

I3B: EAST HAMPSHIRE HANGERS & GREENSAND TERRACE



Chalk & Greensand Hangers near Selborne



Butser chalk scarp- open downland in contrast to wooded hangers.



Greensand Hanger near Hawkley



Greensand Terrace north of Selborne – Wooded Downland Plateau backdrop



Sunken lane near Nursted - Malmstone exposed

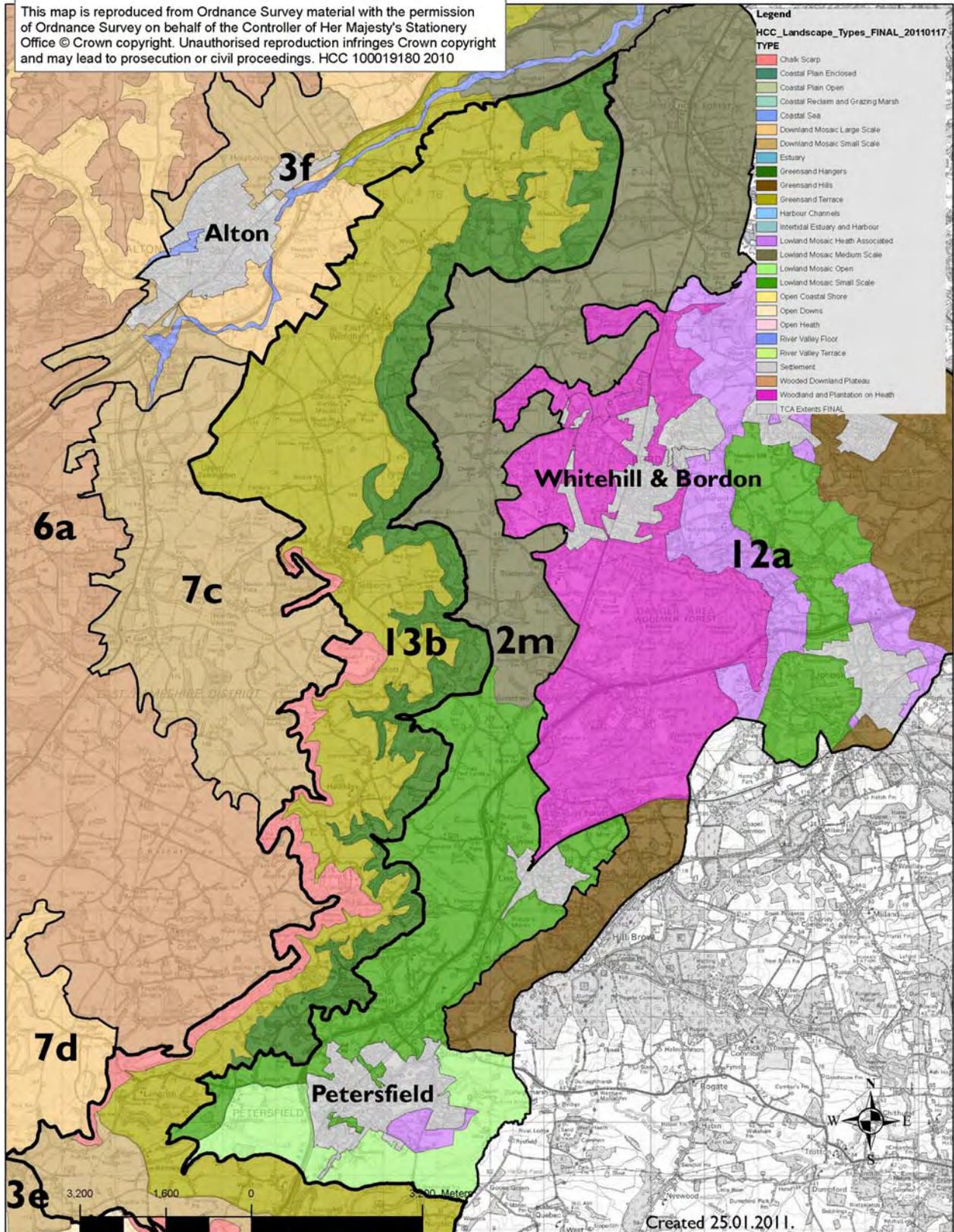


Hawkley - on Greensand Terrace with wooded Chalk Scarp behind

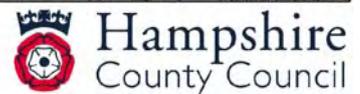


Selborne - building materials are drawn from a wide range of local materials

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EAST HAMPSHIRE HANGERS AND GREENSAND TERRACE



1.0 Location and Boundaries

1.1 The East Hampshire Hangers and Greensand Terrace marks the eastern edge of the chalk Hampshire Downs and its junction with the Wealden landscapes to the east. It extends southwards in a narrow band from the County boundary near Farnham to Petersfield, where it turns eastwards to encompass the north-facing scarp of the South Downs.



In the central and lower northern section it is characterised by a distinctive double scarp, with the chalk to the west and the greensand hangers to the east, separated by an undulating terrace. The largest settlements are the villages of Selborne, Hawkley and East Worldham.

1.2 Component County Landscape Types

Greensand Terrace, Greensand Hangers, Chalk Scarp, Downland Mosaic Small Scale.

1.3 Composition of Borough/District LCAs:

East Hampshire District:

Buriton Scarp
Selborne Hangers to East Meon Scarp
Selborne Greensand Terrace
Ramsdean to Buriton Greensand Terrace
Worldham Greensand Terrace

This character area coincides with the local East Hampshire District Greensand Terrace and Major Scarps landscape types.

1.4 Associations with NCAs and Natural Areas:

NCA 130: Hampshire Downs and 120 Wealden Greensand
Natural Areas: 78 Hampshire Downs and 70 Wealden Greensand

2.0 Key Characteristics

- A dramatic landform dominated by sinuous chalk and greensand scarps marking the edge of the chalk in East Hampshire.
- Distinctive hanger woodland in narrow bands following the steep scarp slopes, interspersed with small pasture fields or open chalk downland.
- Well drained light soils on the terrace, traditionally supporting orchards and arable crops including hops with relatively few wooded areas.
- Cut by a series of small streams that rise from springs at the foot of the chalk escarpment, and have eroded, deep narrow valleys.
- Exploitation for farming since earliest times and strong evidence for occupation since Mesolithic times.
- Roman activity including villa sites on the greensand terrace.

- A mixture of extant assarts and ancient woodland and regular enclosures of perhaps medieval and 17th century origin on the terrace.
- Use of the locally available pale and soft malmstone, in preference to flint.
- Hop kilns and both square and circular oast houses are notable features.
- Varying sense of enclosure/seclusion depending on breadth of greensand terrace.
- Varied views, with occasional dramatic distant views over the Weald and expansive views from the crest of the open chalk ridge at Butser.

3.0 Physical Characteristics and Land use

3.1 This landscape comprises predominantly east facing steep slopes and terrace, known as 'The Hangers' forming a linear edge to the Hampshire Downs. From east to west it includes both the steep scarp faces of Upper Greensand and the narrow, dip slope and the scarp face of the Middle and Lower chalk. The combination of both types of geology creates an impressive high and steep landform, which is well wooded throughout this. At its highest it is 150m above the adjoining valley floor of the East Hampshire Lowland Mosaic. It is steepest around Oakshott, Hawkley and Selborne and Buriton on the southern side. The chalk scarp dominates the horizon from the East Hampshire Lowland Mosaic from Selborne southwards to Ramsdean and then east of the A3 cutting to the County boundary as part of the South Downs ridge chalk escarpment. The Upper Greensand terrace is narrow and is broadest in the northern part of the character area reaching 2.5miles across near Binstead. Around Steep and Ramsdean the landscape is particularly undulating, reflecting the narrow bands of the Upper Greensand and Chalk formations. The Upper Greensand formation turns sharply eastwards here in front of the chalk scarp at Buriton. The soils are particularly well drained and even on the terrace they are generally fine loamy and silty and are light and easily worked. Rendzina soils are typical on the chalk scarp, where the bedrock is close to the surface – soil creep occurs on the steepest soils and appears as small terraces, often exposing tree roots.

3.2 The landscape is dominated by ancient hanger woodland - examples include Milking Hanger, Wick Hill Hanger and Warner's Hanger. These woodlands cling to the steepest slopes together with important ground flora. Pockets of chalk grassland still exist such as at Noar Hill. The terrace supports mixed land cover of woodland and small pasture fields and paddocks, with thick hedgerows in the southern half. North of Selborne where the terrace broadens, arable is the dominant land use. Historically, this landscape was traditionally a hop growing area however all that remains today are numerous oast houses and hop kilns some of which have been converted to residential use. Today, the landscape here comprises large arable fields, with a mixture of treed and low hedges with a range of colourful summer crops including oil seed rape and lavender. This coincides with the extent of high quality agricultural soil. Also of note is a cluster of orchards around Selborne. Disused chalk pits can be found in the woodland one of the most recent and largest can be found just east of the A3.

3.3 The heads of several local streams spring from the base of the chalk scarp flowing east and north eastward, such as the Oakhanger Stream at Selborne and Criddell at Ramsdean. These watercourses have carved deep narrow valleys into the Greensand. There are very occasional areas of standing water.

4.0 Experiential/Perceptual Characteristics

- 4.1 A very dramatic steep and ancient wooded landscape, which forms an impressive backdrop to the western side of the East Hampshire Lowland Mosaic landscape. Climbing through the dense dark woodland builds a sense of anticipation for the occasional views higher up over the Weald and towards the North and South Downs. The landscape on the terrace broadens north of Selborne and near West Worldham there are long panoramic views to the Wooded Downland beyond Alton and a sense of a productive and variable crop based landscape, including the purple haze of a lavender farm in high summer.
- 4.2 Under the hanger woodland canopy, ancient, deeply eroded sunken lanes and tracks climb the steep scarp. Where erosion has been greatest on the track and lane sides the chalk and greensand is exposed in places with overhanging tree roots. There is generally a good public rights of way network including the national routes of the South Downs and Hanger's Way. National Trust land around Selborne provides a significant tract of access land, but there is far less common land under 'downland' than on the more open Major Scarps in Hampshire.
- 4.3 Intimacy and enclosure typify this landscape, with a strong sense of natural prospect and refuge from the hangers. This tract of landscape is an area of high tranquillity with few visual and noise related road detractions.

5.0 Biodiversity Character

- 5.1 This is an internationally designated landscape with the East Hampshire Hangers SAC. The SAC covers beech forests which are extremely rich in vascular plants, including white helleborine, violet helleborine, green-flowered helleborine and Italian lords-and-ladies. and an area of ancient quarries with an outstanding assemblage of orchids, including one of the largest UK populations of the nationally scarce musk orchid as well as other orchid species including pyramidal orchid, frog orchid, common spotted-orchid, bee orchid and autumn lady's-tresses. The woods include areas with old pollards on former wood-pasture as well as high forest. There are also transitions to lime forests of slopes, screes and ravines, a priority feature of East Hampshire Hangers. There are areas of small-leaved lime on the steepest parts of the Upper Greensand scarp, associated with low sandstone cliffs and scree slopes, which are locally calcareous. The bryophyte flora is richer than on the chalk examples and includes several species that are rare in the lowlands.
- 5.2 Within the SAC there are several SSSIs varying in character and ecology including Coombe Wood and the Lythe SSSI (comprising 'hanger' woods), Noar Hill SSSI (comprising chalk grassland and coppice woods), Empshott to Hawkley SSSI (comprising a series of steep, rocky woodlands), Wyck to Wheatley SSSI (comprising a series of steep, rocky woodlands), Wick Wood and Worldham Hangers SSSI (comprising steeply sloping woodlands) and Wealden Edge Hangers SSSI (comprising the mainly wooded easterly facing escarpment of the Hampshire chalk plateau, and one of the ecologically most interesting and diverse series of chalk woodlands in Britain). As indicated by the SAC designation these woodlands, combined with the steep topography and underlying geology, are of value for their varied woodland type and structure (including coppice), substantial populations of hellebore and bryophyte and chalk flora.

- 5.3 Beyond the designations, this is a productive agricultural landscape, with only small marginal areas of unimproved grassland while woodland character varies, from small blocks and strips of broadleaved dominating in the north to larger, more continuous patches and a greater variety of types, including orchards, and occasional patches of active coppice, in the south. Ancient and semi-natural woodland occurs in this area and is also more frequent in the south.
- 5.4 A large proportion of this landscape character area is covered by the East Hampshire Hangers BOA. This BOA covers the steep chalk scarps, their associated woodland and ground flora.
- 5.5 There are two National Nature Reserves in this character area. Ashford Hangers NNR is a part of the mainly wooded escarpment where the Hampshire chalk plateau meets the lower Weald. Butser Hill NNR consists of improved and unimproved calcareous grassland with scattered scrub, chalk heath, yew woodland and semi-ancient broadleaved woodland. Bryophyte and lichen flora are very rich with over 200 lichen, moss and liverwort species being recorded in the chalk grassland.
- 5.6 There are over 130 SINC's in this landscape character area. An exceptionally large number of the SINC's cover ancient and semi-natural woodlands that exist as entities as opposed to ancient woodland which exists as fragments within other types of woodland. There are also a few SINC's designated for the unimproved grassland resource which they support. Buriton Chalk Pit LNR is an abandoned chalk working half a mile south west of Buriton village on the scarp slope of the South Downs and comprises woodland and the abandoned chalk pits.

6.0 Historic Character

6.1 Archaeology

- 6.1.1 The northern part of this area is a fertile plain conjoining a river valley and is archeologically, unusually rich for east Hampshire although, taken as a whole the narrower southern area is less archeologically rich. Evidence from the Mesolithic period is limited and confined mostly to the northern area, in a band between the extraordinary distribution of significant Mesolithic sites of the heathland to the south east, and the broader distributions of Mesolithic material in the Basingstoke area. It is tempting to see this linear band of Mesolithic finds between rich areas across the clay belt as an indication of some sort of landscape route/traffic trend.
- 6.1.2 Early agricultural practice in the Neolithic has distinctly confined distributions which it is reasonable to assume reflect the suitability of the soil. The northern part of this area is notably fertile and has, unusually for east Hampshire, a distinct cluster of Neolithic sites and finds including two long barrows. It is likely this area has been an early farmed landscape.
- 6.1.3 The archaeological evidence of settlement suggests that in the Bronze Age and Iron Age periods this area continued to be relatively intensively exploited, and these farming populations were also probably less intensively exploiting the higher land, particularly the heathland, possibly for grazing. This may account for the Bronze Age burial mounds that over look the area. There are two Iron Age hill forts in the vicinity, again unusual for east Hampshire, and it may in part reflect the agricultural

exploitation of the area, as well as the emergence of a pottery industry, which developed in the Roman period.

6.1.4 The Roman period is also well represented including a number of Roman villas, sites of some status, along the length of the greensand terrace. These may reflect the wealth of the area, possibly agricultural or industrial in origin, but may also reflect the proximity of a number of Roman roads, and access to extensive hunting forests, perhaps implying wealthy estates whose wealth is not locally acquired.

6.1.5 To the south, the landscape is less archaeologically rich or diverse and seems to imply a less intensive occupation, and probably a lower rate of agricultural development. This is further reflected in the historic landscape character, where the increased incidence of assart landscapes suggests longer lived woodland and forests until the mediaeval period.

6.2 **Historic Landscape**

6.2.1 This character area can be divided into 3 broad areas of historic landscape types; the hanger woodlands on the steep Chalk and Upper Greensand; the informal enclosure fieldscape on the more economically productive Upper Greensand terrace and; the assart fieldscape on the less productive parts of the terrace.

6.2.2 A defining characteristic of this character area is the presence of the hangers. Long, narrow remnants of ancient woodland cling to the steep slopes and reflect areas which have remained relatively because the topography has been too steep to cultivate and unable to support agriculture. They woodlands have been exploited in the past for woodland products such as coppice poles, small scale chalk and malmstone extractions which appear as dells.

6.2.3 Conversely the fertile soils of the Upper Greensand terrace have been subject to much intensive arable use, and most famously for hop growing. Poplar windbreaks persist giving a good indication as to where this crop was once grown. The current landscape probably incrementally evolved from assart to open fields to early informal enclosure (typified by large fields with wavy boundaries in a regular pattern). Their persistence in the wider and more fertile parts of the terrace landscape, particularly north of Selborne is indication that this land has been farmed for a considerable time and likely to reflect a medieval field pattern. Ditches and banks with thick treed hedges as field boundaries and a dense network of tracks and rights of way are likely indicators of a medieval field system which was productive and successful. There are medieval derived terraces some of which survive and are extant in the modern landscape.

6.2.4 Where the terrace narrows between Hawkey and Ramsdean, medium irregular assart fields are dominant (and stretch east and west over the character area boundary). This probably represents later incursion into a wooded landscape in late and post medieval times – where farming expanded into more remote, less economically viable areas than in the earlier informal enclosure landscape to the north and east.

- 6.2.5 By the time of parliamentary enclosures there was very little downland and common left that was not already informally enclosed. That which does remain is relatively late (e.g. Selborne enabling act 1866).
- 6.2.6 Boundary loss since 1st edition mapping although, slight overall, has been greatest immediately around Binstead and West Worldham in the north and to a lesser extent around Buriton and Nurstead south of Petersfield. Areas of least loss include land which is less intensively used i.e. areas of small regular fields with wavy fields and assart fields.
- 6.2.7 There are no deer parks recorded within this area and the only site on the English Heritage Register is The Wakes and Zig Zag path at Selborne the home of Gilbert White. There are a dozen pre and post 1810 parks distributed through the area with a cluster around Empshott. There are also some interesting twentieth century gardens including Jermyns Place at Bentley and two gardens designed by Ingo Triggs; Ashford Chase and Island House in Steep.
- 6.3 **Built Environment**
- 6.3.1 There are no large or medium size settlements within the character area. Binstead, Hawkley, Selborne and Buriton are considered to be villages and are the largest settlement form. The settlement pattern is dispersed. Notably, there are several farmstead clusters on the more intensively farmed areas on the terrace north of Hawkley. This reflects the relative lack of suitable land to develop and its isolation from the major highway and rail network.
- 6.3.2 Settlement origin such as; Hawkley 1207 and Buriton 1227 may indicate particular period of expansion for the area as well as prior to 1086. There is also a relatively high proportion of farmsteads of at least 17th century. Farmstead distribution is quite dense particularly between Selborne and Steep. There has been very little 20th century expansion and villages and hamlets retain a strong historical association with their surrounding landscape and setting which has seen little significant recent expansion.
- 6.3.3 Of particular note is the strong association of oast houses and hop kilns with the area on the Upper Greensand terrace. Nowhere else in Hampshire is there such a high concentration. This area represents the western extent of hop growing associated with the greensand of the Wealden landscapes.
- 6.3.4 The availability of malmstone from the Upper Greensand which outcrops near the surface has been exploited through small quarries. It has resulted in the particularly distinctive appearance of many buildings and boundary walls in this area.

EVALUATION

7.0 Forces for Change

1. No large scale development envisaged but there is likely to be pressure for new small scale development within and on the fringes of villages.
2. Farm conversion to residential and possible loss of grazing land management practices to gardens and paddocks.
3. Climate change; storm frequency and intensity, changes in crop choice.
4. Take up of land management grant schemes i.e. woodland grant schemes.
5. South Downs national park designation and associated Management Plan.

KEY QUALITIES AND EFFECTS OF FORCES

<p>7.1 <i>The hangers and scarp downland mosaic represent some of the most extensive unenclosed chalk landscape in Hampshire while the greensand terrace comprises a distinctive and intact ancient landscape pattern.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
2.3.5	<p>Threats: Reordering of field boundaries disrupting connections with ancient countryside enclosures. Small designed landscapes concentrated on the hangers with exotic species could be subject to greater likelihood of loss from increased weather extremes. Probable trend towards smaller holdings and gardens exploiting the setting of the dramatic landscape, in place of agricultural use, and consequently changes to fieldscape and perception of predominantly native species hangers.</p> <p>Opportunities: Investigate further the extent of the open field systems and early enclosures by the post medieval times –indications suggest that the farming landscape was well evolved by this time and there were few common and downland areas on the greensand terrace. Emphasise the traditional hop growing and fruit growing heritage of this area in local level assessment work and rekindle interest in local produce initiatives where appropriate. Possibly determine the extent of change and domestication of farmland.</p>
<p>7.2 <i>No built development on the scarps and a distinctive pattern of spring line nucleated settlements with a large proportion of post medieval farmsteads in more remote areas. The use of malmstone as a building material and the presence of oast houses and kilns is particularly concentrated in this area.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
1.2	<p>Threats: Although no major development is and very unlikely to be proposed in this landscape, the cumulative impact of small scale development in visually prominent parts of existing settlements could dramatically increase their small scale nature and landscape presence. Lack of availability of traditional malmstone for repairs or extensions. Change of use and domestication of existing farmsteads, oast houses and farmland to residential use with gardens and horse paddocks especially in the southern half of the character area appears to be quite high. Oasts and hop kilns are almost completely been converted to mainly residential use – some conversions can radically alter the character of the elevations.</p> <p>Opportunities: Conservation area appraisals of Binsted, Selborne, Hawkley and Buriton provide basis for</p>

	<p>monitoring condition and retaining character.</p> <p>When designing new or built additions promote reference to historic building guidance documents (HCC, EH and local) particularly in respect of historic farmsteads, brick and flint, malmstone, timber frame, thatch, clay tiles.</p>
<p>7.3 <i>Internationally important ancient hanger woodland comprising a range of uncommon woodland types and a rich ground flora including association with abandoned ancient chalk pits.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
3.4.5	<p>Threats:</p> <p>Invasive and competitive ornamental and non native species in ancient hanger woodland such as sycamore.</p> <p>Grant funding streams for woodland management and in particular –coppice management. Balancing nature conservation interest of the hanger woodland with recreational pressures. Species composition change/loss from climate change particularly as some of the woodland types are very rare and ‘island sites’ such as Noar Hill, making them vulnerable to loss. Susceptibility to windthrow from likelihood of increased storm incidence particularly because of the steep thin soils of the hangers.</p> <p>The majority of smaller woods do not appear to be under grant aided management and the extent of coppice management is not clear.</p> <p>Opportunities:</p> <p>Environmental stewardship take up could improve in the south of the character area. Improve knowledge of smaller woodland under management and possibly target small woods for support – particularly as potential to connect larger woodland blocks. The South Downs ESA covered the very south of this area – there is potential to increase higher level stewardship particularly in this area.</p> <p>Ways to ensure the continuation of the trend for recent positive change in the form of conversion of arable land back to pasture and management of chalk grassland habitat – particularly in the BOA area could be investigated.</p>
<p>7.4 <i>Dramatic, tranquil, scarp hangers, traversed by long distance paths, narrow and sunken lanes and open access land on former common and downland providing a focus for visits and providing extensive views over the South Downs landscape.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCE
All	<p>Threats:</p> <p>Insensitive responses to traffic management issue – for example in sunken lanes. Thin soils on the hangers make tracks susceptible to erosion from user pressure. Predominantly undeveloped high wooded skyline could be subject to pressure for vertical structures on escarpment tops which may disrupt the sweeping lines of the landscapes. The exposed hanger woodlands may be susceptible to increased frequency of storms and windthrow which may alter the perception of how wooded parts of this area are.</p> <p>Opportunities:</p> <p>Sensitive approach to rural lane traffic issues involving local community with solutions. Increase draw to the area from national park designation– particularly as striking off point. Local opinions could be sought for particular valued views points to help identify important receptor sites and limit visual impact of new development. Sensitive woodland management and coppicing can provide more opportunities to exploit the commanding views over the Weald from the hangers.</p>