nettlestead Green Farmlands	Low	Tolerant of change
Low Weald	38. Yalding Farmlands	High	Sensitive to change
Low Weald	39. Laddingford Low Weald	Moderate	Scope for change with certain constraints
Low Weald	40. Beltring Grasslands	High	Sensitive to change
Low Weald	41. Linton Park and Farmlands	High	Sensitive to change
Low Weald	42. Ulcombe Mixed Farmlands	High	Sensitive to change
Low Weald	43. Headcom Pasturelands	High	Sensitive to change
Low Weald	44. Staplehurst Low Weald	High	Sensitive to change
Low Weald	45. Sherenden Wooded Hills	High	Sensitive to change
Low Weald	46. Knoxbridge Arable Lowlands	High	Sensitive to change
Low Weald	47. Waterman Quarter Low Weald	Moderate	Scope for change with certain constraints
Valleys	48. Medway Valley Allington	High	Sensitive to change
Valleys	49. Leeds Castle Parklands	High	Sensitive to change
Valleys	50. Harrietsham Vale	Low	Tolerant of change
Valleys	51. Chilston Parklands	High	Sensitive to change
Valleys	52. Medway Valley –Maidstone to Watlingbury	High	Sensitive to change
Valleys	53. Medway Valley Yalding	High	Sensitive to change
Valleys	57. Teise Valley	High	Sensitive to change
Valleys	58. Beult Valley	High	Sensitive to change

**Legend**

**Address**

 Kent Downs

**Tolerance**

 Sensitive to change

 Scope for change with certain constraints

 Tolerant of change

