

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE:

Coastal Plain Open

Found parallel and inland along the length of Hampshire's coast. The largest tracts are in central southern Hampshire between Southampton and Portsmouth.



SIMILAR AND ASSOCIATED TYPES HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT AND BOROUGH LEVEL ASSESSMENTS

Basingstoke:	n/a
East Hampshire	n/a
Eastleigh	Open Coastal Plain
Fareham	Open Coastal Plain Farmland: Weak Structure, Open coastal Plain: Strong Structure, Open Coastal Plain Farmland: Fringe Character, Open Coastal Amenity Land, Horticulture and Small-Holdings: Large Scale.
Gosport	Coastal Heath and Grassland, Amenity Grassland, Allotment Gardens.
Hart	n/a
Havant	Open Lower Harbour Plain,
New Forest	Not really comparable with the District types in this instance: Coastal Plain Estates – Large Formal Enclosures, Coastal Plain Estates – Small Parliamentary Enclosures.
Rushmoor	n/a
Test Valley	n/a
Winchester	n/a

SIMILAR AND ASSOCIATED TYPES IN NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITY ASSESSMENTS

Dorset	
West Berkshire	n/a
West Sussex	Lower Coastal Plain, Coastal Harbours and Peninsulas.
Wiltshire	n/a

KEY IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS AND BOUNDARY DEFINITIONS

- Extensive and flat or gently sloping plain.
- Nationally important high grade agricultural soils, often supporting intensive horticulture and historically market gardening crops.
- Tree shelter belts and low hedgerows with windswept trees near the coast.
- Often associated with early more piecemeal enclosure – but the fields have often been enlarged and reorganised creating an open character.
- Includes area where there has been historically greater levels of market gardening.
- Often associated with arable land uses.
- Less semi natural habitats than coastal plain enclosed.
- Lack of bridleways, open access sites restricted to remnant seaside commons.
- History of gravel quarrying – restored sites can sometimes be obvious by the fact that they are at a lower level than the surrounding landscape.
- Some of the most densely developed areas in Hampshire have occurred in this landscape.
- Some areas are particularly exposed to coastal weather where trees have been moulded by the prevailing winds.
- Big skies and flat horizon to the south, sometimes with distant grey outline of the hills of the Isle of Wight, engender sense of exposure and anticipation of the coast to the south.

PHYSICAL

GEOLOGY, LANDFORM, ELEVATION:

Bedrock and Superficial Geology: The bedrock occurs in narrow bands in the central southern Hampshire coastal plain, with London Clay furthest north, followed by sandstone formations such as Wittering, Earnley sand and Selsey sand. The New Forest Coastal plain landscapes are almost continuous Headon Beds formation.

The River Terrace Deposit superficial geology is widespread and very influential in determining land use, as it supports very high quality agricultural soils. The further west this type occurs the more gravely the deposits and the more pressure for mineral extraction.

Landform and Elevation: Gently sloping very low lying plain to the coast incised by rivers and wooded stream valleys. Less than 30m AOD and typically 15m and below. Towards the east of the county the slope becomes imperceptible and at Hayling Island the landscape is flat

SOILS TYPES:

Typical soil type pattern: Generally deep stoneless silty, well drained soils over gravel. 571s and z, predominantly in the wet and 841e more common in the eastern coastal plain landscapes. The latter tends to be a deeper loamy soil.

FUNCTIONS:

Hydrological function: Soils often affected by groundwater from chalk aquifers. This LCT is often located over minor groundwater protection zones.

Food and Biomass: Often high grade agricultural land; 1 and 2. The area is regarded as being nationally important for its agricultural soils. Other areas are more suitable for biomass and short rotation crops which have lower grade soils.

Biodiversity potential: There is occasional heathland creation opportunity, there is more ancient woodland reversion opportunity than the Coastal Plain Open type.

LANDCOVER AND LAND USE PATTERN: This is predominantly a large scale intensive arable farmland landscape. The well drained productive soils are especially suitable for market gardening and horticulture particularly east of Southampton. The medium to very large sized fields are often fenced or open banks and itches. Windswept trees are progressively more common towards the coast. Shelterbelts are very characteristic and visually dominant, and consist predominantly of poplar but also, Monterey pine and holm oak. Small isolated woodland occur on the plain but are generally confined to stream valleys. Much of the coastal plain has seen huge loss to development and suburbanisation post WW2. The New Forest coast has suffered less loss than other parts of the Hampshire coastal plain. There are many tourist and recreational related land uses, such as, caravan and holiday parks, retirement and nursing homes. Past and current mineral extraction, particularly west of the Hamble to the New Forest coast has had a significant effect on landform. Low level restoration is having the greatest change on the landscape.

HYDROLOGY:

This type is separated by many rivers and streams. Where these are particularly significant at the strategic scale, a River Valley Floor type is drawn. This type also has smaller river and stream valleys, but there is a tendency for these to form part of the landscape in the Coastal Plain Enclosed type.

EXPERIENTIAL**ACCESS AND TRANSPORT ROUTES:**

The smaller settlements are typically linked by minor roads and lanes. There are no bridleways in this type and the footpath network is not particularly dense and relies on the minor road network for connectivity. Specific areas for permissive horse access have been created, notably Hayling Island and the Chilling and Brownwich coastal area.

TRANQUILLITY:

Not identified as being particularly tranquil apart from where this type occurs in the Chilling and Brownwich area and south of Beaulieu Heath. No discernable correlation with open and enclosed type and the CPRE tranquillity mapping.

BIODIVERSITY

The Coastal Plain Open landscape character type is a coastal, agricultural landscape consisting of arable land and improved grasslands with patches of coastal associated habitats including coastal grazing marsh and continuous saltmarsh.

Agricultural land comprises arable land and improved grassland with occasional areas of horticulture/ nurseries. Within this agricultural landscape there are patches of unimproved and semi-improved neutral grassland, and some neglected rough grassland. Unimproved grasslands are important habitats, supporting more flora and invertebrates than improved grasslands. In the Coastal Plain Open landscape character type they are often fragmented and small in scale. There is a quarrying land use in this landscape, with associated ponds and restored land which will provide habitat variation.

Woodland is very limited in the Coastal Plain Open landscape character type. There are occasional strips and blocks of woodland, mainly broadleaved, with some mixed woodland, coniferous woodland and parkland/ scattered trees over grassland. Hedgerows exist within the agricultural landscape, these vary in density, in places they are intermittent features, or do not exist at all, whilst elsewhere they are dense and continuous.

There are a number of BOAs covering this landscape character type:

- Chichester/Langstone Harbours and Hayling Island BOA identifies opportunities for coastal grazing marsh, purple moor grass and rush pastures, and coastal saltmarsh habitat creation and enhancement;
- Portsmouth Harbour BOA identifies opportunities for coastal grazing marsh, coastal saltmarsh and, purple moor grass and rush pastures habitat creation and enhancement;
- Solent BOA identifies opportunities for coastal grazing marsh and coastal saltmarsh habitat creation and enhancement;
- Meon Valley BOA identifies opportunities for purple moor grass and rush pastures, wet woodland, lowland meadow, reedbed and lowland fen habitat creation and enhancement.

This landscape character type provides limited opportunities for heathland habitat creation.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

ARCHAEOLOGY

Review of the archaeological evidence does not generally suggest a difference in the archaeological record between open and enclosed coastal plain.

There does appear to be a presence in the coastal plain in the Mesolithic, but it must be borne in mind that the present coast was not the coastline for earlier parts of the Mesolithic. In particular Portsmouth and Langstone Harbours seem to be relatively rich in evidence around the fringes, and in Langstone Harbour the record is clearer due to intensive survey and lower modern development. A similar picture emerges in the Neolithic. In the Bronze Age some, limited, evidence of settlement emerged. Langstone Harbour is well studied and shows activity around the harbour edge, and it is likely that the coastal plain was used for grazing. For example on the New Forest Solent shore it seems likely that there was some form of transhumance

between the coastal plain and the interior of the forest. This continued into the Iron age and it is noticeable that there is an absence of field systems and enclosures, which seems to suggest that the coastal plain, whilst exploited and settled to some degree, is not fully settled or absolutely intensively exploited.

In the Roman period there were areas of more intense activity. These are where the Roman roads touch coastal locations, such as Stone Point, Portchester and Hayling island. Hayling island has both a villa and a temple site. (also Warblington villa, which is on the coastal east west road close to the head of the harbour and may well have had a coastal link). But the overall level of occupation and exploitation seems lower on the coastal plain. It is interesting to note the Roman settlements occur at the highest navigable points of significant rivers rather than on the coast.

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

There is a wide range of fields of different enclosure origin. The better deep silty soils parts of the coastal plain were farmed and enclosed first leaving large areas of commonland and wood pasture/deerparks on the poorer sandy heathy areas such as at Locks Heath and Netley Common. In the Eastern Solent the enclosure pattern has changed quite dramatically since the mid 19th century –through field enlargement and encroachment by development especially post WW2. Large areas of common and open land were targeted for development. This coastal plain type has generally been subject to more modern field changes and enlargement than the enclosed type. The term open is used to describe the sense of openness and expansiveness rather than in respect to the process of field enclosure.

HISTORIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Settlement types by form: There are relic examples of small Saxon / Medieval origin villages which can be found often in Local and Strategic Gap areas.

Building materials and type;

The coastal plain has some good examples of Victorian and Arts and Crafts villas which overlook the coast. There are large individual detached houses associated with estates on the New Forest coast. Brick is the traditional building material with some use of flint adjacent to Eastern Solent examples.

VISIBILITY

Prominency: The landscape is Lower lying than land to the north and there are very few high spots to obtain vantage points within the type.

Enclosure: The open plain landscape, the expanse of the Solent to the south and the sweeping profile of the Isle of Wight emphasise the sense of openness and exposure

Public perceptions: Close to major centres of population and therefore experienced by many local people and visitors making their way to the coast.