

Appendix J

Landscape Character Areas relevant to the proposal

Landscape Character Areas	Relevant key characteristics
Wealden Greensand NCA120 (and adjacent to the boundary of NCA Hampshire Downs)	<p>The rural settlement pattern is a mixture of dispersed farmsteads, hamlets and some nucleated villages. Large houses set within extensive parks and gardens are found throughout the area. There are a range of historic landscape features, including field monuments, old military defences, prehistoric tumuli, iron-age hill forts, Roman forts, the Royal Military Canal, small quarries and relics of the iron industry (including hammer ponds). Sunken lanes cut into the sandstone are a historic and characteristic feature, as are older deer parks and more recent 18th-century parklands. Surface water is an important feature across the Greensand, with many streams and rivers passing through the NCA: the Western Rother, Wey, Arun, Medway and the Great and East Stour.</p>
County Character Area (CCA) 3f: Wey Valley.	<p>Broad valley with smooth undulating valley sides through which the River Wey flows. Distinct flat valley floor with permanent pasture, wet woodland, water meadows and open water. Large to medium scaled arable fields cloak the open valley sides. Woodland in the upper valley slopes form wooded skylines in places. Valley is and has historically been an important routeway and transport corridor containing the A31 and main rail line. St Swithun's Way long distance route, part of the Pilgrim's way which connected Winchester with the North Downs. Many historic features associated with the river Wey e.g. mills, weirs, watercress beds. Nucleated settlement pattern of a string of villages on the gravel terrace on the north side of the valley floor less development on the slightly steeper southern valley side. The descriptive text for County Character Area 3f notes that: "Although this landscape defines the valley of the River Wey, the river itself often appears insignificant in contrast to other linear features such as the A31 and main rail line which follow the valley bottom parallel to the watercourse. Views from the valley floor are affected by the extent of vegetation but where there are views they extend to the valleys sides</p>

	<p>which provide a backdrop and strong landscape context. From the valleys sides there are more open views across the valley floor and up and down the valley but in all cases the sense of place of this landscape is determined by the valley form. This is an accessible landscape with numerous footpaths linking the historic settlements, although many are fragmented by the A31 and railway. St Swithun's Way passes through the valley on the northern valley sides. This long distance footpath follows the Pilgrim's Way linking Winchester to the North Downs. Another long distance route, The Hangers Way begins at Alton railway station. The steam railway the Watercress Line is popular with tourists and runs within the valley between Alton and Alresford. This landscape is relatively tranquil and its broad character enables it to accommodate development and pylons to some degree. However, the A31 impacts greatly on the tranquillity through the heart of this landscape. In the valley bottom the vegetation on the valley floor slightly reduces this impact and although the semi natural habitats and vegetation along the valley floor enhance tranquillity and perceived naturalness, the A31, railway and settlements are the more dominant features in views from the valley sides". The same text goes to identify the potential development of masts and other vertical structures as a force for change, noting specifically the :“Potential of the vulnerability of open uninterrupted skylines to tall vertical structures which break the flow of the landscape and undermine the scale of the valley”</p>
<p>EHDC Northern Wey Valley Landscape Character Area</p>	<p>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</p>

	<p>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 upperpart of the valley is centred 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.</p>
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