

3E: MEON VALLEY



River Meon in downland setting near Meonstoke; narrow stream bed; often with watermeadows and frequently well wooded sides.



Downland setting - The Meon Valley has a narrow valley floor- Droxford.



Coastal plain setting— at Titchfield Haven.



Lowland mosaic setting of the Forest of Bere.



East Meon in its downland setting at the head of the valley character area

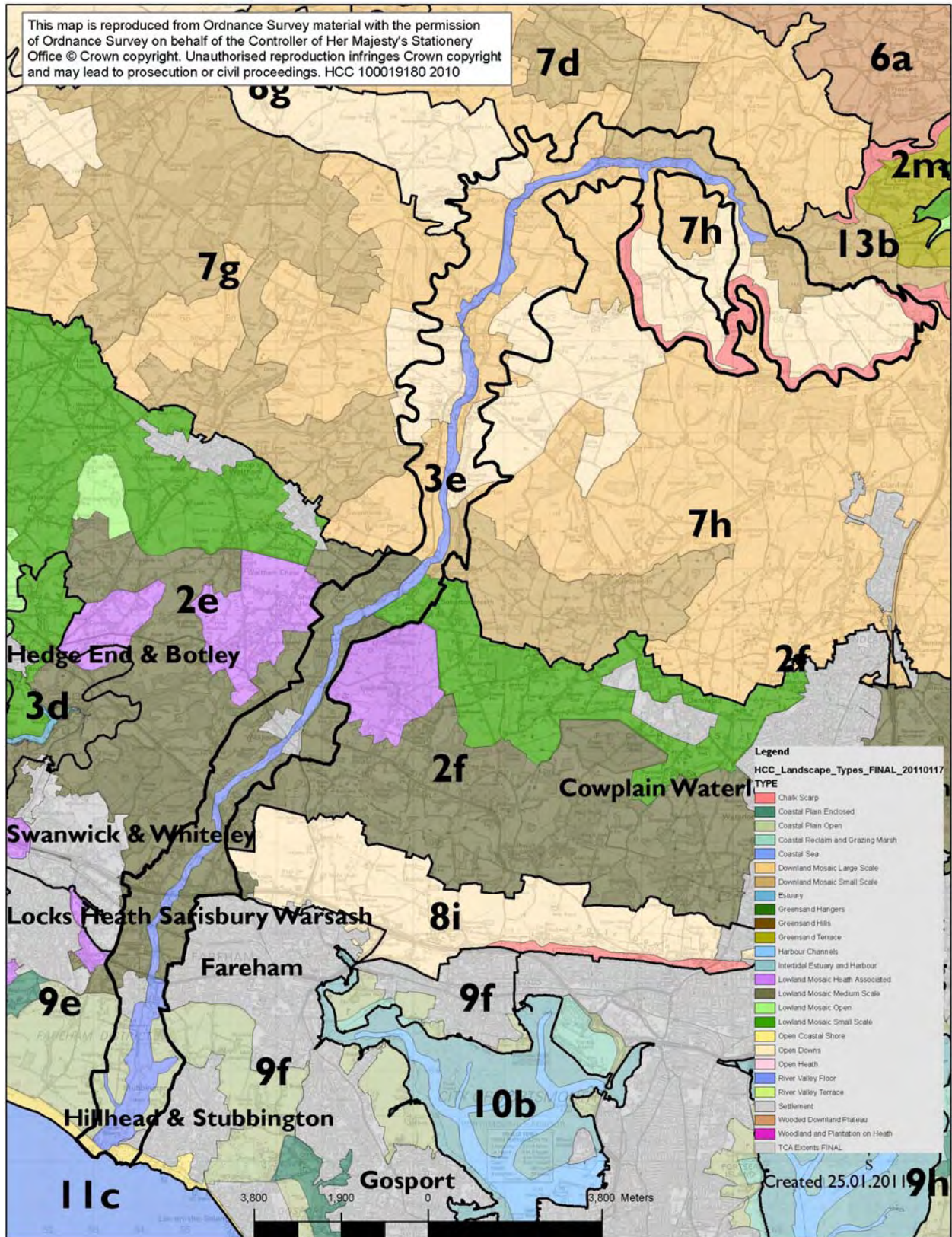


Watercress industry still prevalent in the chalk section – Warnford (LUC)



Titchfield market town - originally a port in early medieval times.

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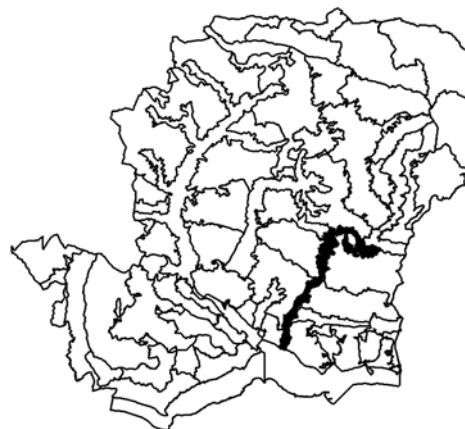
MEON VALLEY



Hampshire
County Council

1.0 Location and Boundaries

1.1 The river Meon rises near East Meon and its valley incorporates downland mosaic, lowland mosaic clay and coastal plain landscapes before finally meeting the Solent at Titchfield Haven and the small harbour of Hillhead. 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 bottom. This is considerably less clearly defined in the lower reaches of the valley. Settlements include Titchfield and Wickham which are located in the lowland landscapes whilst the smaller ones of Droxford, Corhampton, Meonstoke, Exton and West and East Meon are in a downland setting.



1.2 Component County Landscape Types:

River Valley Floor, Open Downs, Downland Mosaic Small Scale, Downland Mosaic Large Scale, Chalk Scarp, Lowland Mosaic Small Scale, Lowland Mosaic Medium Scale, Open Coastal Plain and Settlement.

1.3 Composition of Borough/District LCAs:

East Hampshire

Clanfield (in part)
Downland Mosaic
Meon Valley Chalk Valley
System (in part)

Winchester

Upper Meon Valley
Lower Meon Valley

Fareham

Meon Valley
Titchfield Village

The LCA boundary is drawn on the approximate valley top of the adjoining dry valleys (hence the wavy boundary) and on the rough break in slope indicated by change in contour spacing. The valley boundaries are similar to those defined in local assessments and variation occurs as a result of the perceived extent of valley influence.

1.4 Associations with NCAs and Natural Areas:

NCA 125: South Downs, 126: South Coast Plain, 128: South Hampshire Lowlands
NA 75: South Coastal Plain and Hampshire Lowlands, 74: South Downs

2.0 Key Characteristics

- A fairly narrow major river valley with a relatively narrow valley floor, which passes through downland, lowland mosaic and coastal plain landscapes.
- Southern valley sides are indented by dry valleys and scarp faces in the downland section.
- Increasing proportion of grazing and improved grassland land on the valley sides from the downland to the lowland landscapes.

- Woodland is common on the steeper slopes and is a particular feature where the Meon passes through the lowland mosaic and coastal plain landscapes.
- Internationally significant coastal habitats in its lower reaches and other nationally valued woodland and chalk grassland sites.
- The canal and associated features between the Solent and Titchfield are thought to be the second oldest waterway in the country.
- Major communication links follow close above the valley floor, eg A32, B3334 and the disused Meon Valley railway (now a recreational route).
- Extensive informal enclosure field patterns and significant water meadow (fairly simple layout) survive in the downs section while assarts and formal parliamentary enclosures dominate the lowland mosaic section.
- Strong pattern of nucleated settlements within the valley at strategic river crossing points with relatively little 20th century expansion.

3.0 Physical Characteristics and Landuse

3.1 The Meon Valley can be divided into upper, middle and lower reaches associated with changing geology and landform of the downs, lowland clay and coastal plain respectively.

3.1.1 Within the downland setting (East Meon to just north of Soberton Heath) the valley follows a distinctive curved route from east to west, following a fault in the chalk which creates steep scarp slopes on one side and gentler slopes on the other. There are several, dry valleys/coombes lined with clay and silt head deposits on the valley floors which extend into the chalk. The steep sides are typically grazed and less wooded than through the lowland clay section. The gradient is greatest on the southern side of the uppermost reaches between East and West Meon, where there is a quick succession of middle chalk formations, all with flints. Zig zag chalk (lower chalk) is prevalent on the valley bottom which has thin marls and no inherent flints. There is a comparatively high proportion of improved grassland compared with other downland locations and presence of semi improved neutral/acidic grassland in the valley bottom. The section around Warnford has a long history of watercress growing which continues today. Part of this area falls within the South Downs ESA designation. The predominant countryside stewardship agreements tended to be associated with calcareous grassland and permanent grassland arable reversion.

3.1.2 The middle section (Soberton Heath to just north of Titchfield abbey) is characterised by the presence of waterlogged soils associated with London clay. Sandier lighter soils do occur in association with the Wittering formation either side of the Meon around Wickham. The valley sides are generally a shallower gradient than in the downland setting and the valley width is narrower. Improved grassland and dairying predominate and there is a greater presence of semi and unimproved grassland on the valley bottom and woodland cover on the sides.

3.1.3 South of Titchfield Abbey the Meon flows increasingly through a coastal plain landscape comprising rich silty alluvial soils over sand and gravel geology of the Wittering formation. The valley shape is hard to discern and the sides are of a shallower gradient. The density of woodland compared with the middle section is less but there are more contiguous and extensive areas of unimproved and semi improved grassland and reedbed and fen at Titchfield Haven.

- 3.1.4 The Meon rises at South Farm and is the highest chalk stream source in the UK it is also fed by secondary springs for example Whitewool farm. The river channel is comparatively narrow, compared to Hampshire's other chalk streams due to the smaller catchment area and the floodplain is rarely wider than 200m, but in the coastal plain setting it is up to 700m. At the southern end of the valley are the remains of a canal constructed in 1611 and thought to be the second oldest in the country which linked the Solent with the former port of Titchfield. The sluice gates at Titchfield Haven allowed water levels to be controlled in the river and have produced the right conditions for the establishment of large reedbeds on the Haven.

4.0 Experiential/Perceptual Characteristics

- 4.1 The Meon Valley is full of contrasts and diversity. The downland section and lower reaches of the coastal section tend to be open landscapes whilst the opposite is true of the section in the lowland mosaic landscape. The course of the Meon valley is very distinct when viewed from the surrounding downland, appearing deceptively wooded in comparison to the surrounding chalk landscape. The river valley channel is rarely glimpsed amongst the heavily wooded landscapes in the lowland mosaic landscape.

- 4.2 There are numerous opportunities for public access along and through the Meon Valley, including sections of several long distance routes such as the Wayfarer's Walk, Monarch's Way, South Downs Way and Solent Way. There is also a disused single rail track which linked Fareham, Wickham and Alton which today provides a popular, relatively flat multi user route. The first three routes reflect the strong historical corn and sheep land management links between the river valley floor and the high surrounding downland. Despite the good linear network, open access land is very limited. Some of West Walk and Hen Wood overlaps into the valley and does provide a linked tract of access land but does not extend to the river. As well as being a popular area for countryside access the clear waters of the Meon in the upper chalk section near East Meon is a popular location for fly fishing. Titchfield Haven national nature reserve is a popular attraction for birdwatchers and offers 369ha of diverse coastal wetland habitat.

- 4.3 The valley landscape has largely resisted expansion from adjoining urban areas and has remained relatively unchanged in recent times. As a result there is a strong sense of ruralness, seclusion, and intimate landscape character and lack of development where the valley cuts through the south Hampshire clay lowlands. In the section where the A32 runs through the valley it is generally less tranquil than the surrounding downland landscape.

5.0 Biodiversity Character

- 5.1 The southern end of this LCA is internationally designated and comprises part of the Solent and Southampton Waters RAMSAR and SPA site consisting of estuaries and adjacent coastal habitats including intertidal flats, saline lagoons, shingle beaches, saltmarsh, reedbeds, damp woodland, and grazing marsh. Within this character area however this part of the RAMSAR/SPA covers an area of former estuary which is now extensive freshmarsh as a result of the exclusion of tidal water by one-way tidal valves. This area is also designated the Titchfield Haven SSSI and is flanked by large reed beds and wet, unimproved meadows dissected by drainage ditches and further diversified by pools, flashes and patches of fen. In addition, extensive scrapes have

been constructed. The area is an important resort for surface-feeding duck, including wigeon and teal.

- 5.2 A small part of the Botley Woods and Everett's Mushes Copse SSSI extends into the western edge of this character area as does the Butser Hill SSSI in the north. The former comprise a large tract of woodland in a poorly-drained low-lying hollow. Botley Wood, together with a number of adjoining copses, consists predominantly of conifer plantations established in the 1960s or before in areas of former coppice-with-standards. It is of exceptional importance for its rich insect populations, dependent upon the woodland clearings, broad herb-rich rides with abundant nectar sources and relict stands of semi-natural deciduous woodland.
- 5.3 Beyond specific designations this landscape character area comprises improved grassland and arable land with patches of unimproved and semi-improved grassland (neutral or calcareous) and are often associated with the river, suggestive of water meadows. Woodlands form discrete patches within this landscape, ranging in size and type there are broadleaved woodlands, mixed plantations and parkland, some limited coniferous plantation and active coppice with standards. Ancient woodland is very limited in this landscape, with a small concentration around Mislingford. Patches of marshy grassland, ponds, swamp vegetation and tall marginal vegetation are distributed along the Meon watercourse.
- 5.4 Two BOAs cover this landscape character area: The Meon Valley BOA closely follows the river valley through agriculturally improved grassland and including the ecologically valuable fragments at the lower end, including wet meadows; The Forest of Bere BOA which contains a high concentration of ancient woodlands, wooded common, wood pasture and unimproved grassland and is of particular importance for its small-leaved lime woods. There are over 60 SINC's in this landscape character area which mainly designate ancient woodland resources and unimproved grassland resources.

6.0 Historic Character

6.1 Archaeology

- 6.1.1 The river valley, with its diverse resources and rich floodplain, would have been attractive to hunter gatherers in the Mesolithic, and evidence of their activity is found in the valley and on its flanks. These were ephemeral camps and did not have a landscape impact.
- 6.1.2 In the Neolithic the introduction of arable cultivation saw the beginning of landscape scale change. The evidence of long barrows and settlement clearly place this activity in the upper valley where it is flanked by chalk downland. Although Neolithic artefacts are found in the lowland and coastal areas, the evidence of field systems and settlements is not evident as it is further north.
- 6.1.3 This farmed landscape evolved through the Bronze Age with settlements, field systems and burial mounds. The evidence for this farmed landscape is confined to the valley where it is flanked by chalk down land. Bronze Age burial mounds particularly overlook the upper reaches from the adjacent scarp. There is little evidence of Bronze Age occupation in the lowland and coastal plain sections of the

valley, although it should be anticipated that these areas were subject to non agricultural exploitation.

- 6.1.4 This pattern continued into the Iron Age, with arable exploitation being prevalent in the chalk downland. This is perhaps exemplified by the Iron Age hill fort at Old Winchester Hill (outside the character area) which overlooks the valley.
- 6.1.5 In the Roman period the archaeological evidence of the non agricultural exploitation of the lowland which had presumably been taking place is revealed archeologically by the record of Roman kilns, where industrial processes based on clay and fuel took place. This may have been facilitated to some extent by the Roman road which crosses the valley at Wickham and gave access to urban markets to the east, west and north.
- 6.1.6 By the early medieval and medieval periods, the parishes, settlements and field systems provided the basic framework for the modern landscape. The coastal plain was dominated by the rise of the mediaeval market town and port of Titchfield, with the important mid medieval abbey to the north. The port encouraged the construction of the Titchfield canal in 1611, an early and important industrial monument thought to be the second oldest canal in the country. The line of the 3 mile long canal which fell into disuse by the 1870s is preserved by a trail between the former port of Titchfield and the Solent, which includes the original sea lock. To the north, the water power, charcoal and limestone from the redundant monastic buildings, led to the development of the Funtley Ironworks. Henry Cort established the works in the late 18th century and patented innovative mass producing processes of puddling and rolling iron. This important industry recycled iron scrap from the Portsmouth naval yard shipped along the coast and up the canal. The area was also well known for market gardening, when transport systems, such as railways, allowed export to London, or to Portsmouth.

6.2 **Historic Landscape**

- 6.2.1 The description of the historic landscape character of the Meon Valley cannot be seen in isolation from its surrounding landscape setting. The historic landscape mapping indicates that there have been different historical patterns of exploitation along the valley and its hinterland. These are closely related to changes in geology and soils as the river flows from the chalk downland, to the clay lowlands and finally, the coastal plain.
- 6.2.2 The valley is at its widest in the downland section from East Meon to north of Shirrell Heath and is characterised by a great diversity of field sizes and enclosure types. Informal and early enclosure fieldscapes from the 17th century are located south and east of East Meon, around West Meon and south of Droxford. The variety in field size is characteristic of association with a nucleated settlement pattern. Typically, field size is smallest around the villages planned irregular, rectangular shaped fields reflecting early enclosure of a diverse tenure of landholdings which were likely to be previously predominantly open field systems. Field size increases further from settlement with fewer claims to tenure and enclosure of a previous landscape with a greater proportion of downland, typically with wavy boundaries. Earliest formal enclosures in the chalk were around Meonstoke in 1680 and a small area around East Meon in 1661. Watermeadows are

likely to have originated in the early 17th to 19th centuries to encourage early growth of grass in the spring and enabled early grazing and an increased number of hay crops. In particular, sheep were grazed on the river valley floor and taken to higher land to be folded and manure the arable land for the corn crop. Most formal enclosure occurred in the early to mid 19th century. The only evidence of deer parks is in the northern section of the river valley at East Meon with a possible park at West Meon. This coincides with the predominant early informal enclosures fieldscape. Warnford Park is the only English Heritage registered park in the Meon Valley. This park has been partly attributed to the work of Capability Brown. Westbury Park in East Meon is also of interest because it was laid out by the influential designer Charles Bridgeman. There are several parks and gardens on the County register and a particular concentration between Corhampton and Droxford adjacent to the valley floor.

6.2.3 The middle section between Shirrel Heath and Titchfield is located in the Hampshire lowland mosaic landscape and an integral part of the Forest of Bere. This area was a Royal hunting forest since the 11th century and was the last to be disbanded in 1810. The land management practices, of coppicing and timber extraction, wood and heath pasture, small scale agriculture and game hunting in the forest, were consistent through this period. The relatively recent golf course development at Wickham is symptomatic of several similar developments in the Forest of Bere that are typically associated with the urban rural fringe. From Wickham to the junction with the downland landscapes there is a mixture of formal enclosure small and medium sized fields and assart wood, the latter located generally on the steeper slopes. The section south of Knowle to Titchfield has been significantly reorganised by late formal enclosure. Remnant medieval landscapes remain such as the deerpark and fishponds around Titchfield Abbey.

6.2.4 Where the River Meon flows through the coastal plain landscape south of Titchfield, the historic landscape is typified by a regular small field pattern with wavy boundaries reflecting a predominantly informal and early enclosure field pattern process. The river valley floor in this section is the only part wide enough in the Meon valley to accommodate large complex water meadows. Typically fields are arranged with their long axis perpendicular to the course of the river to ensure the maximum number of fields can have access to the water's edge. To the west of Stubbington there is an area of strips and furlongs which are extremely rare in Hampshire. There are several small parks and gardens where the valley adjoins the neighbouring coastal plain in the upper parts of this section. Fareham deer park provides a wooded buffer between the valley and Fareham suburbs.

6.3 **Built Environment**

6.3.1 Historically, the Meon Valley provided an important transport link between the Solent and the Hampshire Downs but the narrowness of the river has meant that it was not navigable for trade and apart from the Titchfield Canal, roads and tracks provided communication routes. Roads such as the A32 from Wickham to West Meon follow the edge of the floodplain and have their origins in some of the earliest tracks in the valley. The M27 bisects the Meon just south of Funtley. South and north of the motorway the principal valley roads have had to accommodate increasing levels of commuter traffic from recently expanded coastal settlements of Stubbington and Hill Head and the A32 is a popular link to Fareham from the north.

Despite this and outside commuting times the valley has remained a tranquil landscape.

- 6.3.2 Settlements such as Wickham and Titchfield in the clay lowland coastal plain landscapes are of market town status. In the Downs section the settlements are smaller in size but more numerous and of regular row form. The pattern of settlements is highly nucleated and indicative of development from medieval manorial systems based around open field systems. The settlements originated on river crossing points and most are established by the time of Domesday. Most of the settlements, particularly in the downland setting, have had little in the way of 20th century expansion. The towns and villages prospered from the corn and sheep economy, particularly in the 18th and 19th century. Today, this success is reflected, in the significant number and extent of conservation areas, as a proportion of the villages and towns as a whole. Indeed, the villages were considered to be comparatively large in the context of Hampshire settlements at the beginning of the 19th century. The village cores have remained relatively unaltered and street frontages consistent in character through to modern times.
- 6.3.3 Village cores typically have on street buildings frontages set in narrow plots, strung along narrow streets. River crossing points tend to be understated stone and brick bridges typically with white painted ironwork parapets. The valley is rich in listed buildings including several Grade I churches, the barn at Fernhill, Titchfield, and Scheduled Ancient Monuments at Titchfield Abbey and the Funtley ironworks. Because of the relatively early success of settlements in the Meon valley there are significant concentrations of timber frame, pre 1700 brick (especially in the coastal plain section), pre 1850 brick buildings and tile hung buildings can be found. Brick and flint were commonly used in the downland section and their distribution extends significantly into the Hampshire clay lowland where there are otherwise far fewer examples. The use of malmstone is evident in the north part of the valley, such as at Warnford transported from the adjoining area of upper greensand.
- 6.3.4 Farmsteads in the chalk section tend to be associated with villages, and range predominantly from 17th to 19th century, with significantly more medieval and 17th century origin than neighbouring downland and lowland landscapes. The isolated farms, away from the settlements, are predominantly later in origin and particularly 19th century and of moderate density and associated with formal enclosures. There are a significant number of farmsteads of medieval origin particularly around Corhampton and Titchfield and several examples of aisled barns associated with the latter.

EVALUATION

7.2 FORCES FOR CHANGE

1. New housing development mainly small scale and the cumulative impact of small infill sites to settlement morphology.
2. Farmstead conversion to other uses.
3. Pressure from urban fringe use related activities.
4. Recreation pressures and increase visitor draw because of National Park.
5. Climate change in particular sea level rise and increase in frequency of storms.

KEY QUALITIES AND EFFECTS OF FORCES

7.1 <i>A chalk stream valley character area which has very varied and contrasting settings from coast to wooded lowland to the Down, with undeveloped slopes and valley crests combining natural beauty in harmony with the cultural heritage of the settlements and surrounding landscape – including remains of the second oldest canal in Britain.</i>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
All	Threats: Development creeping up the valley side and tall structures on the skyline. The valley crests are particularly vulnerable to development either side of the Meon Gap.
	Opportunities: Support open green infrastructure strategy work which links this area with South Hampshire. The tracks and trails of this valley landscape offer good potential for circular walks using the Meon valley disused rail line and using settlement as striking off point for visitors which is highlighted in the CAP area. Maximise the green infrastructure function of the Meon gap by co-ordinated stewardship of this part of the valley landscape.
7.2 <i>A landscape which evolved predominantly from relatively intensive farming from medieval and Anglo Saxon origin open field systems, with a wide variety of forms and periods of enclosure and in particular the surviving influences of watermeadows and strong connection with the higher surrounding land through valley side drove routes.</i>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
1.3	Threats: Early irregular rectangular fields around nucleated settlement maybe most susceptible to boundary adjustment often part of building plots. Urban fringe related land management changes such as proliferation of horsiculture related fields and formal amenity areas on land which traditionally supported traditional pasture management.
	Opportunities: Perhaps identify the extent of open field systems pre enclosure, the age of the first planned enclosures and where the longest established boundaries and lines in the landscape occur to gain understanding of how the farmed landscape evolved.

7.3

The river valley floor supports classic chalk stream flora, and the southern section supports internationally important coastal habitat associated with Solent areas. There are also unimproved grassland and ancient woodland, particularly in the middle section.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:**CONSEQUENCES****5****Threats:**

Perceived lesser importance of this chalk river system compared with others in Hampshire (which have at least national designation status) and therefore less protection.
Diffuse source pollution in particular from sediment and Nitrogen.
Greater instance of weather extremes affecting water levels and adverse implications for river valley floor habitats.
Physical damage to habitat from projected increase in tidal flooding.
Likely to be a hold the line approach but maybe subject to regulated tidal exchange (RTE) which would affect the salinity of the Haven.

Opportunities:

Chalk stream habitats are particularly sensitive to sediment diffuse pollution – greater information on soil erosion and growing lower risk crops is important to collect.
Extensive chalk grassland opportunity creation above East Meon in particular.
Maintain water levels and river valley floor habitat with sensitive abstraction and supply particularly through monitoring and management of surface water run off quality in particular Nutrient, Manure and Crop protection Management Plans – agri-environment schemes.
Opportunity to negotiate abstraction licensing with EA to maintain favourable salinity levels in the Haven – Solent Dynamic Coast Project (SDCP) and Shoreline Management Plan (SMP).

7.4

A strongly nucleated settlement pattern of market towns in the south and row settlements in the downland section with a large number of listed buildings, and little modern development; the quality of the built heritage is recognised by the concentration of conservation areas.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:**CONSEQUENCES****1.2.3****Threats:**

Increased flood risk to a risk to low lying areas of Titchfield from tide locked flooding.
Farmsteads in the northern part of the character area seem to be particularly susceptible to modern conversions.
Historic integrity of built features such as narrow stream crossings and bridge structures, intensity of traffic on village through roads and insensitive highway design responses, water mill conversions which fail to respond sensitively to the original design, loss of watermeadow structures.

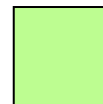
Opportunities:

Raise awareness of the close historic association and landscape setting the fieldscape provides to settlement in local level assessment work and are integral to and contribute to the setting of conservation areas.
Coastal sea level rise impact and mitigation studies such as the North Solent Shoreline management plan could make more reference to the effect on the historic built environment – for instance the impact and opportunities for the Titchfield canal.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE:

River Valley Terrace

Confined to the Avon Valley at the County level assessment scale.



SIMILAR AND ASSOCIATED TYPES HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT AND BOROUGH LEVEL ASSESSMENTS

Basingstoke:	n/a
East Hampshire	n/a
Eastleigh	n/a
Fareham	n/a
Gosport	n/a
Hart	n/a
Havant	n/a
New Forest	River Terrace Farmlands
Rushmoor	n/a
Test Valley	n/a
Winchester	n/a

SIMILAR AND ASSOCIATED TYPES IN NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITY ASSESSMENTS

Dorset	
West Berkshire	
West Sussex	
Wiltshire	

KEY IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS AND BOUNDARY DEFINITIONS

- Adjoins the river valley floor landscape only identified on the gravel terraces of the river Avon - subject to occasional flooding.
- A flat intensively farmed landscape with medium to large irregular sized and arranged fields perhaps indicating early formal enclosures.
- Low hedges and woodland cover creating an open landscape with views across the valley to the distant higher plateau gravel heaths.
- Strongly nucleated settlement pattern of hamlets and market towns centred around crossing points.
- Important sand and gravel resource – considerable exploited north of Ringwood and series of gravel pits restored to lakes which have developed as important wildlife sites for wildfowl.
- There are several different shallow terraces and evidence suggests that the land here has been farmed continuously since the Bronze Age.
- Busy fast winding road parallel with the river plied by extraction industry vehicles away from the road and extraction the pastoral landscape can be very tranquil – views of the river being especially influential.

PHYSICAL

GEOLOGY, LANDFORM, ELEVATION:

Bedrock and Superficial Geology: Important economic resource for sand and gravel. Poole, Branksome and Selsey sand formations. London and Reading clay formations, north of Fordingbridge. The far north of this type is composed of Upper Chalk. The boundary is strongly defined band by the sand and gravel river deposits and the alluvial silty deposits of the River Valley Floor. The eastern edge is less clear cut but generally coincides where the superficial deposits run out.

Landform and Elevation: A very flat landscape only a few metres above the River Valley Floor.

SOILS TYPES:

Typical soil type pattern: Well drained coarse loamy soils over gravel – river terrace drift type 571w.

FUNCTIONS:

Hydrological function: Moderate to low. Free draining permeable soils – seasonally waterlogged..

Food and Biomass: Substantial areas of grade 2 north of extracted areas and south of the London clay. High biomass potential.

Biodiversity potential: Not identified for heath or chalk grassland creation opportunity because of the soils. No ancient woodland reversion opportunities.

LANDCOVER AND LAND USE PATTERN:

Intensively farmed landscape with medium to large scale fields varying from 6 to 25 ha, and averaging about 10ha. Fields are bounded by low (under 1.4m) cut gappy hedgerows or tree belts often with pine trees. The field pattern north of the M27 has been substantially obliterated by sand and gravel works in recent years – restoration is often to geometric shaped lakes with wooded boundaries. Mixed arable and grazing land management.

HYDROLOGY:

Groundwater less than 2m from the surface. Large man made lakes dominate the southern third of this type north of the A27 and have strong biodiversity and recreational functions.

EXPERIENTIAL**ACCESS AND TRANSPORT ROUTES:**

There is a strong east west alignment of PRoV connecting the Avon with the New Forest to the east. There is no open access land. The A338 is a major north south transport link which lies within this type and occasionally coincides with the eastern boundary.

TRANQUILLITY:

Away from the busy valley bottom trunk road and extraction related sites the pastoral landscape with views over the river is very tranquil.

BIODIVERSITY

The River Valley Terrace landscape character type is an agricultural landscape supporting both arable land and improved grassland.

There are some examples of semi-improved neutral grassland, unimproved neutral grassland and occasional ponds. In one locality, ponds are a dominant feature: here they are associated with the quarrying land use although they may still provide habitat value through variation.

This is an open landscape with limited woodland resource, largely confined to field boundaries. This wooded element reduces further north in the type. Woodland is mainly broadleaved, with only small amounts of ancient and semi-natural woodland. In the south of the River Valley Terrace landscape character type there are occasional patches of young trees.

The Avon Valley BOA covers much of this landscape character type. It identifies opportunities for wet woodland, lowland meadow, purple moor grass and rush pastures and floodplain grazing marsh habitat creation and enhancement.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**ARCHAEOLOGY**

There is only weak archaeological evidence of early prehistoric activity but it seems likely there was exploitation associated with the valley. There appears to be settlement and farming from the Bronze Age onwards and it seems likely that it is these farming communities that were exploiting the New Forest. However, whilst the archaeological evidence of settlement is chronologically distinctive at the north end of the area (showing Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman occupation), in the south indistinctive and so undated enclosures probably indicate some these communities. Bronze Age burial mounds populate the whole valley.

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Enclosures generally orientated at right angles to the course of the river to allow access to fresh water from different fields.

HISTORIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT**Settlement types by form:****Building materials and type:**

VISIBILITY

Prominency: Locally low lying and visible from adjoining valley sides and edge of the New Forest. There are no elevated vantage points within this landscape type.

Enclosure: Within the terrace landscape the visual horizon north to south tends to be shorter than east west across the valley.

Public perceptions: The valley bottom landscape conveys a great sense of space, and from the terrace it is possible in places to see right across the valley floor to the predominantly wooded valley sides and up to the plateau heaths and plantations.