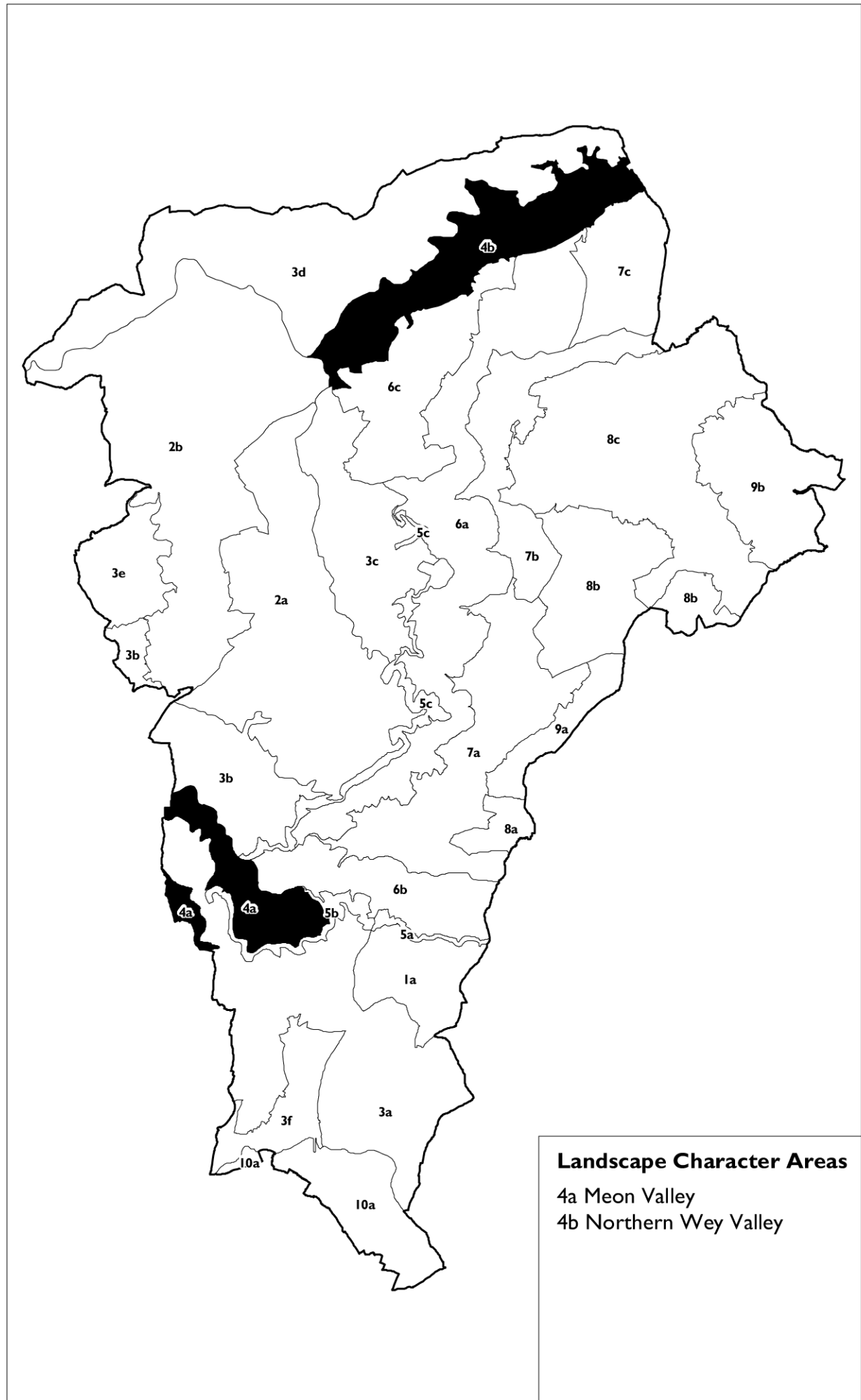
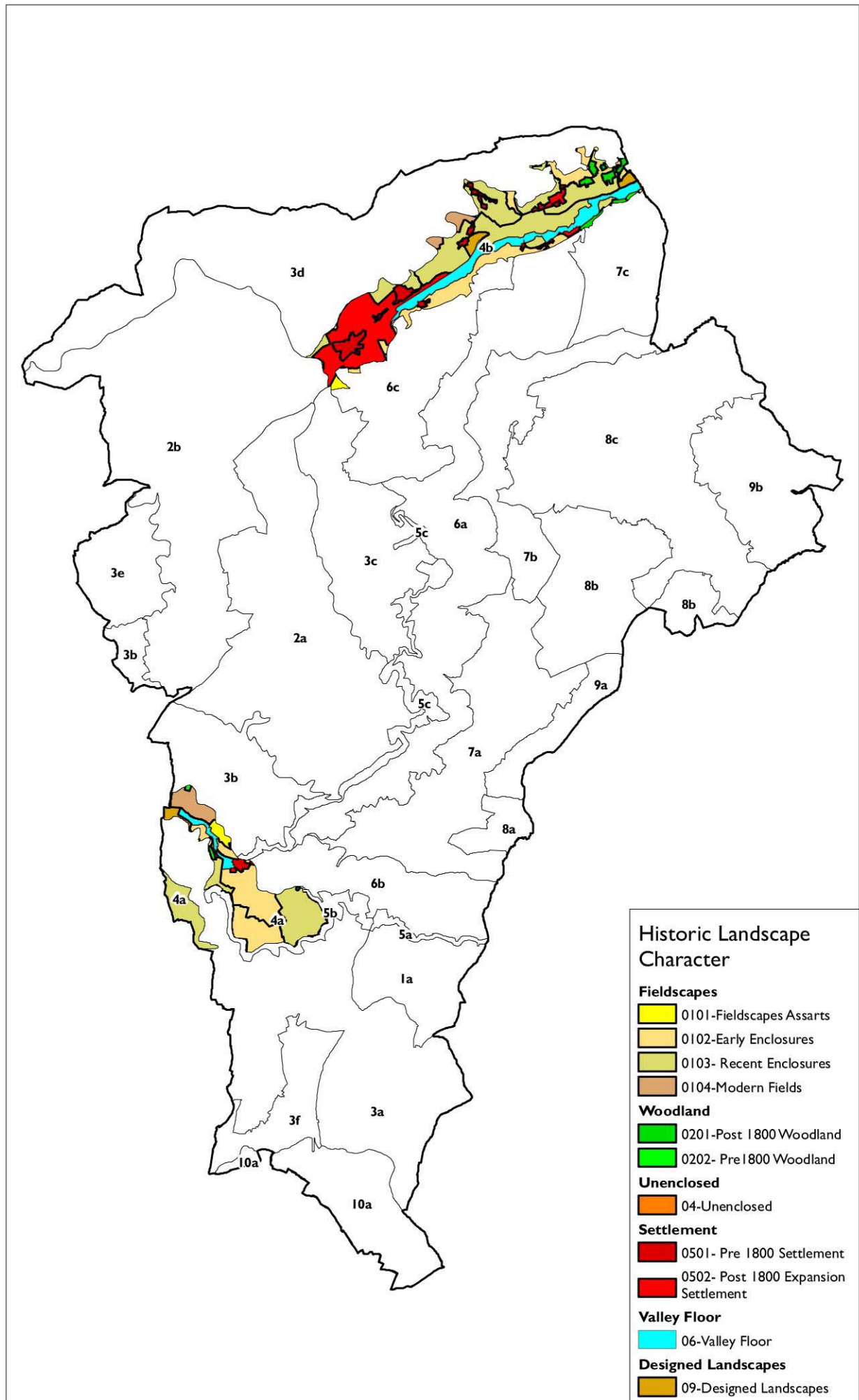


Landscape Type 4 : Chalk Valley Systems



Landscape Type 4 : Chalk Valley Systems



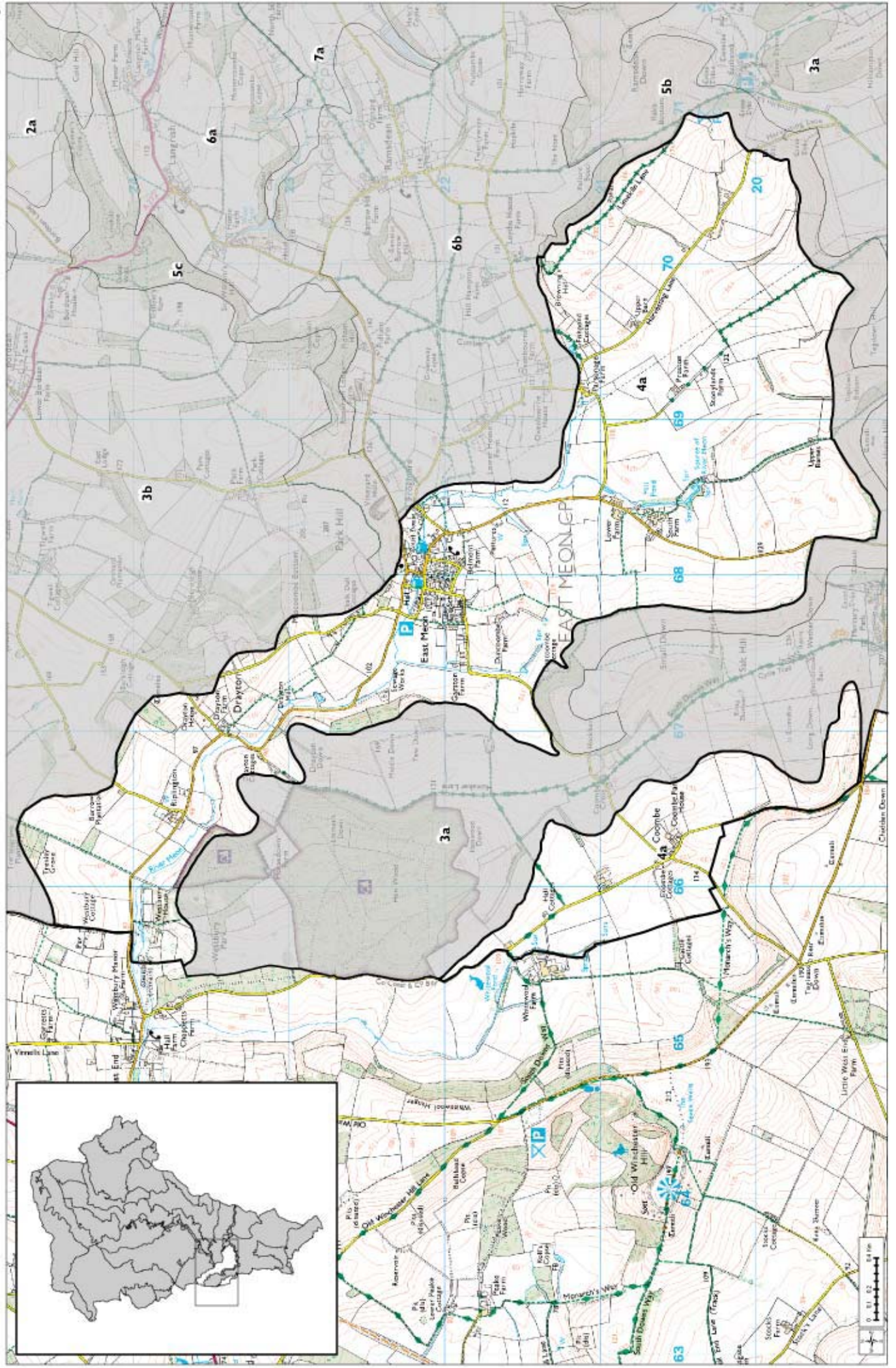
LANDSCAPE TYPE 4: CHALK VALLEY SYSTEMS

- 4.1 The *chalk valley systems* are branching valley systems that drain the dipslope of the chalk downs and contain a river along at least part of their length. They often follow the lines of faults in the chalk and are winterbournes in their upper reaches.

Key Characteristics

- Broad, branching valleys carved from the chalk downs and indented by dry valleys and coombes to produce smoothly rounded valley sides.
- On the valley sides the chalk soils support intensive arable cultivation on shallower slopes, with pasture, calcareous grassland, scrub and woodland on steeper slopes.
- Valleys are often winterbournes in their upper reaches – wells and springs are features.
- Lower valley floors contain clear, chalk rivers that flow within a flat, narrow floodplain characterised by permanent pasture, wet woodland, water meadows, and open water, all of which are of great ecological interest.
- Historically, meadowland alongside the river was integral to the medieval sheep-corn husbandry regime, providing valuable winter and spring grazing for the extensive communal sheep flocks.
- The valleys have provided important routeways from prehistory - today, they often contain a road or winding lane connecting a string of regularly spaced nucleated flint villages. Stone built medieval bridges are located at historic river crossing points.
- Farms, including distinctive flint barns, are located on lower valley sides, sheltered by trees and forming a visual focus. Gentry houses and landscape parks provide evidence of the wealthy population of the past.
- Extensive blocks of early enclosure occur throughout the valleys, notably around settlements, indicating survival of late medieval landscape.
- Rivers were used to power watermills in the past - weirs, mill ponds and mills, as well as fish farms, trout lakes, and watercress beds are distinctive features of the landscape.
- Away from transport corridors the valleys retain an unspoilt and tranquil pastoral character.

Character Area 4a: Meon Valley





4A: Meon Valley

Location and Boundaries

- 4A.1 Located on the south west edge of the district, this character area comprises the valley of the River Meon between the source of the Meon (at East Meon) and the district boundary. The upper edge of the valley is defined by the crest of the slope and has been drawn along the apparent skyline of the valley as seen from the valley floor.
- 4A.2 The character area also includes an additional area around Coombe, which forms part of the valley relating to a tributary of the Meon in the adjacent (Winchester) district.

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

Key Characteristics

- Contained and enclosed valley carved into the chalk with smooth, steep valley sides and scarps. The small scale water course flows within a narrow floodplain.
- Valley form widens out towards the head to include a bowl of more open arable land encompassing the main springs and tributaries.
- On the valley sides, shallow well drained, calcareous silty soils support intensive arable cultivation on shallower slopes and pasture, calcareous grassland, scrub and woodland on steeper slopes.
- Steep downland hills and scarps for example north of East Meon (Park Hill) and at Tegdown create a dramatic backdrop and setting to the valley.
- Springs, including the main source of the Meon at South Farm, are located on the chalk. This is the highest rising chalk stream in the UK.
- The clear, chalk river flows in a narrow floodplain which is characterised by small permanent pastures divided by hedgerows, and water meadows.
- Minor rural lanes connect the nucleated village of East Meon and outlying farmsteads to the wider downland (including ancient sunken lanes).
- Key views to East Meon church spire framed by the backdrop of Park Hill.
- Extensive blocks of fields of early enclosure survive throughout the valley indicating survival of late medieval landscape.
- A number of river crossing points on historic bridges.
- Remnant features relating to water management and agricultural/industrial use of the river, including fragments of watermeadows, weirs and mill ponds.
- A peaceful, tranquil landscape.

Physical Landscape

- 4A.3 This character area comprises the upper reaches of the Meon Valley carved from Upper and Middle Chalk by a process of erosion, sometimes along structural folds, to produce a distinctive valley form. East Hampshire district (east of Westbury House) encompasses the upper part of the Meon Valley, with the river flowing within a small-scale watercourse confined by steep slopes. Beyond east Meon the valley form is less distinct and widens out at its head with springs rising within a bowl of land contained by the scarp to the south - this area is more open and lacking woodland cover compared to the enclosed valley downstream. Where the valley coincides with structural folds in the chalk the result is often an asymmetrical valley with one extremely steep valley side (e.g. south of Drayton).
- 4A.4 The underlying chalk geology gives rise to shallow well drained, calcareous silty soils, known as grey and brown rendzinas. Deposits of 'Head' (weathered and broken up material that has moved downslope) are found in the bottom of the valleys where they give rise to deeper soils. Where topography permits, the soils support arable cultivation. The steeper slopes of the valley sides and adjacent scarps support a mixture of calcareous grassland, scrub and woodland. The majority of the upper Meon valley is in arable cultivation or improved grassland.
- 4A.5 The Meon River rises from its main spring at South Farm and is also fed by secondary springs, for example at Duncombe Farm.

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape

- 4A.6 The Meon Valley provides a sheltered environment that contrasts with the exposed character of the surrounding downs. The rising valley sides, small field sizes, presence of hedgerows with hedgerow trees, and woodland all contribute to the enclosed and secluded character. To the south at the valley head the landform widens out – this area, in contrast a more open character with limited hedgerow and tree cover. There are a number of important views into the valley from the adjacent downland and scarps.
- 4A.7 The gently meandering chalk river, valley floor pastures, presence of the intact, attractive compact village of East Meon and absence of large scale development and main roads combines to create a tranquil, peaceful landscape. The South Downs Way dips briefly into the character area; otherwise the rights of way network is limited to local routes which link the valley to the downs. East Meon village is a popular 'hub' for walkers.
- 4A.8 There are a number of locally important parks and gardens in the character area. On the north western valley crest lie Drayton House (home for many years of playwright William Douglas) and Court Hall with 1920's Morley Holder created courtyard gardens. Westbury House and its pre 1810 landscaped park lie adjacent to the district boundary.
- 4A.9 In the Moncrieff's early 20th century 'Guide to Hampshire', the Meon Valley is described as '*a prettily varied country of commons, parks and embowered villages below green slope*'. The village of East Meon is particularly appreciated - Cobbett, writing in the early 19th century, thought that he could '*dwell long on the beauties of this place*'. East Meon was the home of Isaac Walton, a famous angling writer.

Biodiversity

- 4A.10 The Meon Valley supports a range of semi-natural habitats within the mosaic of agricultural (arable and pasture) land. The river is of inherent ecological value and is designated as a SINC, providing a good example of a small chalk river. The river corridor contains a number of further SINC sites e.g. at Drayton Down. Many of the small woods and copses within the lower part of the valley also have SINC status. In addition some small remnant areas of chalk grassland are retained on the steeper slopes and scarps of the valley side. Also of ecological interest are the verges and boundaries of the ancient sunken lanes that cross the valley.

Historic Character

- 4A.11 Occasional finds of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic artefacts along the Meon valley testify to the passage of hunting bands, although these may occur within deposits that have moved downslope, rather than indicating presence of hunting bands within the valley. In the past, it is likely that the rivers were formerly, much wider in extent compared to the present course. By comparison, the alluvial floodplains, although very fertile, were narrow and vulnerable to flooding, rendering them unsuitable for prehistoric and later settlement and arable agriculture, although the meadows may have been used for pasture by communities situated on the higher land to either side of the rivers.
- 4A.12 The more sheltered soils of the valley sides are likely to have been exploited by early farmers. However, evidence for prehistoric and Romano-British occupation is scarce, due to suitable deposits being buried beneath later colluvial deposits.
- 4A.13 By the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods, the valley formed an integral part of an agrarian landscape based around sheep-corn husbandry and the exploitation of the extensive woodlands on the downs. At this time a series of small nucleated settlements were established up the valleys, in this character area exemplified by the village of East Meon, surrounded by rings of open fields, with open downland and woodland beyond. Large amounts of meadowland were listed in the Domesday Survey - these rich pastures on the valley floors provided valuable winter and spring grazing for the extensive communal sheep flocks that were folded on the arable land at night. The rivers were typically used to power watermills. There is a deserted medieval village at Westbury. A medieval deer park is recorded at East Meon extending to the area of Park Hill to the north.
- 4A.14 The river valley provided an important routeway from prehistory onwards linking the south coast to the Thames valley, although the part of the Meon is always likely to have been too small to be navigable. The 16th and 17th centuries saw the development of water meadows, regulated systems of ditches and channels that provided a continuity of access to winter feed for the sheep flocks, but with a greater degree of control. These were abandoned in the 19th century.
- 4A.15 The open fields were enclosed during the late medieval/early post-medieval period, resulting in small blocks of irregular fields bounded by hedgerows situated around the main settlements, much of which survive in the present landscape. The remainder of the open land was enclosed during the 18th-19th century as exemplified by the land at the head of the valley around Stonylands Farm. This is an area of regular enclosures containing isolated farmsteads.

4A.16 Today, the floodplain is occupied by a series of enclosed fields, reclaimed from the former marshy margins of the river from the medieval period onwards. Fragmentary systems of water meadows are evident, together with a number of archaeological features characteristic of flood plains, including bridges, weirs and mills. Landscape parks, as at the locally important park at Westbury House, are a further typical feature.

Key Historic Characteristics

- Nucleated settlement (East Meon) - indicative of medieval manorial system based around open fields.
- Early enclosures along the main part of the valley floor and surrounding the village of East Meon - indicative of survival of a late medieval landscape pattern.
- Recent enclosure at the head of the valley - forming part of post-1800 gentrification of the landscape.
- Scattered post-medieval farmsteads - indicates the changing nature of farming practice following decline of traditional manorial system.
- Presence of designed landscape (Westbury Park) listed on the Hampshire Register.
- Remnant features relating to water management and agricultural/industrial use of the river – provides evidence of the importance of the river and its margins in the local economy throughout history.

Settlement Form and Built Character

4A.17 The settlement pattern consists of the nucleated village of East Meon and a number of farmsteads located along the valley. The village of East Meon is of medieval origin, surrounded by irregular enclosures of late medieval date. Typically the valley sides support dispersed of farmsteads of largely 18th-19th century date set within regular enclosures of the same date.

4A.18 East Meon is a distinctive compact village dominated by All Saints Church set against the backdrop of Park Hill. Historic buildings front directly onto the grid of narrow streets, and the River Meon flows through the centre of the village crossed by a series of low flint and brick bridges.

4A.19 Building materials are typically flint, red brick, clay tile and straw thatch.

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

4A.20 Key sensitivities include:

- The smooth form of the intact valley sides which reveal the chalk landform.
- Views from the surrounding hills to village of East Meon in its dramatic valley setting, including panoramic views from Butser Hill, Salt Hill, Park Hill.

- Uninterrupted skylines in views from the valley floor (e.g. Salt Hill, Park Hill, Tegdown and Butser Hill) which are especially sensitive to development. Masts and pylons already interrupt the skyline.
- Areas of pasture and remnant chalk grassland on the steeper valley sides.
- The course of the Meon River, including the springs, meanders, pools, and riffles, and the clear alkaline spring water.
- The narrow pastoral floodplain, with habitats that have a high biodiversity value.
- The form, character and rural setting of the compact nucleated village of East Meon.
- The setting of and uninterrupted views to the church spire at East Meon set against the rising valley side backdrop (Park Hill).
- Ancient sunken lanes extending from the village of East Meon.
- The extensive blocks of early enclosure, notably around East Meon which indicate survival of late medieval landscapes.
- Historic bridges which provide minor crossing points over the river.
- Remnant water meadows, which are distinctive historic features.
- Mills, weirs and mill ponds which provide evidence for past use of the river.
- The woodlands and hedgerows limit visual sensitivity to an extent. However, the visibility of the Meon Valley from the adjacent downs, particularly from Winchester Hill and Buster Hill increases visual sensitivity. From within the valleys, the valley crests are seen against an open sky and are particularly visually sensitive.

Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

- 4A.21 The overall management objective should be to conserve the rural character of the Meon Valley and the distinctive character of East Meon village. The aim should be to enhance the natural floodplain landscape and appropriate water flows and high water quality.**

Landscape Management Considerations

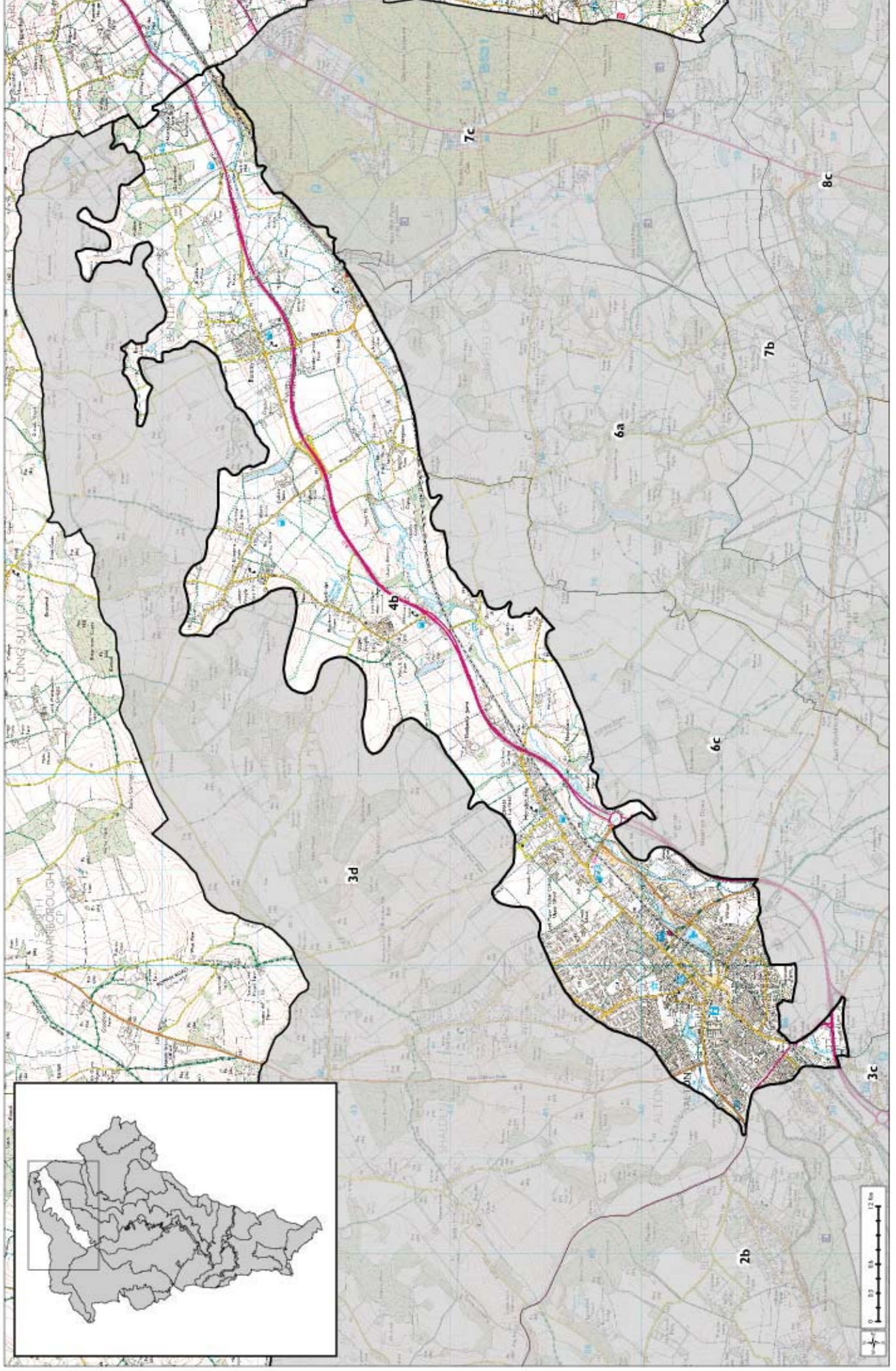
- Conserve the intact smooth form of the valley and its dramatic chalk landforms.
- Strengthen the visual significance of the river channel and associated floodplain landscapes of pastures and water meadows.
- Conserve and enhance areas of semi-improved and unimproved grassland on the valley floor (floodplain grassland) and valley sides (chalk grassland) and seek to extend and link habitats.

- Monitor water quality in the Meon and seek to minimise nitrogen run off/ water pollution resulting from intensive farming. Seek to create a buffer of grassland along the river course and encourage conversion of arable to grassland on valley sides.
- Monitor water flows and seek to enhance summer flows and ensure sensitive and subtle measures for flood prevention in winter.
- Manage and extend areas of unimproved river valley grassland, bank edge vegetation, and water meadows which have a high biodiversity value and contribute to the visual significance of the river channels.
- Manage valley side and valley bottom woodlands to ensure a diverse species and age structure by thinning, coppicing, and replanting as necessary. This will also minimise risk of damage as a result of increased storms and high winds.
- Conserve the extensive blocks of early enclosure patterns around villages, which indicate survival of a late medieval landscape.
- Conserve the distinctive built features of the valleys such as mills, weirs, and historic bridges, which provide evidence for past use and management. In particular retain small scale valley crossing points.
- Conserve remnant historic water meadow systems which are of historic and archaeological interest as well as ecological value.
- Encourage traditional management of flooding in spring and grazing with stock during the summer and autumn.

Development Considerations

- Maintain the compact nucleated form of the medieval village of East Meon and conserve the rural setting and uninterrupted backdrop of Park Hill.
- Ensure that any built development reflects the local vernacular - seek to resist suburban style garden boundaries, kerbs, and lighting, through provision of appropriate guidance.
- Conserve the open skylines of the valley crests which are particular sensitive in views from within the valley. Pay particular attention to the panoramic views from Winchester Hill and Butser Hill (in adjacent character areas) in planning any change within the Meon Valley.
- Consider the effects of any change in the Meon Valley in views from popular viewpoints on the adjacent downs and scarps.

Character Area 4b: Northern Wey Valley





4B: Northern Wey Valley

Location and Boundaries

- 4B.1 The broad *Northern Wey Valley* character area is located to the north east of East Hampshire District, extending from the River's source to the south west of Alton. From this point the River flows in a north easterly direction towards Farnham in the adjacent district. The northern and southern boundaries are defined roughly along the 110m contour line, following the apparent skyline of the valley as seen from the valley floor. The valley forms a main linear communication corridor linking Hampshire and Surrey containing the route of the A31 and the main rail line.

The character area is not in the South Downs National Park

Key Characteristics

- A broad valley, cutting through and enclosed by the Chalk, Upper Greensand and Gault Mudstone geology.
- The river arises as springs around which the market town of Alton has grown. The upper part of the river is a winterbourne, flowing seasonally.
- The northern chalk valley sides are indented by short coombe valleys and form bold bluffs overlooking the valley. To the south the valley sides are more varied and include the wooded backdrop of Alice Holt, as well as the lower land of the Greensand Terrace.
- The valley floodplain is predominantly pastoral with arable cultivation on the valley sides.
- Willows are features of the valley floor forming a distinct pattern alongside channels and ditches. Hanging woodland is occasionally present on the steeper slopes of the valley sides.
- Flood meadows with wet grasslands (e.g. around Froyle Mill) are of particular ecological interest for the range of wetland plant species they support, and their associated wildlife interest.
- Historic features associated with the river are apparent today. Remnant features relating to water management and agricultural/industrial use of the river, include weirs, mills, millponds, watercress beds.
- A string of nucleated settlements of medieval origin exist on the gravel terrace forming the lower valley slopes (e.g. Bentley, Holybourne and Upper Froyle). These are surrounded by a mix of early and recent field enclosures. The upper part of the valley is centered around the market town of Alton
- An important route way since prehistory formerly part of the Pilgrim's Way linking Winchester to the North Downs; this route today, is represented by St. Swithun's Way.

- Main transport routes (A31 and railway) cut across the flat open valley floor, interrupting the otherwise tranquil character.

Physical Landscape

- 4B.2 The River Wey flows within a narrow river channel, and is visually quite insignificant in contrast to the other linear features (road and rail line) which cut along the valley bottom. The river has, however created a distinctive valley form carved through the varied geology of Chalk (to the north) and Upper Greensand and Gault (to the south) and has a wide flat floodplain. The differing geological conditions result in a valley with a distinct profile with strong chalk bluffs to the north and a more varied profile to the south. The northern valley side is also incised by coombes created by the erosional force of water flow over the chalk. On the flatter valley floor the overlying fertile alluvial drift material give rise to predominantly loamy soils. The immediate floodplain is dominated by pasture, including some paddocks. Arable farming is the dominant land use on the gravel terraces; land between Alton and Bentley has an Agricultural land classification of Grade 2. Local crops including hops are grown, especially at Froyle, where the hop poles, wires and former oast houses create a distinctive local feature.
- 4B.3 Although not extensively wooded, there are significant areas of hanging woodland and copses on the valley sides, for example north east of Alton at Mill Court and Wallfield Copse. Willow trees are characteristic of the valley floor. To the east the dark rising slopes of conifer woodland at Alice Holt form a dominant backdrop.

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape

- 4B.4 The scale of the landscape is varied along the course of the valley as a result of the variety of land uses. On the valley bottom the flat landform and hedged fields create a medium scale landscape. The well maintained hedgerows, which mark the field boundaries and lines of willows along ditches, combine to provide some enclosure. Views are afforded from the valley bottom up the valley sides and from one side of the valley to the other. On the higher valley the arable land use creates a more open landscape with some long views across the valley.
- 4B.5 The A31 impacts greatly on the tranquility of this landscape. In the valley bottom, the hedgerows and trees reduce the visible and audible impact of A31 and railway. The watercourses and associated vegetation result in a high level of perceived naturalness and tranquility. However, when viewed from the higher elevations of the valley sides the busy A31 and the railway line are dominant features.
- 4B.6 The Wey valley is accessible and forms a major transport corridor linking Alton and Guildford. This has resulted in a degree of fragmentation and detracts from the visual unity of the landscape. There are a number of footpaths linking the nucleated settlements of the valley sides, notably St. Swithun's Way along the line of the former Pilgrim's Lane. The Hangers Way long distance footpath begins at Alton railway station. There is a sense that whilst accessible, the landscape is used for passing through, rather than for recreational purposes.
- 4B.7 The village of Bentley features in the radio programme 'The Village' which looks at the rural village and profiles its inhabitants. Lord Baden Powell lived in the village.

The 'Bentley Book' which can be found on the Alton Road, was designed by Lord Baden Powell for the Daily Mail competition for village signs 1923. A further local feature is Upper Froyle village with its distinctive 'saints'.

Biodiversity

- 4B.8 The immediate floodplain of the River Wey is dominated by improved and semi-improved grassland, divided by occasional hedgerows and frequent trees including lines of willow. Pockets of marshy grassland also occur, for example around Froyle Mill, which includes an area SINC status, and at the sewage works to the east of Alton. These wet grasslands are of particular ecological interest for their range of wetland plant species, and their associated wildlife interest. Occasional former watercress beds are also of note supporting aquatic plants. Ponds such as Kings Ponds near Alton are further examples of valuable local habitats.
- 4B.9 Away from the immediate river floodplain, rising ground is typically dominated by arable agriculture, together with very occasional woodland blocks, particularly to the east of Bentley. The majority of this woodland is of ancient origin, although much has been replanted. Many woodlands have SINC status.

Historic Character

- 4B.10 This character area was a significant transit corridor during prehistoric and later periods, allowing access between the south coast, via the Solent river systems (Meon and Itchen) and the Thames valley.
- 4B.11 Today, it is a predominantly a landscape of recent planned enclosure of 18th-19th century date, particularly on the northern and higher slopes of the valley, although probably representing modifications of earlier enclosed landscape of later medieval date on the lower fertile slopes to take advantage of improved farming techniques. Southern slopes rise onto the Greensand Terrace, forming early enclosures of late medieval/post-medieval date.
- 4B.12 Historic features associated with the river are apparent. Remnant features relating to water management and agricultural/industrial use of the river, include weirs, mills, millponds.

Key Historic Characteristics

- Absence of woodland apart from localised blocks of pre-1800 woodland east of Bentley.
- Occasional archaeological monuments, notably the Roman settlement site at Cuckoo's Corner east of Alton at point where Chichester-Silchester Roman road crosses the valley (SAM).
- Absence of major historic parkland reflecting the agricultural emphasis of the landscape – one small parkland (Lord Mayor Treloar College) originated as Froyle Place, a Tudor house later used as a military hospital in WWI and subsequently established as a hospital under NHS control in 1948, but now a school.

Settlement Form and Built Character

- 4B.13 A series of nucleated settlements of medieval origin along the lower valley slopes (e.g. Bentley, Holybourne and Upper Froyle), located on the slightly raised gravel terrace above the flood level. The settlements are surrounded by a mix of early and recent enclosures.
- 4B.14 The valley has a strong linear communication pattern, now dominated by the A31, with parallel earlier trackway traversing the length of the valley upslope linking the medieval settlements (fossilised as the St. Swithun's Way footpath). The main London-Winchester railway line (1852) is a further influence within the valley. Further upslope to the north lies a scatter of farmsteads of largely 18th-19th century date set within regular enclosures.
- 4B.15 Traditional building materials include flint, red brick and clay tiles. The villages of Bentley, Upper Froyle have churches which provide a focus and are key feature in views up from the valley floor.

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

- 4B.16 Key sensitivities include:
- Areas of pasture plus unimproved grassland and wet grassland of the valley floor which are of considerable biodiversity interest.
- 4B.17 The network of hedges and waterside willows which create enclosure and visual unity across the valley floor are vulnerable to loss/lack of management. Creation of hard boundaries such as paddock fencing can cause further fragmentation of the landscape.
- The course of the river including springs, ponds and streams – the water quality and water flow within the river are especially sensitive to change.
 - The individual identity of the settlements located on the gravel terrace away from the floodplain could be vulnerable to incremental change and loss of strong nucleated character. The undeveloped rural roads linking the settlements are especially important.
 - The mills, weirs, mill ponds and watercress beds which provide evidence for past use of the river are important features worthy of conservation.
 - The archaeological monuments – Roman settlement site at Cuckoo's Corner east of Alton at point where Chichester-Silchester Roman road crosses the valley (SAM).
 - The skyline and slopes of the adjacent downland (3a) where changes for example development and loss of tree cover are very visible from the valley floor.
- 4B.18 The presence of the larger settlements of Alton and Farnham at either end of the valley create strong pressure for change along the main transport corridors.

- 4B.19 The open, character of this landscape with limited woodland cover amplifies its visual sensitivity with views afforded from one side of the valley to the other. Any new development or large scale change would therefore be highly visible, however its impacts could be mitigated through appropriate planting.

Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

- 4B.20 **The overall management objective should be to conserve the tranquil, natural character of the Northern Wey Valley, and the individual identity of the small villages set on the gravel terrace above the floodplain. The valley should provide an open rural landscape between the towns of Alton and Farnham. The character of the enclosing valley sides, particularly the downland to the north of the Wey, which form the backdrop to the valley, should also be conserved.**

Landscape Management Considerations

- Conserve and enhance areas of flood meadow semi-improved, and wet grassland. Consider opportunities for extending these habitats.
- Safeguard water flows to maintain the pastoral quality of the valley floor and floodplain habitats.
- Monitor water quality in the rivers and seek to ensure high water quality and minimise water pollution.
- Conserve and manage the network of hedgerows and waterside trees of the valley floor.
- Manage small valley side and valley bottom woodlands to ensure a diverse species and age structure by thinning, coppicing and replanting as necessary. This will also minimise the risk of damage as a result of increased storms and high winds.
- Conserve historic elements such as mills, weirs and mill ponds and watercress beds which provide evidence for past use of the river.
- Encourage sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, hardstanding, jumps and other paraphernalia that are associated with horse keeping.

Development Considerations

- Conserve the setting of villages and views to key features such as church towers/spires.
- Monitor further incremental linear development from Alton along the A31 and seek to conserve a rural landscape along the valley between Alton and Farnham.
- Conserve the small scale nucleated character of the gravel terrace settlements and conserve the rural roads linking settlements.