

Medway Landscape Character Assessment

Medway Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

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Medway Landscape Character Assessment

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Chapter 1

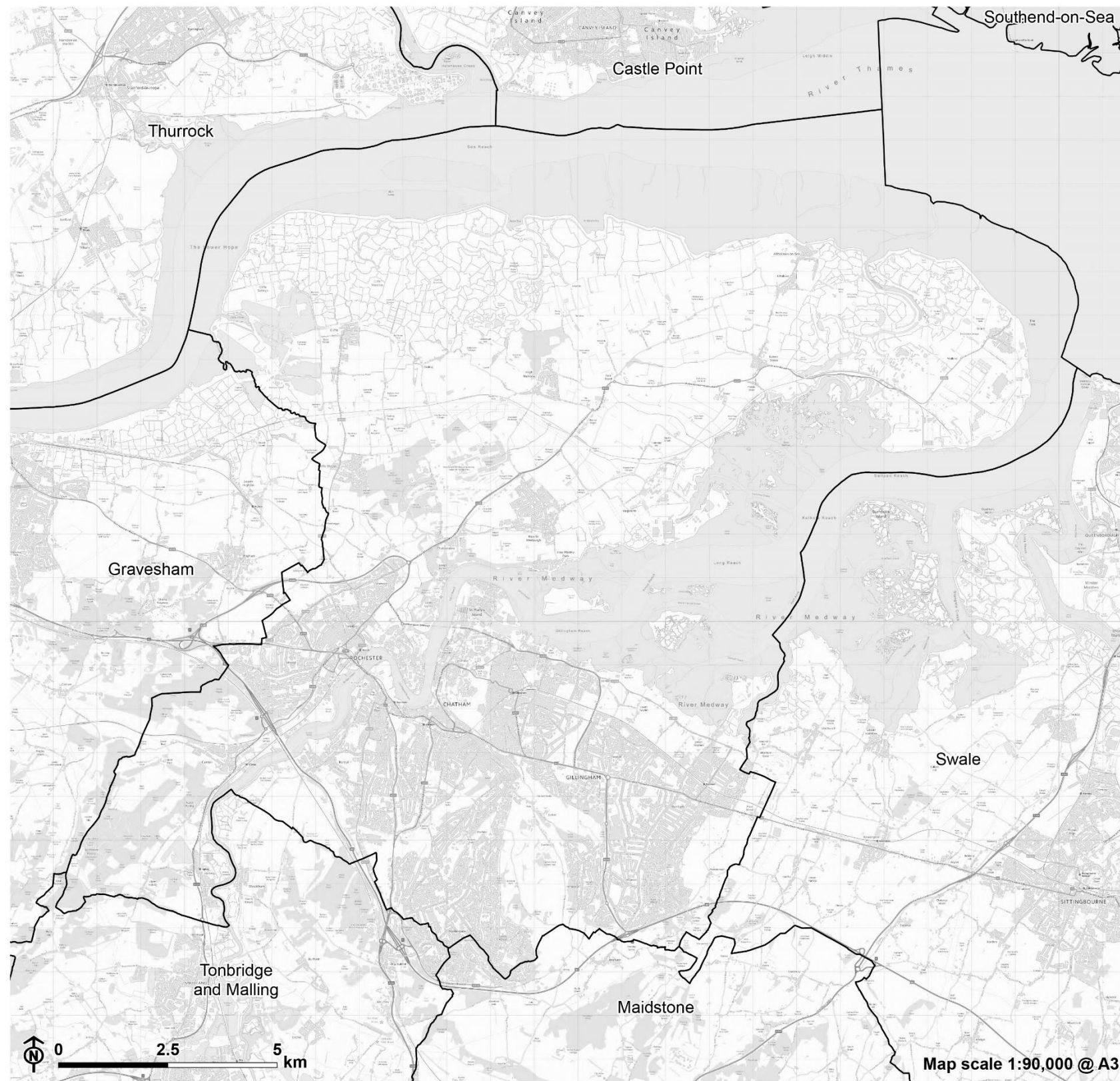
Introduction and Landscape Context

Background and Purpose of the Medway Landscape Character Assessment

1.1 LUC was commissioned by Medway Council in December 2022 to prepare a Landscape Character Assessment for the Medway Council area, including land falling within the Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)). This study updates the Landscape Character Assessment undertaken by Medway Council in 2011 (herein referred to as the '2011 Study').

1.2 The location of Medway Unitary Authority is illustrated on Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Location of Medway Unitary Authority



Medway Landscape Character Assessment for Medway Council



Figure 1.1: Location of Medway Unitary Authority

- Medway boundary
- Neighbouring local authority

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1.3 The aim is to create a comprehensive and up to date strategic scale landscape evidence. It provides a robust evidence base to underpin the review of the Local Plan and to assist in the planning process. It is intended to both inform work on policy development and development management, guiding development that is sympathetic to local character and the qualities of the landscape. It can help inform locational policies for strategic development as well as appropriate design and mitigation, providing a framework for more detailed landscape studies and sensitivity assessments as well as baseline evidence for more detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

1.4 Wider application of the Landscape Character Assessment may include land management, notably implementation of agri-environment schemes such as the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS); land use change to achieve net zero, including opportunities for woodland creation; and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) opportunities.

1.5 In summary, the document can be used to consider landscape character when considering any type of change. This includes opportunities for conserving existing character and strengthening and enhancing character, as well as opportunities to create new character.

1.6 This study focuses entirely on rural and urban-fringe landscape and does not include urban areas, industrial developments or larger rural settlements; urban parks and open spaces are only considered where they form clearly identifiable green links between the urban area and open countryside (such as Capstone Valley and Horsted Valley).

The Role of Landscape Character Assessment

1.7 The process of Landscape Character Assessment is described in 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (Natural England, October 2014) [[See reference 1](#)]. Within this document landscape character is defined

as “a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse”.

1.8 Landscape Character Assessment is the process of identifying and describing such variations in character across a landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of features and attributes (characteristics) that make different landscapes distinctive. The landscape is the result of the interaction between people and place which gives an area a local identity. The ‘landscape wheel’ below illustrates how the different natural, cultural, and perceptual attributes of a landscape combine to produce character.

1.9 Understanding the character of place and evaluating an area’s defining characteristics is a key component in managing growth sustainably and ensuring that the inherent character and qualities of Medway’s landscape can continue to be appreciated. Understanding of character can be used to ensure that any change or development does not undermine whatever is valued or characteristic in a particular landscape and help guide positive change that conserves, enhances, restores, or creates local character.

Figure 1.2: The 'Landscape Wheel' (Natural England, 2014)



The European Landscape Convention

1.10 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) came into force in the UK in March 2007. It establishes the need to recognise landscape in law; to develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes; and to establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies. The ELC definition of 'landscape' recognises that all landscapes matter, be they ordinary, degraded, or outstanding: "Landscape means an area,

as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”.

1.11 The ELC puts emphasis on the whole landscape and all its values and is forward looking in its approach, recognising the dynamic and changing character of landscape. Specific measures promoted by the ELC of direct relevance to this study include:

- The identification and assessment of landscape; and
- Improved consideration of landscape in existing and future sectoral and spatial policy and regulation.

1.12 This updated Landscape Character Assessment will continue to make a key contribution to the implementation of the ELC in Medway. It helps to reaffirm the importance of landscape, coordinate existing work and guide future work to protect, manage and plan the landscape.

Relationship to Published Landscape Studies

1.13 Landscape Character Assessment can be undertaken at a variety of scales and levels of detail. The Medway Landscape Character Assessment is part of a hierarchy of landscape character assessment information cascading down from the national to the local level.

National Level

National Character Areas

1.14 At a national level, England is divided into 159 distinct National Character Areas (NCAs). Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape,

biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity. There are descriptive profiles available for each NCA setting out information on landscape character, changes in the landscape and an assessment of ecosystem services delivered (Natural England, 2014) [\[See reference 2\]](#).

1.15 The Medway Council area lies within the following NCAs:

- **NCA 81:** Greater Thames Estuary, a predominantly remote and tranquil landscape of shallow creeks, drowned estuaries, low-lying islands, mudflats and broad tracts of tidal salt marsh and reclaimed grazing marsh that lies between the North Sea and the rising ground inland. It contains some of the least settled areas of the English coast, with few major settlements and medieval patterns of small villages and hamlets on higher ground and the marsh edges. Sea defences protect large areas of reclaimed grazing marsh and its associated ancient fleet and ditch systems, and productive arable farmland. Historic military landmarks are characteristic features of the coastal landscape. The coastal habitats of the NCA are internationally important for their biodiversity interest and support large numbers of overwintering and breeding wetland birds, rare plant and invertebrate species, and diverse marine wildlife. The vast majority of the coastline and estuaries are designated as Ramsar sites and Special Protection Areas. There is a marked contrast between the wild and remote coastal marshes, and the industrial and urban developments which are highly visible in the low-lying landscape.

- **NCA 113:** North Kent Plain, a strip of low-lying and gently undulating land situated between the Thames Estuary to the north and the Kent Downs to the south. It is a very productive agricultural area with high-quality, fertile soils characterised by arable use, traditional orchards, and other horticultural uses, giving rise to the title 'Garden of England'. There are significant Ancient Woodlands in places, but it is generally an open landscape: characteristic shelterbelts occur within the fruit-growing areas, but the agricultural land is mostly devoid of hedgerows. The area has a strong urban influence, with several built-up areas including significant development around the Medway towns. A small proportion of the area falls within the Kent Downs Area of National Landscape (formerly an AONB).

- NCA 119: North Downs, a chain of chalk hills extending from the Hog's Back in Surrey and ending dramatically at the internationally renowned White Cliffs of Dover. The settlement pattern is characterised by traditional small, nucleated villages, scattered farms and large houses with timber framing, flint walls and brick detailing. Twisting sunken lanes, often aligned along ancient drove roads, cut across the scarp and are a feature of much of the dip slope. The Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly an AONB) designation is testament to the scenic qualities and natural beauty of the area. Agriculture is an important component of the landscape, with variations in soils supporting mixed farming practices where arable, livestock and horticulture have co-existed for centuries. The woodlands, many of which are ancient, are a prominent feature of the landscape and chalk grassland is particularly notable. The chalk downland habitats support rare species, including the late spider orchid – wholly restricted to Kent – and the black-veined moth and straw belle moth which are currently found only within the North Downs. More urban-fringe influence and modern development is associated with the land fringing the Medway towns of Rochester and Chatham.

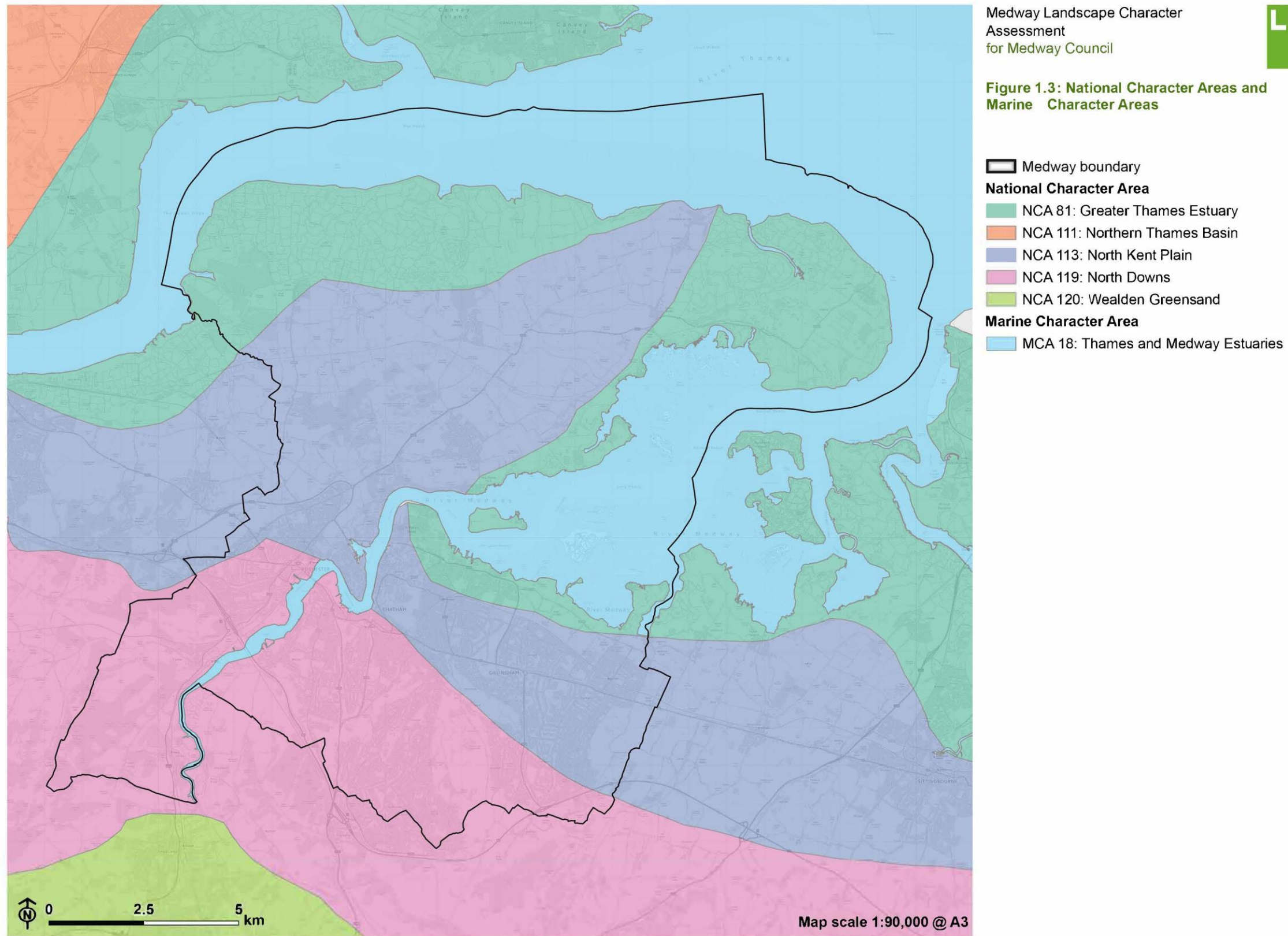
Marine Character Areas

1.16 The Marine Management Organisation commissioned strategic-scale seascape assessments to produce a national seascape character map for all of England's inshore and offshore areas. This consists of individual Marine Character Areas (MCAs) which cross marine plan areas and administrative boundaries. The coastal edge and seascape to the north of the Medway Council area form part of MCA 18: Thames and Medway Estuaries, as assessed within the Seascape Character Assessment for the South East Inshore marine plan area (2018) [See reference 3]. MCA 18 covers the Thames and Medway Estuaries and adjacent coastlines. The Rivers Thames and Medway are busy shipping and transport routes and feature extensive industry and large container ports along the coastline, including at Chatham and Thamesport on the Isle of Grain. The dredged channel along the River Thames is bordered by low lying mudflats, shallow muddy creeks and broad tracts of tidal salt marsh. The area is of international importance for bird species and large swathes of its semi-natural

habitat are designated. The river with its estuaries holds many cultural and historic associations both as a historic transport route and for its military importance, with distinctive landmarks of coastal military heritage along the coast. The Thames is embedded in our national culture and widely celebrated in art and literature.

1.17 The NCAs and MCAs within and surrounding Medway are illustrated on Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3: National Character Areas and Marine Character Areas



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County Level

1.18 At the county level, the Landscape Assessment of Kent [See reference 4] was published in 2004. And identified the following 14 landscape character areas (LCAs) as falling wholly or partly within the Medway Council area:

- Eastern Thames Marshes;
- Medway Marshes;
- Hoo Peninsula;
- Shorne;
- Cobham West Kent Downs;
- Luddesdown West Kent Downs;
- West Downs – Medway, Western & Eastern Scarp;
- Medway Valley Lower;
- The Western Scarp: Medway;
- The Eastern Scarp: Medway;
- Nashenden Valley: Mid Kent Downs;
- Capstone Downs;
- Chatham Outskirts: Mid Kent Downs; and
- Fruit Belt.

1.19 Since the Landscape Assessment of Kent was published in 2004 the accepted methodology for landscape assessment has changed (see paragraphs 1.7 to 1.9 above). Therefore, whilst it provides a useful background and context, the updated Medway Landscape Character Assessment refines and updates this study at a local level.

The Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004)

Local Level

1.20 Landscape does not stop at administrative boundaries but continues seamlessly into surrounding districts/boroughs. This assessment therefore sits alongside the Landscape Character Assessments of the adjacent authorities of Gravesham to the west, Maidstone to the south-east and Swale to the east, which have been reviewed to inform this study (at the time of writing Tonbridge and Malling Borough to the south-west had no published landscape character assessment).

1.21 The following LCAs are lie adjacent to the Medway the Medway Council area boundary:

- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009) [\[See reference 5\]](#)
 - 1: Shorne and Higham Marshes;
 - 3: Higham Arable Farmland;
 - 5: Ashenbank and Cobham Parklands; and
 - 9: Luddesdown Downs.
- Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment (2013) [\[See reference 6\]](#)
 - 1: Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs; and
 - 3: Bredhurst Dry Valleys.
- Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal (2011) [\[See reference 7\]](#)
 - 28: Newington Fruit Belt;
 - 32: Upchurch and Lower Halstow Fruit Belt; and
 - 37: Hartlip Downs.

Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment

1.22 The Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly an AONB) extends into the south of the Medway Council area(see below). The nationally important landscapes in the Kent Downs which are within Medway are included within this study.

1.23 The Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment update 2020 (revised and published 2023) [See reference 8] identifies the following three landscape character areas (LCAs) as falling wholly or partly within the Medway Council area:

- 1A: West Kent Downs;
- 1B: Mid Kent Downs; and
- 4B: Medway Valley.

Kent Downs National Landscape

1.24 Land to the south-west of the Medway Council area falls within the Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly an AONB). National Landscapes are precious landscapes whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them.

1.25 In December 2023 a new duty came into force in Section 245 of the 'Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023' stating that 'relevant authorities must seek to further the purposes' of the designated landscape. This overrides and strengthens the previous duty to 'have regard' to the purposes.

1.26 The Kent Downs is made up of landscape components with special characteristics and qualities which together distinguish it as a landscape of national and international importance and underpin its significance and natural

beauty. These are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 [See reference 9] and include:

- Dramatic landform and views; a distinctive landscape character – Key features include impressive south-facing steep slopes (scarps) of chalk and greensand; scalloped and hidden dry valleys, especially valued where they have a downland character; expansive plateaux; and broad, steep-sided river valleys.
- Biodiversity-rich habitats – Habitats found in the Kent Downs include chalk grassland and chalk scrub; woodlands (including Ancient Woodland), traditional orchards and cobnut platts (nut orchards); and chalk cliffs. Hedgerows and trees outside woodlands are also key features of the landscape and serve an important wildlife function along with networks of linear features of shaws, flower-rich field margins and road verges.
- Farmed landscape – A long-established tradition of mixed farming has helped create and maintain the natural beauty of the Kent Downs. The pastoral scenery is a particularly valued part of the landscape and locally concentrated areas of orchards and other horticultural production are also present.
- Woodland and trees – The Kent Downs is one of Britain’s most wooded landscapes. Broadleaf and mixed woodland cover around 23% of the Kent Downs and frame the upper slopes of the scarp, dry valleys and plateaux tops. Almost 70% of the woodlands are ancient woodland meaning they have been continuously present at least since at least 1600; they support nationally important woodland plant and animal species.
- A rich legacy of historic and cultural heritage – Millennia of human activity have created an outstanding cultural inheritance and strong ‘time depth’ to the Kent Downs. There are the remains of Neolithic megalithic monuments, Bronze Age barrows, Iron Age hillforts, Roman villas, roads and towns, medieval villages and hamlets focused on their churches, post-medieval stately homes with their parks and gardens and historic defence structures from Norman times to the twentieth century.
- Geology and natural resources – The imposing landform and special characteristics of the Kent Downs is underpinned by its geology. This is also the basis for the considerable natural capital and natural resources

which benefit society. These include the soils which support an important farming sector and the water resources which support rivers teeming with wildlife and offering enchanting landscapes.

- Tranquillity and remoteness – Much of the Kent Downs provides surprisingly tranquil and remote countryside – offering dark night skies, space, beauty and peace. Simply seeing a natural landscape, hearing birdsong, seeing and hearing the sea, watching stars at night or ‘bathing’ in woodland are important perceptual qualities of the National Landscape.

Chapter 2

Methodology

Approach

2.1 The Landscape Character Assessment component follows the method promoted by Natural England through 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (2014) which embeds the principles of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) within it.

Assessment Process

2.2 The process for undertaking the study involved three key stages as described below.

Stage 1: Desk Review and Pilot Study

- Inception;
- Review and baseline data collection/collation;
- Desk-based classification and description; and
- Pilot study, for client comments.

Desk Review

2.3 The initial desk-based review involved the collation of a wide range of up to date mapped information to 'sense-check' the existing landscape classification and to update the baseline. Designations relating to cultural heritage, nature

conservation and landscape were checked for any changes since the 2011 Study.

2.4 Data used within the report, including data collated in the GIS database is shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: GIS data

Name	Source
Base OS mapping at 1:25k and 1:50k (The base mapping used was from June 2023; development that was under way at the time, or that has taken place since, is therefore not shown).	Ordnance Survey
Terrain 50 Contour data	Ordnance Survey
Linear features, mass movement, artificial ground, superficial deposits, and bedrock geology 1:50K	British Geological Survey
Administrative boundaries	Medway Council
National Character Areas	Natural England
National Marine Character Areas	Marine Management Organisation
Existing Medway Landscape Character (2011) and Kent LCA (2004)	Medway Council and Kent County Council
Landscape Character Assessment for neighbouring districts	Gravesham, Maidstone and Swale
Public Rights of Way (PRoW), and access land	Natural England
River features and flood zones	Environment Agency
Nature conservation designations	Natural England (national datasets) and Medway Council (local datasets)

Name	Source
Priority habitats	Natural England and Medway Council
Forestry	Forestry Commission
Historic Landscape Characterisation dataset	Kent County Council, Oxford Archaeology (South), Historic England
Heritage designations	Historic England (national datasets) and Medway Council (local datasets)
Dark skies and tranquillity	CPRE
Infrastructure	Ordnance Survey
Local Plan designations and policy areas	Medway Council

Classification

2.5 Classification is concerned with dividing the landscape into areas of distinct, recognisable, and consistent common character and grouping areas of similar character together. This includes:

- Landscape Character Types (LCTs), which share broadly similar patterns of geology, topography, vegetation, and human influences in each area in which they occur (although not identical, they share a common pattern of elements).
- Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) – Each landscape type is divided into geographically specific character areas. These share generic characteristics with other areas of the same type but have their own particular identity or ‘sense of place’.

2.6 The update of the landscape classification for Medway is based on a review of the 2011 Study boundaries and new information on landscape change. Some adjustments were made to LCA boundaries and LCAs were reorganised into LCT. The 2011 Study did not identify broad LCT, rather it set out ‘Principal

Landscape Areas', which broadly matched those set out within the Kent Landscape Character Assessment (2004). Six Principal Landscape Areas were identified and these were subdivided into 42 LCAs. Changes to the landscape classification are outlined in Appendix A.

2.7 This process resulted in the definition of eight LCTs and 34 LCAs for Medway. The classification is shown on Figures 6.1 and 6.2.

Stage 2: Site Assessment

2.8 A systematic field survey was undertaken to review and refine the draft classification and descriptions. This involved:

- Verifying and fine-tuning the classification of the landscape types and areas identified including review of boundaries;
- Checking and identifying key characteristics;
- Checking aesthetic/perceptual characteristics;
- Taking photographs to provide a visual record of the landscape; and
- Providing more detailed guidance in relation to changes observed on the ground.

Stage 3: Reporting

- Updating the interim report with field observations;
- Completing a landscape evaluation based on the field survey; and
- Submitting a draft for client review followed by a final report.

Landscape Character Area Profiles

2.9 The Landscape Character Assessment is presented at an LCA level and arranged by their respective LCT within the district in Chapter 7.

2.10 Each LCT section begins with an overview map showing the location of the LCT within the Medway Council area and its relationship with other LCTs and the component LCAs within it.

2.11 The individual LCA profiles are structured as follows:

Map and Summary of Location and Landscape Character

2.12 A location map (1:25,000 scale) which shows the extent of the LCA and its relationship with other LCAs, followed by a summary paragraph explaining its location and defining landscape character.

Representative Photos

2.13 Photos to help the reader appreciate the character of the LCA.

Landscape Description

2.14 This section provides a description of the landscape character of the LCA under each of the following headings:

- Key Characteristics in bullet point format, provides a summary explanation of the character of the LCA;

- Representative photos to help the reader appreciate the character of the LCA; and
- Formative Influences in bullet format, including for:
 - Natural Influences: The most significant natural influences in the landscape including designated habitats.
 - Cultural Influences: The most significant cultural influences in the landscape including designated cultural heritage assets.
 - Perceptual Influences: The most significant perceptual and aesthetic influences in the landscape (augmented by field survey).

Evaluation

2.15 The evaluation provides an understanding of what is important in each LCA and why, including:

- Key Sensitivities and Values: Identifies the qualities that are particularly valued for their contribution to landscape character (that is, if any one of these attributes ceased to exist, it would change the character to the detriment of the landscape).
- Landscape Strategy: Provides an overall strategy to guide the future direction of the landscape based on opportunities for conservation, restoration, enhancement, and creation.
- Guidelines: Provides guidance on how the strategy can be achieved to ensure future change respects local character. The guidelines can be considered as part of development management, for example guiding mitigation or enhancement or influencing wider land management decisions for the rural environment.

Chapter 3

Formative Influences

3.1 This chapter summarises the main physical and cultural influences that have shaped the landscape of the Medway Council area. The detailed description of different LCAs, that appear in Chapter 7 of this report, highlight the key characteristics (both positive and negative) and valued attributes that are of most significance to the particular landscape concerned.

3.2 The landscape has evolved through the interaction of the natural environment and human activities, through the combination of physical and cultural influences. Physical influences such as geology and landform, together with the pattern of settlement and land use are key determinants of landscape character.

Physical Influences

3.3 The physical components of the landscape have the most tangible and fundamental influences upon its character, being the most permanent and least changeable aspect of its appearance. The underlying geology creates the 'backbone' of the landscape. The actions of weathering, erosion and deposition alter the landform, consequently influencing hydrological patterns and affecting the nature of soil conditions. This influences the nature of the vegetation and fauna that the landscape can support, and affects how humans have used and continue to exploit the landscape for agriculture, settlement and industry.

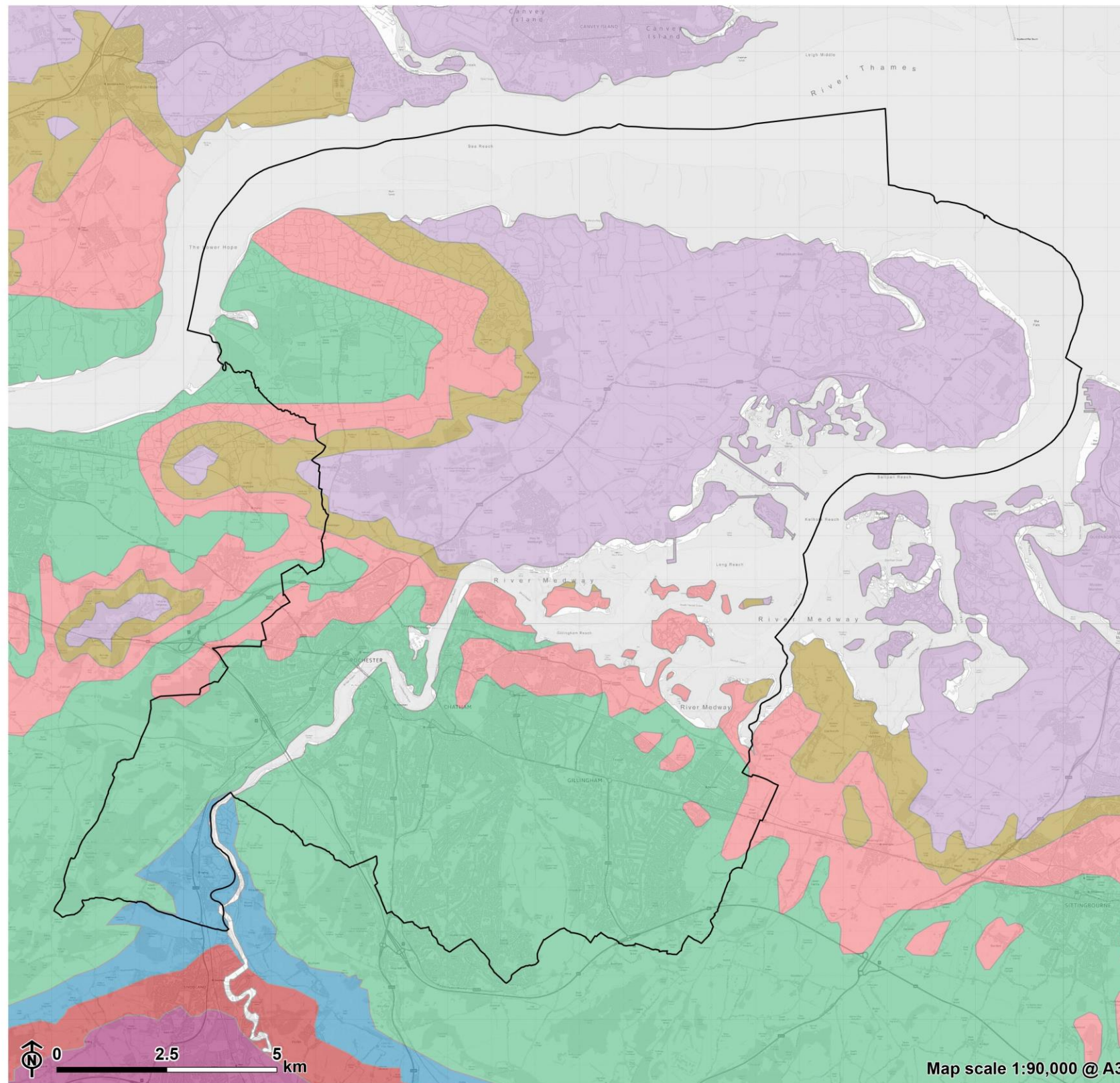
Geology, Landform and Soils

3.4 Figure 3.1 illustrates the solid (or bedrock) geology that underlies the area, and Figure 3.2 shows the drift (or superficial) geology, which overlies the

Chapter 3 Formative Influences

bedrock in places. Figure 3.3 illustrates the topography and watercourses/hydrology of Medway, which relates closely to the underlying geology.

Figure 3.1: Bedrock geology



Medway Landscape Character Assessment for Medway Council

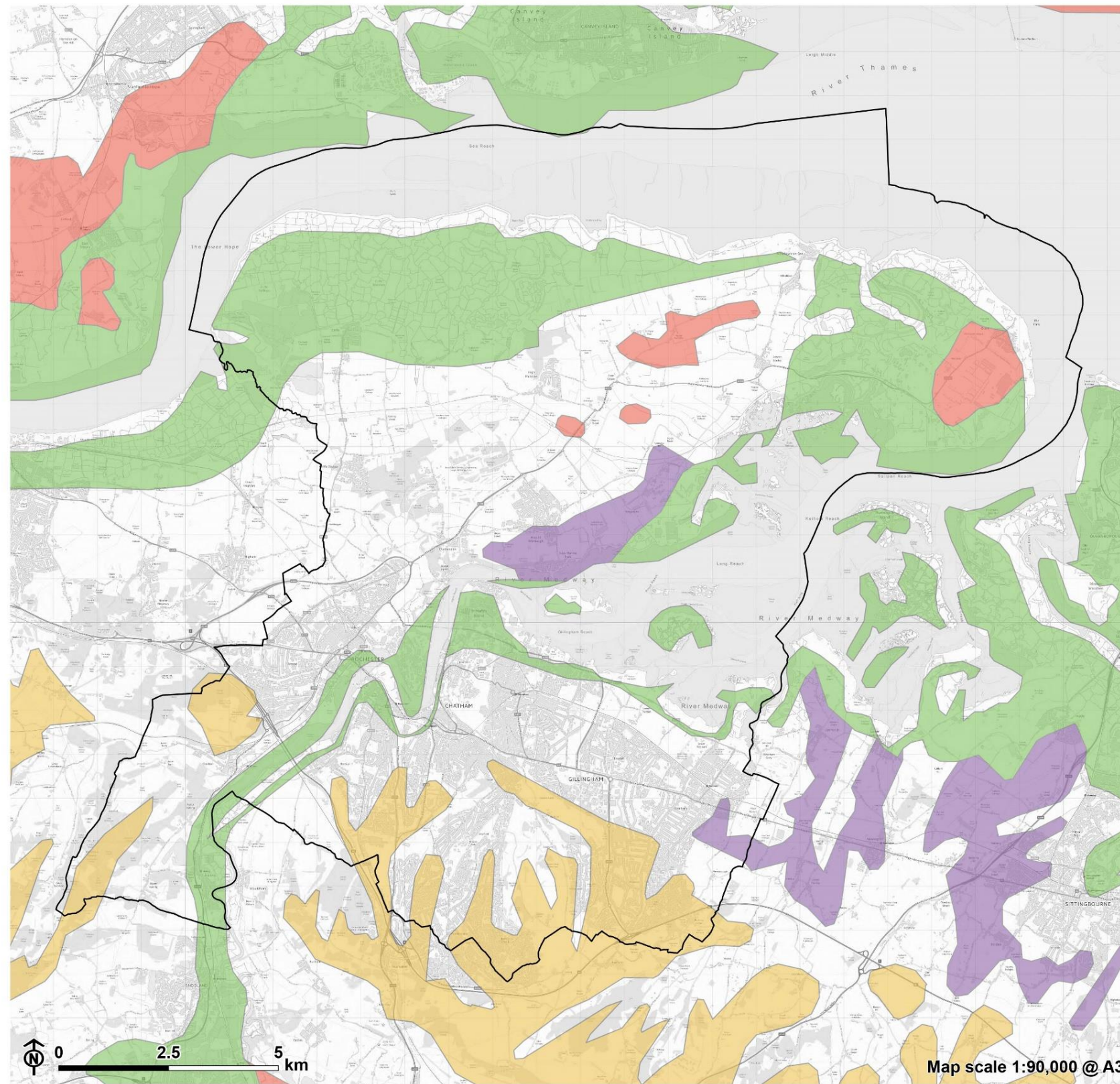


Figure 3.1: Bedrock geology

- Medway boundary
- Bedrock geology**
- White chalk subgroup
- Gault formation and Upper Greensand formation (undifferentiated)
- Grey chalk subgroup
- Lambeth group
- Lower Greensand group
- Thames group
- Thanet sand formation

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Figure 3.2: Superficial geology



Medway Landscape Character Assessment for Medway Council

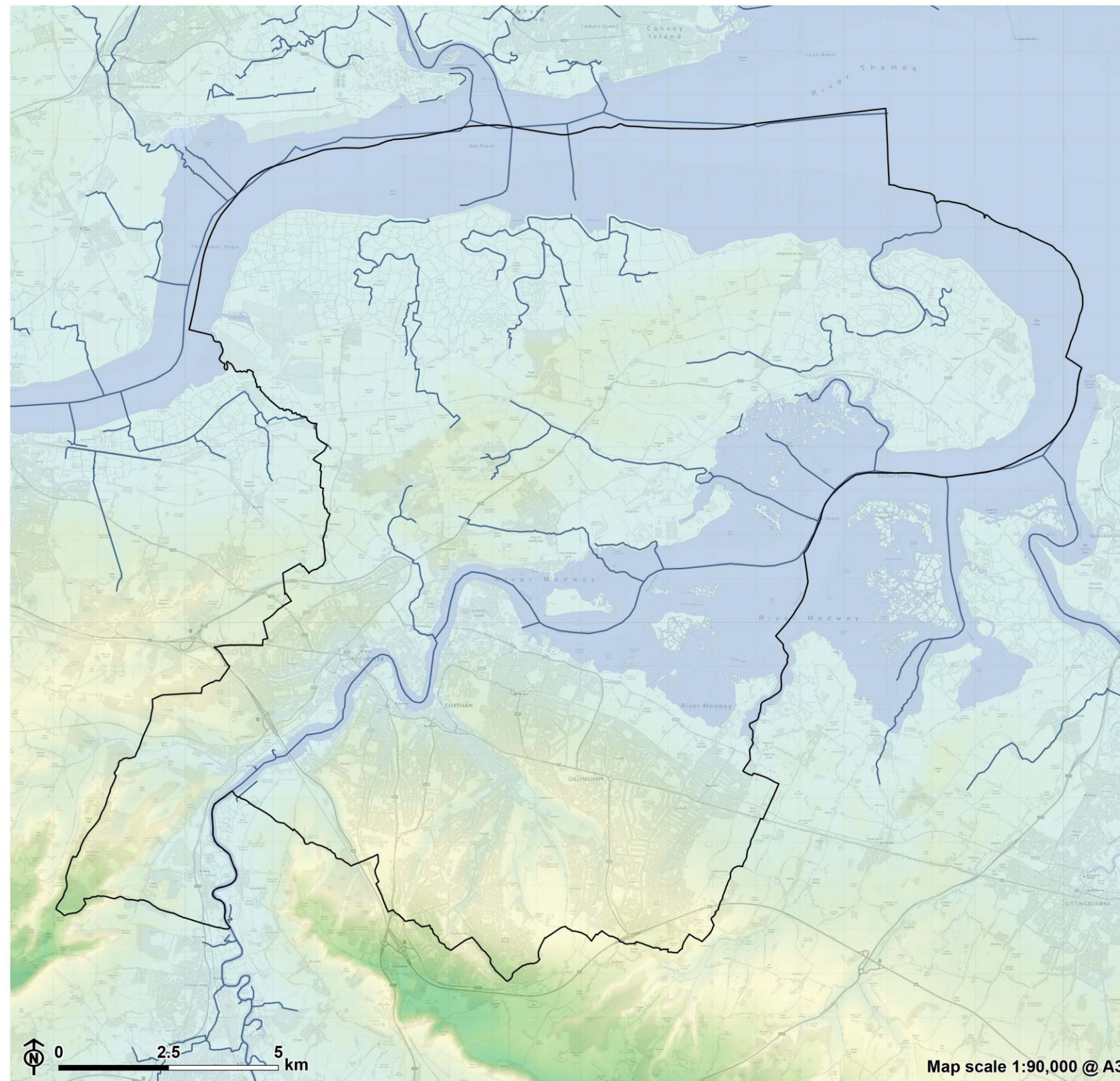


Figure 3.2: Superficial geology

- Medway boundary
- Superficial geology**
- Clay, silt and sand: Alluvium
- Diamicton: Clay-with-flints
- Silt: Brickearth
- Sand and gravel: River terrace deposits (undifferentiated)

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Figure 3.3: Topography and hydrology



Medway Landscape Character Assessment for Medway Council



Figure 3.3: Topography and hydrology

- Medway boundary
- Watercourse
- Tidal water
- Elevation**
 - 700m
 - 0m

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3.5 Geologically, the area is dominated by two formations: the London Clay formation (Thames Group) to the north and north-east and Chalk formations (White Chalk Subgroup) to the south and north-west. Medway extends between the North Downs escarpment to the south and the low-lying London Basin to the north. The North Downs is a chain of chalk hills extending roughly east-west across south-east England. It is dominated by Late Cretaceous Chalk (laid down from about 98 to 65 million years ago) overlain by clay with flints deposits. The Alpine mountain building phase (from around 50 million years ago) raised and folded the chalk, creating the anticline of the Weald. The dome of the anticline was subsequently eroded away during the Cenozoic leaving the escarpments of the North and South Downs. The London Basin is an elongated sedimentary basin underlying London and a large area of south-east England and the North Sea, which also formed as a result of the Alpine mountain building phase. This comprises a bedrock of London Clay overlain by Alluvial deposits (clay, silt, sand and peat) and sand and gravel river terrace deposits.

3.6 The Medway Council area occupies the dip slope of the North Downs, with land falling gradually from approximately 175m and 155m above ordnance datum (AOD) along the escarpment to the south towards the low-lying coastline of the Medway Estuary at between 5 and 0m AOD to the north. Beyond this to the north land rises again to form the Hoo Peninsula, which separates the estuaries of the River Medway and River Thames. Whilst the peninsula is predominantly flat and low-lying, it includes a central spine of low chalk, clay and sand hills (including Chattenden Ridge) running south-west to north-east. There are also several isolated areas of river terrace deposits which, being slightly raised and fertile, have attracted historic settlement (such as Grain, Hoo St Werburgh and Lower Stoke). Historically people have exploited both the higher ground and marshlands as part of a mixed farming regime, and movement between the two has influenced the routeways and field patterns in the landscape evident today.

3.7 Whilst the area was never actually covered by ice sheets during the Quaternary Glaciation (the 'Ice Age'), the landscape was affected by extreme tundra conditions. This has resulted in a network of dry valleys dissecting the chalk escarpment and valley floors filled with sediments gradually transported down slope ('coombe rock'). The Ice Age also resulted in sea level changes and

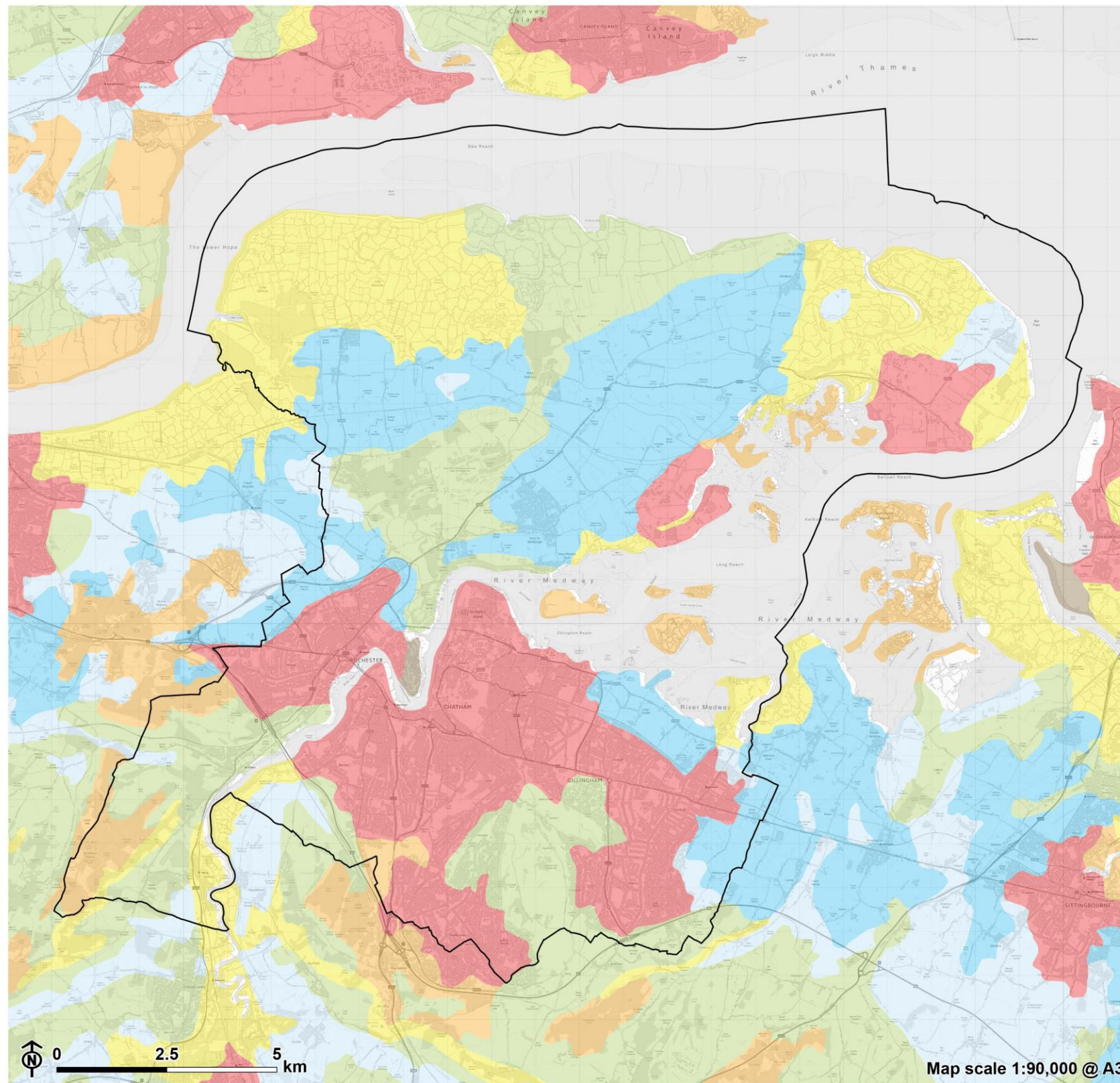
altered the course of several rivers. The River Thames and River Medway appear to have followed completely separate courses until around half a million years ago, when glacial ice forced the Thames southwards to meet the Medway, which at that time flowed across the area of today's Hoo Peninsula into Essex. The rivers eventually merged and moved southwards to their current position, forming the Hoo Peninsula. The changing course of rivers laid down the various river gravel deposits which has resulted in a predominance of highly fertile and easily worked soils.

3.8 The main watercourses in the area are the River Medway and River Thames. The Medway drains into the Thames, with the confluence at the Medway and Thames estuaries to the east of the Hoo Peninsula. The River Medway has incised a broad, steep sided valley through the North Downs to the south-west of the Medway Council area, known as the 'Medway Gap'.

Landcover

3.9 Figure 3.4 illustrates the quality of agricultural land, known as 'agricultural land classification'. Land use within the Medway Council area reflects the topography and soil types.

Figure 3.4: Agricultural Land Classification



Medway Landscape Character Assessment for Medway Council



Figure 3.4: Agricultural Land Classification

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3.10 Higher ground to the south, dominated by chalk geology, is predominantly classified as having Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural soils with some pockets of Grade 2 (very good) and Grade 4 (poor) soils in places. The lower slopes of dry valleys and scarp edges often feature light chalky colluvial soils washed down from the scarp that generally form better quality agricultural soils; these areas often support large-scale arable farming.

3.11 The transitional land between the North Downs dip slope and the Medway and Thames Estuaries, including higher ground on the Hoo Peninsula, is dominated by Grade 1 (excellent) and Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural soils. This supports productive arable farmland and horticultural activity, including numerous orchards, which forms a small part of a distinctive area of the 'Fruit Belt' landscape stretching east towards Faversham, strongly identifiable with Kent's reputation as the 'Garden of England'. Land around the coastal edges to the north generally feature Grade 4 (poor) agricultural soils and are mostly uncultivated, comprising remnant marshland or reclaimed marshland in pastoral use.

Ecological Character

3.12 Figure 3.5 illustrates the location of nature conservation designations and Figure 3.5 illustrates the location and distribution of woodland and other habitats.

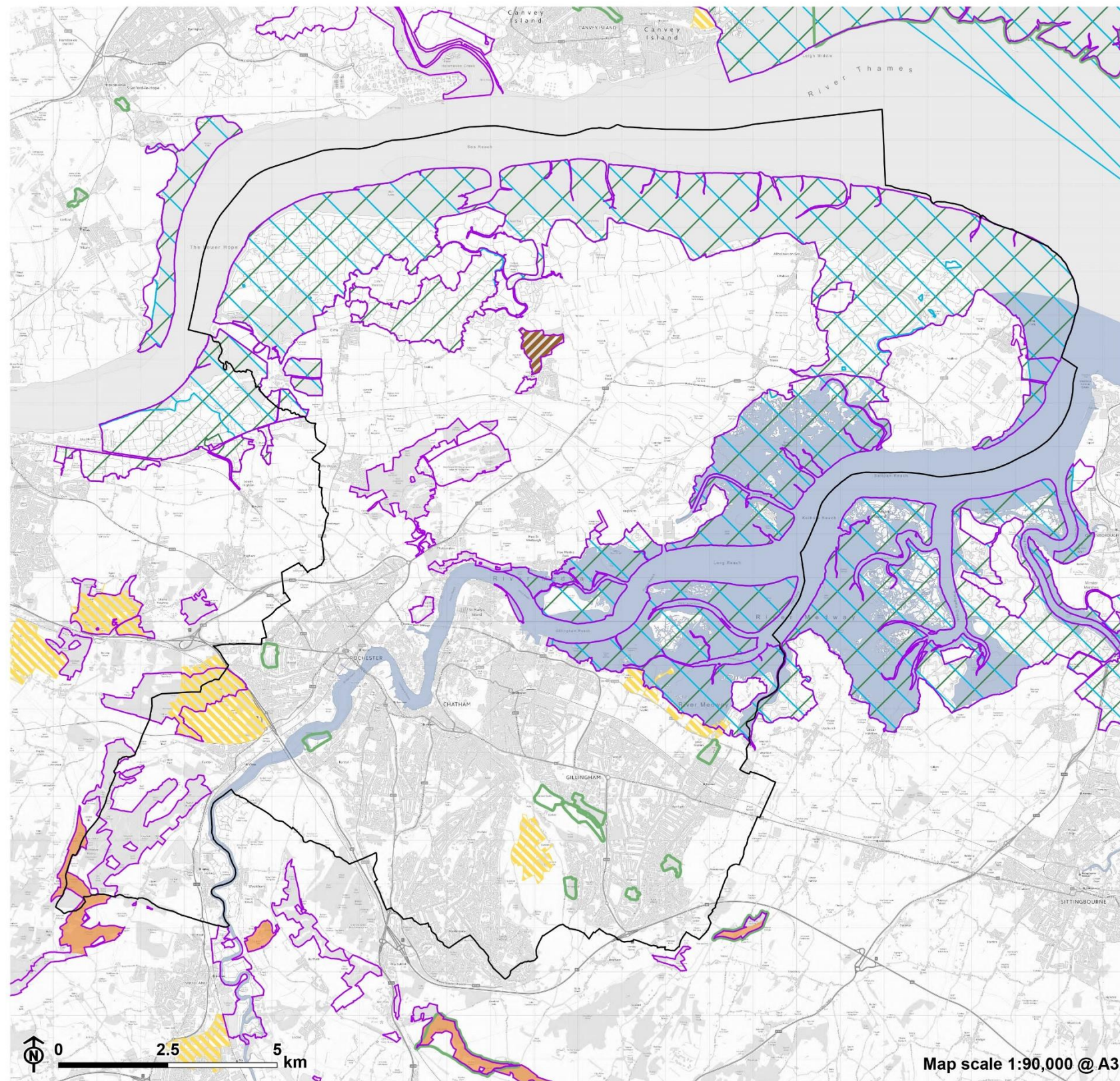
3.13 Medway supports a wide range of habitats, including deciduous woodland, lowland calcareous grassland (chalk grassland), good quality semi-improved grassland, traditional orchards, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh (including salt marsh) and mudflats. Many of these habitats are of international, national or local importance, and are recognised through designation. This includes the Medway and Thames Estuaries and Marshes to the north, which are designated as Ramsar Sites, Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

3.14 There are also numerous areas of woodland identified as Ancient Woodland and designated as SSSI, concentrated mainly on the scarp top and

Chapter 3 Formative Influences

along steeper slopes of dry valleys to the south (much of which falls within the Kent Downs National Landscape), as well as along Chattenden Ridge on the Hoo Peninsula to the north. Ancient Woodland has been continuously present since at least 1600 and it tends to support nationally important woodland plant and animal species. Nature conservation designations are shown on Figure 3.5 and woodland and other habitats on Figure 3.6.

Figure 3.5: Nature conservation



Medway Landscape Character Assessment for Medway Council

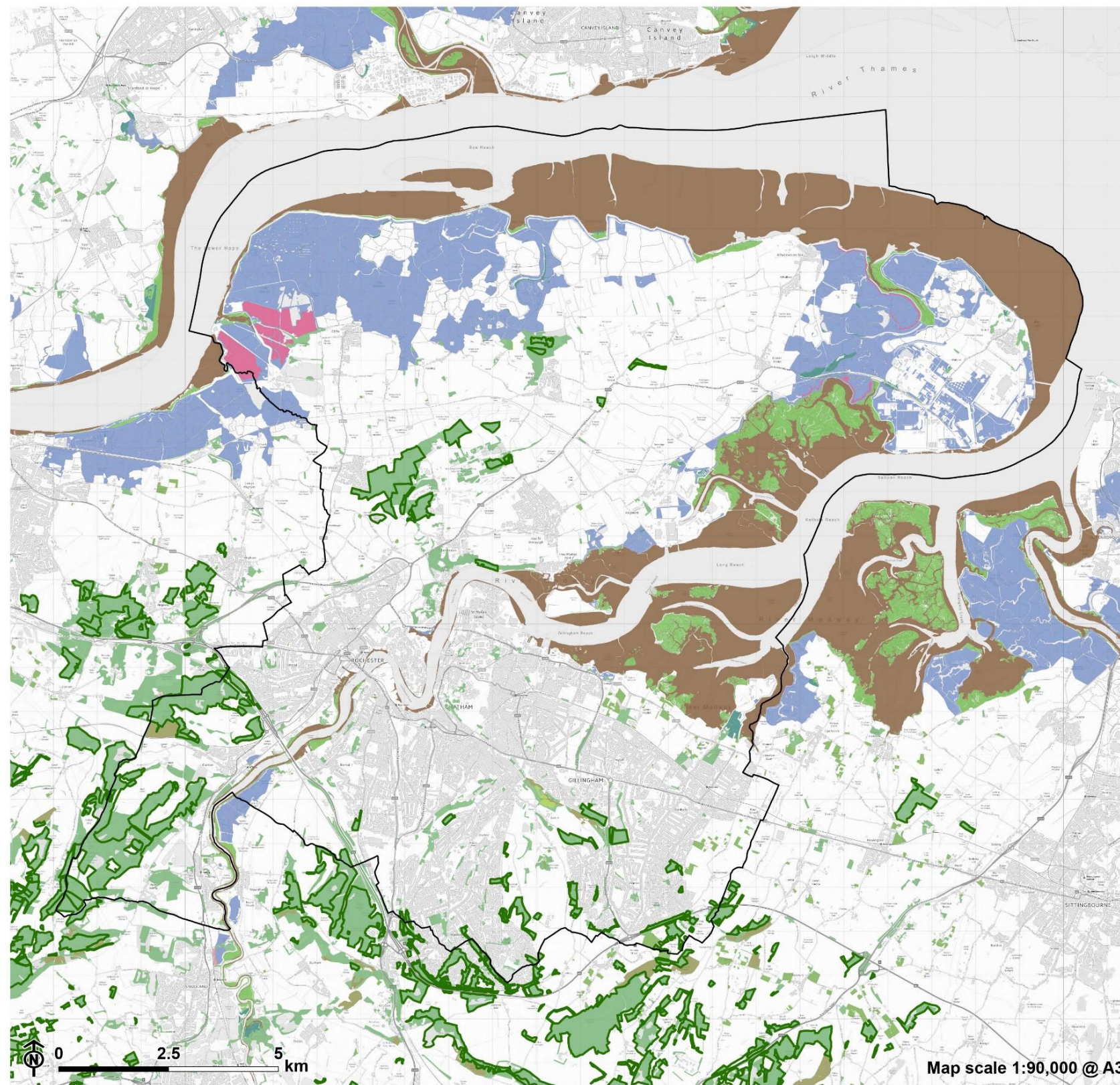


Figure 3.5: Nature conservation

- Medway boundary
- Country Park
- Local Nature Reserve
- National Nature Reserve
- Marine Conservation Zone
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Special Protection Area
- Ramsar
- Special Area of Conservation

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Figure 3.6: Woodland and other habitats



Medway Landscape Character Assessment for Medway Council



Figure 3.6: Woodland and other habitats

- Medway boundary
- Ancient Woodland Inventory
- Priority Habitat Inventory**
- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Coastal saltmarsh
- Coastal vegetated shingle
- Deciduous woodland
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Lowland dry acid grassland
- Lowland fens
- Lowland heathland
- Lowland meadows
- Maritime cliff and slope
- Mudflats
- Reedbeds
- Saline lagoons
- Traditional orchard

0 2.5 5 km

Map scale 1:90,000 @ A3

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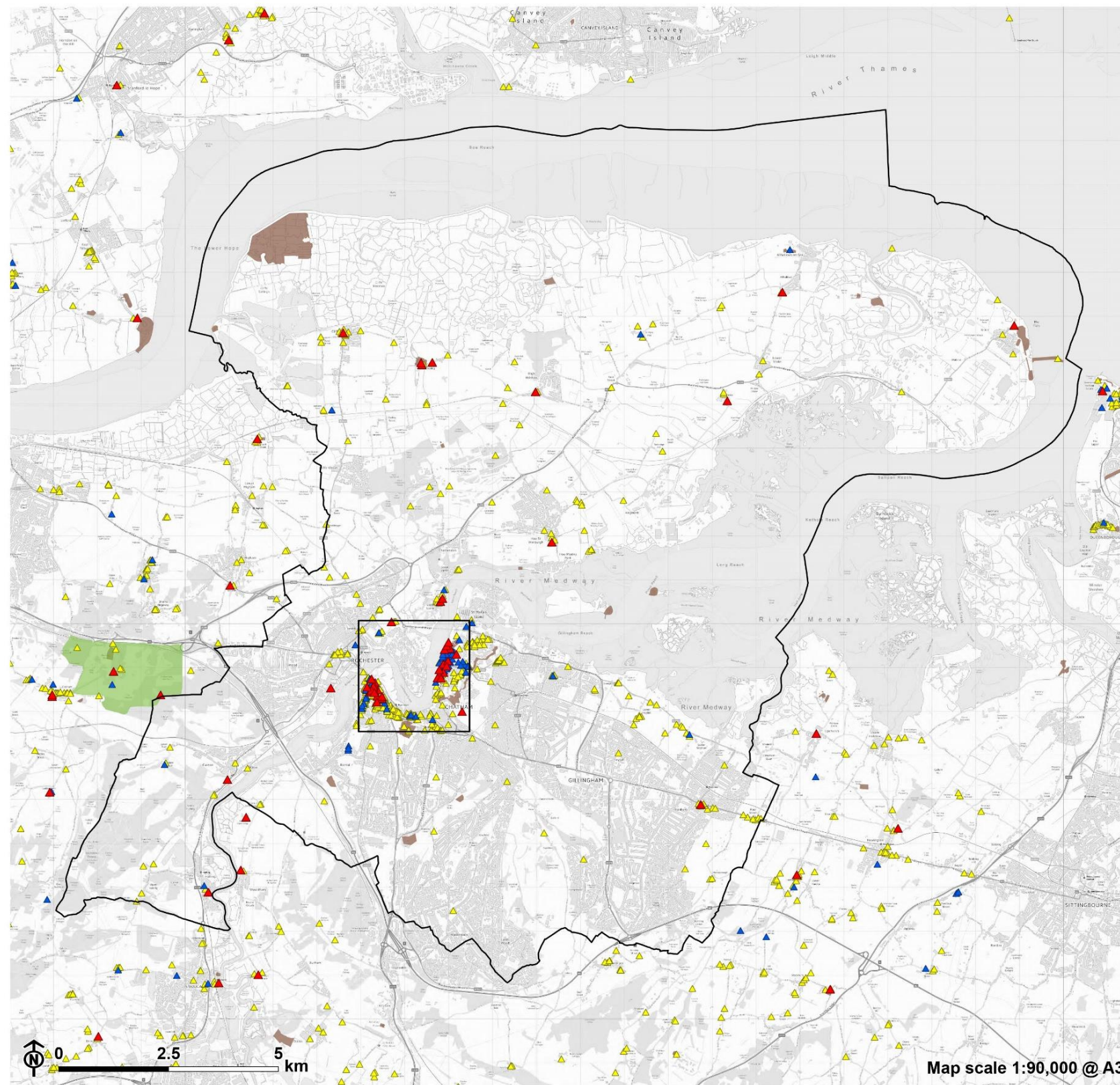
Cultural Influences

Historical Development

3.15 Medway contains a wealth of archaeological sites, monuments and historic assets that reflect a long history of human settlement. These assets, many of which are statutorily designated, play a large part in defining the character of the landscape and the individuality of particular settlements.

3.16 There are 77 Scheduled Monuments covering prehistoric to modern periods, 653 listed buildings and 48 Conservation Areas within the Medway Council area. These are illustrated on Figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7: Cultural heritage

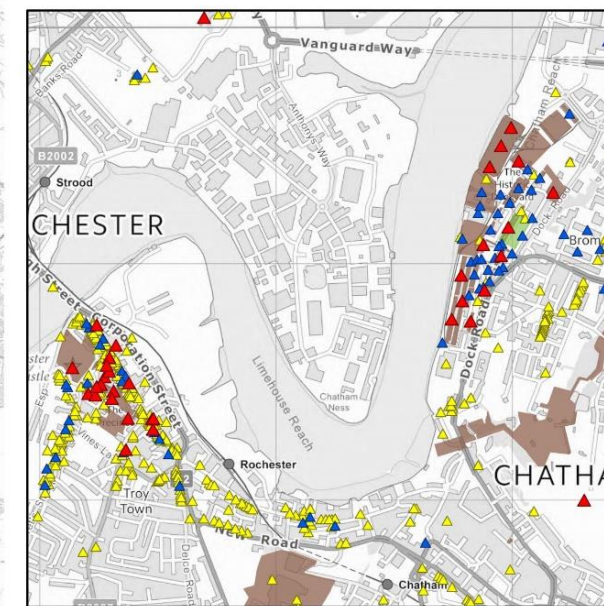


Medway Landscape Character Assessment for Medway Council



Figure 3.7: Cultural heritage

- ▭ Medway boundary
- ▭ Registered Parks and Gardens
- ▭ Scheduled monument
- Listed building**
 - ▲ Grade I
 - ▲ Grade II*
 - ▲ Grade II



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3.17 This section has been informed by reference to the history and heritage section of the 'Visit Medway' website [See reference 10], Kent County Council's 'Exploring Kent's Past' website [See reference 11] and 'The Hoo Peninsula Landscape' (2015) [See reference 12], as well as relevant Medway Council evidence base documents. This study does not attempt a comprehensive analysis of Medway's history but draws attention to the role past uses have played in shaping the current landscape.

Prehistoric (700,000 BC – 43 AD)

3.18 The wider area of Kent has an extremely long record of occupation and activity by humans, including from the Palaeolithic (700,000 – 10,000 BC), the Mesolithic (10,000 – 4,000 BC), the Neolithic (4,000 – 2,500 BC), the Bronze Age (2,500 – 700 BC), and the Iron Age (700 BC – 43 AD). However, the amount of designated sites recording prehistoric activity within the Medway Council area is not as great as elsewhere in Kent, with only two Scheduled Monuments related to this period.

3.19 During the last million years, there have been several separate Ice Ages in Britain, each lasting tens of thousands of years. During this period, the presence of humans would have varied depending the prevailing environmental and climatic conditions. The main evidence that survives from the Palaeolithic is generally stone tools. Within Medway a Palaeolithic site (Scheduled Monument) was discovered at Cuxton on a river terrace deposit adjacent to the River Medway that contained a large assemblage of Acheulian hand axes (these now reside in the British Museum). Other evidence for Palaeolithic activity in the area comes from an assemblage of flint tools found in the quarry to the east of All Saints' Church in Frindsbury.

3.20 People returned to Britain about 13,000 years ago in what is known as the Mesolithic after an absence during the extreme cold of the last glaciation. Whilst there have been limited Mesolithic finds from within Medway, there is considerable evidence from across north Kent in the form of flint tool deposits, including within neighbouring Swale and Gravesham. Many of Kent's Mesolithic finds have been made along river valleys, and it is probable that the River

Medway and River Thames and their estuaries hold further evidence from this period.

3.21 During the subsequent Neolithic we find the first evidence of arable and pastoral farming and for the production of pottery in Britain. Major monuments were also constructed, including chambered tombs or earthen long barrows. Recorded Neolithic sites are rare within Medway. However, evidence for Neolithic activity within the surrounding area comes in the form of the 'Medway/Kentish Megalithic monuments', concentrated along the lower Medway Valley. This includes Kit's Coty chambered long barrow near the village of Aylesford in Tonbridge and Malling to the south.

3.22 During the Bronze Age flint tools were gradually superseded by bronze and farming became more organised. The most common type of Bronze Age monuments are barrows – earth mounds often covering a central burial and with an encircling ditch. Evidence from the Bronze Age within Medway comes in the form of a 'Bell Barrow' (Scheduled Monument) situated in Shoulder of Mutton Wood on the crest of the eastern scarp of the Medway Valley to the south-west, and a sword discovered in the River Medway at Upnor Reach. In addition excavations have uncovered pottery in marshland areas that suggest salt production was taking place as long ago as the Bronze Age.

3.23 During the Iron Age settlement would have predominantly been single farmsteads and smaller villages, although there would have been some larger important local centres referred to by Julius Caesar as 'oppida'. Rochester was one of the two oppida of the Cantiaci tribe, with the other being Canterbury. This ancient trackway between the two centres continued in use through the Roman period, becoming known as 'Watling Street'. Evidence of Iron Age settlement in Rochester is provided by the discovery of Belgic pottery under the Roman levels, and coin moulds suggest that this was centre of some importance.

Roman (43 – 410 AD)

3.24 The Roman occupation of Britain began in AD43, with part of the Claudian Invasion force landing at Pegwell Bay in east Kent. The Romano-British period is extremely well represented and studied in Kent with major sites at Canterbury, Rochester and Dover.

3.25 The Roman administration imposed an administrative territory in Kent known as the Civitas Cantiacorum, centred at Canterbury (Durovernum Cantiacorum). The ensuing period of Roman rule saw some transformation of the geography of Kent with the construction and modification of several roads, including Watling Street which was extended to connect the ports of Dubris (Dover), Rutupiae (Richborough Castle), Lemanis (Lympne), and Regulbium (Reculver) to London (Londinium) via Canterbury. Watling Street passes through Medway – today known as the A2 – crossing the River Medway at Rochester. Rochester (Durobrivae) was established on the site of the earlier Iron Age settlement, primarily to control the crossing point. This was initially opposed by the native population resulting in the ‘Battle of the Medway’ in AD43.

3.26 In Rochester, parts of the Roman town and wall are still in evidence (Scheduled Monuments). Within the wider area the combination of transport links and fertile soils formed the basis of a developed agricultural economy. Numerous villas were constructed along the Medway Valley between Rochester and Maidstone, including one at Snodland to the south of Medway in Tonbridge and Malling Borough. Evidence of a cemetery at Chatham and remains found at Grange Farm east of Gillingham, suggest Roman activity and settlement was also focussed along Watling Street. Estates here would have exploited the land lying between the low-lying marshes to the north and higher ground to the south. Excavations within marshland areas have also revealed the brine tanks, hearths and waste mounds associated with Roman salt making, demonstrating industrial activities during the Roman Period.

Anglo-Saxon (410 – 1066 AD)

3.27 Following the withdrawal of the Roman legions in AD407, groups of Angles, Saxons and Jutes arrived in Kent in increasing numbers, first as raiders and later as settlers. From the middle of the fifth century onwards their material culture begins to become common, and by the end of the fifth century they had established the Kingdom of Kent – the oldest of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. These groups introduced the Old English language and judging from the place names it is likely that many of the settlements within Medway were established during the Anglo Saxon period, with many listed in Domesday Book of 1086.

3.28 Following on from the Roman Period Rochester continued as the principal settlement in the area. The town became the centre of the Cesterwara Lathe (an administrative division of Kent) and by the early 7th century it had a market and a portreeve (an official possessing political, administrative, or fiscal authority over a town). In AD604 Augustine of Canterbury sent Justus to found a cathedral and become the first bishop in Rochester. This makes it second oldest cathedral in England.

Medieval (1066 – 1540 AD)

3.29 Following the Norman Conquest in 1066 AD, the new Norman nobility were in the minority, being greatly outnumbered by the Anglo-Saxon people. One way in which they demonstrated their power and control was by building castles. In this period there was an increased focus on military architecture in Rochester, which continued as the principal settlement in the area. Rochester Castle was later granted to the archbishops of Canterbury by King Henry I in 1127. The first archbishop, William de Corbeil, added the castle keep which still dominates the skyline today. Rochester Castle is one of the finest examples of Norman architecture in the country. Other smaller castles were also built by the local nobility such as at Cooling Castle (Scheduled Monument), which has a quadrangular design constructed on a moated island at Cooling on the Hoo Peninsula.

3.30 As time went by and the need for fortified castles receded, rich landowners began to build more imposing undefended houses. Where they do survive, the oldest buildings are either timber-framed or, in the case of high-status buildings like Cooling Castle and the parish churches, use Kentish Ragstone. The wider area contains several monuments and surviving buildings from this period, including Halstow Marshes Decoy Pond (Scheduled Monument); Cooling Castle (see above); and Bloors Place in Lower Rainham and High Birch at Upper Bush (Grade II* Listed Buildings), timber framed halls dating to the late 15th century.

3.31 The church was an extremely important part of medieval life, and this period also saw an increased focus on religious architecture. Rochester Cathedral was built between 1080 and 1137 and along with the castle forms a dominant landmark in the town. Below Cathedrals within the church structure there were a number of sub-ordinate churches. Medway features several Medieval churches (Grade I and II* Listed Buildings), including the Church of St James (Isle of Grain), Church of St Mary (St Mary Hoo), Church of St Helen (Cliffe) and Church of St Werburgh (Hoo St Werburgh). Rochester was also an important point for people travelling the 'Pilgrims' Way', an historic route supposedly taken by pilgrims from Winchester to the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury. The route of the Pilgrims Way passes through Medway, crossing the River Medway near Cuxton.

3.32 Although little documentary evidence survives, many grass-covered mounds dotting the marshland areas of Medway, including around the Hoo peninsula, are formed of medieval salt-making waste and thus provide evidence of salt production in this period. Construction of sea walls for land reclamation cut off the tides and contributed to the demise of the medieval industry.

3.33 Historic documents record reclamation of salt marsh on the Hoo Peninsula from the late 12th century to the early 15th century, although it possibly dates to before the Norman Conquest. Reclamation (sometimes known as 'inning') involved the construction of walls and drains to reclaim the salt marsh from the tides and to improve its productivity. This had a lasting impact on the landscape, particularly evident on the Hoo Peninsula around the Isle of Grain where nearly all of the field enclosures originate from marshland or salt marsh.

Post Medieval and Industrial (1540 AD – Modern)

3.34 Although Kent is labelled ‘the Garden of England’ it has been an industrialised county since the 16th century. Water and industry have played a significant role in the evolution of the landscape, particularly along River Thames and River Medway which offered good water communication with London and other markets. Industries which have been practised include salt making, brick making and pottery; boat and ship building; and munitions and cement production, in many cases with associated wharfage for transport of goods. Many of these industries have left their mark on the landscape, notably the many chalk quarries including along the Thames Estuary at Cliffe and along the Lower Medway Valley at Cuxton and Halling. More recent industrial activities are readily apparent along the Thames and Medway estuaries, with large-scale power stations and container terminals and associated overhead power lines.

3.35 Medway has a long military history which is clearly evidenced in the landscape. The area has been used since Tudor times for the storage and manufacture of munitions. The Dockyard at Chatham was established in the mid-16th century with Upnor Castle built on the orders of Queen Elizabeth I to protect the naval warships. Several other forts and lines of defensive fortifications were subsequently constructed at various times to defend this strategically important military centre. Many of these forts are designated as Scheduled Monuments, reflecting their importance. This includes Upnor Castle, Hoo Fort and Darnet Fort to defend against a seaward attack; and Fort Borstal, Fort Horsted and Luton Fort to defend against a landward attack from the west and south. Despite this the Dutch successfully attacked during the Second Anglo-Dutch in what is known as the ‘Raid on the Medway’.

3.36 During the First World War defences were constructed throughout Kent with the aim of stopping aerial attacks by airships and bomber aeroplanes. This included ground observers and sound locators to warn of an attack, interceptor air craft and anti-aircraft guns and searchlights. In Medway the Lodge Hill Anti-aircraft Battery (Scheduled Monument) on Chattenden Ridge is one of the world’s first permanent anti-aircraft defences, and rare surviving example.

3.37 During the Second World War defeat of the allies in June 1940 and the evacuation from Dunkirk focussed attention on the need for anti-invasion measures. This led to the creation of a defence scheme based on a 'coastal crust' of pillboxes and gun batteries, with the ports of Dover, Medway and the Thames, being given particular attention, backed by a succession of other defences inland. Good examples of inland defences can be seen along the left bank of the Medway and across the Hoo Peninsula between Hoo St Werburgh and Higham Marshes (the 'Hoo Stop-line').

3.38 The Post-War period saw a further rapid expansion of industry and settlement within the area, which impacted the landscape. Large-scale industrial developments and associated infrastructure were introduced along the Medway Estuary, including at Grain and Kingsnorth on the Hoo Peninsula. The Medway Towns also grew further in both size and population, and effectively merged to form a single urban area. Many of the other towns and villages in Medway have also seen growth in the period, in many cases due to planned post-war housing estates. This has altered the historic character of the villages, vastly increasing their size. However some villages, such as Cooling and St Mary Hoo on the Hoo Peninsula, have retained their historic character in terms of size, form, density of development and continuity of historic building stock. Villages on the northern side of the Hoo Peninsula tend to be of a less-developed nature, reflecting past differences in transport links and the relative accessibility of the 20th century industrial areas and Medway towns from villages on the south. Upnor is an exception to this, retaining its historic character despite its Medway-facing location.

3.39 In addition new transport links were introduced, and new industries and services were developed. This includes the construction of the M2 Motorway and the HS1, which are noticeable features within the landscape.

3.40 The present appearance of many parts of the landscape in Medway originated in the 20th century, when smaller fields were combined to create larger ones for more intensive arable farming. Field amalgamation saw field boundaries removed in order to accommodate modern farming techniques and machinery.

Historic Landscape Characterisation

3.41 Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is about recognising the ways in which the present physical landscape reflects how people have exploited, changed and adapted it through time, with respect to different social, economic, technological and cultural factors. It can enhance the traditional approaches to landscape characterisation by placing an emphasis on time-depth and on how different areas reflect varying patterns and rates of change.

3.42 The Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation (2001) [\[See reference 13\]](#) characterises the landscape into different Historic Landscape Types (HLTs), including field patterns, woodland, reclaimed marsh, downland and coastal. These are included within the analysis for each LCA in Chapter 7.

3.43 The HLC also identifies 34 Historic Landscape Character Areas (HLCAs) across Kent which represent groupings and patterns of identifiable HLTs. The following HLCAs cover the Medway Council area:

- HLCA 4: Western North Downs, an area with a strongly north-south linear nature in accordance with the basic topography. It is dominated by regular field types, with significant elements of post-1801 settlement, woodland and fields bounded by paths and tracks
- HLCA 12: Rochester/Chatham Hinterland, an area composed primarily of 'prairie' fields and coppice woodland. The prairie fields indicate that the area has been heavily worked in the last two hundred years, leading to gradual increase in field size and boundary loss; whilst the coppice woodland has tended to survive on steep topography or poorer soils.
- HLCA 13: Hoo Peninsula, an area primarily defined by farmland for the most part surrounded by coastal types and reclaimed marshland.
- HLCA 17: Northern Horticultural Belt, an area primarily defined by horticultural activity with a predominance of orchards.
- HLCA 28: 'Northern Coast and Marshland', an area featuring a mix of reclaimed marsh and coastal landscape types with some industrial activity.

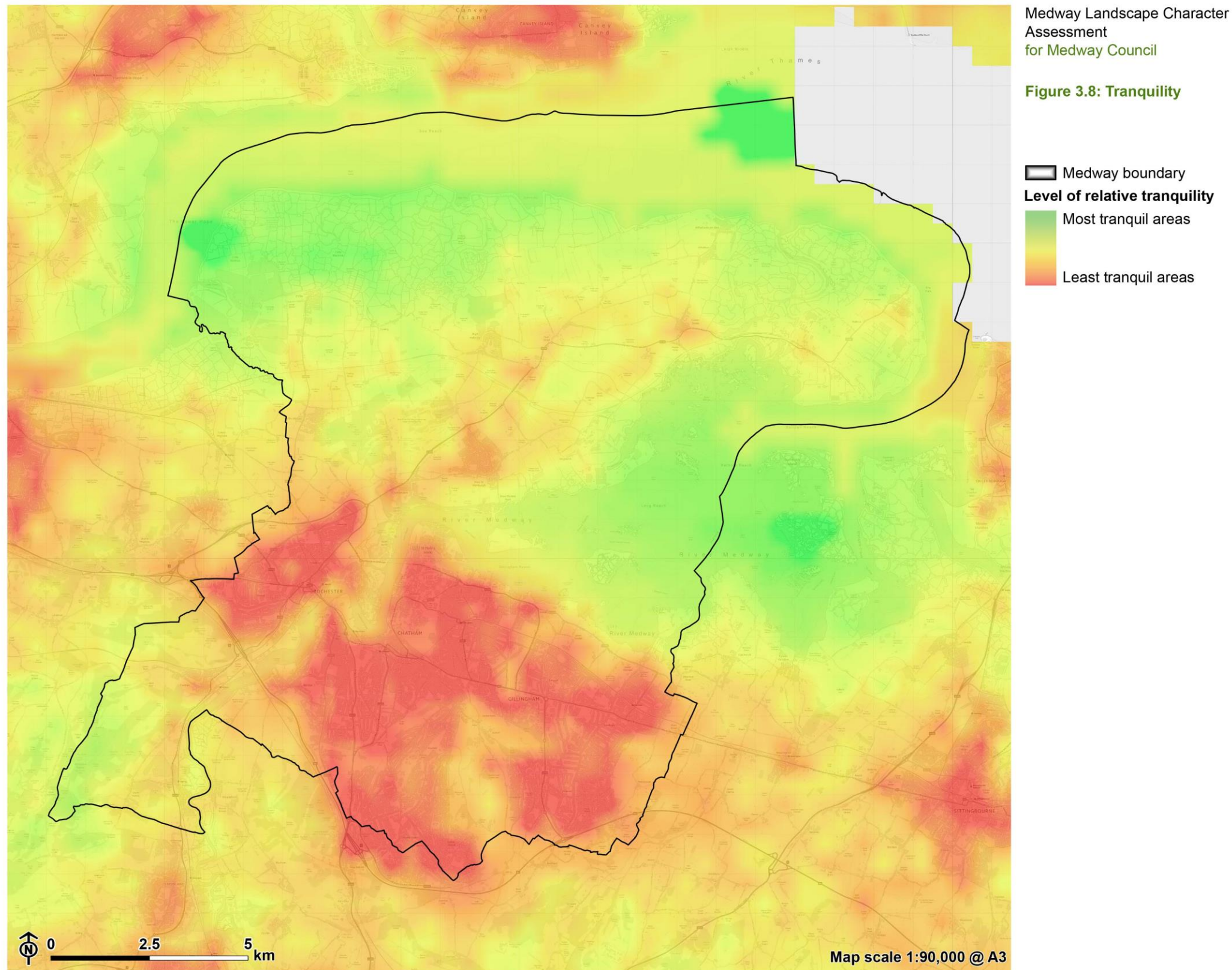
- HLCA 32: Urban Conurbation, an area that comprises discrete blocks of urban conurbation, including areas of industry and recreation, that have arisen since 1801 and reflect the large-scale population shift and growth in the region.

Perceptual Influences

Tranquillity

3.44 The Medway Towns (Strood, Rochester, Chatham, Gillingham and Rainham) together form a large urban area that, along with transport corridors such as the M2 Motorway, and other larger villages and towns influence the character of the surrounding landscape. Away from the settlements and main roads, many parts of the district enjoy relatively higher levels of tranquillity. The areas of higher tranquillity are concentrated to the north within the coastal marshland areas and to the south-west within the Kent Downs National Landscape. This is illustrated on Figure 3.8.

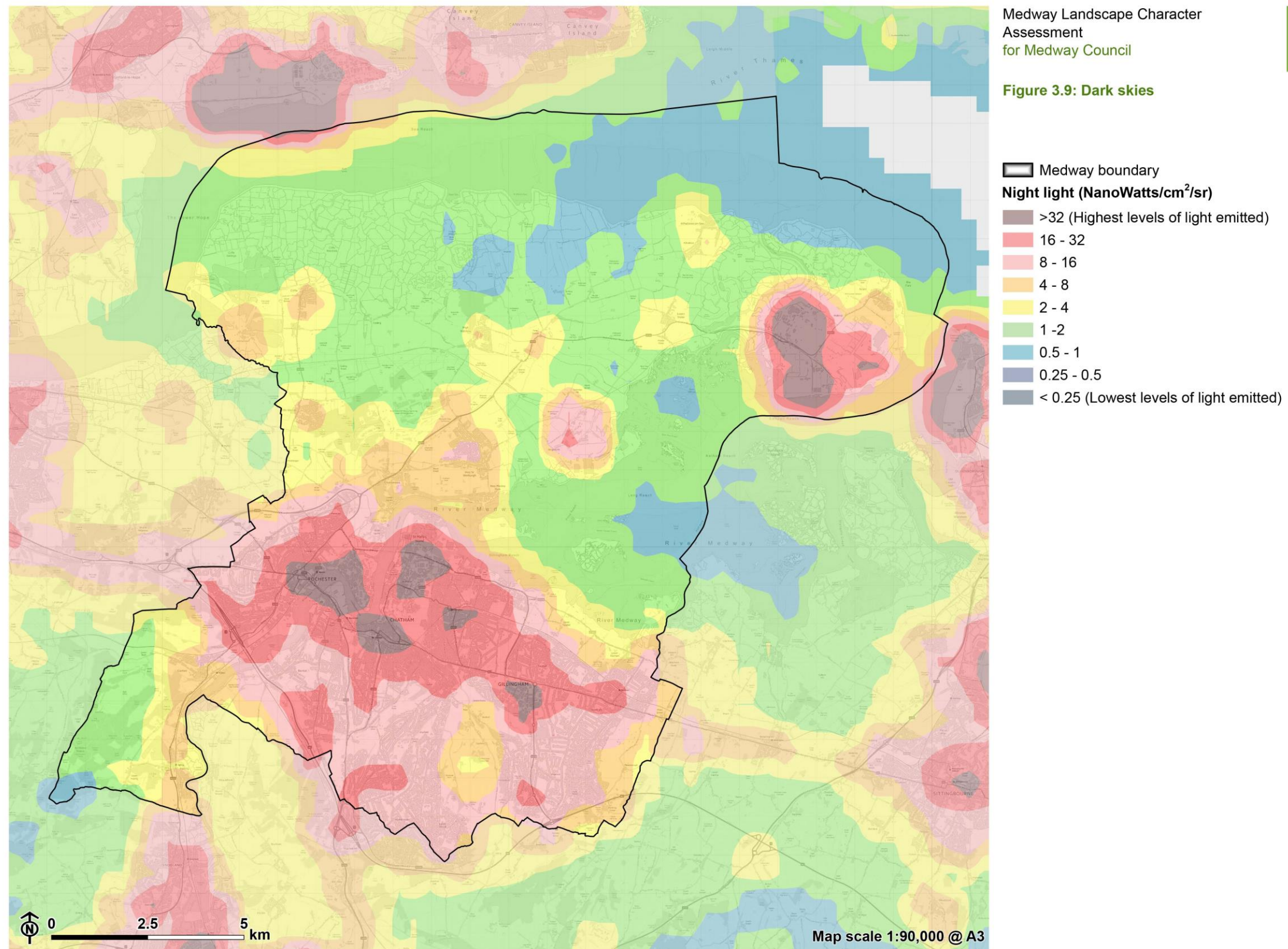
Figure 3.8: Tranquility



National Tranquillity Mapping Data 2007 developed for the Campaign to Protect Rural England and Natural England by Northumbria University. © Crown Copyright and database rights 2023. Ordnance Survey licence number 100022021, 100019741.

3.45 The levels of light pollution and dark night skies within Medway are illustrated on Figure 3.9. Light pollution decreases with distance from the main settlements, however there are only small pockets of dark night skies free from interference from artificial light within the study area, typically in the north within the coastal marshland areas and to the south-west within the Kent Downs National Landscape. Much of the Kent Downs provides surprisingly tranquil and remote countryside – offering dark night skies, space, beauty and peace. Simply seeing a natural landscape, hearing birdsong, seeing and hearing the sea, watching stars at night or ‘bathing’ in woodland are important perceptual qualities of the Kent Downs.

Figure 3.9: Dark skies



Earth Observation Group, NOAA National Geophysical Data Center. Data processed by LUC on behalf of CPRE. © Crown Copyright and database rights 2023. Ordnance Survey license number 100022021, 100019741.

Cultural Associations

3.46 Charles Dickens' formative years were spent in Rochester and Chatham and this greatly influenced his future life and career. The area was a creative inspiration to Dickens and many of his characters and stories are set in the Medway area. It is thought by many that the village of Cooling on the Hoo Peninsula and the adjacent marshland is the origin of Pip's village and the opening chapter where Pip meets Magwitch in "Great Expectations".

3.47 The area was also an inspiration to J.M.W. Turner who painted several scenes within Medway. This includes 'The Medway' (1824) and 'The Junction of the Thames and the Medway' (1807).

3.48 The Kent Downs has also been an inspiration to wide variety of people, including artists, scientists and leaders; people greatly value this place for many of the same reasons.

Chapter 4

General Issues and Changes

4.1 This chapter provides an overview of the main issues and changes (forces for change) affecting the landscape of the Medway Council area. It considers past, current and future forces for change that have, and will continue to, shape the landscapes seen today. Area-specific issues and changes are included in individual LCA profiles in Chapter 7.

4.2 The following issues and changes tend to recur across different LCTs and LCAs and enable a more holistic view to be taken. By assessing common themes at a broader scale allows local guidance to be applied to the wider landscape framework and applied more successfully to cross-cutting themes such as Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity, whilst still attending to the need to conserve and enhance local distinctiveness. Understanding the issues and changes which have affected, or will affect, the landscape has helped to shape the broad management guidelines which are provided in Chapter 6, as well as the area-specific guidelines set out in individual LCA profiles.

Development Pressure

4.3 Settlement expansion, introduction of industry, and increases in recreational and amenity facilities are the main drivers for landscape change:

- Suburbanisation, with the introduction of development and associated urban fringe pressures into the landscape; modern 20th and 21st century building styles are usually of different character to the rest of the settlement and often poorly reflect the local historic vernacular.
- Threat of further expansion of adjacent and surrounding urban edges into the landscape.
- Increased industrialisation and detracting influence of industrial development and associated infrastructure.

- The detracting influence of large scale or visually intrusive development within the more visually open parts of the landscape.
- Threat to international and national nature conservation designations from development and urban fringe pressures.
- Increased sub-urban influences; potential for ribbon development to result in a reduction in physical and perceived separation between distinct settlements/areas of development.
- Light pollution from roads, settlements and industry.

Changes in Agricultural Practices

4.4 Changes in agricultural practices reflect the need for farmers to diversify their operations to remain economically viable. In Medway this has resulted in:

- Loss of traditional orchards and field patterns, and their respected arrangement patterns/ spacings, due to abandonment or conversion to arable, pasture or equine uses. However, in some cases traditional orchards are being replaced with more modern orchard growing methods with differing planting arrangement, form, and species variety.
- Replacement of traditional hedges/shelter belts with post and wire fencing and/or coniferous planting; this has contributed to the fragmentation of semi-natural habitats and reductions in biodiversity.
- An increase in the use of polytunnels and other crop protection structures, which are visually incongruous in the landscape.
- Increase in larger fields due to intensive arable farming and amalgamation, has changed the historic pattern and texture of the landscape.
- Changes in grazing practices have led to a loss or reduction in the diversity of chalk grassland, and scrub encroachment in places.
- Conversion from grazing marsh to cultivated land within marshland areas.
- An increase in equine land uses, particularly in proximity to the urban edges.

- The introduction of small scale solar and other renewable energy developments as part of wider farm diversification.
- Recent vineyard planting on former arable land has created change to the agricultural patterns of the landscape.
- The introduction of larger-scale agricultural processing facilities and associated support facilities (such as worker accommodation), for example at Flanders Farm north of Hoo.

Other

- Lack of formal access to parts of the landscape and severance and weakened links to/from the urban area due to presence of railways or busy roads.
- Increased recreational pressures and disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Gradual loss/erosion of the buffer between the urban area and the area of international and national importance for nature conservation (Medway and Estuary Ramsar Site, SPA and SSSI) along the Medway Estuary and marshes to the north.
- Loss of salt marsh and other coastal and inter-tidal habitats due to reclamation and/or 'coastal squeeze'.
- Climate change and increased importation is increasing the impact of pests and diseases, including ash dieback and acute oak decline, and the increased spread of invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam. Ash dieback and acute oak decline in particular could have a significant future impact on the coverage, character, and composition of woodland cover within Medway.

Climate Change

4.5 Climate change is a major pressure on rural landscapes and is likely to result in increasingly unpredictable weather with hotter drier summers and warmer wetter winters, more intense rainfall and longer dry periods resulting in the need for agriculture to adapt to grow different crops and develop more flexible and responsive land management practices. Hotter summers and increases in temperatures could result in increased demands for agricultural irrigation.

4.6 Climate change resulting in more extreme weather could alter the species composition of existing species-rich woodlands and hedgerows, favouring species with lower water demand. Increasing incidences of pathogens may change the species mix of woodlands and higher temperatures and prolonged droughts are likely to put woodlands under further stress and increase the risk of wildfires. Drier summers and wetter winters could also cause changes in community composition of grassland habitats, and changing temperatures and extreme weather events are creating vulnerabilities in grassland landscapes, leading to increased soil erosion and run-off and fire risk.

4.7 Climate change is also likely to affect other important semi-natural habitats, particularly coastal and river marsh habitats. This will include water shortages in summer and increased water flows and flooding in winter, causing potential damage to habitats and species. These changes may manifest themselves within the natural environment through changes in habitats and a decline of flora and fauna which are unable to adapt quickly enough to the changing habitat conditions. Longer drier summers may affect dry grassland and increase the risk of fire. The changing seasons may also disturb migrating birds and invertebrates, as there will be an increasing mismatch in timing of the arrival of migratory species and food sources, affecting neutral grassland and woodland as well as intertidal habitats.

4.8 Climate change is also likely to result in sea level rises which will impact Medway's coastal habitats, and river valleys are considered to be at high risk of flooding from watercourses. Measures to provide coastal and river flood

Chapter 4 General Issues and Changes

protection may lead to conflict between defences and wildlife value. Increased frequency of flooding can also lead to increased runoff of pollutants from the land. Conversely, hotter and drier summers result in lower summer river flows, which means there is less water available for dilution and dispersion of pollutants such as nutrients and contaminated sediments. The risk of eutrophication and algal blooms increases the longer nutrients remain in a water body.

4.9 Medway Council declared a climate emergency in April 2019. This includes a target of reducing its carbon footprint; providing the local community with a clean, green future; being a place where people want to work and live, which has a sustainable future; and establishing a clear action plan to deal with climate change.

Chapter 5

Management Guidelines

5.1 This chapter presents general guidelines which apply to all landscape character types. These should be read in addition to the LCA-specific guidelines which are contained within the individual profiles in Chapter 7.

5.2 For those LCA that form part of the Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly an AONB), or that lie within its setting, the relevant 'special components, characteristics and qualities' of the National Landscape should be conserved and enhanced, referencing the aims and principles set out in the current AONB Management Plan. The Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment forms an integral, interconnected, component part of the AONB Management Plan and should be used to inform proposals and land management impacting the National Landscape.

General Guidelines

Landscape Management

- In relevant areas, ensure that 'special components, characteristics and qualities' of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the aims set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the duty to further the purposes of the designated landscape.
- Conserve and manage the Ancient Woodland and sites to improve landscape character and encourage biodiversity; promote age and species diversity and structural heterogeneity and continue to keep coppice sites in active management.

- Conserve and enhance hedgerows, woodland belts/shaws and shelter belts through effective management to strengthen the characteristic pattern and structure of the landscape.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing woodland and tree cover through natural regeneration or small-scale planting where appropriate. This will strengthen landscape character, as well as bring benefits for biodiversity, soil quality and a reduction in soil erosion.
- Forestry practices should respect the character of the landscape, promote traditional management techniques (such as coppicing), and take particular care when assessing the visual impact of new planting and felling.
- As climatic conditions change, plant suitable species or encourage natural regeneration to create climate resistant woodland.
- Plan and manage woodland to account for current and future impacts of ash dieback; refer to latest Forestry Commission guidelines on managing ash dieback in England.
- Manage chalk grassland, semi-improved grassland and pasture to enhance its biodiversity value and appearance, particularly neglected areas.
- Work with natural tidal river and coastal processes, seeking to conserve and enhance distinctive features and habitats that contribute to landscape character. Consider the strategies set out within the Thames Estuary 2100 (TE2100) Plan and the Medway Estuary and Swale Flood and Erosion Risk Management Strategy (MEASS).
- Encourage catchment-sensitive land management practices adjacent to watercourses to improve soil quality and prevent run off, ensuring it does not have an impact on water quality.
- Monitor potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases as a result of climate change, including spread of invasive plants and animals in water courses and woodlands.

- Seek to encourage traditional farming practices (including traditional orchards), retaining and enhancing sense of place whilst recognising the need to adapt to and mitigate against the effects of climate change.
- Monitor landscape impact of new forms of farming, including poly tunnels, seeking a balanced approach.
- Discourage an increase in equine related land uses, and encourage sensitive management and screening of existing equine related activities.
- Promote sustainable and wildlife-friendly land management practices that provide multiple landscape and biodiversity benefits.
- Create green corridors and networks linking to the important habitats (such as wider field margins and hedgerows).
- Consider opportunities for landscape and biodiversity enhancements as part of future restoration proposals on former industrial sites/complexes, including mineral workings and quarry sites.
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the landscape, including through the preservation and enhancement of important views and vistas.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of rural historic buildings and hamlets by resisting inappropriate or unsympathetic development.
- Draw upon historic and cultural associations the area has and conserve the landscape setting of historic assets (Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings) and encourage further interpretation and understanding of these features within the landscape.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, particularly along promoted routes, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment; consider opportunities to introduce new footpath and cycle routes where possible.
- Manage recreational routes and access to avoid/minimise disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.

Development Management

- Minimise the impacts of any new development through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing and materials.
- Encourage the use of traditional and locally distinctive building styles, colours and materials that are in keeping with the local vernacular.
- Integrate any new development, through the use of locally characteristic woodland, shaws, hedgerows or shelter belts.
- Consider the role the landscape plays in the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape, including views to and from it.
- Consider the role the landscape plays as an open buffer between settlements or areas of a settlement, and the resulting sense of separation and distinct identity.
- Consider opportunities for the removal of existing intrusive elements, such as pylons and the undergrounding power lines.
- Consider the impact on longer views of any proposed development. Where development is proposed tree screening, muted colours and non-reflective surfaces will help provide mitigation and integration.
- Any proposals for highway upgrading should aim to retain the rural character of the roads/lanes and their verges, and ensure that their character is not lost through unsympathetic highway works, unnecessary signage, lighting, or removal of hedgerows and trees. For areas within the Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly an AONB), refer to the Kent Downs AONB 'Rural Streets and Lanes: A Design Handbook' for highway design guidance [\[See reference 14\]](#).
- Utilise existing roads and tracks for site access wherever possible; for any new roads and tracks, consider how these can fit in with the grain of the landscape and complement the pattern of the existing roads.
- Consider how a proposed development fits with other similar proposals in the area in terms of cumulative effects and in-combination effects.
- Encourage sympathetic boundary treatments to development, particularly avoiding suburbanising gates and fences in more rural areas.

Chapter 5 Management Guidelines

- Maintain the sense of openness by resisting proposals for new development that would impinge on landscapes identified as having a remote undeveloped quality; this includes intensification of existing uses.
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts through sensitive lighting design to avoid any reduction in tranquillity and perception of dark skies and ecological impacts. Minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards in relation to development visible on the ridge top.

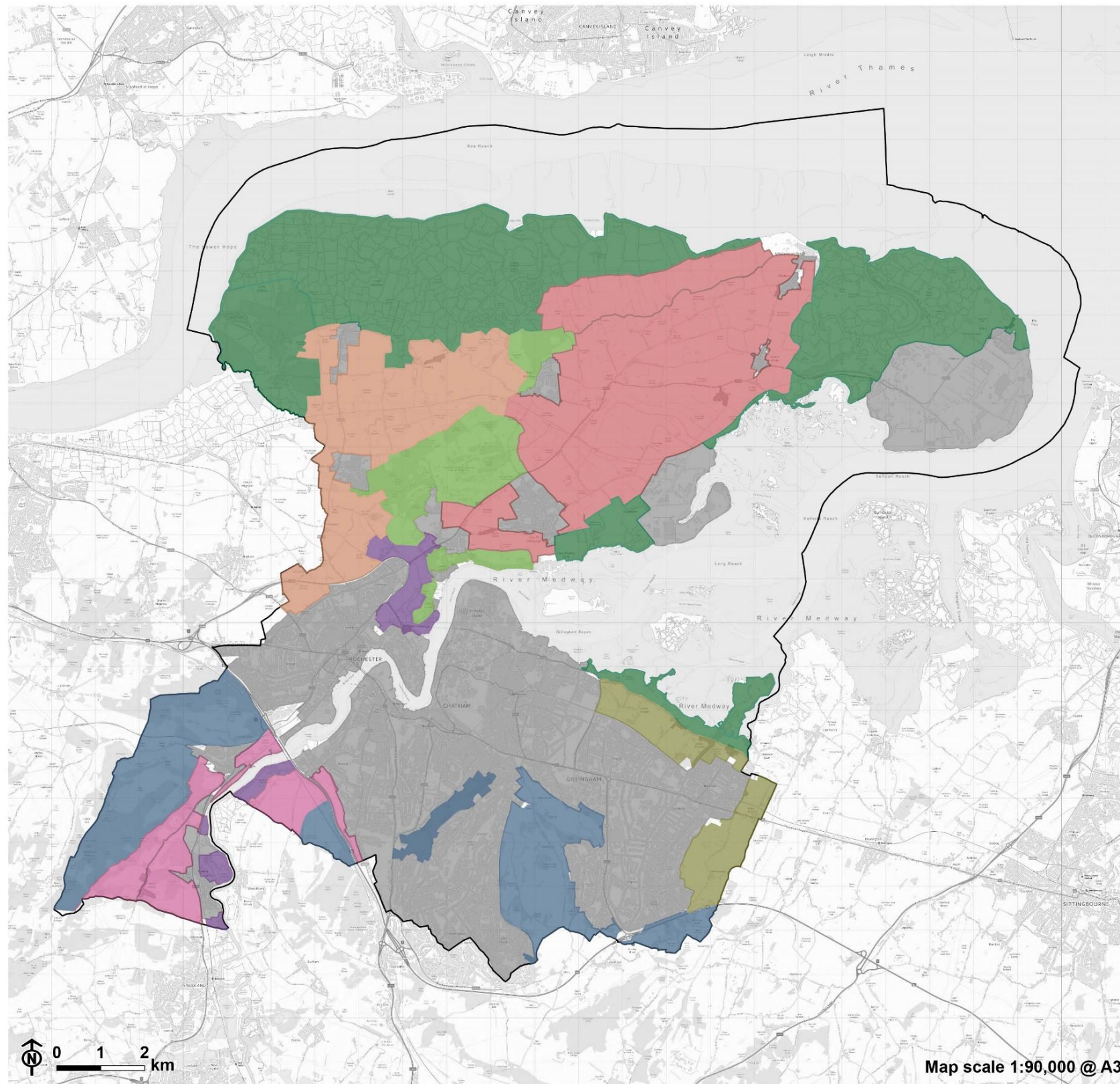
Chapter 6

Landscape Character of Medway

Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas

6.1 The updated landscape classification identifies eight generic landscape character types (LCTs), each representing a distinct identity and common geology, topography, land use and cultural pattern. These are shown on Figure 6.1.

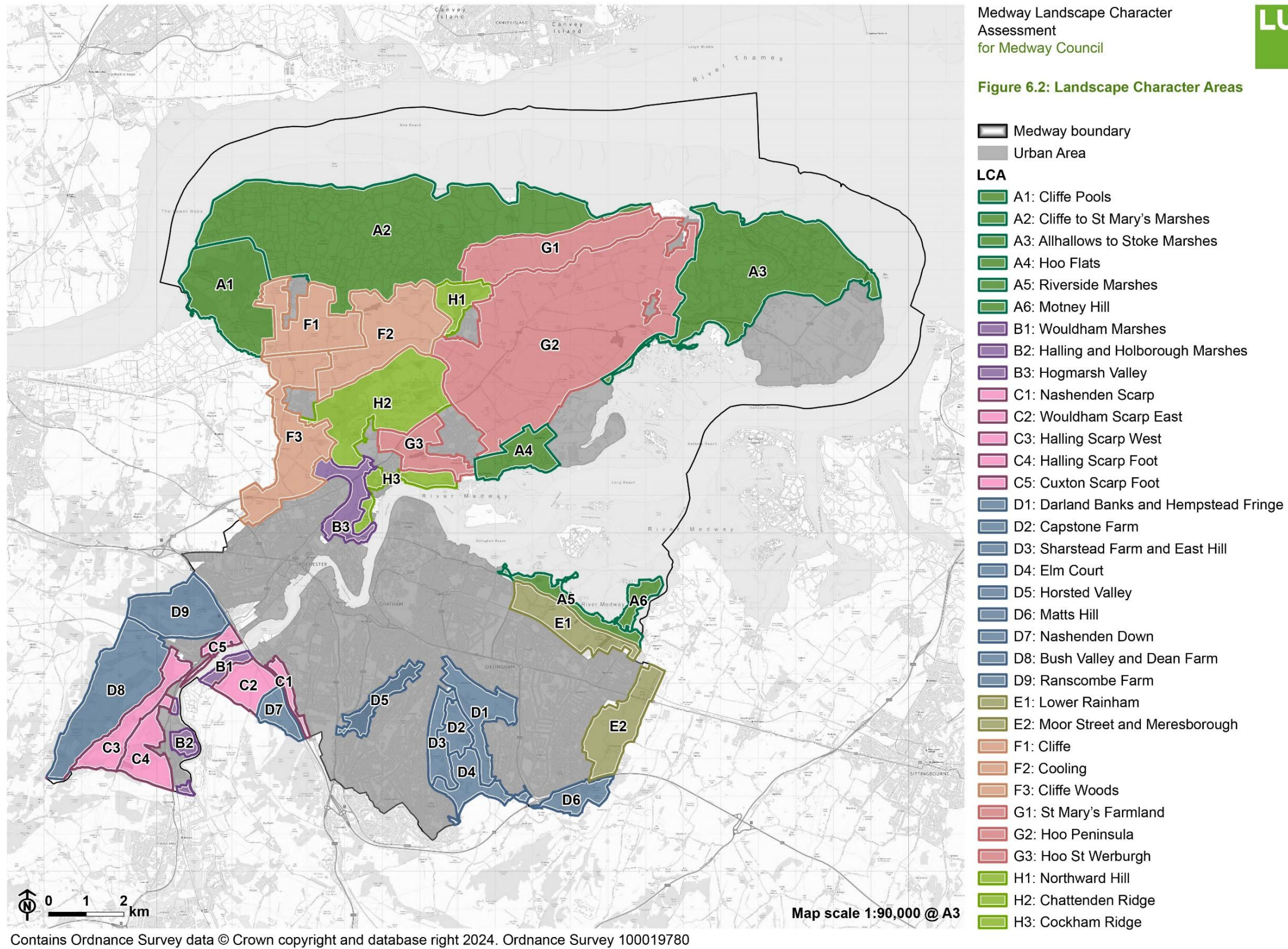
Figure 6.1: Landscape Character Types



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6.2 The LCTs are subdivided into local landscape character areas (LCAs), which are discrete geographic areas that possess the characteristics described for the landscape type but have a recognisable local identity. The revised classification identifies 34 LCAs, as listed below and shown on Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2: Landscape Character Areas



6.3 It is important to note that boundaries between one LCT or LCA and the next are transitional and there is rarely a clearcut change 'on the ground'.

6.4 This assessment has been mapped at a scale of 1:25,000 which provides an appropriate level of detail for the landscape character assessment at the strategic scale.

6.5 In considering any change in one character area the impact on views to/from and the character of neighbouring areas should also be considered.

Landscape Character Types and Areas

Landscape Character Type A: Coastal Marshes

- Landscape Character Area A1: Cliffe Pools
- Landscape Character Area A2: Cliffe to St Mary's Marshes
- Landscape Character Area A3: Allhallows to Stoke Marshes
- Landscape Character Area A4: Hoo Flats
- Landscape Character Area A5: Riverside Marshes
- Landscape Character Area A6: Motney Hill

Landscape Character Type B: River Valleys and Marshes

- Landscape Character Area B1: Wouldham Marshes
- Landscape Character Area B2: Halling and Holborough Marshes
- Landscape Character Area B3: Hogmarsh Valley

Landscape Character Type C: Chalk Scarp and Scarp Foot

- Landscape Character Area C1: Nashenden Scarp
- Landscape Character Area C2: Wouldham Scarp East
- Landscape Character Area C3: Halling Scarp West
- Landscape Character Area C4: Halling Scarp Foot
- Landscape Character Area C5: Cuxton Scarp Foot

Landscape Character Type D: Dry Chalk Valleys and Downs

- Landscape Character Area D1: Darland Banks and Hempstead Fringe
- Landscape Character Area D2: Capstone Farm
- Landscape Character Area D3: Sharstead Farm and East Hill
- Landscape Character Area D4: Elm Court
- Landscape Character Area D5: Horsted Valley
- Landscape Character Area D6: Matts Hill
- Landscape Character Area D7: Nashenden Down
- Landscape Character Area D8: Bush Valley and Dean Farm
- Landscape Character Area D9: Ranscombe Farm

Landscape Character Type E: Fruit Belt

- Landscape Character Area E1: Lower Rainham
- Landscape Character Area E2: Moor Street and Meresborough

Landscape Character Type F: Mixed Chalk and Clay Farmland

- Landscape Character Area F1: Cliffe
- Landscape Character Area F2: Cooling
- Landscape Character Area F3: Cliffe Woods

Landscape Character Type G: Open Clay Farmland

- Landscape Character Area G1: St Mary's Farmland
- Landscape Character Area G2: Hoo Peninsula
- Landscape Character Area G3: Hoo St Werburgh

Landscape Character Type H: Wooded Hills and Ridges

- Landscape Character Area H1: Northward Hill
- Landscape Character Area H2: Chattenden Ridge
- Landscape Character Area H3: Cockham Ridge

Chapter 7

Medway Landscape Character Profiles

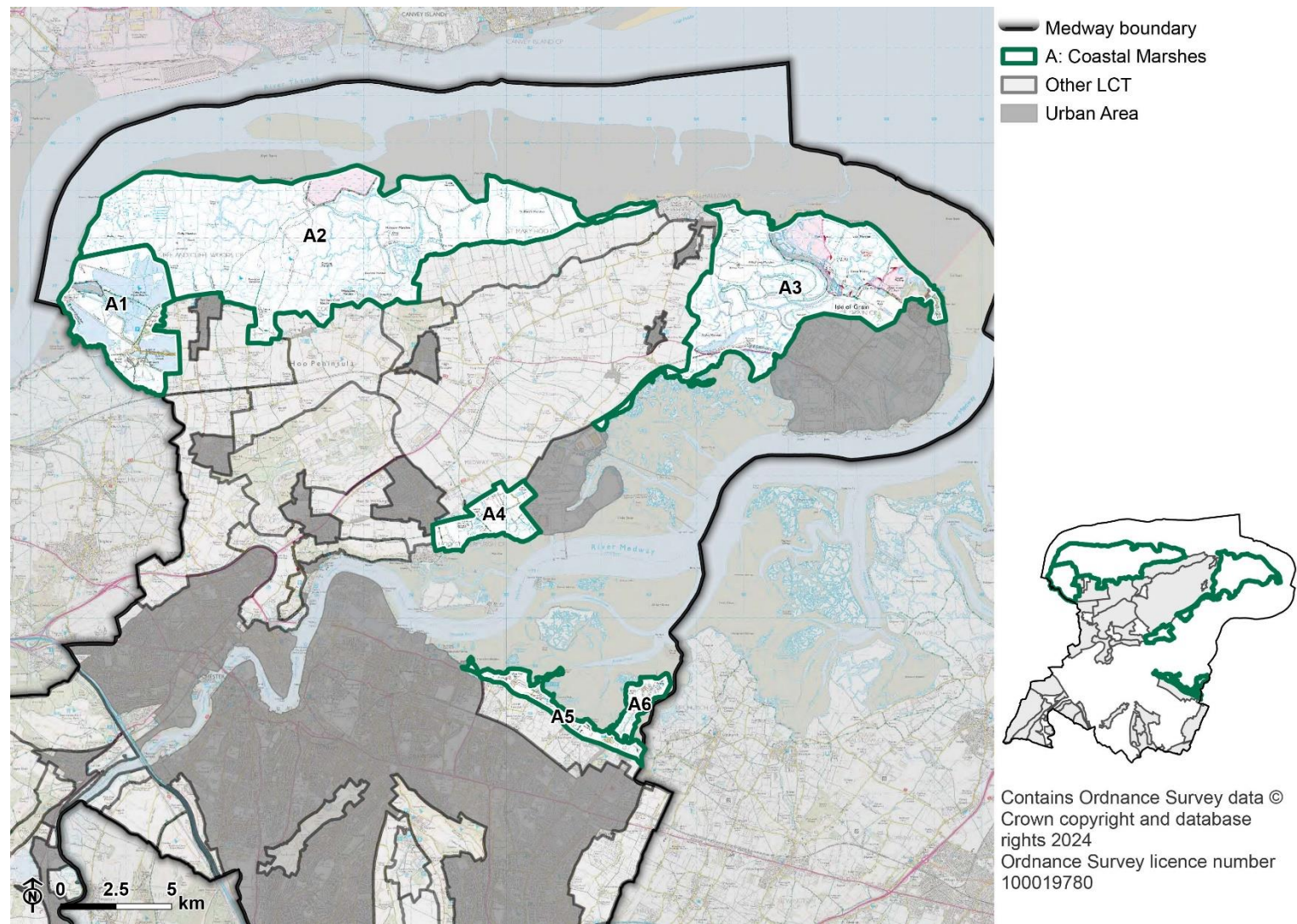
Landscape Character Type A: Coastal Marshes

Landscape Character Areas

7.1 The Coastal Marshes LCT is subdivided into six LCAs:

- Landscape Character Area A1: Cliffe Pools;
- Landscape Character Area A2: Cliffe to St Mary's Marshes;
- Landscape Character Area A3: Allhallows to Stoke Marshes;
- Landscape Character Area A4: Hoo Flats;
- Landscape Character Area A5: Riverside Marshes; and
- Landscape Character Area A6: Motney Hill.

Figure 7.1: Location of the Coastal Marshes LCT and LCAs



Landscape Character Area A1: Cliffe Pools

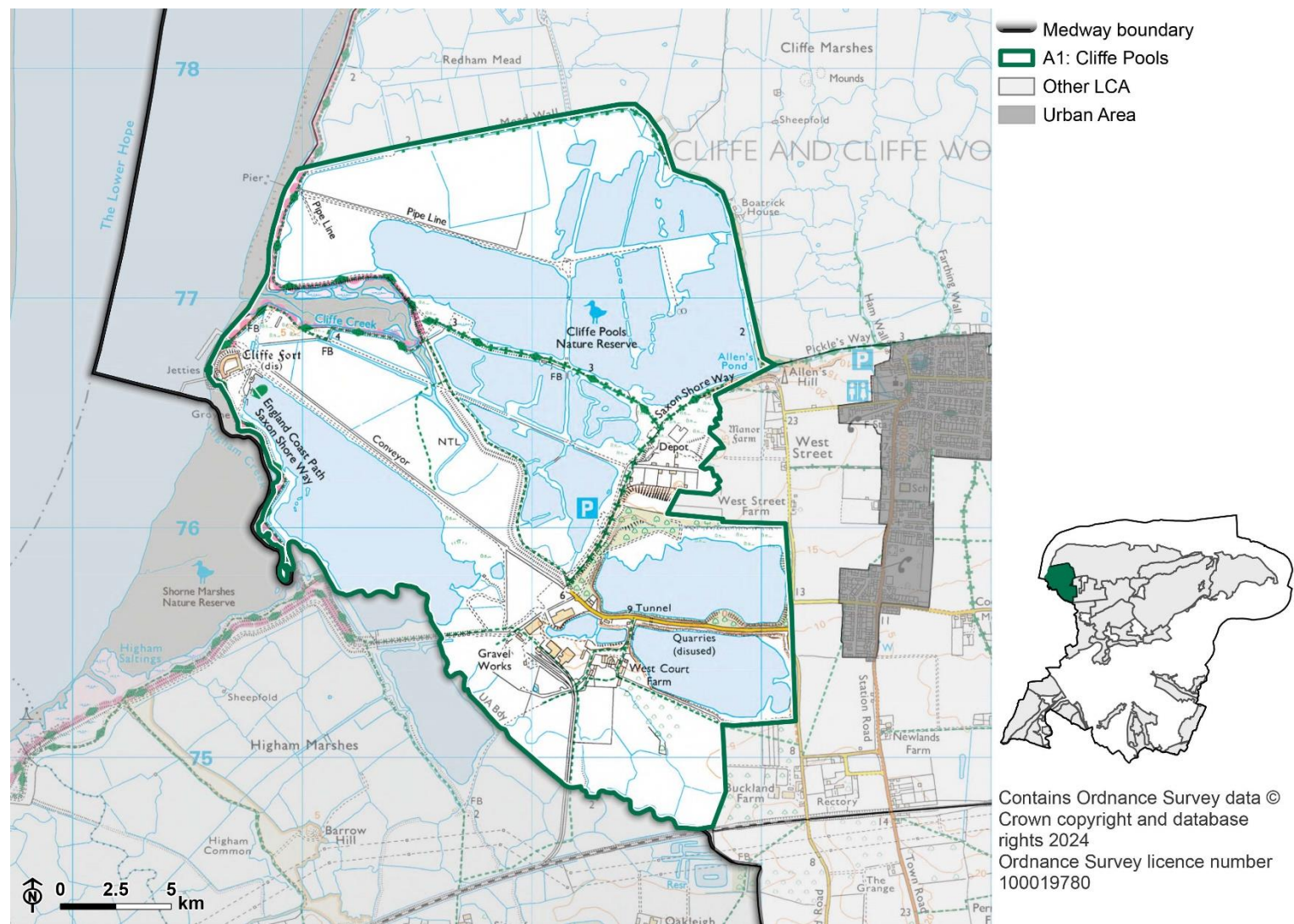
Description

Location and Summary

7.2 The Cliffe Pools Coastal Marshes LCA is located in the north-west of the Hoo Peninsula and forms part of the Thames estuary. The Medway Council boundary with Gravesham marks the south-western edge, while the Thames estuary is to the west and north. The Cliffe to St Mary's Marshes (LCA A2) lies to the north and north-east, and the arable landscape around Cliffe lies to the south-east (LCA F1).

7.3 This is a low-lying landscape, which has been extensively shaped by former and current sand and gravel extraction works, with a number of distinctive flooded pits and pools. This landscape continues across the authority boundary into Gravesham Borough.

Figure 7.2: Location of LCA A1



Key Characteristics

- Flat, low-lying marshland landscape; landform shaped by former and current mineral extraction, resulting in a complex of lagoons and flooded chalk pits. Distinctive white chalk quarry walls above the flooded pools.
- Internationally important coastal and intertidal habitats including brackish, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh ditches, saline lagoons and intertidal saltmarsh and mudflats; the majority of the area is managed by the RSPB to support breeding and overwintering waterfowl.
- Naturally regenerated vegetation around the edge of the pools, spits and islands and along footpaths creates a wooded backdrop in views and a sense of enclosure.
- Cliffe Fort Scheduled Monument, an artillery fort built in the 1860s, held a defensive position on the coastline; the marshes and river form its setting.
- Good network of PRow, including the Saxon Shore Way/King Charles III England Coast Path.
- A remote landscape with sense of wildness, particularly to the north; often peaceful and tranquil, with the sound of birds and the wind dominant.
- Expansive views across the landscape and adjacent River Thames estuary contrast with enclosure provided by naturally regenerated vegetation along the edge of the pools and on footpaths. The pools are often only glimpsed from the footpaths through vegetation.
- Human influences on the landscape are apparent, particularly in the south. This includes current aggregates and transportation and the pools created by former extraction. Views of large shipping vessels on the River Thames, and across the river to industry at Tilbury and Canvey Island, Essex.
- Unmanaged character in places due to disused industrial development, activities and naturally regenerating vegetation.

Photo 7.1: Distinctive complex of flooded man-made lagoons



Photo 7.2: Vegetation around pools and along footpaths creating a sense of enclosure



Photo 7.3: Distinctive white chalk quarry walls above the flooded pools



Photo 7.4: Unmanaged character in places due to disused industrial developments



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Seaford Chalk Formation, overlain by alluvium and beach and tidal flat deposits in Cliffe Creek. A white chalk cliff at Cliffe is a distinctive geomorphological feature. The landscape generally has a flat and low-lying topography, generally below 5 metres AOD.
- Grade 4 (poor) agricultural soils across the whole area. A small area of pasture lies in the south-east. The landscape is dominated by the flooded former gravel pits, and the majority is covered by Flood Zones 2 and 3.
- Small areas of Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' on the edges of pools, which has generally naturally regenerated. Considerable coverage by Priority Habitat 'saline lagoons', 'coastal grazing marsh' and 'mudflats' on the coastline.
- Internationally important landscape of brackish, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh ditches, saline lagoons and intertidal saltmarsh and mudflat (designated as Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar), which support internationally important number of wintering waterfowl (designated as Thames Estuary and Marshes IBA and SPA). The landscape is also designated nationally as part of the South Thames Estuary and Marshes SSSI. The flooded pools now represent 5% of England's total saline lagoons.
- The Thames Estuary Marine Conservation Zone covers the coastline and extends into the inlet in the west.

Cultural Influences

- The LCA lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 28 – Northern Coast and Marshland, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The historic field pattern has largely been destroyed by gravel and clay workings, however a small area in the centre is classified within the HLC as 'reclaimed marsh – small regular enclosures'. Fields are typically

bounded by drainage channels, and the field pattern may date back to the Medieval era.

- Cliffe Fort is an artillery fort built in the 1860s, and now designated as a Scheduled Monument. It is one of the last casemated forts with iron shields to be completed, and is largely preserved in its late 19th century state. Later additions include adaptations for rooftop guns. The fort contains one of the best preserved rare Brennan torpedo installations and the remains of a unique rising observation tower. The fort is now vulnerable to erosion and is partially flooded; it is currently on the Heritage at Risk List. The other recorded historic features in the landscape are the Grade II listed West Court Farm farmhouse and associated granary in the south-east.
- The landscape was heavily worked for mineral extraction for use by the cement industry. This ceased in 1972, resulting in a large series of pits. Some of these were flooded to form pools, some partially infilled to create brackish ponds and others entirely backfilled to allow a mosaic of upper saltmarsh, grassland and hawthorn/bramble scrub.
- An important site for the importation of marine aggregates; the majority of development in the landscape is associated with these works, including a large importation and transfer facility for aggregates.. There is also a small industrial area, and a car park for the RSPB.
- Salt Lane is the only road. There is good access on PRoW, including long-distance routes the King Charles III England Coast Path along the shoreline and the Saxon Shore Way. The north of the LCA is managed by the RSPB as the Cliffe Pools Nature Reserve. Paths lead through the pits and pools, and there are variety of hides to facilitate bird watching.

Perceptual Influences

- Distinctive and strong sense of place as part of the Thames estuary. Long views west across the pools take in the Thames estuary, and other industrial activities including ships, electricity pylons and industrial units.
- Open views across the pools contrast with enclosure along many footpaths due to the high regenerating vegetation.

- A remote landscape with sense of wildness, particularly to the north. It is often peaceful and tranquil, with the noise of birds and wind dominant, and relatively dark skies. Light pollution, bright colours of cranes and noise associated with ongoing extraction works detract from this tranquil character.
- Former industry and naturally regenerating vegetation create a neglected character in places, particularly along Salt Lane. The limited road access can create a sense of relative remoteness, although this is tempered by the movement of large vehicles associated with the current aggregates works.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Strong sense of place as part of the Thames estuary; marshland character and strong visual connection with the River Thames.
- Strong sense of wildness and remoteness, with high levels of tranquillity in places.
- Contrasting sense of openness and enclosure provided by vegetation.
- Post-industrial landscape featuring a series of distinctive lagoons and flooded chalk pits that regenerating with well-vegetated margins, spits and islands; the pools now represent 5% of England's total saline lagoons.
- Ecologically important with several international and national nature conservation designations covering areas of saline lagoon, coastal grazing marsh and mudflats on the coastline, which support overwintering waterfowl.
- Provides an important setting to Cliffe Fort Scheduled Monument.

- Recreational value of the promoted routes which provide access to the saline lagoons and marshland, including opportunities for bird watching at RSPB Cliffe Pools.

Issues and Changes

- The strategy for the North Kent Marshes within the TE2100 Plan is to maintain the flood defences at their current level, accepting that as sea levels rise the flood risk will increase.
- Increasing numbers of recreational visitors to the RSPB reserve, which may cause pressures on the habitats and species, including bird disturbance.
- Increased recreational pressures along the King Charles III England Coast Path and disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Cliffe Fort is on the Heritage at Risk register, and without a conservation plan in place is at risk of further damage and loss.
- Current aggregates works and industrial estate are aural and visual detractors within the landscape; light pollution, cranes and noise associated with ongoing works undermine tranquillity.
- Coastal marsh landscapes and saline lagoons are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Sea level rise leading to loss of salt marsh along the Thames Estuary from 'coastal squeeze', where human activities stop the natural landward spread of coastal habitats as sea levels rise.
 - Tidal flooding and the pollutants and debris it carries has the potential to impact heritage sites and tourism, infrastructure, protected areas and natural habitats, food sources for wildlife, communities, and commerce.
 - Increased temperatures and wetter winters, leading to changes in seasonal water availability and changes in saline lagoon water temperature which could hasten the spread of invasive non-native species.

- Drier summers could result in increased drying out of lagoons and changes to inter-tidal community composition.
- More frequent inundation could increase the area of exposed mud, making marshes more susceptible to invasive plants and erosion.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Cliffe Pools Coastal Marshes LCA is to enhance the character of the post-industrial regenerating marsh landscape and sense of place created by the distinctive saline lagoons, marshes and mudflats. Ecologically important wetland and coastal habitats should be conserved, enhanced and extended where possible.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Retain and enhance the open water, wetland, scrub and woodland habitats which are developing within redundant mineral workings, and consider the long-term character of the landscape in any plans for restoration and future use.
- Opportunity for landscape and biodiversity enhancements as part of future restoration proposals on current area of mineral workings.
- Conserve and restore characteristic features of grazing marshes, including remnant drainage features lost through agricultural drainage or infilling; ditches, ponds, channels, reed beds, counter walls; and characteristic trees (such as willows along ditches).
- Encourage traditional management including grazing and control of water levels in ditches.

- Introduce new areas of salt marsh to counter effects of ‘coastal squeeze’ where opportunities arise; balance with impacts on loss of grazing marsh and freshwater habitats.
- Manage coastal defences to prevent inundation and erosion and to combat the increasing pressures from climate change, including coastal squeeze, flooding, and erosion.
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the Saxon Shore Way and King Charles III England Coast Path, drawing upon the connections to the various historic associations with the Thames, including through the preservation and enhancement of vistas across the marshes and estuaries.
- Conserve Cliffe Fort and consider the role the LCA plays in its landscape setting; encourage interpretation and understanding of this important heritage feature and its wider context of 19th century defence.

Development Management

- Conserve and improve recreational access on PRoW and at the RPSB reserve, while ensuring that recreational activities minimise erosion and damage to important wetland and coastal habitats and species. These could include signage and interpretation boards, screening of sensitive areas and footpath diversions. The strategic measures within the North Kent Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Scheme (SAMMS) Bird Wise North Kent, of which the RSPB and Medway Council are a part, should continue to be implemented.
- Maintain the sense of openness and retain the remote undeveloped quality of the marshland.
- Conserve the open skyline, avoiding any additional visually intrusive development, both within and outside of the area.
- Encourage the use of more sympathetic boundary treatments, particularly on the periphery of industrial areas. These may include wet ditches and timber fencing.

- Seek to minimise the use of lighting in the industrial areas, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards.

Landscape Character Area A2: Cliffe to St Mary's Marshes

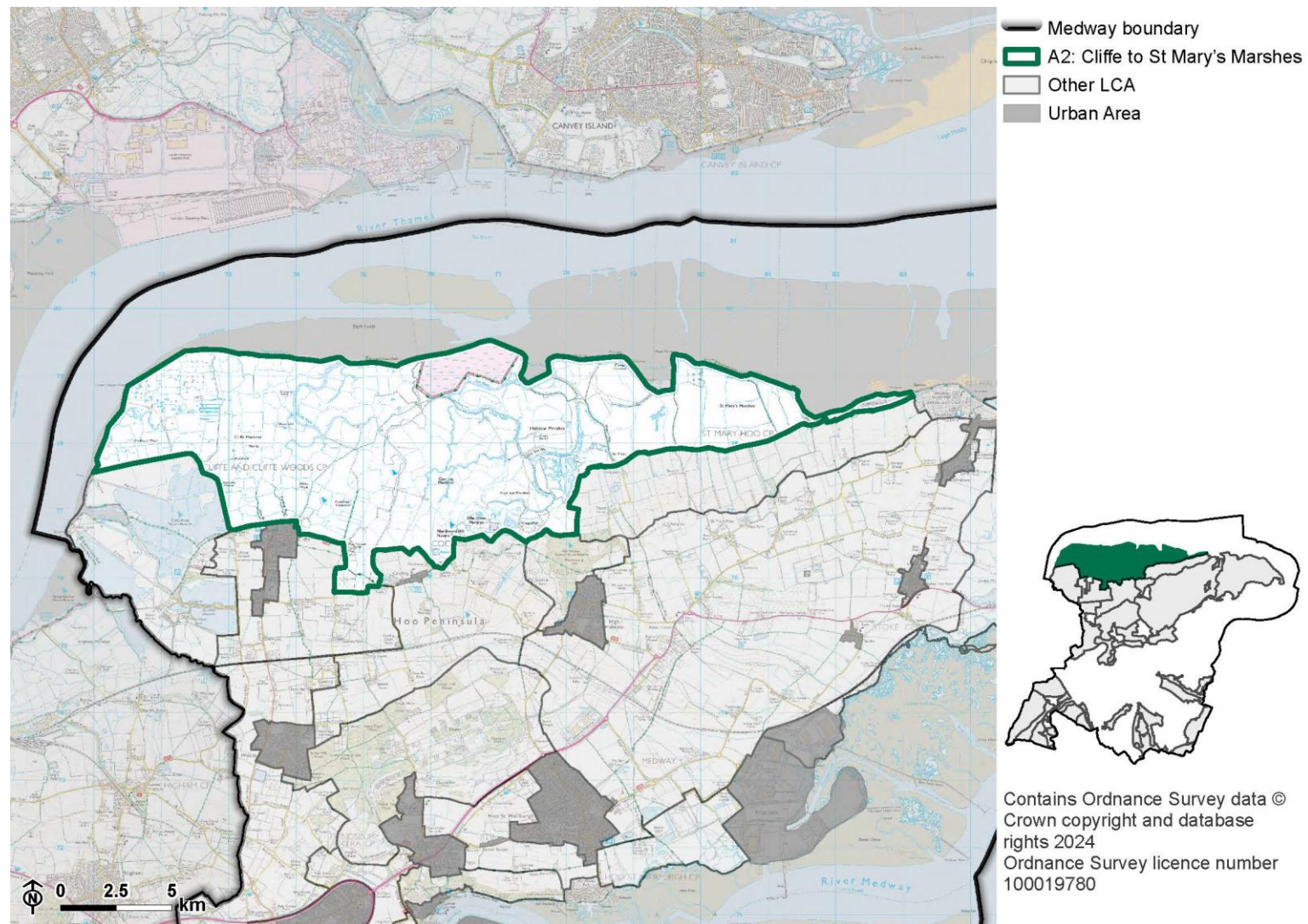
Description

Location and Summary

7.4 The Cliffe to St Mary's Coastal Marshes LCA is located in the north of the Hoo Peninsula. It forms part of the Thames estuary with the river's edge marking the northern boundary, while the transition to higher ground and arable land uses (LCA F1, LCA F2, LCA H1 and LCA G1) marks the southern boundary.

7.5 This is a low-lying, open landscape featuring grazed marshland. It has a strong visual relationship with the Thames estuary to the north, including industrial development on the Essex coast.

Figure 7.3: Location of LCA A2



Key Characteristics

- Flat, open, low-lying marshland landscape within the coastal flood zone.
- Internationally important coastal and intertidal habitats including saline lagoons, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, good quality semi-improved grassland and intertidal saltmarsh and mudflats; large areas managed by the RSPB for nature conservation at Northward Hill.
- Land is generally in use for sheep and cattle grazing; fields are often unenclosed and where field boundaries do occur they comprise drainage ditches, scrub vegetation or occasionally post and wire fencing.
- A remote character; large remains of explosive works in the west are one of few signs of human activity in the landscape.
- The King Charles III England Coast Path provides access along the coastline, while inland access to the marshes is more limited.
- Highly remote and wild landscape, with good experience of relative dark skies and tranquillity.
- Expansive views across the landscape and across the River Thames, with industrial areas at Thames Haven across the estuary clearly visible. The rising ridge of the Hoo Peninsula forms a backdrop in views to the south.

Photo 7.5: Flat, open, low-lying marshland landscape



Photo 7.6: Important coastal and intertidal habitats



Photo 7.7: Area generally in use for sheep and cattle grazing



Photo 7.8: Expansive views across the Thames



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Thanet and Lambeth group sand, silts and clays in the east and centre, transitioning to London Clay in the west and Seaford Chalk in the west. The entire LCA is overlain by alluvium, due to its floodplain location.
- Flat, low-lying topography below 5 metres AOD, and the landscape is within the coastal flood zone, covered by Flood Zones 2 and 3. Grade 4 (poor) agricultural soils in the west and Grade 3 (good to moderate) in the east.
- Extensive coverage, concentrated in the centre and west, of Priority Habitat 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh' and 'good quality semi-improved grassland'. Priority Habitat 'reedbeds', 'coastal saltmarsh' and 'mudflats' along the Thames. The Thames Estuary Marine Conservation Zone covers the coastline.
- Internationally important landscape of brackish, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh ditches, saline lagoons and intertidal saltmarsh and mudflat (designated as Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar), which support internationally important number of wintering waterfowl (designated as Thames Estuary and Marshes IBA and SPA). The landscape is also designated nationally as part of the South Thames Estuary and Marshes SSSI.
- Land is generally in use for sheep and cattle grazing, with large areas managed by the RSPB for nature conservation at Northward Hill. Fields are often unenclosed. Where field boundaries occur these are drainage ditches, scrub vegetation or occasionally post and wire fencing.

Cultural Influences

- The LCA lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 28 – Northern Coast and Marshland, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001). This is an

area characterised by its mix of reclaimed marsh and coastal landscape types. Reclamation may have started as early as the Norman Conquest, although was certainly underway during the Medieval era. The historic field pattern within the LCA consists of 'small irregular enclosures', 'irregular enclosures' and 'rectilinear enclosures'.

- A historically unsettled landscape, Egypt Bay was a typical Thames estuary landing spot for smugglers. Shades House, on Halstow marshes, was built specifically to aid the landing of contraband on the southern shores of the Thames. The only other development within the landscape is Rye Street Farm, which includes Grade II listed 16th century barn.
- Cliffe (Curtis and Harvey) explosive works are a distinctive landscape feature in the north-west, and are now designated as a Scheduled Monument. The explosive works were established around 1890 and active until 1921 and manufactured gunpowder initially, before moving towards production of new explosives including cordite. There was gradual expansion in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with massive expansion during the First World War, resulting in the highest number of buildings and structures on any explosives factory nationally. The reinforced concrete structures are unusual for the period.
- Halstow Marshes Decoy Pond is the other Scheduled Monument in this LCA. It was created to lure wild fowl to be trapped and killed for food and feathers, and was in use from the late 17th century until the 19th century. It is the only surviving decoy pond in Kent.
- The King Charles III England Coast Path runs along the coastline, providing public access. PRow connect north-south through the marshes, particularly in the east. However, public right of way links inland are limited. RSPB Reserve Northward Hill is a popular recreation area for birdwatching.
- Distinctive character of this area has strong cultural links with Charles Dickens and *Great Expectations* (especially at Cooling Marshes). Charles Dickens lived and worked in this area and transmitted a deep understanding of the marshland landscape through his writings. In the opening chapter of *Great Expectations*, the author surveys the marshes from the churchyard at Cooling and paints a sensitive and atmospheric

picture: "...the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing, was the sea...".

Perceptual Influences

- Remote, open, flat and expansive marshland landscape with big skies. Long views across the Thames estuary to the Essex coast, south to the rising topography of the Hoo Peninsula ridge, and east along the coastline towards All Hallows.
- A landscape strongly influenced by its largely unspoilt marshland character and relationship with the Thames estuary. Movement of sailing boats and commercial sailings on the Thames add to the sense of place.
- Water and wildlife contribute to the strong sense of place. Creeks, dykes, fleets and pools are prominent features, while the noise of wild birds and grazing animals contributes to the remote character. The greens of grassland and wild flowers contrasts with the greys and browns of the Thames estuary.
- The landscape retains a distinctively remote, wild and isolated character, due to the very limited levels of access and development.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Strong sense of place as part of the Thames estuary; marshland character and strong visual connection with the River Thames.
- Flat, low-lying landscape with a strong sense of openness and big skies, with uninterrupted views across the marshes and out across the Thames estuary.

- Strong sense of wildness and remoteness due to an absence of built development and open views across the estuary.
- Highly remote landscape with extremely limited development and high levels of relative dark night skies and tranquillity.
- Ecologically important with several international and national nature conservation designations covering areas of saline lagoon, coastal grazing marsh, good quality semi-improved grassland, and saltmarsh and mudflats on the coastline, which support overwintering waterfowl.
- Recreational value of the promoted King Charles III England Coast Path which provides access to the coastline and marshland, including opportunities for bird watching at RSPB Northward Hill.
- Historic explosive works provide a link to the industrial history of the landscape.
- Forms part of the wider setting to the villages of Cliffe and Cooling (located in the adjacent LCA to the south).
- Cultural and historic associations of the Thames and Medway; forms part of the setting of Charles Dickens' 'Great Expectations' (1861).

Issues and Changes

- The strategy for the North Kent Marshes within the TE2100 Plan is to maintain the flood defences at their current level, accepting that as sea levels rise the flood risk will increase.
- Increasing numbers of recreational visitors to the RSPB reserve, which may cause pressures on the habitats and species, including bird disturbance.
- Increased recreational pressures along the King Charles III England Coast Path and disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Uncharacteristic boundary treatments, such as post and wire fencing.
- Potential for the conversion of coastal grazing marsh to arable farmland, which should be avoided to retain the character of the landscape.

- Coastal marsh landscapes and saline lagoons are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Sea level rise leading to loss of salt marsh along the Thames Estuary from 'coastal squeeze', where human activities stop the natural landward spread of coastal habitats as sea levels rise.
 - Tidal flooding and the pollutants and debris it carries has the potential to impact heritage sites and tourism, infrastructure, protected areas and natural habitats, food sources for wildlife, communities, and commerce.
 - Increased temperatures and wetter winters, leading to changes in seasonal water availability and changes in saline lagoon water temperature which could hasten the spread of invasive non-native species.
 - Hotter drier summers and wetter winters and winter flooding could result in changes to wetland plant community composition.
 - Drier summers could result in increased drying out of lagoons and changes to inter-tidal community composition.
 - More frequent inundation could increase the area of exposed mud, making marshes more susceptible to invasive plants and erosion.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Cliffe to St Mary's Coastal Marshes LCA is to conserve and enhance the character of the remote, undeveloped, flat and open marshland landscape and its distinctive sense of place, created by the coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, good quality semi-improved grassland, marshes and mudflats. Ecologically important wetland and coastal habitats should be conserved, enhanced and extended where possible.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Work with the natural estuary processes to conserve and enhance the intertidal and inland marsh landscape, including the distinctive pattern of intertidal saltmarsh and mudflats, reedbed and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh.
- Conserve remnant salt marsh and reedbed and introduce new areas of intertidal habitats to counter effects of 'coastal squeeze' where opportunities arise; balance with impacts on loss of grazing marsh and freshwater habitats.
- Conserve and restore characteristic features of grazing marshes, including remnant drainage features lost through agricultural drainage or infilling; ditches, ponds, channels, reed beds, counter walls; and characteristic trees (e.g. willows along ditches).
- In line with TE2100, maintain coastal defences at their current levels, to prevent inundation and erosion and to combat the increasing pressures from climate change, including coastal squeeze, flooding, and erosion. Prepare for increased flooding events as a result of climate change induced sea level rise.
- Encourage traditional management including grazing and control of water levels in ditches.
- Remove poor boundary features, especially post and wire fencing, and replace with drainage ditches or timber wing fencing and gates more sympathetic to character. Retain and maintain existing timber fences and gates.
- Encourage appropriate management of grazing marshes to maximise landscape and wildlife benefits; resist conversion of grazing marsh to arable, and encourage reversion of arable back to grazing.
- Conserve and improve recreational access on PRow and at the RPSB reserve; consider new PRow connecting the King Charles III England

Coast Path with the Saxon Shore Way to the south and between Cliffe, Cooling and shoreline.

- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the King Charles III England Coast Path, drawing upon the connections to the various historic associations with the Thames, including through the preservation and enhancement of vistas across the marshes and estuaries.
- Conserve Cliffe explosive works and improve interpretation and understanding of this important heritage feature. Manage coastal defences to prevent inundation and erosion and to combat the increasing pressures from climate change, including coastal squeeze, flooding, and erosion.
- Management of the shoreline should consider No Active Intervention policies and natural environmental solutions (such as the accretion of saltmarsh that provide a defence buffer) to allow for natural shoreline evolution, where appropriate and in line with the strategy for the North Kent Marshes within the TE2100. This will enhance adaptation and ecosystem service functioning, and simultaneously begin to move away from a focus on hard engineering solutions.

Development Management

- Conserve and improve recreational access on PRow and at the RPSB reserve, while ensuring that recreational activities minimise erosion and damage to important wetland and coastal habitats and species. These could include signage and interpretation boards, screening of sensitive areas and footpath diversions. The strategic measures within the North Kent Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Scheme (SAMMS) Bird Wise North Kent, of which the RSPB and Medway Council are a part, should continue to be implemented.
- Maintain the sense of openness and retain the remote undeveloped quality of the marshland.

- Conserve the characteristic big open skies and horizons, avoiding any additional visually intrusive development, both within and outside of the area; resist any proposals for overhead power lines, cables or other vertical elements in the wide open marshland.
- Consider the impact on longer views of any proposed large scale or tall development; including planned extensions to Cliffe and Cooling to the south and any further industrial development visible across the Thames estuary.
- Conserve the rural setting of the villages of Cliffe and Cooling by resisting inappropriate or unsympathetic development. Manage recreational pressures to minimise erosion and damage to important wetland and coastal habitats, including continuing to manage more intensive recreational uses.

Landscape Character Area A3: Allhallows to Stoke Marshes

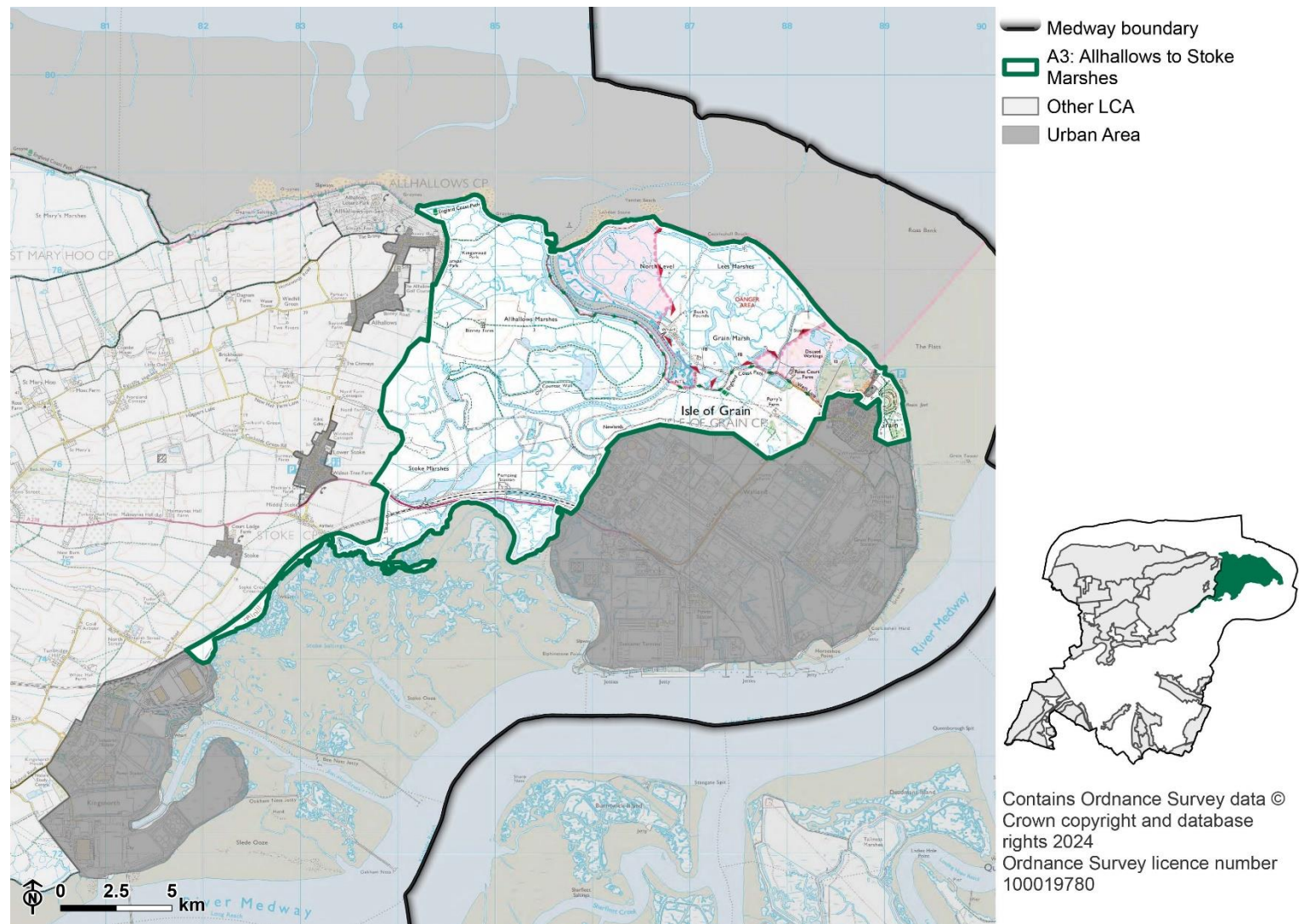
Description

Location and Summary

7.6 The Allhallows to Stoke Marshes LCA is located on the east of the Hoo Peninsula. The LCA forms an expansive marshland landscape lying between the settlements of Allhallows, Grain and Kingsnorth. It is defined by to the north and east by the River Thames; to the south by the River Medway; and to the west by rising topography that marks a transition to undulating farmland (LCA G2: Hoo Peninsula).

7.7 This is an open, flat and expansive marshland landscape with big open skies and wide views. There are strong industrial influences from the power station and container terminal on the Isle of Grain to the south-east and from industrial uses and the power station at Kingsnorth to the south-west.

Figure 7.4: Location of LCA A3



Key Characteristics

- Flat low-lying marshland with some localised areas of higher ground.
- Substantial areas of water, including numerous natural creeks, fleets and pools and several man-made dykes; Yantlet Creek, Stoke Marshes and Stoke Saltings form distinctive landscape features which once separated the Isle of Grain from the rest of Hoo Peninsula.
- Covered almost entirely by international and national nature conservation designations which feature important inter-tidal and estuarine habitats and supports internationally important populations of wintering and passage birds.
- A varied landscape featuring coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, coastal saltmarsh, semi improved grassland, and smaller areas of deciduous woodland; predominantly poor agricultural soils used as grazing pasture.
- Open and expansive landscape with big skies and wide views; strong visual relationship with the surrounding rivers, marshes, saltings and estuaries to the north, south and east, with dramatic views out from sea wall.
- Strong industrial influences from the power station and container terminal on the Isle of Grain to the south-east and from a power station at Kingsnorth to the south-west, as well as development across the Thames in Essex and across the Medway at Sheerness; disused mineral workings and former military uses to the north and east of Grain also exert some influence, as do pylons/power lines, A228 and 'Higham to Port Victoria railway line' to the south.
- The Thames and Medway estuaries hold many cultural and historic associations both as a historic transport routes and for their historic naval use; the Isle of Grain was the site of 19th century coastal artillery defences, including Grain Tower, and there is a series of Second World War oil bombing decoys at Allhallows (Scheduled Monuments).

- Literary associations, including the marshes of the Hoo Peninsula forming part of the setting of Charles Dickens' 'Great Expectations' (1861).
- Access provided by several PRoW, including the King Charles III England Coast Path, a network of narrow lanes and tracks and the Isle of Grain Coastal Park; limited access to Ministry of Defence land between Grain and Allhallows (shown in pink on LCA map above).
- A relative sense of remoteness and tranquillity due to a general lack of built development, open views across water, and the sounds of wind and birds; this is undermined in proximity to industrial influences to the south-west and south-east.
- A sense of dynamism and movement due to the tidal nature of the surrounding rivers and estuary and the movement of boats and shipping.

Photo 7.9: Open, flat and expansive marshland with big skies and wide views



Photo 7.10: Strong visual connection with the Thames and Medway estuaries



Photo 7.11: Strong industrial influences from nearby power stations and container terminal



Photo 7.12: Substantial areas of water, including creeks, fleets, pools and dykes



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of London Clay formations overlain by alluvial clay, silt, sand and peat deposits; pockets of river terrace deposits of sand and gravel in places.
- Flat landform predominantly lying between approximately 0 and 2m AOD, albeit with some areas of higher ground (between approximately 5m and 10m AOD) around the Isle of Grain to the east and around Binney Farm to the north corresponding with areas of river terrace deposits; also a scattering of low mounds survive, some from medieval salt production and some built to provide flood refuge for grazing livestock.
- The Isle of Grain was historically a separate island but today is joined to the Hoo Peninsula; Stoke Saltings, Yantlet Creek and Stoke Marshes mark the historic boundary between the two.
- The majority of the landscape falls within Flood Zone 2 and 3, excluding areas of higher ground at Grain and Binney Farm and around Kingsnorth Power Station to the south-west.
- Predominantly Grade 4 (poor) agricultural soils with some pockets of better quality Grade 2 soils in places; agricultural use is predominantly in the form of grazing pasture.
- Priority Habitats recorded include 'mudflats', 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh', 'coastal saltmarsh', 'good quality semi improved grassland', and smaller areas of 'deciduous woodland'.
- Almost entirely covered by international and national nature conservation designations (Medway and Estuary Ramsar Site, SPA and SSSI) which feature important inter-tidal and estuarine habitats and supports internationally important populations of wintering and passage birds. The adjacent Medway Estuary and Thames Estuary to the south and north are also covered by MCZ designations.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 13 – Hoo Peninsula as defined within the Kent HLC (2001), albeit has close association with the adjacent Historic Landscape Character Area 28 – Northern Coast and Marshland.
- The majority of the landscape comprises low-lying marshes, much of which is reclaimed from the sea and protected from the tide by river and sea walls.
- The HLC records ‘small irregular enclosures’ and ‘creeks and fleets’ covering the majority of the landscape. There are also some smaller areas of ‘medium regular with straight boundaries (parliamentary type enclosure)’, ‘fields predominantly bound by tracks, roads and other rights of way’ and ‘prairie fields (19th century enclosure with extensive boundary loss)’, which reflect some later rationalisation of the landscape.
- Historically the area was sparsely developed with scattered isolated farmsteads and hamlets (including at Grain to the east). This largely remains the case today and is reflected by the presence of several listed buildings at Grain, including the Grade I Church of St James.
- The Thames and the Medway estuaries hold many cultural and historic associations both as a historic transport routes and for their historic naval use; the Isle of Grain was the site of 19th century coastal artillery defences, including Grain Tower, and there is a series of Second World War oil bombing decoys at Allhallows, which are all designated as Scheduled Monuments.
- Has a good level of access with several PRoW, including the King Charles III England Coast Path extending between Grain and Allhallows along Yantlet Creek and the coastal edge along the River Thames; many of these PRoW form surviving routes between settlements and the rivers/creeks.
- Isle of Grain Coastal Park provides access to the coastline to the east of Grain.

- Also features an area of inaccessible Ministry of Defence land to the north-east at Lees Marsh and Grain Marsh (shown in pink on the LCA map above).
- The principal roads in the area are Grain Road (A228), which runs east-west through the south of the area, and Grain Road (B2001), which runs to the south-east. A single track railway line (part of the 'Higham to Port Victoria' line) connects Grain to Gravesham, and the route of a now dismantled branch line connecting to Allhallows is still apparent in the landscape.
- The landscape is traversed by a network of narrow lanes and tracks, which connect the surrounding settlements (Grain, Allhallows and Lower Stoke) with the marshes.
- Literary references to the marshes being 'uninhabited', 'desolate', 'wild' and 'eerie' (e.g. 'A Preambulation of Kent' by William Lambarde (1570) and 'Thames: Sacred River' by Peter Ackroyd (2007)); the marshes of the Hoo Peninsula also formed part of the setting of Charles Dickens' 'Great Expectations' (1861).

Perceptual Influences

- Open, flat and expansive marshland landscape with big skies and wide views.
- Substantial areas of water, including numerous natural creeks, fleets and pools, as well as several linear man-made dykes.
- Strong visual relationship with the surrounding rivers and estuaries to the north, south and east with dramatic open views out from sea wall.
- Strong industrial influences from the National Grid power station and Thamesport container terminal on the Isle of Grain to the south-east and from a Kingsnorth Power Station to the south-west; the construction materials (steel and concrete) and the vertical scale of these structures differs greatly from the traditional built form of the area.

- The holiday park at Allhallows is also readily visible across the marshes, due to the white colour contrasting with the natural colours of the landscape.
- Distant views across the Thames towards Tilbury Power Station and the Coryton Oil Refinery in Essex, and across the Medway towards industrial development at Sheerness, reinforce the sense of an industrial landscape.
- Disused mineral workings and former military uses also exert some influence on the landscape to the north and east of Grain, as do the pylons/power lines, A228 and 'Higham to Port Victoria railway line' to the south.
- Relative sense of remoteness and tranquillity due to a general lack of built development, open views across water, and the sounds of wind and birds; CPRE mapping shows higher levels of light pollution and lower levels of tranquillity in proximity to industrial influences to the south-west and south-east.
- The tidal nature of the surrounding estuary and saltings results a sense of dynamism and movement, with tides periodically filling and emptying the adjacent creeks and covering and uncovering the fringing marshes and mudflats.
- The Thames and Medway marshes have slightly different character: the Medway estuary is narrower feels more sheltered and the coastline contains numerous small islets of reclaimed land and scattered fragments of its once extensive salt marsh.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Flat low-lying landscape with a strong sense of openness allowing uninterrupted views across the marshes and surrounding saltings and estuaries.

- A relative sense of remoteness and tranquillity due to a general lack of built development and open views across the estuary.
- Ecologically important areas of international and national nature conservation designations, and Priority Habitat 'mudflats', 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh', 'coastal saltmarsh', 'good quality semi improved grassland', and smaller areas of 'deciduous woodland'.
- Deciduous woodland and tree belts help to soften views towards adjacent industrial development, particularly from settlements.
- Surviving historic dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and hamlets.
- Recreational value of PRoW, including the promoted King Charles III England Coast Path which provides access to the northern coastal edges and Yantlet Creek; many PRoW and lanes/tracks represent surviving historic routes between the surrounding settlements (Grain, Allhallows and Lower Stoke) and the marshes and rivers/creeks.
- Cultural and historic associations of the Thames and Medway; forms part of the setting of Charles Dickens' 'Great Expectations' (1861).

Issues and Changes

- The strategy for the Isle of Grain within the TE2100 Plan is to take further action to keep up with climate and land use change so that flood risk does not increase.
- Increased industrialisation to the south, with power stations and container terminal as well as pylons/power lines, A228 and 'Higham to Port Victoria' railway line.
- Road improvements and associated road infrastructure, including barriers and signage.
- Uncharacteristic boundary treatments, such as post and wire fencing and metal security fencing, particularly on the edge of settlements and industrial areas.

- Loss of distinctive settlement identity of Grain due to the additional of sub-urban development around the historic parts of the hamlet, and further industrial development to the south.
- Restricted access along the coast between Grain and Allhallows (Ministry of Defence land).
- Increased recreational pressures along the King Charles III England Coast Path and disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Potential for the conversion of coastal grazing marsh to arable farmland, which should be avoided to retain the character of the landscape.
- The coastal marshes landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Loss of salt marsh and inter-tidal habitats as a result of reclamation and 'coastal squeeze'.
 - Tidal flooding has the potential to impact heritage sites and tourism, infrastructure, protected areas and natural habitats, food sources for wildlife, communities, and commerce.
 - Hotter drier summers and wetter winters and winter flooding could result in changes to wetland plant community composition.
 - More frequent inundation could increase the area of exposed mud, making marshes more susceptible to invasive plants and erosion.
 - Periods of heavy rainfall, sea level rise, and subsequent flooding and 'coastal squeeze' will lead to loss of certain assets and areas of infrastructure.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Allhallows to Stoke Marshes LCA is to conserve and enhance the character and strong sense of place of this remote, open marsh landscape, with its strong relationship with the surrounding River Medway and River Thames estuaries, marshes and saltings. Seek to

reduce the influence of existing industrial features and conserve and increase inter-tidal and estuarine habitats to enhance the distinctive marshland character, and strengthen resilience to sea level rise as a result of climate change.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Work with natural coastal processes to conserve and enhance the estuary landscape with its distinctive pattern of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh and coastal saltmarsh, and associated drainage features, ditches, ponds, creeks, channels, dykes and reed beds.
- Make room for 'roll back' of estuary habitats 'squeezed' by sea level rise by providing buffer zones.
- Management of the shoreline should also consider 'No Active Intervention' policies and natural environmental solutions (such as the accretion of saltmarsh that provide a defence buffer) to allow for natural shoreline evolution, where appropriate and in line with the strategy for the Isle of Grain within the TE2100; this will enhance adaptation and ecosystem service functioning, and simultaneously begin to move away from a focus on hard engineering solutions.
- Conserve and enhance ecologically important inter-tidal and estuarine habitats, including Priority Habitat 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh', 'coastal saltmarsh', 'good quality semi improved grassland', and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment; strengthen footpath links with Lower Stoke and consider opportunities to introduce access along the coast within the currently inaccessible Ministry of Defence.

- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the King Charles III England Coast Path, drawing upon the various historic associations with the Thames and Medway, including through the preservation and enhancement of vistas across the marshes and estuaries.
- Seek to remove uncharacteristic boundary features, especially post and wire fencing and metal security fencing, and replace with drainage ditches or timber wing fencing and gates of more appropriate rural character.

Development Management

- Maintain the sense of openness by resisting proposals for new development that would impinge on the remote undeveloped quality of the marshland; where development is proposed consider siting and design and the use of locally characteristic planting to reduce any impacts.
- Conserve the skyline of characteristic large open skies and horizons; consider opportunities for the removal of pylons and the undergrounding power lines. Concentrate any future large-scale industrial or employment structures into contained areas, around the Isle of Grain and Kingsnorth to avoid further interruption of the open skies.
- Consider the impact on longer views of any proposed large scale or tall development. Where development is proposed consider appropriate landscape and visual mitigation within and to the periphery/ edges of such development, such as appropriate tree screening, muted colours and non-reflective surfaces.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and hamlets and their rural setting, including Grain. Any new residential development should be in scale with the existing settlement pattern, and use sympathetic building materials.
- Encourage the removal of uncharacteristic boundary treatments, particularly on the periphery of settlements and industrial areas.

- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and any further reduction in tranquillity associated with industrial uses to the south; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards.

Landscape Character Area A4: Hoo Flats

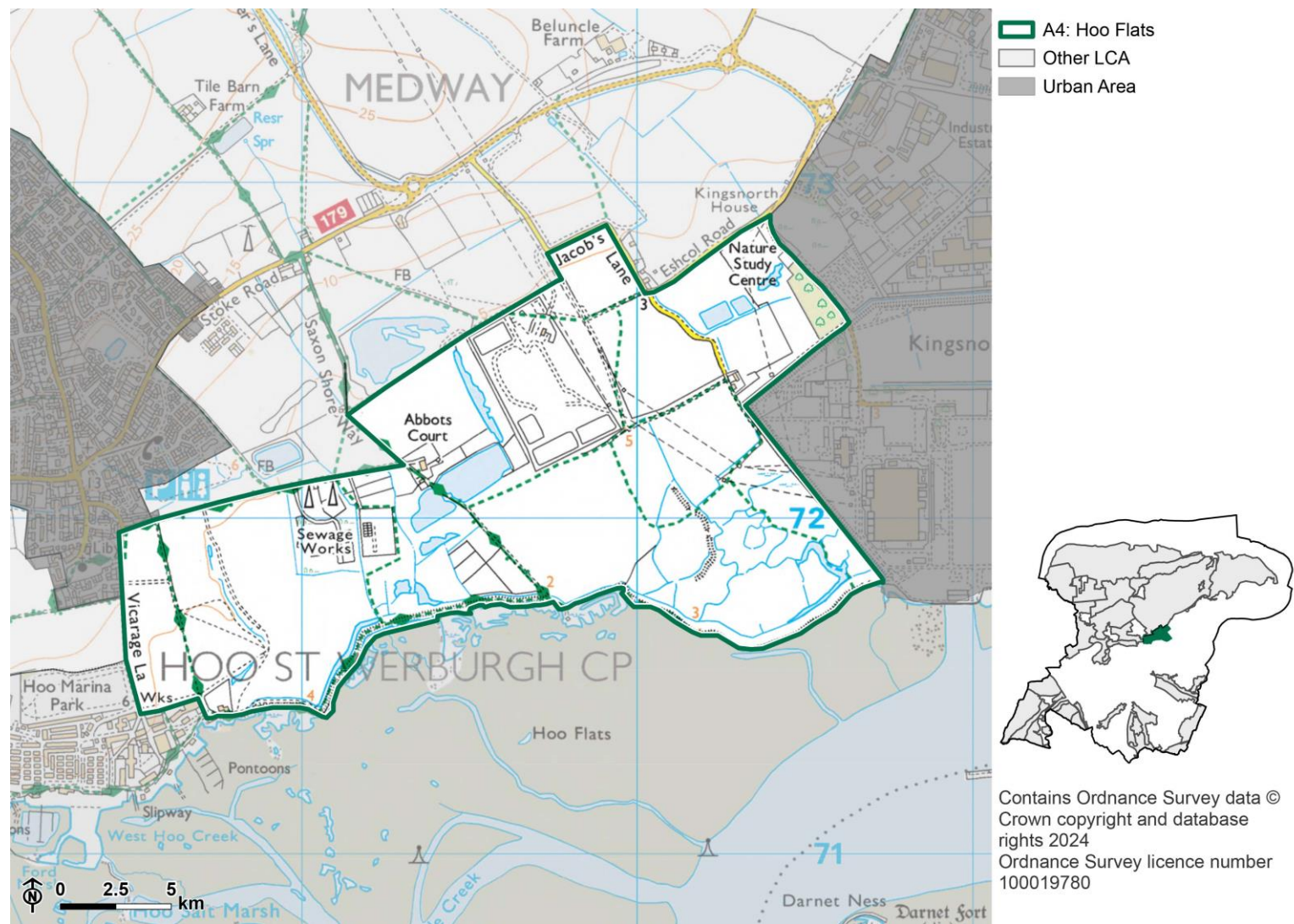
Description

Location and Summary

7.8 The Hoo Flats LCA is located on the southern edge of the Hoo Peninsula. The LCA forms an area of marshland landscape lying between the village of Hoo St Werburgh and Hoo Marina Park to the west and Kingsnorth Power Station to the east. It is defined by to the south by the Medway Estuary and to the north by rising topography that marks a transition to undulating farmland (LCA G2: Hoo Peninsula).

7.9 This is a low-lying landscape featuring areas of remnant grazed marshland as well as arable and equine related uses. It has a strong visual relationship with the Medway Estuary and islands to the south and there are industrial influences from mineral workings, Kingsnorth Power Station and large distribution facilities to the east.

Figure 7.5: Location of LCA A4



Key Characteristics

- Flat low-lying area adjacent to the Medway Estuary, comprising remnant marshland and reclaimed marshland.
- Partially covered by, and lies adjacent to, international and national nature conservation designations protecting important inter-tidal and estuarine habitats and supports internationally important populations of wintering and passage birds.
- A varied landscape featuring coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, coastal saltmarsh, mudflats, reedbeds and deciduous woodland; high quality agricultural soils also support arable farmland to the north and west.
- Strong visual connection with the River Medway and its estuary, with open views south across Hoo Flats and Hoo Salt Marsh from the sea wall; small islands within the estuary, including Hoo Island and Darnet Ness, are prominent in views.
- Evocative hulks and other remains on the intertidal flats, and Creeks, ditches to the south and south-east, reflect the historic character of the area and create a strong sense of place.
- Largely retains its historic settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, although there is some more modern development on its periphery to the north-west on the edge of Hoo St Werburgh to the north-west and to the south-west at Hoo Marina Park.
- A good level of access with several PRoW, including the Saxon Shore Way/King Charels II England Coast Path which follows the coastline in the south.
- Features a cluster of Grade II listed pillboxes and anti-tank cubes, which were components of the 'Hoo Stop-line'; also the 19th century military forts at Hoo Island and Darnet Ness (both Scheduled Monuments) lie within the estuary to the south.
- The Grade I listed Church of St Werburgh forms a visual landmark in views west across the landscape.

- Retains an essentially rural character with a relative sense of remoteness and tranquillity due to a general lack of built development, open views across the estuary, and the sounds of wind and bird; rural character is undermined by industrial influences to the east and suburban influences to the west.
- Literary associations, including the marshes of the Hoo Peninsula forming part of the setting of Charles Dickens' 'Great Expectations' (1861); Dickensian character accentuated by presence of salt marsh, mudflats, rotting boat hulks and influence of forts across the estuary.
- A sense of dynamism and movement due to the tidal nature of the surrounding estuary, and the movement of boats and shipping.

Photo 7.13: Flat low-lying landscape comprising remnant marshland



Photo 7.14: High quality agricultural soils supporting arable farmland



Photo 7.15: Strong industrial influences from Kingsnorth Power Station and pylons



Photo 7.16: Strong visual connection with the Medway estuary



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of London Clay formations overlain by Head and River Terrace deposits of clay and silt.
- Flat landform lying between approximately 0 and 5m AOD, featuring a number of remnant creeks and ditches to the east; also features several artificial ponds created by mineral extraction to the north and north-east.
- Falls entirely within Flood Zone 2 and 3.
- Predominantly Grade 1 (excellent) agricultural soils to the north with Grade 4 (poor) soils to the south along the coast.
- Priority Habitats recorded include 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh', 'coastal saltmarsh' and 'mudflats', as well as some smaller areas of 'reedbeds' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Partially covered by, and lies adjacent to, international and national nature conservation designations (Medway and Estuary Ramsar Site, SPA and SSSI) which feature important inter-tidal and estuarine habitats and supports internationally important populations of wintering and passage birds.
- Adjoins the Medway Estuary MCZ to the south.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 13 – Hoo Peninsula as defined within the Kent HLC (2001), albeit has close association with the adjacent Historic Landscape Character Area 28 – Northern Coast and Marshland. .
- Comprises low-lying marshes and mixed farmland reclaimed from the sea and protected from the tide by a sea wall.
- Some equine uses in places and fishing activities along the shoreline.

- The HLC records 'fields predominantly bound by tracks, roads and other rights of way' covering the majority of the landscape, which reflect some later rationalisation of the landscape, and an area of 'small irregular enclosures' covering remnant marshland to the east; a smaller area of 'reservoirs and water treatment' covers a former sewage works to the west.
- Historically the area was sparsely settled, with only a few scattered isolated farmsteads and the adjacent hamlet of Hoo St Werburgh. The area largely retains the historic settlement pattern today, although Hoo St Werburgh has grown in size, particularly to the north of its historic core, and there is some modern development at Hoo Marina Park on the periphery of the area to the south-west.
- The historic core of Hoo St Werburgh is reflected by the presence of several listed buildings, including the Grade I Church of St Werburgh which forms a local landmark.
- The Medway and its estuary holds many cultural and historic associations both as a historic transport route and for its historic naval use; the military forts at Hoo and Darnet islands (both Scheduled Monuments) lie to the south and the wider estuary was the site of the Raid on the Medway in June 1667 during the Second Anglo-Dutch War.
- Literary references to the marshes being 'uninhabited', 'desolate', 'wild' and 'eerie' (e.g. 'A Preamble of Kent' by William Lambarde (1570) and 'Thames: Sacred River' by Peter Ackroyd (2007)); the marshes of the Hoo Peninsula also formed part of the setting of Charles Dickens' 'Great Expectations' (1861).
- Features four listed buildings, all of which are Second World War pillboxes and anti-tank cubes installed as part of the 'Hoo Stop-line', a defensive anti-invasion line stretching between the River Thames near Cliffe and the River Medway to the south-east of Hoo St Werburgh.
- Has a good level of access with several PRoW, including the Saxon Shore Way/King Charels II England Coast Path , extending through it; Kingsnorth Power Station prevents access along the coastline to the east.

- There are no main roads within the area; road access is limited to narrow lanes and tracks that provide access to the shoreline and isolated farmsteads, including Abbots Court Lane and Saxon Shore Way.

Perceptual Influences

- Area has become partially fragmented by urban fringe and industrial influences, but retains an essentially marshland remote character.
- Strong visual relationship with the estuary to the south, with open views across the Hoo Flats and Hoo Salt Marsh from sea wall. Small islands within the estuary, including Hoo Island and Darnet Ness, are prominent in views.
- Hoo Island has had a variety of land uses historically, including the deposit of river dredgings. The engineered bunds have an unnatural appearance and have raised the level of the island which partially disrupts views across the estuary.
- Creeks, ditches and other features to the south and south-east reflect the historic character of the area and create a strong sense of place; a number of evocative hulks and other remains form focal features on the intertidal flats.
- Sense of remoteness and tranquillity in places due to a general lack of built development, open views across the estuary, and the sounds of wind and birds.
- Strong detracting industrial influences to the east (mineral working and Kingsnorth Power Station and associated pylons and power lines) and some suburban influences to the west (Hoo St Werburgh and Hoo Marina Park); this is also reflected in CPRE night blight and tranquillity mapping.
- The tidal nature of the surrounding estuary results a sense of dynamism and movement, with tides periodically filling and emptying the adjacent creeks and covering and uncovering the fringing marshes and mudflats; movement of boats and shipping.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Low-lying landscape with a strong sense of openness, allowing uninterrupted views across the marshes and adjacent estuary.
- Relative sense of remoteness and tranquillity due to a general lack of built development and open views across the estuary.
- Ecologically important inter-tidal and estuarine habitats lying within and adjacent to international and national nature conservation designations, and featuring areas of Priority Habitat 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh', 'coastal saltmarsh', 'mudflats', 'reedbeds' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Deciduous woodland and tree belts help to soften views towards Kingsnorth Power Station, particularly from settlements.
- Provides an open marshland setting to the south-east of Hoo St Werburgh.
- Recreational value of PRow, including the Saxon Shore Way, which provide access to the landscape and coastline.
- The rural character of much of the landscape which provides a setting for the historic buildings within the historic core of Hoo St Werburgh, including the Grade I Church of St Werburgh.
- Provides a rural buffer/green corridor (along with the adjacent LCA G3: Hoo St Werburgh and LCA H3: Cockham Ridge) between the urban area of Hoo St Werburgh and the area of international and national importance for nature conservation along the Medway estuary and marshes to the south.
- Provides a sense of separation between Hoo St Werburgh and the industrial area at Kingsnorth, and between Hoo St Werburgh and Hoo Marina Park to the south.

- Gently sloping land that forms a low green backdrop when viewed from the Medway estuary.
- Cultural and historic associations of the Medway and its estuary; forms the setting to listed Second World War pillboxes and anti-tank cubes installed as part of the 'Hoo Stop-line' and part of the wider setting of military forts at Hoo and Darnet islands (Scheduled Monuments).

Issues and Changes

- The strategy for the shoreline within the Medway Estuary and Swale Flood and Erosion Risk Management Strategy (MEASS) is for the current defences to be maintained for the first 25 years after which maintenance will be ceased. The sea wall at Kingsnorth to the east is planned to be raised to protect the industrial areas. Further west beyond Hoo Marina Park, the medium-term strategy is for no active intervention. This may have a knock-on effect further along the shoreline.
- Increased industrialisation and commercial activities to the east, with power stations, mineral workings and distribution facilities.
- Increased sub-urban influences to the west; potential for ribbon development along Vicarage Lane to result in a reduction in physical and perceived separation between Hoo St Werburgh and Hoo Marina Park.
- Increased recreational pressures along the Saxon Shore Way and disturbance to highly designated estuary shoreline.
- Impact on landscape character of new development proposals on the periphery of the area, including housing development on the edge of Hoo St Werburgh to the north-west.
- Conversion of grazing marsh to cultivated land.
- Historic military features are often in poor condition. Fort Hoo and Fort Darnet are both on the Heritage at Risk Register.
- The coastal marshes landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:

- Loss of salt marsh and inter-tidal habitats as a result of reclamation and ‘coastal squeeze’.
- Tidal flooding has the potential to impact heritage sites and tourism, infrastructure, protected areas and natural habitats, food sources for wildlife, communities, and commerce.
- Hotter drier summers and wetter winters and winter flooding could result in changes to wetland plant community composition.
- More frequent inundation could increase the area of exposed mud, making marshes more susceptible to invasive plants and erosion.
- Further industrial development poses threat to the current climate change defences in place, such as structures near Kingsnorth Power Station that protect from erosion and flooding.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Hoo Flats LCA is to conserve and enhance the distinctive character and strong sense place of this flat open marsh landscape with its strong relationship with the Medway Estuary. Seek to reduce the influence of existing industrial features and conserve and increase coastal and inter-tidal habitats to enhance the distinctive marshland character. Look to build on the cultural and historic associations of the Medway and its estuary.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Work with natural coastal processes to conserve and enhance the coastal landscape with its distinctive pattern of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, coastal saltmarsh, mudflats and reedbeds.
- Make room for 'roll back' of estuary habitats 'squeezed' by sea level rise by providing buffer zones.
- Management of the shoreline should consider No Active Intervention policies and natural environmental solutions (such as the accretion of saltmarsh that provide a defence buffer) to allow for natural shoreline evolution, where appropriate and in line with the strategy within the MEASS; this will enhance adaptation and ecosystem service functioning, and simultaneously begin to move away from a focus on hard engineering solutions.
- Conserve and enhance ecologically important inter-tidal and estuarine habitats, including Priority Habitat 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh', 'coastal saltmarsh', 'mudflats', 'reedbeds' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Encourage appropriate management of grazing marshes to maximise landscape and wildlife benefits; resist conversion of grazing marsh to arable, and encourage change back from arable to grazing.
- Consider opportunities to remove equine paddocks in line with the Hoo Wetland Reserve as part of a Future Hoo Strategic Environmental Management Scheme (SEMS)
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment; consider options for a new country park mentioned in the Hoo Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Study (2019).
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the Saxon Shore Way, drawing upon the various historic associations with the Medway,

including through the preservation and enhancement of vistas across the estuary.

- Conserve the component parts of the 'Hoo Stop Line' and consider the role the landscape plays in their open setting; encourage interpretation and understanding of these important heritage features and their wider context of Second World War defence.
- Opportunity for landscape and biodiversity enhancements as part of future restoration proposals on current area of mineral workings.
- Monitor and ensure the control of potential invasive non-native species.
- Manage coastal defences to prevent inundation and erosion and to combat the increasing pressures from climate change, including coastal squeeze, flooding, and erosion.

Development Management

- Maintain the sense of openness by resisting proposals for new development that impinge on the remote undeveloped quality of the marshland; strongly resist any proposals for development on the islands to the south.
- Where development is proposed consider siting and design and the use locally characteristic planting to reduce any impacts.
- Conserve the skyline of characteristic large open skies and horizons; consider opportunities for the removal of pylons and the undergrounding power lines. Concentrate any future large-scale industrial or employment structures into a contained area, around Kingsnorth to avoid further interruption of the open skies.
- Consider the impact on longer views of any proposed large scale or tall development; where development is proposed consider appropriate landscape and visual mitigation within and to the periphery/ edges of such development, such as appropriate tree screening, muted colours and non-reflective surfaces.

- Conserve the rural setting of historic buildings within the historic core of Hoo St Werburgh, including the Church of St Werburgh, by resisting inappropriate or unsympathetic development.
- Consider the role of this area as a green backdrop to the adjacent estuary, by resisting visually prominent development.
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and any further reduction in tranquillity associated with industrial development to the west and east; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards.

Landscape Character Area A5: Riverside Marshes

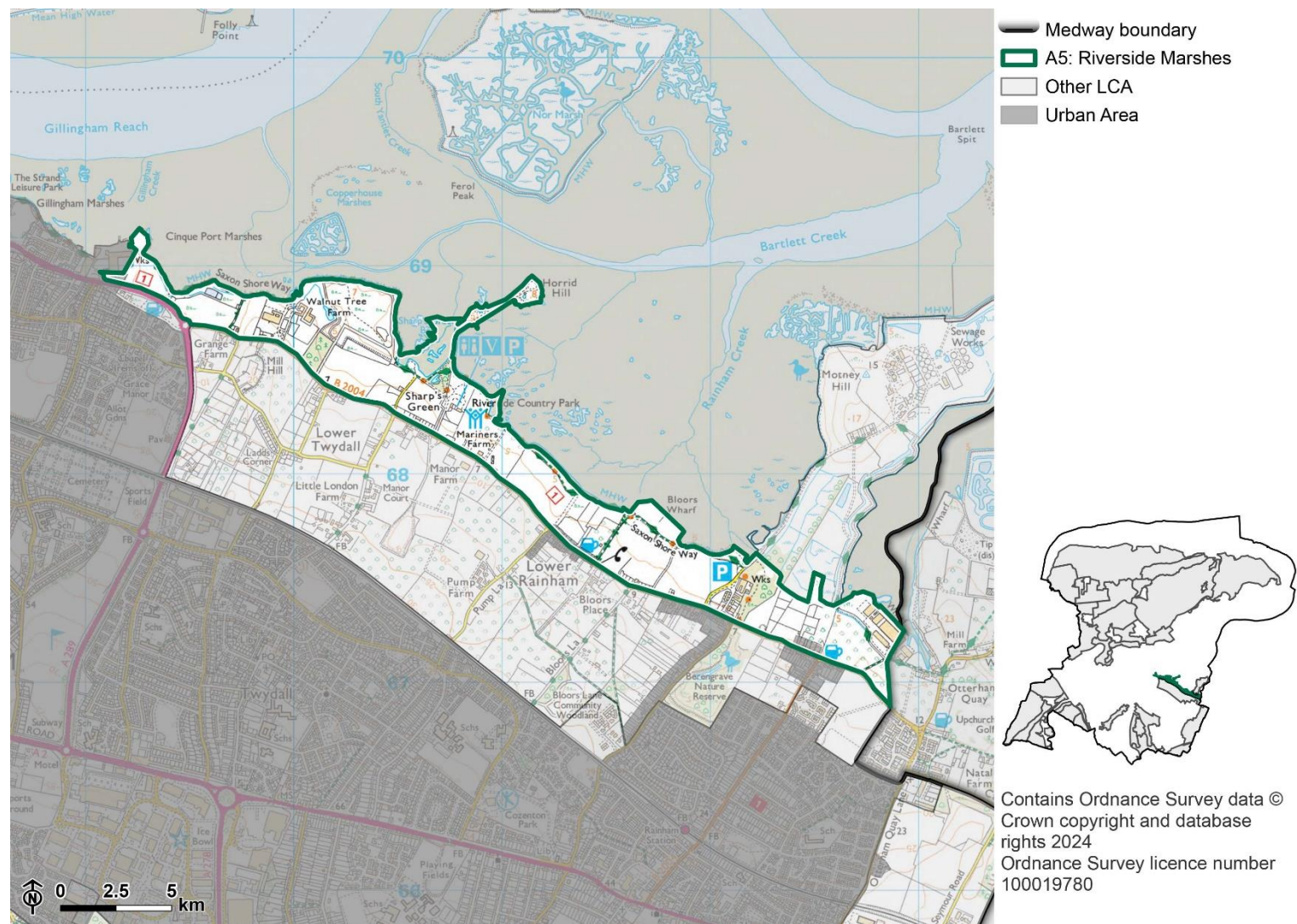
Description

Location and Summary

7.10 The Riverside Marshes LCA is located to the north and east of the Rainham and Gillingham urban areas. The LCA forms a linear strip of land extending east-west along the southern edge of the Medway Estuary. It is defined to the north by the coastal edge; to the south by Lower Rainham Road (B2004), which marks the transition to the Kent Fruit Belt (LCA E1: Lower Rainham); to the west by the urban edge of Gillingham; and to the east by the boundary with neighbouring Swale District, which marks a transition to the 'Fruit Belt' landscape (LCA 32. Upchurch and Lower Halstow Fruit Belt).

7.11 This is a low-lying area of marshland with slightly higher ground to the south in agricultural use. It is a varied landscape featuring coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, coastal saltmarsh, intertidal mud flats and scrub along the coastal edge, and orchards, small fields, equine related uses further inland. It forms a rural setting to the north of Lower Rainham Conservation Area and part of the wider setting to Lower Twydall Conservation Area.

Figure 7.6: Location of LCA A5



Key Characteristics

- A linear area extending along the southern edge of the Medway Estuary that rises gently from the waters' edge to slightly higher ground inland to the south.
- A varied landscape featuring coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, coastal saltmarsh, intertidal mud flats and scrub along the coastal edge, and orchards, small agricultural fields and equine related uses on higher ground to the south.
- Largely retains its historic settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and the hamlet at Lower Rainham on higher ground to the south; reflected today by the presence of several Grade II listed farmhouses and a Conservation Area designation at Lower Rainham.
- Forms a rural setting to the north of Lower Rainham Conservation Area and part of the wider setting to Lower Twydall Conservation Area.
- A good level of access, featuring the Saxon Shore Way/ King Charels III England Coast Path extending along the coastline to the north and the Riverside Country Park ; several lanes/tracks run perpendicular to the shoreline, connecting it with Lower Rainham Road.
- Predominantly rural in character due to prevalence of coastal habitats, open farmland and orchards, although the country parks introduce an amenity element.
- Strong visual connection with the River Medway and its estuary, with dramatic open views north from sea wall; a number of evocative hulks and other remains form focal features on the intertidal flats and the 19th century military forts at Hoo and Darnet islands are visible in places.
- Relative sense of remoteness and tranquillity to the north due to a general lack of built development, open views across the estuary, and the sounds of wind and birds.
- Some urban influences along Lower Rainham Road to the south-east and in proximity to the edge of Gillingham to the west; remnant industrial influences to the east around Bloors Wharf and views across the

river/estuary towards industrial development at Kingsnorth and the Isle of Grain.

- A sense of dynamism and movement due to the tidal nature of the surrounding estuary results and the movement of boats and shipping.
- Partially covered by, and lies adjacent to, international and national nature conservation designations which feature important inter-tidal and estuarine habitats and supports internationally important populations of wintering and passage birds.

Photo 7.17: Coastal saltmarsh, intertidal mud flats and scrub along the coastal edge



Photo 7.18: Agricultural land uses on slightly higher ground to the south



Photo 7.19: Strong visual connection with the River Medway and its estuary



Photo 7.20: Evocative hulks and other remains form focal features on the intertidal flats



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Upper Cretaceous Chalk and Thanet Sand Formations overlain by alluvium (clay, silt, sand and peat) and Head deposits (clay, silt, sand and gravel).
- Gently sloping landform, from 0m AOD along the coastline to the north up to approximately 5m AOD to the south.
- Predominantly Grade I agricultural soils which support agricultural and horticultural land uses, including a mix of arable, pasture and orchards.
- The majority of the landscape falls within Flood Zone 2 and 3, excluding areas to the south along Lower Rainham Road.
- Priority Habitats recorded include 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh', 'coastal saltmarsh', 'mudflats', 'traditional orchards' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Partially covered by, and lies adjacent to, international and national nature conservation designations (Medway and Estuary Ramsar Site, SPA and SSSI) which feature important inter-tidal and estuarine habitats and supports internationally important populations of wintering and passage birds. The adjacent Medway Estuary is also covered by the Medway Estuary MCZ.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 17 – Northern Horticultural Belt as defined within the Kent HLC (2001), albeit has close association with the adjacent Historic Landscape Character Area 28 – Northern Coast and Marshland.
- The Medway and its estuary holds many cultural and historic associations both as a historic transport route and for its historic naval use; the wider area includes military forts at Hoo and Darnet islands (both Scheduled

Monuments) and was the site of the Raid on the Medway in June 1667 during the Second Anglo-Dutch War.

- The HLC records 'small regular with straight boundaries (parliamentary type enclosure)' covering the majority of the landscape, with small areas of 'country park' to the west and 'post-1801 settlement (general)' to the east. This reflects later rationalisation of the landscape and introduction of residential development from the 19th century onwards.
- Historically the area was sparsely settled with scattered farmsteads and the hamlet at Lower Rainham on higher ground along Lower Rainham Road to the south. This is reflected today by the presence of several Grade II listed farmhouses and other rural buildings, including the Black House, and a conservation area designation at Lower Rainham.
- Today, the area also features ribbon development on its southern edge along Lower Rainham Road.
- Has a good level of access, including the Saxon Shore Way extending along the seawall to the north and the Riverside Country Park; the Saxon Shore Way is connected to Lower Rainham Road to the south by two PRoW and several rural lanes/tracks.
- The principal road in the area is Lower Rainham Road (B2004), which runs east-west to the south; elsewhere the landscape is traversed by a network of narrow lanes and tracks, which largely follow a north-south axis which historically connected settled areas to the south with the open marshes to the north.

Perceptual Influences

- Area has become partially fragmented by urban fringe influences, particularly to the east, but retains an essentially rural character.
- Strong visual relationship with the estuary to the north, including Cinque Port Marshes and Nor Marsh, with dramatic open views across estuary from sea wall.

- Sense of remoteness and tranquillity to the north due to a general lack of built development, open views across the estuary, and the sounds of wind and birds.
- A number of evocative hulks and other remains form focal features on the intertidal flats.
- Some detracting industrial influences due to views across the river/estuary towards industrial development at Kingsnorth to the north and the Isle of Grain to the north-east.
- The tidal nature of the surrounding estuary results a sense of dynamism and movement, with tides periodically filling and emptying the adjacent creeks and covering and uncovering the fringing marshes and mudflats.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Gently rising, low-lying landscape with a strong sense of openness allowing uninterrupted views across the surrounding marshes and estuary.
- Relative sense of remoteness and tranquillity due to a general lack of built development and open views across the estuary.
- Ecologically important area, lying within and adjacent to international and national nature conservation designations, and featuring areas of Priority Habitat 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh', 'coastal saltmarsh', 'traditional orchards' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Recreational value of the promoted Saxon Shore Way, which provides access to the coastal edges, and the Riverside Country Park which provides access to the west and east respectively.
- High-quality soils supporting horticultural land uses, including arable and orchards. Orchards provide a strong connection with the adjacent LCA E1: Lower Rainham to the south.

- The rural character of much of the landscape which provides a setting for the historic farmhouses and the Conservation Area at Lower Rainham.
- The north-south and east-west grain of the landscape, as a result of the northerly aspect of the landscape in relation to the estuary and the resulting axes of roads, lanes and tracks.
- Provides a rural buffer/green corridor (along with the adjacent LCA E1: Lower Rainham) between the urban area and the area of international and national importance for nature conservation along the Medway Estuary and marshes to the north.
- Gently sloping land that forms a green backdrop when viewed from the Medway estuary.
- Cultural and historic associations of the Medway and its estuary; forms part of the wider setting of military forts at Hoo and Darnet islands (Scheduled Monuments).
- Area has key role as gateway into Medway; linking urban areas and countryside and as interface between estuary and orchards of North Kent Fruit Belt.

Issues and Changes

- The strategy for the shoreline within the Medway Estuary and Swale Flood and Erosion Risk Management Strategy (MEASS) is to construct new setback embankments at Danes Hill and sustain embankments, walls, and flood gates around other areas.
- Suburbanisation in the east, with ribbon development along Lower Rainham Road and the further northward expansion of the Rainham urban area along Berengrave Lane, Station Road and Otterham Quay Lane.
- An increase in equine land uses, particularly to the east in proximity to the urban edges.
- Loss of traditional orchards and field patterns, due to abandonment or conversion to arable, pasture or equine uses.

- Loss distinctive settlement identity of Lower Rainham; ribbon development along Lower Rainham Road to the east of the hamlet is leading to a reduction in physical and perceived separation between it and the urban area of Rainham (including the formerly separate hamlet of East Rainham).
- Gradual loss/erosion of the buffer between the urban area and the area of international and national importance for nature conservation along the Medway Estuary and marshes to the north.
- Increased recreational pressures within country parks and along the Saxon Shore Way and disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Loss of the historic character of the marshes and waterfront due to industrial and amenity influences.
- Conversion of grazing marsh to cultivated land.
- The coastal marshes landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Loss of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh and coastal salt marsh and other inter-tidal habitats as a result of reclamation and 'coastal squeeze'.
 - Tidal flooding has the potential to impact heritage sites and tourism, infrastructure, protected areas and natural habitats, food sources for wildlife, communities, and commerce.
 - Hotter drier summers and wetter winters and winter flooding could result in changes to wetland plant community composition.
 - More frequent inundation could increase the area of exposed mud, making marshes more susceptible to invasive plants and erosion.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Riverside Marshes LCA is to conserve and enhance the character of this flat open landscape and its strong sense of

place due to its relationship with the Medway estuary. Seek to conserve and increase coastal and inter-tidal habitats to enhance the distinctive marshland character. Maintain and enhance recreational access to the landscape in balance with protecting the historic character of the marshes and avoiding/minimising disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Work with natural coastal processes to conserve and enhance the coastal landscape with its distinctive pattern of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh and coastal saltmarsh.
- Make room for 'roll back' of estuary habitats 'squeezed' by sea level rise by providing buffer zones.
- Conserve and enhance ecologically important habitats, including Priority Habitat 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh', 'coastal saltmarsh', 'traditional orchards' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Encourage retention and conservation of remaining traditional orchards and encourage the planting of new orchards; seek to connect and extend and manage to enhance biodiversity value.
- Conserve the traditional pattern and structure of the landscape by improving the continuity of hedgerows/shelter belts to enhance the rectilinear field pattern and to create an intact and connected network providing shelter from higher winds and shade; enhance and augment fragmented field boundaries with locally characteristic species, filling gaps where possible and replacing uncharacteristic coniferous planting and fencing.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and

enjoyment; consider the strengthening of north-south footpath and cycle links with Lower Twydall and Lower Rainham.

- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the Saxon Shore Way, drawing upon the various historic associations with the Medway, including through the preservation and enhancement of vistas across the estuary.
- Introduce positive land management within the country park, protecting the historic character of the marshes and balancing potential conflicts between educational, recreational and wildlife interests; consider the preservation and interpretation of Black House.
- Monitor and ensure the control of potential invasive non-native species.
- Manage coastal defences to prevent inundation and erosion and to combat the increasing pressures from climate change, including coastal squeeze, flooding, and erosion.

Development Management

- Maintain the sense of openness by resisting proposals for new development that would impinge on the remote undeveloped quality of the marshland; where development is proposed consider siting and design and the use locally characteristic planting to reduce any impacts.
- Conserve the skyline, avoiding visually intrusive development, both within the area and outside it, that impacts the characteristic large open skies and horizons. Encourage appropriate landscape and visual mitigation within and to the periphery/ edges of such development, such as siting, appropriate tree screening, muted colours and non-reflective surfaces.
- Consider the impact on longer views from the marshes and the coast of any proposed large scale or tall development; where development is proposed tree screening, muted colours and non-reflective surfaces will help provide mitigation and integration.

- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and hamlets and their rural setting, including the listed Black House and Lower Rainham Conservation Area, by resisting inappropriate or unsympathetic development.
- Consider the role of this area as a green backdrop to the adjacent estuary and as a gateway into Medway from the east, by resisting visually prominent development.
- Seek to manage signage and other features to strengthen and reinforce rural character.
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and any further reduction in tranquillity; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards.

Landscape Character Area A6: Motney Hill

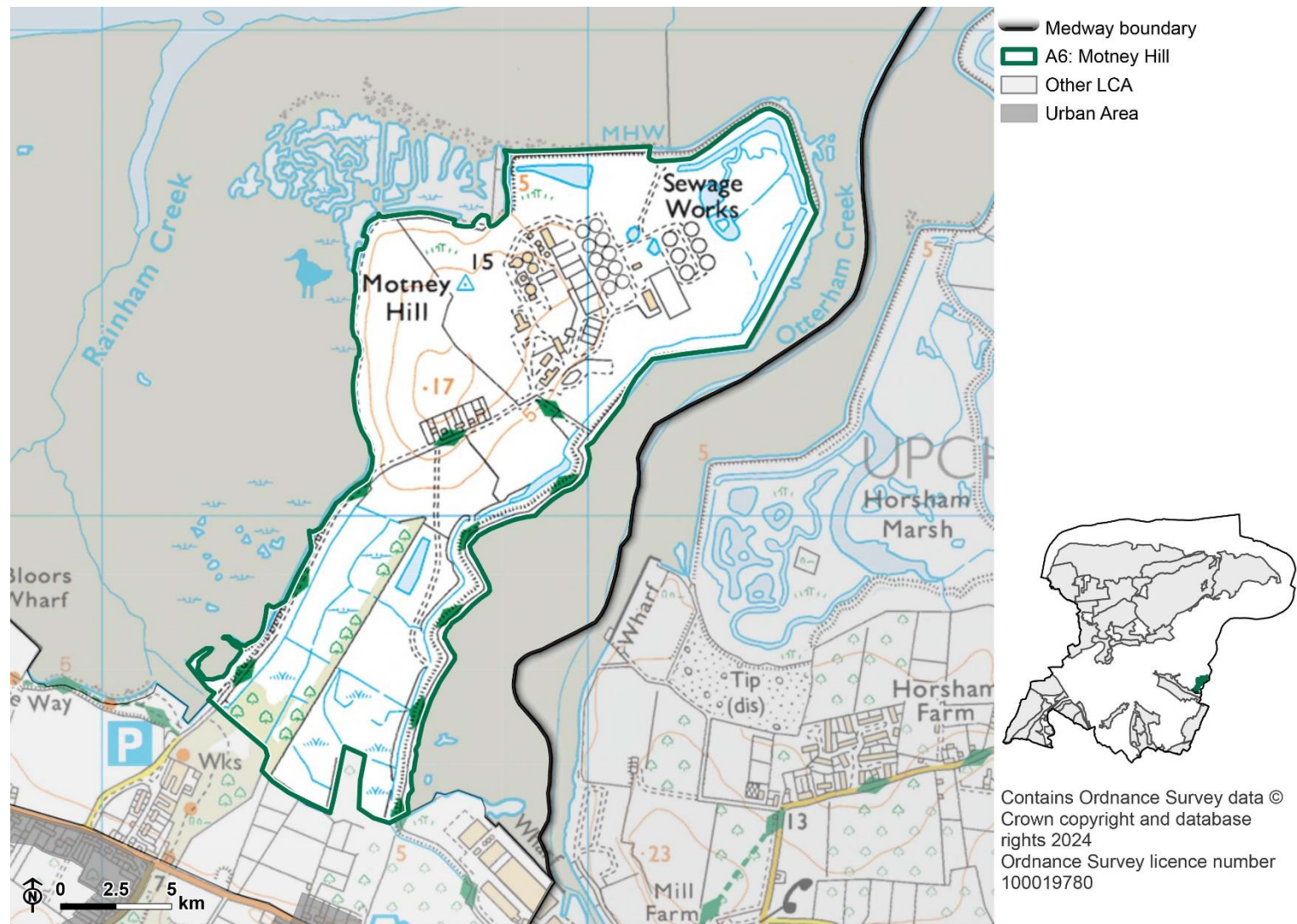
Description

Location and Summary

7.12 The Motney Hill LCA is located to the north of Rainham and west of Upchurch (Swale District). The LCA forms a narrow peninsula of land extending out into the Medway Estuary. It is surrounded by open estuary to the north, east and west – Bartlett Creek to the north, Otterham Creek to the east and Rainham Creek to the west. The southern boundary of the LCA is defined by scattered blocks of woodland that mark the transition to LCA A5: Riverside Marshes.

7.13 This is a predominantly low-lying area of marshland, although rises to an area of localised higher ground – Motley Hill – to the north. It is a varied landscape featuring marshland, reed beds, scrub and saltmarsh, as well as man-made features in the form of a sea wall and a sewage works to the far north.

Figure 7.7: Location of LCA A6



Key Characteristics

- A narrow peninsula surrounded by broad open estuary to north, east and west; Otterham Creek to east forms a narrow channel between it and land within neighbouring Swale District to the east.
- A relatively flat and low-lying landform, albeit with land rising to a localised area of higher ground to the north at Motney Hill.
- A varied landscape featuring both natural features – marshland, reed beds, scrub and saltmarsh – and man-made features – sea wall and sewage works.
- Areas of high biodiversity value to the south, north-east and along the fringes of the character area, reflected in international and national nature conservation designations.
- Access to the landscape is via the Saxon Shore Way/King Charles III England Coast Path, which follows the costal edges, and informal routes along the shoreline, especially at low tide; the Riverside Country Park also extends partially into the south-western corner of the character area.
- Strong visual connection with the River Medway and its estuary, with dramatic open views out from sea wall; a number of evocative hulks and other remains form focal features on the intertidal flats.
- Relative sense of remoteness and tranquillity due to a general lack of built development, open views across the estuary, and the sounds of wind and birds; this is undermined by the influence of the sewage works, traffic using Motney Hill, and views towards industrial development at Kingsnorth and Grain on the opposite side of the estuary.
- A sense of dynamism and movement due to the tidal nature of the surrounding estuary and the movement of boats and shipping.

Photo 7.21: Varied landscape featuring marshland, reed beds, scrub and saltmarsh



Photo 7.22: Strong visual connection with the Medway estuary



Photo 7.23: Narrow channel to the east formed by Otterham Creek



Photo 7.24: Evocative hulks forming focal features on the mud flats



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Thanet Sand Formations and Lambeth Group overlain by estuarine sand and silt deposits.
- Relatively flat and low-lying landform of between 0m and 5m AOD, albeit with land rising to a localised area of higher ground to the north – Motney Hill – at approximately 17m AOD.
- The majority of the landscape (excluding Motley Hill and sewage works to the north) falls within Flood Zone 2 and 3.
- Predominantly Grade II agricultural soils, although little to no farming evident.
- Varied landcover of marshland, reed beds, scrub and saltmarsh.
- Priority Habitats recorded include ‘reedbeds’, ‘coastal and floodplain grazing marsh’, ‘coastal saltmarsh’, and ‘deciduous woodland’ to the south-west.
- The majority of the landscape (excluding Motley Hill and sewage works to the north) is covered by international and national nature conservation designations (Medway and Estuary Ramsar Site, SPA and SSSI); it forms part of the wider area that features important inter-tidal and estuarine habitats and supports internationally important populations of wintering and passage birds. The surrounding estuary is also covered by the Medway Estuary MCZ.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 17 – Northern Horticultural Belt as defined within the Kent HLC (2001), albeit has close association with the adjacent Historic Landscape Character Area 28 – Northern Coast and Marshland.

- The Medway and its estuary holds many cultural and historic associations both as a historic transport route and for its historic naval use; the wider area includes military forts at Hoo and Darnet islands (both Scheduled Monuments) and was the site of the Raid on the Medway in June 1667 during the Second Anglo-Dutch War.
- The HLC records 'small rectilinear enclosures' and 'medium regular with straight boundaries (parliamentary type enclosure)' covering the majority of the landscape, with an area of 'reservoirs and water treatment' to the far north. This reflects later rationalisation of the landscape and introduction of industry in the early 20th century.
- The landscape was historically unsettled and today remains so, with the exception of a line of properties along Motney Hill to the south-west of the sewage works.
- Much of the landscape to the north is inaccessible, including Motney Hill and land associated with the sewage works, although the Saxon Shore Way provides access along the east and west sides of peninsula and the Riverside Country Park extends into the south-west of the area.

Perceptual Influences

- Sense of remoteness and tranquillity across much of the landscape, due to a general lack of built development and roads and sounds of wind and birds.
- Some detracting industrial influences, including the sewage works; traffic using Motney Hill, a narrow road that carries traffic to and from the sewage works and residential properties; views towards housing development to the south (including that at Wooleys Orchard, south of Lower Rainham Road); and views north across the river/estuary towards industrial development at Kingsnorth and Grain.
- Strong visual relationship with the surrounding estuary; dramatic open views across estuary from sea wall and inland from higher ground to north.
- A number of evocative hulks and other remains form focal features on the intertidal flats.

- The tidal nature of the surrounding estuary results a sense of dynamism and movement, with tides periodically filling and emptying the adjacent creeks and covering and uncovering the fringing marshes and mudflats.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Flat, low-lying landscape with a strong sense of openness allowing uninterrupted views across the surrounding marshes and estuary.
- A general lack of built development and roads which increases the sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Ecologically important area, lying within and adjacent to international and national nature conservation designations, and featuring areas of Priority Habitat 'reedbeds', 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh', 'coastal saltmarsh', and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Provides parts of a rural buffer/green corridor (along with the adjacent LCA A5: Riverside Marshes and LCA E1: Lower Rainham) between the urban area and the area of international and national importance for nature conservation along the Medway Estuary and marshes to the north.
- Recreational value of the promoted Saxon Shore Way, which provides access to the coastal edges, and the Riverside Country Park which provides access to the south-west.
- Cultural and historic associations of the Medway and its estuary; forms part of the wider setting of military forts at Hoo and Darnet islands (Scheduled Monuments).

Issues and Changes

- The strategy for the shoreline within the Medway Estuary and Swale Flood and Erosion Risk Management Strategy (MEASS) is for No Active Intervention with compensatory freshwater habitat required by year 9.
- Lack of management of reed beds and scrub in the interior of the peninsula.
- Detracting influence of the sewage works and Motney Hill road and associated traffic, signage and boundary treatments.
- Recreational pressure from Saxon Shore Way and disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Impact of new development on landscape character and sense of remoteness, including that on the edge of the urban area to the south.
- Loss of the historic character of the marshes and waterfront due to industrial influences.
- The coastal marsh landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Loss of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh and coastal salt marsh and other inter-tidal habitats as a result of reclamation and 'coastal squeeze'.
 - Tidal flooding has the potential to impact heritage sites and tourism, infrastructure, protected areas and natural habitats, food sources for wildlife, communities, and commerce.
 - Hotter drier summers and wetter winters and winter flooding could result in changes to wetland plant community composition.
 - More frequent inundation could increase the area of exposed mud, making marshes more susceptible to invasive plants and erosion.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Motney Hill LCA is to conserve and enhance the character of the flat open landscape and the strong sense of place due to its relationship with the Medway estuary. Seek to reduce the influence of existing industrial features and conserve and increase coastal and intertidal habitats to enhance the distinctive marshland character.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Work with natural coastal processes to conserve and enhance the coastal landscape with its distinctive pattern of grazing marsh, saltmarsh and reedbed habitats.
- Make room for 'roll back' of estuary habitats 'squeezed' by sea level rise by providing buffer zones.
- Management of the shoreline should consider No Active Intervention policies and natural environmental solutions (such as the accretion of saltmarsh that provide a defence buffer) to allow for natural shoreline evolution, in line with the strategy for the MEASS; this will enhance adaptation and ecosystem service functioning, and simultaneously begin to move away from a focus on hard engineering solutions.
- Conserve and enhance ecologically important habitats, including Priority Habitat 'reedbeds', 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh', 'coastal saltmarsh', and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment; consider the introduction of low-key routes east-west across

the landscape and to higher ground at Motney Hill and the creation/enhancement of wayfinding and interpretation .

- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the Saxon Shore Way, drawing upon the various historic associations with the Medway, including through the preservation and enhancement of vistas across the estuary.
- Introduce positive land management within and around the country park, protecting the historic character of the marshes and balancing potential conflicts between educational, recreational and wildlife interests.
- Consider opportunities to increase the extent of deciduous woodland cover to the south of the LCA, using locally characteristic species to strengthen biodiversity and local distinctiveness and to help screen adverse impacts, particularly the sewage works, using locally occurring species.
- Monitor and ensure the control of potential invasive non-native species.
- Manage coastal defences to prevent inundation and erosion and to combat the increasing pressures from climate change, including coastal squeeze, flooding, and erosion.

Development Management

- Maintain the sense of openness by resisting proposals development that impinge on the remote undeveloped quality of the marshland, including intensification of existing uses; where development is proposed consider siting and design and the use locally characteristic planting to reduce any impacts.
- Conserve the skyline, avoiding visually intrusive development, both within the area and outside it, that impacts the characteristic large open skies and horizons. Encourage appropriate landscape and visual mitigation within and to the periphery/ edges of such development, such as siting, appropriate tree screening, muted colours and non-reflective surfaces.

- Consider the impact on longer views from the marshes and the coast of any proposed large scale or tall development; where development is proposed tree screening, muted colours and non-reflective surfaces will help provide mitigation and integration.
- Consider impact of development to the south to avoid adverse impact on views out from this open landscape.
- Seek to manage signage and other features to strengthen and reinforce rural character.
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and any further reduction in tranquillity ; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards.

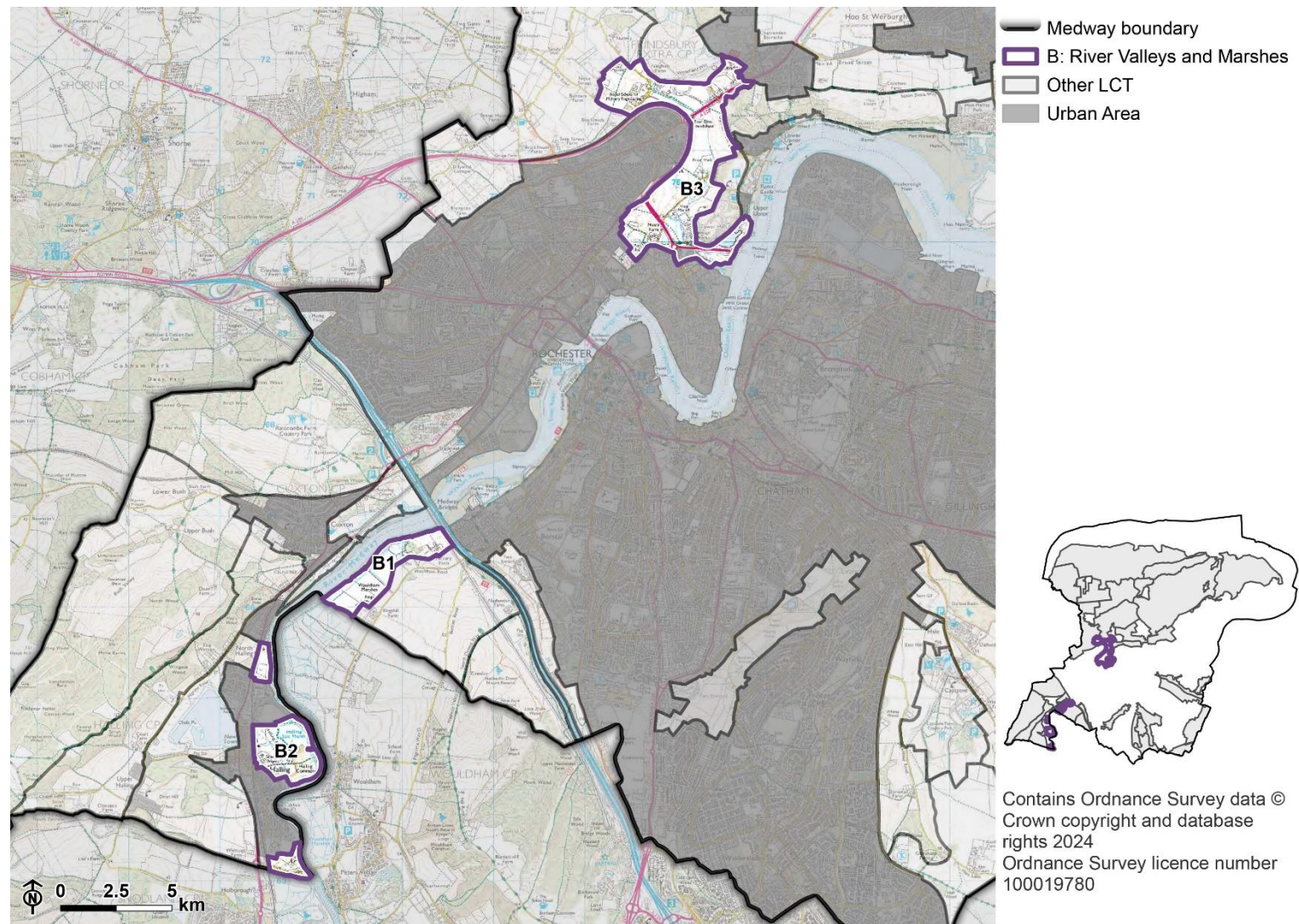
Landscape Character Type B: River Valleys and Marshes

Landscape Character Areas

7.14 The River Valleys and Marshes LCT is subdivided into three LCAs:

- Landscape Character Area B1: Wouldham Marshes;
- Landscape Character Area B2: Halling and Holborough Marshes; and
- Landscape Character Area B3: Hogmarsh Valley.

Figure 7.8: Location of the River Valleys and Marshes LCT and LCAs



Landscape Character Area B1: Wouldham Marshes

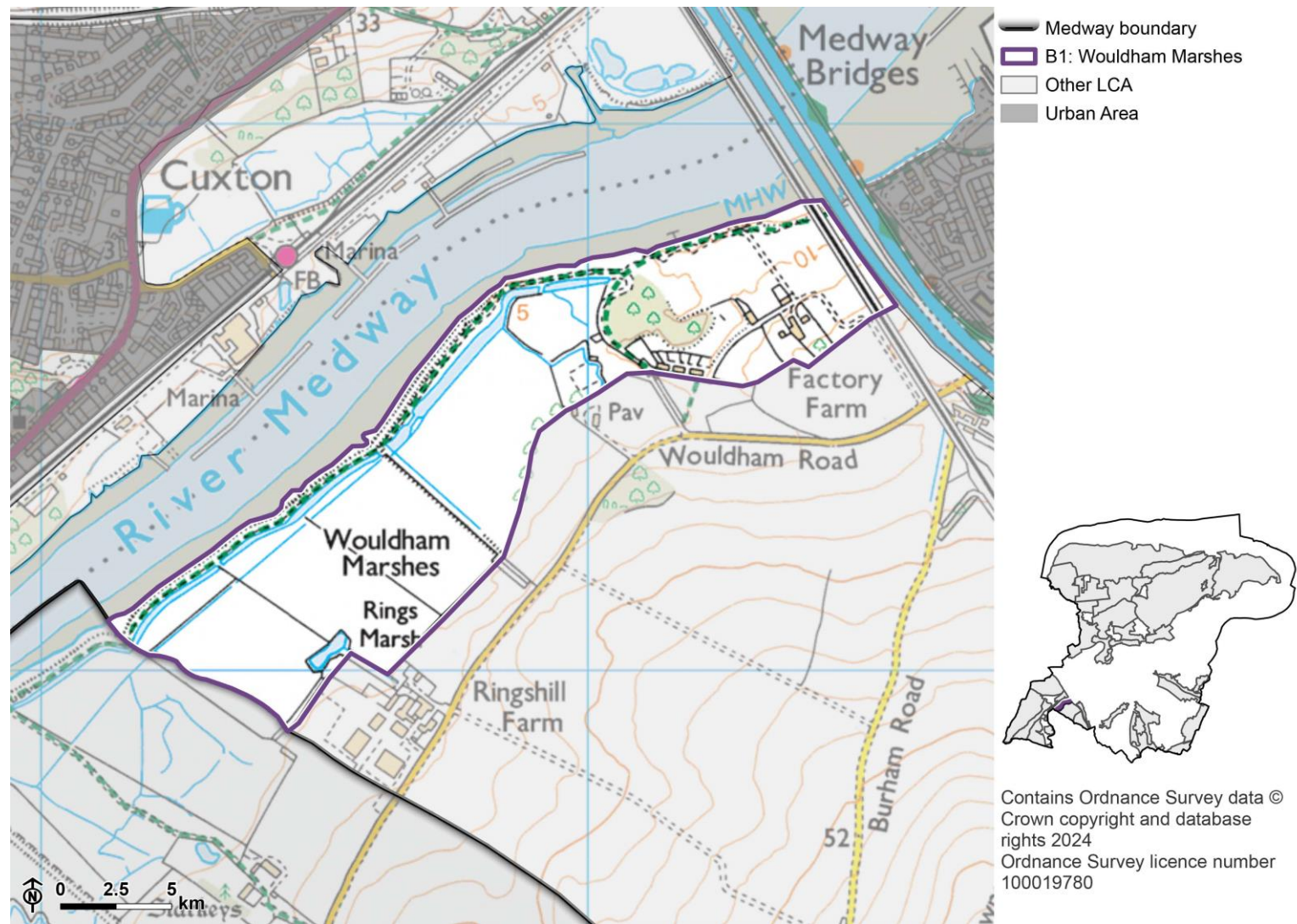
Description

Location and Summary

7.15 The Wouldham Marshes LCA is located to the west of Chatham (Borstal). It is defined by the river to the north; by the M2 Motorway bridge to the east; and by rising topography to the south, which mark the transition to the eastern scarp foot (LCA C2: Wouldham Scarp East). The western boundary of the LCA follows the boundary with neighbouring Tonbridge and Malling Borough.

7.16 This is a flat area of marshland along the River Medway that lies entirely within the Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly an AONB). The LCA forms part of the larger LCA 4B: Medway Valley and lies within the 'Eastern Scarp' Local Character Area, as assessed within the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment Update (2023).

Figure 7.9: Location of LCA B1



Key Characteristics

- Small area of low-lying marshland adjacent to the River Medway, characterised by drainage ditches, unimproved grassland, floodplain grazing marsh and reeds; an artificial raised embankment runs along the river edge.
- Predominantly used for pasture farming, with some equine uses to the east; fields are defined by gappy hedgerows with some replacement by post and wire fencing in places.
- Road access is limited to Brambletree Cottages and several narrow lanes/access tracks to the east; there is no road access to the west.
- Features two PRoW, including one that follows the raised embankment along the river; access between the river and Wouldham Road is limited to the west and the river forms a natural barrier to movement north.
- Retains a rural character, although to the east tranquillity is undermined by the influence of the M2, HS1 and urban edge of Chatham.
- Open long views along and across the river, including east towards Rochester Castle and Cathedral and north towards the Grade I listed Church of St Michael in Cuxton; detracting features in these views include industry, pylons and residential development along the valley bottom, and the Medway Bridges to the east.
- The flat low-lying landscape contrasts with the steeply sloping scarps that form the valleys sides to the east and west.
- The tidal nature of the river results a sense of dynamism and movement, with tides periodically covering and uncovering the fringing marshes, reeds and mudflats.

Photo 7.25: Marshland along the River Medway, with ditches, grassland, grazing marsh and reeds



Photo 7.26: Open long views along and across the river, including towards Cuxton



Photo 7.27: Retained rural character, although the M2 and HS1 bridges are detracting elements



Photo 7.28: Flat low-lying landscape contrasting the steeply sloping scarps to the east and west



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Late Cretaceous Chalk overlain by alluvial deposits of clay, silt, sand and peat cut by the River Medway.
- A flat landform along the valley floor, lying between approximately 2m and 5m AOD, with several drainage ditches; and artificial raised embankment runs along the river edge.
- The majority of the landscape falls within Flood Zone 2 and 3, excluding a small area to the east.
- Grade 4 (poor) agricultural soils cover the majority of the area, with a small area of Grade 2 (very good) soils to the south.
- Priority Habitat 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh', 'coastal saltmarsh' and 'mudflats' cover a large part of the area to the west, with a small area of 'deciduous woodland' (on the site of the now demolished Borstal Cement Works) and 'traditional orchard' (south of Riverview Manor).
- Land is predominantly used for pasture farming, with some equine uses to the east.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 12 – Rochester/Chatham Hinterland as defined within the Kent HLC (2001), albeit has close association with the adjacent Historic Landscape Character Area 32 – Urban Conurbation.
- The HLC records 'small regular with straight boundaries (parliamentary type enclosure)' covering almost the entire area, with a small area of 'scattered settlement with paddocks (post-1800 extent)' to the east; this is characteristic of the post-medieval period up to the early 19th century.
- Fields are defined by gappy hedgerows with some replacement by post and wire fencing.

- Historically the landscape was largely unsettled, although Borstal Cement Works and a series of cottages were introduced to the east in the 19th century; today the cement works have been demolished and there is now some further residential development in this location and some houseboats along the river to the north-east.
- The area was used as a military training ground for pontooning and bridging during the Second World War.
- Road access is limited to Brambletree Cottages and several narrow lanes/access tracks to the east; there is no road access to the west.
- The area features a PRoW that follows the raised embankment along the river; access between the river and Wouldham Road limited to a PRoW in the east.
- The River Medway forms a natural barrier to movement to the north-west; bridging points are limited in this area.

Perceptual Influences

- The area retains a rural character, although to the east the landscape has become fragmented by the influence of sub-urban development, a car breakers/ scrap metal compound, and roads around Brambletree Cottage, as well as the presence of HS1L, M2 and the urban edge of Chatham.
- The M2 and urban edge of Chatham influence the landscape and reduce levels of tranquillity and increase light pollution to the east; elsewhere there is a greater sense of tranquillity, indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.
- There are open long views along and across the river, including east towards Rochester Castle and Cathedral and north towards the Grade I listed Church of St Michael in Cuxton; detracting features in these views include industry, pylons and residential development along the valley bottom, and the Medway Bridges to the east.
- The flat low-lying landscape contrasts with the steeply sloping scarps that form the valleys sides to the east and west.

- The tidal nature of the river results a sense of dynamism and movement, with tides periodically covering and uncovering the fringing marshes, reeds and mudflats. Important open rural setting to the river.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Forms part of the Kent Downs National Landscape and demonstrates the following 'special components, characteristics and qualities': biodiversity-rich habitats; farmed landscape; geology and natural resources; and tranquillity and remoteness.
- The rural character of much of the landscape which provides a setting for the river Medway, as it emerges from the urban areas to the east.
- Ecologically important areas of Priority Habitat 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh', 'coastal saltmarsh', 'mudflats', 'traditional orchard' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Sense of tranquillity, particularly in the west away from urbanising influences.
- The flat low-lying landscape contrasting with the steeply sloping scarps that form the valleys sides to the east and west.
- Ecologically important areas – Priority Habitat 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Recreational value of the PRoW, which provides access to the river edge.

Issues and Changes

- Land to the east lies within a 'safeguarded corridor of M2 widening', although the presence of HS1 may restrict potential for road widening/improvements.
- Negative effect of suburbanisation in the east, with residential development around Brambletree Cottages.
- An increase in equine land uses to the east, which undermine the traditional appearance of the landscape.
- Loss of hedgerows and replacement with post and wire fencing.
- Increased recreational pressures along the river edge and disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Limited formal access between the river and Wouldham Road to the west.
- Lack of management of scrub vegetation.
- The strategy for this area within the Medway Estuary and Swale Flood and Erosion Risk Management Strategy (MEASS) is for 'No Active Intervention'. This will involve all maintenance on current defences being ceased with an increased risk of overtopping and defences being at risk from failure from year 20 causing increased risk of overflow flooding.
- The river valley and marshes landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Loss of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh and other inter-tidal habitats as a result of 'coastal squeeze'.
 - Tidal flooding and the pollutants and debris it carries has the potential to impact infrastructure, protected areas and natural habitats, food sources for wildlife and communities.
 - Hotter drier summers and wetter winters and winter flooding could result in changes to wetland plant community composition.
 - Wetter winters and higher peak river flows may lead to flooding events which could cause physical habitat degradation and have the potential

to spread invasive non-native species across habitats and water bodies.

- Increased cycles of drought and flood will cause fluctuations in landscape condition, altering the landscape and its key features; it can lead to water logging, increased siltation and eutrophication, low flow in streams and rivers, drying out of marshes and wetland habitats, and changes to community composition.
- Hotter summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species and a changing composition of wildlife in hedgerows.
- Wetter winters may mean woody species in hedgerows are exposed to prolonged flooding in the growing season and will be at risk of dying, and winter trimming will become more difficult due to wet ground. Winter trimming is preferred to autumn trimming to ensure food supply for birds.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Wouldham Marshes LCA is to conserve and enhance the character and strong sense of place of the open river marsh landscape with its relationship with the river. Seek to reduce the influence of existing development to the east by increasing woodland cover, reinstate hedgerows and conserve and increase inter-tidal habitats to enhance the distinctive river marsh character and its role in providing a setting for the River Medway as it emerges from the urban areas to the east.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Ensure that relevant 'special components, characteristics and qualities' of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard for the aims and principles set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan.
- Work with natural tidal river processes to conserve and enhance the landscape with its distinctive pattern of drainage ditches, unimproved grassland, floodplain grazing marsh and reeds.
- Maintain and enhance natural river bank and bed features, to restore traditional patterns and processes of natural flooding cycles through selective areas of 'No Active Intervention' and 'Managed Realignment strategies' in line with the MEASS; this will allow natural functioning of the river and will help to conserve and restore wetland habitats, enhancing their contribution to landscape character and improving habitat connectivity, nature conservation and biodiversity.
- Conserve and enhance ecologically important habitats, including Priority Habitat 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing deciduous woodland cover through natural regeneration or small scale planting, particularly around urbanising influences to the east.
- Seek to prevent any loss or decline in the quality of remaining boundary hedgerows and encourage their restoration/reinstatement; consider opportunities to re-introduce historic hedgerow patterns (pre-19th century).
- When establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to

diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.

- Manage livestock grazing on the river floodplains and close to the rivers and drainage ditches, to ensure it does not have an impact on water quality; minimise over and under-grazing through flexible management.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment; consider opportunities for additional rights of way in the west connecting the river and Wouldham Road; consider opportunities to extend and build upon the 'Wouldham Community Trail', part of the Valley of Visions Community Trails Project.
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the PRow, including through the enhancement of vistas along the river.
- Draw upon historic associations the area has, including views towards Rochester Castle and Cathedral and its use as a pontooning and bridging area during World War Two.
- Manage areas of scrub to maintain the open character of the marshland.
- Monitor and ensure the control of potential invasive non-native species.
- Restoration of river floodplains, where possible, will play an increasingly important role in flood protection; setting back defences along the shoreline will also create areas of flood catchment that will reduce stressors on upstream areas.

Development Management

- Maintain the characteristic sparse pattern of development on lower ground, avoiding further development on the floodplain.
- Seek to reduce the influence of existing development to the east through the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Maintain the sense of openness by resisting proposals for new development that impinge on the undeveloped quality of the marshland;

if development is proposed look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.

- Any large scale or visually intrusive development would be detrimental within this visually open landscape and impact on views, including the visual setting of the adjacent Western and Eastern Scarp Areas of the Kent Downs National Landscape.
- Resist proposals for earth bunds and overly-engineered approaches to flood management. Where required, seek to integrate any new flood defences sensitively into the landscape, using gently sloping embankments and avoiding the use of unsympathetic materials.

Landscape Character Area B2: Halling and Holborough Marshes

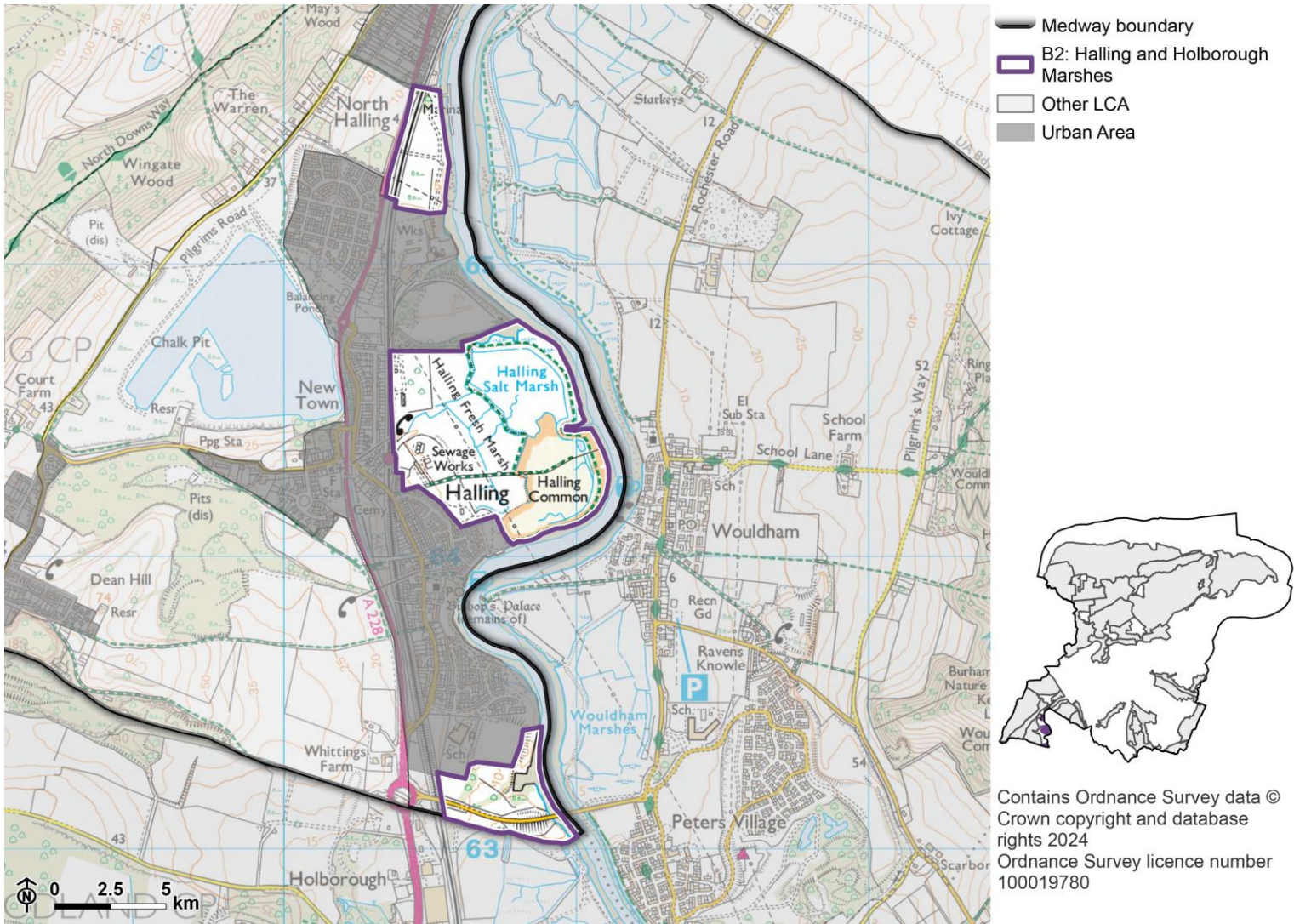
Description

Location and Summary

7.17 The Halling and Holborough Marshes LCA comprises three separate parcels of land located on the northern, central and southern edges of Halling. The northern parcel is defined by the 'Rochester to Paddock Wood' railway line to the west and the River Medway to the east, by residential development to the north and by a large industrial site (Cemex site). The central parcel is defined by the river to the south and south-east, by the urban edge of Halling to the south-west, by the railway line to the west, and by the Cemex site to the north. The southern smaller parcel extends to the administrative boundary with Tonbridge and Malling Borough to the south and east and is crossed by Peters Bridge Road.

7.18 This is an area of open marshland along the River Medway. It contains Halling Common and forms part of a rural setting to both Halling (including its Conservation Area) and Wouldham, with the latter located on the opposite side of the river within Tonbridge and Malling Borough.

Figure 7.10: Location of LCA B2



Key Characteristics

- A flat area of marshland adjacent to the River Medway, characterised by drainage ditches, coastal salt marsh, mudflats and scrub woodland; an artificial raised embankment runs along the river edge.
- Predominantly used for grazing; fields are defined by ditches, gappy hedgerows with some replacement by post and wire fencing in places.
- Good levels of recreational access, with the central parcel featuring Halling Common and a network of PRow, including along the raised river embankment, and the southern parcel being a nature reserve with several permissive footpaths; formal access is restricted in the northern parcel.
- The area largely retains a rural character, particularly at Halling Common; tranquillity is undermined in the vicinity of pylons and industrial development and Peters Bridge Road to the south.
- Forms an important open river-side setting for Halling and Wouldham across the river; several small irregular enclosures, common marsh and other commons and greens provide a sense of time depth, being characteristic of the medieval and early post medieval periods.
- Open long views along and across the river, including east towards Wouldham with its Grade I listed Church of All Saints forming a prominent visual landmark.
- The flat low-lying landscape contrasts with the steeply sloping scarps which form the valleys sides of the river and provide wooded horizons to the east and west.
- The tidal nature of the river results a sense of dynamism and movement, with tides periodically covering and uncovering the fringing marshes, reeds and mudflats.

Photo 7.29: Marshland along the River Medway with ditches, salt marsh, mudflats and scrub



Photo 7.30: Views along and across the river, including towards All Saints Church in Wouldham



Photo 7.31: Retained rural character, but pylons and industrial development are detracting elements



Photo 7.32: Flat low-lying landscape contrasting the steeply sloping scarps to the east and west



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Late Cretaceous Chalk overlain by alluvial deposits of clay, silt, sand and peat; this has been cut by the River Medway to form a wide flat valley.
- A flat landform, lying between approximately 2m and 10m AOD, with several drainage ditches; and artificial raised embankment runs along the river edge.
- The majority of the landscape falls within Flood Zone 2 and 3, excluding small areas to the south and west.
- Grade 4 (poor) agricultural soils cover the majority of the area which predominantly support grazing.
- Priority Habitats include 'coastal saltmarsh', 'mudflats', 'good quality improved grassland' and 'deciduous woodland'; the landscape also features areas of scrub vegetation in places, particularly on land previously occupied by Halling Cement Works (now demolished) and the associated railway lines (now dismantled).

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 32 – Urban Conurbation.
- The HLC records 'small irregular enclosures', 'common marsh' and 'other commons and greens' which provide time depth, being characteristic of the medieval and early post medieval periods.
- Historically the landscape was unsettled, although the cement industry is of local historical importance and Halling Cement Works occupied land adjacent to the LCA; today the majority of the landscape remains unsettled.
- Road access is limited to Marsh Road to the north, a narrow rural lane connecting Halling to the river edge; Peters Bridge Road lies to the south

although this carries traffic over the river with no access to the landscape itself.

- The central parcel area features Halling Common CRoW Access Land and a network of PRow, including one that follows the raised embankment along the river, although there is no continuity of access along the river on the north or south; there is no formal access to the northern parcels but the southern is run as a nature reserve by Kent Wildlife Trust and features permissive footpaths connecting to the adjacent playing fields.
- The River Medway forms a natural barrier to movement to the east; bridging points are limited in this area. Historically there was a ferry access across the river between Halling and Wouldham.

Perceptual Influences

- The area largely retains a rural character, although this is undermined in places by a series of pylons and the nearby Cemex site and by Peters Bridge Road to the south. Poorly managed fences adds to the degraded character locally.
- The Cemex site, urban area of Halling and Peters Bridge Road influence the landscape and reduce levels of tranquillity and increase light pollution to the north, west and south; elsewhere there is a greater sense of tranquillity, indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.
- There are open long views along and across the river, including east towards Wouldham; views also available towards the eastern and western scarps which provide wooded horizons.
- Forms an important rural setting for Halling and Wouldham across the river; the Grade I listed Church of All Saints in Wouldham is a prominent landmark in views along across the river.
- The flat low-lying landscape contrasts with the steeply sloping scarps that form the valleys sides to the east and west.
- The tidal nature of the river results a sense of dynamism and movement, with tides periodically covering and uncovering the fringing marshes, reeds and mudflats. Important open rural setting to the river.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- The rural character of much of the landscape which provides a setting for Halling and Wouldham and the River Medway.
- Open views along and across the river, including towards the Church of All Saints in Wouldham.
- The flat low-lying landscape contrasting with the steeply sloping scarps that form wooded valleys sides to the east and west.
- Ecologically important areas of Priority Habitat 'coastal saltmarsh', 'mudflats', 'good quality improved grassland' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Recreational value of the PRoW, which provides access to the river edge and connect to settlements.
- The rural character of much of the landscape which provides a setting for Halling and Wouldham and the River Medway.
- Ecologically important areas of Priority Habitat 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Sense of tranquillity, particularly at Halling Common.
- Time depth provided by 'small irregular enclosures', 'common marsh' and 'other commons and greens' which are characteristic of the medieval and early post medieval periods.

Issues and Changes

- Detracting influence of surrounding development, including the Cemex site, Peters Bridge to the south, development in Wouldham to the east, and the Peters Village development to the south-east.
- Loss of hedgerows and replacement with post and wire fencing.

- Lack of continuous access along the river to the north and south; lack of formal access to the southern parcel.
- Increased recreational pressures along the river edge and disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Lack of management of scrub vegetation.
- The strategy within the Medway Estuary and Swale Flood and Erosion Risk Management Strategy (MEASS) for the construction of new setback embankments at Halling Marshes with a 'No Active Management' approach elsewhere, involving the management of defences being ceased. Additionally, construction of a 'Managed Realignment' site at Halling marsh to help compensate for the strategy-wide coastal squeeze impacts.
- River valley and marsh landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Loss of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh and other inter-tidal habitats as a result of 'coastal squeeze'.
 - Tidal flooding and the pollutants and debris it carries has the potential to impact infrastructure, protected areas and natural habitats, food sources for wildlife and communities.
 - Hotter drier summers and wetter winters and winter flooding could result in changes to wetland plant community composition.
 - Wetter winters and higher peak river flows may lead to flooding events which could cause physical habitat degradation and have the potential to spread invasive non-native species across habitats and water bodies.
 - Increased cycles of drought and flood will cause fluctuations in landscape condition, altering the landscape and its key features; it can lead to water logging, increased siltation and eutrophication, low flow in streams and rivers, drying out of marshes and wetland habitats, and changes to community composition.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Halling and Holborough Marshes LCA is to conserve and enhance the character and strong sense of place of the flat open landscape with its strong relationship with the river. Seek to reduce the influence of existing development to the north and to conserve and increase inter-tidal habitats to enhance the distinctive river marsh character and rural setting of Halling, Wouldham and the river.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Work with natural tidal river processes to conserve and enhance the landscape with its distinctive pattern of drainage ditches, coastal saltmarsh, mudflats and improved grassland.
- Conserve and enhance ecologically important habitats, including Priority Habitat 'coastal saltmarsh', 'mudflats', 'good quality improved grassland' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing deciduous woodland cover through natural regeneration or small scale planting, particularly around urbanising influences within and adjacent to the area (such as the Cemex site).
- Seek to prevent any loss or decline in the quality of remaining boundary hedgerows and encourage their restoration/reinstatement; when establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.

- Manage livestock grazing on the river floodplains and close to the rivers and drainage ditches, to ensure it does not have an impact on water quality; minimise over and under-grazing through flexible management.
- Manage areas of scrub to maintain the open character of the marshland.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment; consider opportunities for additional PRoW along the river to the north and south, which could extend and build upon the 'Farming & Ferries Medway Valley Rail Trail', part of the Valley of Visions Community Trails Project.
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the PRoW, including through management of vegetation and anti-social activities, as well as the preservation and enhancement of vistas along an across the river.
- Monitor and ensure the control of potential invasive non-native species.
- Maintain and enhance natural river bank and bed features, to restore traditional patterns and processes of natural flooding cycles through selective areas of 'No Active Intervention' and 'Managed Realignment strategies' in line with the MEASS; this will allow natural functioning of the river and will help to conserve and restore wetland habitats, enhancing their contribution to landscape character and improving habitat connectivity, nature conservation and biodiversity.
- Restoration of river floodplains, where possible, will play an increasingly important role in flood protection; setting back defences along the shoreline will also create areas of flood catchment that will reduce stressors on upstream areas.

Development Management

- Maintain the sense of openness by resisting proposals for new development that impinge on the undeveloped quality of the marshland; if development is proposed consider siting and design and the use locally characteristic planting and earth bunds to reduce any impacts.

- Any large scale or visually intrusive development within or adjacent to the area would be detrimental within this visually open landscape and impact on views, including the visual setting of the adjacent Western and Eastern Scarp Areas of the National Landscape; where .
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and hamlets and their rural setting, including Halling and Wouldham, by resisting inappropriate or unsympathetic development.
- Avoid additional visually intrusive development along the valley bottom; consider opportunities for the removal of intrusive elements, such as pylons and the undergrounding power lines.
- Resist proposals for earth bunds and overly-engineered approaches to flood management. Where required, seek to integrate any new flood defences sensitively into the landscape, using gently sloping embankments and avoiding the use of unsympathetic materials.
- Encourage the removal of uncharacteristic boundary treatments, particularly on the periphery of settlements and industrial areas.
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and avoid any further reduction in tranquillity to the south, north and east; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards.

Landscape Character Area B3: Hogmarsh Valley

Description

Location and Summary

7.19 The Hogmarsh Valley LCA is located on the south-west of the Hoo Peninsula, between Medway City Estate to the south, Wainscott to the west, Chattenden to the north-east and Upnor to the east.

7.20 This is a broad shallow valley associated with the Hogmarsh Valley/River Wain and associated tributary streams, that drain into the River Medway via Whitewall Creek. It forms an open setting to Frindsbury Conservation Area and the landward setting to Upnor Conservation Area and Upnor Castle Scheduled Monument. The area also forms a clear distinction between the rural Hoo Peninsula and more urban Medway Towns.

Key Characteristics

- Broad valley of the Hogmarsh Stream/River Wain which drains into the River Medway via Whitewall Creek.
- The valley sides support gently rolling arable farmland, enclosed by distinctive wooded hilltops and higher valley sides; some wetland habitats are found along the valley bottom and pockets of tidal estuary habitats at Whitewall Creek estuary.
- Forms a predominantly open landscape lying between the built-up areas of Medway City Estate, Frindsbury, Wainscott, Upnor and Chattenden, and between the rural Hoo Peninsula and urban Medway Towns.
- Forms an open setting to the Frindsbury Conservation Area, which covers a surviving medieval manorial complex; and the landward wooded setting to Upnor Conservation Area and Upnor Castle Scheduled Monument.
- Predominantly open and rural in character, although tranquillity is undermined in proximity to Wainscott, Medway City Estate, the Royal School of Military Engineering, Ministry of Defence Gundulph Pool, and the busy A289 and A228.
- A network of PRoW provide access to the landscape, many of which are fringed by scrubby vegetation which restricts views; the A289 weakens links between Wainscott and Medway City Estate, and the military sites are publicly inaccessible.
- Surrounding hills and valley sides, including Tower Hill, Beacon Hill and Chattenden Ridge, form a distinctive elevated wooded backdrop.
- Distinctive views across the river towards Chatham Historic Dockyard and covered slips.

Photo 7.33: Open farmland enclosed by distinctive wooded hilltops and valley sides



Photo 7.34: Wetland habitats found along the valley bottom



Photo 7.35: Setting to the medieval manorial complex at Frindsbury



Photo 7.36: Views across the river towards Chatham Historic Dockyard



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Thanet Formation sand, silts and clays and Upper Chalk in the south, with small areas of Head brickearth deposits and alluvium along the course of Whitewall Creek.
- A broad valley enclosing the Hogmarsh stream/River Wain and Whitewall Creek, which are recorded as flood zones 2 and 3 and also fall within the tidal flood zone. Topography varies from 5 metres AOD along the streams and at the estuary to 30 metres AOD in the west.
- Pockets of Priority Habitat ‘coastal and floodplain grazing marsh’ and ‘mudflats’ at the Whitewall Creek estuary. Small areas of Priority Habitat ‘deciduous woodland’ in the north-east is recorded as part of the Chattenden Woods and Lodge Hill SSSI.
- Grade 1 (excellent) and Grade 3 (good to moderate) soils support large-scale arable farmland, bounded by fragmented hedgerows. Small areas of pasture are found along the Hogmarsh Stream south of Upnor Road.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 13 – Hoo Peninsula, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001). It is predominately formed of ‘fields bounded by tracks, roads and other rights of way’, with some ‘small rectilinear fields with wavy boundaries’ recorded in the north, although there has been some boundary loss.
- Historic character is concentrated at the Medieval manorial complex of Frindsbury and Manor Farm in the south-west. One of the most important buildings is the Grade I listed barn, built around 1304. The Manor Farm barn, Church of All Saints and parsonage form the Frindsbury and Manor Farm Conservation Area. Although this is a historic area, there is limited public access to it, and it is not very visible within the landscape.

- Transport corridors of the A289 and A228 sever links between Wainscott, Frindsbury and the surrounding landscape. The landscape is also impacted by modern features, including the suburban character of adjacent Wainscott and Medway City Estate; former quarry at Manor Farm; sewage treatment works; military infrastructure, including barbed wire fencing; and the Royal School of Military Engineering (RSME) buildings on Islington Farm Road.
- Limited PRoW link with areas of settlement and major road corridors. The Saxon Shore Way runs along the south of the character area. Additional recreational facilities within the area include the Frindsbury Lawn Tennis Club and Cricket Club.

Perceptual Influences

- Distinctive views are possible across the Medway towards Chatham Historic Dockyard and covered slips. Tower Hill, Beacon Hill and Chattenden Ridge form a distinctive elevated woodland backdrop to views from within the valley.
- The settlement edges of Wainscott and Chattenden are visible in views from the A228, and are not well integrated into the landscape. However, views from the minor roads are generally enclosed by vegetation along the roads. An exception is the view of the oast houses and church at Frindsbury from Upnor Road.
- The Hogmarsh Stream and Whitewall Creek are often not visible within the landscape, due to limited public access and vegetation along the streams.
- Pockets of tranquillity at Islingham Farm, Manor Farm and Frindsbury Barn, and around the fringes of Upper Upnor. However, the coherence and overall integrity of the area is disturbed by urban fringe and military land uses, unsympathetic boundary treatments and neglected pockets of land. Development at Medway City Estate and the Dockside Outlet Centre in Chatham Maritime are detracting features in many views. The A228 and A289 are noisy intrusions within the landscape.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Distinctive broad open valley, enclosed by a backdrop of surrounding wooded hills and upper valley sides, including Tower Hill, Beacon Hill and Chattenden Ridge.
- Forms an open landscape buffer between built-up areas of Medway City Estate, Frindsbury, Wainscott, Lower and Upper Upnor and Chattenden.
- Forms a strategic gap between the rural Hoo Peninsula and Medway Towns; provides a green 'gateway' to the Medway Towns when approaching from the north along the A289.
- Ecological importance of the wetland habitats along the Whitewall Creek, and at woodland in the north-east, which form part of the Chattenden Woods and Lodge Hill SSSI.
- Forms an open setting to Frindsbury Conservation Area, including the surviving medieval manorial complex, and the wooded landward setting of Upnor Conservation Area and Upnor Castle Scheduled Monument.
- Views across the Medway towards Chatham Historic Dockyard provide a strong sense of place.

Issues and Changes

- Negative effect of surrounding urban development and road infrastructure, including on the distinctiveness of Hogmarsh Stream and Whitewall Creek.
- A neglected and weak landscape structure, including poor hedgerows, especially along transport corridors.
- Poor access between Wainscott and Medway City Estate, and the military sites are publicly inaccessible.

- New development plans at Frindsbury including a new school, new housing and change in use of Frindsbury manor barn to a wedding and events venue to support the heritage conservation; these plans need to be carefully managed to ensure they fit into the landscape.
- The strategy within the Medway Estuary and Swale flood and erosion risk management strategy (MEASS) for this shoreline is to sustain defences, to protect Strood further inland. This option considers immediate capital works to increase the Standard of Protection of the flood defences, and may require further capital works at year 50 to maintain this standard of protection with sea level rise.
- River valley and marsh landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Sea level rise could result in the loss of intertidal habitats and ‘coastal squeeze’, where human activities stop the natural landward spread of coastal habitats as sea levels rise.
 - Increased cycles of drought and flood will cause fluctuations in landscape condition, altering the landscape and its key features; it can lead to water logging, increased siltation and eutrophication, low flow in streams and rivers, drying out of marshes and wetland habitats, and changes to community composition.
 - Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh and mudflats may be impacted by hotter and drier summers leading to a longer growing season and drought; wetter winters leading to flooding and higher winter water table; change in seasonal rainfall resulting in changes to specialist species and increased susceptibility to the spread of invasive species.
 - Wetter winters and higher peak river flows may lead to flooding events which could cause physical habitat degradation and have the potential to spread invasive non-native species across habitats and water bodies.
 - More frequent flooding will increase the risk of pollution run-off.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Hogmarsh Valley LCA is to restore the open, gently rolling valley with wetland habitats along the watercourses and areas of woodland copses, and to strengthen the hedgerow and hedgerow tree network. Rural character should be enhanced to further its role as an open landscape buffer between built-up areas and as a green gateway to the Medway towns.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Work with the natural river processes to conserve and enhance the Hogmarsh Stream and Whitewall Creek as distinctive landscape features.
- Conserve and enhance ecologically important habitats, including Priority Habitat 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh' and 'mudflats'; consider how the shoreline management plan set out in the Medway Estuary and Swale flood and erosion risk management strategy will impact these.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing deciduous woodland cover through natural regeneration or small scale planting, particularly around urbanising influences; new planting should reflect the scale, shape, pattern and composition of the existing woodland.
- Seek to strengthen landscape structure by appropriately sited tree and hedgerow planting, particularly alongside roads and strengthen the field pattern network.
- When establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to

diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.

- Protect and improve the recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment; consider opportunities for additional PRoW to connect the landscape with adjacent settlements, and for pedestrian bridging/crossing points to connect with Chatham on the opposite side of the River Medway.
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the PRoW, including through the preservation and enhancement of vistas across the River Medway towards Chatham Historic Dockyard.
- Protect and enhance distinctive landscape setting for Frindsbury Conservation Area and surroundings as viewed from A289 and wider countryside.
- Consider opportunities for enhancement of Frindsbury Pit, including biodiversity and recreation improvements; area to north west of the disused pit is subject to Village Green proposal.
- Monitor and control potential invasive non-native species.
- Maintain and enhance natural river bank and bed features, to restore traditional patterns and processes of natural flooding cycles through selective areas of 'No Active Intervention' and 'Managed Realignment strategies' MEASS; this will allow natural functioning of the river and will help to conserve and restore wetland habitats, enhancing their contribution to landscape character and improving habitat connectivity, nature conservation and biodiversity.

Development Management

- Maintain the sense of openness by resisting proposals for new development that impinge on its open character and role as an open buffer between built up areas; where development is proposed consider siting and design and the use locally characteristic planting and earth bunds to reduce any impacts.

- Avoid additional visually intrusive development along the valley bottom and lower slopes; consider opportunities to further screen and reduce the influence of road infrastructure, urban edges, military infrastructure and the sewage treatment works; seek enhancements that provide greater respect for locally distinctive landscape character and overall landscape quality in longer term plans for these areas.
- Realise the 'gateway' value of A289 along its full extent, particularly at the key arrival nodes of Four Elms and Whitewall Creek roundabouts.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and hamlets and their rural setting, including Frindsbury Conservation Area and Upnor Conservation Area, by resisting inappropriate or unsympathetic development.
- Ensure that any future development plans for this area respect landscape context; protect openness and retain views of prominent green woodland backdrop; enhance setting of Whitewall Creek as distinctive landscape feature.

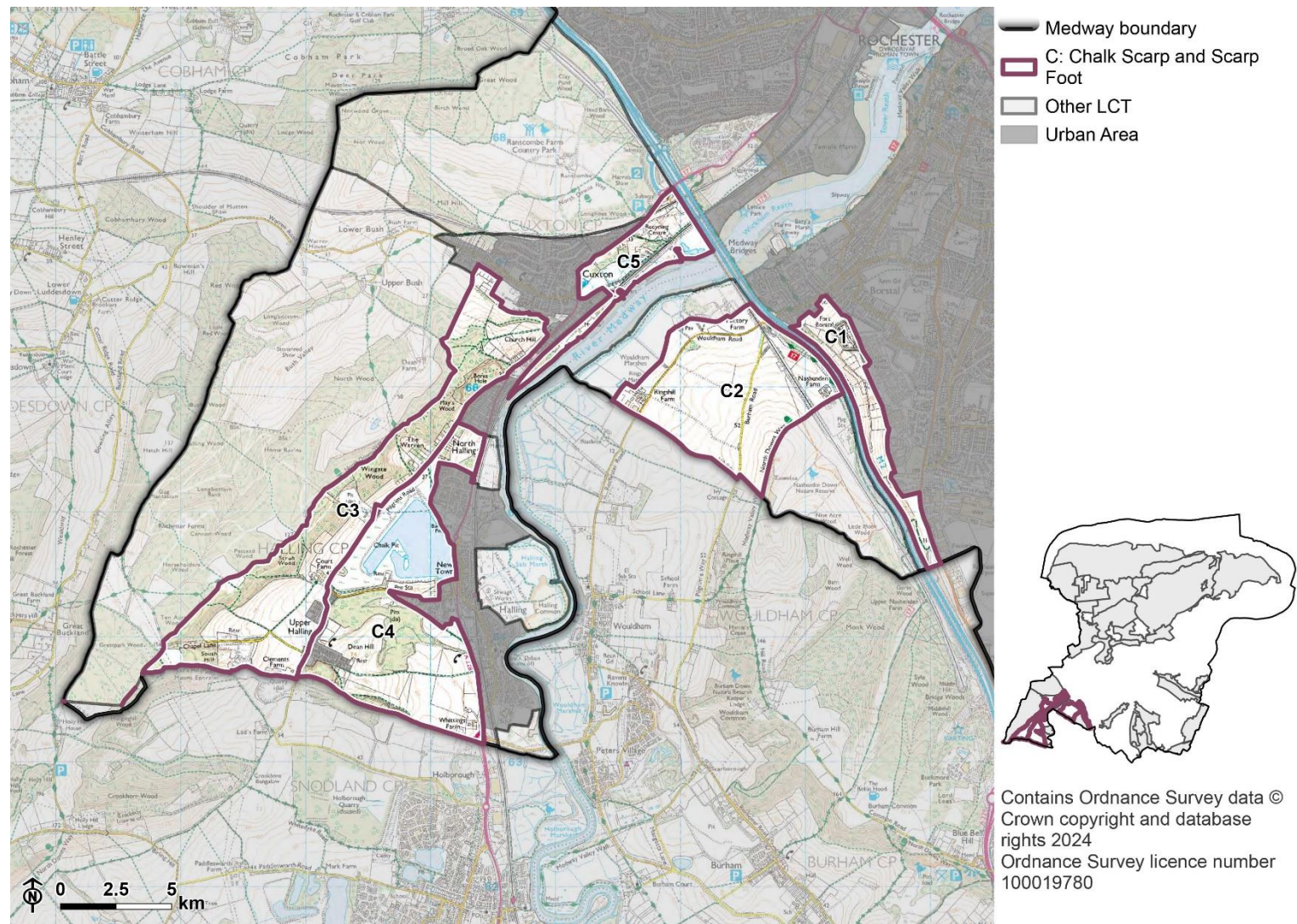
Landscape Character Type C: Chalk Scarp and Scarp Foot

Landscape Character Areas

7.21 The Chalk Scarp and Scarp Foot LCT is subdivided into five LCAs:

- Landscape Character Area C1: Nashenden Scarp;
- Landscape Character Area C2: Wouldham Scarp East;
- Landscape Character Area C3: Halling Scarp West;
- Landscape Character Area C4: Halling Scarp Foot; and
- Landscape Character Area C5: Cuxton Scarp Foot.

Figure 7.12: Location of the Chalk Scarp LCT and LCAs



Landscape Character Area C1: Nashenden Scarp

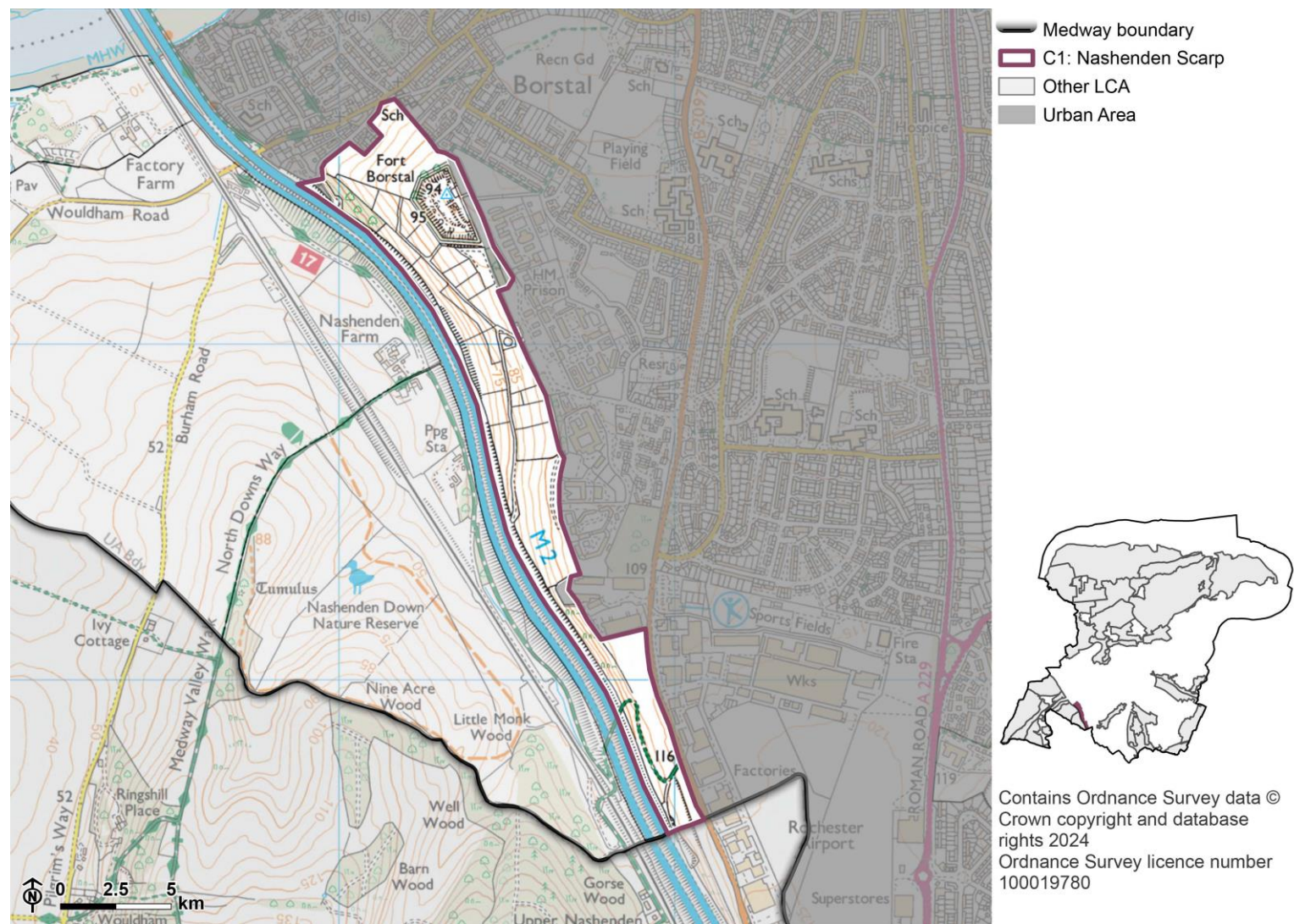
Description

Location and Summary

7.22 The Nashenden Scarp LCA is located along the south-western edge of Borstal (Rochester). It is defined by the urban edge of Borstal to the north and east; by the M2 Motorway to the west; and by the boundary with the neighbouring Tonbridge and Malling Borough to the south.

7.23 This is a prominent steeply sloping chalk scarp featuring rough grassland, scrub and woodland. It lies adjacent to the Kent Downs National Landscape to the west (beyond the M2) and contains Fort Borstal Scheduled Monument.

Figure 7.13: Location of LCA C1



Key Characteristics

- Steeply sloping scarp located between the urban edge of Borstal and the M2 Motorway; scarp foot has been disturbed by M2 construction/excavation.
- Predominantly open landscape of rough chalk grassland and scrub, with fields generally defined by low gappy hedgerows or fencing; some woodland cover along the scarp top to the east and along the M2 to the west.
- Woodland along the scarp top forms a partially wooded backdrop when viewed from the Kent Downs National Landscape to the west and helps reduce the visual influence of the urban edge; however, several large-scale buildings and high perimeter fencing around Borstal HM Prison and Young Offenders Institution remain apparent.
- Fort Borstal is one of a series of 19th century Palmerston Forts constructed around Chatham and Gillingham to protect HM Dockyard Chatham; the scarp landscape is an important part of its setting above the River Medway.
- Features only one PRow along Stoney Lane in the south, which connects to the Kent Downs National Landscape on the opposite side of the M2 (via a footbridge); elsewhere the landscape has limited formal public access, although there is evidence of some informal recreational use to the north.
- Road access limited to Stoney Lane in the south and built development limited to Fort Borstal, although strongly influenced by proximity to the M2 and the urban edge of Borstal, which undermine the rural character and levels of tranquillity.
- Some pockets of degraded and neglected land, including along the upper slopes in proximity to the urban edge.
- Upper slopes offer good views west towards the Kent Downs National Landscape and across the Medway Valley, particularly from higher ground to the north-east (although this is currently not formally accessible); detracting features in these views out include industry,

pylons and development along the valley bottom and lower scarp slopes to the west, and the Medway Bridges to the north-west.

- Forms a distinctive green backdrop adjacent to the M2, which creates a visual connection with the Kent Downs National Landscape and forms an open buffer between it and the urban area.

Photo 7.37: Prominent steeply sloping scarp on the edge of Borstal



Photo 7.38: Open landscape of rough chalk grassland and scrub



Photo 7.39: Wooded scarp top forming a partially wooded backdrop when viewed from the Kent Downs National Landscape



Photo 7.40: Good views west towards the Kent Downs National Landscape and across the Medway Valley



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Late Cretaceous Chalk overlain by chalky, silty loams, cut down by the Medway to form steep valley sides.
- A steeply sloping scarp, falling from between approximately 90m and 100m AOD in the east to between approximately 50m and 60m AOD in the west and north.
- Predominantly Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural soils, which support grazing.
- An open landscape of rough chalk grassland and scrub, albeit with some woodland cover around Fort Borstal to the north-east, along the M2 to the west and along the urban edge to the east; much of this is identified as Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'.

Cultural Influences

- The LCA lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 12 – Rochester/Chatham Hinterland as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The HLC records large areas of 'downland' which provide time-depth, being characteristic of the medieval and early post-medieval periods; there are also some areas of 'small regular with straight boundaries (parliamentary type enclosure)' to the north and 'small rectilinear with wavy boundaries' to the south, which represent later modifications to the landscape.
- Fields generally defined by low, gappy hedgerows or fencing with some now used for horse grazing.
- Historically the LCA was largely unsettled, with the only development at Borstal Fort; this remains the case today.
- Fort Borstal (Scheduled Monument) is one of a series of 19th century Palmerston Forts constructed around Chatham and Gillingham to protect

HM Dockyard Chatham, and was designed to hold the high ground overlooking the western approach; it was subsequently used in the Second World War as an anti-aircraft battery.

- Road access within the LCA is limited to Stoney Lane in the south and several private access roads and farm tracks.
- The area features only one PRow along Stoney Lane to the south, which connects the LCA with the Kent Downs National Landscape on the opposite side of the M2 (via a footbridge).

Perceptual Influences

- The area is strongly influenced by the M2 to the west and the urban edge of Borstal (including industrial development along Maidstone Road and several large-scale buildings and high perimeter fencing around Borstal HM Prison and Young Offenders Institution) to the east, which reduce levels of tranquillity and increase light pollution, as indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.
- Some pockets of degraded and neglected land, including along the lower slopes adjacent to the motorway and on the upper slopes in proximity to the urban edge and HM prison.
- The scarp top features broadleaved tree belts in the vicinity of the HM prison and woodland around Fort Borstal; this forms a partially wooded backdrop when viewed from higher ground within the Kent Downs National Landscape to the west (including from the North Downs Way and the permissive path network of Nashenden Down Nature Reserve) and helps reduce the visual influence of the urban edge.
- Upper slopes offer good views west towards the Kent Downs National Landscape and across the Medway Valley, particularly from higher ground to the north-east; detracting features in these views out include industry, pylons and residential development along the valley bottom and lower scarp slopes to the west, and the Medway Bridges to the north-west.

- Forms a green backdrop adjacent to the M2; this creates a visual connection with land within the Kent Downs National Landscape to the west of the M2 and forms an open buffer between it and the urban area.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Forms part of the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape and has a strong visual relationship with land to the west of the M2.
- Forms an open buffer between the Kent Downs National Landscape and the urban area of Borstal (Chatham).
- Provides an open rural setting to the east of the M2, experienced on approach to the Medway Towns from the south.
- Tree belts and woodland along the scarp top form a partially wooded backdrop when viewed from the Kent Downs National Landscape to the west and helps reduce the visual influence of the urban edge.
- Predominantly open and undeveloped character provides a distinctive setting and buffer to the urban area.
- Ecologically important areas of Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' and 'chalk grassland'.
- Time-depth provided by remnant areas of downland and presence of Fort Borstal.
- Provides an open setting for Borstal Fort Scheduled Monument.

Issues and Changes

- Recent suburbanisation of the landscape, particularly in the north and north-east with the introduction of additional residential development on

Hill Road, and south with development close to the junction of Stoney Lane and Maidstone Road.

- Threat of further expansion of urban edges and influences from the north and east.
- Sense of neglect in places due to unmanaged grassland and neglected field boundaries.
- An increase in equine land uses.
- Potential for road widening/improvements along the M2 to the south-east; land lies within a 'safeguarded corridor of M2 widening'.
- Currently no formal public access, including to Fort Borstal Scheduled Monument.
- Degradation of the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape, due to the cumulative effect of inappropriate, poorly designed development; and unsustainable land management approaches and land use change.
- Chalk Scarps and Scarp Foot landscapes are particularly susceptible to the impacts of and responses to climate change, including:
 - Changing temperatures and extreme weather events are creating vulnerabilities in chalk grassland landscapes, leading to increased soil erosion and run-off.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters could cause changes in plant and animal species and community composition of chalk grassland (for example loss of perennials, expansion of drought-tolerant ephemerals and dominance of grasses in the sward of chalk grassland).
 - Drier summers leading to an increased fire risk affecting grassland habitats.
 - Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by

various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.

- Intense rainfall events and increased winter rainfall resulting in flooding, erosion and damage to buildings and structures, including heritage assets.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Nashenden Scarp LCA is to restore, conserve and enhance the distinctive landscape and sense of place created by the combination of steeply sloping landform and extensive areas of open chalk grassland and woodland. Retain the area as an open buffer between the urban area and the Kent Downs National Landscape and improve presentation for example from the M2. Seek to improve formal access and recreational opportunities, including to Fort Borstal Scheduled Monument. Consider the aims and principles set out within the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, in regard to the role this LCA plays in the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Ensure that relevant 'special components, characteristics and qualities' of the adjacent Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard for the aims and principles set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan.

- Conserve and enhance and where appropriate extend ecologically important habitats, including Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' and 'chalk grassland'.
- Manage chalk grassland to enhance its biodiversity value and appearance; ensure best practice management through suitable grazing regimes; manage recreational routes to avoid/minimise disturbance; and manage scrub vegetation appropriately to maintain the open character (a certain amount of scrub can be beneficial, especially on sites that are prone to heat stress or drought, due to its shading effect potentially providing refuge for invertebrates).
- Consider opportunities to increase the area of chalk grassland through re-creation and restoration around existing areas, and ensure that areas that might act as refugia from climate change (such as areas with north facing slopes, complex micro-topography and/or low nitrogen levels) are under optimal management.
- Manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, pollutants and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing deciduous woodland cover, particularly along the scarp top adjacent to the urban edges.
- Consider the wider ecosystem services that woodlands provide (such as urban cooling, visual amenity or recreational opportunities).
- Seek to prevent further loss or decline in the quality of remaining boundary hedgerows and encourage their restoration/reinstatement.
- When establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to

diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.

- Seek to enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment, including options for new formal PRoW (using nearby Darland Banks, Coney Banks and Daisy Banks as an example); consider opportunities to provide public access to Fort Borstal.
- Conserve Fort Borstal and consider the role the LCA plays in its landscape setting; encourage interpretation and understanding of this important heritage feature and its wider context of 19th century defence.
- Consider opportunities to promote and enhance existing views towards the Kent Downs National Landscape and Medway Valley (in combination with improved access), and draw upon the historic associations with Fort Borstal.
- Seek to manage urban fringe activities and continue to ensure this area is presented as a rural landscape, including in views from the Kent Downs National Landscape and M2.
- Discourage an increase in equine related land uses; encourage sensitive management and screening of existing equine related activities and seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.

Development Management

- Maintain the characteristic sparse pattern of development, with settlement largely limited to the scarp top and beyond, avoiding expansion onto the upper scarp slopes.
- Any large scale or visually intrusive development would be detrimental within this visually prominent landscape and impact on views, including the visual setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape; consider the role of this area as an open buffer between the Kent Downs National Landscape and the urban area of Borstal.

- If development is proposed seek to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Avoid further encroachment onto the scarp foot by future motorway upgrading.
- Maintain a sense of openness and views west towards the Kent Downs National Landscape and across the Medway Valley.
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and avoid any further reduction in tranquillity; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards in relation to development visible on the ridge top.

Landscape Character Area C2: Wouldham Scarp East

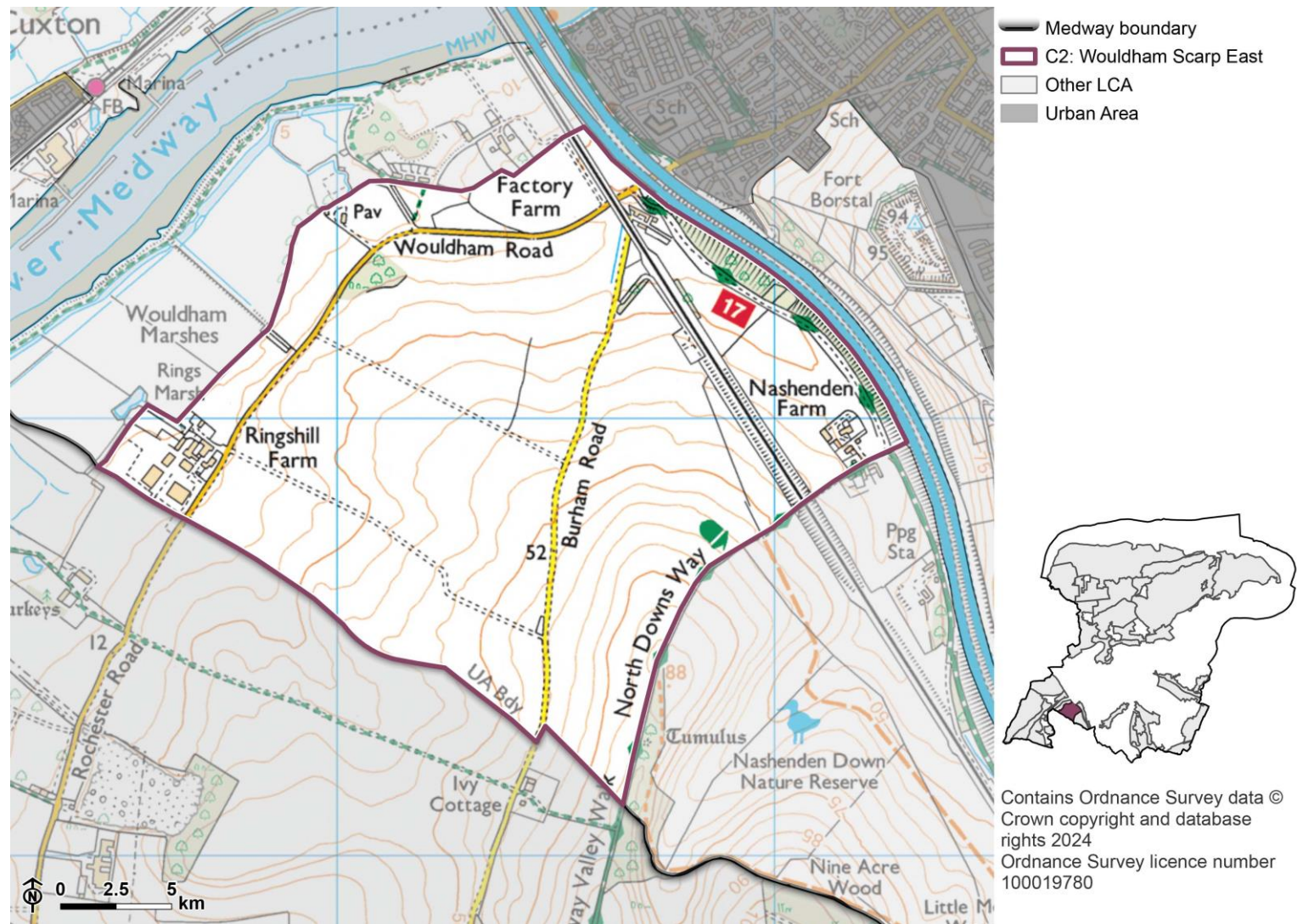
Description

Location and Summary

7.24 The Wouldham Scarp East LCA is located to the west of Borstal (Rochester) and forms part of the eastern scarp of the River Medway Valley. It is defined by falling topography to the north, which marks the transition to marshland along the River Medway (LCA B1: Wouldham Marshes); by the M2 Motorway to the east; and by the North Downs Way to the south-east, which marks the transition to a series of undulating dry valleys (LCA D7: Nashenden Down). The southern boundary of the LCA follows the boundary with the neighbouring Tonbridge and Malling Borough.

7.25 This scarp features open arable farmland that lies entirely within the Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly an AONB). The LCA forms part of the larger LCA 4B: Medway Valley, assessed within the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment Update (2023), and lies within the 'Eastern Scarp' Local Character Area.

Figure 7.14: Location of LCA C2



Key Characteristics

- A gently sloping scarp slope cut by the River Medway falling from a ridge of higher ground in the south-east, which forms part of the North Downs dip slope.
- A predominantly open arable landscape with few surviving hedgerows; some pasture farming on lower ground to the north and west and some scattered pockets of woodland along the ridge of higher ground to the south-east and along the M2 to the north-east.
- Grade II Listed Buildings at Nashenden Farm to the north-east and Ringshill Farm to the north-west, reflect the historic settlement pattern of isolated farmsteads; a Bronze Age bell barrow (Scheduled Monument) located on the ridge of higher ground to the south-east also reflects the long history of human activity in this area.
- Features the North Downs Way which traverses the scarp top to the east and lower ground to the north; Burham Road, which follows lower ground to the west, also forms part of the 'Pilgrims Way'.
- Axes of PRow and farm access tracks are either parallel with or perpendicular to the topography, with the latter connecting the higher ground with the valley bottom.
- A strong rural character, although the tranquillity of the landscape is undermined to the north and north-east by the influence of the HS1, M2 Motorway and the urban edge of Borstal.
- Expansive panoramic views west across the Medway Valley from the scarp top; detracting features in these views out include industry, pylons and residential development along the valley bottom and lower slopes of the opposite scarp to the west, and the Medway Bridges to the north and north-east.
- Sloping scarp, contrasting with the adjacent flat low-lying valley bottom; forms a rural/green backdrop in views from the opposite valley side and bottom.

Photo 7.41: Gently sloping scarp slope cut by the River Medway



Photo 7.42: Predominantly open arable landscape with few surviving hedgerows



Photo 7.43: Expansive panoramic views across the Medway Valley



Photo 7.44: Rural/green backdrop in views from the opposite valley side



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Late Cretaceous Chalk overlain by Head deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel on the lower slopes; the lower slopes tend to feature light chalky colluvial soils washed down from the scarp that form better quality agricultural soils.
- A gently sloping scarp foot, falling from a ridge of higher ground at approximately 85m AOD in the south-east to lower ground at approximately 10m AOD in the north-west, north and north-east; forms part of the North Downs dip slope.
- Lower-lying land to the north falls within Flood Zone 2 and 3; this is utilised as a corridor for HS1 and the M2.
- Grade 2 (very good) agricultural soils cover the lower slopes, whilst Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural soils cover the upper slopes.
- A predominantly arable landscape, albeit with some small pockets of woodland, including along the ridge of higher ground to the south-east (Shoulder of Mutton Wood) and along the M2 to the north-east; these are identified as Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'.
- Some pasture farming on lower ground north and west of Wouldham Road, and equine uses to the north.

Cultural Influences

- The LCA lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 12 – Rochester/Chatham Hinterland as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The HLC records 'prairie fields (19th century enclosure with extensive boundary loss)' covering almost the entire LCA, with a small area of 'post-1810 settlement (general)' around Nashenden Farm and a small area of 'small regular with straight boundaries (parliamentary type enclosure)' to the north-east.

- Historically the LCA was largely unsettled, other than scattered farmsteads at Nashenden Farm to the north-east and Ringshill Farm to the north-west; today settlement remains sparse although there is some further development along Nashenden Farm Lane.
- A Bronze Age bell barrow (Scheduled Monument) is located on the ridge of higher ground to the south-east. There are three Grade II Listed Buildings, with one at Nashenden Farm and two at Ringshill Farm.
- Burham Road forms part of the 'Pilgrims Way', an historical route taken by pilgrims from Winchester in Hampshire to the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury.
- Only two roads traverse the LCA – Burham Road and Wouldham Road – which both rural lanes that run roughly parallel with the topography, the former running along the higher ground and the latter along the lower ground; there are a number of non-metalled farm access tracks that connect the two roads.
- The area features only one PRoW – the North Downs Way which follows the scarp top to the east and lower ground to the north.

Perceptual Influences

- The area retains a strong rural character, although to the north and north-east the landscape has become fragmented by the influence of the rail line and Motorway, as well as the urban edge of Chatham.
- The M2 and urban edge of Chatham influence the landscape and reduce levels of tranquillity and increase light pollution to the north; elsewhere there is a greater sense of tranquillity, indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.
- There are expansive panoramic views west across the Medway Valley, particularly from higher ground to the south-east; detracting features in these views out include industry, pylons and residential development along the valley bottom and lower slopes of the opposite scarp to the west, and the Medway Bridges to the north and north-east.

- Sloping scarp, contrasting with the adjacent flat low-lying valley bottom; forms a rural/green backdrop in views from the opposite valley side.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Forms part of the Kent Downs National Landscape and demonstrates the following 'special components, characteristics and qualities': dramatic landform and views; farmed landscape; a rich legacy of historic and cultural heritage; and tranquillity and remoteness.
- The rural character of much of the landscape provides a setting for the North Downs Way and Pilgrims Way and a Bronze Age bell barrow (Scheduled Monument).
- Visually open scarp foot landscape with expansive panoramic views west across the Medway Valley.
- Sense of tranquillity in places, particularly to the south away from urbanising influences.
- PRoW and narrow rural lanes and tracks predominantly run perpendicular to or parallel with the scarp landform.
- Sloping scarp foot, contrasting with the adjacent flat low-lying valley bottom; forms a rural/green backdrop when viewed from the opposite valley side to the west.
- Recreational value of the promoted North Downs Way and Pilgrims Way.
- Ecologically important areas of Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'.

Issues and Changes

- Potential for road widening/improvements along the M2 to the north and north-east; land lies within a 'safeguarded corridor of M2 widening'.
- Threat of further expansion of urban influences along lower ground beyond HS1 to the north.
- An increase in equine land uses to the north, north of Wouldham Road.
- Further loss of hedgerows.
- Increased recreational pressures along the North Downs Way and 'Pilgrims Way'.
- HS1 and M2 sever connections with the nearby urban area to the north-east, with limited crossing points.
- Pressure for increasing scales of large farm buildings, such as at Ringshill Farm to the north-east of the LCA, which are of inappropriate scale and prominence for the Kent Downs National Landscape.
- Loss of and damage to quality and character the Kent Downs National Landscape through the cumulative effect of inappropriate, poorly designed development; unsustainable land management approaches and land use change; and the impacts of growth in visitor pressure.
- Ash Dieback disease causing loss of tree cover and consequent impacts on landscape character.
- Chalk Scarps and Scarp Foot landscapes are particularly susceptible to the impacts of and responses to climate change, including:
 - Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.

- Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins, an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins.
- Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.
- Intense rainfall events and increased winter rainfall resulting in flooding, erosion and damage to buildings and structures, including heritage assets. This may include increases run off and soil erosion from arable slopes.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Wouldham Scarp East LCA is to maintain, conserve and enhance the distinctive rural landscape and sense of place created by the combination of gently sloping scarp landform and expansive panoramic views across the Medway Valley. Seek to increase the extent and quality of field boundaries and woodland cover characteristic of the scarp top and screening urban intrusions to the north-east. Consider the aims and principles set out within the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, in regard to the role this LCA as part of the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Ensure that relevant ‘special components, characteristics and qualities’ of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard for the aims and principles set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan.
- Conserve and enhance ecologically important areas of Priority Habitat ‘deciduous woodland’.
- Seek opportunities to increase woodland cover, particularly along higher ground, which is characteristic of the wider Kent Downs National Landscape; new planting should reflect the scale, shape, pattern and composition of the existing woodland.
- Manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, pollutants and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.
- Consider the wider ecosystem services that woodlands provide; outside designated sites and Ancient Woodland, changes in species composition may be acceptable if the services that the woodland provides (such visual amenity or recreational opportunities) remain intact.
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers. Arable management

practices should seek to encourage infiltration and reduce run off and soil erosion.

- Consider opportunities to expand habitats developing within the adjacent Nashenden Down Nature Reserve.
- Seek to prevent further loss or decline in the quality of remaining boundary hedgerows and encourage their restoration/reinstatement; consider opportunities to re-introduce historic hedgerow patterns (pre-19th century).
- When establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment including enhanced links to the nearby urban area; manage recreational routes to avoid/minimise disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the PRoW, including through the enhancement and promotion of panoramic views across the Medway Valley.

Development Management

- Maintain the characteristic sparse pattern of development on lower ground, avoiding development on the upper slopes.
- Conserve the setting and isolated character of the historic farmsteads at Nashenden Farm and Ringshill Farm; resist proposals for larger-scale farm buildings in the vicinity of these.
- Resist proposals for highway upgrading to retain the rural character of the roads/lanes and their verges; refer to the Kent Downs AONB 'Rural Streets and Lanes: A Design Handbook' for highway design guidance.

- Any large scale or visually intrusive development would be detrimental within this visually prominent landscape and impact on views, including the visual setting of 'The Western Scarp Area' of the Kent Downs National Landscape; consider the role of this area as a rural/green backdrop in views from the west.
- If development is proposed seek to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Maintain a sense of openness and views west across the Medway Valley.
- Avoid additional visually intrusive development along the valley bottom and lower slopes of the opposite scarp to the west; consider opportunities for the removal of intrusive elements, such as pylons and the undergrounding power lines.
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and avoid any further reduction in tranquillity to the north and north-east; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards in relation to development visible on the ridge top in the adjacent LCA C1.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing deciduous woodland cover along scarp top in the adjacent LCA C1 to help reduce the influence of the urban edge.

Landscape Character Area C3: Halling Scarp West

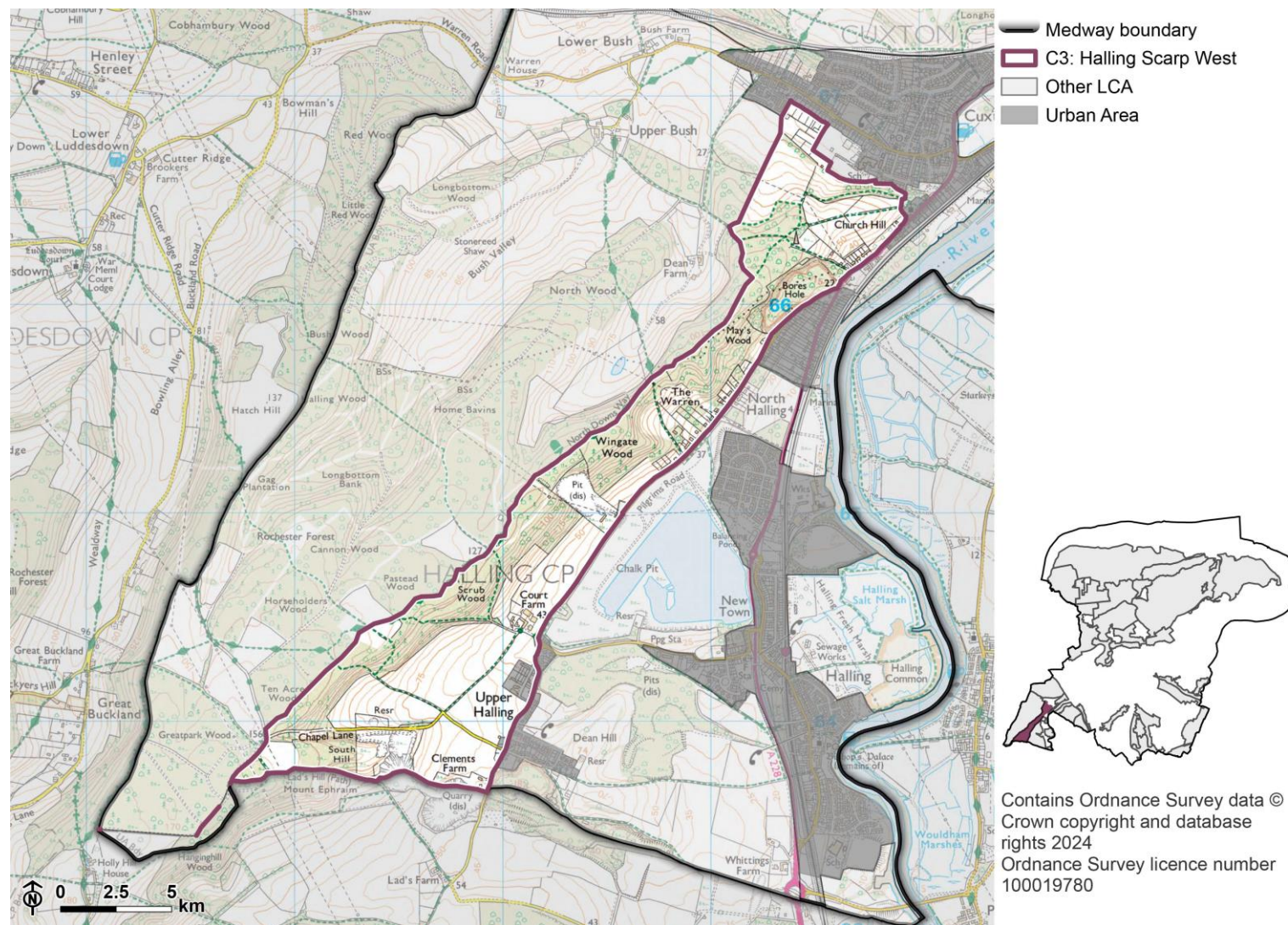
Description

Location and Summary

7.26 The Halling Scarp West LCA is located to the west of Halling and forms the scarp rising above the River Medway Valley. It is a linear area defined to the east by Rochester Road (A228) and Pilgrims Road, which mark the transition to the lower-lying scarp foot (LCA C4: Halling Scarp Foot and LCA C5: Cuxton Scarp Foot); and to the west by the wooded scarp top (LCA D7: Bush Valley and Dean Farm). To the south it follows the boundary with the neighbouring Tonbridge and Malling Borough and to the north it extends as far as the urban edge of Cuxton.

7.27 This is a steeply sloping scarp featuring extensive woodland cover and open arable farmland that lies entirely within the Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly an AONB). The LCA forms part of the larger LCA 4B: Medway Valley and lies within the 'Western Scarp' Local Character Area, as assessed within the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment Update (2023). It also lies within the Green Belt.

Figure 7.15: Location of LCA C3



Key Characteristics

- A steeply sloping scarp landscape, rising from east to west with the slopes becoming steeper towards the top; some chalk exposures forming dramatic cliff sides.
- Dense woodland covering the steep scarp sides and top, much of which is designated as a SSSI and is identified as Ancient Woodland, and the lower slopes support a belt of open arable farmland.
- Largely retains the historic settlement pattern of scattered properties and hamlets to the south, although this has been altered to the north by ribbon development along Pilgrims Road and Rochester Road (A228).
- The area is accessed by an extensive network of PRow, including the North Downs Way which follows the scarp top to the west; Rochester Road (A228) and Pilgrims Road form part of the 'Pilgrims Way'.
- The landscape has a strong rural character, owing to a general lack of built development and road infrastructure, although tranquillity is undermined to the north and north-east by urban fringe influences.
- The upper slopes are visually enclosed by mature woodland cover, although there are views east across the Medway Valley from the more open lower slopes; detracting features in views out include remnants of chalk quarrying, industry, pylons and residential development along the valley floor to the east, and the Medway Bridges to the north-east.
- Contrast in pattern, colour and texture between irregular woodland blocks on upper slopes, and regular large arable fields on lower slopes.
- Deciduous woodlands and trees create strong seasonal changes in the landscape, particularly in spring and autumn.
- Steeply sloping scarp, contrasting with the adjacent flat low-lying valley bottom; forms a rural/green backdrop to development along the lower slopes and valley bottom when viewed from the opposite valley side to the east.

Photo 7.45: Sloping scarp landscape becoming steeper towards the top



Photo 7.46: Dense woodland along the steep scarp sides and top



Photo 7.47: Fertile soils that support open arable farmland



Photo 7.48: Views east across the Medway Valley from the open lower slopes



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Late Cretaceous Chalk overlain by clay-with-flints on the upper slopes and Head deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel on the lower slopes; the lower slopes tend to feature light chalky colluvial soils washed down from the scarp that form better quality agricultural soils and correspond with a belt of arable farmland.
- A steeply sloping scarp, falling from between approximately 155m and 100m AOD in the west down to approximately 30m AOD in the east; slopes becomes steeper towards the top.
- Grade 3 (moderate to good) agricultural soils cover the lower slopes, whilst Grade 4 (poor) agricultural soils cover the majority of the upper slopes.
- Much of the woodland along the upper slopes is designated as Halling and Trottscliffe Escarpment SSSI and is recorded as Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'; this includes Ten Acre Woods, Shrub Wood, Wingate Wood and May's Wood.

Cultural Influences

- The LCA lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 4 – Western North Downs as defined within the Kent HLC (2001). This is an area with a strongly north-south linear nature in accordance with the basic topography. It is dominated by regular field types, with significant elements of post-1801 settlement, woodland and fields bounded by paths and tracks.
- The HLC records several woodland types, including 'pre-1810 Woodland', 'pre-19th century Coppices' and '19th century Plantations (general)' and 'rectilinear with wavy boundaries (late medieval to 17th/18th century enclosure)' fieldscapes which provide a sense of time-depth; elsewhere 'small regular with straight boundaries (parliamentary type enclosure)' and

industrial uses in the form of 'active and disused Chalk quarries' reflect more recent changes to the landscape.

- Historically the LCA was largely unsettled, other than scattered farmsteads, properties and hamlets along Rochester Road and Pilgrims Road to the east (including Upper Halling to the south and Whorns Place located centrally); today there is ribbon development along both these roads with a particular concentration to the north. A number of Grade II Listed Buildings survive along Pilgrims Road, including Court Farm and Clement's Farm House.
- Rochester Road (A228) and Pilgrims Road form part of the 'Pilgrims Way', an historical route taken by pilgrims from Winchester in Hampshire to the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury.
- Whilst Pilgrims Road and the A228 lie along the eastern boundary, the core of the LCA contains no main roads; road access is limited to private access tracks and Chapel Lane to the south.
- The area is accessed by an extensive network of PRow, including the North Downs Way which follows the scarp top to the west.
- The axes of PRow and tracks/lanes is dictated by the topography, running either north-west to south-east and connecting the scarp top with the valley bottom, or north-east to south-west axis and running along the scarp top or valley bottom.

Perceptual Influences

- The area retains a strong rural character within the interior and to the west away from settlement and busy roads, although to the north and north-east the landscape has become fragmented by urban fringe influences, including ribbon development along Pilgrims Road and the A228.
- The busy A228, the urban edge of Cuxton and development along the A228 and Pilgrims Road (including recent residential development at St Andrew's Lake) influence the landscape and reduce levels of tranquillity to the north and north-east; elsewhere woodland cover results in a sense of

enclosure and greater levels of tranquillity. This is indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.

- The upper slopes are visually enclosed by mature woodland cover.
- Views east across the Medway Valley from the open arable lower slopes; detracting features in views out include remnants of chalk quarrying, industry, pylons and residential development (including recent residential development at St Andrew's Lake) along the valley floor to the east, and the Medway Bridges to the north-east.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Forms part of the Kent Downs National Landscape and demonstrates the following 'special components, characteristics and qualities': dramatic landform and views; biodiversity-rich habitats; farmed landscape; woodland and trees; a rich legacy of historic and cultural heritage; geology and natural resources; and tranquillity and remoteness.
- Open land lying within the Green Belt.
- The rural character of much of the landscape provides a setting for the North Downs Way and 'Pilgrims Way'.
- Sense of tranquillity in places, particularly in the more enclosed areas located away from urbanising influences.
- PRoW and narrow rural lanes and tracks running perpendicular to or parallel with the scarp formation resulting in a distinctive landscape grain.
- Sloping scarp, contrasting with the adjacent flat low-lying valley bottom; forms a rural/green backdrop to development along the lower slopes and valley bottom when viewed from the opposite valley side to the east, helping to reduce its visual prominence.

- Ecologically important areas – SSSI, Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat ‘deciduous woodland’.
- Recreational value of the promoted North Downs Way and ‘Pilgrims Way’.
- Importance of woodland in providing enclosure and connecting habitats.
- Provides a buffer/green corridor between urban influences to the east and the area of national importance for nature conservation to the west.
- Provides an open buffer between Upper Halling and development along Pilgrims Road to the north-east, helping to maintain its separate settlement identity.

Issues and Changes

- Urban fringe influences in the north and north-east, with the introduction of ribbon development along the A228 and Pilgrims Road between Cuxton and Halling, including a recent housing scheme at St Andrew’s Lake.
- Threat of further expansion of urban edges of Cuxton in the north and north-east.
- An increase in equine land uses in the vicinity of urban influences, such as around The Warren and Church Hill.
- Loss of hedgerows and replacement with fencing, particularly in areas of equine use.
- Increased recreational pressures along the North Downs Way and disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Gradual loss/erosion of the buffer between urban influences and the area of national importance for nature conservation along the upper scarp slopes and scarp top.
- Ash Dieback disease causing loss of tree cover and consequent impacts on landscape character.

- Loss of and damage to quality and character the Kent Downs National Landscape through the cumulative effect of inappropriate, poorly designed development; unsustainable land management approaches and land use change; and the impacts of growth in visitor pressure.
- Chalk Scarps and Scarp Foot landscapes are particularly susceptible to the impacts of and responses to climate change, including:
 - Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins, an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Halling Scarp West LCA is to maintain, conserve and enhance the distinctive landscape and sense of place created by the combination of steep scarp landform and contrast between extensive areas of dense mature woodland covering the steep scarp sides and top and open arable fields on the lower slopes. Conserve and enhance

woodland cover, which is a characteristic feature of the Kent Downs National Landscape. Consider the aims and principles set out within the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, in regard to the role this LCA as part of the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Ensure that relevant ‘special components, characteristics and qualities’ of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard for the aims and principles set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan.
- Conserve and enhance ecologically important areas of SSSI, Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat ‘deciduous woodland’.
- Manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, pollutants and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.
- Consider the wider ecosystem services that woodlands provide; outside designated sites and Ancient Woodland, changes in species composition may be acceptable if the services that the woodland provides (such as visual amenity or recreational opportunities) remain intact.
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species

through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers.

- Seek to prevent further loss or decline in the quality of remaining boundary hedgerows and encourage their restoration/reinstatement.
- When establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance access and enjoyment including enhanced links to the nearby urban area; manage recreational routes to avoid/minimise disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the PRoW, including through the enhancement and promotion of existing views across the Medway Valley.

Development Management

- Maintain the characteristic sparse pattern of development, with settlement largely limited to the lower slopes avoiding further expansion onto the upper slopes.
- Conserve the individual identity of Upper Halling, by resisting further development along Pilgrims Road.
- Any large scale or visually intrusive development would be detrimental within this visually prominent landscape and impact on views, including the visual setting of 'The Eastern Scarp Area' of the Kent Downs National Landscape; consider the role of this area as a rural/green

backdrop to development along the lower slopes and valley bottom when viewed from the east, helping to reduce its visual prominence.

- If development is proposed look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic woodland blocks/shaws and hedgerows.
- Maintain a sense of openness and views east across the Medway Valley from the lower slopes.
- Avoid additional visually intrusive development along the valley bottom to the east; consider opportunities for the removal of intrusive elements, such as pylons and the undergrounding power lines.
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and avoid any further reduction in tranquillity to the north and north-east; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards.

Landscape Character Area C4: Halling Scarp Foot

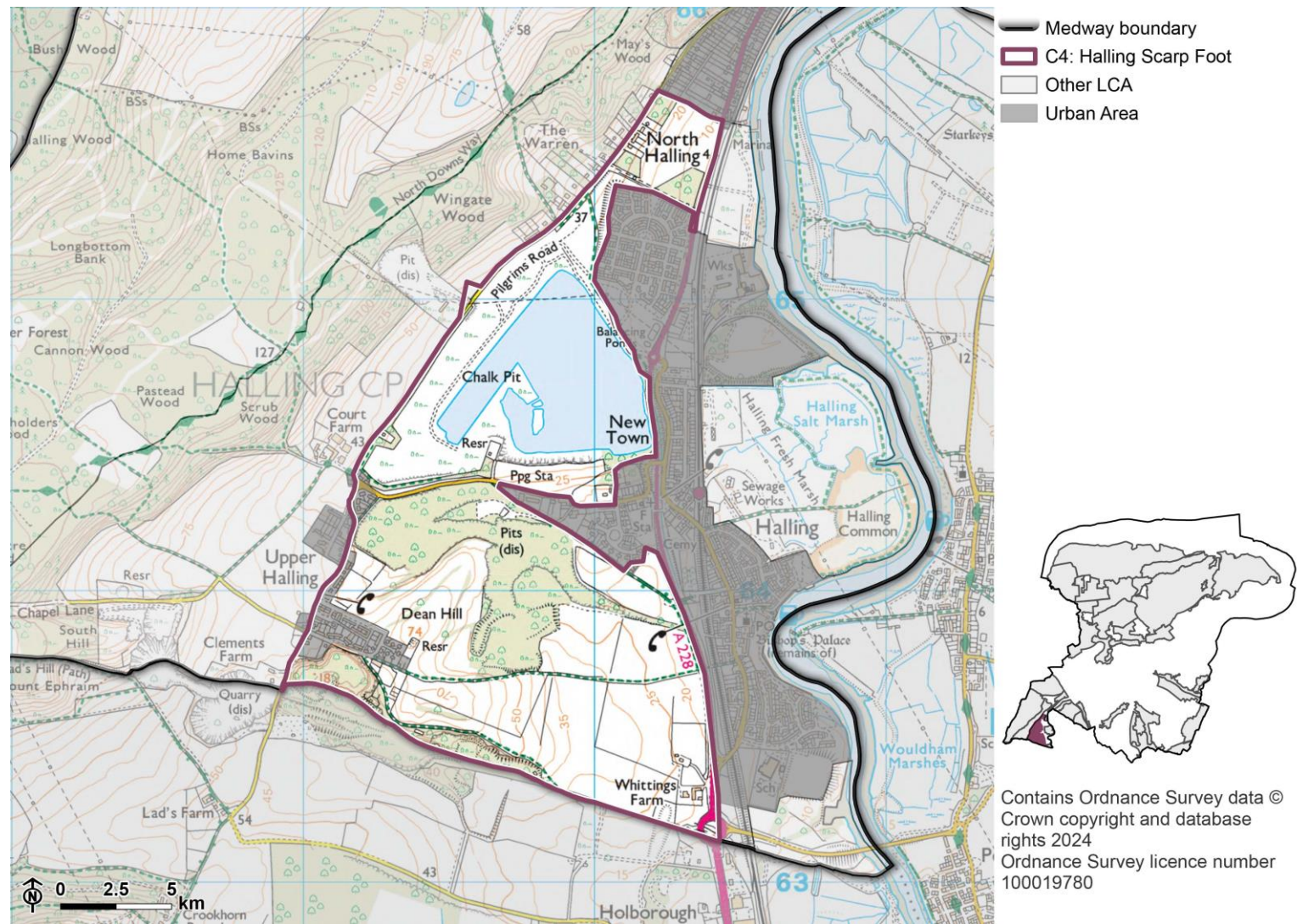
Description

Location and Summary

7.28 The Halling Scarp Foot LCA is located to the west of Halling. It is defined by Rochester Road/Formby Road (A228) to the east, which marks the transition to the lower lying valley bottom of the River Medway (LCA B2: Halling and Holborough Marshes); by Pilgrims Road to the west, which marks the transition to a steeply rising scarp (LCA C3: Halling Scarp West); and to the south by the administrative boundary with neighbouring Tonbridge and Malling Borough.

7.29 This is a rolling scarp foot landscape strongly influenced by former chalk quarrying. It comprises arable farmland, disused quarries (largely colonised by scrub and pioneer woodland) and other remnant industrial features. It lies immediately adjacent to the Kent Downs Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly an AONB) along its western boundary.

Figure 7.16: Location of LCA C4



Key Characteristics

- An undulating and sloping scarp foot landscape, falling from the scarp edge in the west down to the edge of the River Medway valley floor in the east; natural landform disturbed in places by former chalk quarrying.
- Comprises arable farmland interspersed with settlement and remnants of former chalk quarrying.
- Well-wooded to the south, with a large area of deciduous woodland and scrub covering an area former chalk pits around Dean Hill; more open elsewhere with only occasional smaller pockets of woodland.
- Retains its historic settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and small hamlets to the south, with Upper Halling retaining its identity as a separate settlement; to the north Halling has increased notably in size, including recent development at St Andrews Lake.
- Features several roads and a network of PRow, with a particular concentration to the south; these routes run either perpendicular to or parallel with the slope of the land, with the former connecting the scarp top with the river valley.
- Pilgrims Road forms part of the 'Pilgrims Way'.
- St Andrews Lake, a flooded former chalk quarry, is a notable feature in the landscape with a distinctive turquoise colour; it is now used recreationally for water sports, fishing, diving and open water swimming.
- Fragmented character in places due to remnants of former chalk quarrying, the presence of urbanising development to the east and north, and the busy A228; other detracting elements visible within the surrounding area include pylons and cement works (Cemex site) on the valley floor to the east.
- There are some views east across the Medway Valley from the upper slopes and from more open arable areas to the south.
- Sense of enclosure around the former chalk pits to the south, due to topography and tree cover.

Photo 7.49: Undulating and sloping scarp foot landscape featuring arable farmland



Photo 7.50: Disused quarries largely colonised by pioneer scrub and woodland



Photo 7.51: St Andrews Lake which is a notable feature in the landscape



Photo 7.52: Views across the Medway Valley from the upper slopes and more open arable areas



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Late and Upper Cretaceous Chalk overlain by Head deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel. Close relationship to the River Medway.
- An undulating scarp foot landscape, that trends from approximately 55m AOD in the west to approximately 20m AOD in the east, with an area of higher ground to the south of up to 74m AOD; former chalk quarrying has disturbed the natural topography in places, including the now flooded St Andrews Lake ('Blue Lake') to the north and former pits around Dean Hill to the south.
- Grade 3 (moderate to good) agricultural soils cover the majority of the LCA, with some Grade 2 (very good) to the south-east; this supports predominantly arable farming.
- Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' covers a large area of former chalk pits to the south, as well as smaller pockets in proximity to North Halling and New Town to the north-east.

Cultural Influences

- The LCA lies predominantly within Historic Landscape Character Area 32 – Urban Conurbation as defined within the Kent HLC (2001). It also lies immediately adjacent to Historic Landscape Character Area 4 – Western North Downs.
- The HLC records large areas of 'active and disused chalk quarries', as well as 'prairie fields (19th century enclosure with extensive boundary loss)', 'small regular with straight boundaries (parliamentary type enclosure)' and 'post-1810 settlement (general)'.
- Historically the LCA featured a settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and small hamlets at Upper Halling and Halling. The Grade II Listed Prings and Chapel Houses survive along Pilgrims Road to the west.

- Today Upper Halling retains its identity as a small hamlet, although Halling has increased notably in size, including recent development on the former Cement Works north of St Andrews Lake.
- Pilgrims Road forms part of the 'Pilgrims Way', an historical route taken by pilgrims from Winchester in Hampshire to the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury.
- The principal roads through the LCA are Pilgrims Road in the west with the A228 in the east; these are connected east-west by Vicarage Road.
- The area is accessed by a network of PRow, with a particular concentration to the south.
- The axes of PRow and roads is predominantly east-west or north-south, running perpendicular or parallel to the slope of the land; east-west routes historically connected the scarp top with the river valley although today the A228 and 'Rochester to Paddock Wood' railway line create some severance.
- St Andrews Lake is used for water sports, fishing, diving and open water swimming.

Perceptual Influences

- The area has a fragmented character due to remnants of former chalk quarrying and the presence of urbanising development to the east and north; other detracting elements that are visible within the surrounding area include pylons and the Cemex site on the valley floor to the east.
- The busy A228 and urban edge of Halling influence the landscape and reduce levels of tranquillity and increase light pollution to the east, as indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.
- There are views east across the Medway Valley from the upper slopes and open views to the south; detracting features in these views include industry, pylons and residential development along the valley bottom.
- Sense of enclosure around the former chalk pits to the south, due to topography and mature tree cover.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Predominantly open land lying within the Green Belt.
- Ecologically important areas of Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'.
- Importance of woodland in providing enclosure and connecting habitats.
- Recreational value of PRow, the 'Pilgrims Way' and St Andrews Lake.
- Forms part of an open buffer between Upper Halling and Halling helping to maintain their separate settlement identities.
- Sloping scarp foot, contrasting with the adjacent steeper sloping scarp to the west and flat low-lying valley bottom to the east.

Issues and Changes

- Suburbanisation to the east and north-east, with the introduction of residential development along the valley floor.
- Threat of further expansion of urban edge of Halling from the east.
- Increased recreational pressures along PRow and disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Degradation of the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape, due to the cumulative effect of inappropriate, poorly designed development; unsustainable land management approaches and land use change; and the impacts of growth in visitor pressure.
- Chalk Scarps and Scarp Foot landscapes are particularly susceptible to the impacts of and responses to climate change, including:
 - Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and

composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.

- Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins, an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins.
- Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.
- Intense rainfall events and increased winter rainfall resulting in flooding, erosion and damage to buildings and structures, including heritage assets.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Halling Scarp Foot LCA is to restore and enhance the scarp foot landscape. This will include managing and strengthening woodlands providing enclosure and screening of intrusive features and improving presentation for example from the A228. The scarp should provide a green backdrop to the Medway Valley and Halling and a gap between development in Medway and Tonbridge and Malling. Consider the aims and principles set out within the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, in regard to the role this LCA plays in the setting of the National Landscape.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance ecologically important areas of Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'.
- Consider opportunities for enhancement of disused chalk pits, including biodiversity and recreation improvements; explore opportunities to expand and connect existing deciduous woodland cover.
- Manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, pollutants and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.
- Consider the wider ecosystem services that woodlands provide (such as urban cooling, visual amenity or recreational opportunities).
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers.
- Promote the regeneration of hedgerow trees and shrubs through management; when planting or restocking hedgerows, aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment; consider opportunities to enhance physical connection with the valley bottom to the east which could extend and build upon the

'Farming & Ferries Medway Valley Rail Trail', part of the Valley of Visions Community Trails Project – GBI Framework.

- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the PRoW, including through the enhancement and promotion of views across the Medway Valley.

Development Management

- Any large scale or visually intrusive development would be detrimental within the more visually open parts of the landscape and impact on views, including the visual setting of the adjacent Western and Eastern Scarp Areas of the Kent Downs National Landscape.
- Maintain the sense of openness between Upper Halling and Halling by resisting proposals for new development; conserve the individual identity of Upper Halling, by resisting further development along Pilgrims Road.
- Avoid additional visually intrusive development along the valley bottom to the east; consider opportunities for the removal of intrusive elements, such as pylons and the undergrounding power lines.
- If development is proposed look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and avoid any further reduction in tranquillity to the north and east; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards.

Landscape Character Area C5: Cuxton Scarp Foot

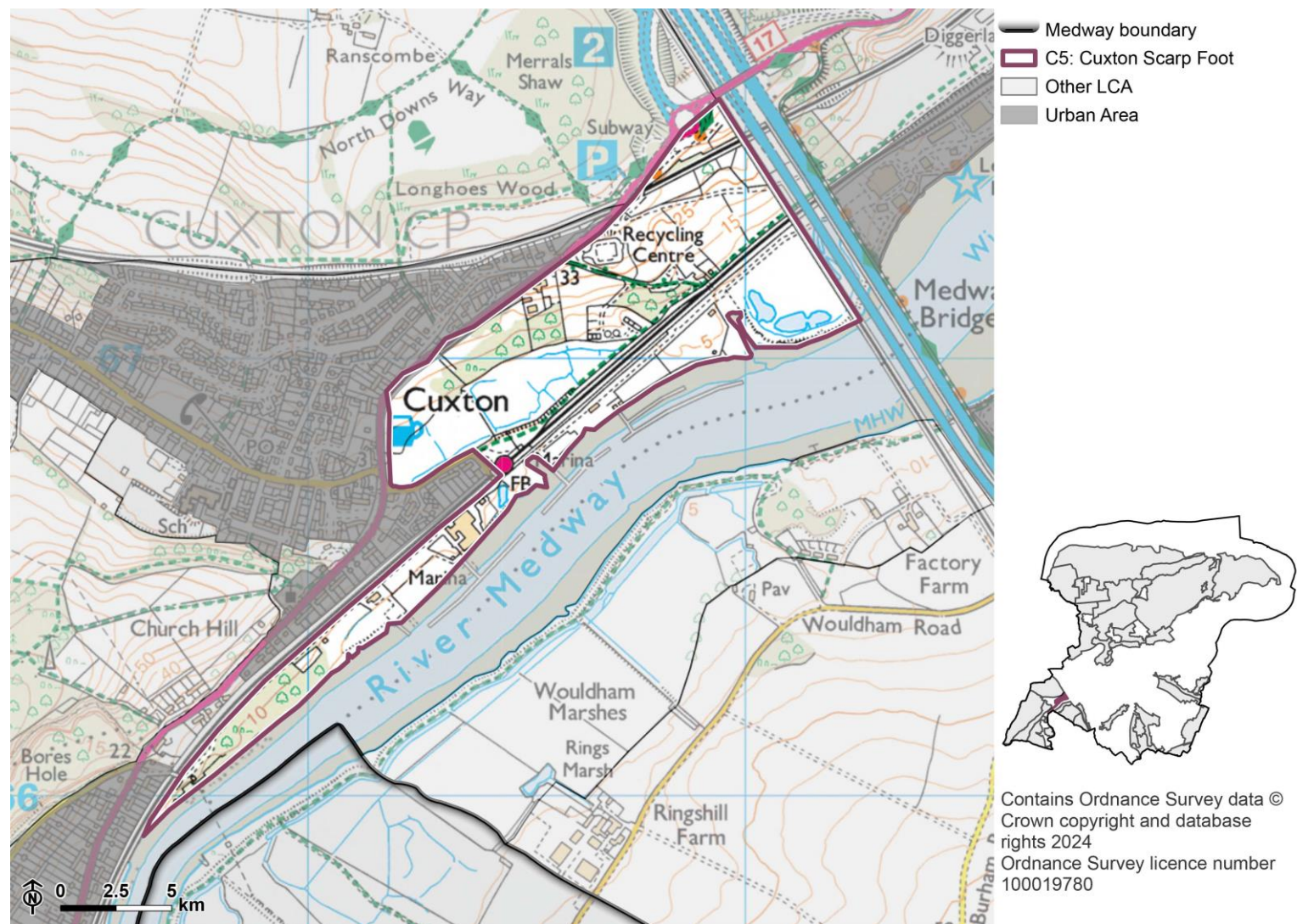
Description

Location and Summary

7.30 The Cuxton Scarp Foot LCA is located to the south-east of Cuxton and forms part of the western valley side of the River Medway. It is a linear area defined to the south by the River Medway; to the east by the Medway Bridges (HS1 and the M2 Motorway), beyond which lies the urban area of Strood; and to the north by Rochester Road (A228) and the urban edge of Cuxton. The A228 forms the boundary with the Kent Downs National Landscape to the north-west and north-east, marking the transition to the rising scarp foot (LCA C3: Halling Scarp West) and undulating chalk downland (LCA D9: Ranscombe Farm) respectively.

7.31 This is a sloping landscape rising gradually from the valley floor and marshes of the River Medway. It comprises a mix of pasture farmland on higher ground and remnant marshland on lower ground, as well as areas of development.

Figure 7.17: Location of LCA C5



Key Characteristics

- Sloping scarp foot landscape rising up from the valley floor of the River Medway.
- Comprises a mix of open pasture farmland on higher ground and remnant marshland on lower ground; greater sense of enclosure in places due to the presence of several small woodland copses, mature hedgerows and tree belts along the 'Rochester to Paddock Wood' railway.
- Pockets of coastal floodplain grazing marsh and deciduous woodland with mudflats extending along the river edge.
- Development includes boat yard/marina development along the river edge and a recycling centre, sewage works and a council run gypsy and traveller site to the east; this undermines the rural character of the landscape.
- The visual presence of the urban edge of Cuxton to the north and the Medway Bridges to the east, and the audible presence of the A228 and M2, also influences the landscape by undermining levels of tranquillity.
- The area is accessed by two PRoW, located north of the railway line, and the A228 forms part of the 'Pilgrims Way'; the railway line and busy A228 cause severance and there is currently no public access along the river edge to the south.
- Some of the boat yard/marina development has an industrial character, utilising metal, concrete and other materials which are not sympathetic to the landscape context.
- There are some views south and east across and along the Medway Valley towards parts of the Kent Downs National Landscape, particularly from the upper slopes; detracting features in these views include industry, pylons and residential development along the valley bottom. There are views to the Medway Bridges to the east.

- The tidal nature of the river results a sense of dynamism and movement, with tides periodically covering and uncovering the fringing marshes, reeds and mudflats.
- Sloping scarp, contrasting with the adjacent flat low-lying valley bottom; forms a rural/green backdrop in views from the opposite valley side and has a visual link with the Kent Downs National Landscape on the opposite side of the river.
- Forms part of an open buffer between Cuxton and the urban edge of Strood, helping to maintain its separate settlement identity.

Photo 7.53: Sloping scarp foot rising from the River Medway valley bottom



Photo 7.54: Open pasture farmland on higher ground and remnant marshland on lower ground



Photo 7.55: Views across the Medway Valley, particularly from the upper slopes



Photo 7.56: Greater sense of enclosure around woodland copses, mature hedgerows and tree belts



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Late Cretaceous Chalk overlain by Head deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel on the upper slopes and alluvium and fluvial deposits of clay, silt, sand and peat on the lower slopes.
- A sloping scarp foot, falling from between approximately 40m AOD in the north down to approximately 2m AOD in the south.
- Grade 3 (moderate to good) agricultural soils cover the majority of the LCA and supports pastoral farmland to the north of the 'Rochester to Paddock Wood' railway line; land to the south of the railway comprises marshland and woodland.
- Pockets of Priority Habitat 'coastal floodplain grazing marsh' and 'deciduous woodland' and 'mudflats' extending along the river edge. Other landcover includes some chalk grassland in areas to the north and tree cover, including small copses, hedgerows, planting along the railway line and regenerated woodland around the former Cuxton Brickfield to the east.
- Land to the south falls within Flood Zone 2 and 3.

Cultural Influences

- The LCA lies predominantly within Historic Landscape Character Area 32 – Urban Conurbation as defined within the Kent HLC (2001). It also lies partially within Historic Landscape Character Area 12 – Rochester/Chatham Hinterland.
- The HLC records areas of 'small regular enclosures', 'small regular with straight boundaries (parliamentary type enclosure)', 'other commons and greens', 'mudflats' and 'post-1810 settlement (general)'.

- Historically the LCA was largely unsettled, other than scattered properties off Rochester Road; there was also development around Cuxton Brickfield to the east and several wharves along the river edge.
- Evidence of early human occupation and use of the landscape comes in the form of a small Anglo Saxon barrow found during construction of HS1.
- Today there is further boat yard/marina development along the river and a recycling centre, sewage works and a council run gypsy and traveller site to the east; the urban edge of Cuxton also extends up to the northern edge of the LCA.
- Rochester Road (A228) forms part of the 'Pilgrims Way', an historical route taken by pilgrims from Winchester in Hampshire to the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury.
- The Medway valley forms a key east-west transport route and the presence road and rail lines now severs the landscape, particularly north-south movement; the more recent introduction of the M2 and HS1 also sever links between the area and the urban area of Strood.
- Whilst the A228 and Station Road run along the boundaries of the LCA, road access to the core of the area is limited to narrow access tracks to the recycling centre and gypsy and traveller site to the east.
- The area is accessed by two PRoW, located north of the railway line; the railway line causes severance and there is currently no public access along the river edge.

Perceptual Influences

- The area has a fragmented character due to the presence of detracting elements within the LCA (railway line, recycling centre, sewage works and gypsy and traveller site) and the influence of the urban edge of Cuxton to the north and the M2 Medway Bridges to the east.
- The urban edge of Cuxton and the M2 influence the landscape and reduce levels of tranquillity and increase light pollution, as indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.

- The boat yard/marina development has an industrial character which is not sympathetic to its landscape context.
- There are views east across the Medway Valley from the upper slopes; detracting features in these views include industry, pylons and residential development along the valley bottom, and the Medway Bridges to the east.
- The tidal nature of the river results a sense of dynamism and movement, with tides periodically covering and uncovering the fringing marshes, reeds and mudflats on the valley floor.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Ecologically important areas of Priority Habitat 'coastal floodplain grazing marsh' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Importance of woodland and hedgerows in providing enclosure and connecting habitats.
- Recreational value of PRow and the 'Pilgrims Way'.
- Forms part of an open buffer between Cuxton and the urban edge of Strood, helping to maintain its separate settlement identity.
- Sloping scarp, contrasting with the adjacent flat low-lying valley bottom; open land to the north-east of the LCA forms a green backdrop when viewed from the opposite valley side to the west and has visual link with the Kent Downs National Landscape on the opposite side of the river.
- Visually prominent from numerous transport routes and role as a rural 'gateway' to/from the urban area.

Issues and Changes

- Suburbanisation in the north and east, with the introduction of development to the east and the influence of the urban edge of Cuxton and the Medway Bridges.
- Threat of further expansion of urban edge of Cuxton from the north.
- Industrial character of boat yard/marina development along the river edge.
- Lack of public access along the river to the south of the railway line.
- The presence of the busy A228 and 'Rochester to Paddock Wood' railway line severs north-south movement, and the presence of the M2 and HS1 also severs east-west links with the urban area of Strood.
- Potential for increased traffic along the A228 with the development of the Lower Thames Crossing (in neighbouring Gravesham Borough).
- Poor quality and uninviting character of existing PRow, due to lack of management.
- Degradation of the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape, due to the cumulative effect of inappropriate, poorly designed development; and unsustainable land management approaches and land use change.
- The strategy within the Medway Estuary and Swale Flood and Erosion Risk Management Strategy is for No Active Intervention (NAI). This will involve all maintenance on current defences being ceased with an increased risk of overtopping and defences being at risk from failure from year 20 causing increased risk of overflow flooding.
- Chalk Scarps and Scarp Foot landscapes are particularly susceptible to the impacts of and responses to climate change, including:
 - Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.

- Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.
- Increased cycles of drought and flood may lead to water logging, increased siltation and eutrophication, low flow in streams and rivers, drying out of marshes and wetland habitats, and changes to community composition.
- Wetter winters and higher peak river flows may lead to flooding events which could cause physical habitat degradation and have the potential to spread invasive non-native species across habitats and water bodies.
- More frequent flooding will increase the risk of pollution run-off.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Cuxton Scarp Foot LCA is to restore and enhance the visually prominent scarp foot landscape, conserving and enhancing the woodlands and coastal marsh habits and improving management and presentation of this area as a rural gateway to and from the Medway urban area. Consider the aims and principles set out within the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, in regard to the role this LCA plays in the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance ecologically important areas of Priority Habitat 'coastal floodplain grazing marsh' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Consider opportunities to increase the area of chalk grassland to the north through re-creation and restoration around existing areas, and ensure that areas that might act as refugia from climate change (such as areas with north facing slopes, complex micro-topography and/or low nitrogen levels) are under optimal management.
- Manage chalk grassland to enhance its biodiversity value and appearance; ensure best practice management through suitable grazing regimes; and manage scrub vegetation appropriately to maintain the open character.
- Work with natural tidal river processes to conserve and enhance the landscape with its distinctive pattern of wetland features, including drainage ditches, unimproved grassland, floodplain grazing marsh and reeds.
- Management of the river's edge should consider 'No Active Intervention' policies and natural environmental solutions in line with the Estuary and Swale Flood and Erosion Risk Management Strategy.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing deciduous woodland cover, particularly around existing detracting elements.
- Manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, pollutants and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.

- Consider the wider ecosystem services that woodlands provide (such as urban cooling, visual amenity or recreational opportunities).
- Promote the regeneration of hedgerow trees and shrubs through management; when planting or restocking hedgerows, aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Manage pasture land to enhance its biodiversity value and appearance.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment; consider opportunities for additional PRoW to the south along the river and linking to the adjacent urban areas which could extend and build upon the 'Coppice & Corncockle Medway Valley Rail Trail Community Trail', part of the Valley of Visions Community Trails Project – GBI Framework.
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the PRoW, including through management of vegetation and anti-social activities, as well as the preservation and enhancement of vistas east across the Medway Valley and along the river.
- Manage urban fringe activities, to improve presentation of this rural landscape.

Development Management

- Any large scale or visually intrusive development would be detrimental within this visually open landscape and impact on views, including the visual setting of the adjacent Western and Eastern Scarp Areas of the Kent Downs National Landscape.
- Where development is proposed look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Seek to reduce the influence of existing detracting development through appropriate edge treatments, including hedgerows and woodland.

- Maintain the sense of openness, particularly to the north-east, by resisting proposals for new development; consider the role this area plays in the sense of separation between Cuxton and Strood and as a green backdrop when viewed from the opposite valley side to the west.
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and avoid any further reduction in tranquillity to the east; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards.

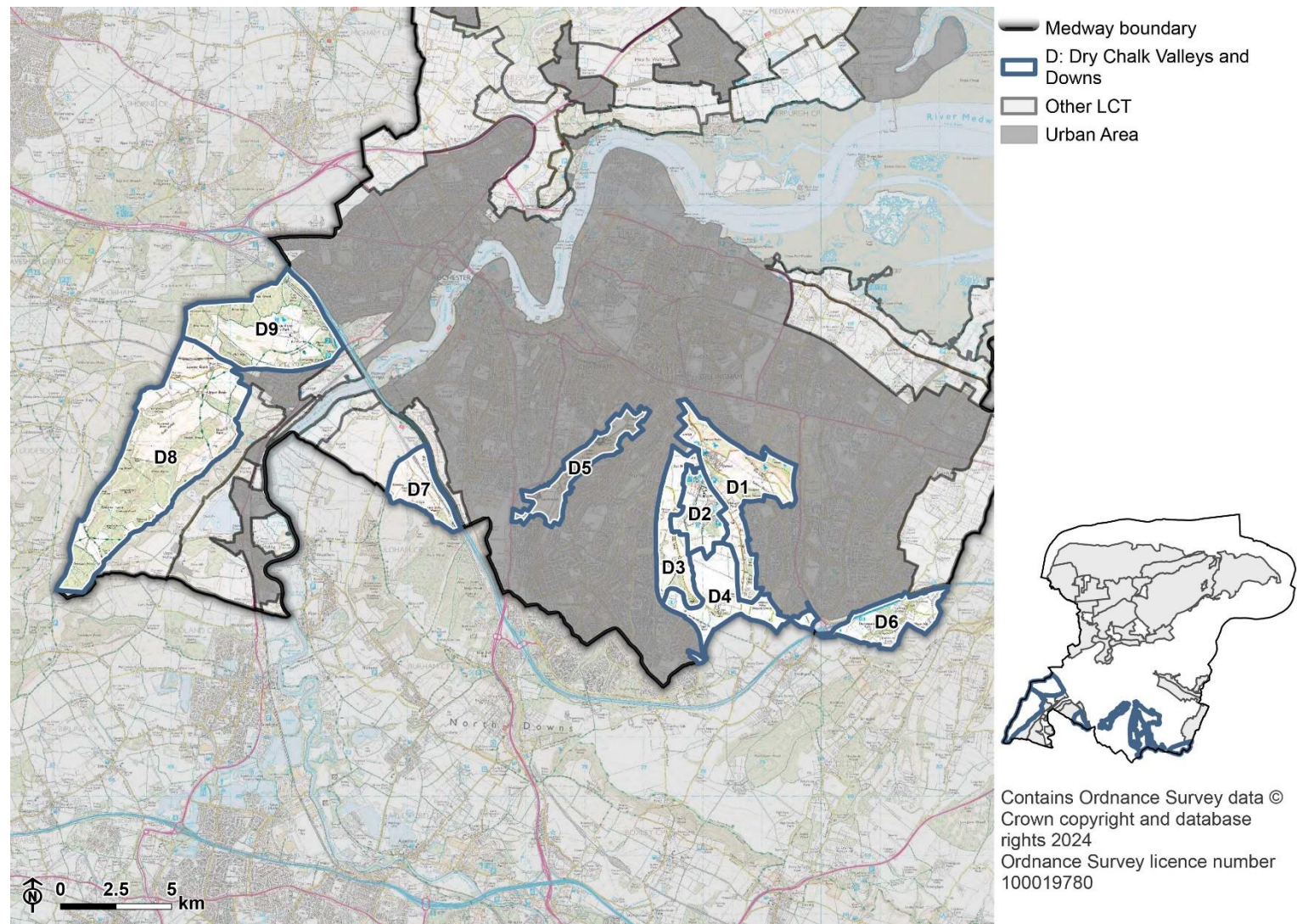
Landscape Character Type D: Dry Chalk Valleys and Downs

Landscape Character Areas

7.32 The Dry Chalk Valleys and Downs LCT is subdivided into nine LCAs:

- Landscape Character Area D1: Darland Banks and Hempstead Fringe;
- Landscape Character Area D2: Capstone Farm;
- Landscape Character Area D3: Sharstead Farm and East Hill;
- Landscape Character Area D4: Elm Court;
- Landscape Character Area D5: Horsted Valley;
- Landscape Character Area D6: Matts Hill;
- Landscape Character Area D7: Nashenden Down;
- Landscape Character Area D8: Bush Valley and Dean Farm; and
- Landscape Character Area D9: Ranscombe Farm.

Figure 7.18: Location of the Dry Chalk Valleys and Downs LCT and LCAs



Landscape Character Area D1: Darland Banks and Hempstead Fringe

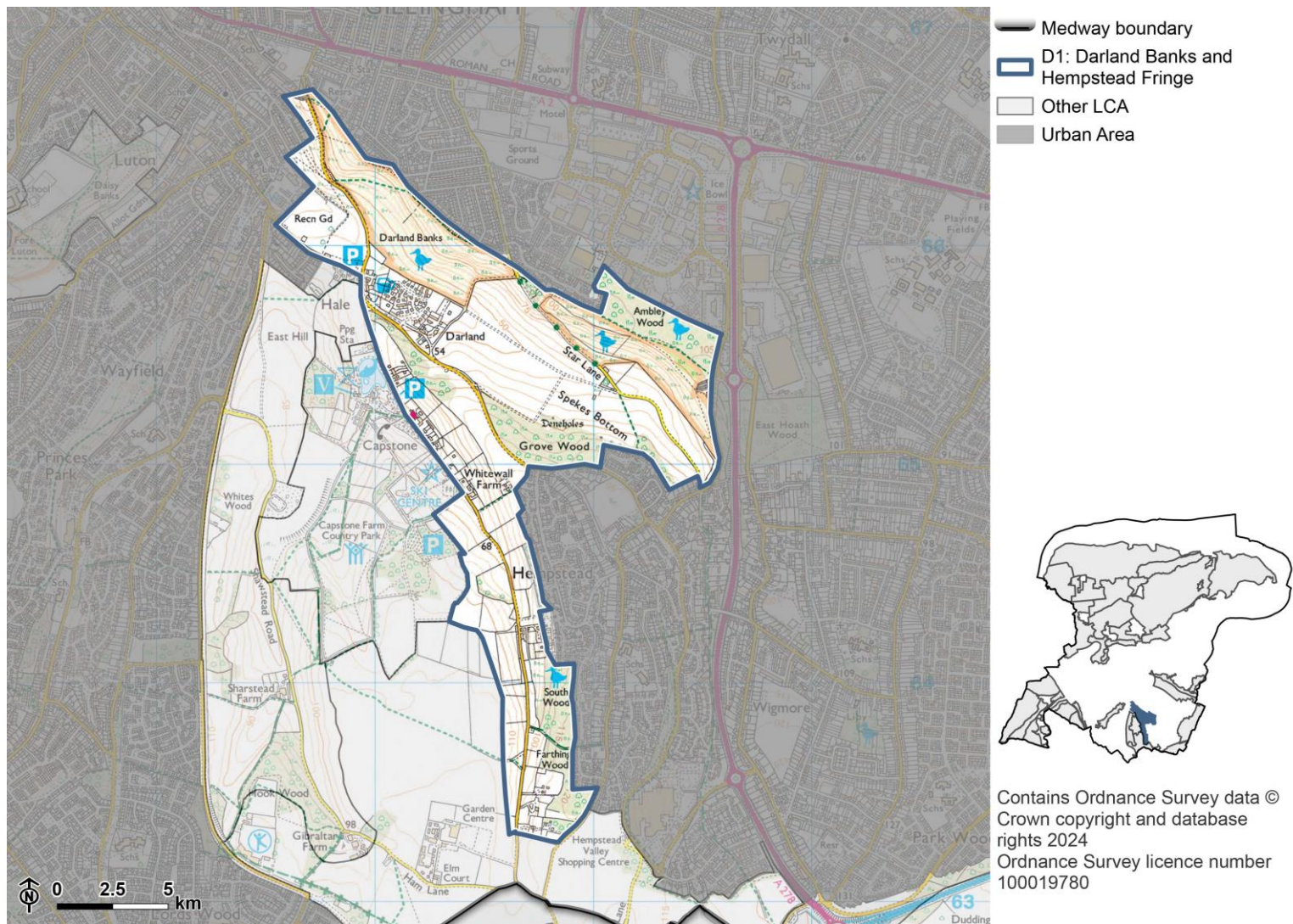
Description

Location and Summary

7.33 The Darland Banks and Hempstead Fringe LCA penetrates the urban area of Chatham and Gillingham. It is oriented roughly north-west to south-east and is defined on all sides by urban edges – Gillingham to the north-east, Hempstead to the south-east, and Chatham to the north-west; to the south-west and south there is a transition to an area of undulating arable farmland (LCA D2: Capstone Farm and LCA D4: Elm Court).

7.34 This is a series of open chalk ridges and valleys featuring chalk grassland, scrub, ancient woodland and arable and pasture farmland. It forms

Figure 7.19: Location of LCA D1



Key Characteristics

- A steep ridge and valley landform oriented north-west to south-east, set within the dip slope of the North Downs.
- A varied landscape featuring chalk grassland, scrub, deciduous woodland and arable and pasture farmland; some equine uses concentrated along Capstone Road to the south.
- A small to medium scale field pattern to the south; elsewhere the landscape features more open areas of arable farmland and chalk grassland and meadows.
- Good level of public access to the north and south, with several PRoW and CROW Access Land at Darland Banks; access across central areas is severed to some extent by the presence of busy roads and development.
- Retains an essentially rural character of agricultural fields, open grassland and woodland; sense of enclosure and isolation experienced within wooded areas and in valley bottoms, in particular Spekes Bottom to the east.
- Forms part of a continuous green corridor linking the urban area to open countryside to the south (including the Kent Downs National Landscape south of the M2 Motorway).
- Urban development, including recent development at Darland, busy roads, and the more exposed urban edges of Hempstead to the south and on Kingsway (Gillingham) to the north, have a localised influence on the character of the landscape.
- Open long range views are available from higher ground, including Darland Banks, south across open farmland towards the Kent Downs National Landscape; views more contained by tree cover along roads and in the valley bottoms.
- Provides a green and wooded backdrop in views north and east from Capstone Farm Country Park (LCA D2); Darland Banks is a distinctive feature in views from surrounding areas.

- Deciduous woodlands and trees create strong seasonal changes in the landscape, particularly in spring and autumn.

Photo 7.57: Varied landcover, including chalk grassland, woodland and arable farmland



Photo 7.58: Darland Banks is a distinctive feature in views from surrounding areas



Photo 7.59: Open long range views south across open farmland towards the Kent Downs National Landscape



Photo 7.60: Rural open space close to the urban area



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Upper Cretaceous Chalk overlain by Head deposits (clay, silt, sand and gravel) and clay with flints formations (clay, silt, sand and gravel).
- A steep ridge and valley landform with heights ranging from approximately 120m to 35m AOD.
- Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural soils cover the majority of the area and support a mix of arable and pasture, with equine uses concentrated along Capstone Road; elsewhere the land is classified as 'urban'.
- Several areas of Ancient Woodland, including South Wood and Farthing Wood to the south, and Grove Wood and Ambley Wood to the east; several areas of Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland', 'lowland calcareous grassland' and 'lowland meadows', which are predominantly located on the valley sides.
- Darland Banks, Ambley Wood and South Wood are managed as Local Nature Reserves.

Cultural Influences

- Lies predominantly within Historic Landscape Character Area 32 – Urban Conurbation and partially within Historic Landscape Area 12 – Rochester/Chatham Hinterland, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The HLC records 'downland' covering the majority of the landscape, with some areas of 'pre-19th century coppices', 'post-1810 settlement (general)' and 'small regular with straight boundaries (parliamentary type enclosure)'. The remnant areas of downland and pre-19th century woodland provide a link to historic land cover/use, whilst the parliamentary enclosure and post-1810 settlement reflect more recent changes to the landscape.

- Farmland to the south is organised into a small to medium scale field pattern defined by gappy hedgerows and post and wire fencing (corresponding with areas of parliamentary enclosure), whilst arable land to the north comprises larger scale open fields; elsewhere the landscape features woodland or more open downland.
- Historically settlement within the area comprised properties along Capstone Road and a small hamlet at Darland, as well as several isolated farmsteads; today, whilst settlement within the area itself remains low density, it is surrounded by urban development.
- Historic settlement pattern reflected in presence of Grade II listed Capstone Farmhouse.
- This area contains the northern end of the Chatham ring fortress, one of a series of forts created in the late 19th century that took the form of infantry redoubts.
- The principal roads in the area are Capstone Road, Ash Tree Lane and Pear Tree Lane, with Star Lane being a more rural lane to the east; elsewhere vehicle access is generally limited to private access and farm tracks.
- The area features several PRow and there is CROW Access Land at Darland Banks.
- Provides rural open space close to the urban area and helps retain a sense of separation between Gillingham and Luton to the north and Hempstead and Princess Park/Wayfield to the south.

Perceptual Influences

- Roads through the area are relatively well-trafficked; more rural character along Star Lane at Spekes Bottom.
- Urban development and adjacent amenity uses at Luton to the north-west, and the more exposed urban edges of Hempstead to the south and on Kingsway (Gillingham) to the north, influence the character of the landscape.

- Largely surrounded by the urban area and this strongly influences the landscape, increasing light pollution and reducing levels of tranquillity, as indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.
- Open long range views are available from higher ground at Darland Banks south across farmland towards the Kent Downs National Landscape; views more contained by tree cover along roads and the valley bottoms.
- Provides a green and wooded backdrop in views east from Capstone Farm Country Park and the urban area.
- Deciduous woodlands and trees create strong seasonal changes in the landscape, particularly in spring and autumn.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- A valuable rural chalk landscape close to the urban area.
- Forms part of a continuous green corridor linking the urban area to open countryside to the south (including the Kent Downs National Landscape south of the M2 Motorway)
- An open area that helps retain a sense of separation between Gillingham and Luton to the north and Hempstead and Princess Park/Wayfield to the south.
- Provides an open setting to Capstone Farm Country Park; Provides a green and wooded backdrop in views east from the park.
- Remnant areas of downland/chalk grassland and Ancient Woodlands provide a link to historic land cover/use.
- Recreational value of PRow and CROW Access Land.
- The essentially rural character of agricultural fields or open grassland.
- Importance of woodland in providing sense of enclosure and connecting habitats.

- Open long range views from higher ground across farmland towards the Kent Downs National Landscape.
- Several areas of ecological importance, including Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland', 'lowland calcareous grassland' and 'lowland meadows'; Darland Banks, Ambley Wood and South Wood are managed as Local Nature Reserves.

Issues and Changes

- Loss of chalk grassland to arable farming and encroachment of scrub vegetation.
- Urbanising influence of busy roads, development at Luton to the north-west, and the more exposed urban edges of Hempstead to the south and on Kingsway (Gillingham) to the north.
- Largely surrounded by the urban area and this proximity influences the wider landscape, increasing light pollution and reducing levels of tranquillity.
- An increase in equine land uses in the vicinity of Capstone Road and the urban edge of Hempstead.
- Loss of hedgerows and replacement with post and wire fencing, particularly where equine uses are increasing.
- Access within central areas is severed to some extent by the presence of roads and development, particularly between Darland Banks and Capstone Farm Country Park.
- Threat of further expansion of surrounding urban edges, particularly to the north-west.
- Increased recreational pressures and potential disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Dry chalk valleys and downs landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:

- Changing temperatures and extreme weather events are creating vulnerabilities in grassland landscapes, leading to increased soil erosion and run-off.
- Drier summers and wetter winters could cause changes in plant and animal species and community composition of grassland (for example loss of perennials, expansion of drought-tolerant ephemerals and dominance of grasses in the sward of chalk grassland).
- Drier summers leading to an increased fire risk affecting grassland habitats.
- Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.
- Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.
- Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins, an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Darland Banks and Hempstead Fringe LCA is to conserve and enhance the distinctive rural character of this downland

landscape with its steeply sloping topography and remnant areas of chalk grassland and Ancient Woodland. Maintain and enhance its role as part of a continuous green corridor linking the urban area to open countryside to the south by providing better functional connections for people and nature.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance and where appropriate extend ecologically important habitats, including Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland', 'lowland calcareous grassland' and 'lowland meadows'.
- Manage chalk grassland on Darland Banks and elsewhere to enhance its biodiversity value and appearance; ensure best practice management through suitable grazing regimes and avoiding agrochemical and fertiliser inputs; manage recreational routes to avoid/minimise disturbance; and manage scrub vegetation appropriately to maintain the open character (a certain amount of scrub can be beneficial, especially on sites that are prone to heat stress or drought, due to its shading effect potentially providing refuge for invertebrates).
- Consider opportunities to increase the area of chalk grassland through re-creation and restoration around existing areas around Darland Banks, and ensure that areas that might act as refugia from climate change (such as areas with north facing slopes, complex micro-topography and/or low nitrogen levels) are under optimal management.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing deciduous woodland cover through natural regeneration or small scale planting, particularly along the more exposed urban edges to the north and south; new planting should reflect the scale, shape, pattern and composition of the existing woodland.

- Manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.
- Consider the wider ecosystem services that woodlands provide; outside designated sites and Ancient Woodland, changes in species composition may be acceptable if the services that the woodland provides (such as urban cooling, visual amenity or recreational opportunities) remain intact.
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers. Consider how arable margins to the north can complement and extend characteristic chalk grassland habitats found at Darland Banks.
- Seek to prevent further loss or decline in the quality of remaining boundary hedgerows and encourage their restoration/reinstatement.
- When establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Discourage an increase in equine related land uses along Capstone Road to the south; encourage sensitive management and screening of existing equine related activities and seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment including enhanced links to the nearby urban area and better

links within central areas, including between Darland Banks and Capstone Farm Country Park; manage recreational routes to avoid/minimise disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.

- Consider opportunities to protect and enhance existing long range views towards the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Development Management

- Maintain the characteristic sparse pattern of development and rural character, by avoiding expansion of adjacent urban areas onto the valley slopes.
- Avoid large scale urban/housing extensions within this open landscape, particularly on the open slopes to the north (Darland Banks); consider the role of this area as an open buffer between the different parts of Chatham and Gillingham and as a distinctive open/green backdrop in views from surrounding areas.
- If development is proposed look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and avoid any further reduction in tranquillity; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards in relation to development visible on the ridge tops.

Landscape Character Area D2: Capstone Farm

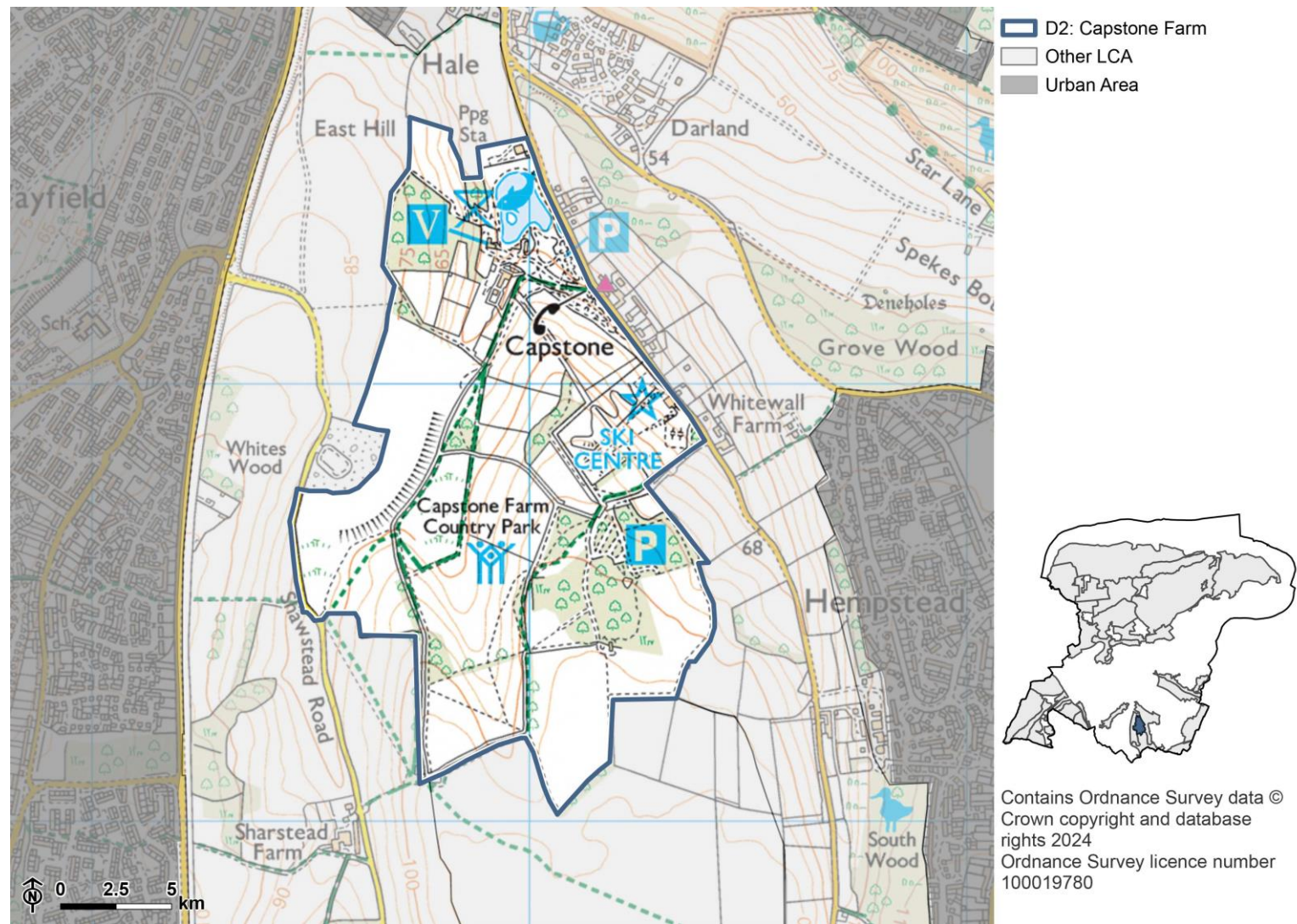
Description

Location and Summary

7.35 The Capstone Farm LCA forms part of the Capstone Valley, which penetrates the urban area of Chatham and Gillingham. The LCA boundaries are broadly coterminous with the Capstone Farm Country Park and its outer edges are defined predominantly by well-established hedgerows and tree belts. The LCA is enclosed by steeper valley landforms to the north and east (LCA D1) and west (LCA D3).

7.36 This is an area of undulating former farmland that rises gradually towards the south. It is now in use as a Country Park and comprises a mix of amenity uses to the north – car park, fishing lake, visitor centre and ski centre – and open meadows on former arable farmland to the south and west.

Figure 7.20: Location of LCA D2



Key Characteristics

- An undulating landform, set within the dip slope of the North Downs.
- Predominantly open meadows on former arable farmland and woodland; amenity facilities concentrated to the north.
- A small to medium scale field pattern defined by well-established hedgerows, tree belts and woodland blocks; features a remnant area of traditional orchard to the south.
- Has a good level of access, with several PRow and a network of permissive paths within Capstone Farm Country Park; the country park and ski centre form a notable visitor attraction within Medway and surrounding area.
- A rural open space close to the urban area and, helps retain a sense of separation between Hempstead to the east and Princess Park/Wayfield to the west.
- Forms part of a continuous green corridor linking the urban area to open countryside to the south (including the Kent Downs National Landscape south of the M2 Motorway).
- Amenity uses to the north and adjacent household waste site to the west, have a localised influence on the character of the landscape.
- Retains an essentially rural character of agricultural fields, and wooded areas provide some sense of enclosure and isolation; this is undermined in places by glimpsed views towards exposed urban edges on ridge tops to the east and north.
- Steep valley sides provides a green and wooded backdrop in views east and north (LCA D1) and west (LCA D3), albeit with exposed urban edges visible in places; urban area visible in some views north.

Photo 7.61: Undulating landform featuring meadows on former arable land and woodland



Photo 7.62: Wooded areas providing enclosure and sense of isolation



Photo 7.63: Small to medium scale field pattern defined by hedgerows, tree belts and woodland



Photo 7.64: Surrounding valley sides providing a backdrop to views



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Upper Cretaceous Chalk overlain by clay with flints formations and Head deposits (clay, silt, sand and gravel).
- An undulating landform, set within a north to south dip slope of the North Downs; heights range from approximately 110m AOD in the south to approximately 45m AOD in the north.
- Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural soils formerly supported a mix of arable and pasture farming; arable now predominantly used as meadow.
- Several areas of Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland', as well as some areas of 'good quality semi improved grassland' and 'traditional orchard' to the south.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Area 12 – Rochester/Chatham Hinterland, although also has a close association with Historic Landscape Character Area 32 – Urban Conurbation, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The HLC records 'small regular with straight boundaries (parliamentary type enclosure)' and 'small rectilinear with wavy boundaries' as covering the majority of the landscape; an area of 'active and disused chalk quarries' lies to the west and corresponds with land surrounding Capstone Household Waste Site. The small rectilinear fields with wavy boundaries possibly date to the late medieval period and areas of traditional orchards provide a link to historic land use/cover, whilst the parliamentary enclosure and former chalk quarries reflect more recent changes to the landscape.
- Historically settlement within the area comprised several isolated farmsteads and the hamlet of Capstone to the north-east; today, whilst settlement within the landscape itself remains low density, the area is surrounded by urban development to the west, north and east.

- The principal roads in the area are Capstone Road and Shawstead Road which run along the eastern and western boundaries respectively; vehicle access within the landscape itself is limited to an access track and car parking areas associated with the Country Park and ski centre to the north.
- Has a good level of access, with several PRow and a network of permissible paths and cycle paths within the country park; the Country Park and ski centre form a notable visitor attraction within Medway and surrounding area, including a visitor centre, fishing lake, café and children's play areas.
- Provides a rural open space close to the urban area and helps retain a sense of separation between Hempstead to the east and Princess Park/Wayfield to the west.

Perceptual Influences

- Retains an essentially rural character of agricultural fields, and wooded areas provide some sense of enclosure and isolation.
- Amenity uses to the north and adjacent household waste site to the west, influence the character of the landscape.
- Largely surrounded by the urban area and this strongly influences the landscape, increasing light pollution and reducing levels of tranquillity, as indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.
- Steep valley sides provides a green and wooded backdrop in views east (LCA D1: Darland Banks) and west (LCA D2: Sharstead Farm and East Hill), albeit with exposed urban edges visible in places.
- The urban area at Luton is visible in some views north, particularly from more open arable areas to the west.
- Deciduous woodlands and trees create strong seasonal changes in the landscape, particularly in spring and autumn.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- A valuable rural landscape and recreational resource close to the urban area.
- An open area that helps retain a sense of separation between Hempstead and Princess Park/Wayfield.
- Retains an essentially rural character agricultural fields and wooded areas, despite amenity uses to the north.
- Small rectilinear fields with wavy boundaries and remnant traditional orchards provide a link to historic land cover/use.
- Recreational value of PRow and Capstone Farm Country Park – a key resource and visitor attraction in Medway that lies close to the urban area.
- Importance of woodland in providing sense of enclosure and connecting habitats.
- Ecologically important areas of Priority Habitat ‘deciduous woodland’, ‘traditional orchards’ and ‘semi improved grassland’, as well as meadows on former arable land.

Issues and Changes

- Loss of traditional orchards; areas to the east have been partly replaced by pasture/equine.
- Influence of amenity uses to the north, including the ski centre, and household waste site to the west.
- Largely surrounded by the urban area and this proximity influences the wider landscape, increasing light pollution and reducing levels of tranquillity.

- Increased recreational pressures and potential disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Limited direct access/connectivity with the urban edge of Wayfield to the north-west and with Darland Banks to the north.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters could cause changes in plant and animal species and community composition of grassland habitats.
 - Hotter, drier summers and wetter winters will lead to changes in food production and growing seasons.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Capstone Farm LCA is to conserve and enhance the open rural character and recreational value of this open landscape in proximity to the urban area. Maintain and enhance functional connections for people nature and strengthen the well-wooded character of the landscape through enhancing woodland and reinforcing hedgerow boundaries.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance ecologically important areas of Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland', 'traditional orchards' and 'semi improved grassland', as well as areas of former arable farmland managed as meadow.
- Manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.
- Consider the wider ecosystem services that woodlands provide; outside designated sites and Ancient Woodland, changes in species composition may be acceptable if the services that the woodland provides (such as urban cooling, visual amenity or recreational opportunities) remain intact.
- Ensure best practice management of grassland habitats to enhance its biodiversity value and appearance, through managing grazing flexibly in response to seasonal variations in vegetation growth; and controlling the spread of scrub vegetation.
- Conserve and enhance hedgerows through effective management to strengthen the characteristic pattern and structure of the landscape.
- When establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.

- Encourage the traditional farming practice and maintain and restore traditional orchards to the south; seek to connect and extend and manage to enhance biodiversity value.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking to further enhance opportunities for informal access and enjoyment through well maintained linked routes, including cycle routes where possible; consider new links between the Country Park and the urban area of Wayfield and with Darland Banks; manage recreational routes to avoid/minimise disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the PRoW, including through the enhancement and promotion of views south towards the Kent Downs National Landscape.
- Seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.

Development Management

- Maintain the characteristic sparse pattern of development, avoiding further amenity related built development; consider the role of this area as an open buffer between Hempstead and Princess Park/Wayfield.
- If development is proposed look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Resist proposals for highway upgrading to retain the rural character of the roads/lanes and their verges.
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and avoid any further reduction in tranquillity; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards in relation to development visible on the surrounding ridge tops.

Landscape Character Area D3: Sharstead Farm and East Hill

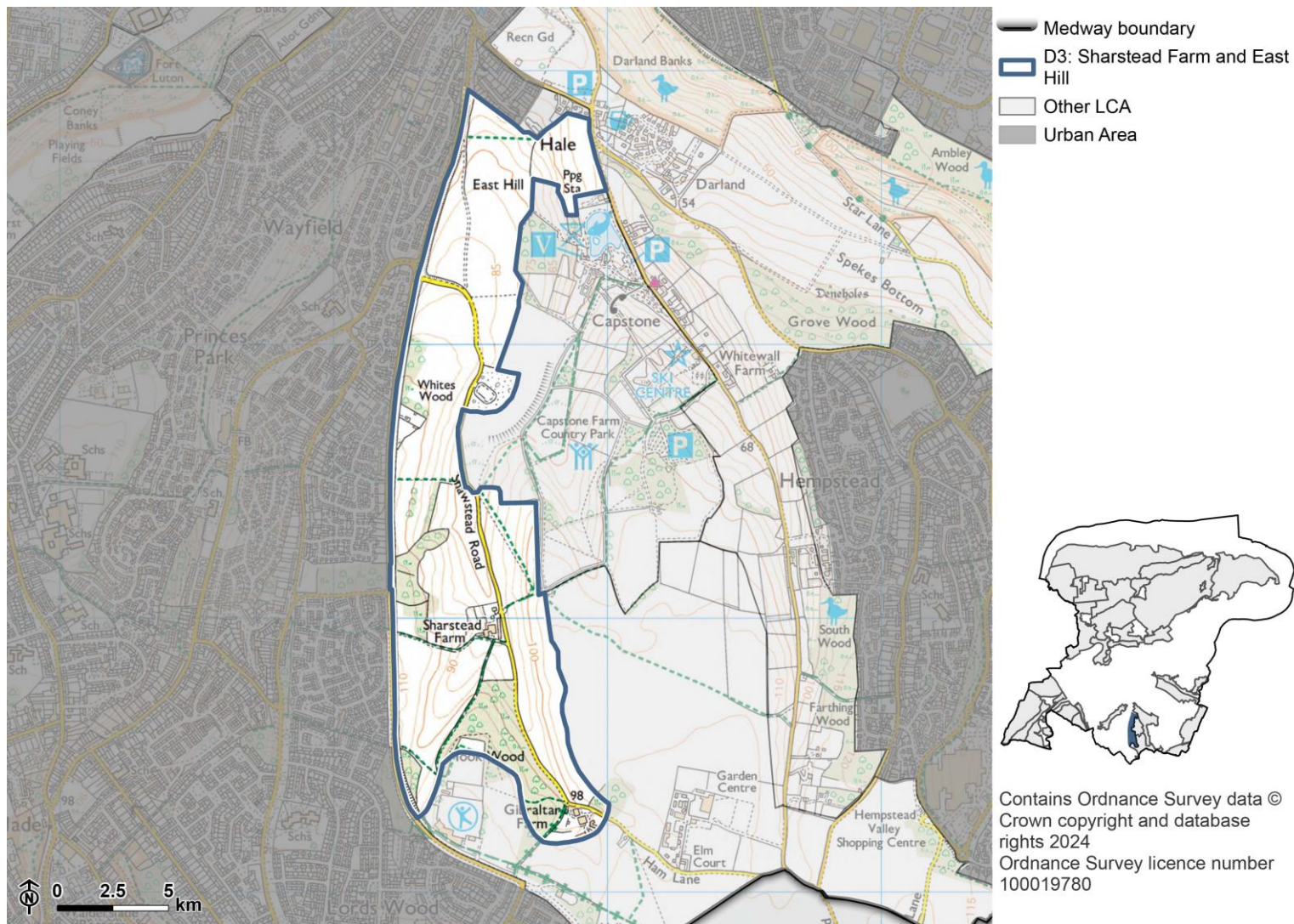
Description

Location and Summary

7.37 The Sharstead Farm LCA forms part of the Capstone Valley, which penetrates the urban area of Chatham and Gillingham. It is defined to the south and west by North Dane Way, beyond which lies the urban area of Princes Park and Wayfield; to the north by the urban edge of Luton; and to the east by rising topography which marks the boundary with Capstone Farm Country Park (LCA D2) and an arable plateau (LCA D4).

7.38 This is an open dry chalk ridge and valley featuring arable farmland and strong wooded boundaries to the west. The mature wooded boundaries, mirrored opposite valley side to the east (LCA D1: Darland and Hempstead Fringe), helps reduce the visual influence of the adjacent urban area and maintain an over-riding rural character.

Figure 7.21: Location of LCA D3



Key Characteristics

- A dry deep chalk valley landform characteristic of the higher dip slopes of the North Downs.
- A predominantly open arable landscape organised into medium to large scale fields defined by hedgerows with some evidence of hedgerow loss in places; interspersed with woodland blocks concentrated mainly to the south.
- Good level of public access, with several PRoW connecting with the adjacent urban area and Capstone Farm Country Park; North Dane Way severs links from the adjacent urban area.
- Provides a rural open space close to the urban area and helps retain a sense of separation between Princess Park and Hempstead to the east.
- Part of a continuous green corridor linking the urban area to open countryside to the south (including the Kent Downs National Landscape south of the M2 Motorway).
- The majority of the landscape retains an essentially rural character and strong sense of tranquillity; Capstone Household Waste Site, amenity uses at Lords Wood and the well-trafficked North Dane Way have a localised influence on the character of the landscape to the north, south and west respectively, although surrounding tree cover helps reduce this.
- Dense tree belts along North Dane Way generally reduces the visual influence of the adjacent urban area, although views towards wider surrounding urban edges to the north are available from open higher ground.
- Some open long range views are available from higher ground, including east across Capstone Farm Country Park, north-east towards Darland Banks and south-east towards the Kent Downs National Landscape; views elsewhere are more contained by topography and tree cover.
- Provides a green and wooded backdrop in views west from Capstone Farm Country Park.

Photo 7.65: Dry chalk valley landform, set within the north-south North Downs dip slope



Photo 7.66: Predominantly open arable landscape defined by hedgerows and woodland



Photo 7.67: Essentially rural character and sense of tranquillity



Photo 7.68: Views across Capstone Farm Country Park and towards Darland Banks



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Upper Cretaceous Chalk overlain by clay with flints formations and Head deposits (clay, silt, sand and gravel).
- A deep dry chalk valley landform, set within the higher dip slope of the North Downs; heights range from approximately 110m to 40m AOD.
- Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural soils predominantly support arable farmland.
- Several areas of Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland', including Whites Wood, North Dane Wood and Hall Wood, predominantly located on the upper slopes and to the south.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Area 12 – Rochester/Chatham Hinterland, although also has a close association with Historic Landscape Character Area 32 – Urban Conurbation, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The HLC records 'small rectilinear with wavy boundaries' to the north and 'prairie fields (19th century enclosure with extensive boundary loss) to the south; 'pre-1810 woodland' and 'pre-19th century coppices' correspond with areas of Ancient Woodland.
- Farmland is organised into a medium to large scale field pattern; fields are defined by well-established hedgerows and woodland belts to the north whilst there is some boundary loss in places.
- Historically the area was largely unsettled; today, development within the landscape itself remains sparse, with dense urban development lying close, beyond the western boundary and further beyond to the north.
- The principal roads in the area are North Dane Way and Shawstead Road/Ham Lane; elsewhere vehicle access is generally limited to private roads and farm tracks.

- There is a good level of public access, with several PRow connecting with the adjacent urban area to the west and Capstone Farm Country Park to the north-east.

Perceptual Influences

- The majority of the landscape retains an essentially rural character of agricultural fields, and wooded areas provide some sense of enclosure and isolation.
- The Capstone Household Waste Site influences the character of the landscape to the east, primarily through the associated traffic along Shawstead Road, and amenity uses at Lords Wood have a localised influence on character to the south along the edge of Hook Wood.
- Dense tree belts along North Dane Way generally reduces the visual influence of the adjacent urban area to the west and south; views towards wider surrounding urban edges are often available from open higher ground.
- North Dane Way is relatively well-trafficked, however the visual and aural influence of the traffic is largely mitigated, by the cuttings in which the road sits, and the extensive tree cover including White Wood Ancient Woodland; more rural character along Shawstead Road/Ham Lane.
- Urban areas north and west influence the landscape, increasing light pollution and reducing levels of tranquillity, as indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.
- Some open long range views are available from higher ground, including east across Capstone Farm Country Park, north-east towards Darland Banks and south-east towards the Kent Downs National Landscape; views elsewhere are more contained by topography and tree cover.
- Provides a green and wooded backdrop in views west from Capstone Farm Country Park.
- Deciduous woodlands and trees create strong seasonal changes in the landscape, particularly in spring and autumn.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- A valuable rural landscape and recreational resource close to the urban area.
- An open area that helps retain a sense of separation between Hempstead and Princess Park/Wayfield.
- Open long range views from higher ground east towards the Capstone Farm Country Park, Darland Banks and the Kent Downs National Landscape.
- Part of a continuous green corridor linking the urban area to open countryside to the south (including the Kent Downs AONB south of the M2 Motorway)
- Provides an open setting to the Country Park; provides a green and wooded backdrop in views west from the park.
- Recreational value of PRow, connecting with the adjacent urban area and Country Park.
- The essentially rural character of agricultural fields and woodlands.
- Importance of woodland in providing sense of enclosure and connecting habitats and in reducing the influence of the adjacent urban edge.
- Ecologically important areas of Ancient Woodland and areas of Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'.

Issues and Changes

- The localised influence of Capstone Household Waste Site, primarily through associated traffic using Shawstead Road.

- Evidence of hedgerow boundary loss in places, such as along Shawstead Road in the vicinity of the waste site.
- Evidence of Ash Dieback in places, such as along North Dane Way.
- Threat of further expansion of surrounding urban edges from the north, west and south.
- Increased recreational pressures and potential disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Dry chalk valleys and downs landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Changing temperatures and extreme weather events are creating vulnerabilities in chalk grassland landscapes, leading to increased soil erosion and run-off.
 - Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins, an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Sharstead Farm and East Hill LCA is to conserve and enhance the open rural character and recreational value of this landscape in proximity to the urban area. Maintain and enhance its role as a part of a continuous green corridor linking the urban area to open countryside to the south and provide better functional connections for people. Seek to strengthen the wooded character of the landscape through enhancing woodland and reinforcing hedgerow boundaries. Particularly along boundaries adjacent to urban areas west and north, where large-scale trees locally distinct to the LCA are present or can establish.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance ecologically important area of Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'.
- Consider opportunities to restore and increase the area of chalk grassland through re-creation and restoration around existing areas.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing deciduous woodland cover through natural regeneration or small scale planting; look to increase woodland cover to the north.
- Manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland.
- Seek to prevent further loss or decline in the quality of remaining boundary hedgerows and encourage their restoration/reinstatement,

including along Shawstead Road; when establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; and aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.

- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers. Consider how arable margins can complement and extend characteristic chalk grassland habitats found at nearby Darland Banks.
- Enhance the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to increase opportunities for access and enjoyment including through well maintained linked routes; consider enhanced links to the nearby urban area and the Country Park.
- Consider opportunities to protect and enhance existing long range views east towards Capstone Farm Country Park, north-east towards Darland Banks and south-east towards the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Development Management

- Maintain the characteristic sparse pattern of development, avoiding expansion of adjacent urban areas into the landscape.
- Avoid large scale urban/housing extensions within this valley landscape; consider the role of this area as an open buffer between Hampstead and Princes Park.
- If development is proposed look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.

- Resist proposals for highway upgrading to retain the rural character of the roads/lanes and their verges.
- Seek to minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards in relation to development visible on the surrounding ridge tops.

Landscape Character Area D4: Elm Court

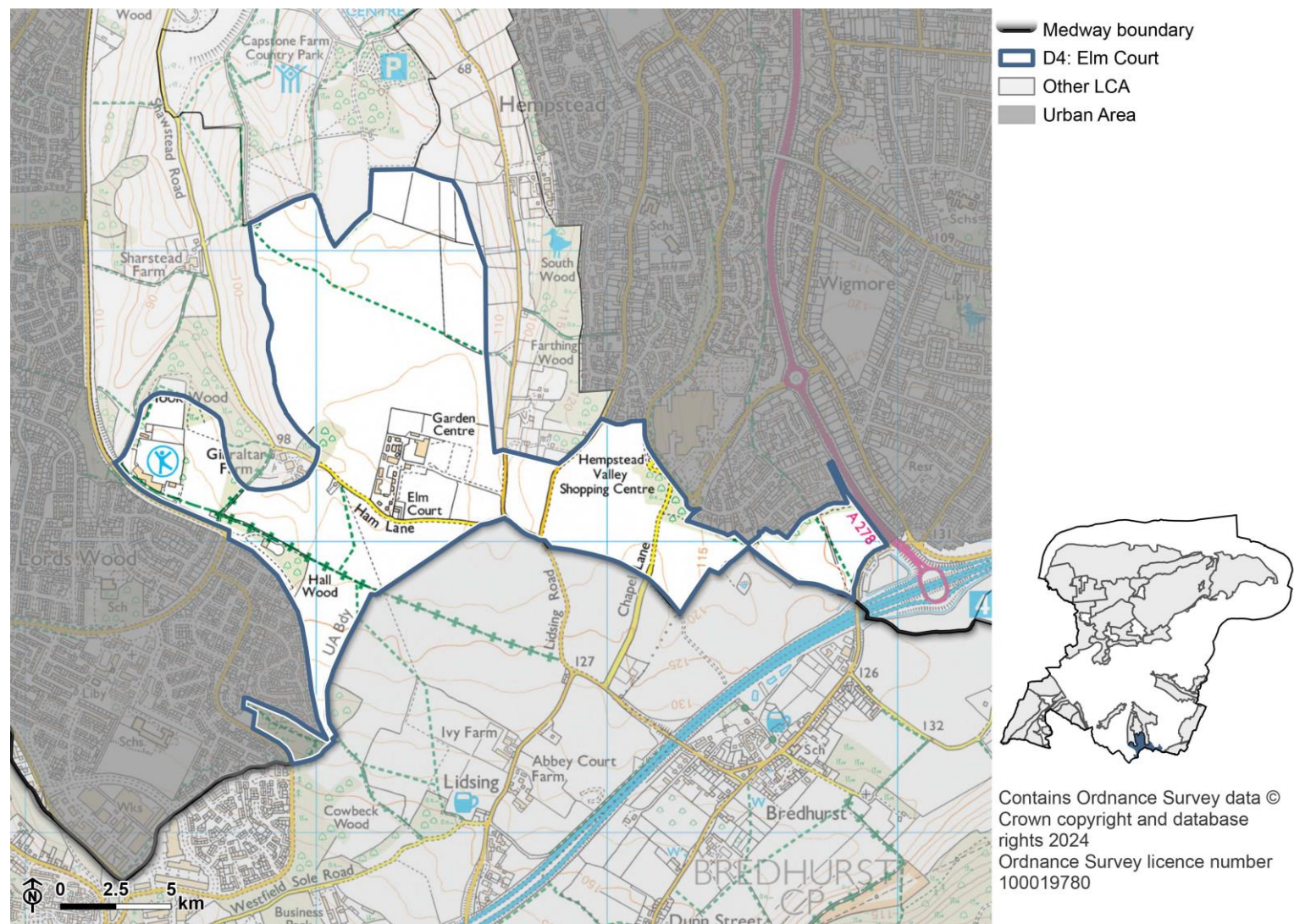
Description

Location and Summary

7.39 The Elm Court LCA forms part of the Capstone Valley, which penetrates the urban area of Chatham and Gillingham. The LCA boundaries are defined by the urban edges of Hempstead and Lords Wood to the east and west respectively; by falling topography to the north-east and north-west, which marks the transition to steeper dry chalk valleys (LCA D3 and D1 respectively); by the boundary of Capstone Farm Country Park to the north (LCA D2); and by the administrative boundary with Maidstone to the south.

7.40 This is gently undulating predominantly arable plateau that rises gradually towards the south. Dry valleys define its north-eastern and north-western boundaries.

Figure 7.22: Location of LCA D4



Key Characteristics

- A gently undulating plateau landform set within the upper/higher dip slope of the North Downs; land rises gradually towards the south.
- Predominantly arable farmland organised into large fields defined by gappy hedgerows or ditches creates a strong sense of openness; the plateau landform and open nature of large fields result in a strong sense of openness.
- Good level of access, with several PRoW connecting with the adjacent urban areas east-west; weaker north-south links, though many well used informal and permissive north south links exist along field edges.
- Provides a rural open space close to the urban area and helps retain a sense of separation between Hempstead to the east and Lords Wood to the west.
- Forms part of a continuous green corridor linking the urban area to open countryside to the south (including the Kent Downs National Landscape south of the M2 Motorway).
- The majority of the landscape retains an essentially rural character of agricultural fields and woodland; this is undermined by the presence of light industrial uses at Elm Court and the relatively well-trafficked Capstone Road and Lidsing Road and the M2 to the south-east.
- Some open long range views are available south towards the Kent Downs National Landscape; woodland to the east and west provides a green and wooded backdrop in views, albeit with exposed urban edges visible in places.

Photo 7.69: Gently undulating landform that rises gradually towards the south



Photo 7.70: Plateau landform and large arable fields create a sense of openness



Photo 7.71: Visual connection with the Kent Downs National Landscape to the south



Photo 7.72: Woodland on the peripheries providing a green backdrop



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Upper Cretaceous Chalk overlain by clay with flints formations and Head deposits (clay, silt, sand and gravel).
- A gently undulating landform with dry chalk valleys to the north-west and north-east, set within a north to south dip slope of the North Downs; heights range from approximately 135m AOD in the south to approximately 105m AOD in the north.
- Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural soils support predominantly arable farming; some equine uses to the north-east in the vicinity of Capstone Road.
- Several small areas of Ancient Woodland to the south-east and south-west, also identified as areas of Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Area 12 – Rochester/Chatham Hinterland, although also has a close association with Historic Landscape Character Area 32 – Urban Conurbation, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The HLC records 'prairie fields (19th century enclosure with extensive boundary loss) as covering the majority of the landscape; a small area of 'small regular with straight boundaries (parliamentary type enclosure)' in the vicinity of Elm Court to the south and small areas of 'pre-19th century coppices' to the west corresponding to blocks of Ancient Woodland. The pre-19th century coppices provide a link to historic land use/cover, whilst the prairie fields and parliamentary enclosure reflect more recent changes to the landscape.
- Historically settlement within the area was limited to isolated farmsteads; today, whilst settlement within the area itself remains low density, it is surrounded by urban development to the west, north and east.

- The principal roads in the area are Capstone Road, Ham Lane and Hempstead Road, which are largely oriented north-south parallel to the sloping topography; elsewhere vehicle access is limited to private access tracks and farm tracks (such as Chapel Lane).
- Has a good level of access, with several PRow which connect to the adjacent urban areas; weaker north-south links, including to Capstone Farm Country Park. PRow GB40, is an important active transport route in Medway linking the Hempstead suburbs with the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Perceptual Influences

- Light industrial uses at Elm Court and exposed urban edges (particularly south of the ancient woodland at Hall Wood to the west) influence the character of the landscape; coniferous planting around the northern boundary of Elm Court forms a discordant urbanising element within the landscape.
- Partially enclosed by the urban area to the east and west and the M2 Motorway lies to the south; this influences the landscape, increasing light pollution and reducing levels of tranquillity, as indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.
- Some open long range views are available south towards the Kent Downs National Landscape.
- Woodland cover to the east and west provides a green and wooded backdrop in views, albeit with exposed urban edges visible in places particularly that at Lords Wood to the west.
- Deciduous woodlands and trees create strong seasonal changes in the landscape, particularly in spring and autumn.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Forms part of the wider setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape and has some visual relationship with land to the south of the M2. Medway's direct link with the Mid Kent Downs of the AONB.
- Forms an open buffer between the Kent Downs National Landscape and the urban area of Hempstead/Park Wood.
- A valuable open space and recreational resource close to the urban area.
- Provides a valuable rural open space close to the urban area and helps retain a sense of separation between Hempstead to the east and Lords Wood to the west.
- Small areas of pre-19th century coppice (Ancient Woodland) provide a link to historic land cover/use.
- Recreational value of PRow which connect to the adjacent urban areas.
- The essentially rural character of agricultural fields and wooded areas, and rural character experienced along Ham Lane.
- Importance of woodland in providing sense of enclosure and connecting habitats.
- Ecologically important areas of Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'.

Issues and Changes

- Loss of hedgerows and erosion of historic field patterns.

- Influence of light industrial uses at Elm Court, busy roads and exposed urban edges (particularly south of ancient woodland at lords Wood to the west).
- Threat of further expansion of urban edges and influences from the east and west, and from within Maidstone to the south (including allocation for Lidsing Garden Community).
- Weak north-south accessibility, including to Capstone Farm Country Park.
- Increased recreational pressures and disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins, an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins and an increase in agricultural use of summer insecticides which could reduce insect numbers and pollination.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.
 - Hotter, drier summers and wetter winters will lead to changes in food production and growing seasons.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Elm Court LCA is to conserve and enhance the open rural character of this landscape in proximity to the urban area. Maintain and enhance its role as a part of a continuous green corridor linking the urban area to open countryside to the south with associated Green Infrastructure function. Seek to enhance north-south access between the Kent Downs National Landscape and Capstone Farm Country Park and increase woodland cover and replace and reinforce hedgerow boundaries.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance ecologically important areas of Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'.
- Manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.
- Consider opportunities to increase the extent of deciduous woodland cover, using locally characteristic species to strengthen biodiversity and local distinctiveness, particularly along settlement edges to the west and around other detracting features.
- Consider the wider ecosystem services that woodlands provide; outside designated sites and Ancient Woodland, changes in species

composition may be acceptable if the services that the woodland provides (such as urban cooling, visual amenity or recreational opportunities) remain intact.

- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers. Consider how arable margins can complement and extend characteristic chalk grassland habitats found in the surrounding area, including at Darland Banks to the north and Strawberry Banks to the south.
- Seek to prevent further loss or decline in the quality of remaining boundary hedgerows and consider opportunities to reintroduce lost or heavily denuded hedgerow boundaries; consider opportunities to re-introduce historic hedgerow patterns (pre-19th century).
- When establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for informal access and enjoyment through well maintained linked routes, including cycle routes where possible; consider new north-south links between Capstone Farm Country Park and the Kent Downs National Landscape; manage recreational routes to avoid/minimise disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the PRow, including through the enhancement and promotion of views south towards the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Development Management

- Maintain the characteristic sparse pattern of development, avoiding expansion of adjacent urban areas into the landscape; consider the role of this area as an open buffer between Hampstead and Lords Wood.
- Any large scale or visually intrusive development would be detrimental within this visually open landscape and impact on views, including the visual setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape; consider the role of this area as an open buffer between Hampstead and Lords Wood.
- If development is proposed look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Resist proposals for highway upgrading, particularly along Ham Lane to the west to retain its rural character.
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and avoid any further reduction in tranquillity; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards in relation to development visible on the surrounding ridge tops.

Landscape Character Area D5: Horsted Valley

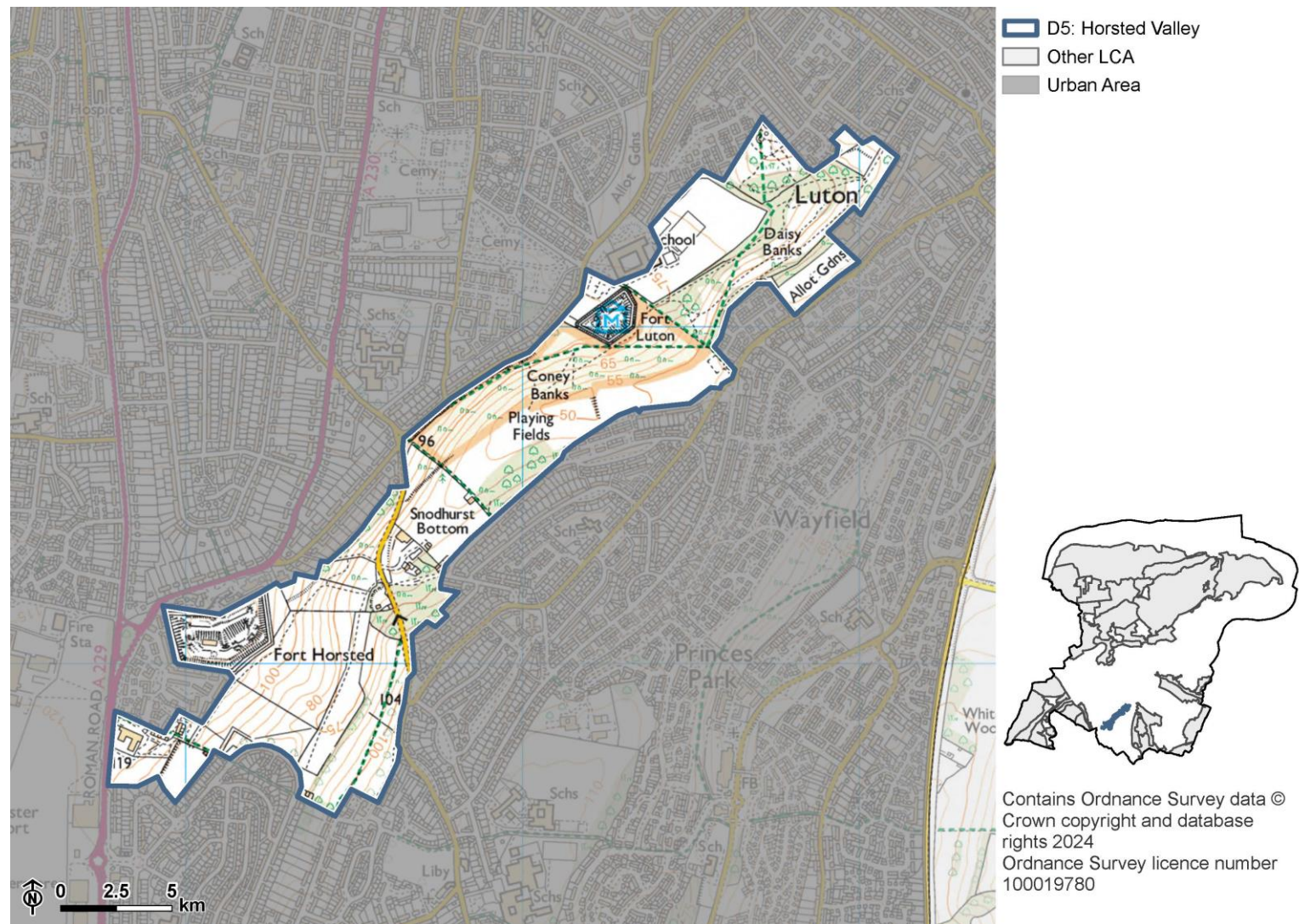
Description

Location and Summary

7.41 The Horsted Valley LCA penetrates the urban area of Chatham. It is oriented north-east to south-west and is defined on all sides by urban edges – Chatham to the north-west, Luton to the north-east, and Wayfield and Snodhurst to the south-east. Maidstone Road (A229) defines the south-western edge, beyond which lies Rochester Airport.

7.42 This is an open steep sided dry chalk valley featuring a variety of land cover, including chalk grassland, scrub, woodland and amenity open spaces.

Figure 7.23: Location of LCA D5



Key Characteristics

- A steep valley landform set within the dip slope of the North Downs.
- A varied landscape featuring woodland and scrub predominantly covering the steep valley slopes; open chalk grassland and semi-improved grassland; and open amenity space.
- A small to medium scale field pattern to the south-west; elsewhere features more open downland interspersed with woodland.
- Fort Horsted and Fort Luton (Scheduled Monuments) provide time-depth; these form part of a series of 19th century Palmerston Forts constructed to protect the southern overland approach to HM Dockyard Chatham.
- Historically settlement within the area was limited to scattered farmsteads; today, whilst development within the area remains sparse, it is surrounded on all sides by urban development which strongly influences the character of the landscape.
- Good levels of access, including an extensive network of PRoW and other permissive paths; amenity green space at Luton Millennium Green, Snodhurst Bottom and Vale Drive Play Park; CROW Access Land at Coney Banks Recreation Ground; and Hosted Valley Park open space.
- Provides open space close to the urban area and helps retain a sense of separation between Chatham and the suburbs of Wayfield and Snodhurst.
- Some parts, in particular land to the south-west, retain an essentially rural character of open grassland, and wooded areas provide a sense of enclosure and isolation, limiting the visual influence of the adjacent urban edges.
- Open views are available in places along and across the valley, terminating on either wooded valleys sides or the urban edge; longer range views also available from higher ground at Daisy Banks and Coney Banks towards Darland Banks (LCA D1) to the east.

- Some pockets of degraded and neglected land in places.
- Deciduous woodlands and trees create strong seasonal changes in the landscape, particularly in spring and autumn.

Photo 7.73: Steep valley landform, set within the north-south dip slope of the North Downs



Photo 7.74: Open space penetrating the urban area with good levels of access



Photo 7.75: Varied land cover, including woodland and open chalk grassland



Photo 7.76: Long range views from higher ground towards Darland Banks



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Upper Cretaceous Chalk overlain by Head deposits (clay, silt, sand and gravel) and clay with flints formations (clay, silt, sand and gravel).
- A steep valley landform oriented north-east to south-west, set within a north to south dip slope of the North Downs; heights range from approximately 115m to the south-west and 30m AOD to the north-east.
- Agricultural land classification identifies 'Non Agricultural' soils to the south-west ; elsewhere the land is classified as 'urban'.
- Bishops Hoath Wood to the south is identified as Ancient Woodland; several areas of Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' cover the majority of the steep valley sides and lower ground to the north-east, and 'good quality semi improved grassland' cover land to the south-west.
- Unimproved chalk grassland at Coney Banks and Daisy banks; this is a habitat that supports a wide variety of flora a fauna, including orchids, butterflies (notably The Marbled White) and birds.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 32 – Urban Conurbation as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The HLC records 'downland' to the north-east, 'post-1810 settlement (general)' located centrally and 'small regular with straight boundaries (parliamentary type enclosure)' to the south-west; two areas of '19th century (1830-1914)' correspond with two Palmerston Forts (see below). The remnant areas of downland provide a link to historic land cover/use, whilst other areas reflect more recent changes to the landscape.
- Fort Horsted and Fort Luton (Scheduled Monuments) are part of a series of 19th century Palmerston Forts constructed around Chatham and

Gillingham to protect HM Dockyard Chatham; these were designed to protect the southern overland approach to Chatham.

- A small to medium scale field pattern to the south-west defined by a strong network of hedgerows generally in good condition; elsewhere the landscape features woodland or more open downland.
- Historically settlement within the area was limited to scattered farmsteads; today, whilst settlement within the area itself remains low density, it is surrounded by urban development. The Grade II listed Snodhurst Farmhouse & Outbuildings is a reminder of the historic settlement pattern.
- The principal road in the area is Walderslade Road; elsewhere vehicle access is generally restricted.
- Has high levels of accessibility, including an extensive network of PRow and other permissive paths; amenity green space at Luton Millenium Green, Snodhurst Bottom and Vale Drive Play Park; CROW Access Land at Coney Banks Recreation Ground; and Hosted Valley Park open space.
- Fort Luton is open to the public on certain weekends throughout the year.
- Rochester Airport, whilst predominantly comprising open grassed runways, is inaccessible and severs direct links to open countryside to the south-west (including the Kent Downs National Landscape).

Perceptual Influences

- Parts of the landscape, in particular land to the west, retain an essentially rural character of agricultural fields or open grassland, albeit with some urban fringe influence.
- Wooded areas provide a sense of enclosure and isolation, limiting the visual influence of the adjacent urban edges.
- Within much of the landscape the urban edges are apparent and this influences the character of the landscape.
- Penetrates the urban area and this strongly influences the landscape, increasing light pollution and reducing levels of tranquillity, as indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.

- Open views are available in places along and across the valley, terminating on either wooded valleys sides or the urban edge; longer range views also available from higher ground at Daisy Banks and Coney Banks towards Darland Banks to the east (LCA D1).
- Coney Banks and Daisy Bank form a green and wooded backdrop in views north and north-west from Wayfield and Snodhurst, and the hillsides around Fort Horsted form an open green backdrop in views north-west from Snodhurst Avenue.
- Deciduous woodlands and trees create strong seasonal changes in the landscape, particularly in spring and autumn.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- A valuable open space penetrating the urban area, predominantly in the care of Medway Council.
- An open area that helps retain a sense of separation between Chatham and the suburbs of Wayfield and Snodhurst.
- Provides a green and wooded backdrop in views north and north-west from Wayfield and Snodhurst.
- Remnant areas of downland/chalk grassland and Ancient Woodland provide a link to historic land cover/use.
- Provides an open setting for Fort Horsted and Fort Luton Scheduled Monuments.
- Recreational value of PRoW, CROW Access Land and amenity open spaces.
- Some areas retain an essentially rural character of agricultural fields or open chalk grassland.

- Importance of woodland in providing sense of enclosure and connecting habitats.
- Open long range views from higher ground towards Darland Banks.
- Ecologically important areas of Ancient Woodland, Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' and 'semi-improved grassland', and areas of chalk grassland.

Issues and Changes

- Loss of chalk grassland due to encroachment of scrub vegetation.
- Urbanising influence of development and more exposed urban edges, particularly to the west (including recent development on Elliotts Way and Woodstock Road) and east (including recent development off Lytham Close and Golve Drive).
- Largely surrounded by the urban area and this proximity influences the wider landscape, increasing light pollution and reducing levels of tranquillity.
- Rochester Airport is inaccessible and severs direct links between the urban area and open countryside (including the Kent Downs National Landscape) to the south-west.
- Threat of further expansion of surrounding urban edges.
- Increased recreational pressures and potential disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Dry chalk valleys and downs landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Changing temperatures and extreme weather events are creating vulnerabilities in grassland landscapes, leading to increased soil erosion and run-off.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters could cause changes in plant and animal species and community composition of grassland (for example

loss of perennials, expansion of drought-tolerant ephemerals and dominance of grasses in the sward of chalk grassland).

- Drier summers leading to an increased fire risk affecting grassland habitats.
- Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.
- Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Horsted Valley LCA is to conserve and enhance the distinctive character of this landscape with its steeply sloping valley landform, remnant areas of downland/chalk grassland and Ancient Woodland. Maintain its role as a green corridor penetrating the urban area and seek to enhance connections with the open countryside (including the Kent Downs National Landscape) to the south-west, providing better functional connections for people and nature.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance and where appropriate extend ecologically important habitats, including Ancient Woodland, Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' and 'semi-improved grassland', and areas of chalk grassland.
- Manage chalk grassland at Daisy Banks and Coney Banks to enhance its biodiversity value and appearance; ensure best practice management through suitable grazing regimes and avoiding agrochemical and fertiliser inputs; manage recreational routes to avoid/minimise disturbance; and manage scrub vegetation appropriately to maintain the open character (a certain amount of scrub can be beneficial, especially on sites that are prone to heat stress or drought, due to its shading effect potentially providing refuge for invertebrates).
- Consider opportunities to increase the area of chalk grassland through re-creation and restoration around existing areas at Daisy Banks and Coney Banks, and ensure that areas that might act as refugia from climate change (such as areas with north facing slopes, complex micro-topography and/or low nitrogen levels) are under optimal management.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing deciduous woodland cover through natural regeneration or small scale planting, particularly along the more exposed urban edges to the west and east; new planting should reflect the scale, shape, pattern and composition of the existing woodland.
- Manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland.
- Consider the wider ecosystem services that woodlands provide; outside designated sites and Ancient Woodland, changes in species composition may be acceptable if the services that the woodland

provides (such as urban cooling, visual amenity or recreational opportunities) remain intact.

- Conserve and enhance hedgerows through effective management to strengthen the characteristic pattern and structure of the landscape.
- Conserve Horsted Fort and Luton Fort and consider the role the landscape plays in their open setting; retain and enhance interpretation and understanding of these important heritage features and their wider context of 19th century defence.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment including enhanced links to the nearby urban area; manage recreational routes to avoid/minimise disturbance to areas of nature conservation value; consider enhanced access to the Hosted Fort and Fort Luton.
- Consider opportunities to protect and enhance existing longer range views towards Darland Banks.
- Conserve the rural character of open agricultural fields to the south-west.

Development Management

- Maintain the characteristic sparse pattern of development and rural character, by avoiding expansion of adjacent urban areas onto the valley slopes.
- Avoid large scale urban/housing extensions within this open landscape, particularly on the open slopes to the north (Coney Banks and Daisy Banks); consider the role of this area as an open buffer between the different suburbs of Chatham and as an open/green backdrop in views.
- If development is proposed look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting as appropriate boundary treatment.

- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and avoid any further reduction in tranquillity; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards in relation to development directly visible on the periphery of the area.

Landscape Character Area D6: Matts Hill

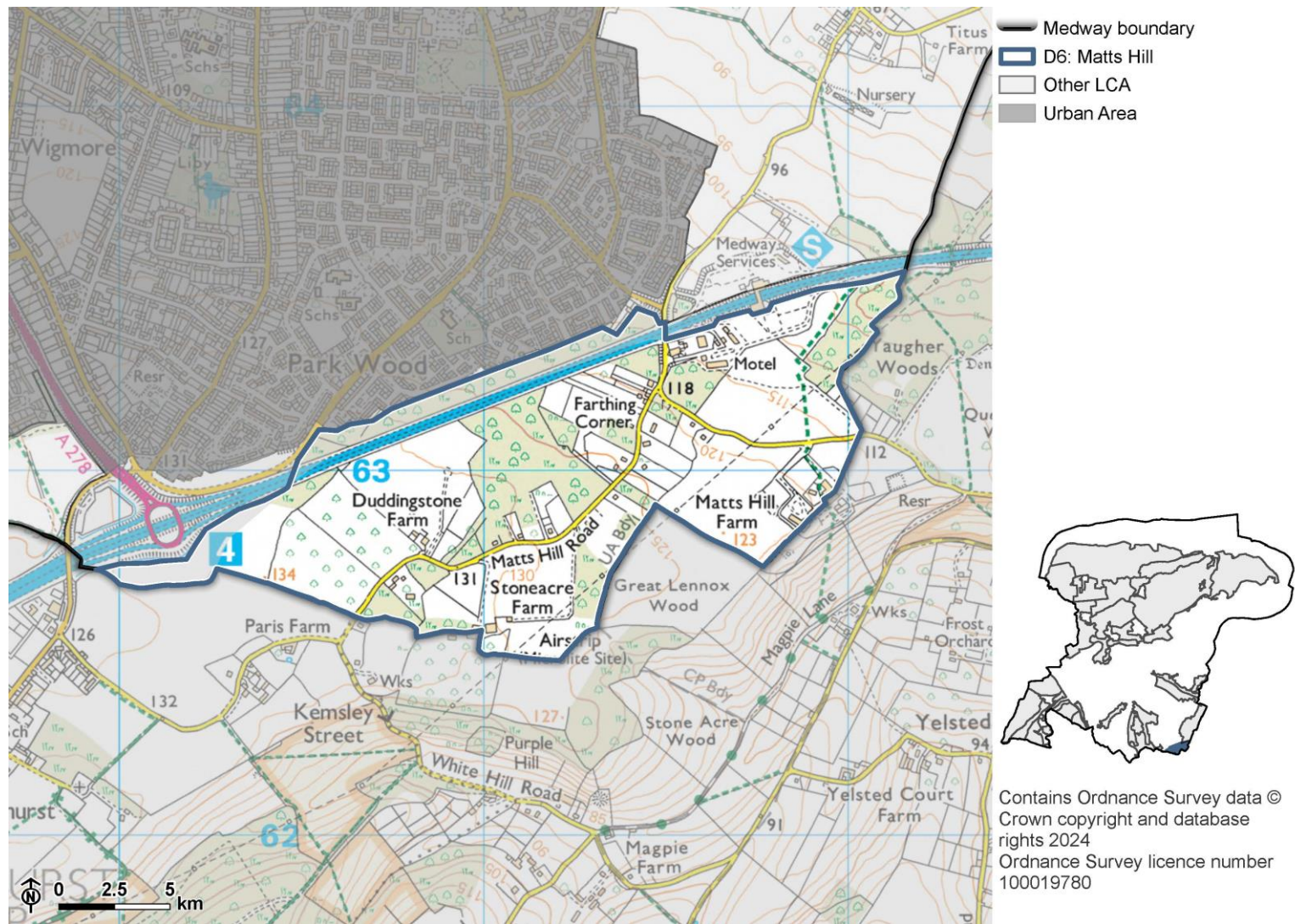
Description

Location and Summary

7.43 The Matts Hill Farmland LCA is located to the south of Rainham. It is defined to the north by Brooms Wood Ancient Woodland and the M2 Motorway, beyond which lies the suburb of Park Wood; to the south by the boundary with neighbouring Maidstone District; and to the east by the boundary with neighbouring Swale Borough.

7.44 This is a relatively flat to gently sloping landscape with variety of land cover, including woodland, pasture and arable farmland and orchards. It lies entirely within the Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly an AONB) and forms part of the larger LCA 1B: Mid Kent Downs and the 'Bredhurst' Local Character Area, as assessed within the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment Update (2023).

Figure 7.24: Location of LCA D6



Key Characteristics

- A flat to gently sloping landform that forms part of the North Downs dip slope.
- A well-wooded landscape featuring several areas identified as Ancient Woodland; also features open areas of pasture and arable farming and some remnant areas of traditional orchard.
- A general sense of enclosure due to woodland cover and a small to medium scale field pattern defined by hedgerows or shelter belts; larger scale arable fields to the west and pasture fields defined by post and wire fencing to the east produce a more open character.
- Woodlands and orchards provide a link to the historic land uses, although large arable fields, parliamentary enclosure and areas of post-1801 settlement along Matts Hill Road reflect more recent changes to the landscape.
- Limited public access, with only one PRoW to the east, although the narrow lanes and tracks are also well used by pedestrians, providing access to the landscape; the M2 severs links from the urban area although Matts Hill Road overbridge crossing, is an important active transport route in Medway linking suburbs with the National Landscape.
- Retains an essentially rural character but is undermined by the presence of the M2 (and associated service station) to the north, localised sub-urban influences along Matts Hill Road, and a series of electricity pylons and small-scale industrial uses at Matts Hill Farm to the east.

Photo 7.77: Sense of enclosure due to woodland cover and a small to medium scale field pattern



Photo 7.78: Varied landscape including pasture and some areas of traditional orchard



Photo 7.79: Pasture field and limited hedgerows creating a more open character to the east



Photo 7.80: Rural character undermined by sub-urban influences along Matts Hill Road



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Upper Cretaceous Chalk overlain by clay with flints formations (clay, silt, sand and gravel).
- A relatively flat landform to the west (between approximately 125m and 134m AOD) but begins to slope gently to the east (between 125m and 100m AOD); forms part of the North Downs dip slope.
- Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural soils that predominantly support pasture, with some areas of orchards and arable.
- Several areas of woodland, much of which is identified as Ancient Woodland (including Yaughter Woods to the east, Stone Acre Shaw to the south and Upper Broom Wood and Ryetop Wood which lie along the southern edge of Rainham), and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'; some areas of Priority Habitat 'traditional orchard' to the south-west.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 17 – Rochester/Chatham Hinterland as defined within the Kent HLC (2001). It is also closely associated with Historic Landscape Character Area 12 – Northern Horticultural Belt.
- The HLC records several areas of 'other pre-1810 woodland' and 'pre-19th century coppices', which correspond with areas of Ancient Woodland, and areas of 'orchards'; other types recorded include 'medium regular with straight boundaries (parliamentary type enclosure)', 'prairie fields (19th century enclosure with extensive boundary loss)' and 'scattered settlement with paddocks (post-1800 extent)'; the woodland and orchards provide a link to the historic land uses, although the prairie fields, parliamentary enclosure and areas of post-1801 settlement reflect more recent changes to the landscape.

- Historically settlement within the area was limited to a single farmstead at Matts Hill; today the settlement pattern remains low density, although has been altered by the introduction of development along Matts Hill Road.
- The principal roads in the area is Matts Hill Road and Matts Hill Lane, which for the most part retain a rural character; elsewhere vehicle access is limited to private access roads and farm tracks.
- Features one PRoW which runs north-south through the eastern part of the landscape, providing Medway's only direct PROW link with the Mid Kent Downs area of the National Landscape; the M2 severs links from the urban area. However, the narrow lanes and tracks are also well used by pedestrians, providing access to the landscape.

Perceptual Influences

- The area retains an essentially rural character but this undermined by localised sub-urban influences along Matts Hill Road; development here is not generally in keeping the local vernacular (yellow stock brick, some red brick and flint walls and some timber frame and weatherboarding) and often has inappropriate boundary treatments along road frontage; a series of electricity pylons and small-scale industrial uses at Matts Hill Farm to the east are also detracting features.
- The M2 (and associated service station) and urban edges influence the landscape, increasing light pollution and reducing levels of tranquillity, as indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.
- Mature woodland along the M2, including Upper Brooms Wood and Ryetop Wood, generally screens views towards the motorway infrastructure, with only localised views from proximity (such as from the Matts Hill Road bridge).
- Elsewhere woodland cover results in a sense of enclosure and seclusion and greater levels of tranquillity, particularly to the south of Matts Hill Road and Matts Hill Lane away from the M2.
- Deciduous woodlands and trees create strong seasonal changes in the landscape, particularly in spring and autumn.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Forms part of the Kent Downs National Landscape and demonstrates the following 'special components, characteristics and qualities': biodiversity-rich habitats; farmed landscape; woodland and trees; and tranquillity and remoteness.
- As an open predominantly rural landscape immediately adjacent to the urban area.
- Small to medium scale field pattern, generally defined by woodland and hedgerows/shelter belts.
- More visually open areas to the west (large arable fields) and east (fields defined by post and wire fencing).
- Remnant orchards with associated distinctive shelterbelts create in strong sense of place to the south-west.
- Ancient Woodlands and traditional orchards provide a link to the historic land uses.
- Rural character of roads, lanes and tracks.
- Importance of woodland, hedgerows and shelterbelts in providing enclosure and connecting habitats.
- Sense of tranquillity, particularly to the south away from the M2 and urban area.
- Ecologically important areas of Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' and 'traditional orchards'.

Issues and Changes

- Suburbanisation along Matts Hill Road, and urban fringe influences to the north in proximity to the M2 and to the south-east along Matts Hill Lane in proximity to small-scale industrial uses.
- Lies immediately adjacent to the urban area and the M2 and associated service station; this proximity influences the wider landscape, increasing light pollution and reducing levels of tranquillity.
- Evidence of hedgerow boundary loss, particularly in the east and west, due to conversion to arable and replacement of hedgerows with post and wire fencing.
- Severance and weakened links to the landscape from Rainham due to the presence of the M2; poor legibility and connection with Queens Down Warren to the east.
- Loss of and damage to quality and character the Kent Downs National Landscape through the cumulative effect of inappropriate, poorly designed development; unsustainable land management approaches and land use change.
- Dry chalk valleys and downs landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.

- Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins, an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins.
- Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to a shift in the growing area of specific fruit species; waterlogged soils leading to crop loss; new pest and diseases may reduce the success of fruit crops; changes in fruit growing practices including increase in poly tunnels; and a reduction in available moisture during the growing season affecting the success of fruit trees.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Matts Hill Farmland LCA is to conserve and enhance the rural character of this farmed landscape in proximity to the urban area. Provide better functional connections for people and nature and strengthen the well-wooded character of the landscape through enhancing woodland and reinforcing hedgerow/shelter belt boundaries. Consider the aims and principles set out within the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, in regard to the role this LCA as part of the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Ensure that relevant 'special components, characteristics and qualities' of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced,

having regard for the aims and principles set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan.

- Conserve and manage the Ancient Woodland sites to improve landscape character and encourage biodiversity; promote age and species diversity and continue to keep coppice sites in active management.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing deciduous woodland cover through natural regeneration or small scale planting.
- Manage woodland and woodland shaws appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.
- Seek to prevent further loss or decline in the quality of remaining boundary hedgerows and encourage their restoration/reinstatement; when establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; and aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers. Consider how arable margins can complement and extend characteristic chalk grassland habitats found in the surrounding area, such as at Queens Down Warren to the east and Strawberry Banks to the south-west.
- Encourage the traditional farming practice and maintain and restore traditional orchards, retaining and enhancing the area's strong sense of

place and associations of the Kent Fruit Belt; seek to connect and extend and manage to enhance biodiversity value.

- Plan for climate change, including the introduction of new fruit crops and tree species suited to the changing climate and the use of multiple fruit tree species to increase resiliency of orchard farming.
- Improve connectivity and recreational use across the area and between it and the adjacent urban area; consider the introduction of new formal PRoW, particularly to the west, and seek to enhance connection with Queens Down Warren to the east.
- Conserve the rural character of the landscape, particularly to the south of Matts Hill Road and Matts Hill Lane.

Development Management

- Resist proposals for highway upgrading to retain the rural character of the roads/lanes and their verges.
- Avoid large scale urban/housing extensions within this working rural agricultural landscape characterised by its low-density settlement pattern; consider the role of this area as an open predominantly rural landscape immediately adjacent to the urban area.
- If new development is proposed look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Encourage the use of traditional and locally distinctive styles, colours and materials identified in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and that are in keeping with the local landscape, such as yellow stock brick, red brick, flint and timber framing.
- Encourage sympathetic boundary treatments to residential properties, particularly avoiding suburbanising gates and fences.

- Consider opportunities for the removal of existing intrusive elements, such as pylons and the undergrounding power lines.

Landscape Character Area D7: Nashenden Down

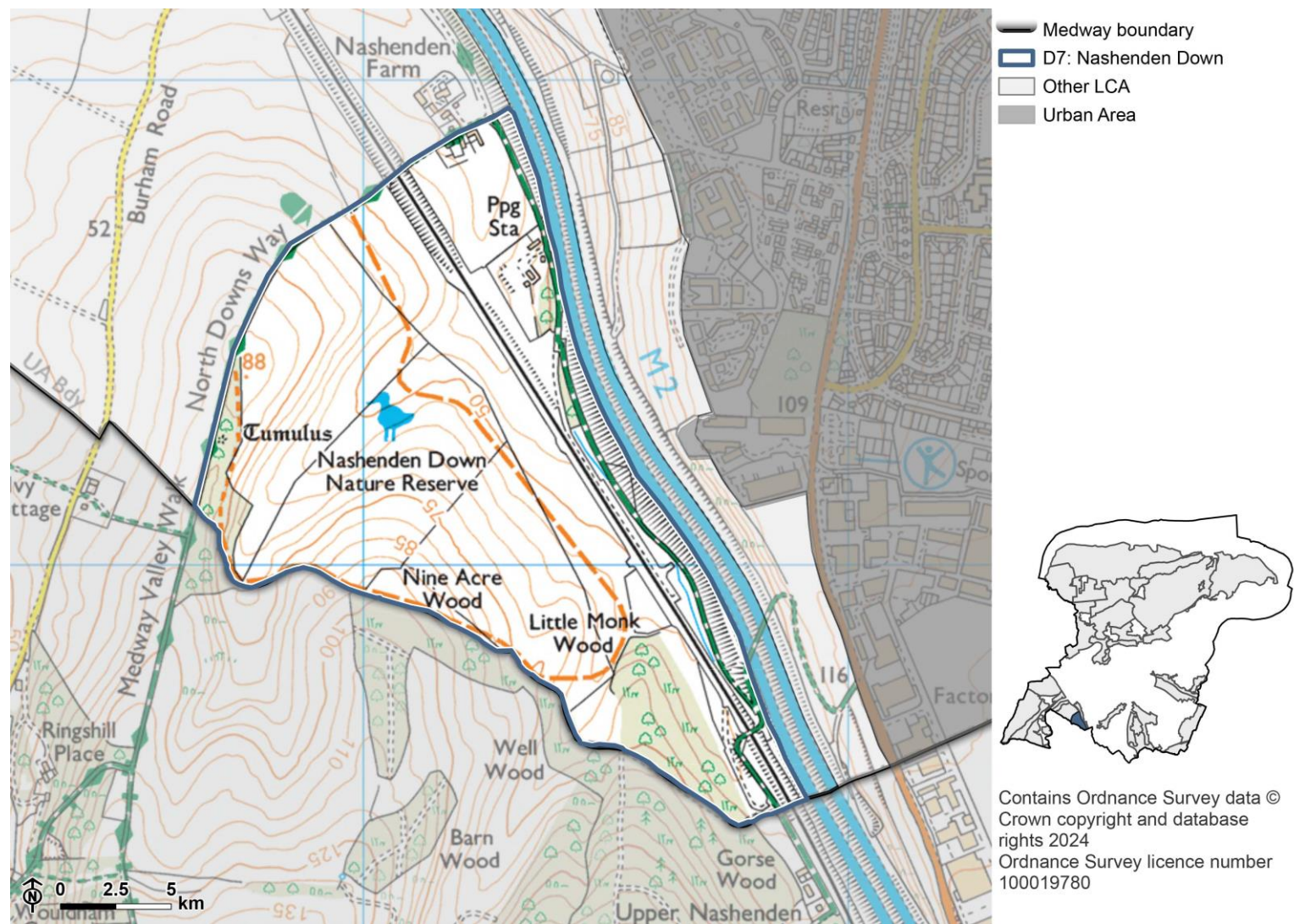
Description

Location and Summary

7.45 The Nashenden Down LCA is located to the west of Rochester (Borstal). It is defined to the north by the North Downs Way, which marks the transition to a higher scarp (LCA C2); by the M2 Motorway to the east; and to the south by woodland belts that occupy the rising topography of the eastern scarp of the Medway Valley (this also marks the boundary with the neighbouring Tonbridge and Malling Borough).

7.46 This is a series of rolling dry valleys featuring open grazed meadows on former arable farmland. It lies entirely within the Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly an AONB) and forms part of the larger LCA 1B: Mid Kent Downs and the 'Nashenden Valley' Local Character Area, as assessed within the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment Update (2023).

Figure 7.25: Location of LCA D7



Key Characteristics

- A series of rolling dry valleys set within the dip slope of the North Downs; higher ground to the west forms the scarp top of the Medway Valley.
- A predominantly open landscape of grazed meadows enclosed by wooded higher ground to the south, south-east and south-west; some equine uses on lower ground around Nashenden Farm to the north.
- Nashenden Downs Nature Reserve (managed by Kent Wildlife Trust) supports an impressive list of wildflower species.
- Only one road traverses the landscape – Nashenden Farm Lane – which retains a strong rural character in the vicinity of the farm; other vehicle access is restricted to a number of non-metalled farm access tracks.
- Good levels of access with the North Downs Way following the scarp top to the west, and a PRoW to the north along the southern edge of the M2; Nashenden Down Nature Reserve also features a 3.5km circuit of permissive paths.
- Strong rural character, although this is undermined to the north and north-east by the influence of HS1, M2 Motorway and views of the urban edge of Borstal.
- A predominantly open landscape, although woodland cover and valley landform provides a greater sense enclosure to the south.
- Views north-east are backdropped by Nashenden Scarp (LCA C1); detracting features in these views out include HS1 and the M2 and associated gantries and overbridges and large scale buildings at the HM Prison at Borstal.

Photo 7.81: Series of rolling dry valleys



Photo 7.82: Open landscape of grazed meadows enclosed by wooded higher ground



Photo 7.83: Nashenden Downs Nature Reserve managed as open grazed meadows



Photo 7.84: Views north backdropped by Nashenden Scarp, seen in front of HS1 and the M2



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Late Cretaceous Chalk overlain by Head deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel on the lower slopes.
- A series of rolling dry valleys set within the north to south dip slope of the North Downs; heights range from approximately 100m AOD to the south approximately 35m AOD in the north.
- A strip of land running parallel to HS1 and the M2 to the north falls within Flood Zone 2 and 3.
- Grade 2 (very good) agricultural soils cover parts of the lower slopes, whilst Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural soils cover the majority of the area.
- A predominantly open landscape, albeit with woodland along higher ground to the south and west and along the M2 to the north-east; woodland to the south is identified as Ancient Woodland (Bridge Woods) and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' and that to the west and along the M2 as Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'.
- Nashenden Downs Nature Reserve is an area of grazed meadows created from a large arable field that supports an impressive list of wildflower species; it has been managed by Kent Wildlife Trust since 2009.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 12 – Rochester/Chatham Hinterland as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The HLC records 'prairie fields (19th century enclosure with extensive boundary loss)' covering almost the entire LCA, with 'pre-19th century coppices' on higher ground to the south and an area of 'small rectilinear with wavy boundaries' to the north and east.

- Historically the landscape was largely unsettled, other than the farmstead at Nashenden Farm to the north; this remain the case today.
- The area features the North Downs Way, which follows the scarp top to the west, and a PRow to the north along the southern edge of the M2; Nashenden Down Nature Reserve also features a 3.5km circuit of permissive paths.

Perceptual Influences

- The area retains a strong rural character, although this is undermined to the north and north-east by the influence of the HS1 and M2 Motorway.
- The M2 and urban edge of Borstal beyond influence the landscape and reduce levels of tranquillity and increase light pollution to the north and east; elsewhere there is a greater sense of tranquillity, indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.
- This is a predominantly open landscape, although woodland provides enclosure to the south; there is also some sense of enclosure within the valley bottoms.
- Some pockets of degraded and neglected land, including along North Downs Way (road) to the north.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Forms part of the Kent Downs National Landscape and demonstrates the following 'special components, characteristics and qualities': dramatic landform and views; biodiversity-rich habitats; farmed landscape; woodland and trees; a rich legacy of historic and cultural heritage; and tranquillity and remoteness.
- As an open predominantly rural landscape close to the urban area.

- The rural character of much of the landscape which provides a setting for the North Downs Way and a Bronze Age bell barrow (Scheduled Monument).
- The rural character of Nashenden Farm Lane in the vicinity of the farm.
- Visually open landscape.
- Sense of tranquillity to the south away from urbanising influences.
- Recreational value of the promoted North Downs Way and permissive paths within Nashenden Down Nature Reserve.
- Ecologically important areas – Ancient Woodland, Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' and grazed wildflower meadows within Nashenden Down Nature Reserve.

Issues and Changes

- Potential for road widening/improvements along the M2 to the north and north-east; land lies within a 'safeguarded corridor of M2 widening'.
- Detracting influence of HS1, the M2 and urban area of Borstal to the north.
- Lies close to the urban area and this proximity influences the wider landscape, increasing light pollution and reducing levels of tranquillity.
- Threat of further expansion of surrounding urban edges.
- An increase in equine land uses to the north around Nashenden Farm.
- Change to the agricultural patterns of the landscape brought about by management as a nature reserve.
- HS1 and the M2 sever connections with the nearby urban area to the north and north-east.
- Increased recreational pressures along the North Downs Way and permissive paths within Nashenden Down Nature Reserve and potential disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.

- Loss of and damage to quality and character the Kent Downs National Landscape through the cumulative effect of inappropriate, poorly designed development; unsustainable land management approaches and land use change; and the impacts of growth in visitor pressure.
- Dry chalk valleys and downs landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Changing temperatures and extreme weather events are creating vulnerabilities in grassland landscapes, leading to increased soil erosion and run-off.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters could cause changes in plant and animal species and community composition of grassland (for example loss of perennials, expansion of drought-tolerant ephemerals and dominance of grasses in the sward of chalk grassland).
 - Drier summers leading to an increased fire risk affecting grassland habitats.
 - Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Nashenden Down LCA is to conserve and enhance the distinctive landscape and sense of place created by the combination of rolling dry chalk valley landforms, extensive areas of open grazed wildflower meadows, and woodland. Seek to maintain its recreational value and increase the extent and quality of woodland cover, characteristic of the wider Kent Downs National Landscape, to limit the influence of urbanising intrusions to the north. Consider the aims and principles set out within the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, in regard to the role this LCA as part of the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Ensure that relevant ‘special components, characteristics and qualities’ of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard for the aims and principles set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan.
- Conserve and enhance and where appropriate extend ecologically important habitats, including Ancient Woodland, Priority Habitat ‘deciduous woodland’ and grazed wildflower meadows within Nashenden Down Nature Reserve.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing deciduous woodland cover through natural regeneration or small scale planting, particularly along higher ground to the south and south-west, which is characteristic of the wider Kent Downs National Landscape; new

planting should reflect the scale, shape, pattern and composition of the existing woodland.

- Manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland.
- Manage and enhance the grazed wildflower meadows to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity; ensure best practice management through suitable grazing regimes and avoiding agrochemical and fertiliser inputs; manage recreational routes to avoid/minimise disturbance; and manage scrub vegetation appropriately to maintain the open character (a certain amount of scrub can be beneficial, especially on sites that are prone to heat stress or drought, due to its shading effect potentially providing refuge for invertebrates).
- Discourage an increase in equine related land uses; encourage sensitive management and screening of existing equine related activities and seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment including enhanced links to the nearby urban area; manage recreational routes to avoid/minimise disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Conserve the open rural setting of the Bronze Age bell barrow (Scheduled Monument).

Development Management

- Maintain the characteristic sparse pattern of development, avoiding any further development on lower ground to the north.
- Any large scale or visually intrusive development would be detrimental within this visually open landscape and impact on views; consider the

role of this area as an open rural landscape immediately adjacent to the urban area.

- If development is proposed look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Resist proposals for highway upgrading to retain the rural character of Nashenden Farm Lane and its verges; refer to the Kent Downs AONB 'Rural Streets and Lanes: A Design Handbook' for highway design guidance.
-
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and avoid any further reduction in tranquillity; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards in relation to development visible to the north.

Landscape Character Area D8: Bush Valley and Dean Farm

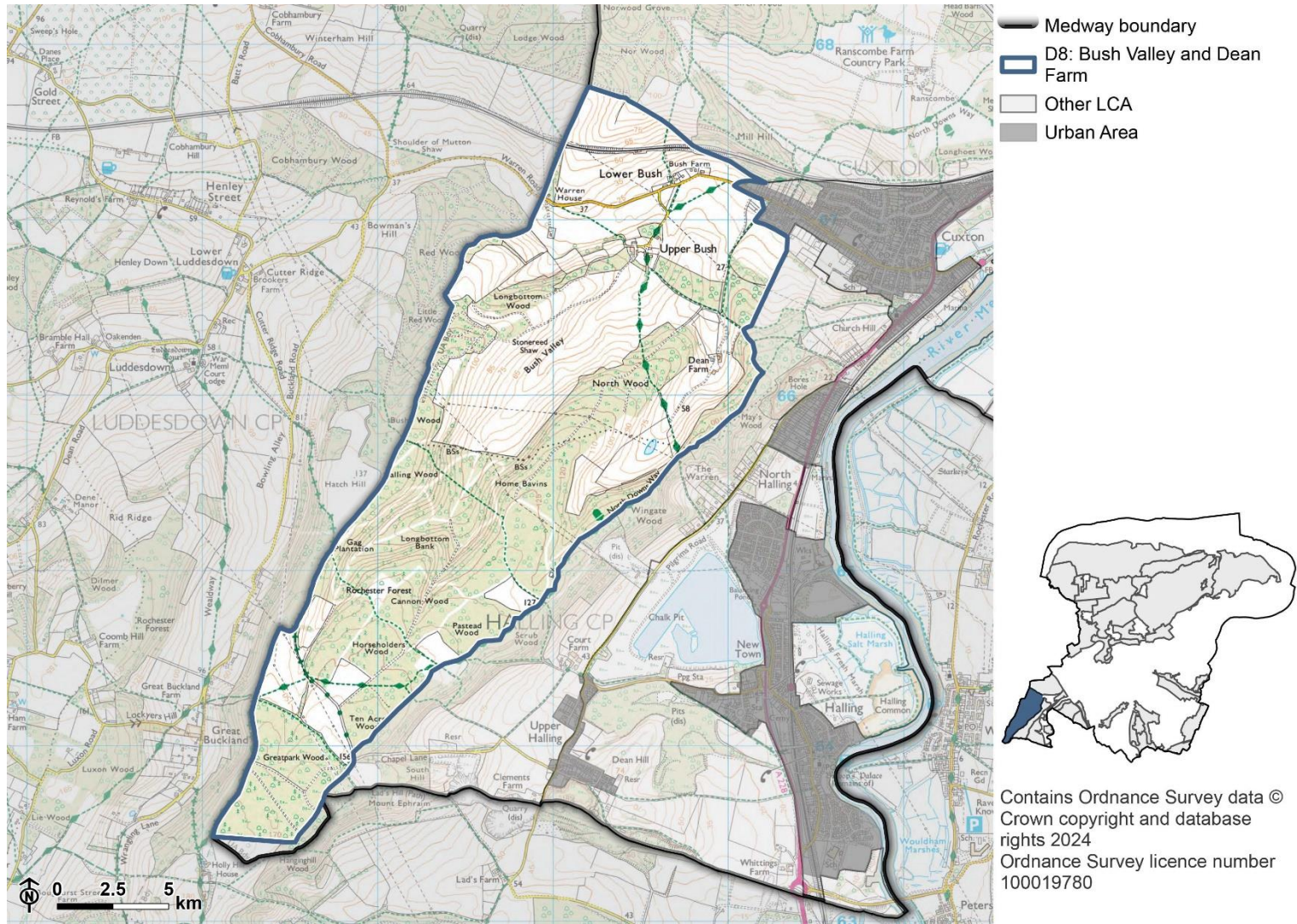
Description

Location and Summary

7.47 The Bush Valley and Dean Farm LCA is located to the south-west of Cuxton. It is a linear area that extends to the administrative boundaries with Tonbridge and Malling to the south and Gravesham to the west. It is defined to the south-east by the steeply sloping scarp edge (LCA C3) and to the north by a transition to a further area of chalk valleys and downs (LCA D9).

7.48 This is an area of strongly undulating chalk valleys featuring extensive woodland cover and open arable farmland that form a rural setting to Upper Bush Conservation Area. It lies entirely within the Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly an AONB) and forms part of the larger LCA 1A: West Kent Downs and the 'Loddesdown' Local Character Area, as assessed within the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment Update (2023). It also lies within the Green Belt.

Figure 7.26: Location of LCA D8



Key Characteristics

- A series of dry chalk valleys set within a the dip slope of the North Downs, giving rise to a strongly undulating landform.
- Dense woodland covering the scarp tops and higher ground to the south, much of which is designated as a SSSI and Ancient Woodland.
- The lower slopes are more open in character, featuring arable farmland with some pasture and viticulture in places.
- Largely retains the historic settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and the rural hamlet of Upper Bush to the north.
- The pattern of Ancient Woodlands and open farmland has remained largely unchanged since the late nineteenth century, which along with scattered Listed Buildings and a Conservation Area at Upper Bush, provides a sense of time depth.
- The area is accessed by a network of PRow, including the North Downs Way.
- Retains a strong rural character with very few detracting elements, which contrasts with the nearby urban areas and busy roads further east; some localised influence from the urban edge of Cuxton to the north-east.
- The hamlet of Upper Bush retains a sense of rural isolation.
- Enclosure by landform and woodland cover results in a strong sense of remoteness.
- Whilst much of the upper slopes are visually enclosed by mature woodland cover, there are more open views north and south along the lower dry valleys.
- Contrast in pattern, colour and texture between irregular woodland blocks on upper slopes, and regular large arable fields on lower slopes.
- Deciduous woodlands and trees create strong seasonal changes in the landscape, particularly in spring and autumn.

Photo 7.85: Undulating dry chalk valleys



Photo 7.86: Dense woodland cover on higher ground and open arable farmland on the lower slopes



Photo 7.87: Woodland cover resulting in a strong sense of enclosure and remoteness



Photo 7.88: Hamlet of Upper Bush retaining a sense of rural isolation



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Late Cretaceous Chalk overlain by clay-with-flints on the upper slopes and Head deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel on the lower slopes and dry valley bottoms; the lower slopes and valley bottoms tend to feature light chalky colluvial soils washed down from the scarps that form better quality agricultural soils and correspond with areas of arable farmland.
- The landform trends in a dip slope from approximately 170m AOD in the south to approximately 25m in the north; this is incised with north-south oriented dry valleys, including Bush Valley, giving rise to a strongly undulating landform.
- Predominantly Grade 3 (moderate to good) agricultural soils covering the dry valleys to the north, with a small area of Grade 2 (very good) soils at Upper Bush to the north-west; the scarp tops to the south are largely covered by woodland and are classified as being 'non-agricultural' land.
- Much of the woodland along the scarp tops and upper slopes is designated as Halling and Trottiscliffe Escarpment SSSI and is recorded as Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'; this includes Ten Acre Woods, Pasted Wood, Halling Wood and North Wood.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 4 – Western North Downs as defined within the Kent HLC (2001). The HLC records several woodland types, including 'pre-1810 Woodland', 'Replanted pre-1810 Woodland', 'pre-19th century Coppices' and '19th century Plantations (general)'; and field types, including 'regular assarts with straight boundaries', 'rectilinear with wavy boundaries (late medieval to 17th/18th century enclosure)' and 'small regular with straight boundaries (parliamentary type enclosure)'.

- Historically the landscape was sparsely settled, with only a few scattered farmsteads and the hamlet of Upper Bush on lower ground to the north, which remains the case today.
- It has a strong sense of time-depth, and the pattern of Ancient Woodlands and open farmland has remained largely unchanged since the late nineteenth century, although there has been some field boundary loss; the Conservation Area designation at Upper Bush and scattered listed rural buildings, including Forge Cottage in Lower Bush, add to this.
- The principal road in the area is Bush Road/Warren Road to the north; other vehicular access is limited to small farm tracks.
- Recent vineyard planting, such as that to the north-east of Upper Bush, has created change to the agricultural patterns of the landscape.

Perceptual Influences

- Retains a strong rural character with very few detracting elements; enclosure by landform and woodland cover results in a strong sense of place and remoteness.
- Whilst there is some influence from the urban edge of Cuxton to the north-east, the majority of the landscape has relatively high levels of tranquillity and low levels of light pollution, as indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Forms part of the Kent Downs National Landscape and demonstrates the following 'special components, characteristics and qualities': dramatic landform and views; biodiversity-rich habitats; farmed landscape; woodland and trees; a rich legacy of historic and cultural

heritage; geology and natural resources; and tranquillity and remoteness.

- Forms an open area within the Green Belt.
- Distinctive, strongly undulating landform.
- Historic hamlet of Upper Bush, designated as a Conservation Area, and several Listed Buildings provide time depth; the landscape provides a rural setting for these.
- The strong rural character of the landscape which contrasts with the nearby urban areas and busy roads.
- Strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness, particularly in the more enclosed areas.
- Ecologically important areas – SSSI, Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat ‘deciduous woodland’.
- Importance of woodland in providing enclosure and connecting habitats.
- Recreational value of PRoW, including the promoted ‘North Downs Way’.
- Provides a buffer/green corridor between urban influences to the north-east and the area of national importance for nature conservation to the south-west.
- Provides an open buffer between Upper Bush and Cuxton, helping to maintain the separate settlement identity of the former.

Issues and Changes

- Suburbanisation in the north-east, with ribbon development along Bush Road leading to a gradual loss of distinctive settlement identity of Lower Bush.
- Threat of further expansion of urban edges of Cuxton from the north-east.
- Some equine land uses in the vicinity of Cuxton and Lower Bush.

- Increased recreational pressures along the North Downs Way and disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Limited public access in some areas, such as to the north-west of Bush Valley.
- Change to the agricultural patterns of the landscape brought about by recent vineyard planting.
- Loss of and damage to quality and character the Kent Downs National Landscape through the cumulative effect of inappropriate, poorly designed development; unsustainable land management approaches and land use change; and the impacts of growth in visitor pressure.
- Dry chalk valleys and downs landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins, an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.
 - Intense rainfall events and increased winter rainfall resulting in flooding, erosion and damage to buildings and structures, including heritage assets.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Bush Valley and Dean Farm LCA is to conserve and enhance the distinctive landscape and sense of place created by the combination of strongly undulating landform and the contrast between extensive areas of mature woodland on higher ground and open arable land on lower ground. Conserve and enhance woodland cover, which is a characteristic feature of the Kent Downs National Landscape, and maintain the strong rural character of the landscape. Consider the aims and principles set out within the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, in regard to the role this LCA as part of the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Ensure that relevant 'special components, characteristics and qualities' of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard for the aims and principles set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan.
- Conserve and enhance ecologically important areas of SSSI, Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'.
- Conserve and enhance characteristic woodland cover, which is a characteristic feature of the Kent Downs National Landscape.
- Manage woodland and plantations appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland. Consider the promotion of natural

colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.

- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers. Consider how arable margins can complement and extend wildflower meadow habitats found at nearby Ranscombe Farm Nature Reserve to the north.
- Consider opportunities to re-introduce historic hedgerow patterns (pre-19th century); when establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment including enhanced links to the nearby urban area; consider opportunities to increase access to the north-west and manage recreational routes to avoid/minimise disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the PRoW, including through the enhancement and promotion of views along the dray valleys; Maintain sense of openness and views along dry valleys.
- Conserve the rural character of the landscape and consider the strong rural setting of Lower Bush and the scattered listed farm buildings.

Development Management

- Maintain the characteristic sparse pattern of development, with settlement largely limited to the lower ground in the north avoiding any expansion onto higher ground and scarp slopes.
- If development is proposed look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic woodland blocks/shaws and hedgerows.
- Conserve the individual identity of Lower Bush, by resisting further development along Bush Road.
- Resist proposals for highway upgrading to retain the rural character of Bush Road and Upper Bush Road; Refer to the Kent Downs AONB 'Rural Streets and Lanes: A Design Handbook' for highway design guidance.

Landscape Character Area D9: Ranscombe Farm

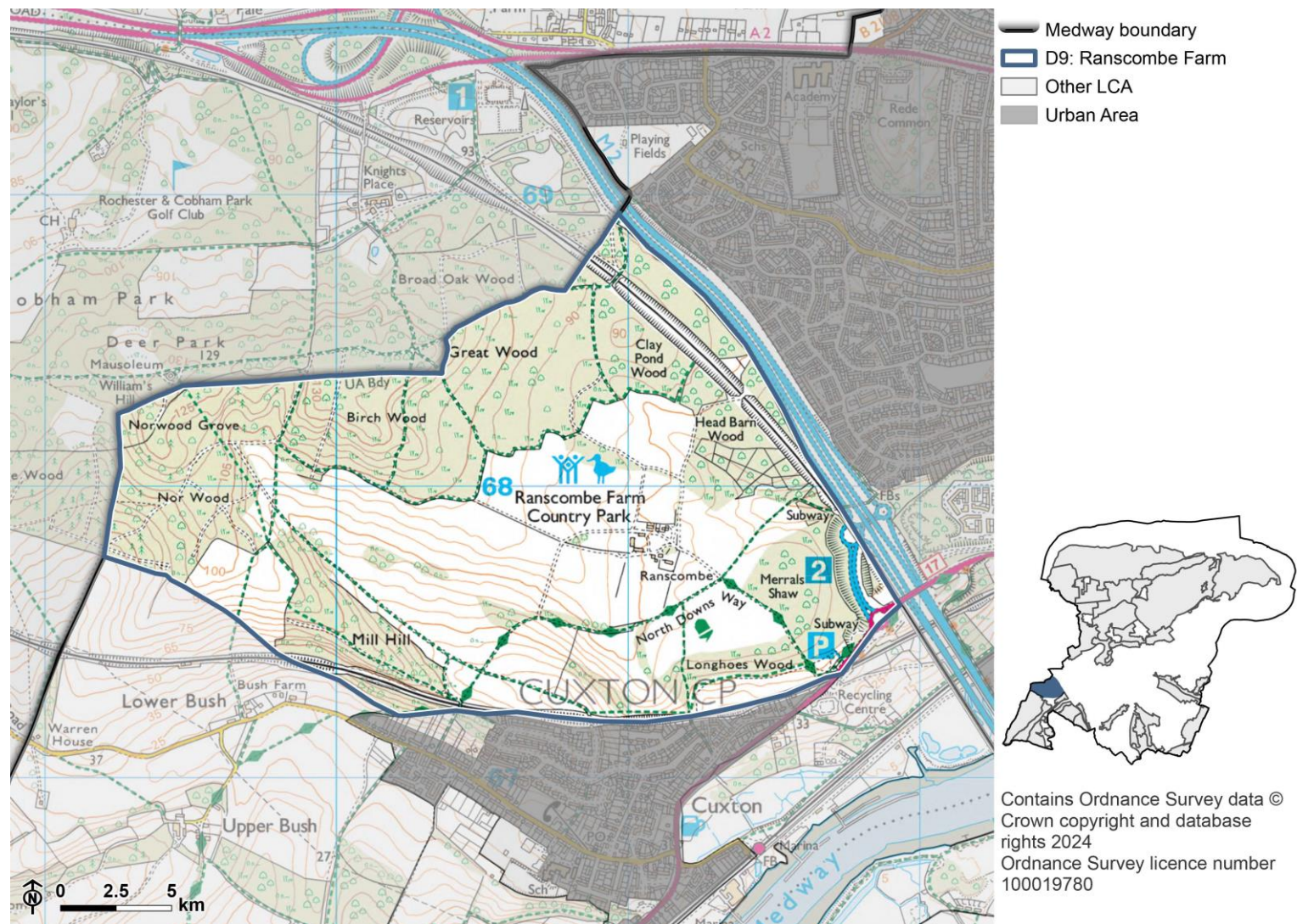
Description

Location and Summary

7.49 The Ranscombe Farm LCA is located to the north of Cuxton. It extends to the administrative boundaries with Gravesham to the north and west, and is defined by the M2 Motorway to the east and the urban edge of Cuxton and woodland cover to the south.

7.50 This is an area of undulating chalk downland, dry valleys and woodland cover that lies entirely within the Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly an AONB). The LCA forms part of the larger LCA 1A: West Kent Downs and the 'Cobham' Local Character Area, as assessed within the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment Update (2023). It also lies within the Green Belt.

Figure 7.27: Location of LCA D9



Key Characteristics

- Shallow dry chalk valleys set within the dip slope of the North Downs, giving rise to an undulating landform.
- Ranscombe Farm Nature Reserve is managed as a wildflower meadow and features an extremely unusual collection of rare wild plants, especially arable wildflowers and orchids.
- Dense woodland covering higher ground to the north, east and west, much of which is designated as a SSSI and Ancient Woodland, contrasts with the open arable land on the lower slopes.
- Retains the historic sparse settlement pattern with only a single farmstead at Ranscombe.
- The pattern of Ancient Woodlands and open farmland has remained largely unchanged since the late nineteenth century, which provides time depth; forms part of the wooded setting of Cobham Deer Park, which lies outside the LCA to the north-west.
- The area is accessed by an extensive network of PRoW, including the North Downs Way, and is managed as a Ranscombe Farm Country Park which features a network of walking trails.
- Retains a strong rural character with very few detracting elements; this is undermined by the influence of the urban edge of Cuxton to the south and the M2 Motorway, HS1 and urban edge of Strood to the east.
- Enclosure by landform and woodland cover results in a strong sense of remoteness, particularly in the north and west.
- Whilst much of the upper slopes are visually enclosed by mature woodland cover, there are views from the more open high points, including views across the Medway Valley and glimpses of the urban edge of Strood.
- Contrast in pattern, colour and texture between irregular woodland blocks on upper slopes, and the more regular large arable fields on lower slopes.

- Deciduous woodlands and trees and meadow flora create strong seasonal changes in the landscape, particularly in spring and autumn.

Photo 7.89: Shallow dry chalk valleys forming part of the dip slope of the North Downs



Photo 7.90: Ranscombe Farm Nature Reserve managed as wildflower meadows



Photo 7.91: Contrasting woodland on higher ground and open arable farmland on lower ground



Photo 7.92: Views from open high points across the Medway Valley



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Late Cretaceous Chalk overlain predominantly by clay-with-flints with some smaller areas of Head deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel.
- The landform is undulating slopes from approximately 125m AOD in the north-west to approximately 30m in the south and east; within this there are some shallow dry valleys which give rise to an slightly undulating landform.
- Grade 3 (moderate to good) agricultural soils cover the lower slopes to the south, supporting open arable farmland; the largely wooded higher ground to the north is classified as being 'non-agricultural' land.
- The woodland along the higher ground is designated as Cobham Woods SSSI and the majority of it is recorded as Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'; a small area to the west is identified as Priority Habitat 'lowland calcareous grassland'.
- Ranscombe Farm is managed as a 560 acre reserve by Plantlife, including for its extremely unusual collection of rare wild plants, especially arable wildflowers and orchids; the woodlands are also managed for conservation and have good populations of dormice, birds, large mammals, butterflies and insects.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 4 – Western North Downs as defined within the Kent HLC (2001). The HLC records several woodland types, including 'pre-19th century Coppices', '19th century coppices' and 'Other Pre-1810 Woodland'; and field types, including 'Prairie fields (19th century enclosure with extensive boundary loss)' and 'Fields predominantly bounded by tracks, roads and other rights of way'.
- Lies on the south-eastern edge of Cobham Deer Park, forming part of its wooded setting.

- It has a strong sense of time-depth, as the pattern of Ancient Woodlands and open farmland has remained largely unchanged since the late nineteenth century, although there has been some field boundary loss.
- Historically the landscape was sparsely settled, with only a single farmstead at Ranscombe, which remains the case today.
- The principal road within the area is a narrow lane/track leading to Ranscombe Farm; other vehicular access is limited to private tracks.
- HS1 passes through the east of the area and the 'Swanley to Dover' rail line defines its southern boundary.
- Ranscombe Farm is designated as a Country Park, which covers the majority of the landscape; this contains over 10km of footpaths.

Perceptual Influences

- Retains a strong rural character with very few detracting elements; enclosure by landform and woodland cover results in a strong sense of place and remoteness.
- There is some influence from the urban edge of Cuxton to the south and the M2 Motorway, HS1 and urban edge of Strood to the east, as indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.
- Whilst much of the upper slopes are visually enclosed by mature woodland cover, there are views from the more open high points, including views across the landscape and out towards the Medway Valley and Upper Bush; viewing areas/points often marked by the presence of a bench.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Forms part of the Kent Downs National Landscape and demonstrates the following 'special components, characteristics and qualities':

dramatic landform and views; biodiversity-rich habitats; farmed landscape; woodland and trees; a rich legacy of historic and cultural heritage; geology and natural resources; and tranquillity and remoteness.

- Forms an open area within the Green Belt.
- Strongly undulating landform.
- The pattern of Ancient Woodlands and open farmland provides time depth and forms part of the wooded setting of Cobham Deer park.
- The strong rural character of the landscape which contrasts with the nearby urban areas and busy roads.
- Sense of tranquillity and remoteness, particularly in the more enclosed areas to the north and west.
- Ecologically important areas – SSSI, Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat ‘deciduous woodland’ and areas managed as a reserve for wildflowers.
- Recreational value of the promoted North Downs Way and Ranscombe Farm Country Park.
- Importance of woodland in providing enclosure and connecting habitats.
- Provides a buffer/ green corridor between urban influences to the south and east and the area of national importance for nature conservation to the north and west.

Issues and Changes

- Potential for road widening/improvements around the M2 Junction 2 to the south-east; land lies within a ‘safeguarded corridor of M2 widening’.
- Influence of the urban edge of Cuxton to the south and the M2 Motorway, HS1 and urban edge of Strood to the east.
- Threat of further expansion of urban edges of Cuxton from the south.

- Increased recreational pressures along the North Downs Way and within Ranscombe Farm Country Park and disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Change to the agricultural patterns of the landscape brought about by management as a nature reserve.
- Loss of and damage to quality and character the Kent Downs National Landscape through the cumulative effect of inappropriate, poorly designed development; unsustainable land management approaches and land use change; and the impacts of growth in visitor pressure.
- Dry chalk valleys and downs landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins, an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Ranscombe Farm LCA is to conserve and enhance the distinctive landscape and sense of place created by the combination of the undulating landform and the contrast between extensive areas of mature woodland cover on higher ground and open arable land and wildflower meadows on lower ground. Conserve and enhance woodland cover, which is a characteristic feature of the Kent Downs National Landscape, and maintain the strong rural character and recreational value of the landscape in proximity to the urban area. Consider the aims and principles set out within the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, in regard to the role this LCA as part of the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Ensure that relevant 'special components, characteristics and qualities' of the Kent Downs National Landscape are conserved and enhanced, having regard for the aims and principles set out in the current Kent Downs AONB Management Plan.
- Conserve and enhance and where appropriate extend ecologically important areas of SSSI, Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' and areas of wildflowers within the nature reserve.
- Conserve and enhance woodland cover, which is a characteristic feature of the Kent Downs National Landscape.

- Manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.
- Consider the wider ecosystem services that woodlands provide; outside designated sites and Ancient Woodland, changes in species composition may be acceptable if the services that the woodland provides (such as urban cooling, visual amenity or recreational opportunities) remain intact.
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment including enhanced links to the nearby urban area while avoiding disturbance to areas of nature conservation value; seek opportunities to establish new links between this area and the urban area of Strood across the M2.
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the PRow, including through the enhancement and promotion of views across the Medway Valley and towards Upper Bush.

Development Management

- Maintain the characteristic sparse pattern of development, avoiding any expansion of adjacent urban areas into this LCA.

- If development is proposed look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic woodland blocks/shaws and hedgerows.
- Maintain sense of openness and views across and out of the landscape, including across the Medway valley.
- Resist proposals for highway upgrading to retain the rural character of the access road to Ranscombe Farm; Refer to the Kent Downs AONB 'Rural Streets and Lanes: A Design Handbook' for highway design guidance.
- Seek to minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards in relation to the adjacent urban edges.

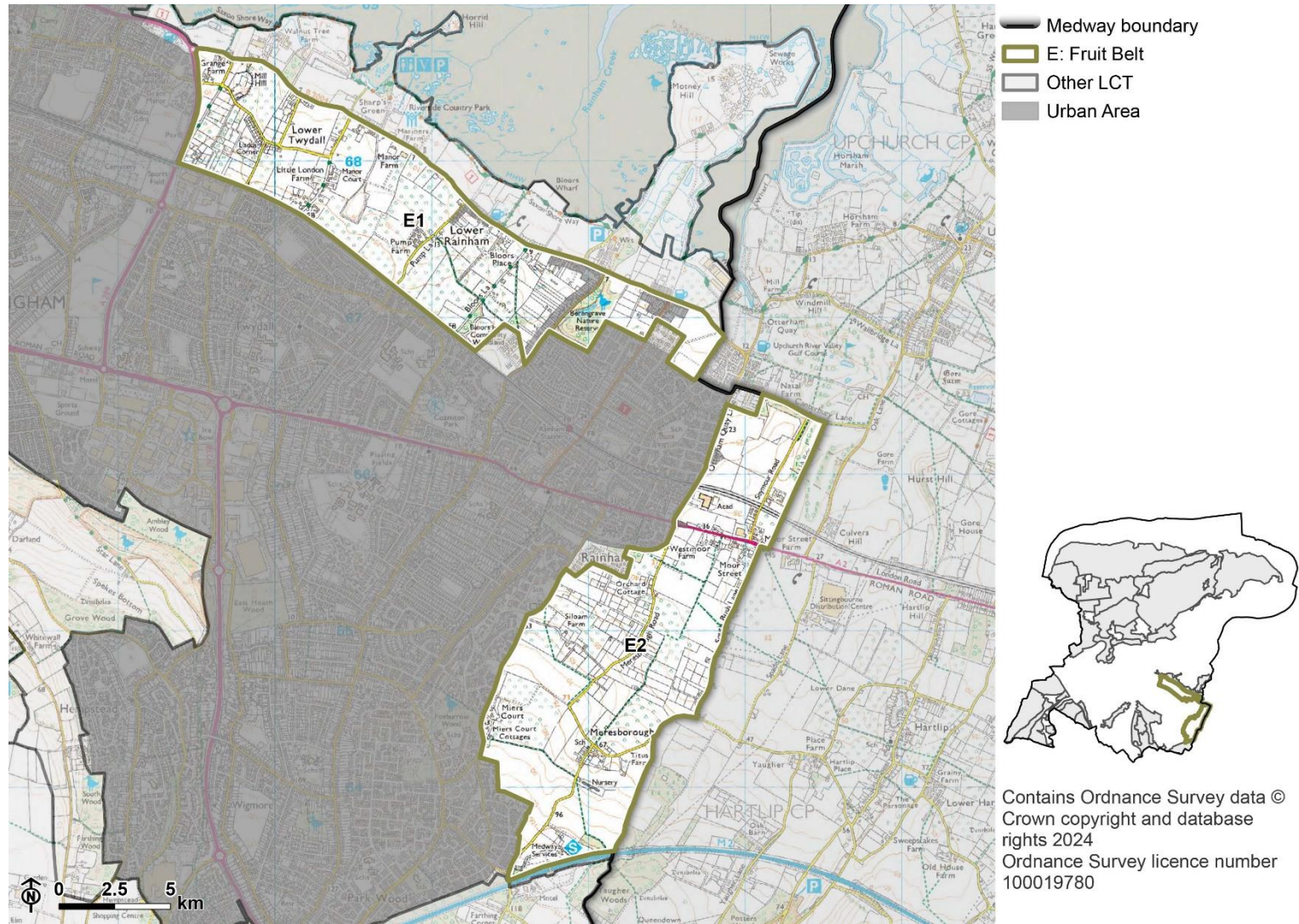
Landscape Character Type E: Fruit Belt

Landscape Character Areas

7.51 The Fruit Belt is subdivided into two LCAs:

- Landscape Character Area E1: Lower Rainham; and
- Landscape Character Area E2: Moor Street and Meresborough.

Figure 7.28: Location of the Fruit Belt LCT and LCAs



Landscape Character Area E1: Lower Rainham

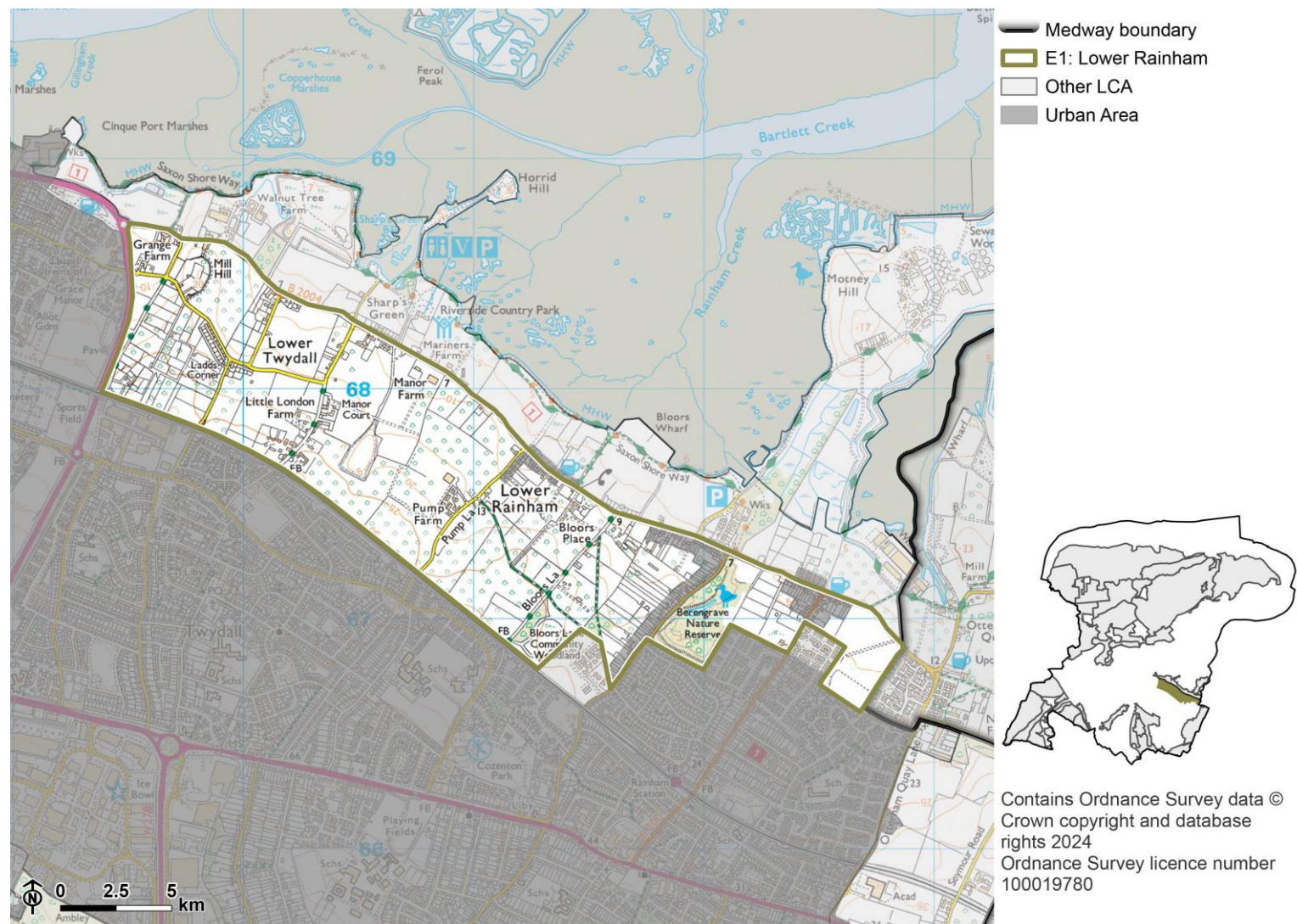
Description

Location and Summary

7.52 The Lower Rainham Farmland LCA is located to the north and north-east of the urban areas of Rainham and Gillingham respectively. The LCA is defined to the north by Lower Rainham Road (B2004), which marks the transition to lower-lying marshes (LCA A5: Riverside Marshes); and to the south, east and west by the urban edges of Rainham and Gillingham. The urban edges to the west and south are defined by Yokosuka Way (A289) and the Chatham Main Line railway respectively.

7.53 This is a low-lying, flat to gently undulating landscape supporting several orchards, as well as arable and pasture. It contains two Conservation Areas at Lower Rainham and Lower Twydall.

Figure 7.29: Location of LCA E1



Key Characteristics

- A low-lying, flat to gently undulating landform that rises gradually away from the adjacent marshes to the north.
- High quality soils support a variety of agricultural and horticultural land uses, including several orchards and arable farming, but also some pasture; it forms a small part of the distinctive area of 'Fruit Belt' landscape stretching east towards Faversham, strongly identifiable with the 'Garden of England'.
- Small to medium scale field pattern defined predominantly by shelter belts and high hedges; some replacement with coniferous planting in places.
- A network of roads, narrow lanes, and tracks, which largely follow a north-south axis, running down towards the adjacent marshes; these intersect with east-west oriented Lower Rainham Road and the Chatham Main Line railway, resulting in a rectilinear pattern/grain.
- Settlement comprises scattered farmsteads and residential properties, with more concentrated settlement within the hamlets of Lower Rainham and Lower Twydall; to the east there is ribbon development along Lower Rainham Road, Berengrave Lane and Station Road.
- An over-riding rural character with open farmland and orchards interspersed with farm buildings and cottages, several of which are listed, and Conservation Area designations covering the historic parts of Lower Rainham and Lower Twydall; the rural character is undermined to the east and west due to urban fringe influences and a predominance of equine uses.
- A sense of enclosure as a result of the landform and shelter belts/hedges around orchards and along narrow lanes; views across the area are generally limited, albeit with some open views north towards the Medway Estuary around larger arable fields and/or where hedgerow loss has occurred (particularly in western areas between Lower Twydall and Ladds Corner).

- Two PRow cross the area, and the narrow lanes and tracks are also well used by pedestrians, providing access to the landscape; the railway line and the A289 cause some severance and weaken links to/from the urban area to the south and west.

Photo 7.93: High quality soils supporting a variety of agricultural land uses, including orchards



Photo 7.94: Over-riding rural character of farmland, orchards, farm buildings and rural hamlets



Photo 7.95: Predominance of equine uses, with subdivided fields to the east and west



Photo 7.96: Sense of enclosure around orchards and along narrow lanes



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Upper Cretaceous Chalk and Thanet Sand Formations overlain by Head deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel.
- A flat to gently undulating landform that rises gradually away from the lower-lying marshes to the north; heights range from approximately 5m AOD in the north to approximately 30m AOD in the south.
- Grade I agricultural soils predominantly support agricultural and horticultural land uses, including several orchards and arable; there is also some pasture in places and the more recent introduction of equine uses to the east and west.
- Flood Zone 2 and 3 covers a small area to the east near Berengrave.
- Priority Habitats include several areas of 'traditional orchards' and some areas of 'deciduous woodland', with the latter concentrated mainly in the east along the urban edge (including Bloors Lane Community Woodland and Berengrave Chalk Pit/Nature Reserve); Berengrave LNR is located to the east.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 17 – Northern Horticultural Belt as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- Forms a small part of a distinctive area of the 'Fruit Belt' landscape stretching east towards Faversham, strongly identifiable with Kent's reputation as the 'Garden of England'.
- The HLC records several 'orchards' which provide a link to land uses characteristic in this area since the 18th Century, although 'small regular fields with straight boundaries (parliamentary enclosure)' are indicators of more recent rationalisation of the enclosed landscape.

- A small to medium scale field pattern is defined predominantly by shelter belts and high hedges; some replacement with coniferous planting in places.
- Historically settlement within the area was limited to dispersed farmsteads and small hamlets at Lower Rainham, Lower Twydall and East Rainham. This is largely still the case today, although ribbon development along Berengrave Road and Lower Rainham Road have effectively subsumed East Rainham into the urban area of Rainham.
- The historic settlement pattern is reflected today by the presence of several Grade II listed buildings and conservation area designations at Lower Rainham and Lower Twydall. There is one Grade II* listed building (Bloors Place) in Lower Rainham.
- The principal road in the area is Lower Rainham Road (B2004), which runs east-west to the north parallel with the Medway Estuary and associated marshes; elsewhere the landscape is traversed by a network of narrow lanes and tracks largely on a north-south axis, which historically connected the settled higher ground and Watling Street to the south with the lower-lying open marshes to the north.
- Only two PRow cross the area to the south of Lower Rainham, although the narrow lanes and tracks are well used by pedestrians, providing access to the landscape; the Chatham Main Line railway and the A289 cause some severance and weaken links to/from the urban area to the south and west respectively.

Perceptual Influences

- The area retains an essentially rural character, although to the east the landscape has become fragmented by urban fringe influences, including ribbon development along Lower Rainham Road, Berengrave Lane and Station Road; woodland cover around the urban edge to the east helps reduce its influence in places.
- Busy roads, the railway line and urban edges influence the landscape and reduce levels of tranquillity; elsewhere shelter belts and high hedges result in a sense of enclosure and greater levels of tranquillity, particularly within

central areas south of Lower Rainham and between Lower Rainham and Lower Twydall This is indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.

- Whilst much of the area is visually enclosed by high hedges and shelter belts, there is some visual connection with the Medway Estuary to the north. This is particularly the case in places along roads and lanes (oriented towards the coastline) and to the west where medium-scale arable fields predominate and/or there has been hedgerow loss.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Gently sloping undulating land, contrasting with the adjacent flat low-lying marshes to the north; forms a green backdrop when viewed from the Medway Estuary.
- High-quality soils supporting horticultural land uses, including several characteristic orchards; forms part of the distinctive area of 'Fruit Belt' landscape stretching east towards Faversham.
- Orchards with associated distinctive shelterbelts, hedges and rural buildings create a strong sense of place; complements and contributes to the setting of Riverside Country Park.
- Historic hamlets of Lower Rainham and Lower Twydall, both designated as Conservation Areas, and several Listed Buildings provide time depth.
- The rural character of much of the landscape provides a setting for the historic farmhouses and hamlets of Lower Rainham and Lower Twydall.
- Sense of tranquillity in places, particularly in the more enclosed central areas located away from urbanising influences, albeit due to the limited public access over the LCA much of its valuable tranquillity is out of public reach.

- Importance of high hedges and shelterbelts in providing enclosure and connecting habitats.
- Narrow rural lanes and tracks predominantly on a north-south axis, running perpendicular with the marshes to the north; includes Lower Bloors Lane, Pump Lane and Lower Twydall Lane.
- Rectilinear pattern/grain of the landscape, as a result of the north-south and east-west axes of roads, lanes and tracks, and predominance of rectilinear fields and orchards.
- An area of open land helping maintain the distinctive identities of Lower Rainham and Lower Twydall, providing separation between these hamlets and the urban areas of Rainham and Gillingham.
- Provides a rural buffer/green corridor (along with the adjacent LCA A5) between the urban area and the area of international and national importance for nature conservation along the Medway estuary and marshes to the north.
- Ecologically important areas – of Priority Habitat ‘deciduous woodland’ and ‘traditional orchards’, and Berengrave LNR.

Issues and Changes

- Suburbanisation in the east, with recent expansion of the urban area into the landscape (such as development east of Bloors Lane Community Woodland and on Bloomfields east of Station Road).
- Threat of further expansion of urban edges from the south and west.
- An increase in equine land uses, particularly to the east and west in proximity to the urban edges.
- Loss of traditional orchards and field patterns, due to abandonment or conversion to arable, pasture or equine uses.
- Replacement of traditional hedges/shelter belts with coniferous planting.
- An increase in the use of polytunnels.

- Loss of distinctive settlement identity of Lower Rainham; ribbon development along Lower Rainham Road to the east of the hamlet is leading to a reduction in physical and perceived separation between it and the urban area of Rainham (including the former separate hamlet of East Rainham).
- Lack of formal access to much of the landscape and severance and weakened links to/from the urban area to the south and west due to the presence of the Chatham Main Line railway and the A289.
- Gradual loss/erosion of the buffer between the urban area and the area of international and national importance for nature conservation along the Medway estuary and marshes to the north.
- The Fruit Belt landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to a shift in the growing area of specific fruit species; waterlogged soils leading to crop loss; new pest and diseases may reduce the success of fruit crops; changes in fruit growing practices including increase in poly tunnels; and a reduction in available moisture during the growing season affecting the success of fruit trees.
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins; an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins; and an increase in agricultural use of summer insecticides which could reduce insect numbers and pollination.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Lower Rainham Farmland is to conserve and enhance the rural character of this intensively farmed area, including the setting of rural Conservation Areas at Lower Rainham and Lower Twydall. Provide better functional connections for people and nature with the adjacent marshes and strengthen the rectilinear pattern/grain of the landscape through reinforcing hedgerow/shelter belt boundaries.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Encourage the traditional farming practice and maintain and restore traditional orchards, retaining and enhancing the area's strong sense of place and associations of the Kent Fruit Belt; seek to connect and extend and manage to enhance biodiversity value.
- Conserve the traditional pattern and structure of the landscape by improving the continuity of hedgerows/shelter belts to enhance the rectilinear field pattern and to create an intact and connected network providing shelter from higher winds and shade; enhance and augment fragmented field boundaries with locally characteristic species, filling gaps where possible and replacing uncharacteristic coniferous planting and fencing.
- When establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.

- Improve connectivity and recreational use across the area and between it and the adjacent areas, including the urban area and the marshes and Saxon Shore Way to the north; consider the introduction of new formal PRoW between Lower Twydall and the Saxon Shore Way.
- Consider opportunities to increase the extent of deciduous woodland cover, using locally characteristic species to strengthen biodiversity and local distinctiveness, particularly around the urban area and other sub-urbanising influences, using locally occurring species.
- Develop visual connections with the estuary from publicly accessible areas.
- Discourage and increase in equine related land uses; enforce sensitive management and screening of existing equine related activities.
- Involve local communities in the management of orchards, particularly those connected to existing/new development, promoting local engagement and understanding.
- Manage farmland to conserve water and reduce run off and implement land management practices to maintain and improve infiltration/reduce erosion, including vegetative buffers.
- Plan for climate change, including the introduction of new fruit crops and tree species suited to the changing climate and the use of multiple fruit tree species to increase resiliency of orchard farming.
- Monitor landscape impact of new forms of farming, including poly tunnels, seeking a balanced approach.
- Create green corridors and networks linking to the important habitats associated with the marshes including making room for 'roll back' of estuary habitats 'squeezed' by sea level rise by providing buffer zones.

Development Management

- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and hamlets and their rural setting, including Lower Rainham and Lower Twydall, by resisting inappropriate or unsympathetic development.
- Consider the role of this area as a green backdrop to the adjacent marshes, by resisting visually prominent development.
- Encourage the sympathetic conversion of traditional farm buildings to retain their rural character and as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Resist proposals for highway upgrading to retain the rural character of the roads/lanes and their verges, including Lower Bloors Lane, Pump Lane and Lower Twydall Lane.
- Utilise existing roads and tracks for site access wherever possible; for any new roads and tracks, consider how these can fit in with the landscape character and complement the pattern of the existing roads.
- Integrate new development, through the use of native shelter belts, hedgerows and woodlands.
- Avoid large scale urban/housing extensions within this working rural agricultural landscape characterised by its low-density dispersed settlement pattern.
- Avoid linear coalescence of development along roads, maintaining distinctive settlement identity, particularly between the hamlet of Lower Rainham and the urban area of Rainham to the east.
- Conserve the rural character in central areas and consider the rural setting of Lower Rainham and Lower Twydall, scattered listed farm buildings and Riverside Country Park.

Landscape Character Area E2: Moor Street and Meresborough

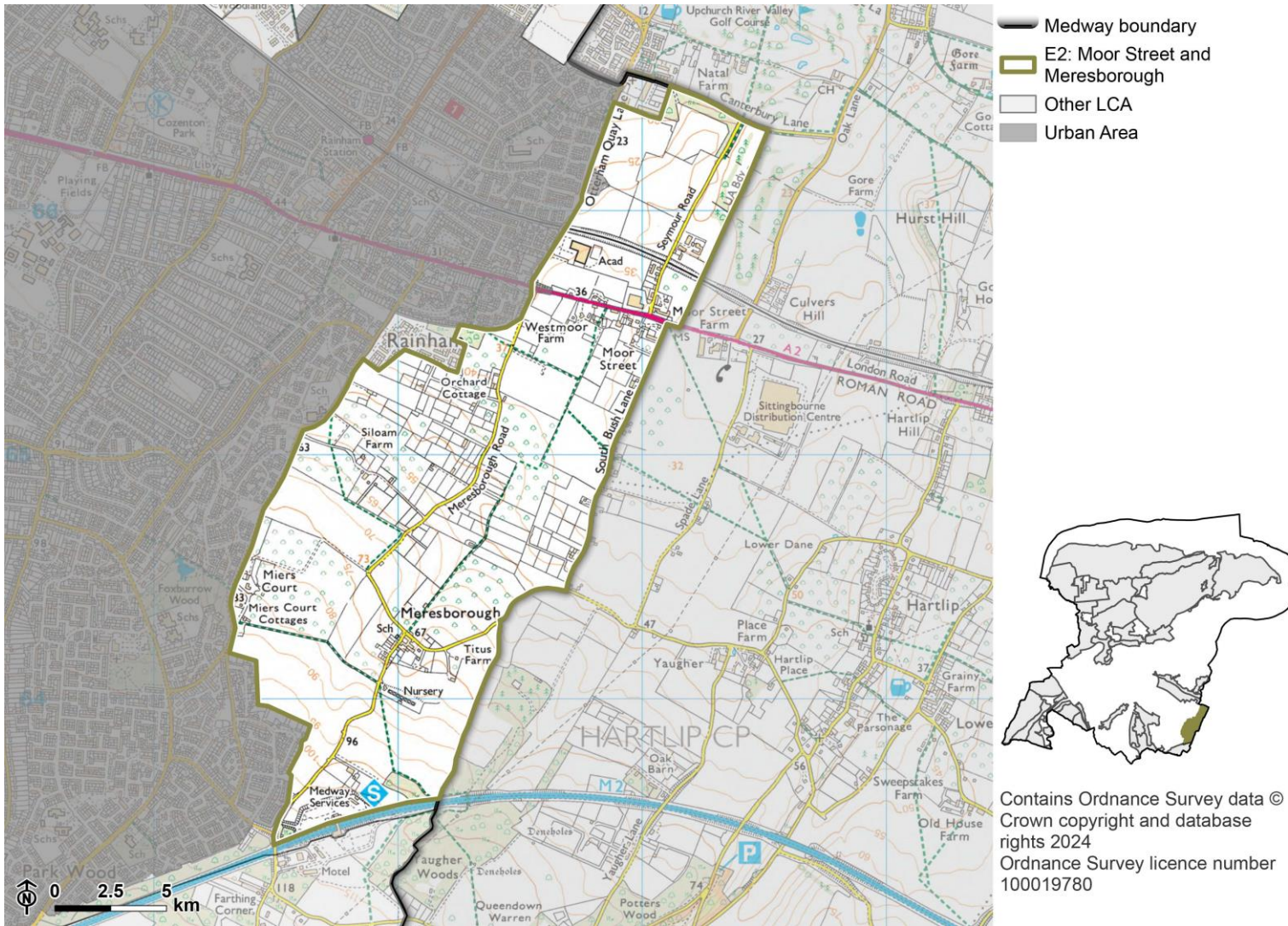
Description

Location and Summary

7.54 The Moor Street and Meresborough Farmland LCA is located along the eastern edge of the urban area of Rainham. The LCA is defined to the west and north-west by the urban edge of Rainham, to the south by the M2 Motorway, by South Bush Lane to the east, and by Canterbury Lane to the north-east. Land to the south-east, east and north-east of the LCA lies within neighbouring Swale Borough; that to the north-east and east is defined within the Swale Landscape and Biodiversity Appraisal (2011) as a further area of Fruit Belt (LCA 32: Upchurch and Lower Halstow Fruit Belt) and that to the south-east as an area of rising downland (LCA 37: Hartlip Downs).

7.55 This is a undulating, gently rising landscape supporting mixed farming, including orchards, arable and pasture. It forms a setting to the rural conservation areas at Moor Street and Meresborough.

Figure 7.30: Location of LCA E2



Key Characteristics

- A gently undulating landform that rises gradually from north to south.
- High quality soils support a variety of agricultural and horticultural land uses, including several orchards concentrated mainly to the south, and arable and pasture farming; it forms a small part of the distinctive area of 'Fruit Belt' landscape stretching east towards Faversham, strongly identifiable with the 'Garden of England'.
- Small to medium scale field pattern defined predominantly by shelter belts and high hedges; loss of traditional field pattern in places due to replacement with post and wire fencing or conifer belts, particularly in central and northern areas.
- A network of roads, narrow lanes, and tracks, which largely follow a north-south axis, running down towards the lower-lying marshes to the north; these intersect with east-west oriented London Road/Moor Street (A2), resulting in a rectilinear pattern/grain.
- Settlement comprises scattered farmsteads and residential properties, with more concentrated settlement within the hamlets of Meresborough and Moor Street; to the north there is ribbon development along the A2.
- An over-riding rural character with open farmland and orchards interspersed with farm buildings and houses and the hamlets of Meresborough and Moor Street; this is undermined in central and northern parts of the landscape due to urban fringe influences and a predominance of equine uses and activities.
- A sense of visual enclosure across much of the landscape as a result of shelter belts/hedges around orchards and along narrow lanes; some more open views in central and northern areas where hedgerows/shelter belts have been lost and/or replaced by post and wire fencing, and from higher ground to the south where there are some long range views out to the Medway Estuary particularly where the orientation of hedgerows/orchards allow.

- A network of PRow and the narrow lanes and tracks are well used by pedestrians, providing access to the landscape; the railway line and busy A2 cause some severance and weaken links to the north.

Photo 7.97: High quality soils supporting a variety of agricultural land uses, including orchards



Photo 7.98: Over-riding rural character of farmland, orchards, farm buildings and rural hamlets



Photo 7.99: Sense of enclosure around orchards and along narrow lanes



Photo 7.100: Long range views out to the Medway Estuary from higher ground



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Upper Cretaceous Chalk and Thanet Sand Formations overlain by Head deposits of clay and silt and clay with flints formations.
- Undulating landform, that rises gradually away from the lower-lying marshes to the north; land lies between approximately 20m AOD in the north and 110m AOD to the south.
- Predominantly Grade I agricultural soils that support agricultural and horticultural land uses, including orchards and arable, as well as some pasture; some Grade II soils to the south and south-west.
- Several areas of 'traditional orchard' and one area of 'deciduous woodland' Priority Habitat recorded within the landscape and there is one small area of ancient woodland at Reed's Shaw to the south (severed from a larger area at Yaughter Woods by the construction of the M2).

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 17 – Northern Horticultural Belt as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The HLC records several 'orchards', 'fields predominantly bounded by tracks, roads and other rights of way' and two small areas of 'post-1801 settlement'; the orchards provide a link to the historic land uses, although the areas of post-1801 settlement and equine uses reflect more recent changes to the landscape.
- Several horse paddocks and arable fields in central and northern parts of the area.
- Historically settlement within the area was limited to dispersed farmsteads, and two small hamlets at Meresborough and Moor Street. This is largely still the case today, although ribbon development along the A2 threatens the separate identity of Moor Street.

- The historic settlement pattern is reflected today by the presence of scattered Grade II listed rural buildings and conservation area designations covering the historic parts of Meresborough and Moor Street.
- London Road/Moor Street (A2) follows the course of Watling Street, an historic route that linked Dover and London.
- The principal road in the area today remains the A2, which runs east-west across the north of the area; elsewhere the landscape is traversed by a network of narrow lanes and tracks predominantly on a north-south axis, which historically connected the settled higher grounds with the lower-lying open marshes to the north.
- In addition to the rural lanes, access to the landscape is via a network of PRoW which connect the urban area to the landscape; access is more limited in land to the north of the A2.

Perceptual Influences

- The area retains an essentially rural character but has become partially fragmented by urban fringe influences to the north and north-west; this includes ribbon development extending along and to the north of the A2, including Leigh Academy and adjacent housing schemes, and housing development on Bramling Way to the east of Mierscourt Road.
- The busy A2, the M2 (and associated service station), the Chatham Main Line railway and urban edges influence the landscape and reduce levels of tranquillity, particularly where loss of hedges/shelter belts results in greater visibility towards these features. This is also indicated by CPRE tranquillity and dark skies mapping.
- Elsewhere shelter belts and hedges and the small to medium scale field pattern results in a sense of enclosure and greater levels of tranquillity, particularly to the south around orchards and along the narrow lanes, also indicated by CPRE tranquillity mapping.
- Whilst much of the area is visually enclosed by high hedges and shelter belts, there is some visual connection with the Medway Estuary from higher ground to the south. This is particularly the case where rows of fruit

are oriented towards the coastline and/or where hedgerow loss allows views out.

- The introduction of equine related uses – including lotted fields, fencing, equipment, materials, degraded hedges and conifer belts – is noticeable in central areas between Meresborough and Moor Street.
- CPRE dark skies mapping indicates areas to the south-east are relatively dark in comparison to areas closer to the urban edge of Rainham and in the vicinity of the M2 to the south.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Orchards with associated distinctive shelterbelts, hedges and rural buildings create in strong sense of place.
- High-quality soils supporting horticultural land uses, including several characteristic orchards; forms part of the distinctive area of 'Fruit Belt' landscape stretching east towards Faversham.
- Historic hamlets of Meresborough and Moor Street, both designated as Conservation Areas, and several Listed Buildings provide time depth.
- Narrow rural roads, lanes and tracks predominantly on an north-south axis, running perpendicular with the marshes to the north.
- Importance of hedgerows and shelterbelts in providing enclosure and connecting habitats.
- The rural character of much of the landscape which provides a rural setting for the historic farmhouses and the Conservation Areas at Meresborough and Moor Street.
- Sense of tranquillity in places, particularly in the more enclosed areas and those located away from urbanising influences.

- Rectilinear pattern/grain of the landscape, as a result of the aspect of the landform in relation to the open marshes to the north, the north-south and east-west axes of roads, lanes and tracks, and the predominance of rectilinear fields and orchards.
- As an open buffer helping prevent the further eastward expansion of the Rainham urban area and helping maintain the distinctive identities of settlements including Moor Street and Meresborough; ribbon development along the A2 threatens the identity of Moor Street as separate from Rainham. Adjacent areas in Swale Borough are identified as an 'Important Local Countryside Gap' under Policy DM25 of the adopted Swale Borough Local Plan (2017).
- Part of the immediate setting to the Kent Downs National Landscape, which lies to the south of the M2 Motorway.
- Ecologically important areas of traditional orchards and ancient woodland.

Issues and Changes

- Suburbanisation in the north and north-west, with recent and ongoing development along and to the north of the A2, including Leigh Academy and adjacent housing schemes, and housing development on Bramling Way to the east of Mierscourt Road.
- Threat of further expansion of urban edges from the west.
- An increase in equine land uses, particularly in central and northern areas in proximity to the urban edges.
- An increase in the use of polytunnels.
- Loss of traditional orchards and field patterns, due to abandonment or conversion to arable, pasture or equine uses particularly in central and northern parts of the area.
- Replacement of traditional hedges/shelter belts with post and wire fencing and/or coniferous planting.

- Loss distinctive settlement identity of Moor Street; ribbon development along the A2 is leading to a reduction in physical and perceived separation between it and the urban area of Rainham.
- Severance and weakened links to the landscape to the north due to the presence of the Chatham Main Line railway and the busy A2.
- Weak legibility and wayfinding means poor understanding of how to access and visit local destinations, for example the Kent Downs National Landscape and Queensdown Warren (both south of M2).
- The Fruit Belt landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to a shift in the growing area of specific fruit species; waterlogged soils leading to crop loss; new pest and diseases may reduce the success of fruit crops; changes in fruit growing practices including increase in poly tunnels; and a reduction in available moisture during the growing season affecting the success of fruit trees.
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins; an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins; and an increase in agricultural use of summer insecticides which could reduce insect numbers and pollination.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Moor Street and Meresborough Farmland is to conserve and enhance the rural character of this intensively farmed area, including the setting of rural Conservation Areas at Meresborough and Moor Street. Provide better functional connections for people and nature and strengthen the rectilinear pattern/grain of the landscape through reinforcing hedgerow/shelter belt boundaries.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Seek to encourage the traditional farming practice and maintain and restore traditional orchards, retaining and enhancing the area's strong sense of place and associations of the Kent Fruit Belt.
- Conserve and manage remaining traditional orchards and seek to connect and extend and manage to enhance biodiversity value.
- Discourage an increase in equine related land uses; enforce sensitive management and screening of existing equine related activities.
- Conserve the traditional pattern and structure of the landscape by improving the continuity of hedgerows/shelter belts to enhance the rectilinear field pattern and to create an intact and connected network providing shelter from higher winds and shade; enhance and augment fragmented field boundaries with native species, filling gaps where possible and replacing uncharacteristic coniferous planting and fencing.
- Encourage regular management of hedgerow boundaries and shelter belts, including along rural lanes.

- Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland/tree cover, particularly around the urban area and other sub-urbanising influences, using locally occurring species.
- Protect the valued recreational use of the landscape (PRoW), seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for informal access and enjoyment through well maintained linked routes through farmland; consider opportunities to improve legibility and wayfinding to key local features such as the Kent Downs National Landscape and Queensdown Warren.
- Create green corridors and networks linking to the important habitats (e.g. wider field margins and hedgerows) and plan for climate change.
- Maintain and enhance visual connections with the estuary from publicly accessible areas.
- Involve local communities in the management of orchards, particularly those connected to existing/new development, promoting local engagement and understanding.
- Manage farmland to conserve water and reduce run off and implement land management practices to maintain and improve infiltration/reduce erosion, including vegetative buffers.
- Plan for climate change, including the introduction of new fruit crops and tree species suited to the changing climate and the use of multiple fruit tree species to increase resiliency of orchard farming.
- Monitor landscape impact of new forms of farming, including poly tunnels, seeking a balanced approach.

Development Management

- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and hamlets and their rural setting, including Meresborough and Moor Street, by resisting inappropriate or unsympathetic development.

- Encourage the sympathetic conversion of traditional farm buildings, to retain their rural character and as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Resist proposals for highway upgrading to retain the rural character of the roads/lanes and their verges.
- Utilise existing roads and tracks for site access wherever possible; for any new roads and tracks, consider how these can fit in with the landscape character and complement the pattern of the existing roads.
- Integrate new development, through the use of native shelter belts, hedgerows and woodlands.
- Avoid large scale urban/housing extensions within this working rural agricultural landscape characterised by its low-density dispersed settlement pattern.
- Maintain the open landscape as a buffer to prevent the further eastward expansion of the Rainham urban area and avoid linear coalescence of development along roads, maintaining distinctive settlement identity, particularly between the hamlet of Moor Street and the urban area of Rainham to the west.
- Conserve the rural character in southern areas and consider the rural setting of Meresborough and Moor Street.

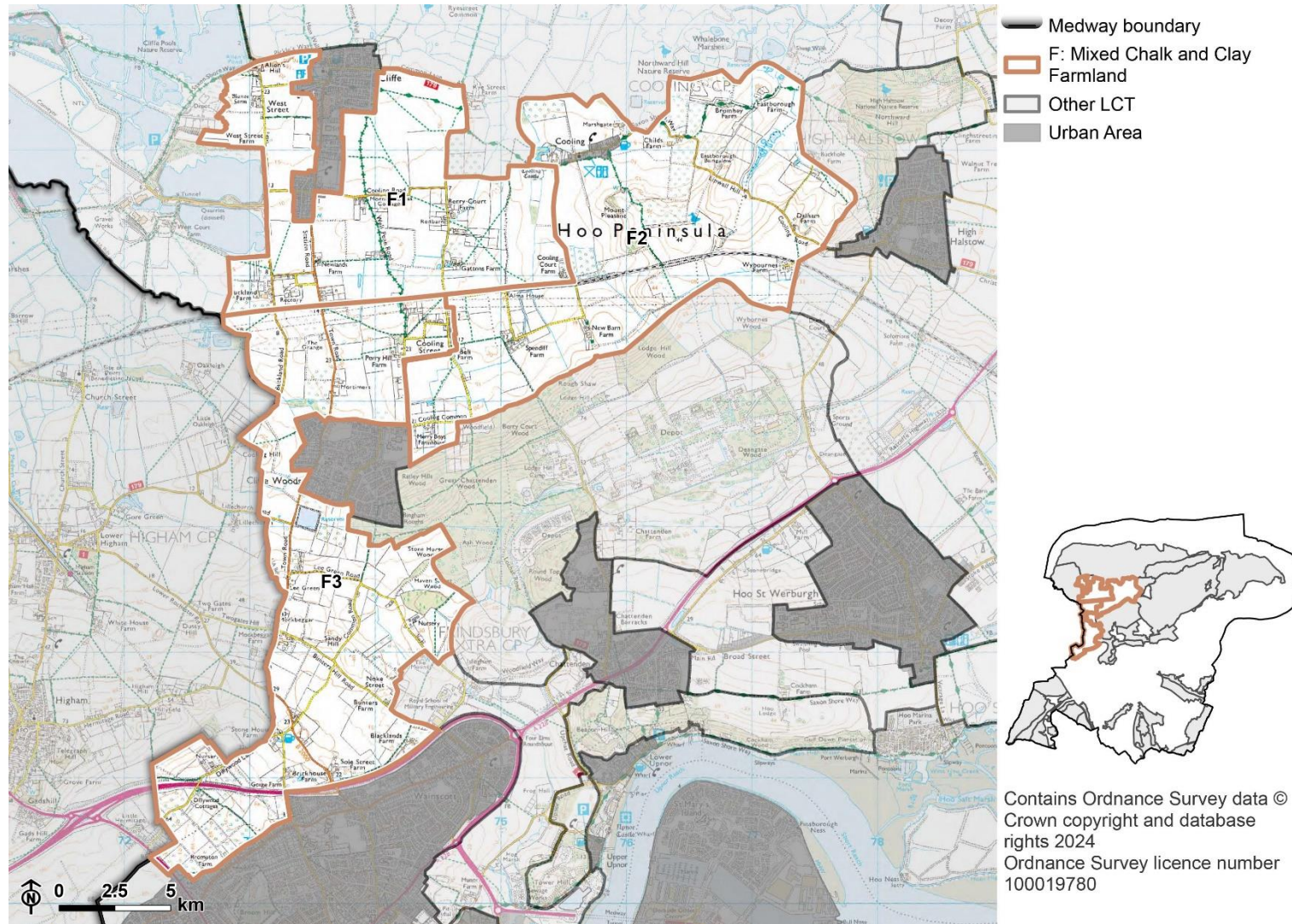
Landscape Character Type F: Mixed Chalk and Clay Farmland

Landscape Character Areas

7.56 The Mixed Chalk and Clay Farmland LCT is subdivided into three LCAs:

- Landscape Character Area F1: Cliffe;
- Landscape Character Area F2: Cooling; and
- Landscape Character Area F3: Cliffe Woods.

Figure 7.31: Location of the Mixed Chalk and Clay Farmland LCT and LCAs



Landscape Character Area F1: Cliffe

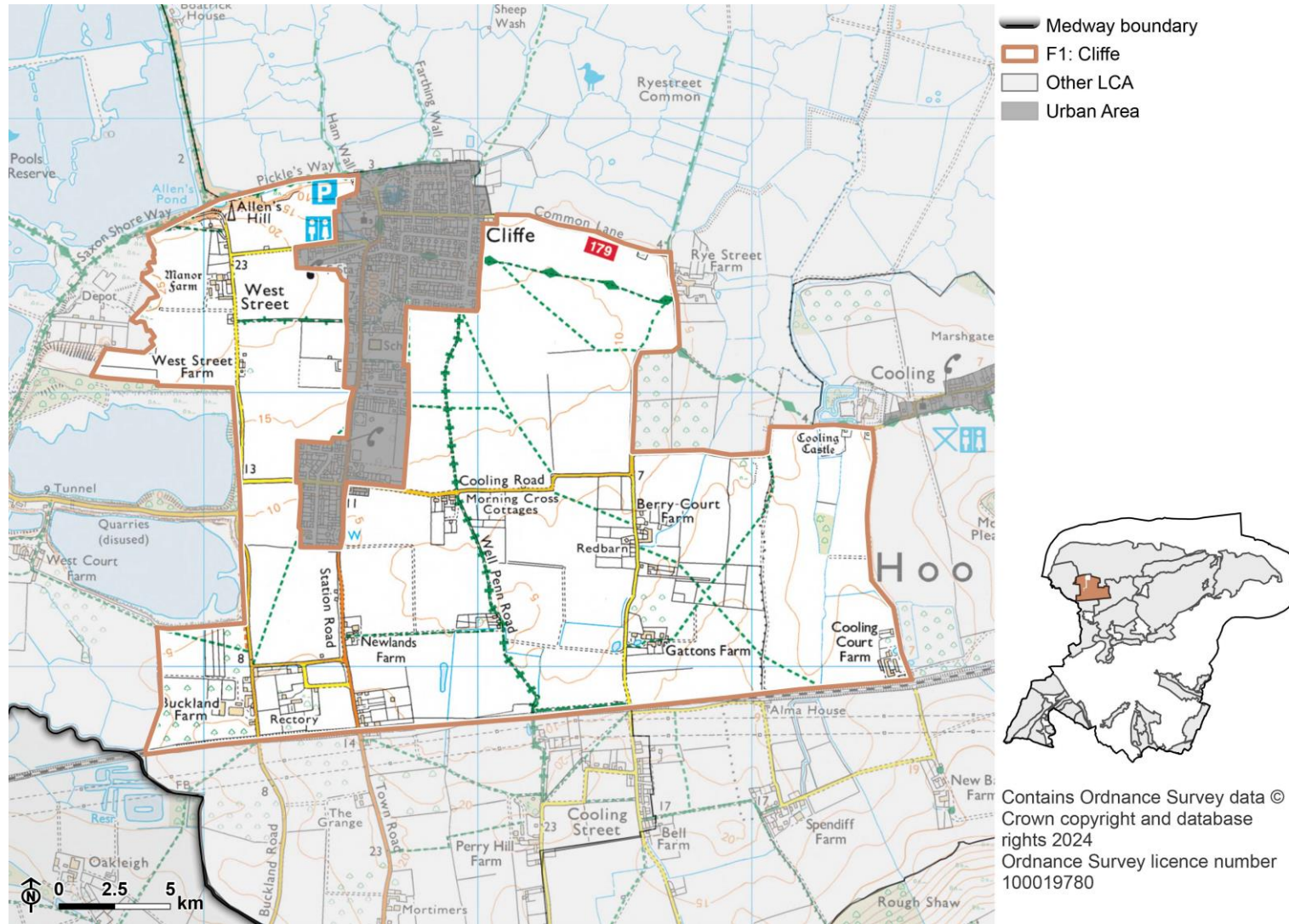
Description

Location and Summary

7.57 The Cliffe LCA is located in the north-west of the Hoo Peninsula. It is bounded by lower-lying marshland landscapes to the north and west (LCA A2: Cliffe to St Mary's Marshes and LCA A1: Cliffe Pools), and by farmland landscapes to the south and east (LCA F3: Cliffe Woods and LCA G2: Hoo Peninsula).

7.58 This is an area of relatively flat farmland composed of large fields in intensive arable use. Cliffe village extends from the north to the centre of the area and contains a Conservation Area and a cluster of Listed Buildings.

Figure 7.32: Location of LCA F1



Key Characteristics

- A low-lying and generally flat landscape, rising to a localised area of higher ground – Allen’s Hill – in the west.
- High quality agricultural soils support arable cropping with some small pockets of surviving orchards; contrasts with the predominantly pastoral nature of the adjacent marshland to the north.
- Medium to large scale field pattern defined by hedgerow boundaries of varying condition varied, with some missing entirely.
- A grid of narrow roads and tracks cross the area, often bounded by hedgerows.
- Limited settlement, concentrated mainly in the village of Cliffe; elsewhere there is a pattern of scattered farmsteads, which are often Grade II Listed Buildings.
- Good access on PRow, particularly in the east, including the long distance Saxon Shore Way.
- An open landscape, with long views to wooded slopes of Chattenden Ridge and Kent Downs National Landscape to the south, and across open marshland to the north.
- The settlement edge of Cliffe village is prominent in views, as is the Grade I listed Church of St Helen, Cliffe.
- An essentially rural landscape, although this is undermined by the presence of electricity pylons to the south which form vertical components in the flat landscape.

Photo 7.101: Low-lying and generally flat landscape, with open views



Photo 7.102: High quality agricultural soils predominantly supporting arable cropping



Photo 7.103: Open long views, including across open marshland to the north



Photo 7.104: Grid of narrow roads and tracks, often bounded by hedgerows



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Seaford Chalk Formation and Thanet Formation sand silt and clay in the south, overlain by Head deposits.
- A low lying largely flat topography between 5 metres and 10 metres AOD, rising up to 25 metres AOD in the west at Allen's Hill.
- Grade 1 (excellent) agricultural soils across the whole area, predominately supporting arable cropping with some small pockets of surviving orchards.
- Small springs, wells and ponds are found in the east, and the area is covered by Flood Zones 2 and 3.
- Hedgerow boundaries around fields are varied – some are in good condition, particularly along the smaller lanes, however others have been removed.
- Woodland and tree cover is very limited, with isolated trees and sparse mixed woodland mainly around farm buildings.
- Small areas of Priority Habitat 'traditional orchard' and 'deciduous woodland' are recorded. The internationally designated Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar Site, SPA and SSSI lie in proximity to the north and west of the area.

Cultural Influences

- The LCA lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 13 – Hoo Peninsula, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The landscape forms part of the rural setting to Cliffe, a medieval settlement and port, and Cooling Castle (within the adjacent LCA F2), which was at one time accessible from the sea.
- Settlement is concentrated in the village of Cliffe; elsewhere settlement comprises scattered historic farms, most of which are Grade II Listed

Buildings. There is a local vernacular of timber framed and brick buildings, and tiled roofs are common.

- The Rectory House south of Cliffe is a stone and flint hall-house from the early 14th century, and is the only Grade II* Listed Building in the area.
- Roads are often oriented north-south, connecting to the marshlands to the north with higher ground to the south; these are often single track and bounded by hedgerows.
- PRoW are concentrated in the east of the LCA and includes the long-distance Saxon Shore Way and several local footpaths linking Cliffe to Cooling Street and Cooling.
- National Cycling Route 179 passes through the east of the LCA, connecting Cliffe with Cliffe Woods to the south.

Perceptual Influences

- An open landscape with long views, including south to Chattenden Ridge and the North Downs which form a wooded backdrop in views to the south. Occasional views east towards the wooded Northward Hill also provide containment. These contrast with the enclosure provided by hedgerows along the narrow local lanes.
- In the north there are open views across the marshes towards the Thames Estuary and the Essex coast beyond.
- The edge of Cliffe village is prominent in views to west, and is not well-integrated into the landscape. The Church of St Helen, Cliffe is a visual landmark.
- The area has relatively high tranquillity and experience of dark night skies, although these are both impacted by proximity to Cliffe.
- While this is a rural area, modern intrusions in the landscape include prominent pylon routes which are vertical elements in an otherwise horizontal landscape, and views to industrial areas in Essex to the north.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Low-lying arable landscape, with a strong sense of openness.
- Ecologically important areas of Priority Habitat 'traditional orchard' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Lies in proximity and forms a setting to the Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar Site, SPA and SSSI.
- Settlement pattern comprising the historic village of Cliffe and surrounding scattered farmsteads, which provide time depth. Forms part of the rural setting to Cliffe Conservation Area and Cooling Castle Scheduled Monument (located within the adjacent LCA F2).
- Recreational value of PRoW, including the Saxon Shore Way.
- Long views across marshland to the north and west, and to the wooded backdrop of Chattenden Ridge and the North Downs to the south.
- A tranquil, rural area, with an open and exposed character and large skies.

Issues and Changes

- Pressure for new developments as extensions to Cliffe village; the existing settlement edges of Cliffe village are very exposed and prominent in views.
- Weak landscape structure due to varied condition of hedgerows and a general lack of woodland.
- Historic loss of orchards, and further loss of orchards and hedgerows.
- An increase in the use of polytunnels which are visual detractors. While polytunnels can provide a controlled growing environment in the face of

rising temperatures and extreme weather events, they provide an impermeable surface that can result in increased run-off and flooding.

- An increase in equine land uses, which undermine the traditional appearance of the landscape.
- The strategy for the North Kent Marshes within the TE2100 Plan to the north is to maintain the flood defences at the current level, accepting that as sea levels rise the flood risk will increase. This may increase flooding in the north of this area, and impact on suitable land uses.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins, an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins and an increase in agricultural use of summer insecticides which could reduce insect numbers and pollination.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.
 - Wetter winters may mean woody species in hedgerows are exposed to prolonged flooding in the growing season and will be at risk of dying, and winter trimming will become more difficult due to wet ground. Winter trimming is preferred to autumn trimming to ensure food supply for birds.
 - Hotter, drier summers and wetter winters will lead to changes in food production and growing seasons.
 - Intense rainfall events and increased winter rainfall resulting in flooding, erosion and damage to buildings and structures, including heritage assets.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Cliffe Mixed Chalk and Clay Farmland LCA is to enhance the rural character of the intensively farmed landscape, including the setting of Cliffe Conservation Area and scattered Listed Buildings. Seek to increase the extent of hedgerows and woodland, and where possible soften the residential edge of Cliffe village.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance ecologically important areas of Priority Habitat 'traditional orchards' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Seek to prevent further loss or decline in the quality of remaining boundary hedgerows and consider opportunities to promote the regeneration of hedgerow trees and shrubs where they have been lost or heavily denuded.
- When establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to diversify the range of species; and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Employ effective buffering against the impact of adjacent land uses on hedgerows, through for example the use of grass, and uncultivated or low intensity margins.
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species

through the landscape; and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers.

- Seek to encourage traditional farming practices including restoring and enhancing traditional orchards, to enhance the area's sense of place.
- Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland or tree cover, particularly around Cliffe, to soften the settlement edges.
- Manage farmland to reduce conserve water and reduce run off and implement land management practices to maintain and improve infiltration/reduce erosion including vegetive buffers.
- Monitor landscape impact of new forms of farming including polytunnels seeking a balanced approach.
- Consider appropriate boundary management of land in equine use, avoiding wire fencing or horse tape where possible.
- Create green corridors and networks linking to the important habitats in the north associated with the marshes including making room for 'roll back' of estuary habitats 'squeezed' by sea level rise by providing buffer zones.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for informal access and enjoyment through well maintained linked routes, including cycle routes where possible; consider opportunities to improve links with the adjacent marshes to the north and west.
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the PRow, including through the enhancement and promotion of views north across the marshes and south towards the wooded Chattenden Ridge and Kent Downs National Landscape.

Development Management

- Conserve the local distinctiveness of the historic village of Cliffe and the surrounding farmsteads and their rural setting, by resisting inappropriate or unsympathetic development.
- Encourage the sympathetic conversion of any traditional farm buildings, aiming to retain their rural character as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Resist proposals for highway upgrading to retain the rural character of the roads and lanes and their verges.
- Utilise existing roads and tracks for site access wherever possible; for any new roads and tracks, consider how these can fit in with the landscape character and complement the pattern of the existing roads.
- Any large scale or visually intrusive development would be detrimental within this visually open landscape and impact on views; where development is proposed look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Seek to minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards.

Landscape Character Area F2: Cooling

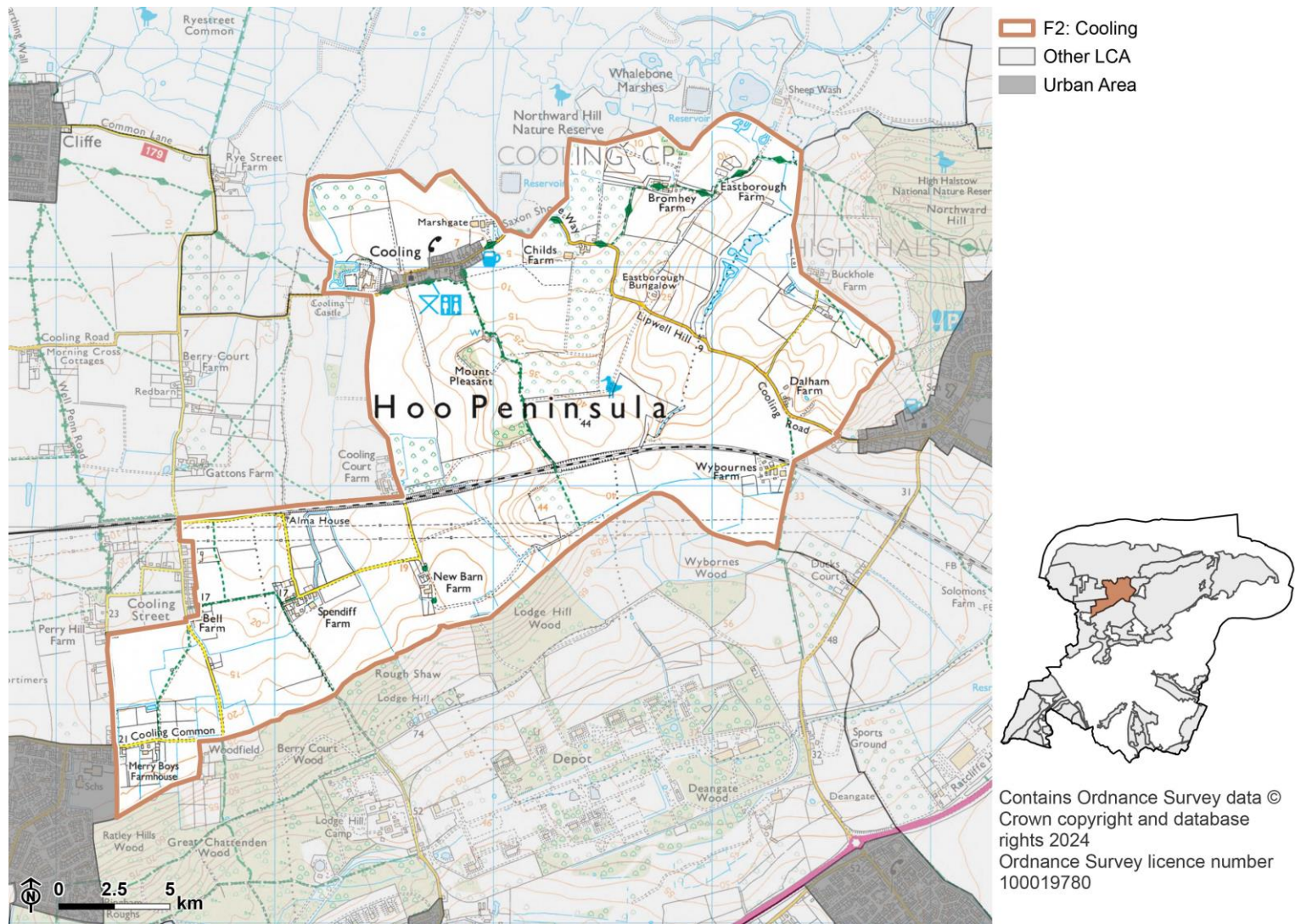
Description

Location and Summary

7.59 The Cooling LCA is located in the north-west of the Hoo Peninsula. It is bounded by lower-lying marshland landscapes to the north (LCA A2), by mixed chalk and clay farmland to the west (LCA F1 and F3), clay farmland to the east (LCA G2) and wooded ridges and hills to the south and north-east (LCA H1 and H2).

7.60 This is an area of generally low-lying farmland with a smaller field pattern size, shelter belts and hedgerows and some areas of orchard. The historic village of Cooling lies in the north.

Figure 7.33: Location of LCA F2



Key Characteristics

- A low-lying, undulating landform rising from the marshes towards the south; localised small hills provide topographic interest.
- High quality agricultural soils support arable cropping and pockets of surviving orchards; contrasting with the predominantly pastoral nature of the adjacent marshland to the north.
- Small areas of woodland around Cooling Castle and Eastborough Farm.
- Medium-scale field pattern defined by hedgerows and shelterbelts, which provide some enclosure.
- Forms a setting to nationally designated historic defensive structures, including the 14th century Cooling Castle.
- Settlement is concentrated in the historic village of Cooling and small farmsteads accessed on angular local roads, often bounded by hedgerows.
- Good access on PRow, including Saxon Shore Way which runs through Cooling and provides connections to Northward Hill and Cliffe.
- Long views to the wooded slopes of Chattenden Ridge and Kent Downs National Landscape to the south, and across open marshland to the north.
- A rural and relatively tranquil landscape interrupted by electricity pylons, which form vertical components in the landscape. The railway line creates a barrier to access.

Photo 7.105: Orchards with wooded Northward Hill in the backdrop



Photo 7.106: 14th century Cooling Castle



Photo 7.107: Open arable fields with prominent electricity pylons



Photo 7.108: Chattenden Ridge providing a wooded backdrop to the south



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Thanet Formation and Lambeth Group sand silt and clays, with small areas of River Terrace deposits in the centre of the area and alluvium over waterbodies in the north-east.
- A gently undulating landscape, ranging from 5 metres AOD close to the marshes and 45 metres AOD in the south before transitioning into the Chattenden Ridge (LCA H2). Small local hills are visually prominent in the landscape, for example Mount Pleasant.
- Isolated Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' blocks are found around Cooling Castle, Mount Pleasant and Eastborough Farm. Small areas of 'traditional orchard' are also recorded close to the farmsteads. 'Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh' is recorded in the north on the edges of the Thames estuary marshes. The Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar and South Thames Estuary and Marshes SSSI lie in close proximity to the north.
- Grade 1 (excellent) agricultural soils across the majority of the area support medium-scale arable farming. Traditional orchards are found at Childs Farm and Cooling Court Farm. Small areas of horse grazing are associated with the farmsteads, and seasonal polytunnels are used to the north of Cooling.

Cultural Influences

- The LCA lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 13 – Hoo Peninsula, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The historic origin of the field pattern is uncertain, but is likely to be 19th and 20th century in date.
- Historic interest is concentrated at Cooling. Cooling Castle is a rare quadrangular castle completed in 1385 for the Earl of Cobham. The castle was later transformed into a picturesque ruin within a landscaped garden

in the 19th century. The castle and surrounds are designated as a Scheduled Monument, with the gatehouse and inner ward also Grade I Listed Buildings. St James church, Cooling (Grade I listed) is said to be the inspiration for Pip's graves in 'Great Expectations', and Charles Dickens is known to have picnicked in the graveyard.

- Outside of Cooling, the sparse settlement pattern consists of scattered farmhouses and associated barns, two of which are Grade II listed buildings. The small linear settlement of Cooling Street lies in the west. The settlements and farms are linked by narrow and angular local roads, with mixed hedgerows. The single-track freight railway line connects the Isle of Grain and Gravesham to the west. Although trains on the line are infrequent the railway provides a barrier to access.
- The Saxon Shore Way runs along Main Road through Cooling and connects to Northward Hill. NCN 179 also runs along Main Road, and connects to High Halstow. In the south-west local PRoW connect the farmsteads to Chattenden Ridge. Northward Hill RSPB Reserve extends into the north-east, and is managed for its habitats for birds. A small visitor carpark is located at Eastborough Farm.

Perceptual Influences

- Shelterbelts, hedgerows along the narrow lanes and areas of orchard provide an enclosed character. There are long views south towards the wooded backdrop of Chattenden Ridge and the Kent Downs National Landscape beyond, while Northward Hill provides a wooded backdrop to the east. There are occasional long views north over the Thames estuary marshes.
- Electricity pylons are significant vertical features in the views, and are one of the few modern influences on the landscape.
- A good experience of dark night skies and tranquillity, impacted by proximity to Cliffe Woods in the south-west and High Halstow in the east.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Arable and orchard land uses which contrast with the surrounding low-lying marshes.
- Remnant orchards with their associated distinctive shelterbelts which provide variety in the landscape and create a strong sense of place.
- Rural landscape with limited development, retaining the historic settlement pattern.
- Distinctive angular network of minor roads which link the small farmsteads, Cooling and Cooling Street.
- Time-depth provided by the defensive 14th century Cooling Castle, and St James church, Cooling. The rural character of the landscape provides a setting to these historic features.
- Recreational value of the promoted Saxon Shore Way and RSPB Northward Hill.
- Cultural and historic associations with Charles Dickens, and particularly 'Great Expectations' (1861).
- Areas of enclosure contrast with far reaching views to distinctive wooded hills at Chattenden and Northward Hill, and to the Thames estuary.

Issues and Changes

- The strategy for the North Kent Marshes within the TE2100 Plan is to maintain the flood defences at their current level, accepting that as seas levels rise the flood risk will increase. Land in the north may be more frequently flooded, and land uses will need to adapt.
- Historic loss of orchards to conversion to arable farmland.

- An increase in the use of polytunnels, which are visual detractors. While polytunnels can provide a controlled growing environment in the face of rising temperatures and extreme weather events, they provide an impermeable surface that can result in increased run-off and flooding.
- Cooling Castle is on the Heritage at Risk Register, as the ruined fabric is in need of major repair.
- Increasing numbers of recreational visitors to the RSPB reserve, which may cause pressures on the habitats and species, including bird disturbance.
- Pylon routes are significant human influences in an otherwise rural landscape.
- Impact of future potential development, including new roads, settlements, parklands and open spaces.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to a shift in the growing area of specific fruit species; waterlogged soils leading to crop loss; new pest and diseases may reduce the success of fruit crops; changes in fruit growing practices including increase in poly tunnels with associated landscape impacts; and a reduction in available moisture during the growing season affecting the success of fruit trees.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins; an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins and an increase in agricultural use of summer insecticides which could reduce insect numbers and pollination.

- Hotter, drier summers and wetter winters will lead to changes in food production and growing seasons.
- Areas where hedgerow field boundaries are limited or absent will be more susceptible to erosion and run off, while increases in pests, weeds and diseases will increase the likelihood of crop failure.
- Intense rainfall events and increased winter rainfall resulting in flooding, erosion and damage to buildings and structures, including heritage assets.
- Sea level rises, floods and extreme weather events are projected to increase significantly within 50 years.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Cooling Mixed Chalk and Clay Farmland LCA is to restore the rural landscape, with an increase in traditional orchards, improved field boundaries and shelterbelts. Conserve and enhance the historic character of Cooling, and improve and promote recreational links to the surrounding marshlands and wooded hills and ridges.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Manage farmland to conserve water and reduce run off, and implement land management practices to maintain and improve infiltration/reduce erosion, including vegetative buffers.
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to

provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers.

- Create green corridors and networks linking to the important habitats in the north associated with the marshes including making room for 'roll back' of estuary habitats 'squeezed' by sea level rise by providing buffer zones.
- Allocate land to non-crop land uses such as increasing biodiversity planting, maintaining hedgerows and field margins and using traditional or conservation farming techniques to reduce run off and mitigate the effects of drier seasons.
- Seek to encourage the traditional farming practice, and maintain and restore traditional orchards. Where possible, connect and extend small orchards, and involve local communities in management of these spaces.
- Monitor landscape impact of new forms of farming, including polytunnels, seeking a balanced approach.
- Consider appropriate boundary management of land in equine use, avoiding wire fencing or horse tape where possible.
- Consider opportunities to increase the extent of deciduous woodland cover, using locally characteristic species to strengthen biodiversity and local distinctiveness, particularly along roads and settlement edges.
- Seek to strengthen the landscape structure by introducing new hedgerows and shelter belts along field boundaries and roads; when establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Plan for climate change, including the introduction of new fruit crops within the orchards, and tree species suited to the changing climate. Use multiple tree species to increase resiliency of orchard farming.

- Seek to strengthen and enhance access opportunities; consider opportunities to improve access links to the marshlands and wooded ridges of Chattenden and Northward Hill.

Development Management

- Avoid additional visually intrusive development, both within the area and outside it; firmly resist proposals for new overhead power lines or cables and consider opportunities to under-ground existing overhead lines.
- Retain the sparse, small-scale settlement pattern, centred on the angular, narrow local road network. Resist any development which results in the actual or perceived coalescence of Cooling and Cooling Street.
- Conserve the rural setting to Cooling, and conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their rural setting.
- Encourage the sympathetic conversion of traditional farm buildings to retain their rural character and as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Maintain and enhance the character of the local narrow roads. Resist unsympathetic highway improvement that would threaten their rural character.
- Encourage the integration of existing farmsteads and new development into the landscape through the use of native shelter belts, hedgerows and woodlands to reflect and reinforce rural character.

Landscape Character Area F3: Cliffe Woods

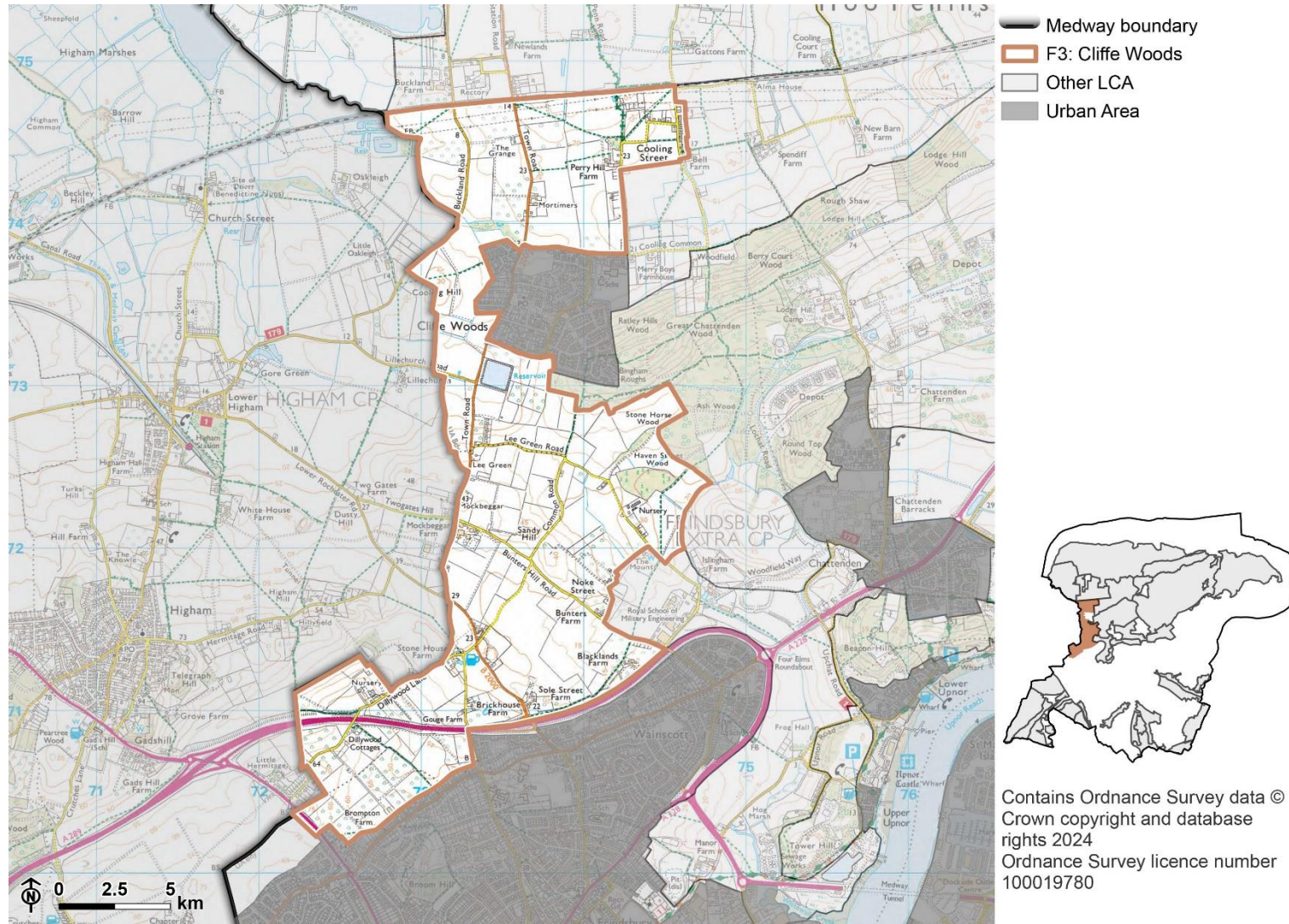
Description

Location and Summary

7.61 The Cliffe Woods LCA is located in the west of the Hoo Peninsula in Medway. The southern boundary is formed by the settlement edge of Wainscott, while the administrative boundary with Gravesham Borough forms the western boundary. The Hoo railway line marks the northern boundary, the eastern boundary is formed by rising topography that marks a transition to the wooded Chattenden Ridge (LCA H2).

7.62 This is an undulating mixed agricultural landscape, featuring arable, orchards and horticulture uses. The village of Cliffe Woods lies the east of the LCA. The south-west lies within the Green Belt, which extends west into Gravesham Borough.

Figure 7.34: Location of LCA F3



Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating landscape, rising gradually from the marshes to the north towards a ridge of higher ground to the south.
- Small and medium-scale fields are bounded by a mixture of low hedgerows, grass margins and poplar shelterbelts.
- Mixed land use of arable, orchards and horticultural uses, including hops and vines; extensive use of polytunnels; some remnant areas of traditional orchards in places.
- Settlement is limited to the village of Cliffe Woods and several scattered farmsteads, many of which contain Listed Buildings. Buildings are based along the grid of narrow rural roads.
- Some PRoW link settlement and farmsteads, with some extending into Gravesham Borough. In general east to west access is limited. The railway line and A289 (Wainscott Bypass) act as barriers within the landscape to the north and south.
- Poplar shelterbelts and hedgerows along the narrow rural roads create an often enclosed character; some views are available to the adjacent wooded Chattenden Ridge and north to the Thames estuary.
- An essentially rural landscape, which forms a buffer to Cliffe Woods, Strood and Higham. The rural character is undermined in places by busy transport corridors and pylon routes in the north.

Photo 7.109: Gently undulating landscape rising towards a ridge in the south



Photo 7.110: Mixed farming – hops and vines are common, bounded by shelterbelts



Photo 7.111: Shelterbelts along narrow rural roads partially enclosing polytunnels



Photo 7.112: Chattenden Ridge forming a wooded backdrop to the east



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of Thanet and Lambeth Group sand silts and clays in the north, transitioning to London Clay Formation overlain by Head deposits in the south.
- A gently undulating landscape, rising from 5 metres AOD in the north-west where the LCA meets the marshes to 75 metres AOD in the south-west where the landform rises at the edge of Strood.
- Grade 1 (excellent) and 2 (very good) agricultural soils support a mixture of arable, orchard and horticultural land uses.
- Very limited Priority Habitats, with only small areas of 'deciduous woodland' along transport corridors, and remnant areas of 'traditional orchards' at farmsteads. Haven Street Wood is a replanted ancient woodland (PAWS), while Stone Horse Wood is a small outlier of the Chattenden Woods and Lodge Hill SSSI (within LCA H2).
- Poplar shelter belts are a dominant feature along lanes, roads and fields, and help create a wooded character.

Cultural Influences

- The LCA lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 13 – Hoo Peninsula, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The historic origin of the field pattern is uncertain, but is likely to be 19th century enclosure, with extensive modern boundary loss.
- While the landscape was historically defined by orchards, these have often been converted to arable land uses or horticultural uses in the majority of the area, with polytunnels a frequent feature.
- Narrow lanes lined by poplar shelterbelts generally have a rural character which contrasts with Town Road and Lower Rochester Road (B2000)

which feature heavy traffic servicing the surrounding extraction works and industrial estates.

- Settlement is limited to scattered farmsteads and individual houses. Some farmsteads have expanded into light industrial units.
- Historic features are limited to several Grade II listed farmhouses, dating from the 16th and 17th centuries. Timber-framing and weather boarding are common.
- Limited number of PRow cross the landscape, which historically connected the settlements and farmsteads. East-west connections are particularly limited, and the railway line and A289 (Wainscott Bypass) act as barriers within the landscape to the north and south.

Perceptual Influences

- The landscape is heavily influenced by human activity, including prominent pylon routes both within the LCA and visible in adjacent areas, and the busy A289 and B2000 transport routes. The settlement edge of Cliffe Woods is not generally well-integrated into the landscape. Where farms have diversified into light industrial uses, this has an urbanising impact on the otherwise rural landscape.
- Poly tunnels are visually intrusive, and impact the undeveloped character of the landscape. Although they are often concealed within the landscape by hedgerows and poplar shelterbelts, the plastic can be reflective in the sunlight.
- Shelterbelts and hedgerows provide a generally enclosed character. Occasional longer distance views are available through gaps in vegetation and/or from more open areas of higher ground, including towards Gravesham Borough to the west. The wooded Chattenden Ridge forms a backdrop to the east and there are views towards the Thames estuary to the north and north-west.
- Tranquil, rural character away from the main roads, with dark night skies impacted by proximity to Wainscott and Cliffe Woods village.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- An undulating agricultural landscape, contrasting with the low-lying marshes to the north and ridges of higher ground to the east and south.
- Traditional orchards with associated distinctive shelterbelts, hedges and rural buildings create a strong sense of place.
- Ecological importance of Priority Habitat 'traditional orchards' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Importance of high hedges and shelterbelts in providing enclosure and connecting habitats.
- The rural character of much of the landscape which provides a setting to several historic farmsteads, and provides a buffer between Cliffe Woods, Strood and Higham.
- Rural character with sense of tranquillity away from main roads.
- Longer views towards the wooded backdrop provided by the Chattenden Ridge, towards the Thames estuary and west into Gravesham Borough, create a distinctive sense of place.

Issues and Changes

- Suburbanisation around Cliffe Woods, with recent and ongoing housing developments on the western edge of the village. Pressure from further expansion of the urban edges of Cliffe Woods.
- Loss of traditional orchards and field patterns, due to conversion to arable and other horticultural farming or abandonment.
- An increased use of polytunnels and plastic mulches and the associated visual intrusion and adverse landscape impacts.

- Increasing heavy vehicular traffic (particularly HGVs) on main road between Wainscott to Cliffe (the B2000), undermining the rural character and sense of tranquillity.
- Intrusiveness and adverse visual and landscape character impact of pylons/power lines.
- Limited formal east-west connections across the landscape, and the severance of links to the north and south due to the presence of the railway line and the A289 (Wainscott Bypass) respectively.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to a shift in the growing area of specific fruit species; waterlogged soils leading to crop loss; new pest and diseases may reduce the success of fruit crops; changes in fruit growing practices including increase in poly tunnels with associated landscape impacts; and a reduction in available moisture during the growing season affecting the success of fruit trees.
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins; an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins and an increase in agricultural use of summer insecticides which could reduce insect numbers and pollination.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.
 - Hotter, drier summers and wetter winters will lead to changes in food production and growing seasons.
 - Areas where hedgerow field boundaries are limited or absent will be more susceptible to erosion and run off, while increases in pests, weeds and diseases will increase the likelihood of crop failure.

- Intense rainfall events and increased winter rainfall resulting in flooding, erosion and damage to buildings and structures, including heritage assets.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Cliffe Woods Mixed Chalk and Clay Farmland LCA is to conserve and enhance the rural, agricultural character of the landscape, by increasing the extent and quality of field boundaries and by better integrating polytunnels into the landscape. Remaining orchards should be conserved, and locally distinct historic orchards reflected by similar tree planting. The settlement edges of Cliffe Woods and Wainscott/Strood, and any proposed development should also be integrated into the landscape using appropriate boundary treatments.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Plan for climate change, including the introduction of new fruit crops and tree species suited to the changing climate, and the use of multiple fruit tree species to increase resiliency of orchard farming.
- Manage farmland to conserve water and reduce run off and implement land management practices to maintain and improve infiltration/reduce erosion, including vegetative buffers.
- Seek to strengthen the landscape structure by introducing new hedgerows and shelter belts along field boundaries and roads; when establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to diversify the range

of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.

- Seek to encourage the traditional farming practice and maintain and restore traditional orchards. Where possible, connect and extend small orchards, and involve local communities in management of these spaces.
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers.
- Allocate land to non-crop land uses such as increasing biodiversity planting, maintaining hedgerows and field margins and using traditional or conservation farming techniques to reduce run off and mitigate the effects of drier seasons.
- Consider opportunities to increase the extent of deciduous woodland cover, using locally characteristic species to strengthen biodiversity and local distinctiveness, particularly along major roads and along settlement edges and around other detracting features.
- Monitor the landscape impact of polytunnels; seek to integrate these structures through appropriate siting and mitigation.
- Seek to strengthen and enhance access opportunities; consider opportunities to improve east-west links through the LCA.

Development Management

- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic farm buildings and their rural setting, by resisting inappropriate or unsympathetic development.
- Encourage the sympathetic conversion of traditional farm buildings to retain their rural character and as features of the agricultural landscape.

- Maintain and enhance the character of the narrow local roads. Resist unsympathetic highway improvements to retain the rural character of the road and its verges.
- Integrate existing and new development, seeking to soften the harsh urban edges of Cliffe Woods and Wainscott through the use of native shelter belts, hedgerows and woodlands.
- Retain the small-scale, low-density dispersed settlement pattern.
- Avoid visually intrusive development both within the area and outside it; firmly resist proposals for new overhead power lines or cables and consider opportunities to underground existing overhead lines.
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and any further reduction in tranquillity; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards.

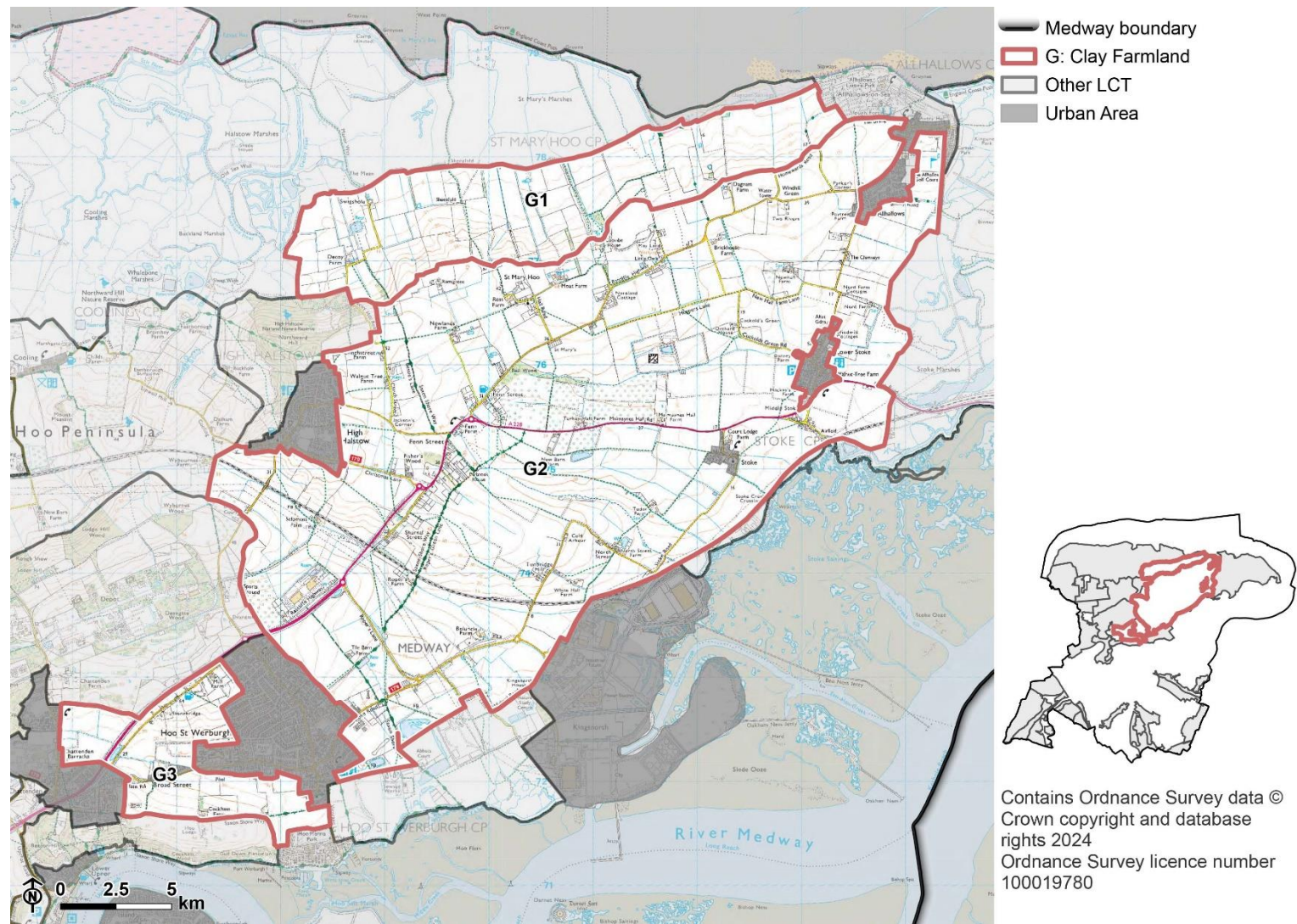
Landscape Character Type G: Clay Farmland

Landscape Character Areas

7.63 The Open Clay Farmland LCT is subdivided into five LCAs:

- Landscape Character Area G1: St Mary's Farmland;
- Landscape Character Area G2: Hoo Peninsula; and
- Landscape Character Area G3: Hoo St Werburgh.

Figure 7.35: Location of the Open Clay Farmland LCT and LCAs



Landscape Character Area G1: St Mary's Farmland

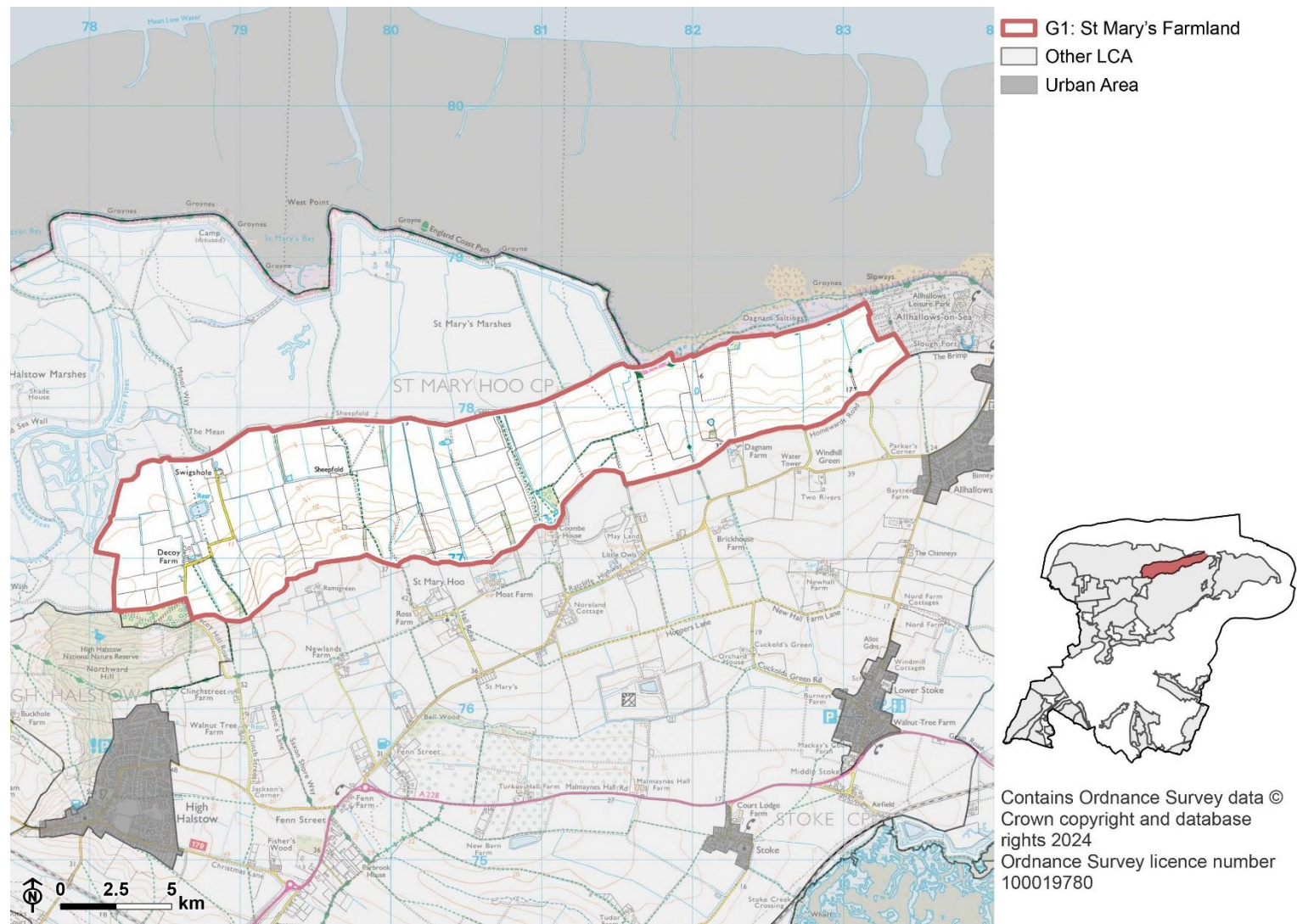
Description

Location and Summary

7.64 The St Mary's Farmland LCA is located in the north-east of the Hoo Peninsula. It is bounded by Allhallows holiday park to the east, Northward Hill (LCA H1) to the south-west and the plateau of the Hoo Peninsula (LCA G2) to the south. The Cliffe to St Marys Marshes (LCA A2) and the River Thames lie to the north.

7.65 The LCA is defined by its rising landform, transitioning between the flat marshland to the north and the higher flatter plateau to the south. It is a rural landscape comprising a mixture of arable and grazing land uses.

Figure 7.36: Location of LCA G1



Key Characteristics

- Distinctive undulating rising landform, marking the transition between the lower-lying marshlands to the north and the higher plateau of the Hoo Peninsula to the south.
- Some coastal habitats, including saltmarsh and coastal grazing marsh, on lower ground to the north. Woodland cover is limited to shelter belts and shaws.
- Mixed arable and pasture farming with a medium to large-scale rectilinear field pattern, generally bounded by remnant hedgerow trees, wildflower verges and post and rail fencing; some orchards and fruit growing at Decoy Farm.
- Extremely limited development, with one farm and associated road in the west.
- PRoW run through the area, predominantly on a north-south axis connecting the marshlands and the plateau; the King Charles III England Coast Path runs along the coast in the north-east.
- Open elevated views northwards from the upper slopes across the marshlands to the Thames Estuary and Essex beyond.
- The rising slopes are visible from the Thames marshes and surrounding farmland, forming a green backdrop in views south.
- Unspoilt, remote and tranquil landscape with very few built or detracting features.

Photo 7.113: Rising landform marking the transition between the marshes and plateau



Photo 7.114: Undulating landform underlain by clay



Photo 7.115: Open elevated views from the upper slopes northwards across the marshlands



Photo 7.116: Fields bounded by remnant hedgerow trees, wildflower verges and fencing



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of London Clay Formation, with River Terrace and Head deposits in the centre and east. Soils are classed as Grade 3 (good to moderate) across the LCA.
- The area has a rising topography, from 5 metres AOD in the north closest to the marshes to 40 metres AOD in the south-west. The slope is less steep in the east and reaches highs of 30 metres AOD. Flood Zones 2 and 3 cover the north of the LCA, where the topography is under 5 metres AOD.
- Small areas of Priority Habitat 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh' are recorded in the north, associated with the adjacent St Mary's Marshes. Priority Habitat 'coastal saltmarsh' is recorded along the shoreline in the north-east, and the LCA is adjacent to the internationally designated Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar Site, SPA and SSSI.
- Woodland is limited to linear shelterbelts and shaws, recorded as Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'. A varied hedgerow network and vegetation along footpaths contributes to the tree cover.
- An agricultural landscape, supporting both arable and pasture land uses. Decoy Farm in the west is in use for orchards and fruit growing, and features the use of polytunnels.
- Fields typically form a medium- to large-scale rectilinear pattern and are bounded by remnant hedgerow trees, wildflower verges and post and rail fencing.

Cultural Influences

- The LCA lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 13 – Hoo Peninsula, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001). The historic origin of the field pattern may relate to the organisation of the Medieval landscape and

its subdivision into holdings that took in a part of different land types, including grazing marsh, arable or orchards.

- This is an extremely remote landscape with only one farmstead in the west at Decoy Farm, and one associated road, which stops at the edge of the marshes.
- There are no designated historic features within the area, although a number of World War II type 24 pillboxes are situated in the east, part of the line of defences from Allhallows. To the west the LCA forms part of the rural setting to Halstow Marshes Decoy Pond Scheduled Monument (located within the adjacent LCA A2).
- PRoW provide north-south links between the marshes and the small villages to the south (within LCA G2). There are no east/west links along the top of the ridge. The King Charles III England Coast Path runs along the shoreline in the north-east.

Perceptual Influences

- A highly rural landscape, with a remote character due to the lack of development and extremely limited access. This provides a good experience of relative dark night skies and tranquillity, with birdsong present across the area.
- Detracting features include views to caravans within the Allhallows Leisure Park in the east, although these are partially screened by vegetation.
- Open, elevated views across the marshes to the Thames estuary and Essex shoreline to the north, including to the industrial areas of Thameshaven. Pleasure boats and industrial boats can be seen on the Thames, providing some movement. Views south into the Hoo Peninsula are blocked by the plateau landform.
- Some enclosure is found along the tree-lined footpaths, which create channelled views towards the Thames.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- A distinctive sloping undulating landform that forms a transition between the marshland to the north and plateau farmland to the south.
- Ecological importance of Priority Habitat 'coastal saltmarsh', 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh' and 'deciduous woodland', and proximity to the Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar Site, SPA and SSSI.
- Rural and remote landscape, with extremely limited development, resulting in a strong sense of tranquillity and good experience of dark night skies.
- Open, expansive views across the marshlands and Thames estuary to the north.
- Forms a distinctive rising green backdrop in views from the Thames estuary marshes.
- Forms part of the rural setting to Halstow Marshes Decoy Pond Scheduled Monument.

Issues and Changes

- Polytunnels in the west are a visual detractor in the open landscape. While polytunnels can provide a controlled growing environment, in the face of rising temperatures and extreme weather events, they provide an impermeable surface that can result in increased run off and flooding.
- Field boundaries are in varied condition, with some declining and fragmented; replacement with post and wire fencing in places.
- Limited PRoW, particularly crossing east-west.
- Expansion of Allhallows Leisure Park in the east may impact on the remote character of the landscape.

- The strategy for the North Kent Marshes within the TE2100 Plan is to maintain the flood defences at the current level, accepting that as sea levels rise the flood risk will increase. This may increase flooding in the north of this area, and impact on suitable land uses.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins; an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins and an increase in agricultural use of summer insecticides which could reduce insect numbers and pollination.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.
 - Wetter winters may mean woody species in hedgerows are exposed to prolonged flooding in the growing season and will be at risk of dying, and winter trimming will become more difficult due to wet ground. Winter trimming is preferred to autumn trimming to ensure food supply for birds.
 - Hotter drier summers and wetter winters and winter flooding could result in changes to wetland plant community composition.
 - Hotter, drier summers and wetter winters will lead to changes in food production and growing seasons, and are likely to cause heat stress to livestock.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the St Mary's Farmland LCA is to conserve and enhance the mixed farming landscape, restoring hedgerow field boundaries and maintaining the remote and undeveloped character of the area. The area should be retained as a transition between the Thames Estuary marshes and more intensive farmland of the Hoo Peninsula plateau to the south.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance ecologically important areas of Priority Habitat 'coastal saltmarsh', 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh' and 'deciduous woodland'.
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity. Maintain and expand the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape; and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers.
- Allocate land to non-crop land uses such as increasing biodiversity planting, maintaining hedgerows and field margins and using traditional or conservation farming techniques to reduce run off and mitigate the effects of drier seasons.
- Seek to prevent further loss or decline in the quality of remaining boundary hedgerows and consider opportunities to promote the regeneration of hedgerow trees and shrubs where they have been lost or heavily denuded.

- When establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Discourage the proliferation of polytunnels in the west.
- Consider opportunities to increase the extent of deciduous woodland blocks sensitively along slopes and ridge line to strengthen biodiversity and local distinctiveness.
- Create green corridors and networks linking to the important habitats associated with the marshes including making room for 'roll back' of estuary habitats 'squeezed' by sea level rise by providing buffer zones.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for informal access and enjoyment through well maintained linked routes, including cycle routes where possible; consider opportunities to improve east to west connections across the area; manage recreational routes to avoid/minimise disturbance to areas of nature conservation value.
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the PRow, including through the enhancement and promotion of views north across the marshes towards the Thames.

Development Management

- Resist development proposals that would harm the distinctive open, rural and undeveloped landscape character.
- Consider the role of this landscape as a green backdrop to the adjacent marshes, by resisting visually prominent development.
- Consider views from the area when planning new development in adjacent areas, especially at Allhallows and across the Thames estuary in Essex to the north.

- Where development is proposed consider appropriate landscape and visual mitigation and look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Respect the landscape character and biodiversity of the area in developing new or enhanced visitor attractions and recreational uses.

Landscape Character Area G2: Hoo Peninsula

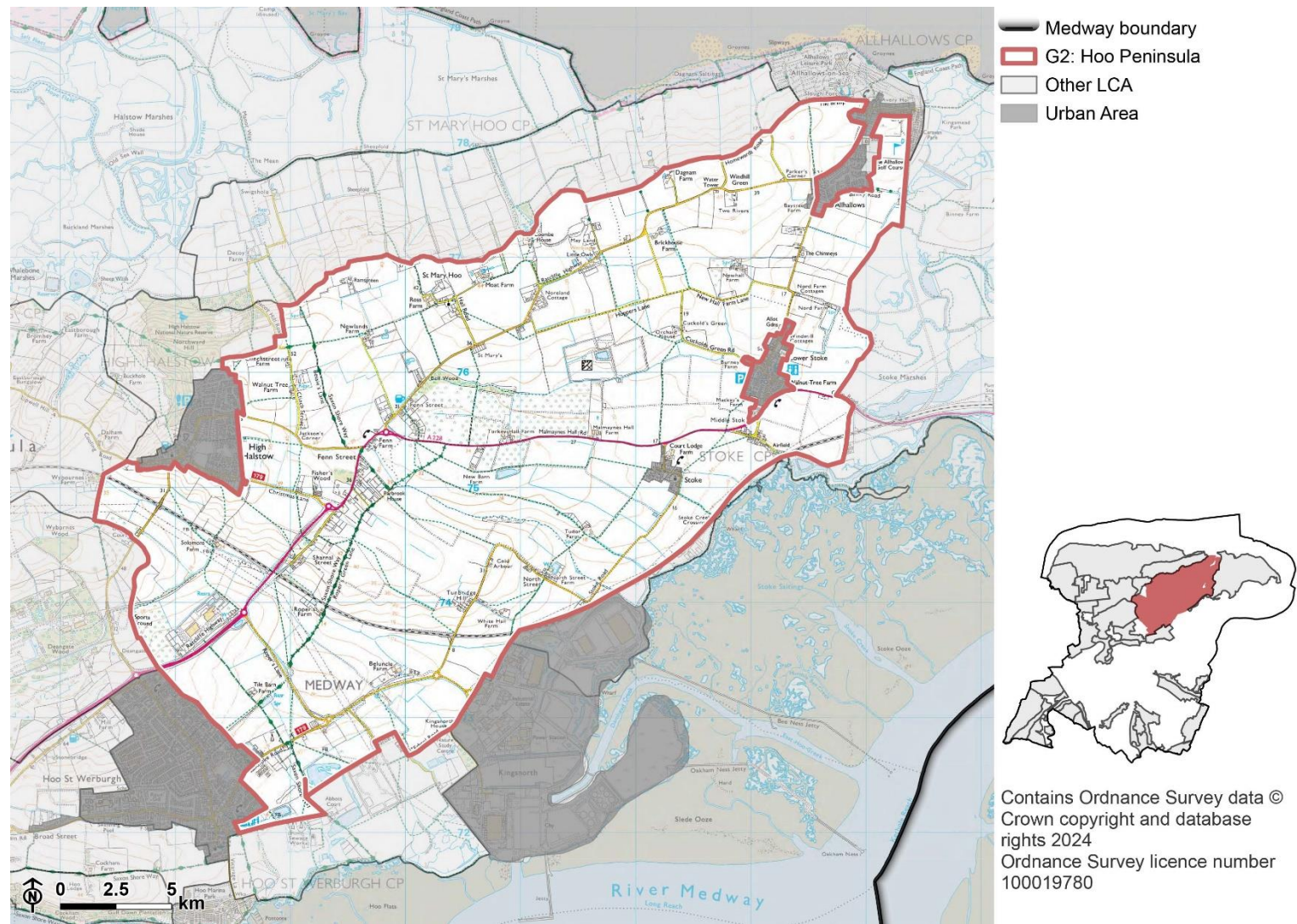
Description

Location and Summary

7.66 The Hoo Peninsula LCA is located in the north of the Medway Council area, and covers the central plateau of the Hoo Peninsula. It stretches from the south of High Halstow and west of Hoo St Werburgh to Allhallows in the north-east and Kingsnorth industrial area to the south-east, where it meets the Medway marshes (LCA A3 and A4).

7.67 This is an undulating landscape, consisting of large-scale open arable farmland, with some smaller areas of traditional orchard providing visual variation.

Figure 7.37: Location of LCA G2



Key Characteristics

- An undulating landscape gradually rising from the marshes in the east to form the central plateau of the Hoo Peninsula; some localised hills are visually prominent in the landscape.
- An open arable landscape of large-scale fields defined by grass margins and often sparse and poorly managed hedgerows; tree cover is limited to occasional remnant woodlands, shelterbelts and orchards, which provide some variety in the landscape. Recent large-scale recent orchard planting at Turkey Hall Farm is an exception.
- Settlement pattern of hamlets, villages and scattered farmsteads, often on exposed hills; Connected by a very angular minor road network and a network of PRow. There are limited PRow connecting the farmland and marshland, despite the close proximity, and the railway line acts as a physical barrier in the south and south-east.
- Time-depth is concentrated in the small villages, such as historic St Mary Hoo, which has a Conservation Area.
- Open, exposed landscape with some far reaching views to surrounding areas of higher ground, including Chattenden Ridge and Northward Hill, and across the Medway and Thames estuaries; greater sense of enclosure near orchards and woodland, and along small hedgerow lined lanes.
- A series of pylons and the adjacent industrial areas at Isle of Grain and Kingsnorth are significant vertical features in the open landscape. Settlement edges of High Halstow, Allhallows, Lower Stoke and Hoo St Werburgh are not well-integrated into the landscape.
- An essentially rural and tranquil landscape, undermined by the presence of the busy A228, pylons, railway line and adjacent industrial uses.

Photo 7.117: Hops, electricity pylons and the open settlement edge of High Halstow



Photo 7.118: Remnant woodlands, shelterbelts and orchards providing variety in the landscape



Photo 7.119: Pylons which are significant vertical features in the open landscape



Photo 7.120: Far reaching views to the Medway and Thames estuaries



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of London Clay Formation. Significant Head deposits in the east, with smaller areas of River Terrace deposits.
- An undulating landscape, ranging from between 5 metres AOD close to the marshes and 55 metres AOD on the edge of High Halstow. A small dry valley lies in the west, separating High Halstow and Hoo St Werburgh.
- Bell Wood and Fisher's Wood are identified as Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'. Shelterbelts, orchards and occasional hedgerows also provide semi-natural habitats. The Medway Estuary and Marshes Ramsar, SPA and SSSI lies in close proximity to the south-east.
- Grade 1 (excellent) agricultural soils support large-scale arable farming. Traditional orchards are found along Dux Court Road and east of Fenn Street. Small areas of horse grazing are often associated with farmsteads, and some cropping near Lower Stoke features the use of polytunnels.

Cultural Influences

- The LCA lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 13 – Hoo Peninsula, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The historic origin of the field pattern is uncertain, but is likely to be 19th and 20th century in date.
- The sparse settlement pattern consists of scattered historic farmhouses and associated barns. Many of the farmhouses are Grade II listed. A C Goatham & Son has a strong presence on the Hoo Peninsula, and now grows 1 in 3 of the British apples and pears sold in the UK.
- The main settlements within the landscape are the small nucleated village of Hoo St Mary, which is designated as a Conservation Area, and Upper Stoke which contains the 12th century St Peter and Paul's church, now a

Grade I listed building. The Grade II* listed Church of St Mary has now been sympathetically converted into a house.

- Historic defensive structures include the Grade II listed former World War I airship shed at Moat Farm, and World War II pill boxes to the east of Hoo St Werburgh, which were part of the important 'Hoo Stop-line' protecting the heavily militarised Hoo Peninsula.
- The local road network predominantly consists of minor straight roads with angular turns, bounded by limited hedgerows, generally running east-west.
- In contrast to the narrow local roads, the busy A228 crosses the east of the LCA, connecting Wainscott with the Isle of Grain; and a single-track freight railway line connects the Isle of Grain and Gravesham to the west.
- PRow link the small settlements, and the Saxon Shore Way passes through Cooling, and runs adjacent to Hoo St Werburgh; east-west links are more limited. National Cycling Route 179 also connects High Halstow with Hoo St Werburgh. There are very limited PRow links with the marshes to the east and south-east.

Perceptual Influences

- A large, open landscape with field boundaries often missing, sparse or poorly managed. The landscape structure is generally weak, and the area lacks distinctiveness. Some enclosure is provided by shelterbelts, occasional hedgerow-lined roads and in areas of orchard.
- Modern influences on the landscape include poor quality edges to farms and settlements with discordant conifers and houses visible across the landscape. High Halstow is particularly visible on the hilltop in views across the dry valley from the south. The A228, including road signs and large roundabouts, and railway are also discordant features in the open landscape.
- Electricity pylon routes both within the area and outside of it are significant vertical features in the views. The industrial areas at Grain and Kingsnorth are prominent in views to the south and east.

- Medium levels of dark night skies and relative tranquillity, although these are impacted locally by transport routes and settlements.
- Extensive views out across the farmland to surrounding areas of higher ground, including Chattenden Ridge and Northward Hill, north across the Thames estuary towards Essex, and south across the Medway estuary. There are strong visual links with the marshes of the Thames and Medway estuaries.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Gently sloping agricultural landscape covering much of the Hoo Peninsula and contrasting with the surrounding low-lying marshes.
- Ecological importance of Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'.
- Remnant orchards with their associated distinctive shelterbelts which provide variety in the landscape and create a strong sense of place.
- Rural landscape with limited development, retaining the historic settlement pattern.
- Distinctive angular network of minor roads which link the small historic farmsteads and settlements.
- History of defensive structures provides time depth, including World War II pill boxes.
- The rural character of much of the landscape which provides a setting to St Mary Hoo Conservation Area, Grade I listed St Peter and St Paul, Upper Stoke, and several Grade II listed historic farmsteads.
- An open landscape with far reaching views to distinctive wooded hills at Chattenden and Northward Hill, and to the Thames and Medway estuaries.

- Provides a distinctive rising green backdrop in views from the Medway and Thames estuary marshes.

Issues and Changes

- The strategy to manage sea level rise on the adjacent coastline to the south-east may impact this landscape. The current strategies are to maintain the current coastal defences around Kingsnorth, with some managed realignment north of the power station site. The railway line will be protected by the sea defences, however other areas of land may become intertidal habitats as managed realignment comes in.
- Limited biodiversity value, reflected in the limited Priority Habitats.
- Field boundaries and edges are poorly managed, and hedgerows are often missing or severely depleted.
- Historic loss of orchards to development or conversion to arable farmland.
- An increase in equine related land uses, including post and rail subdivision of larger fields and small structures.
- An increase in the use of polytunnels, which are a visual detractor in the open landscape. While polytunnels can provide a controlled growing environment, in the face of rising temperatures and extreme weather events, they provide an impermeable surface that can result in increased run off and flooding.
- Poorly integrated settlement edges at High Halstow, Hoo St Werburgh, Lower Stoke and Allhallows, which are exposed in the open landscape.
- Potential for further expansion of surrounding settlements.
- Pylon routes, the A228 and its out of character large roundabouts, and views to large-scale industrial development at the Isle or Grain and Kingsnorth are significant human influences on the landscape, and result in a slightly suburban character in places.
- Future development on the Kingsnorth power station site for employment and industrial use may cause further visual impact on this landscape.

- Impact of potential major development through the new Local Plan including new roads, settlements, parklands and open spaces.
- An increase in heavy vehicle traffic movements travelling to Isle of Grain, undermines the rural character and sense of tranquillity.
- Limited formal east-west links across the landscape, and limited PRow and connections to the Medway and Thames marshes to the east and south-east.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to a shift in the growing area of specific fruit species; waterlogged soils leading to crop loss; new pest and diseases may reduce the success of fruit crops; changes in fruit growing practices including increase in poly tunnels with associated landscape impacts; and a reduction in available moisture during the growing season affecting the success of fruit trees.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins; an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins and an increase in agricultural use of summer insecticides which could reduce insect numbers and pollination.
 - Hotter, drier summers and wetter winters will lead to changes in food production and growing seasons.
 - Areas where hedgerow field boundaries are limited or absent will be more susceptible to erosion and run off, while increases in pests, weeds and diseases will increase the likelihood of crop failure.

- Intense rainfall events and increased winter rainfall resulting in flooding, erosion and damage to buildings and structures, including heritage assets.
- Sea level rises, floods and extreme weather events are projected to increase significantly within 50 years.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Hoo Peninsula Open Clay Farmland LCA is to restore the rural landscape, with improved field boundaries and diversity of agricultural land uses, including traditional orchards. Existing and new development should be incorporated into the landscape using appropriate boundary treatments.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Manage farmland to conserve water and reduce run off, and implement land management practices to maintain and improve infiltration/reduce erosion, including vegetative buffers.
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers.
- Allocate land to non-crop land uses such as increasing biodiversity planting, maintaining hedgerows and field margins and using traditional

or conservation farming techniques to reduce run off and mitigate the effects of drier seasons.

- Seek to encourage the traditional farming practice and maintain and restore traditional orchards. Where possible, connect and extend small orchards, and involve local communities in management of these spaces.
- Monitor landscape impact of new forms of farming, including polytunnels, seeking a balanced approach.
- Discourage an increase in equine related land uses; enforce sensitive management and screening of existing equine related activities.
- Consider opportunities to increase the extent of deciduous woodland cover, using locally characteristic species to strengthen biodiversity and local distinctiveness, particularly along major roads and along settlement edges and around other detracting features.
- Seek to strengthen the landscape structure by introducing new hedgerows and shelter belts along field boundaries and roads; when establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Plan for climate change, including the introduction of new fruit crops within the orchards, and tree species suited to the changing climate. Use multiple tree species to increase resiliency of orchard farming.
- Seek to strengthen and enhance access opportunities; consider opportunities to improve east-west links through the landscape, including links to the marshlands.
- Enhance the visual characteristics and quality of the PRow, including through the enhancement and promotion of views east and south across the marshes towards the Thames and Medway.
- Respect the landscape character and biodiversity of the area in developing enhanced visitor attractions and recreational uses.

- Consider the implications of managed realignment policies of the adjacent coast line, including the accretion of saltmarsh where appropriate to allow for natural shoreline evolution.
- Create green corridors and networks linking to the important habitats associated with the marshes including making room for 'roll back' of estuary habitats 'squeezed' by sea level rise by providing buffer zones.

Development Management

- Maintain the sense of openness by resisting proposals for new development that would impact the open undeveloped quality of the landscape; where development is proposed consider siting and design and the use of locally characteristic planting to reduce any impacts.
- Avoid additional visually intrusive development, both within the area and outside it, especially at Allhallows and across the Thames estuary in Essex to the north.
- Consider views from this landscape in any new developments at Kingsnorth.
- Where development is proposed consider appropriate landscape and visual mitigation and look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Firmly resist proposals for new overhead power lines or cables and consider opportunities to under-ground existing overhead lines.
- Retain the sparse, small-scale settlement pattern, centred on the angular, narrow local road network.
- Conserve the rural setting to the Stokes, High Halstow, Hoo St Werburgh and Allhallows, and conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their rural setting.
- Encourage the sympathetic conversion of traditional farm buildings to retain their rural character and as features of the agricultural landscape.

- Maintain and enhance the character of the local narrow roads; resist unsympathetic highway improvement that would threaten their rural character.
- Encourage the integration of existing and new development into the landscape through the use of native shelter belts, hedgerows and woodlands to reflect and reinforce rural character, and strengthen settlement edges.
- Seek to reduce lighting impacts and any further reduction in tranquillity; minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards.

Landscape Character Area G3: Hoo St Werburgh

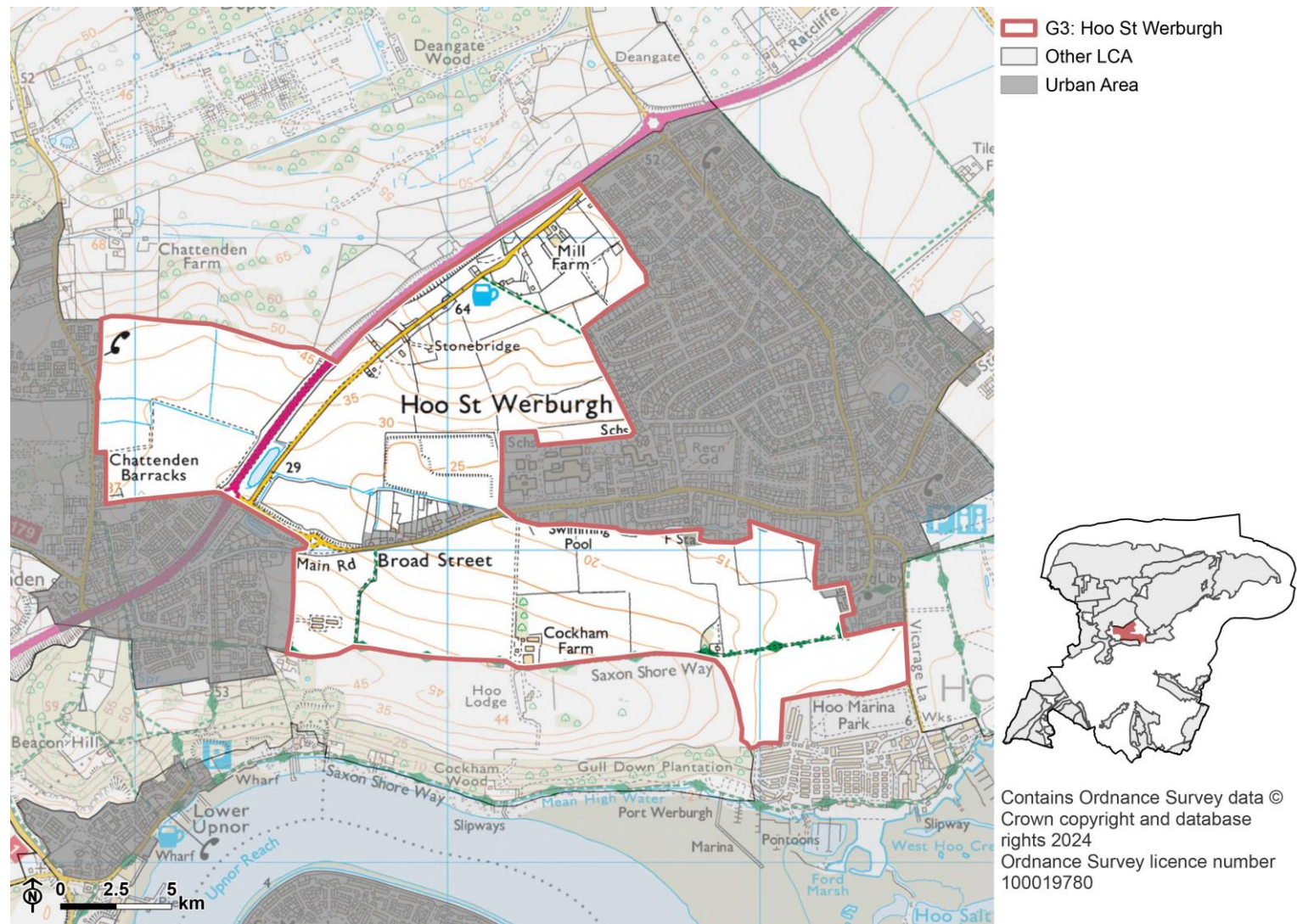
Description

Location and Summary

7.68 The Hoo St Werburgh Farmland LCA is located in the south of the Hoo Peninsula, between the villages of Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden. It lies between two areas of wooded hills and ridges – Chattenden Ridge (LCA H2) to the north and Cockham Ridge (LCA H3) to the south.

7.69 This is an undulating arable landscape composed of large-scale arable fields bounded by fragmented hedgerows with a resulting open character.

Figure 7.38: Location of LCA G3



Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating landscape that transitions from the marshes in the south-east to the Chattenden Ridge to the north.
- A relatively open landscape composed of large-scale arable fields bounded by fragmented hedgerows and occasional hedgerow trees.
- Semi-natural vegetation is limited to fragmented hedgerows and occasional tree clumps, although views to surrounding woodlands on Chattenden Ridge and Cockham Ridge creates a partially wooded character.
- Whilst development is limited to that along Broad Street/Main Road and farmsteads on Ratcliffe Highway, the edges of Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden are visible; St Werburgh church forms a prominent landmark feature to the east.
- A limited network of PRow, although the Saxon Shore Way runs in the south and links Chattenden and Hoo St Werburgh; Access in the north is severed by the presence of the A228.
- Open, exposed landscape with far reaching views especially south across the Medway estuary, and framing views of Hoo St Werburgh.
- The industrial areas at Isle of Grain and Kingsnorth are significant vertical features in views.

Photo 7.121: Undulating landform lying between the marshes and Chattenden Ridge



Photo 7.122: Relatively open landscape of large scale arable fields



Photo 7.123: St Werburgh church forming a prominent landmark feature



Photo 7.124: Far reaching views south across the Medway estuary



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of London Clay Formation, with considerable Head gravel and brick-earth deposits in the south.
- An undulating landscape, rising from 10 metres AOD in the south-east close to the Hoo marshes to 45 metres AOD at the base of Chattenden Ridge.
- A hidden stream flows from Chattenden to Hoo St Werburgh along the route of an old tramway.
- A fragmented hedgerow network and very sparse tree cover, with recorded Priority Habitats limited to an area of 'deciduous woodland' to the west.
- Grade 1 (excellent) agricultural soils support large-scale arable fields.

Cultural Influences

- The LCA lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 13 – Hoo Peninsula, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The historic origin of the field pattern is uncertain, but is likely to be 19th and 20th century in date. There has been considerable boundary loss in the north-west, forming large Prairie style fields. Land south of Broad Street was in use for orchards during the early 20th century, but has since been converted to arable.
- The only Listed Building within the area is the Grade II listed Mill House on Radcliffe Highway, a red brick house dating from 1779. Other settlement within the landscape comprises ribbon development along Broad Street/Main Road between the edges of Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden. Farmsteads at Mill Farm and Cockham Farm have diversified, and have a more sub-urban character.

- The large villages of Hoo St Werburgh in the east and Chattenden to the west are not well-integrated into the landscape, and their settlement edges are highly visible. St Werburgh church spire is a prominent landmark on the edge of Hoo St Werburgh.
- The A228 dual carriageway passes through the centre of the landscape, and creates barriers to access. The large roundabouts are out of keeping with the rural character. Ratcliffe Highway and Broad Street are the other roads through the area.
- The Saxon Shore Way links Chattenden and Hoo St Werburgh, in the south of the area. The settlements are also connected by National Cycling Route 179 which runs along Broad Street / Main Road.

Perceptual Influences

- A large, open landscape with little sense of enclosure; field boundaries are often sparse and poorly managed. This produces a weak landscape structure with a lack of distinctiveness.
- Modern influences on the landscape include the poorly integrated edges to Chattenden and Hoo St Werburgh and the busy A228. The adjacent settlements, industry and roads are highly visible from the landscape.
- Dark night skies and relative tranquillity are impacted by transport routes and settlements.
- Long open views from elevated ground including over the Medway to the south, with boats and cranes of Medway visible. The industrial areas at Grain and Kingsnorth are prominent in views.
- Small areas of woodland within the area, and views to the Cockham Ridge woodland to the south (LCA H3) creates a partially wooded backdrop.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Gently undulating arable landscape, contrasting with the adjacent wooded ridges and marshland.
- Rural landscape with limited development.
- An open buffer helping prevent the coalescence of Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden and maintaining their distinctive identities; ribbon development along Broad/Street Main Road to the south threatens this.
- Open, exposed landscape with far reaching views across the Medway provides a sense of place.
- Provides a rural backdrop to Hoo St Werburgh.

Issues and Changes

- Suburbanisation on the edges of Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden, with recent and ongoing housing developments; threat of further expansion of surrounding settlements into the landscape.
- Ribbon development along Broad Street / Main Road may result in perceived coalescence of Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden.
- Field boundaries and edges are poorly managed, and hedgerows are often missing or severely depleted.
- Loss of orchards to the south.
- The A228 dual carriageway in the north and views to large-scale industrial development at the Isle of Grain and Kingsnorth are significant human influences on the landscape.
- Poorly integrated settlement edges, especially on the approach to Hoo St Werburgh along the A228.

- Severed links to the north due to the presence of the A228 and limited direct links out of Hoo St Werburgh into the LCA.
- Impact of future potential development including the proximity to new roads and settlements.
- Planned redevelopment of the Kingsnorth power station site may impact on views.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins; an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins and an increase in agricultural use of summer insecticides which could reduce insect numbers and pollination.
 - Hotter, drier summers and wetter winters will lead to changes in food production and growing seasons.
 - Areas where hedgerow field boundaries are limited or absent will be more susceptible to erosion and run off, while increases in pests, weeds and diseases will increase the likelihood of crop failure.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Hoo St Werburgh Open Clay Farmland LCA is to restore and enhance the rural landscape, with improved field boundaries, increased tree and habitat cover, and a wider diversity of agricultural land uses. The settlement edges of Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden, as well as any new development should be integrated into the landscape using appropriate boundary treatments.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Consider opportunities to encourage traditional farming practices and reinstate traditional orchards. Where possible, involve local communities in management of these spaces.
- Consider opportunities to increase the extent of deciduous woodland cover, using locally characteristic species to strengthen biodiversity and local distinctiveness, particularly along major roads and along settlement edges and around other detracting features.
- Seek to strengthen the landscape structure by introducing new hedgerows along field boundaries and roads; when establishing new hedges, aim to provide links to the existing hedgerow network and patches of semi-natural habitat in order to promote the movement of species through the landscape; aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers.
- Allocate land to non-crop land uses such as increasing biodiversity planting, maintaining hedgerows and field margins and using traditional or conservation farming techniques to reduce run off and mitigate the effects of drier seasons.
- Seek to strengthen and enhance recreational opportunities, particularly bridging the A228 to the north, and more direct links out of Hoo St Werburgh into the area.

Development Management

- Retain the relatively sparse settlement pattern.
- Retain the remaining open areas between Chattenden and Hoo St Werburgh to prevent their physical and perceived coalescence.
- Encourage the integration of existing and new development into the landscape through the use of native shelter belts, hedgerows and woodlands to reflect and reinforce rural character, and strengthen settlement edges.
- Avoid additional tall development which is visually intrusive in this open landscape, both within the area and outside it; firmly resist proposals for new overhead power lines or cables and consider opportunities to under-ground existing overhead lines.
- Respect the landscape character and biodiversity of the area in developing enhanced visitor attractions and recreational uses.
- Seek to minimise the use of lighting, in particular blue light emissions, and use shielding and sensors effectively to direct lighting downwards.

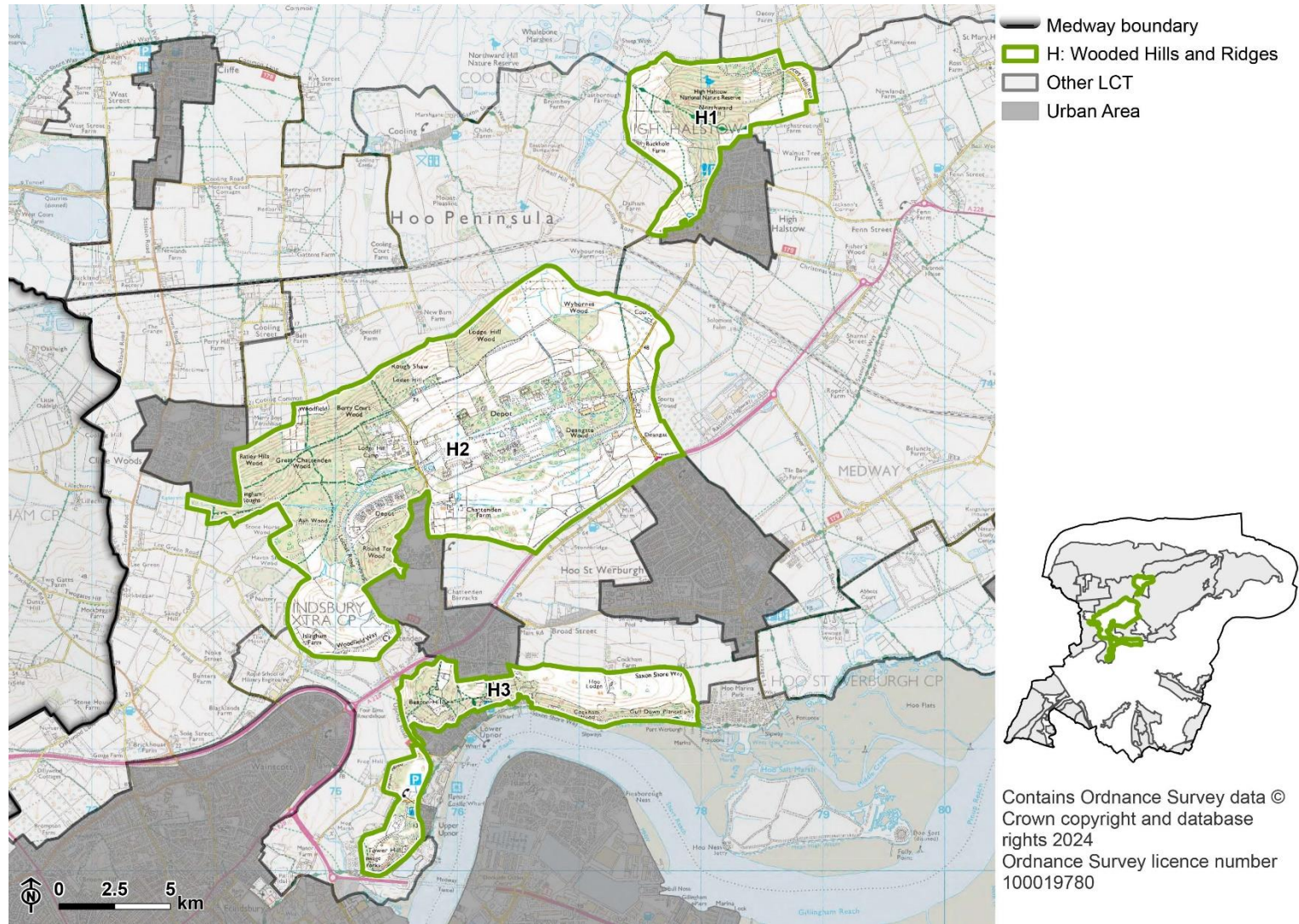
Landscape Character Type H: Wooded Hills and Ridges

Landscape Character Areas

7.70 The Wooded Hill and Ridges LCT is subdivided into three LCAs:

- Landscape Character Area H1: Northward Hill;
- Landscape Character Area H2: Chattenden Ridge; and
- Landscape Character Area H3: Cockham Ridge.

Figure 7.39: Location of the Wooded Hills and Ridges LCT and LCAs



Landscape Character Area H1: Northward Hill

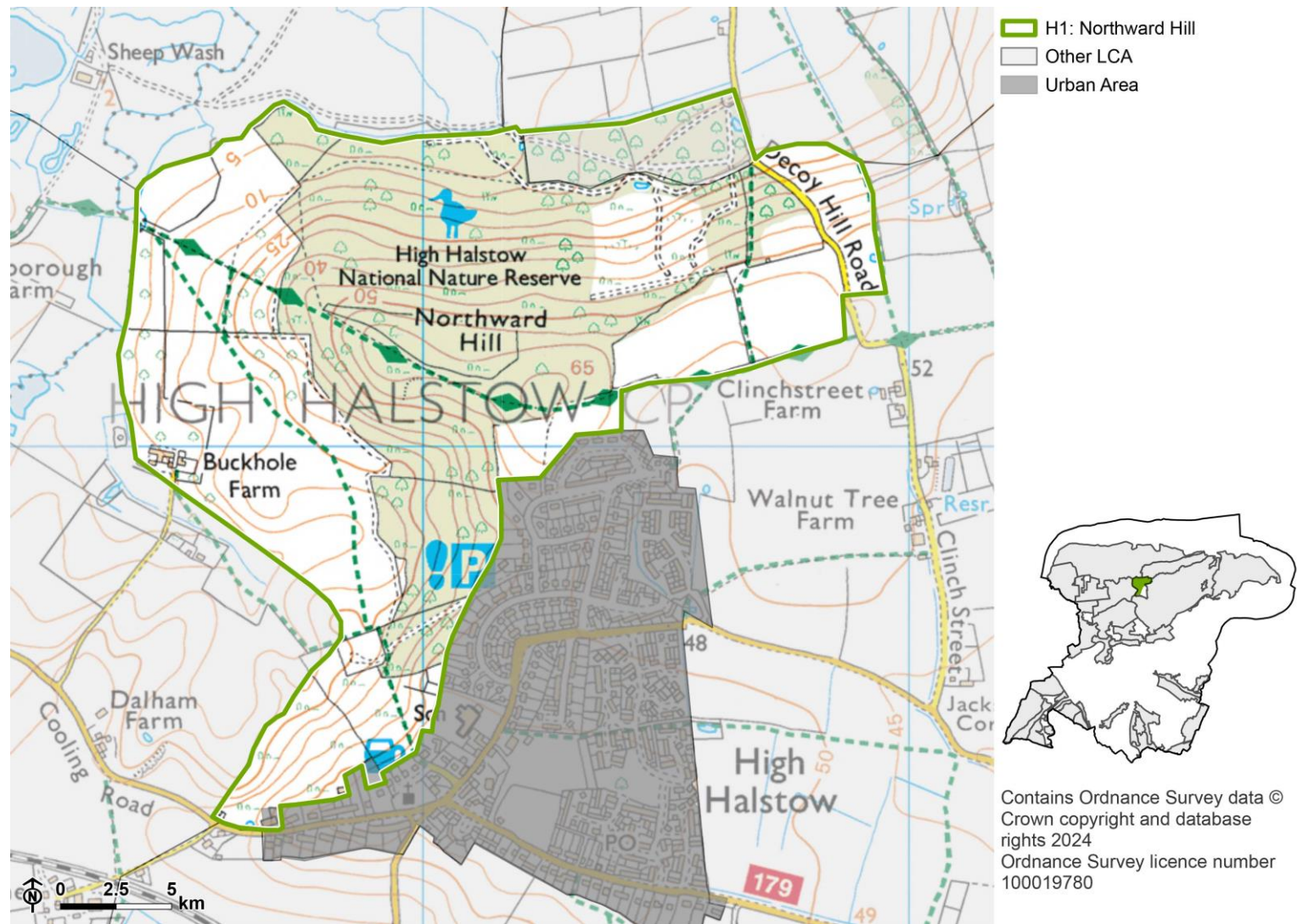
Description

Location and Summary

7.71 The Northward Hill LCA lies in the north of the Hoo Peninsula, to the north and west of the village of High Halstow. It rises above surrounding undulating clay farmland to the south, east and west (LCA F2 and G2) and low-lying coastal marshes to the north (LCA A2).

7.72 It comprises a wooded hill, containing extensive areas of Ancient Woodland, and is partly managed by the RSPB as a nature reserve.

Figure 7.40: Location of LCA H1



Key Characteristics

- A distinctive low hill, rising above the lower-lying coastal marshes and undulating clay farmlands.
- Dominated by extensive tracts of deciduous woodland, some of ancient origin, which covers the summit and sides of the hill; outside of the wooded areas, land is in predominantly in arable use albeit with some areas of orchards and equine use.
- A largely undeveloped landscape, with the Grade II listed Buck Hole Farmhouse being the only building.
- The majority of the landscape is managed as Northward Hill Nature Reserve by the RSPB and High Halstow NNR.
- Good levels of recreational access via the Saxon Shore Way and other local footpaths and access within High Halstow NNR.
- Generally tranquil, peaceful and unspoilt character, particularly on the western and northern slopes away from the adjacent High Halstow settlement edge.
- A coherent landscape with a strong sense of enclosure due to the woodland.
- Forms a dominant landscape feature in views from surrounding lower-lying marshes and farmland. Views out are generally restricted by woodland, although there are occasional views out over the Thames marshlands to the north and south towards the Chattenden Ridge and the distant Kent Downs National Landscape.

Photo 7.125: Distinctive wooded hill rising above the surrounding lower-lying landscape



Photo 7.126: Area dominated by deciduous woodland, but with some other uses such as orchards



Photo 7.127: Coherent landscape with a strong sense of enclosure due to the woodland



Photo 7.128: Occasional views out north across the Thames marshlands



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of London Clay Formation and Lambeth Group sand silt and clay, with some small areas of River Terrace Deposits. Dalham Farm SSSI is designated for its geology interest, being the lowest angled slope failure in Britain.
- The area is a distinctive hill, rising above the surrounding marshland and clay farmland; heights range from 5 metres AOD to 65 metres AOD at its summit.
- Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' cloaks the hill and slopes, some of which is also identified as Ancient Woodland.
- The hawthorn scrub and ancient oak woodlands, with regenerating elm woodland is home to the largest heronry in Britain, and is designated as Northward Hill SSSI. New wildlife ponds have recently been excavated within the woodland, which will also provide semi-natural habitats. The majority of the landscape is designated as a National Nature Reserve and as Northward Hill RSPB Nature Reserve.
- Grade 1 (excellent) agricultural soils in west and east are in use for arable farming, with some areas of orchards on the lower slopes to the west; some equine uses to the south-west.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 13 – Hoo Peninsula, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The historic origin of the field pattern is uncertain, but is likely to be 19th and 20th century in date.
- The only building in the landscape is the early 18th century Buckhole Farmhouse, which is Grade II listed. High Halstow lies to the south-east of the hill.

- The Saxon Shore Way runs through the centre of the area, and local footpaths connect to High Halstow to the south-east. Northward Hill is managed by the RSPB and is a popular spot for walkers and bird watchers.

Perceptual Influences

- Northward Hill has a strong sense of enclosure and coherence within the woodland. Occasional views out of the woodland are available to the north over the Thames estuary and south towards the Chattenden Ridge and hills of the Kent Downs National Landscape across the Medway.
- The hill forms a dominant landscape feature in views from the surrounding lower-lying marshes and estuary to the north and farmland to the south.
- High Halstow lies to the immediate south-east of the area, although the settlement is not prominent in views due to the wooded nature of the southern part of the LCA.
- Deciduous woodlands and trees create strong seasonal changes in the landscape, particularly in spring and autumn.
- A highly tranquil, peaceful landscape with birdsong apparent.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Distinctive wooded hill, which is visible in views from the surrounding landscape/estuary; contrasts with the surrounding lower lying marshes and clay farmland.
- Nationally important geological feature in the south at Dalham Farm.
- Ecological importance of Northward Hill SSSI, Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' and other areas managed as part of the nature reserves.

- Tranquil, peaceful character and general lack of development.
- Importance of woodland in providing enclosure and connecting habitats.
- Recreational value of PRow, including the Saxon Shore Way, and nature reserves.
- Occasional longer range views out across the Thames marshlands and south towards Chattenden Ridge and the Kent Downs National Landscape in the distance.

Issues and Changes

- Future plans for management and development of RSPB bird reserve, which may alter the landscape character and increase recreational visitors, which could cause disturbance to areas of nature conservation.
- Potential development pressures due to proximity to High Halstow; threat of further expansion of urban edges from the south and south-east.
- An increase in equine land uses to the south-west.
- Loss of traditional orchards and field patterns, due to conversion to equine uses.
- The wooded hills and ridges landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins, an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone

locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins.

- Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to a shift in the growing area of specific fruit species; new pest and diseases may reduce the success of fruit crops; changes in fruit growing practices including increase in poly tunnels; and a reduction in available moisture during the growing season affecting the success of fruit trees.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Northward Hill LCA is to conserve and reinforce the wooded character of this locally distinctive hill, managing the Ancient Woodland and other habitats carefully, while encouraging recreational visitors to the NNR and RSPB reserve.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance ecologically important areas of SSSI, Ancient Woodland, Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' and hawthorn scrub.
- Explore opportunities to expand the edges of existing woodland and connect existing deciduous woodland cover through natural regeneration or small scale planting . New planting should reflect the scale, shape, pattern and composition of the existing woodland. Identify locations for woodland planting where the direct impacts of climate change on the suitability of individual species may be less than in the surrounding region (such as north-facing slopes or areas with more secure water supply).

- Manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland.
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers.
- Encourage the traditional farming practice and maintain and restore traditional orchards, retaining and enhancing the area's strong sense of place; seek to connect and extend and manage to enhance biodiversity value.
- Discourage an increase in equine related land uses; enforce sensitive management and screening of existing equine related activities.
- Consider opportunities to enhance existing long range views towards the marshes to the north and Kent Downs National Landscape to the south; where possible, open up new view corridors to provide interest and assist visitors in understanding the site context.
- Protect the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for informal access and enjoyment through well maintained linked routes, while ensuring that recreational routes avoid/minimise disturbance to areas of nature conservation value; consider opportunities to restore paths and tracks through the woodland, and consider the legibility of signage for visitors.
- Encourage further interpretation about the woodland and other habitats within the RSPB reserve to improve the recreational offer and visitor experience.
- Conserve the rural, tranquil and undeveloped character of the landscape.

Development Management

- Maintain the characteristic undeveloped character of the area by resisting any new built development.
- Consider the role of this area as a distinctive feature visible from the surrounding lower-lying areas; any development within more open areas to the east and west is likely to impact views.
- If development is proposed look to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Ensure any future expansion of High Halstow does not encroach beyond the existing clearly defined wooded settlement boundary, and that any development is integrated into the landscape using appropriate boundary treatments.
- Resist development proposals that would harm biodiversity value and damage the distinctive landscape character.
- Respect the landscape character and biodiversity of the area in developing new or enhanced visitor attractions and recreational uses.

Landscape Character Area H2: Chattenden Ridge

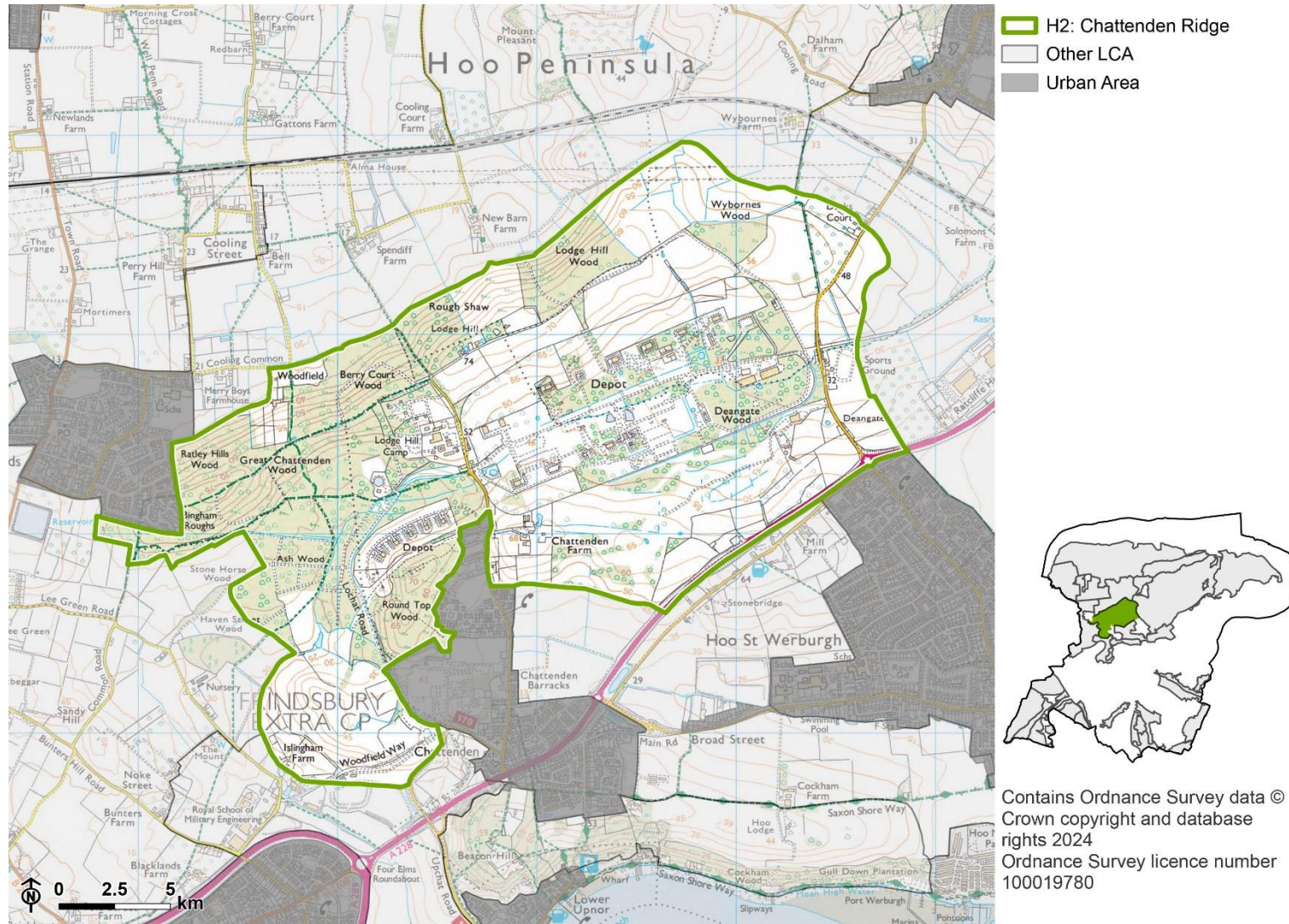
Description

Location and Summary

7.73 The Chattenden Ridge LCA is located in the centre of the Hoo Peninsula, north of Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden and east of Cliffe Woods. It rises above the surrounding lower-lying undulating clay farmlands to the west, north and east (LCAs G2, F2 and F1) and south (LCA G3).

7.74 It is a prominent steeply sloping ridge, extending as far as Bald Top Hill in the south-west. The LCA is predominantly wooded, and forms a backdrop to many views across the Hoo Peninsula and beyond.

Figure 7.41: Location of LCA H2



Key Characteristics

- A distinctive and prominent ridge, rising above the surrounding lower-lying areas of undulating farmland and marshes.
- Dominated by extensive tracts of deciduous woodland, particularly on the northern and western sides of the ridge; much of the woodland is of high ecological value, being designated as Ancient Woodland and Chattenden Woods and Lodge Hill SSSI.
- Outside of the woodland, arable and pasture land uses are common; An informal country park at Deangate Ridge occupies the site of a former golf course to the south.
- Water features, running east to west, and their associated riparian vegetation are distinctive features within the landscape.
- Military history, including naval magazines, First World War anti-aircraft batteries, and more recently use as a Ministry of Defence training camp. Lodge Hill Anti-aircraft Battery is a Scheduled Monument.
- Good levels of access to the west, which features a network of PRow connecting the ridge to the settlement of Cliffe Woods; access is more limited to the east, with military areas closed to public access.
- Generally tranquil and peaceful, with woodland cover creating an enclosed character; development associated predominantly with the military, including the former Ministry of Defence Lodge Hill Training Area, have a localised urbanising influence.
- Some long views are available in places, including dramatic views north to the Thames Estuary, south-west towards the Kent Downs National Landscape, south / south-east to Chattenden and Hoo St Werburgh and east towards Kingsnorth.
- Forms a dominant landscape feature in views across the surrounding lower-lying farmland and marshes to the north and south.

Photo 7.129: Prominent wooded ridge rising above the surrounding farmland and marshes



Photo 7.130: Area dominated by extensive tracts of deciduous woodland



Photo 7.131: Urbanising development associated predominantly with the military



Photo 7.132: Long views out across the surrounding lower lying landscapes



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of London Clay and Lambeth Group (sand, silts and clays), with a small area of Head (clay, silt, sand and gravel) in the south-east.
- A distinctive ridge, rising up to between 70 and 75 metres AOD. Slopes to the north are relatively steep, whilst those to the south a gentler. The south-west of the ridge culminates in Bald Top Hill.
- Water features, running east to west, and their associated riparian vegetation are distinctive features in the landscape.
- Extensive woodland cover, particularly in the west, much of which is designated as Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'. The majority of the landscape is designated as Chattenden Woods and Lodge Hill SSSI for its mosaic of habitats including semi-natural woodland, coppice, scrub and neutral grassland. The woods house the largest Nightingale population in the UK.
- Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural soils in the east and south-west support pasture and arable farming, with some remnant hedgerows and groups of trees. Some areas of cleared woodland have been repurposed for equine uses.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 13 – Hoo Peninsula, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The HLC records 'irregular straight boundaries' and 'small regular parliamentary type enclosures' in the east, and 'small rectilinear fields with wavy boundaries' in the south-west. There has been some boundary loss throughout the area.

- The area has a long military history. Naval magazines were built at Chattenden in 1877, and a Royal Naval Ordnance Depot followed at Lodge Hill in the late 1890s. A railway linked these two sites to Upnor, resulting in the first ordnance depot in Britain that could be supplied without the need for sea transport. A railway also connected to the Higham – Grain / Port Victoria branch line.
- The militarisation of the area continued through both World Wars. Anti-aircraft batteries were built to defend the magazines, the first permanent anti-aircraft emplacements in Britain, reflecting the importance of the peninsula in defending London and the navy based at Chatham. The anti-aircraft battery at Lodge Hill is now a Scheduled Monument. The Hoo stop line formed part of a national network put in place to stop invasion.
- In the 1960s the site was used as extensive barracks and training facilities for the Royal School of Military Engineering and Bomb Disposal School. The Ministry of Defence moved out of the site in 2013, however the buildings and fencing remain, retaining a militarised character. Development is related predominantly to the military, including the former Ministry of Defence Lodge Hill Training Area. Several Grade II Listed Buildings in the area are related to the military.
- Good network of PRow in the west connect the ridge to Cliffe Woods. Access in the east and south-west is more limited due to its previous military uses. The former Deangate golf course in the south is now being re-naturalised as an informal country park, increasing recreational spaces in the area. An athletics ground in the east is also available for recreational use.

Perceptual Influences

- Wooded areas result in a sense of enclosure with views generally restricted; there are occasional long views north to the Thames Estuary, south towards the Kent Downs National Landscape and east towards Kingsnorth.
- Strong intervisibility with High Halstow, particularly from Dux Court Road in the east.

- The wooded ridge forms a strong landscape feature in views across the Hoo Peninsula, while Bald Top Hill is prominent in views from the A289 and Wainscott.
- Despite the continuing military character of the landscape, the lack of road access creates a tranquil and in places relatively remote character.
- Deciduous woodlands and trees create strong seasonal changes in the landscape, particularly in spring and autumn.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Distinctive ridge and prominent hills, which form the backbone of the Hoo Peninsula; contrasts with the surrounding lower-lying farmland and marshes.
- Distinctive water features and their associated riparian vegetation.
- Ecological and landscape importance of woodlands, grassland and scrub vegetation, including Ancient Woodland and the SSSI.
- Long military and defensive history, evident in the landscape and buildings.
- Contrast between enclosed views within the woodlands and longer distance views elsewhere, creates a strong sense of place.
- Distinctive wooded ridge forming a backdrop in views from the surrounding lower lying landscape.
- Remnant areas of locally characteristic orchards to the east.
- Recreational value of PRow and other routes within the woodlands, and informally at Deangate Ridge, particularly in close proximity to the urban areas of Chattenden, Cliffe Woods, Hoo St Werburgh and Wainscott.

- Generally tranquil and peaceful, with woodland cover creating an enclosed character.

Issues and Changes

- Urbanising effect of existing military development.
- Future plans at Deangate for a community park to support potential future residential development elsewhere on the Hoo Peninsula may alter the landscape character and increase recreational visitors. A balance will need to be found between the positive impacts of increased access to the landscape, and retention of the peaceful, tranquil character and wildlife and habitat protection.
- Potential development pressures due to close proximity to Chattenden and Cliffe Woods; threat of further expansion of urban edges from the south and north-west.
- Potential development pressures may also result in increased use of the public right of way network.
- Woodland clearance and use for horse grazing.
- The wooded hills and ridges landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins, an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins.

- Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.
- Intense rainfall events and increased winter rainfall resulting in flooding, erosion and damage to buildings and structures, including heritage assets.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Chattenden Ridge LCA is to conserve and restore the wooded character of the distinctive ridge, managing the Ancient Woodland and other habitats, while encouraging recreational visitors, including to the proposed park at Deangate.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance ecologically important areas of SSSI, Ancient Woodland, and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'. Seek appropriate management of neutral grassland, scrub, and woodland (including coppiced woodland) to create optimal / favourable habitat for Nightingale population. Any additional woodland planting should not negatively impact on this important resource.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing deciduous woodland cover through natural regeneration or small scale planting, particularly around urbanising military development. New planting

should reflect the scale, shape, pattern and composition of the existing woodland. Identify locations for woodland planting where the direct impacts of climate change on the suitability of individual species may be less than in the surrounding region (such as north-facing slopes or areas with more secure water supply).

- Manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland.
- Consider the wider ecosystem services that woodlands provide; outside designated sites and Ancient Woodland, changes in species composition may be acceptable if the services that the woodland provides (such as urban cooling, visual amenity or recreational opportunities) remain intact.
- Promote the regeneration of hedgerow trees and shrubs through management; when planting or restocking hedgerows, aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers.
- Encourage traditional farming practice and restore and reinstate orchards where appropriate; seek to connect and extend and manage to enhance biodiversity value.
- Discourage an increase in equine related land uses; enforce sensitive management and screening of existing equine related activities.
- Seek sensitive and appropriate improvement of boundary treatments at Lodge Hill and equine activities.
- Integrate existing natural water courses and water bodies sensitively into any new development proposals in order to conserve and enhance

landscape character, biodiversity and the natural quality of the environment.

- Consider opportunities to protect and enhance existing longer range views, including north towards the Thames estuary; where possible, open up new view corridors to provide interest and assist visitors in understanding the site context.
- Protect the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for informal access and enjoyment through well maintained linked routes, while ensuring that recreational routes avoid/minimise disturbance to areas of nature conservation value; consider options for enhanced off-road pedestrian and cycle links between Hoo, Chattenden, Upnor, Cliffe Woods and Wainscott.
- Promote use of traditional methods of grassland / meadow management to Deangate Ridge, as part of increasing biodiversity value.
- Encourage further interpretation and understanding of important heritage features and their wider context of Second World War defence, including the Hoo stop line, to improve the recreational offer and visitor experience.
- Conserve the rural, tranquil and undeveloped character of the landscape.

Development Management

- Resist development proposals that would harm biodiversity value and damage the distinctive landscape character. Protect the distinctive ridgeline and skyline.
- Consider the role of this area as a distinctive feature visible from the surrounding lower-lying areas; any development on exposed ridge lines, hill tops and valley sides is likely to impact views.

- If development is proposed seek to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Ensure any future expansion of adjacent settlement edges into the landscape is integrated into the landscape using appropriate boundary treatments.
- Ensure new development proposals reference and respect the historic military uses and character of this landscape.
- Develop range of multi-functional land uses as part of GI improvements and ensure that the rural character of surrounding countryside is retained and enhanced.

Landscape Character Area H3: Cockham Ridge

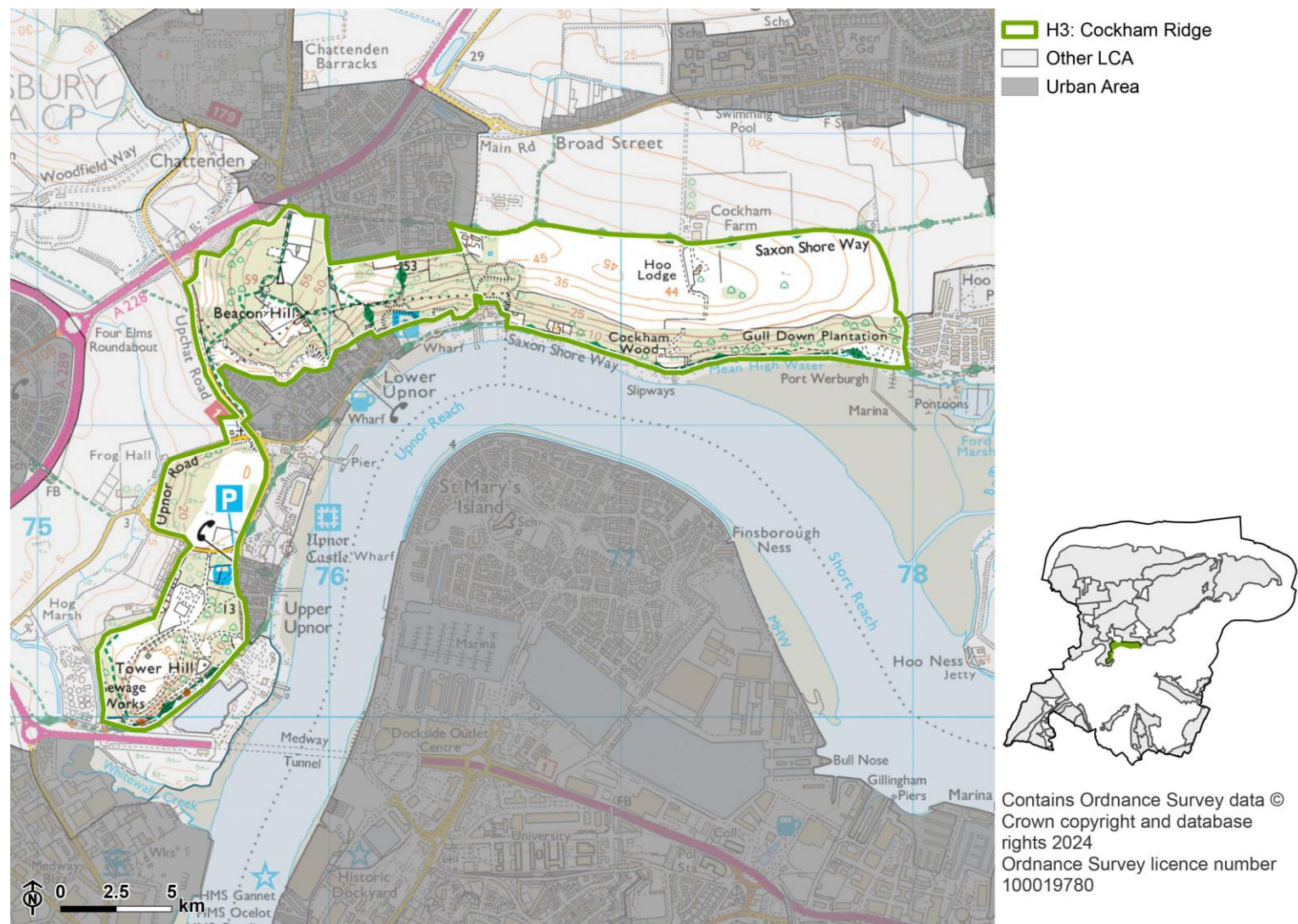
Description

Location and Summary

7.75 The Cockham Ridge LCA is located in the south of the Hoo Peninsula, on the northern shore of the River Medway. It rises above the Hogmarsh Valley to the west (LCA B3) and Hoo St Werburgh clay farmland to the north (LCA G3).

7.76 It is a distinctive and prominent wooded ridge, rising steeply from the shoreline of the Medway. It includes the locally prominent Beacon Hill and Tower Hill. The area forms the immediate setting to Upnor Conservation Area and a number of Scheduled Monuments including Upnor Castle and Cockham Wood Fort.

Figure 7.42: Location of LCA H3



Key Characteristics

- A distinctive wooded ridge rising steeply from the shoreline of the River Medway.
- Extensive tracts of mature deciduous woodland, much of which is designated as Ancient Woodland and Tower Hill to Cockham Wood SSSI.
- Small clearings with meadows are found within the woodlands, while large-scale arable fields line the gently sloping north-eastern slopes.
- Strong defensive and military history, including the 17th century Cockham Wood Fort, First World War anti-aircraft batteries, and more recently a Ministry of Defence training camp at Tower Hill; also forms the setting to Upnor Castle.
- Development is limited to scattered properties and the remnant historic military structures.
- Good levels of access via a network of PRow on Beacon Hill and the Saxon Shore Way and to Hoo Common; access to Tower Hill restricted due to continuing military usage.
- Woodland cover creates a strong sense of enclosure and a generally tranquil and peaceful landscape; this is undermined in proximity to settlement edges of Upper Upnor to the south-east and Chattenden to the north and around the military structures on Tower Hill with its unsympathetic boundary treatments.
- Elevated woodland ridge prominent in views across and along the River Medway, including from the Hogmarsh Valley, Upnor Conservation Area and Upnor Castle Scheduled Monument.
- Open views in the north towards Hoo St Werburgh and Kingsnorth power station, and from the shoreline across the River Medway, and some glimpsed longer-range views from areas of clearings and meadows; these contrast with enclosed character of wooded areas.

Photo 7.133: Distinctive wooded ridge rising above the Medway estuary



Photo 7.134: Mature deciduous woodland creates a strong sense of enclosure



Photo 7.135: Clearings within woodland provide glimpsed views across the Medway



Photo 7.136: Urban character at Tower Hill, with unsympathetic boundary treatments



Formative Influences

Natural Influences

- Bedrock geology of London Clay Formation, with bands of Lambeth Group and Thanet Formation sand, silts and clays in the west. A small area of Head clay and silt deposits lies in the north-east on Tower Hill. Upnor quarry is part of the Tower Hill to Cockham Wood SSSI, designated for its complete Tertiary age stratigraphic sequence.
- A distinctive ridge, rising from approximately 5 metres AOD at the Medway shoreline to 59 metres AOD at Beacon Hill. Tower Hill is a continuation of the ridge, at 25 metres AOD.
- Majority designated as Tower Hill to Cockham Wood SSSI for its woodland and scrub which support a rich insect fauna. Woodland has naturally regenerated on the lower slopes of Tower Hill, creating a slightly overgrown and neglected character. Cockham Wood is recorded as Ancient Woodland. Extensive Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland' at Beacon Hill and Tower Hill, which is unusual in descending right to the shoreline.
- Grade 3 (good to moderate) soils cover the majority of the area, with a band of Grade 1 (excellent) in the north on the gently sloping valley sides; the latter supports large open arable farmland. Fields are bound by a fragmented hedgerow network and poor tree cover.

Cultural Influences

- Lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 13 – Hoo Peninsula, as defined within the Kent HLC (2001).
- The HLC identifies several areas of '19th century plantations' and areas of 'fields bounded by tracks, roads and other rights of way' to the east. To the south the land cover on and around Tower Hill is identified as being of 20th century date.

- Historic military uses are evident across the area, in the form of a number of Scheduled Monuments. Cockham Wood Fort, is a 17th century fort built in the aftermath of the 1667 Dutch raid as part of a defensive system to protect the river approaches to the Royal Dockyard at Chatham. A beacon dating from at least the 1570s and a World War II pillbox are sited on top of Beacon hill, as a look out post for approaching enemy craft. Beacon Hill also features an undesignated wireless station and a World War I anti-aircraft gun site, which is a twin site to the well preserved example at Chattenden Ridge (within the adjacent LCA H2).
- Tower Hill is still under Ministry of Defence control for military training. Due to its elevated position opposite Chatham Dockyards, the hill was also used for siting guns, in 1804 and during World War II.
- The landscape forms the immediate setting to Upnor Castle Scheduled Monument and Upnor Conservation Area, which lie along the River Medway to the south-east; the ridge between Tower Hill and Beacon Hill forms a wooded backdrop to views west and the wooded backdrop of Cockham Wood provides an important backdrop in views north along the river.
- Development within the area is restricted to scattered properties and the remnant historic military structures; however, the area directly adjoins the settlements of Upper Upnor to the south-east and Chattenden to the north.
- The Saxon Shore Way runs along the shoreline, with a parallel high water route on the ridge. The area around Beacon Hill features a good network of PRoW, connecting with the adjacent settlement edges. There is no public access to Tower Hill due to its continuing military use.
- Recreational facilities along the River Medway include several yacht clubs along the shoreline.
- The landscape and riverscape at Upnor and Upnor Castle has provided inspiration for many artists, including J M W Turner.

Perceptual Influences

- The steep wooded ridge along the Medway river edge is an unusual and distinctive feature; this provides a strong elevated wooded backdrop in views along and across the river, including the setting for Lower Upnor and Upper Upnor, Chatham and St Mary's Island.
- Open views along the shoreline towards Hoo St Werburgh and Kingsnorth power station, as well as across the river towards St Mary's Island, contrast with enclosed views within wooded areas.
- Wharves and boats create a busy maritime character and strong sense of place; More intimate and tranquil character with some sense of remoteness in places due to the woodland cover and limited amount of built development and roads within the area.
- Urban fringe character around Tower Hill due to military boundary treatments, and views to Medway City Estate industrial area and sewage works to the south-west (within the adjacent LCA B3). The lower slopes of Tower Hill are covered in naturally regenerating woodland and scrub, which creates a neglected character, particularly in combination with the surrounding barbed wire of the military site.
- Deciduous woodlands and trees create strong seasonal changes in the landscape, particularly in spring and autumn.

Landscape Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Values

- Distinctive wooded ridge, which rises steeply from the shoreline of the River Medway.
- Forms a strong backdrop to views along and across the river from the surrounding built up areas of Chattenden, Upper Upnor, Lower Upnor and St Mary's Island.

- A unique landscape within the area, being the only wooded shoreline of the River Medway.
- Ecological and landscape importance of woodlands, including Ancient Woodland, the SSSI and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'.
- Strong military and defensive history.
- Forms the immediate wooded setting to several Scheduled Monuments and Upnor Conservation Area.
- Contrast between enclosed views within the woodlands and longer range views from more open areas to the north and along the shoreline, creates a strong sense of place.
- Long distance views from the north into the Hoo Peninsula interior and south across the River Medway provide a strong sense of place.
- Recreational value of PRow, including the Saxon Shore Way, particularly in close proximity to the urban areas of Chattenden and Upnor.
- Generally tranquil and peaceful, with woodland cover creating an enclosed character.

Issues and Changes

- Potential development pressures due to close proximity to Chattenden and Upnor; threat of further expansion of urban edges from the north and south-east.
- The farmland in the north has a weak hedgerow network and limited tree cover.
- The historic military features of the landscape are often in a poor condition, and are not well interpreted. Cockham Wood Fort is on the Heritage at Risk Register.
- Recreational activities including bike trails are causing erosion and destruction of ground flora on Beacon Hill, including the land designated

as SSSI. A balance is needed between retaining and improving access and protecting the woodland.

- The Medway Estuary and Swale Flood Risk and Erosion Risk Management Strategy (MEASS) plans for No Active Intervention along Cockham Wood. This will result in cliff retreat as sea levels rise.
- Rising sea levels will impact on the Saxon Shore Way route along the shoreline, and the link between Upnor, Hoo, Kingsnorth and Grain. There is already poor accessibility along the shoreline at high tide.
- Potential future plans to provide a community park to support future residential development elsewhere on the Hoo Peninsula may alter the landscape character and increase recreational visitors. A balance will need to be found between the positive impacts of increased access to the landscape, loss of agricultural land and habitat protection.
- The wooded hills and ridges landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events; there may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and water-borne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees.
 - Higher average temperatures and drier summers could lead to changes to community composition in arable field margins, an increase in bare ground and an increased risk of dieback in drought prone locations; the introduction of new crops and associated changes to management could alter the area and type of field margins.
 - Drier summers and wetter winters may lead to increased mortality and die-back of certain hedgerow tree species; an increased occurrence of insect pests and pathogens could lead to a potential loss or significant reduction in populations of key hedgerow tree species; and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.

- Intense rainfall events and increased winter rainfall resulting in flooding, erosion and damage to buildings and structures, including heritage assets.
- Rising sea levels will result in greater risk of coastal flooding and coastal erosion. The strategy within the Medway Estuary and Swale flood and erosion risk management strategy for this shoreline is for no active intervention. All maintenance of the current defences will be ceased. Cliff retreat is likely to increase with sea level rise, but will create new coastal habitats, which will increase the natural heritage importance of the area.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Cockham Wooded Ridge LCA is to conserve and restore the wooded character of the distinctive ridge, managing the Ancient Woodland and other important habitats within the SSSI. Seek to enhance interpretation and understanding of important heritage features and encourage recreational visitors to the shoreline and woodlands, whilst balancing the need for nature conservation. Maintain the landscape's role in forming a wooded backdrop to views and setting to settlements.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance ecologically important areas of SSSI, Ancient Woodland, and Priority Habitat 'deciduous woodland'.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing deciduous woodland cover through natural regeneration or small scale planting. New planting should reflect the scale, shape, pattern and composition of

the existing woodland. Identify locations for woodland planting where the direct impacts of climate change on the suitability of individual species may be less than in the surrounding region (such as north-facing slopes or areas with more secure water supply).

- Manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases, and over-grazing; to encourage and protect regeneration; and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland. Consider the wider ecosystem services that woodlands provide; outside designated sites and Ancient Woodland, changes in species composition may be acceptable if the services that the woodland provides (such as urban cooling, visual amenity or recreational opportunities) remain intact.
- Strengthen the character of the farmland to the north by promoting the regeneration of hedgerows through management; when planting or restocking hedgerows, aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers.
- Consider how the planned no intervention set out in the MEASS will impact on the biodiversity of the shoreline. Consider the need to reroute the Saxon Shore Way as the sea levels rise
- Encourage further interpretation and understanding of important heritage features and their wider context of defence, to improve the recreational offer and visitor experience.
- Seek opportunities to preserve the historic character of Beacon Hill; carefully consider the balance between the levels of vegetation, historic importance, interpretation and access.

- Protect and improve the recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to enhance opportunities for informal access and enjoyment through well maintained linked routes with adjacent settlements, while ensuring that recreational routes avoid/minimise disturbance to areas of nature conservation value. Enhance wayfinding, interpretation and access, including improved access to Tower Hill in the south.
- Seek sensitive and appropriate management of incongruous boundary treatments, particularly at Tower Hill.
- Consider opportunities to protect and enhance existing long range views along and across the river.
- Conserve the rural, tranquil and undeveloped character of the landscape.

Development Management

- Resist development proposals that would harm biodiversity value and damage the distinctive landscape character.
- Maintain the characteristic sparse pattern of development, avoiding expansion of adjacent urban areas into the landscape.
- Consider the role of this area as a distinctive feature visible in views along and across the river; any development along the shoreline and within less wooded areas is likely to impact views.
- If development is proposed seek to minimise its impact through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing, materials and the use of locally characteristic planting.
- Reference and respect the historic military uses and character of this landscape. Seek sensitive preservation and management of historic features, including Cockham Wood Fort.

- Consider views from the area across the River Medway when further developments are planned across the river to the south and east.

Appendix A

Changes to the Landscape Classification

A.1 The landscape classification and how this relates to the LCAs within the 2011 Study is set out below. The 2011 landscape character areas are provided in parenthesis.

Landscape Character Type A: Coastal Marshes

- LCA A1: Cliffe Pools (LCA 1: Cliffe Pits and Pools).
- LCA A2: Cliffe to St Mary's Marshes (LCA 2: Cliffe to St Mary's Marshes).
- LCA A3: Allhallows to Stoke Marshes (LCA 3: Allhallows to Stoke Marshes).
- LCA A4: Hoo Flats (LCA 4: Hoo Flats).
- LCA A5: Riverside Marshes (LCA 5: Riverside Marshes).
- LCA A6: Motney Hill (LCA 6: Motney Hill).

Landscape Character Type B: River Valleys and Marshes

- LCA B1: Wouldham Marshes (LCA 35: Wouldham Marshes).
- LCA B2: Halling and Holborough Marshes (LCA 37: Halling Marshes, LCA 38: Holborough Marshes and LCA 39: Halling Quarries).
- LCA B3: Hogmarsh Valley (LCA 18: Hogmarsh Valley).

Landscape Character Type C: Chalk Scarp and Scarp Foot

- LCA C1: Nashenden Scarp (LCA 32: Nashenden Scarp).
- LCA C2: Wouldham Scarp East (LCA 34: Wouldham Scarp East).
- LCA C3: Halling Scarp West (LCA 40: Halling Scarp West).
- LCA C4: Halling Scarp Foot (LCA 39: Halling Quarries).
- LCA C5: Cuxton Scarp Foot (LCA 36: Cuxton Scarp Foot).

Landscape Character Type D: Dry Chalk Valleys and Downs

- LCA D1: Darland Banks and Hempstead Fringe (LCA 24: Darland Banks and LCA 29: Hempstead Fringe).
- LCA D2: Capstone Farm (LCA 26: Capstone Farm).
- LCA D3: Sharstead Farm and East Hill (LCA 27: Sharstead Farm and LCA 25: East Hill).
- LCA D4: Elm Court (LCA 28: Elm Court).
- LCA D5: Horsted Valley (LCA 30: Horsted Valley).
- LCA D6: Matts Hill (LCA 31: Matts Hill Farmland).
- LCA D7: Nashenden Down (LCA 33: Nashenden Valley).
- LCA D8: Bush Valley and Dean Farm (LCA 41: Bush Valley and Dean Farm).
- LCA D9: Ranscombe Farm (LCA 42: Ranscombe Farm).

Landscape Character Type E: Fruit Belt

- LCA E1: Lower Rainham (LCA 21: Lower Rainham Farmland).
- LCA E2: Moor Street and Meresborough (LCA 22: Moor Street Farmland and LCA 23: Meresborough Farmland).

Landscape Character Type F: Mixed Chalk and Clay Farmland

- LCA F1: Cliffe (LCA 7: Cliffe Farmland and LCA 13: Cliffe Woods Farmland).
- LCA F2: Cooling (LCA 11: Hoo Peninsula Farmland – (West) and LCA 8: Cooling Farmland).
- LCA F3: Cliffe Woods (LCA 13: Cliffe Woods Farmland).

Landscape Character Type G: Open Clay Farmland

- LCA G1: St Mary's Farmland (LCA 10: St Mary's Marshes).
- LCA G2: Hoo Peninsula (LCA 11: Hoo Peninsula Farmland – (East) and LCA 12: Lower Stoke Farmland).
- LCA G3: Hoo St Werburgh (LCA 16: Hoo Farmland and LCA 15: Deangate Ridge).

Landscape Character Type H: Wooded Hills and Ridges

- LCA H1: Northward Hill (LCA 9: Northward Hill).

Appendix A Changes to the Landscape Classification

- LCA H2: Chattenden Ridge (LCA 14: Chattenden Ridge, LCA 15: Deangate Ridge and LCA 19: Bald Top Hill).
- LCA H3: Cockham Ridge (LCA 17: Cockham Farm and LCA 20: Tower Hill).

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