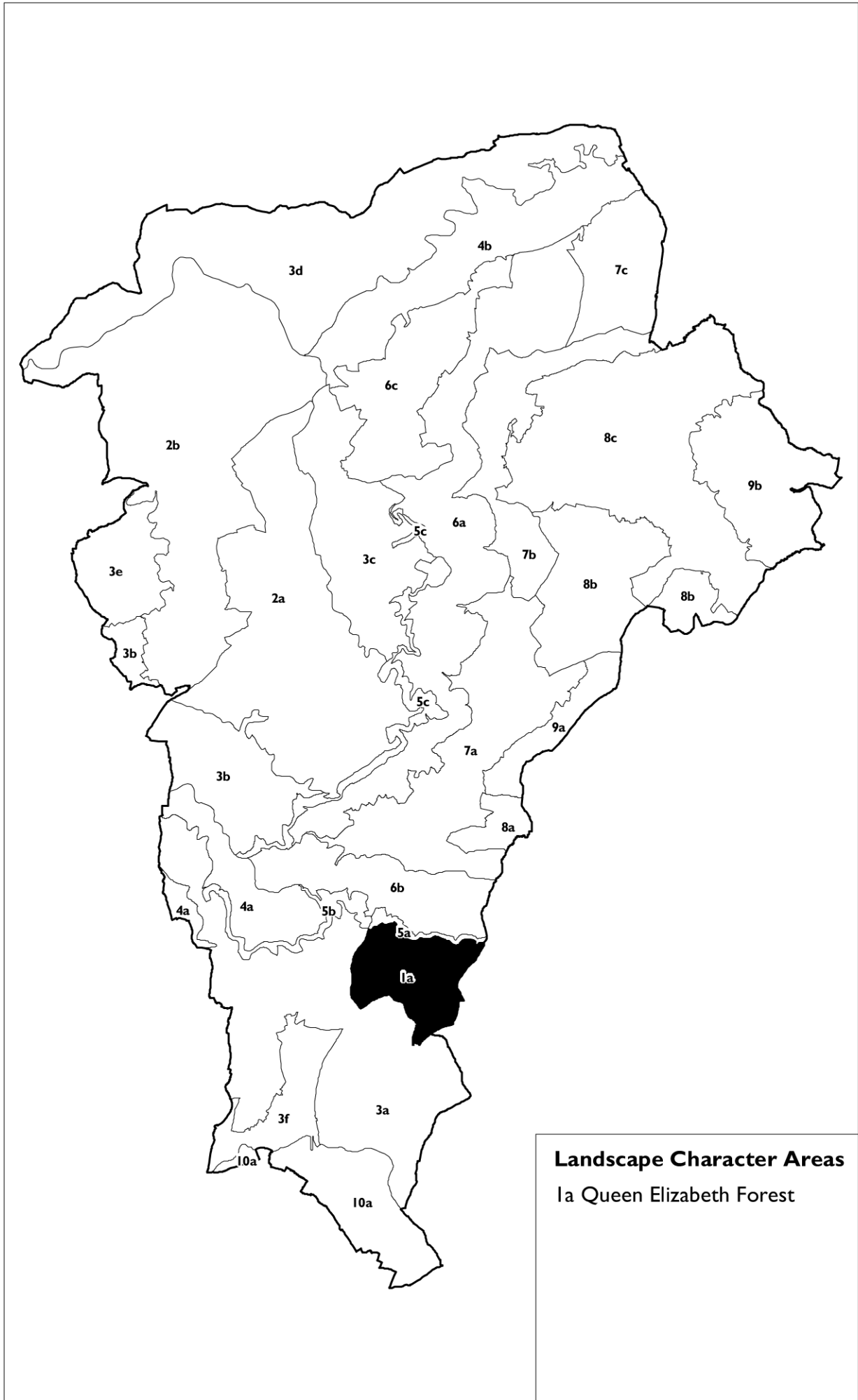
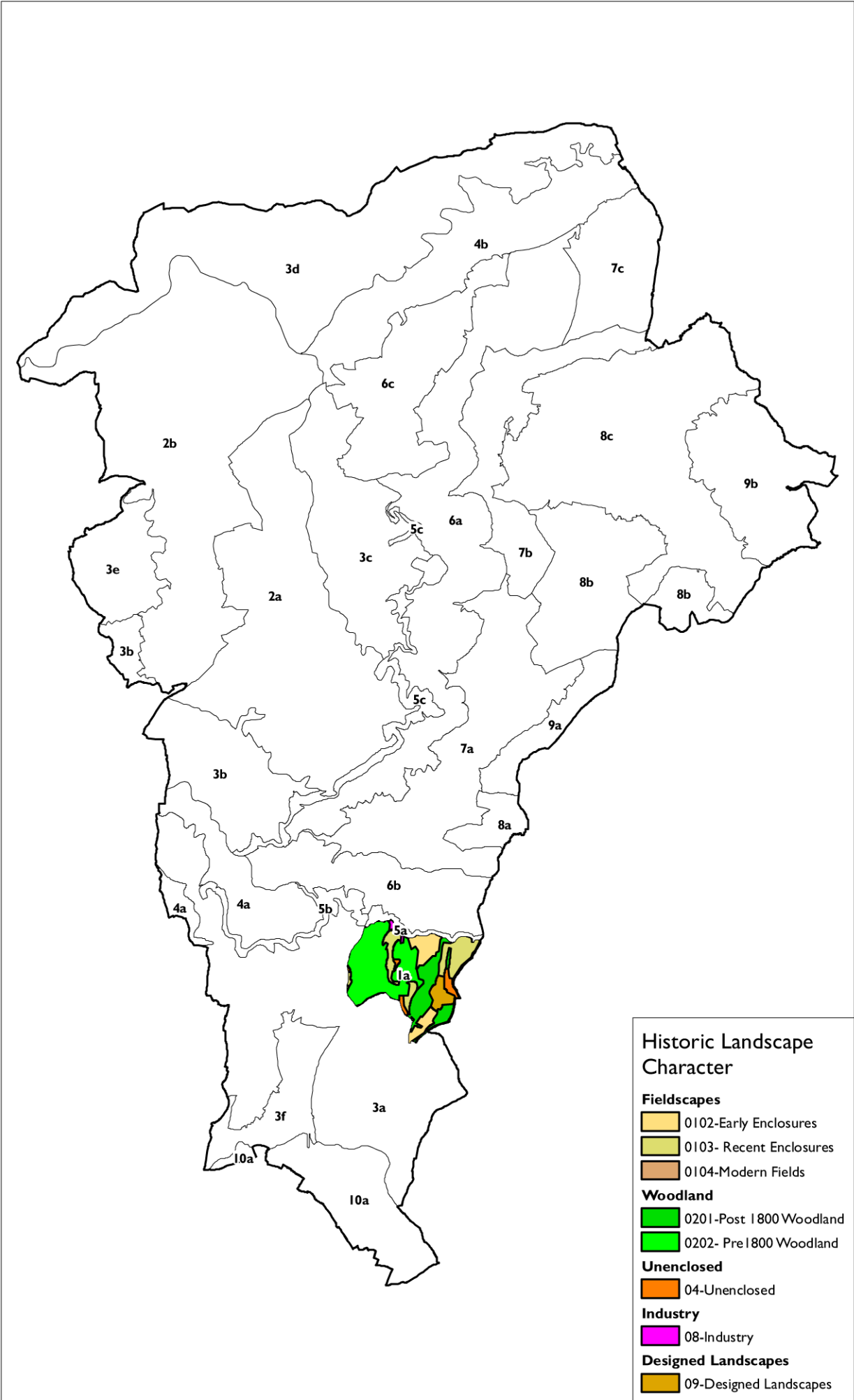


Landscape Type I : Wooded Estate Downland



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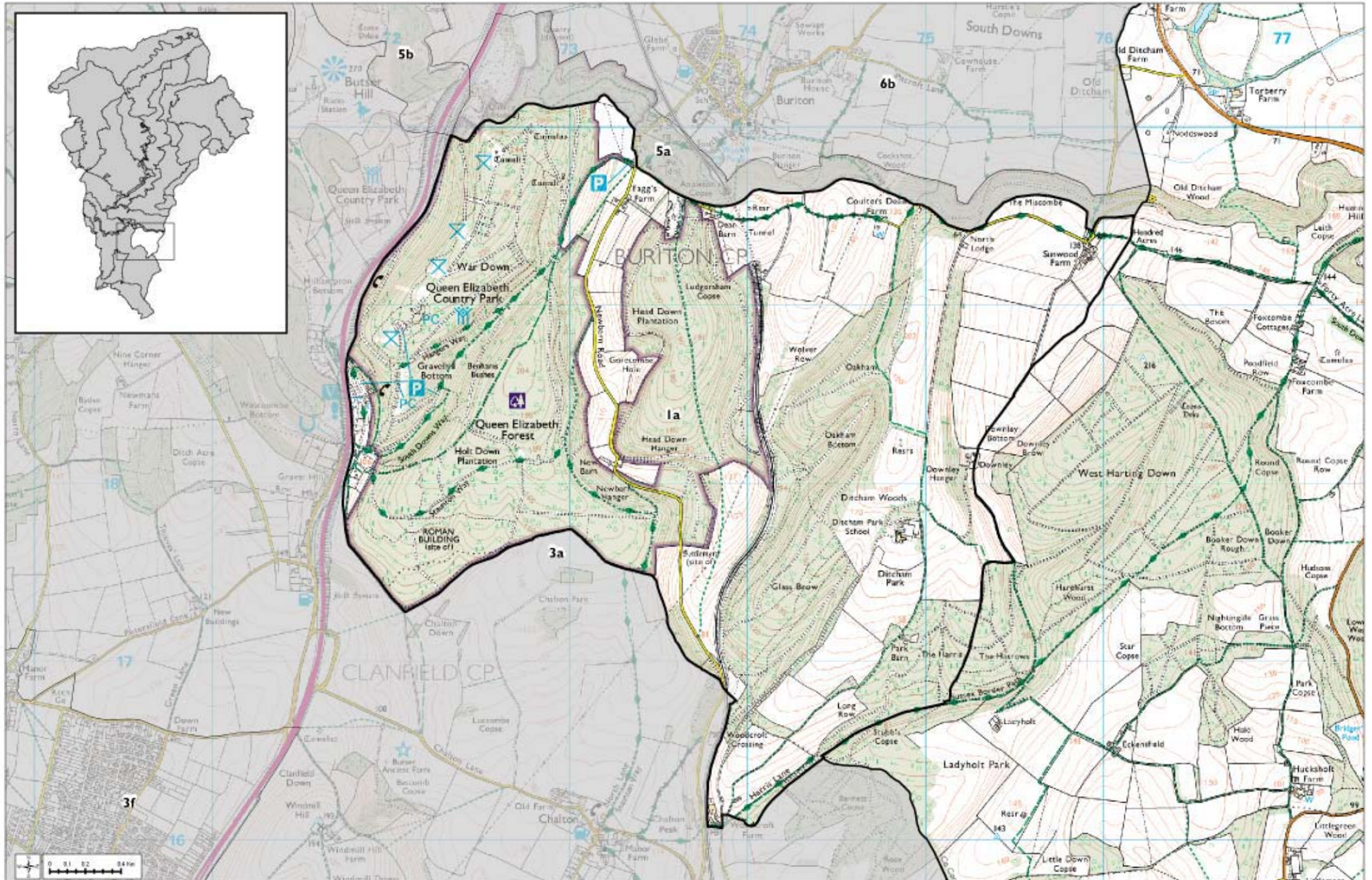
LANDSCAPE TYPE I: WOODED ESTATE DOWNLAND

- 1.1 This landscape type is located in the south eastern part of East Hampshire District, comprising part of the wooded chalk ridge which extends eastwards beyond the district boundary.

Key Characteristics

- Chalk geology forming an elevated ridge with typical folded downland topography, with isolated patches of clay-with-flints (part of a former more extensive clay cap) which has given rise to acidic soils.
- Supports extensive woodland including semi-natural ancient woodland plus beech, mixed and commercial coniferous plantation. The extensive woodland cover creates a distinctive dark horizon in views from the south.
- Woodland is interlocked with straight-sided, irregular open arable fields linked by hedgerows. A sporting landscape with woodland managed for shooting and areas of cover crops for game.
- Woodland cover creates an enclosed landscape with contained views, occasionally contrasting with dramatic long distance views from higher, more open elevations.
- Occasional areas of unimproved chalk grassland are found on the steeper slopes and ridge tops.
- Ancient sites including field systems and holloways occur, buried beneath the woodland.
- Settlement pattern is characterised by villages and shrunken hamlets of Saxon or early medieval origin interspersed by scattered farmsteads of 18th-19th century origin. Chalk flint is the dominant building material, often edged with red brick.
- A landscape transformed in the 18th century with the establishment of great landed estates, with much of the downland bought up to create large holdings and planted up with woodland for economic and aesthetic reasons. The area remains an estate landscape with strong sporting traditions.
- A deeply rural secluded landscape intruded upon by the A3.
- Where woodland permits there are some panoramic views across adjacent landscape types.

Character Area 1a: Queen Elizabeth Forest





IA: Queen Elizabeth Forest

Location and Boundaries

- IA.1 The character area is located in the south east part of East Hampshire District, comprising part of the wooded chalk ridge which extends eastwards beyond the district boundary. The northern boundary of the area is defined by the crest of the north facing scarp slope, while the southern boundary is defined by the extent of dense woodland cover and the transition to a more open downland landscape. To the west the boundary of the character area is marked by the A3, indicative of the transition to a more open downland mosaic.

The character area is wholly within the South Downs National Park. It forms part of a much larger character area extending to the east beyond the district boundary.

Key Characteristics

- Part of a vast rolling upland chalk ridge, with a southern dipslope furrowed by dry valley systems.
- Supports extensive woodland including ancient woodland (Oakham Bottom and Glass Brow) plus beech, mixed and commercial coniferous plantation (e.g. War Down and Holt Down), including many relatively young plantations.
- Hanging woodland (Downley Hanger and Newbarn Hanger) dominated by beech, ash and yew also features on steep slopes.
- Enclosed character with woodland dominating, with intermittent and limited views. The area also includes some straight-sided, irregular open arable fields linked by hedgerows; the area around Ditcham is more open and agricultural in character.
- Occasional areas of unimproved chalk grassland persists on steeper slopes (Coulters Dean SSSI) of special interest and biodiversity value.
- Strong sense of remoteness within the wooded core. At the same time an accessible landscape with high levels of public access on foot and horseback, including the South Downs Way national trail, Staunton Way, Hangers Way and Queen Elizabeth Country Park.
- A very low density of dispersed settlement characterised by occasional scattered farmsteads - most of 18th-19th century origin and associated with estates. Main buildings are the Queen Elizabeth Country Park Visitor Centre and Ditcham Park (now a school).
- Parkland landscape at Ditcham Park provides evidence of the great transformation of the landscape in the 18th century; the combination of parkland and agricultural land create a more open landscape with some long views to the south.

- Ancient sites generally hidden within woodland - Romano-British and Iron Age buildings, field systems and holloways occur within the plantation at Holt Down.
- Cut by major north- south routes of the A3 and rail line, which sever the landscape. Both are major engineering projects with the road in a deep cutting through the scarp at Buster and the railway in a tunnel and cutting.
- Where woodland cover permits there are some panoramic views across adjacent landscapes - particularly notable are the views across the scarp and into the Greensand Terrace (e.g. Buriton) and some longer views to the south.

Physical Landscape

- I.A.2 This landscape character area occupies the western end of a prominent northern ridge of Upper and Middle Chalk which extends eastwards beyond the boundary of East Hampshire District. The chalk has been eroded along the ridgeline and the dip slope is furrowed by dry valleys. These erosional processes have created a landform of significant and sometimes dramatic undulations. Communication routes exploit the north south running valleys and folds in the chalk.
- I.A.3 Slightly acidic heavy soils support a particularly extensive areas of woodland, including oak, birch and holly on the less well drained clayey soils, and beech dominating on deeper calcareous flint soils. Hanger woodland is a distinctive feature on the steepest slopes (Downley Hanger). The more easily cultivated soils of the shallower dip slopes often support large arable fields which interlock with the woodland. Hedgerows link the straight-sided, irregular open arable fields in blocks of both early and recent enclosure.
- I.A.4 Plantation woodland associated with the estate landscape of Ditcham Park is a feature.

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape

- I.A.5 The rolling chalk landform, extensive woodland cover and vast fields contribute to a perception of a large scale and simple landscape. Within this character area there is significant contrast between the densely wooded parts, which convey a strong sense of enclosure and remoteness, and the open hilltops allowing expansive views, with those form the high downs around Ditcham Park extending across Southern Hampshire to the Solent and the Isle of Wight on a clear day. Within the woodland, there are some intermittent views from rides and clearings. Woodland and arable land uses are interlinked along angular lines contrasting with the smoothly rolling landform. The wooded ridge creates distinctive dark horizons in views from the south, while from the lower land to the north the plantations on the ridgeline are a prominent skyline feature, contrasting with the more open scarp to the west. The colours of the beech woods and cereal crops create dramatic seasonal change.
- I.A.6 Although this character area contains large blocks of coniferous woodland alongside intensive agricultural production, it has a strong sense of remoteness as a result of its low noise levels, sparse settlement, large areas of semi-natural woodland, and few overt built human impacts. A significant intrusion is the A3 (T) forming the western boundary following the line of a dry valley. The road passes through a road cutting with steep engineered banks forming a dominant visual feature and a local source of

noise and disruption. Within the character area itself, there are few roads, although the Waterloo-Portsmouth rail line dissects and severs the area.

- IA.7 The Queen Elizabeth Country Park ensures the landscape is highly accessible on foot, bicycle and horse with good opportunities for informal recreation. The area includes notable national and regional routes including The Hangers Way, South Downs Way and Staunton Way. East to west access across the area is however severed by the rail line, with the landscape around Ditcham being exceptionally 'quiet'.

Biodiversity

- IA.8 The eastern half of this character area has retained significant ancient woodland cover (Oakham Bottom, Glass Brow and The Harris). Together with extensive areas of broadleaved, mixed and conifer plantation this creates a strongly wooded character. Within the plantation woodlands, open rides and glades are an important habitat feature.
- IA.9 The woodland resource includes ancient hanger woodlands (Downley Hanger and Newbarn Hanger) dominated by beech, ash and yew, as well as mixed beech woodland associated with the deeper calcareous flint soils and mixed oak woodland on the poorly draining clay soils. The ecological importance of these woodlands is recognised through designation of many of county importance as SINCs. There are in addition number of SINCs associated with lime pits or former quarries.
- IA.10 Arable fields occur within the wooded matrix and occasional areas of unimproved chalk grassland are found on the steeper slopes and ridge tops. Part of Oakham Bottom (Coulters Dean) on a west facing fold of the escarpment retains a small area of chalk grassland and is designated as a SSSI.
- IA.11 The relatively intact hedgerow network around the arable fields has an important function in linking woodland blocks.

Historic Character

- IA.12 The ridge of wooded downland has been favoured for settlement throughout history. Agricultural communities continued to clear the tree cover and farm the downland on an increasing scale until the Romano-British period, leaving extensive traces of their field systems and settlements across the landscape (as represented by the earthworks at Holt Down Plantation). The land was also valued as a ritual landscape, with a number of different monuments constructed, mainly round barrows. Many of these sites were prominently located on, or just below, the ridge-line, although today they are largely hidden within plantation woodland. There is some evidence to suggest that further tree clearance of the woodland on the heavier clay soils was undertaken by Romano-British farmers who had the benefit of improved ploughing technology to tackle the heavy soils.
- IA.13 Subsequently, centuries of arable cultivation exhausted the downland soils on the ridges, and the landscape was given over to pasture. It is likely that woodland regenerated on the heavier clay soils. A sheep-corn husbandry system developed throughout the medieval period, although pasture was less extensive due to the increased woodland cover, and sheep were often required to graze common wood

pastures, together with cattle and pigs, producing a pastoral system reminiscent of the Weald. The woodland was exploited for a wide range of craft industries.

- IA.14 The downs were also used to a great extent for hunting in the medieval period. Reorganisation of the landscape took place from the 18th century with the establishment of large landed estates, generally beyond the district boundary in West Sussex. Within the character area Ditcham Park, recorded on the Hampshire Parks and Gardens Register is an example. Here woodland was cleared for both economic reasons as sources of timber but also as an aesthetic improvement of the landscape. The downland around the woodland was enclosed at this time, and much of these regular enclosures survive, together with isolated farmsteads.
- IA.15 Today, the area is dominated by the extensive beechwoods, both the original pre-1800 woodland core (much of it of medieval origin) and the post-1800 plantations. The open areas between are largely filled with recent enclosures of 18th-19th century date, typified by regular blocks of fields set around isolated farmsteads. Some areas were further transformed during the twentieth century when modern farming techniques allowed the downland to be ploughed up for arable crops. In the 1930's large areas of new plantation woodland, were established by the Forestry Commission as at War Down, Holt Down and Queen Elizabeth Forest. More recent changes have included the establishment of the Queen Elizabeth Country Park (1976), by Hampshire County Council and opening up of the area for public access and recreation.

Key Historic Characteristics

- Survival of significant blocks of pre-1800 (ancient) woodland provides evidence of medieval and early post-medieval woodland exploitation, e.g. coppicing and charcoal burning.
- Extensive areas of post-1800 woodland plantations as well as areas of recent enclosure (around Ditcham) forming part of post-1800 gentrification of the landscape.
- Absence of large-scale settlement indicative of the marginal nature of landscape.
- Post 1900 plantation woodland representing post-war planting of woodlands e.g. by the Forestry Commission.
- 18th century landed estate at Ditcham provides evidence of the great transformation of the landscape which remains a dominant influence on the character of the landscape today.

Settlement Form and Built Character

- IA.16 The area is characterised by low density, sparse settlement and absence of hamlets or villages. The typical settlement form is relatively late in origin, and comprises occasional isolated farmsteads of 18th-19th century origin set within areas of recent enclosure derived from former sheep walk. The principal building of note is Ditcham Park (now a school), with associated lodges, plus an agglomeration of farm buildings at Fagg Farm.

IA.17 Building materials are typically flint, red brick and clay tiles.

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

IA.18 Key sensitivities include:

- Visual prominence of the skyline above the scarp (are 5A) and need to consider effects of changes in management e.g. woodland felling on views.
- Areas of ancient woodland, which have a rich ground flora and contribute to the distinctly wooded and deeply rural character.
- The large scale of the landscape created by the landform, extensive woodland plantations, and vast fields bounded by hedgerows.
- Remnant areas of chalk grassland (Coulters Dean SSSI) and hanger woodland which are of great biodiversity interest and which are vulnerable to changes in management and require consistent grazing regimes.
- The strong sense of remoteness arising from the extensive woodlands, relatively limited access by car, and low density of dispersed settlement.
- The ‘undeveloped’ character and essential absence of buildings and settlement.
- The archaeological sites hidden within woodland and archaeological potential of this area.
- The open landscape and historic parkland at Ditcham Park.
- Panoramic views from open tops of the ridgeline.
- The need to balance public access and recreational use with the deeply rural ‘remote’ character.

The high proportion of woodland cover in this landscape type limits visual sensitivity of the landscape. The prominent undeveloped ridges and hills, particularly around Ditcham and the scarp skyline are the most visually sensitive part of the landscape.

Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

IA.19 **The overall management objective should be to conserve the large scale landscape of woodland interspersed with farmland, and the deeply rural ‘undeveloped’ secluded character.**

Landscape Management Considerations

- Conserve the large scale mosaic of distinctive beechwoods, ancient woodlands and hedgerows that create a bold, distinctive identity. Management should follow the relevant Forestry Commission guidance.
- Encourage re-planting of native broadleaved species as coniferous woodlands are felled. Reduce the impact of forestry by encouraging sensitive forestry practice.

Consider the impact of forestry operations on views, avoiding harsh edges and fragmented blocks which could be at odds with this large scale rolling landscape - the scarp skyline to the north is a particularly sensitive feature.

- Manage woodland to ensure a diverse species and age structure to minimise risk of damage as a result of increased storms and high winds. Promote interest in, and marketing of, local wood products
- Identify areas within the plantation woodland which retain semi-natural features, ground flora or areas of archaeological interest and seek to protect, manage and enhance these features.
- Conserve and manage the intact hedgerow network with hedgerow trees which are of biodiversity interest and create a strong landscape pattern linking into the woodland as well as contributing to seclusion and enclosure. Create buffer strips along hedgerows, monitor regeneration of hedgerow trees and consider re-planting where necessary.
- Protect and continue to manage the existing chalk grassland (Coulter's Dean) through appropriate grazing regimes and management of scrub. Seek to extend areas of chalk grassland, where appropriate.
- Maintain and enhance the species diversity of areas of semi-improved grassland, which act as a reservoir for more common chalk downland species.
- Conserve the historic designed landscape at Ditcham Park.
- Maintain the character of the rural character of the unmarked lanes.
- Maintain the network of bridleways and public and consider further opportunities for recreation and access in less sensitive areas.

Development Considerations

- Conserve the very low density of settlement, general absence of built development and road access, and consequent strong sense of remoteness.
- Maintain clear, undeveloped ridges and skylines – particularly those that are that are visible from adjacent landscapes.
- Consider views from the ridge in association with any change in adjacent areas, for example in the scarp footslopes to the north.
- Seek opportunities to reduce the visual and aural impact of the A3(T).