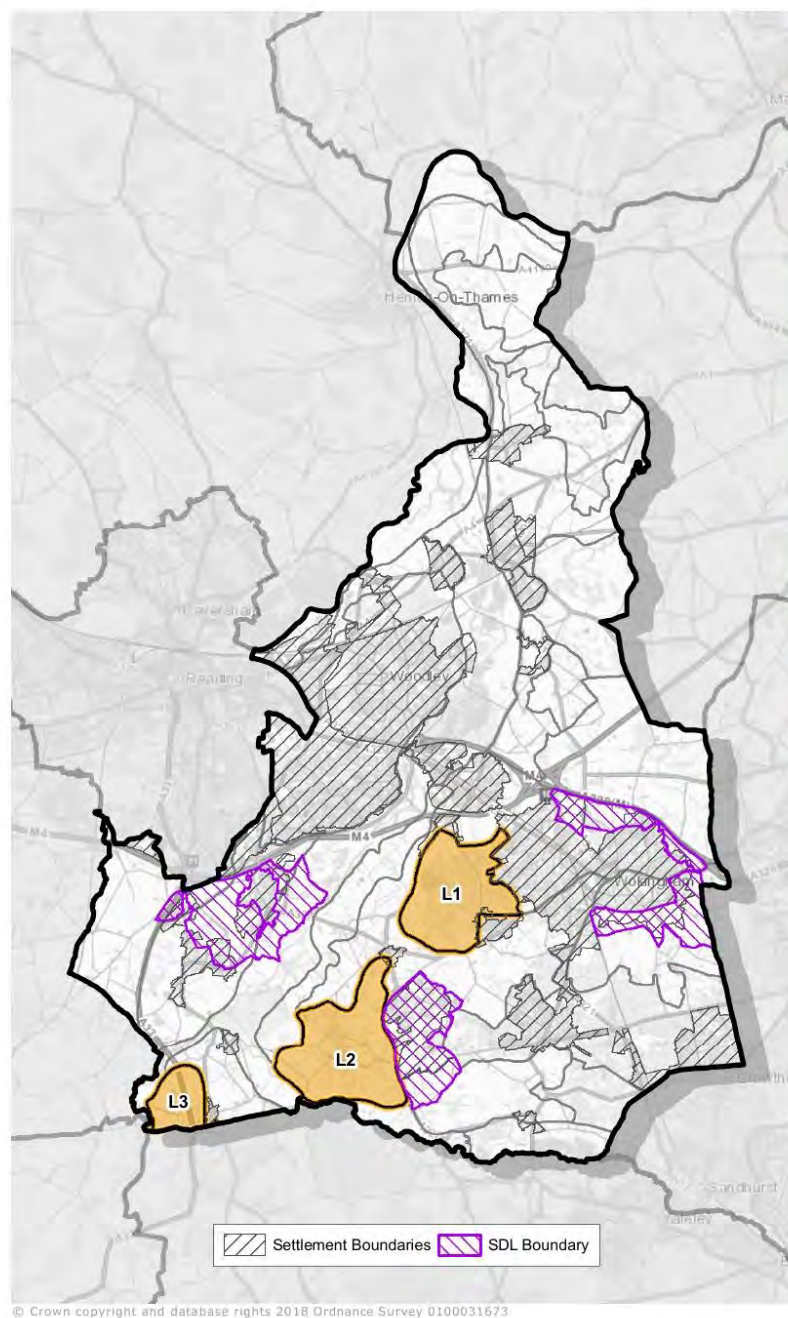


## L: Wooded Sand And Gravel Hills



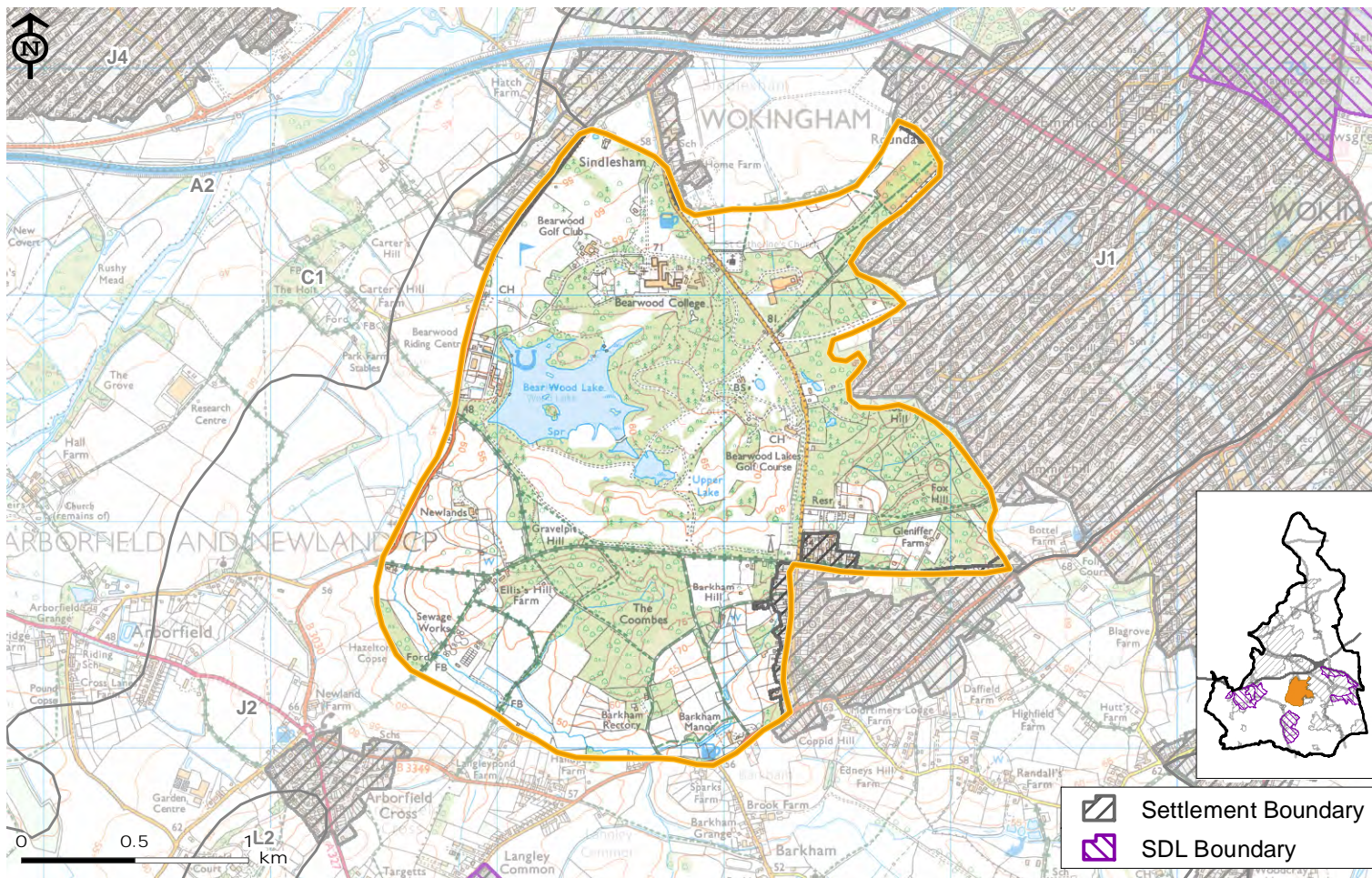
### Description

The LCT is characterised by undulating hills formed by sandy Bagshot Beds and river terraces and gravels overlying London Clay. Woodlands with native coniferous element are on the hilltops, with open lower slopes in use for arable farming or pasture. There is sparse settlement, although there is significant historic parkland.

### Landscape Character Areas

The Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills LCT is subdivided into three Landscape Character Areas:

- L1: Bearwood Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills
- L2: Farley Hill Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills
- L3: Stanford End Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills



## SUMMARY

The north of the area contains undulating hills, characterised by dense woodland, which form part of the medieval Bishops Bearwood Chase, later the historic Bearwood estate. The south of the area is more intricate, with coombe woodland valleys and contrasting grazed pasture. Largely unsettled, the area has few rights of way although there are a greater number around The Coombes in the south and the area is popular for recreation.

The Bearwood Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills character area is located in the centre of the borough immediately to the west of Wokingham town. It is a self-contained area of higher ground rising above the surrounded clay lowlands. The settlement edge in J1: Wokingham-Winnersh Settled and Farmed Clay forms the boundary to the north and east and the B3030 forms the boundary to the south and west with J2: Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay roughly following the 50m contour line.



## Key Characteristics

- Rolling hills of London Clay to the north and west with steeper hillsides in the south and east dominated by the sandy geology of the Bagshot Formation, overlain with localised deposits of river gravel.
- Higher sandy areas are generally dry but there are a number of small open water bodies and the larger Bear Wood Lake historically used for mineral extraction but redesigned as part of the parkland setting for the mansion house at Bearwood.
- Heavily wooded landscape with swathes of BAP priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland interconnected with blocks of coniferous planting, mainly Scots pine. Beechwoods are characteristic on the higher slopes. There is a small area of ancient woodland **at Hazelton's Copse**.
- Most of the area is designated as LWS for its semi-natural woodlands (Bearwood Estate, Hazeltons Copse and The Coombes) but also for areas of open water and remnant heathland in the Bearwood Estate and dry acid grassland in The Coombes.
- Historic parkland of the Bearwood estate (Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden) forms the core of the area, centred on a large lake with woodlands and open parkland with clumps of trees. A distinct 250m long avenue of Wellingtonia leads to the Jacobean style 19<sup>th</sup> century country house (now a private school).
- Smaller scale rural patchwork of deciduous woodland and sheep pasture associated with the hills and incised coombe valleys in the south.
- Largely unsettled, with most buildings relating to the estate, and occasional farmhouses. Roadside ribbon development extends from Wokingham along the boundaries of the area and at Barkham Hill.
- Well used for formal and informal recreation including a golf course, cricket club and football training grounds as well as a good network of public rights of way around The Coombes used for dog walking and horse riding. There is a small area of Open Access Land in the northeast on the edge of Wokingham town.
- A secluded landscape with access restricted in the north of the area around Bearwood College and the buildings are largely screened by woodland. The south of the area is particularly tranquil with an experience of dark skies despite the close proximity to Wokingham town and the localised visual and audible instruction of the M4.
- Area provides a wooded backdrop to views from the surrounding landscape and screens the western boundary of Wokingham town.
- Views are enclosed by the extensive woodland, but open out on the edge of the woodland across the Loddon Valley towards Reading.

## Natural Landscape

- L1.1 This area of undulating high ground is dominated by the sandy geology of the Bagshot Formation with later localised deposits of river gravel. It is an outlying spur of the sandy area that forms much of the south east of the borough. From the southern border of the area, the land rises over the rolling London Clay to the steeper hillsides of the overlying sand and gravel deposits. Centred on the deciduous woodland of The Coombes, a pattern of valleys eroded by water from the higher

ground gives variety to the landform. Some of the valleys are now dry but others have streams running down to join tributaries of the River Loddon.

- L1.2 There are localised deposits of Head Gravel at the core of the coniferous woodland to the north east and to the south west at Gravelpit Hill, a name which indicates past exploitation of this resource. To the north and west of the area the London Clay geology is reflected in the more gently rolling topography.
- L1.3 Soils follow the underlying geology with sandy Gley Podzols over the Bagshot Formation to the southeast and Stagnogley soils, clayey or loamy soils with impeded drainage, to the north and west over the London Clay areas. The sandy soils are free draining making the higher area generally dry with no streams. However, there are a number of small open water bodies on the river gravel, indicating past gravel extraction plus the much larger Bear Wood Lake, created as a clay pit for building bricks.
- L1.4 The historic parkland of Bearwood dominates this area, much of which is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). The distinctive Wellingtonia avenue leads to the mansion house, and rhododendron lining Bearwood Road is a particularly distinctive landscape feature. Most of the park is wooded, with areas of BAP priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland interspersed with largely coniferous with both ornamental specimen trees and later forestry planting. Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*) are common. The estate has also retained important areas of open water at Bear Wood Lake and remnant heathland. Limited areas of open parkland have more typical parkland planting of oak, and around the lake and on the islands there is mixed woodland including oak, holly and yew. There are areas of BAP priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland.
- L1.5 To the south the landform is made more intricate with undulating coombe valleys. Small-scale pasture fields are found on the lower slopes, which are framed by the deciduous woodland on the high ground. Pastoral land uses include sheep, but also horse grazing and small-scale pig farming at Barkham Manor Farm. The Coombes LWS (also a local geology site) is largely contiguous with Bearwood estate and has a similar mixture of broadleaved and native coniferous planting, including stands of Scots pine and beech in the higher elevations.
- L1.6 Hazeltons Copse is separate from the main areas of woodland, and has deciduous woodland of ancient origin which **appears on Norden's 1607 map of the Royal Forest of Windsor**.

## Cultural Landscape

- L1.7 There is no evidence to support the presence of prehistoric or Roman activity in this marginal upland landscape. **The 'Bear' name of this area, found elsewhere in the borough, may derive from the Saxon bare meaning swine pasture, the swine being fattened on woodland fodder before autumn slaughter or may derive from the locally prominent 'Bear family, who claimed descent from the Norman 'de la Bere' family.** Locally, the popularity of the sport of bear baiting within the town of Wokingham has also been suggested as an origin of the name.
- L1.8 Clearance probably commenced in medieval times, and much of the area became a large open common as part of the medieval Bishops Bearwood Chase. This was largely enclosed in the 1820s to form a landscaped park and consequently, there is little evidence of the medieval landscape at Bearwood Park, due to the extensive landscaping of the 19th century estate. However, medieval landscape features survive in the wider landscape, including Langley Common (which appears on the early modern map by John Norden of 1607), banks, ditches and surviving field patterns in the south of the estate which indicate assart enclosures around areas of woodland (including The Coombes) encroaching into Bishops Bearwood Chase and later Royal Forest lands.
- L1.9 Bearwood parkland was laid out in the 1820s by John Walter II, the proprietor of the Times newspaper and son of its founder John Walter I. Walter employed William Sawrey Gilpin in one of his first landscape gardening commissions. His son, John Walter III, one of the top ten landowners in the county, inherited both the newspaper and the estate in 1847 **on his father's** death. He added new features to the estate, most notably the 250m long Wellingtonia Avenue along the drive to the north front of the house, the rock garden built by Pulham and Company and the Rhododendron Drive along Bearwood Road. The estate is listed as a Grade II\* Registered

Park and Garden, and is on the Heritage at Risk Register, although a Conservation Management Plan is being developed.

- L1.10 Bearwood Park house was built between 1865 and 1874 from the onsite brickworks, now infilled as Bear Wood Lake. The house, probably the largest in the county outside Windsor Castle, was built for John Walter III in the Jacobean style, and is now Grade II\* listed. It was taken over by the Royal Merchant Navy School in 1921, and in 2015 became Reddam House. Bearwood Park house is part of the Sindlesham Conservation Area, which extends out of this area to the north.
- L1.11 The majority of buildings in the area relate to the estate and have distinctive polychromatic Reading brick and black diaper patterned walls with decorative bargeboards. The college chapel, Park Lodge and Wets Lodge are all Grade II listed. The distinctive character of the building materials contributes to the dominance of the historic estate. Industrial buildings built to provide building materials for the estate survive in the west of the estate, near Mole Road.
- L1.12 Apart from the estate lodges, the only buildings of note in the area are 19<sup>th</sup> century Church of St Catherine, Bearwood and the red brick Georgian Barkham Manor and stables, listed at Grade II, which is locally listed as an Historic Park and Garden. There are a few farm buildings within The Coombes e.g. Ellis' Hill Farm.
- L1.13 Recreational uses have been incorporated into the estate, including the Bearwood Lakes Golf Course, while the school uses the Bear Wood Lake for water sports. Wokingham Cricket Club is situated east of Bearwood Road. A large area along Mole Road is currently being redeveloped as **Reading FC's new training site. The Coombes are popular for recreation including walking, horse riding and dog walking through the network of Rights of Way.**
- L1.14 There are few roads through the estate area, just the Bearwood Road which forms a boundary to the parkland. The verge has been expanded to a wide grassed roadside edge with a deep ditch and mature conifers, and is lined by mature rhododendron. At the south end of Bearwood Road there is settlement along the road forming part of Barkham Hill, with detached, executive style houses further to the north.

## Perceptual Landscape

- L1.15 Woodland defines and screens the western boundary of the town of Wokingham and creates a wooded backdrop to views from the surrounding landscape. The woodland and restricted access around the historic bounds of the Bearwood estate, create a secluded landscape, with dark skies and a tranquil character particularly to the south. From the woodland edge of the Coombes, views open out across the Loddon Valley towards Reading. In the open areas the M4 can be seen and heard, which disrupts the rural character.

### Valuable Landscape Attributes

- Elevated wooded hills forming a backdrop to the wider landscape and western settlement edge of Wokingham. The wooded hills provide physical and visual separation between settlements, including Wokingham and Reading, and the future development at Arborfield Garrison (Arborfield SDL) to the south of the area.
- Varied topography which forms an intricate range of landscape spaces and backdrops emphasised by the largely enclosed and wooded nature of the core of the area, with views out over farmland to the wider countryside.
- Large expanses of mature mixed woodland which are designated as BAP priority habitats and LWS and provide important ecological habitats and a sense of place. Stands of Scots pine and beech woodlands on the hilltops provide characteristic landmark features.
- The distinctive mosaic of interconnecting mixed woodland interspersed with small scale pastoral fields in the south of the area which provide scenic qualities and visual diversity.
- Parkland landscape associated with the historic estate at Bearwood Park designated as a

Registered Park and Garden which provides a cultural record of the past and layers of history within the landscape. The estate character lends homogeneity to much of the area.

- Medieval landscape features which survive on the boundary of later historic estates, such as wide tracts of former common land which provide a cultural record of the past and strong time depth.
- Recreational value particularly in The Coombes through the presence of byways, footpaths and bridleways which allow enjoyment of the landscape. A golf course and cricket club offer formal recreational opportunities.
- Peaceful secluded character with naturalistic qualities and experience of dark skies, largely unsettled and with limited access, which provides a rural retreat in close proximity to urban areas.
- Contrast of enclosed views within woodland and long views across the Loddon Valley towards Reading, and south towards Barkham and beyond.

### Landscape Condition

The elevated landscape with its dense interconnected woodland and pattern of small combe pasturelands are in good condition.

This is a distinctive landscape with a strong sense of place; however, there are opportunities for improving the biodiversity of the woodland, relationship of the Bearwood estate buildings to the surrounding landscape and integration of development at the periphery of the area.

### Key Issues

- Changes in deciduous woodland structure through loss of species diversity and the spread of sycamore, rhododendron and other invasive/exotic species are threatening the locally distinctive species composition of these woodlands.
- Effects on tree health or species composition of woodland and heathlands as a consequence of pathogens and climate change.
- The influence of woodland fell cycles has an influence on wider landscape character, particularly on wooded ridgelines.
- Changes in management that could result in loss and fragmentation of acid grassland and heath habitats as a result of scrub encroachment or conversion to woodland.
- Decline in livestock grazing and conversion to horse and pony paddocks with temporary fencing and structures resulting in a decline in rural intactness
- Lack of the recruitment of very young trees (through natural regeneration or planting) required to rebalance the age structure of parkland and hedgerow trees is an ongoing threat to the character of the landscape.
- Damage to remaining medieval landscape features including banks, ditches, ancient woodland and assart enclosures.
- High demands for recreation due to proximity to large centres of population, including golf, horse riding and mountain biking continue to threaten the tranquillity of the area, and may lead to erosion of special ecological or landscape features.
- Pressure for formal recreation facilities and associated car parks that could have an impact on the character of the landscape e.g. Reading FC new training ground at former Bearwood Golf

Course. Damage to the existing Public Rights of Way network through the area.

- Demand for residential development and supporting infrastructure inside and outside the area impacting on landscape character, including the spread of ribbon development along the periphery of the area and expansion of the urban edge of Wokingham town.
- Pressure for alternative land uses within the woodlands leading to the erosion, clearance or inappropriate management of woodland areas.
- Visual and auditory intrusion of the M4. Light pollution is a key issue affecting the night landscape, particularly to the north of the area.
- Pressure for built development on the wooded skyline leading to visual intrusion in the elevated landscape and in views to the wooded backdrop from elsewhere.

### Landscape Strategy

To maintain the landscape character of the *Bearwood Wooded Sands and Gravel Hills* the following strategy is required: to conserve and enhance the existing wooded and parkland character of the landscape and its biodiversity.

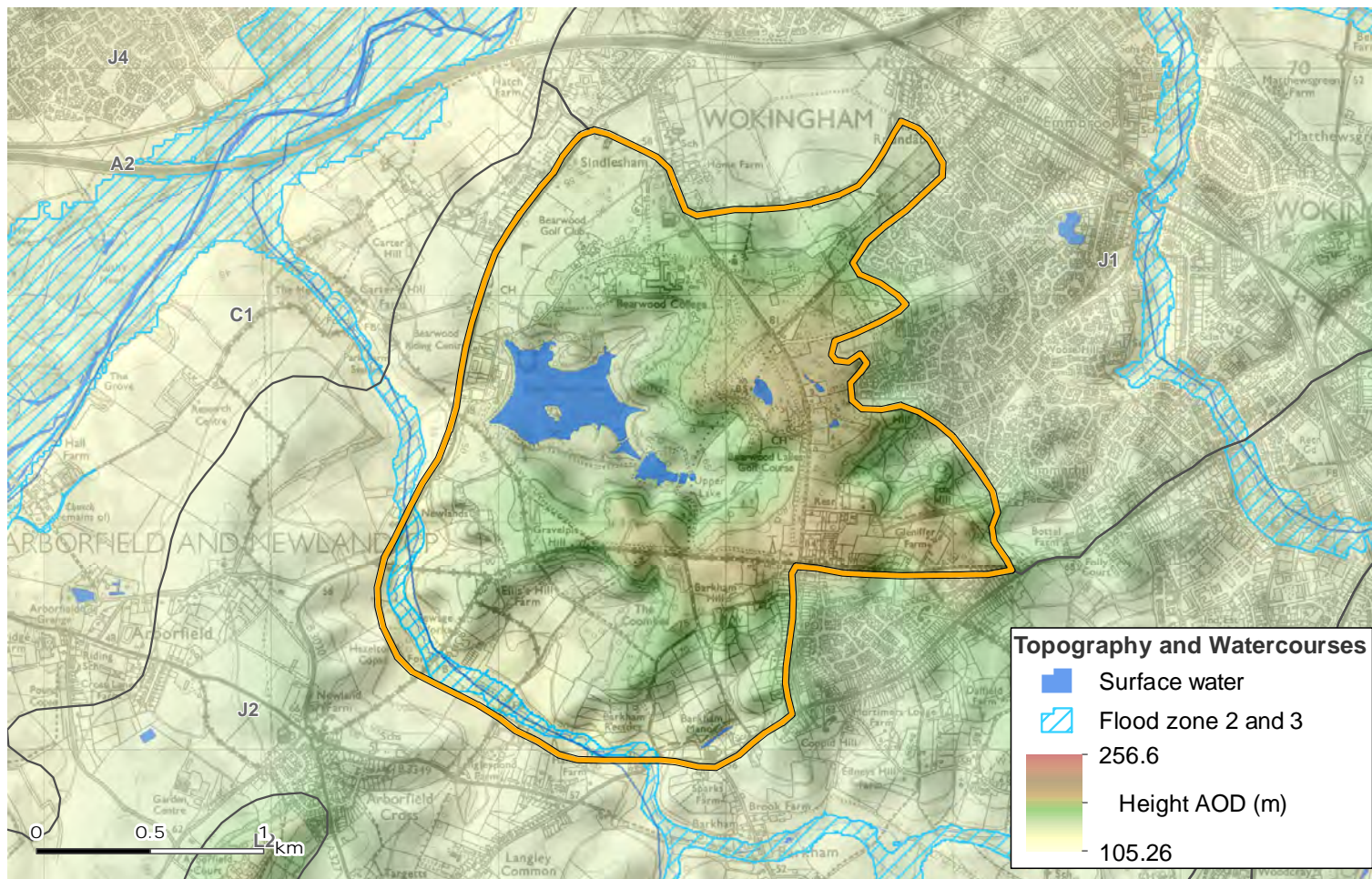
The key aspects to be actively managed are the mixed woodland and the features associated with the historic landscape. There are also opportunities to strengthen open water, woodland and remnant heathland habitats, and manage the exotic species including the locally distinctive Rhododendron Drive, which made include replacement by non-invasive species.

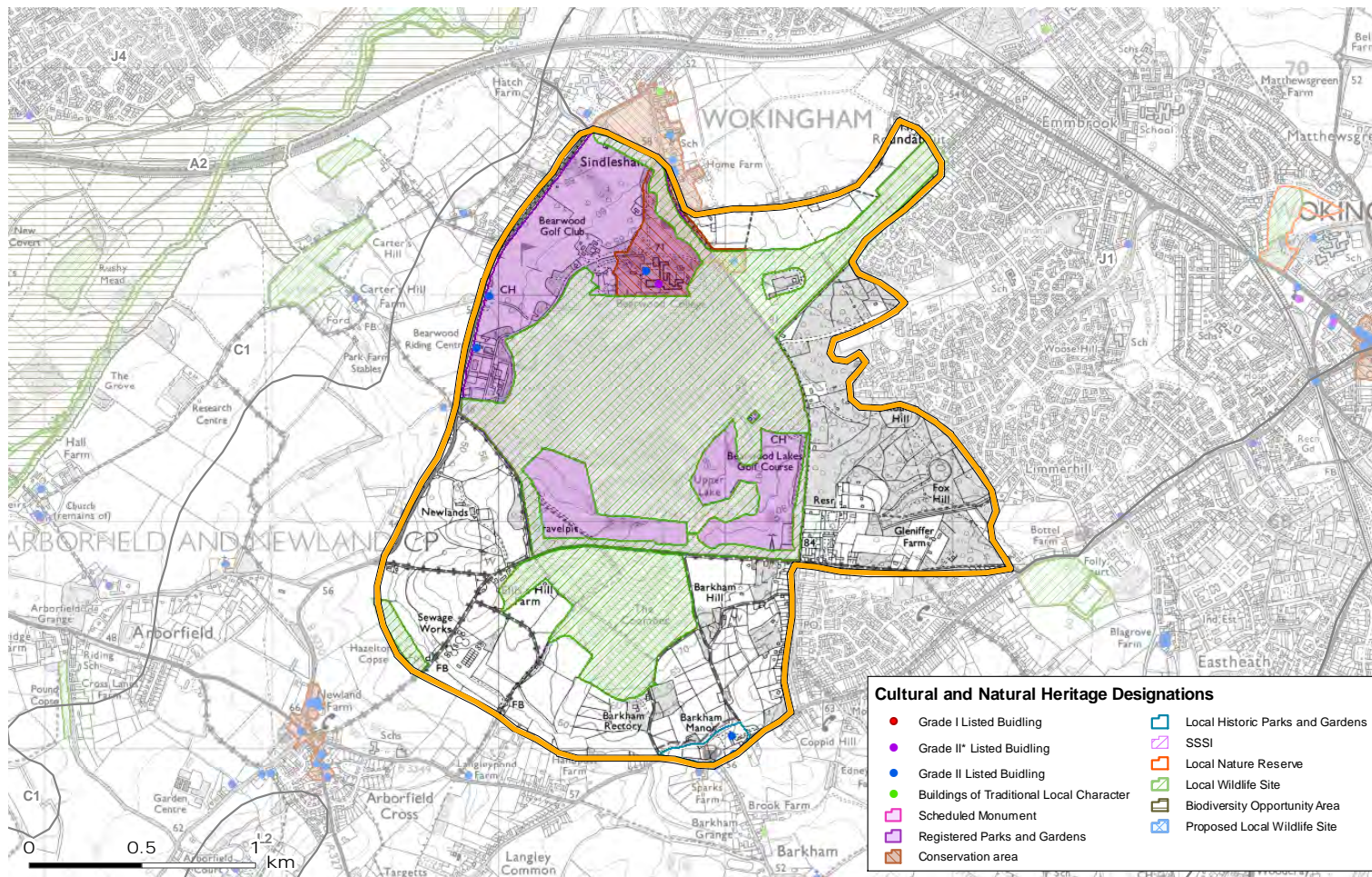
In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the unsettled character of the area.

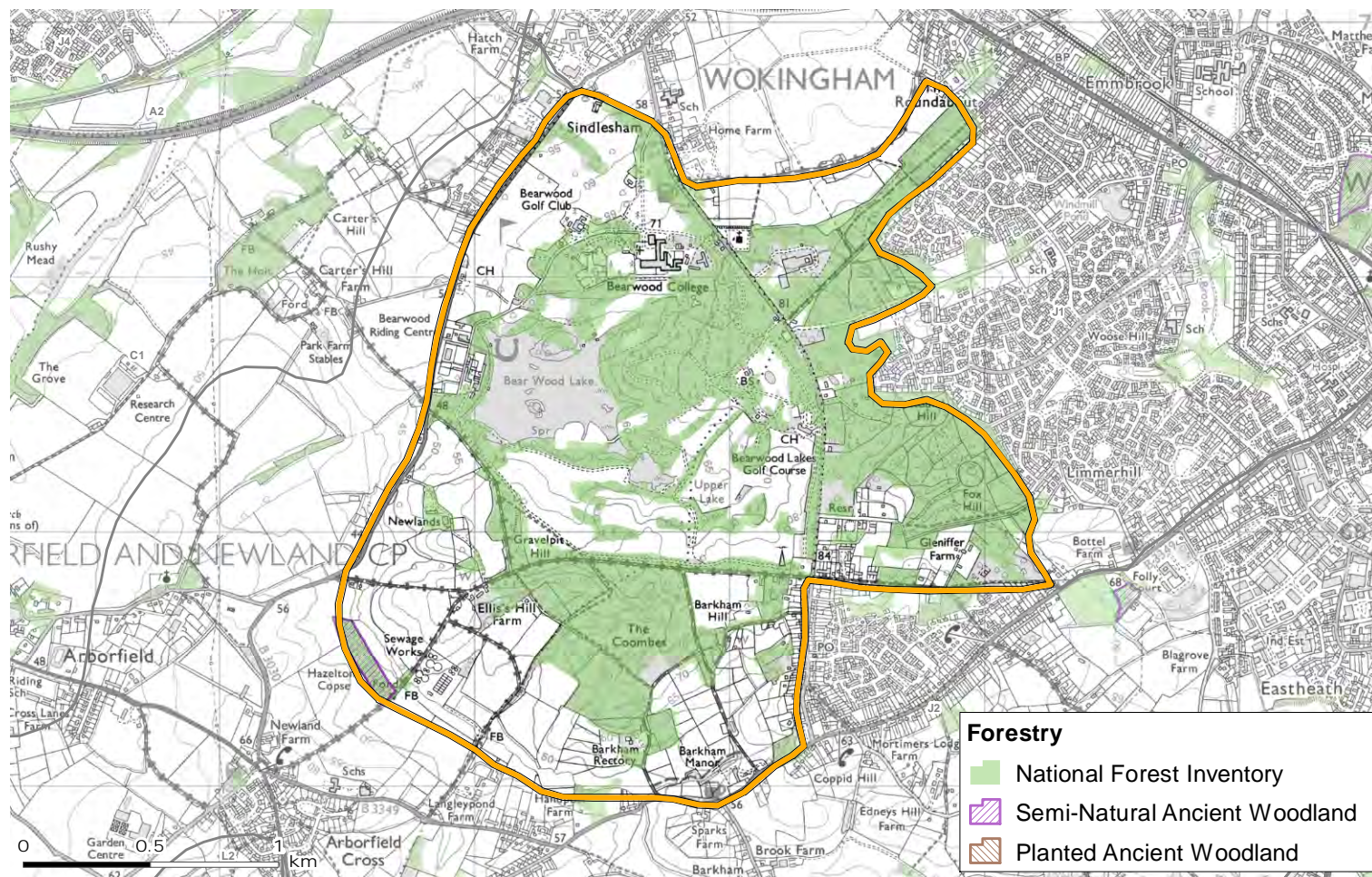
### Landscape Guidelines

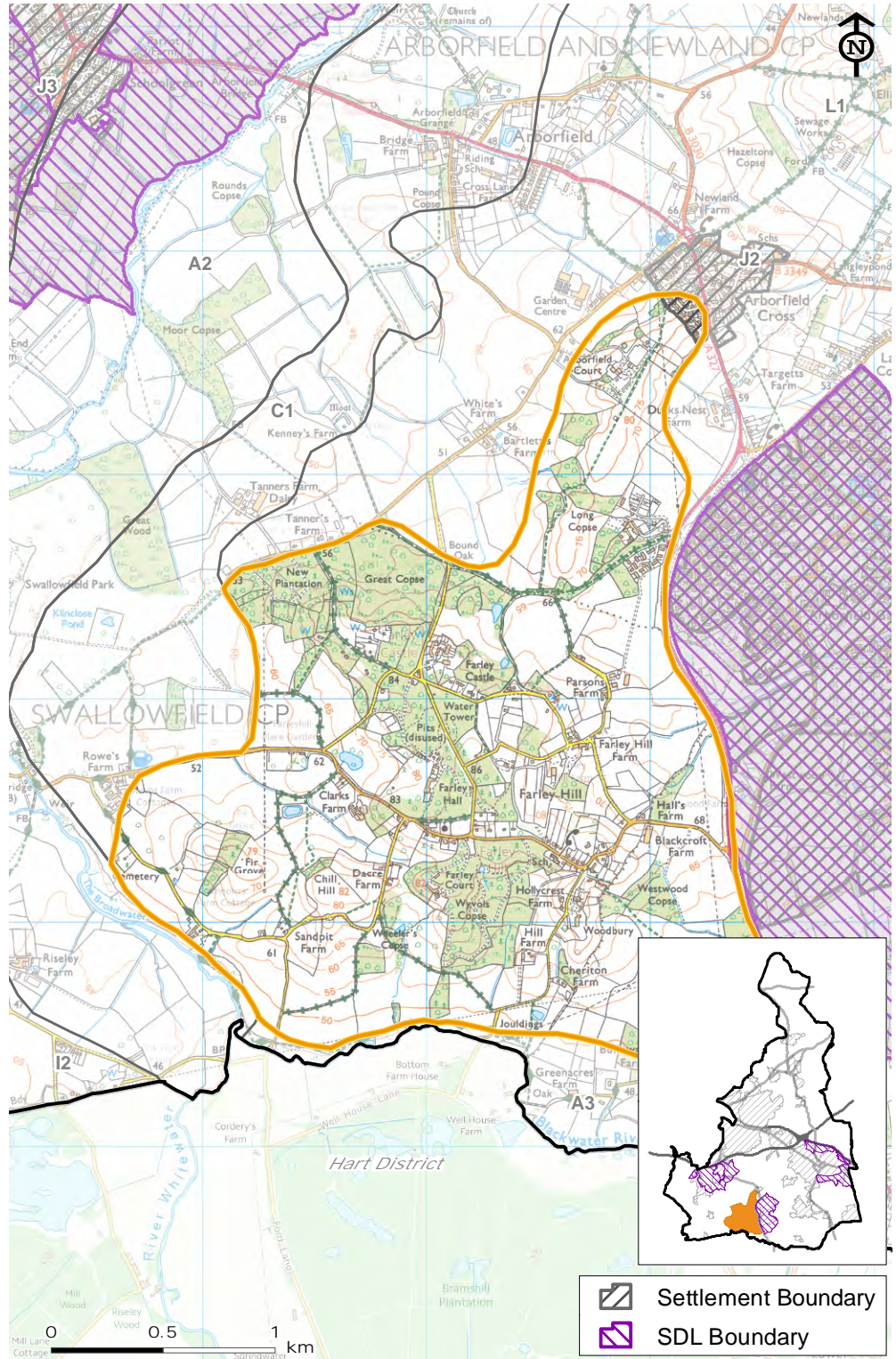
- Conserve distinctive wooded skylines. Consider the impact of any development on skylines, particularly where it would have the potential to be highly visible from adjacent character areas. Develop sympathetic fell cycles to maintain positive character, particularly phased cycles along sensitive skylines to ensure that the wooded backdrop is maintained. Particular care should be taken in the siting of communication masts or other vertical elements, which have the potential to be highly visible in this elevated landscape.
- Conserve and enhance the wooded character of the landscape including BAP priority habitats, ancient woodlands, and designated LWS. Continue to promote appropriate management through natural regeneration, control of non-native species and coppicing as a management tool for neglected woodland. Ensure active management of the Rhododendron Drive, which is a locally important feature, including consideration of replacement planting with non-invasive species.
- Manage the integration of new woodland using locally occurring native species and ensure that new woodland planting follows the existing pattern of wooded ridges and interconnecting valleys.
- Conserve and protect the landscape pattern of mixed woodland and pasture in the south of the area and conserve and enhance the open and rural qualities of the pastureland on the edge of the landscape. Encourage appropriate management of grassland by grazing.
- Manage the integration of equine related activities into the landscape through the maintenance of existing boundaries and control of associated built elements.
- Conserve and protect the parkland landscape of Bearwood estate and plan for the next generation of parkland trees, including areas of BAP priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland.

- Conserve and protect surviving medieval landscape features, including the ancient woodland, banks and ditches.
- Conserve, enhance and manage remnant heathland and acid grassland habitats particularly from changes in land use and encroachment by secondary woodland and scrub. An appropriate heathland and grassland management regime is critical. Seek to extend the area of wetland habitats through re-creation of wetlands (including water meadows and wet woodland). Seek to enhance the habitat value of the lake.
- Seek sympathetic integration of new recreational facilities and associated car parks into the landscape.
- Enhance informal recreational enjoyment of the landscape while managing recreational pressure on the LWS. Consider zoning of activities to ensure ecologically valuable or more sensitive elevated landscapes are protected from damaging activities and ensure appropriate management of informal recreation, particularly in relation to the Rights of Way network.
- Conserve the unsettled character of this area. In particular maintain the rural and undeveloped character of this area in relation to Wokingham town, by conserving and enhancing the integration of the urban edge through wooded boundaries to provide visual screening.
- Conserve the rural character of the wooded landscapes between adjacent towns and settlements, to protect their individual identity and retain the sense of physical and visual separation. In particular protect the sensitive areas of open land between Wokingham and Barkham Hill.
- Limit unsympathetic changes of use within woodland to prevent the fragmentation of the homogenous areas of woodland.
- Maintain and enhance the character of rural and tree-lined byways and tracks, resisting unsympathetic highways improvements, infrastructure and signage.
- Use appropriate tree planting to help integrate roads including proposed improvements at Barkham Bridge. Encourage retention of wooded edges and boundaries along roads and minimising fencing and other boundary structures.
- Conserve distinctive wooded character of undeveloped skylines. Consider the impact of any development on skylines, particularly where it would have the potential to be highly visible from adjacent character areas. Develop sympathetic fell cycles to maintain positive character, particularly phased cycles along sensitive skylines to ensure that the wooded backdrop is maintained. Particular care should be taken in the siting of communication masts or other vertical elements, which have the potential to be highly visible in this elevated landscape.
- Protect the strong perceptions of tranquillity and remoteness in the landscape, including the experience of dark skies through the management of development.





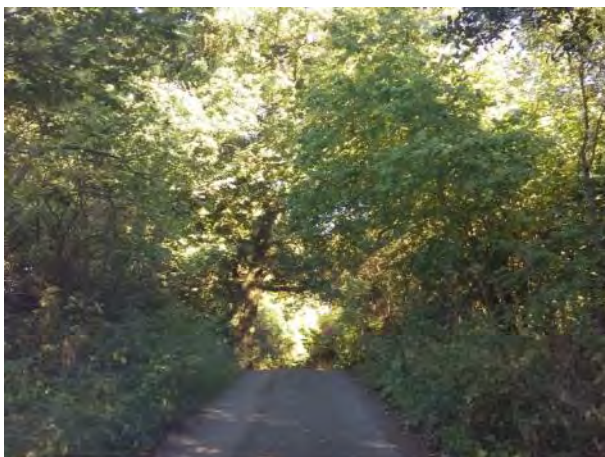




## SUMMARY

A discrete elevated landscape of small hills and knolls. The higher areas are wooded, with a distinctive coniferous element interspersed with pastures with arable farming on the lower slopes. Timber framed farmhouses and brick built cottages are linked with a network of winding rural roads and lanes.

The Farley Hill Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills character area is located in the south of the borough and rises from the surrounding lower land of A2: Loddon River Valley and A3: Blackwater River Valley in the west and south and from J2: Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay and N2: Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland to the north and east. The boundaries of the area largely follow the base of the slopes along the 50m contour line. To the east and west of the area where the slopes are not so distinctly defined the boundaries follow a series of minor roads and the A32.



## Key Characteristics

- Small undulating hills rising to 80m AOD at Farley Hill. The islands of higher land express the underlying geology, of London Clay overlain by Bagshot Formation sands and Sixth River Terrace deposits, which produce poorer soils making it unsuitable for agriculture. The lower clay slopes support mixed agriculture.
- Small ponds and open water bodies, possibly from former gravel or clay pits are scattered throughout the area, including Farley Hill West pond, a proposed LWS.
- Extensive woodland network of mixed, coniferous and deciduous woodland and copses, including areas of BAP priority habitat and ancient woodland, many of which are designated as LWS. Farley Hill Woods also contains small areas of remnant heathland habitat.
- Intricate small scale landscape with small sinuous pastures enclosed by the woodland, and arable fields on lower slopes bounded by thick overgrown hedgerows with hedgerow trees. Early enclosure field systems cover an extensive area.
- Marginal land uses including pony paddocks with associated stables bound by post and rail fencing and semi-industrial uses of farmland which influence the rural character.
- Some large agricultural buildings which are highly visible within the small scale landscape.
- Historic parkland associated with Farley Hall (Grade I listed). The parkland was laid out in early-mid 18th century, with possible contribution from Charles Bridgeman, and is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden.
- Rural settlement pattern of closely spaced farmsteads, the hamlet at Farley Hill and 18th and 19th century country houses with a strong vernacular of brick, timber-framing, thatch and clay tile. A new estate development on the former Poperinghe Barracks disturbs this pattern.
- Network of footpaths and bridleways and quiet rural lanes and tracks, some sunken, which wind through the woodlands, bordered by bulky hedgerows and often without kerbs or intrusive signage.
- Views to the river valleys of the Blackwater, Broadwater and Loddon, with this area forming a wooded backdrop to views from the surrounding landscape.
- Secluded, remote character of the landscape enclosed within woodland, with an experience of dark skies.

## Natural Landscape

- L2.1 The area comprises a convoluted series of small knolls or hills rising to 80m AOD centred on Farley Hill, expressing the geology of London Clay overlain by sands and gravels of the Bagshot Formation, Sixth River Terrace Gravels and Head Gravels. Water shed from the higher land has eroded valleys down the sides of the hills forming a complex and small scale landscape. Streams still flow down these valleys and there are drainage ditches in others. There are disused gravel pits on Farley Hill, and a number of small open water bodies may have been gravel or clay pits. The Farley Hill West Pond is a proposed Local Wildlife Site (LWS) for its very high toad population.
- L2.2 On the central area of Farley Hill the poor fertility of the soil makes it unsuitable for agriculture and here the land use is largely woodland, which ranges across the area both on the hill tops and the sides of the slopes. The woodland is mixed deciduous with conifers, and Scots pine is

particularly noticeable in the Farley Hill area, along with beech, birch, holly, yew and rhododendron. The woods are irregular in outline and vary in size including small blocks loosely connected to the larger areas. These woodlands often have heathy elements as they developed on slightly sandy soils, for example the small remnant area of heath at the Farley Hill Woods complex. Seven of the woodlands are designated as LWS, for the BAP priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland.

- L2.3 On the more fertile soil over the London Clay, the lower slopes of the hills support arable farming mixed with pasture. Areas of rough grazing and paddocks are also evident. Fields are small and sinuous in outline following the varied topography of the hill slopes and often enclosed or partially enclosed by woodland. The hedgerows and hedgerow trees add to the rural, wooded character of the area with their overgrown appearance. The paddocks detract from the unity of the landscape as they are geometric in outline with post and rail fences rather than hedges, although they are small scale. There are large agricultural buildings, and farms with semi-industrial use, including an anaerobic digester plant at Hill Farm and substation and breakers yard south of Ducks Nest Farm, which also disrupt the small-scale field pattern.
- L2.4 The historic parkland of Farley Hall occupies a central block of Farley Hill, bounded by public lanes, with gardens and an early to mid-18th century landscape park possibly designed (at least in part) by Charles Bridgeman, and designated as Grade II Registered Park and Garden. The Hall stands at the edge of the woodland with views across to Swallowfield Park and the Loddon valley. The woodland to the east of the hall may have been part of the pleasure gardens, and the more open terraced lawns to the west give way to parkland running down to the lake. The park extends its influence on the landscape through the lodges, two of which survive, and the holly, yew and laurel hedge along Bunglers Hill. There is BAP priority habitat lowland wood pasture and parkland recorded.

## Cultural Landscape

- L2.5 The **Roman road between London and Calleva (Silchester), known locally as the Devil's Highway**, enters the area at Lea Copse where it can be traced for a short length. There is however, little evidence of either prehistoric or Romano-British settlement. Place names such as Farley and Langley containing **"-leah"** (a woodland clearing) indicates settlement in the forest landscape which later formed part of the Royal Forest of Windsor. The area is characterised by a low level of settlement of closely spaced farmsteads linked by a network of lanes, including the former Wokingham Lane which runs west from Langley Common.
- L2.6 The piecemeal clearance of woodland to form cultivatable land by assarting, and later by agreement, can be seen in the pattern of small irregular fields intermixed with woodland around Farley Hill. This early enclosure landscape covers an extensive area, once contiguous with adjacent lands around the Loddon (A2 and C1) and Spencers Wood (J3). A considerable amount of this early field system remains well-preserved.
- L2.7 Later development has also influenced landscape character. The elevated ground at Farley Hill became the site of the 18th and early 19th century country houses and landscaped parks at Farley Hall, Farley Hill Court and Farley Castle (formerly Wragg Castle). **The possible 'motte' at Farley Hill Place** may be a landscaping feature. Some of the woodland represents 19th century plantation – such as New Plantation at Farley Castle, while the small Farley Hill Common was not enclosed for farmland until 1865.
- L2.8 Settlement in this area is in a regular pattern of farms dispersed on the hill slopes, with the scattered hamlet of Farley Hill crowning the central higher area. Grander historic houses are on the high ground around the village (Farley Hall, Farley Castle, Farley Hill Court and Arborfield Court) backed by the woods, with views out over the hillsides.
- L2.9 There is a rich variety of vernacular materials and architectural styles with timber framed farmhouses and cottages, some infilled with red brick and with thatch or clay tiled roofs. There are also Victorian polychromatic Reading brick houses with clay tiles or slate roofs and decorative barge boards in the hamlet of Farley Wood. Farley Hall is an early 18th century red brick Queen Anne style house, listed at Grade I. The historic parkland around the Hall includes small brick

lodges and the former kitchen garden with a **brick gardener's cottage set into the** north wall (listed Grade II).

- L2.10 More recent development includes the estate development on the site of the former Poperinghe Barracks off the A327 Eversely Road (formerly part of the Arborfield Garrison) and the conversion of the early 19th century gothic style brick built Farley Castle to apartments.
- L2.11 An intricate network of winding rural roads and lanes, bridleways and footpaths links the farms and hamlets, and are used for recreation. The lanes are highly rural in character, a small proportion are sunken, bordered by bulky hedgerows and by woodland. They are without kerbs, sometimes with rough grassed triangular islands at junctions and with little intrusive signage. The roads are becoming busier, and traffic is now an issue. Informal passing places have also been created.

## Perceptual Landscape

- L2.12 The woods form a wooded horizon, framing views across the Loddon, Broadwater and Blackwater river valleys and strengthening the wooded character of the borough. The enclosure given by the woods on the hills themselves adds drama to the open views out across the valleys.
- L2.13 There is a quiet and rural ambiance, and although the landscape is accessible, it still feels secluded and tranquil, with dark skies.

### Valuable Landscape Attributes

- Distinctive hilly landform and wooded skyline visible and forming a backdrop in the wider landscape.
- Variety and complexity of mixed broadleaved woodland, some of which is ancient in origin, with high biodiversity value reflected in BAP priority habitats and LWS designations.
- Intimate pattern of pastures, woodland and arable farmland provides scenic quality and visual diversity.
- Recreational value of the network of the tree-lined and enclosed byways and footpaths allowing access and enjoyment of the countryside in close proximity to urban areas.
- Rural pattern of farms and hamlets, which are well integrated into the wooded landscape and display a strong vernacular of timber-framed farmhouses and cottages, with polychromatic Reading brick, clay-tiled or thatched roofs.
- Sunken winding rural lanes and tracks with mature hedgerows are visually appealing and add rural character to the landscape.
- Historic parkland landscape associated with the Farley Hill estate, designated as a Registered Park and Garden, provides a cultural record of the past and layers of history within the landscape.
- Contrast between the enclosure created by the woods and framed views across the Loddon, Broadwater and Blackwater river valleys.
- Areas with a strong sense of seclusion and rural tranquility, with naturalistic perceptual qualities and experience of dark skies due to the lack of settlement.

### Landscape Condition

This is a distinctive hilly landscape with an intact pattern of pastures, woodland and arable farming interspersed with vernacular settlements. These provide a strong sense of place and strong perceptual

qualities of seclusion and remoteness resulting in a good condition. However increasing traffic levels are affecting the tranquillity of the area. The presence of large agricultural buildings and semi-industrial uses for farms is incongruous, as is the replacement of hedgerows with fencing.

### Key Issues

- Loss of structure and species diversity in deciduous woodland has occurred in the past through cessation of coppice management. However, there are positive signs that woodlands are being brought back into management.
- Effects on tree health or species composition of woodland as a consequence of pathogens and climate change.
- Spread of sycamore, rhododendron and other invasive/exotic species into native deciduous woodland is threatening the locally distinctive species composition of these woodlands.
- Influence of woodland management on wider landscape character, in particular affecting wooded ridgelines.
- Hedgerow loss associated with the expansion of fields and intensification of agriculture.
- Loss of remnant of heath habitats as a result of scrub encroachment.
- Changes in agricultural practice, including conversion of livestock grazing to horse paddocks, are leading to a decline in traditional management regimes and loss of traditional features such as hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Temporary fencing and structures resulting in a decline in rural intactness.
- Lack of recruitment of young trees (through natural regeneration or planting) required to rebalance the age structure of parkland and hedgerow trees is an on-going threat to the character of the landscape.
- Potential pressure for more paddocks, particularly at settlement edges leading to a fragmentation of the rural landscape.
- Recreational pressure leading to erosion of special ecological features and other landscape features.
- Demand for new residential development and supporting infrastructure outside the area impacting on landscape character. The proximity of development in relation to the Arborfield Garrison SDL development (in adjoining LCA M1) may affect the tranquillity and character of the area.
- Infrastructure associated with new development outside and inside the area, particularly the Arborfield Cross Relief Road which crosses the north of the area, and increased traffic on the Eversley Road.
- Increase in traffic on small lanes leading to a loss of tranquillity and resulting in unofficial passing places and erosion of verges. This may lead to demands for upgrading the network of rural lanes with new signage, line painting and widening which threatens their intimate rural character.
- Demand for densification and infill within existing settlements leading to loss of features such as trees, woodland and historic features, such as the small estate on the former Poperinghe Barracks.
- A modern trend towards close-boarded fencing of garden boundaries leading to the loss of green infrastructure and biodiversity at the local level.

- Pressure for further semi-industrial uses of farmland e.g. anaerobic digestion plant at Hill Farm, which can cause loss of landscape features, and increase traffic to and from the site.
- Potential pressure for built development on the skyline leading to loss of wooded ridges which are characteristic of the local landscape.
- This **character area contains a reservoir of 'dark skies'**, particularly to the south of the area. Light pollution is a key issue affecting the night landscape.
- Increasing demand for communication masts, pylons and poles leading to visual intrusion of these elements in the elevated landscape.

### Landscape Strategy

To maintain the landscape character of the *Farley Hill Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills* the following strategy is required: to conserve and enhance the existing wooded and secluded character.

The key aspects to be conserved are the views, intimate pattern of pastures, tranquillity and dark skies, woodland and arable farmland and rural settlement pattern linked by narrow lanes. There are opportunities to restore and actively manage the historic parkland, ancient woodland coppice and the connecting hedgerows. Marginal farmland and paddocks should also be enhanced.

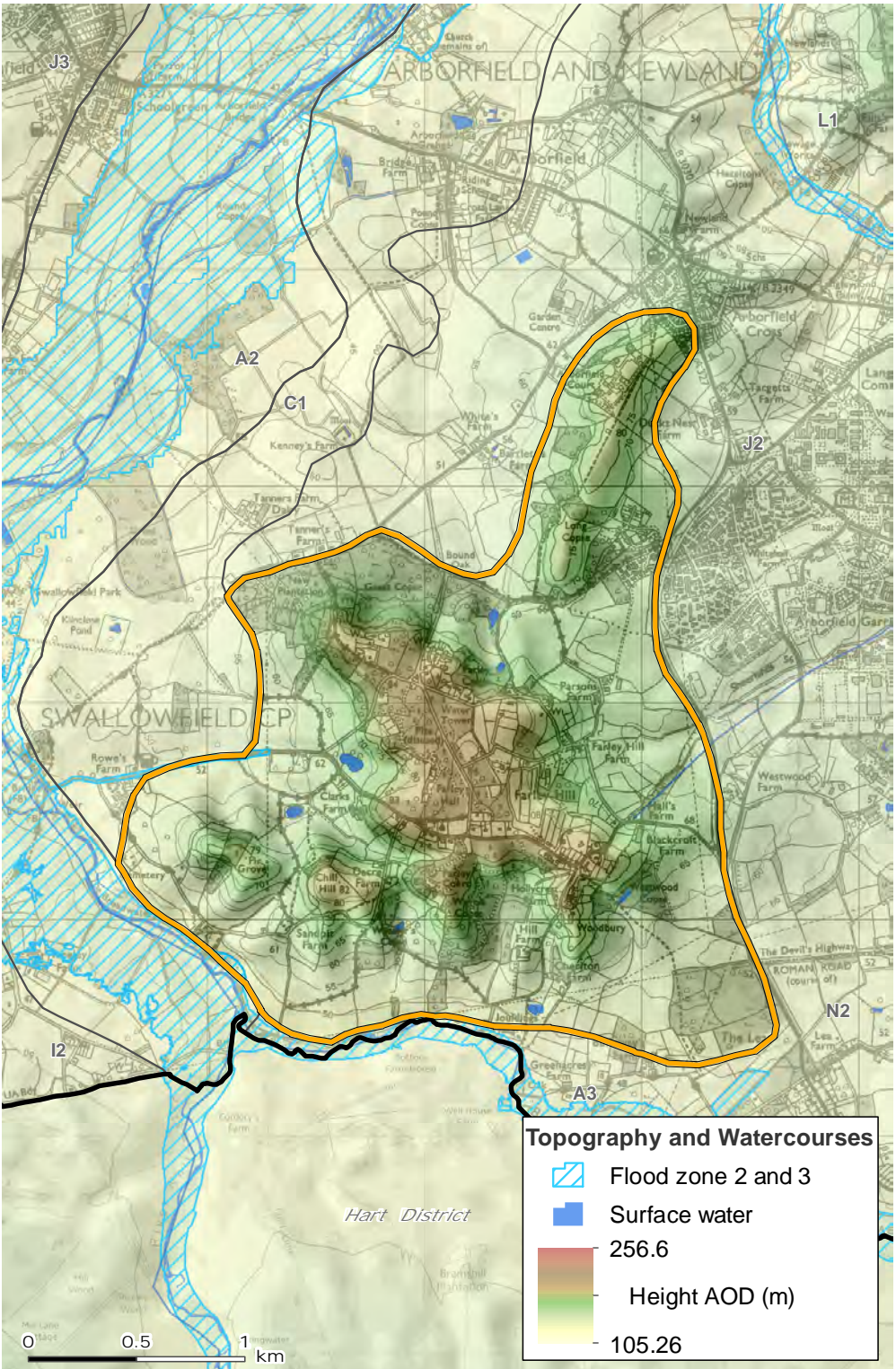
In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the sparse settlement pattern, and maintain the low density of development avoiding encroachment from the new development at Arborfield.

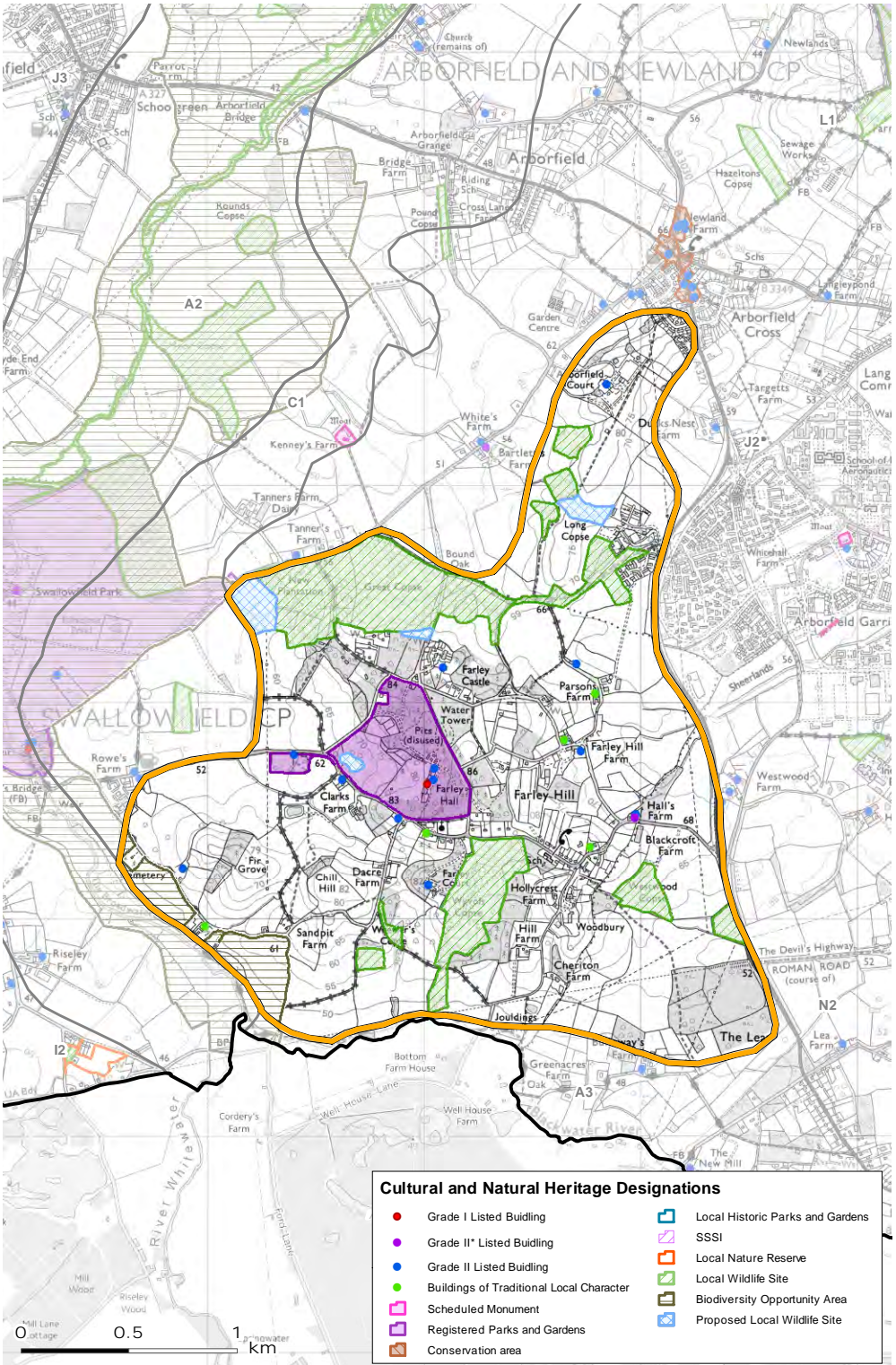
### Landscape Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the wooded character of the landscape, including BAP priority habitats and ancient woodlands, designated as LWS. Continue to promote appropriate management through natural regeneration, control of non-native species and coppicing as a management tool for neglected woodland.
- Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland, using locally occurring native species in order to provide screening of roads and development. Plan for the next generation of hedgerow trees with a programme of tree planting. Seek to avoid introduction of coniferous boundaries and shelterbelts.
- Conserve the rural qualities of the farmed landscape. Manage and enhance the wildlife interest of agricultural fields by encouraging the creation of uncultivated field margins and other wildlife-friendly farming methods around intensively farmed fields.
- Conserve and manage hedgerows as important wildlife habitats and landscape features, as well as the links they provide across the landscape and between areas of woodland. Reinstate or repair hedgerows with native species where there are opportunities to do so.
- Manage the integration of equine related activities into the landscape through the maintenance of existing boundaries or restoration of hedgerows and control of associated built development.
- Conserve and protect the intricate landscape pattern of woodland and mixed pasture and arable fields, and encourage appropriate management of grassland by grazing.
- Conserve and protect the parkland landscapes, and plan for the next generation of parkland trees, including BAP priority habitat lowland wood pasture and parkland.
- Conserve, enhance and manage heathland habitats, particularly from changes in land use and encroachment by secondary woodland and scrub. An appropriate heathland management

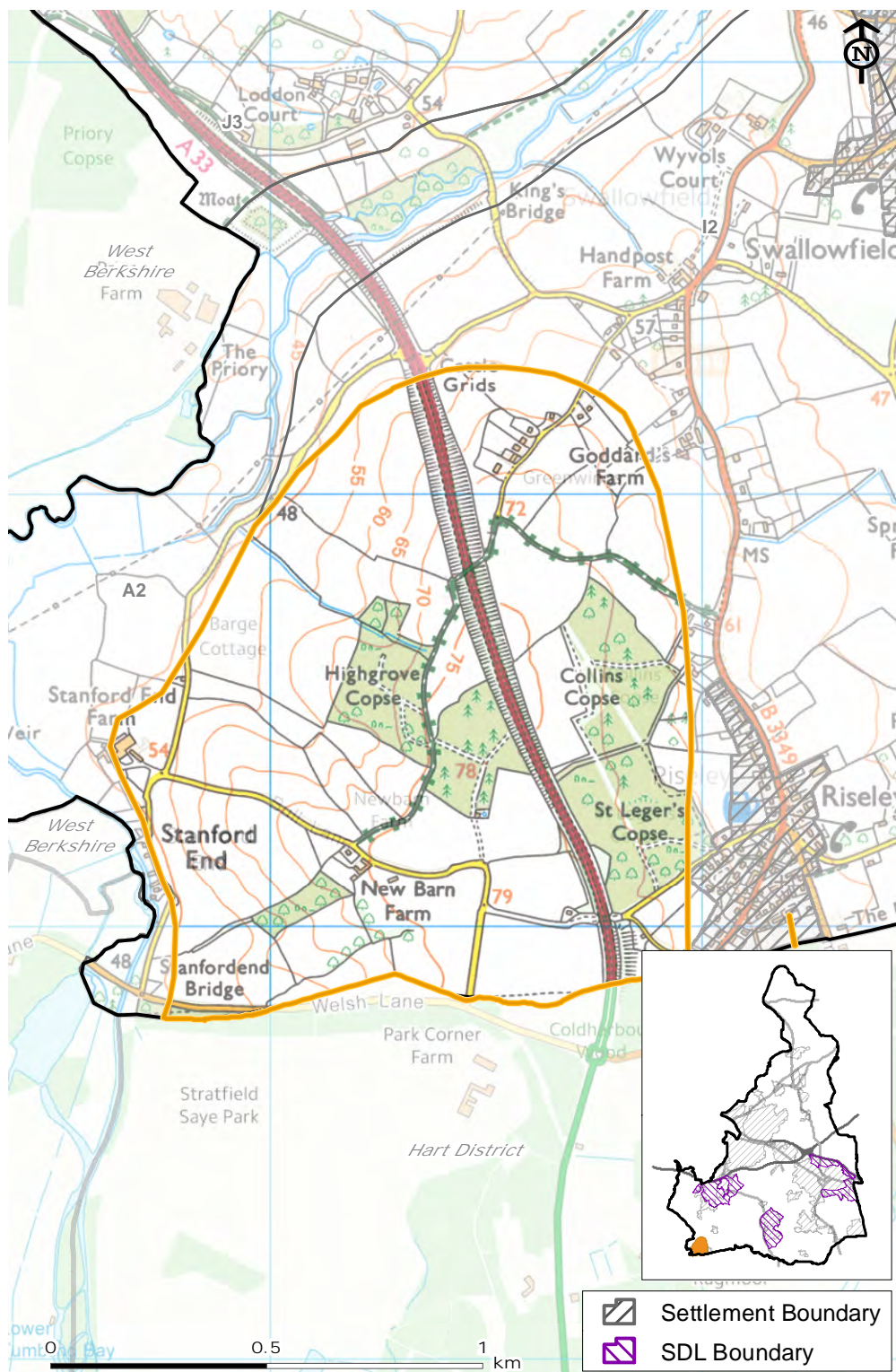
regime is critical.

- Conserve the individual identity of the hamlets, farmsteads and manors through control of new development. In particular avoid the spread of development from Arborfield into the area.
- Enhance informal recreational enjoyment of the landscape but balance this with continued conservation of valuable semi-natural habitats. Consider zoning of activities to ensure ecologically valuable or more sensitive elevated landscapes are protected from damaging activities and ensure appropriate management of informal recreation, particularly in relation to the Rights of Way network and connections to new residential areas.
- Maintain and enhance the character of the rural winding lanes with their unimproved road side verges. Resist unsympathetic highway improvements or widening that would threaten their rural character, particularly in the most rural areas.
- Integrate the new urban edge of the development at Arborfield through planting of woodland and large-species trees to provide visual screening and a positive interface between the built up and rural areas.
- Use appropriate tree planting to help integrate new roads, particularly in relation to the Arborfield Cross Relief Road and its connection via Eversley Road.
- Enhance sense of place through careful design (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape – and sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) to minimise the impacts of any potential new development on valuable attributes. Take particular care to minimise the visual impact of commercial farm enterprises. Restrict unsympathetic boundary changes around existing properties.
- Conserve distinctive wooded character of undeveloped skylines. Consider the impact of any development on skylines, particularly vertical elements which would have the potential to be highly visible from adjacent character areas, and the Loddon and Blackwater valleys. Develop sympathetic fell cycles to maintain positive character, particularly phased cycles along sensitive skylines to ensure that the wooded backdrop is maintained. Particular care should be taken in the siting of communication masts or other vertical elements, which have the potential to be highly visible in this elevated landscape.
- Protect the framed views across the river valleys
- Protect the strong perceptions of tranquillity and intimate character of the landscape, including the experience of dark skies through the control of development.









## SUMMARY

A small but topographically distinct area of higher ground, characterised by sparse settlement linked by sunken rural lanes. The area is predominately used for arable farming with a strong network of low hedgerows, interspersed by heathy woodland blocks. An isolated and rural character bisected and disturbed by the busy A33.

The Stanford End Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills area is located at the south west corner of the borough. It is topographically distinct from the surrounding lowland areas, the A2: Loddon River Valley to the west and I2: Riseley Farmed Clay Lowland to the north and east. The southern boundary coincides with the borough boundary. The western boundary marks the base of the slope from the River Loddon valley floor, based on the 50m contour line. To the east the hillside is less steep and the rise of the hill less defined, here the boundary follows the 70m contour and skirts the western edge of the settlement of Riseley.



## Key Characteristics

- Northern end of a pronounced ridge of clay hills, overlain by sandy deposits and extending beyond the borough boundary.
- Topographically distinct from the surrounding lowlands, particularly the steeper western slopes rising from the Loddon valley, from 50 to 75m AOD.
- Native coniferous and mixed woodlands form a wooded backdrop to the surrounding farmed landscape and accentuate the landform.
- Concentration of BAP priority habitat and ancient woodland including Highgrove Copse, St **Leger's** Copse, and **Collin's** Copse LWS.
- An irregular pattern of arable farmland with some sheep pasture.
- Field sizes are varied but larger on the lower slopes bound by sinuous lines of hedgerows rising to the higher ground. On higher ground hedgerows are thicker and denser with mature oak standards.
- Very sparsely populated, with scattered modern red brick farmhouses.
- The GHQ Stop Line (General Headquarters Line), a defensive zone built during the summer of 1940 to contain the threatened German invasion ran east from Bristol to the Thames Estuary and included a section along the Blackwater.
- Single-track lanes, deeply sunken and bounded with banks, ditches and hedges on the higher ground.
- Tranquil and remote character, which has dark skies, locally interrupted by the busy A33, which bisects the area, isolating the western half from the rest of the borough.
- Extensive views over the Loddon Valley from the ridge.

## Natural Landscape

- L3.1 This area reflects its simple underlying structure as the northern end of a larger area of Sixth River Terrace gravels overlying the sandy geology of the Bagshot Formation, which in turn overlies the London Clay. The steeper gradients on the undulating western slopes are striking because of the contrast with the adjacent River Loddon valley. Here the land rises from 50m to 75m AOD. To the east the land shelves even more gently down to I2: Riseley Arable Open Clay Lowland.
- L3.2 Arable farming dominates the landscape, including sunflowers and maize supported by fertile loamy soils. The lower western and northern slopes of the ridge are devoted mainly to arable farming with a small amount of sheep pasture. Fields are large, bounded by sinuous lines of hedgerows with mature or over mature hedgerow trees rising up the slopes to the wooded ridge. The mature hedgerow trees silhouetted against the sky and the dark woodland on the higher ground form a visual counterpoint to the open arable fields and accentuate the curves of the landform.
- L3.3 Farmland is interspersed with blocks of mixed and coniferous woodland, often BAP priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland. There is heathy vegetation on the higher ground, reflecting the underlying sandy geology. The wedge of woodland between Highgrove Copse and the A33 is

a conifer plantation on an ancient woodland site (PAWS) **while St Leger's Copse contains hazel coppice**, along with more heathy vegetation such as birch and broom. Both Highgrove Copse and **St Leger's Copse/Collins Copse are designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)**.

## Cultural Landscape

- L3.4 There is evidence of a Mesolithic site in this area with a later small Roman settlement also occupying this higher land overlooking the Loddon valley. However, in recent times settlement has developed on the lower lying ground at the edge of the valley such as the settlements of Riseley and Stanford End.
- L3.5 The irregular outlines of the surviving woodland suggest assart incursions. There are small regular fields with wavy boundaries, and less regular fields, surrounding the woodlands, which may represent informal enclosures of late medieval and post-medieval date, possibly the result of rationalisation of small assarts. Some of this pattern has remained well preserved, particularly to the west of the area.
- L3.6 A more recent historic feature of the Loddon Valley is the GHQ Stop Line, a defensive zone built during the summer of 1940 to contain the threatened German invasion. The line ran east from Bristol to the Thames Estuary and included a section through the borough.
- L3.7 This area contains a loose network of noticeably sunken winding lanes with deep banks and some roadside ditches, linking the farmsteads. The Reading to Basingstoke turnpike, established in 1718, passing through Riseley to the east has since been replaced by the A33 trunk road cutting which runs through the heart of this area, separating the eastern and western halves.
- L3.8 Settlement is sparse with just a few farms of 19th or 20th century red brick.

## Perceptual Landscape

- L3.9 The mature hedgerow trees silhouetted against the sky and the dark woodland on the higher ground form a visual counterpoint to the wide open arable fields and accentuate the curves of the landform.
- L3.10 Away from the busy and intrusive A33, the area has an enclosed and rural character, enhanced by the sunken and winding lanes.

### Valuable Landscape Attributes

- Rural farmed character due to the mosaic of irregular fields of varied size, woodland and sparse settlement.
- Variety of the mixed and coniferous woodlands including BAP priority habitats and of ancient origin and network of thick hedgerows with hedgerow trees which provide ecologically important habitats.
- The wooded skyline which provides a distinctive backdrop to surrounding areas, including in adjacent boroughs.
- Deeply sunken and winding lanes on higher slopes which contribute to scenic rural quality.
- Network of mature hedgerows with mature oak standards which are silhouetted against the sky, giving an enclosed character and sense of place.
- Views to Loddon Valley over the surrounding landscape gives a sense of place and orientation.
- Strongly tranquil and remote character, with experience of dark skies due to sparse settlement.

### Landscape Condition

The pattern of arable and pastoral fields with mixed woodland, linked by rural lanes and little settlement is intact and in overall good condition. The busy A33 is a detracting element, and disturbs the rural character and tranquility of the area. There are opportunities for woodland and hedgerow habitat recreation and strengthening.

### Key Issues

- Effects on tree health or species composition of woodland and wet woodland as a consequence of pathogens and climate change.
- Loss of structure and species diversity of the traditionally coppiced woodlands has occurred in the past through cessation of coppice management. However, there are positive signs that woodlands are being brought back into management.
- Spread of sycamore, rhododendron and other invasive/exotic species into native deciduous woodland is threatening the locally distinctive species composition of these woodlands.
- Influence of woodland fell cycles on wider landscape character, in particular affecting wooded ridgelines.
- Hedgerow loss associated with past expansion of fields and intensification of agriculture. Lack of the recruitment of young trees (through natural regeneration or planting) required to rebalance the age structure of hedgerow trees is an on-going threat to the character of the landscape.
- Decline or decay of historic features including the GHQ Stop Line.
- Demand for built development on the skyline is leading to loss of wooded ridges which are characteristic of the Wokingham landscape.
- **This character area contains a reservoir of 'dark skies'. Light pollution is a key issue affecting the night landscape.**
- The A33 brings noise and movement to the area, disturbing the tranquillity. Demands for upgrading the winding network of rural lanes with new signage, line painting and widening is threatening the intimate rural character of the lanes and, by encouraging greater traffic volumes, also threatens the tranquillity of the area.
- Increasing demand for communication masts, pylons and poles leading to visual intrusion of these elements in the open landscape.

### Landscape Strategy

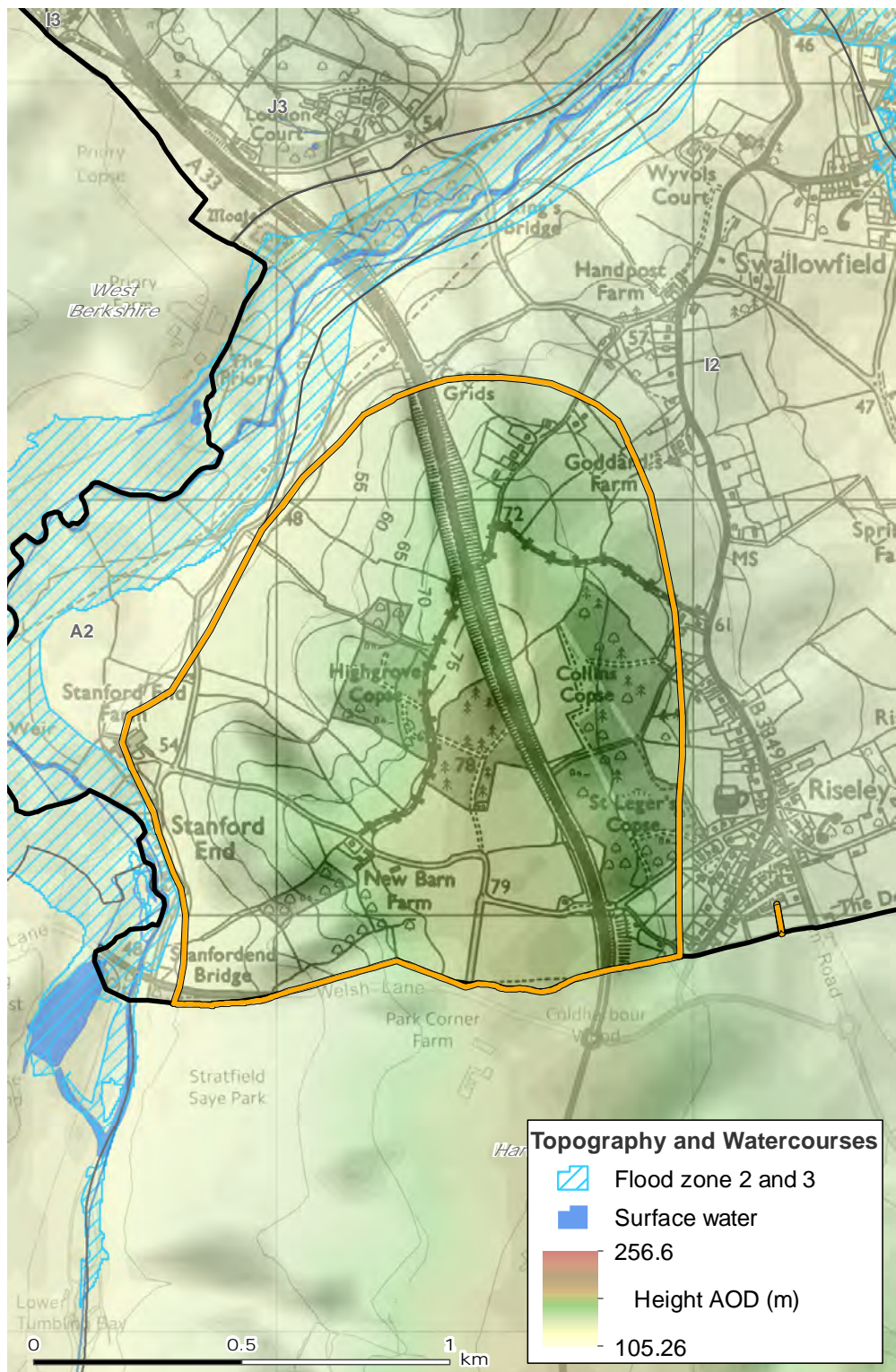
To maintain the landscape character of the *Stanford End Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills* the following strategy is required: to conserve and enhance existing rural and wooded character of the ridge.

The key aspects to be conserved are the inter-visibility of this area with the surrounding landscape, (particularly views to/from the Loddon), the rural character, mixed woodland and ancient woodland, sparse settlement and rural lanes, dark skies and relative tranquillity away from the A33. There is an opportunity to consider restoration of the hedgerows, and further integration of the A33 into the landscape.

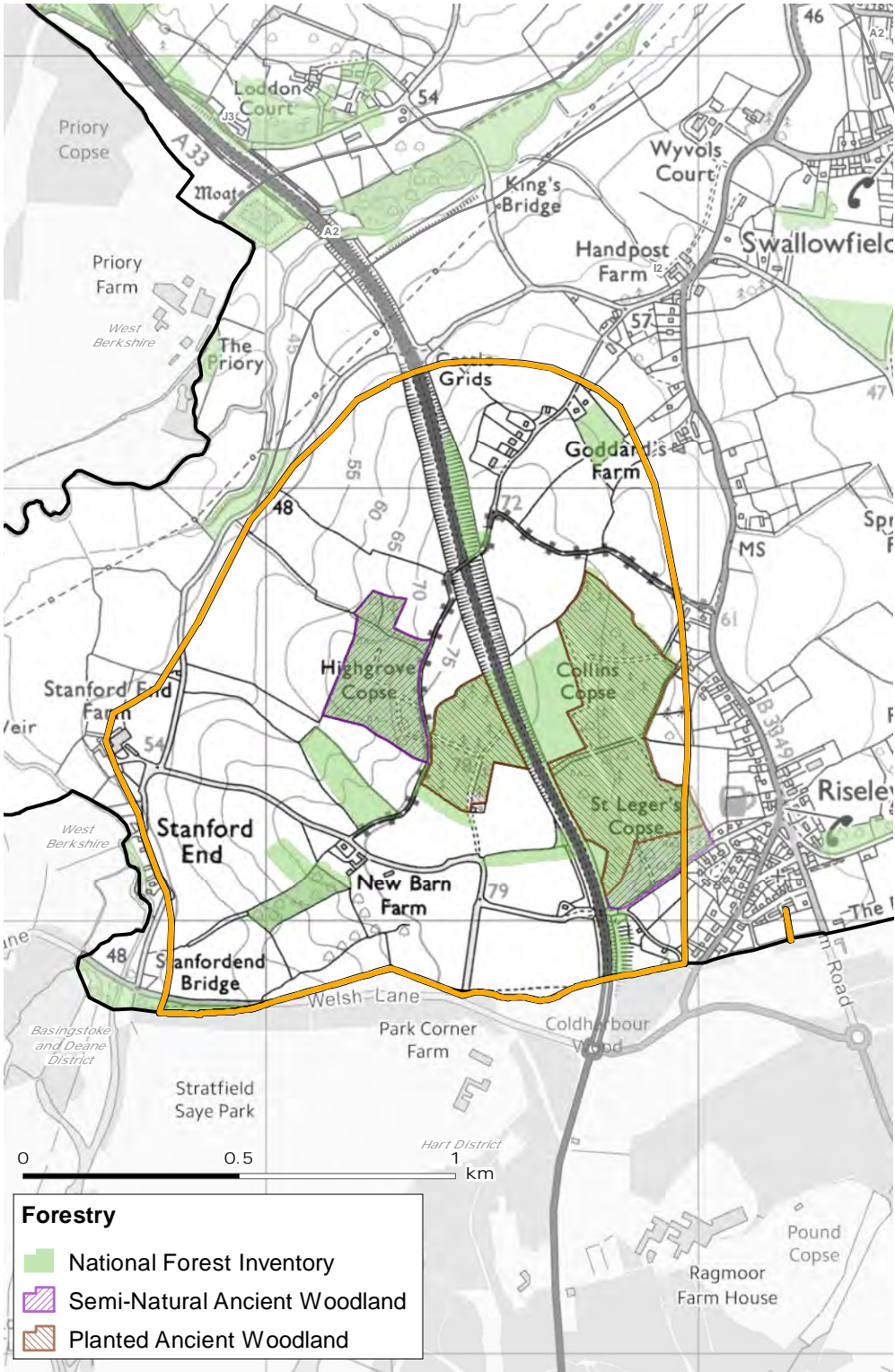
In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the sparse settlement pattern.

### Landscape Guidelines

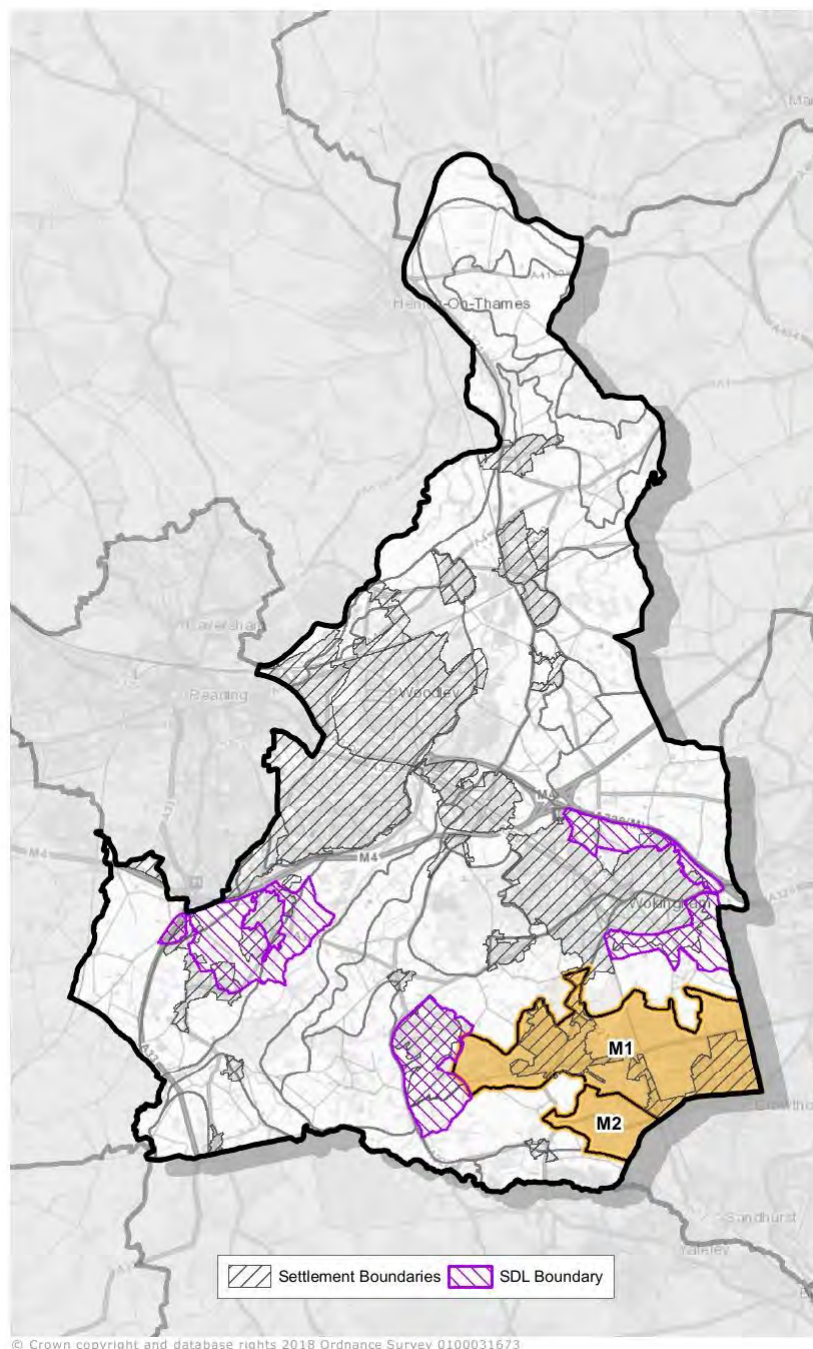
- Conserve and enhance the wooded character of the landscape, including ancient woodland. Continue to promote appropriate management through natural regeneration, control of non-native species and coppicing as a management tool for neglected woodland.
- Conserve enhance and manage valued woodland habitats including BAP priority habitats and those designated as LWS. Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland, using locally appropriate native species.
- Conserve and manage hedgerow field boundaries, with standard trees as important wildlife habitats and landscape features, as well as the links they provide across the landscape and between areas of woodland. Reinstate or repair hedgerows with native species where there are opportunities to do so. Plan for the next generation of hedgerow trees with a programme of tree planting.
- Conserve and protect the rural qualities of the farmed landscape with its pattern of mixed pasture and arable fields interspersed with woodland.
- Manage and enhance the wildlife interest of agricultural fields by encouraging the creation of uncultivated field margins and other wildlife-friendly farming methods around intensively farmed fields.
- Maintain and enhance the character of rural sunken lanes resisting unsympathetic highways improvements, infrastructure and signage.
- Conserve the features associated with the GHQ Stop Line.
- Use appropriate tree planting to help better integrate the A33 into the landscape. Encourage retention of wooded edges and boundaries along roads and minimising fencing and other boundary structures.
- Conserve distinctive wooded character of undeveloped skylines. Consider the impact of any development on skylines, particularly vertical elements which would have the potential to be highly visible from adjacent character areas. Develop sympathetic fell cycles to maintain positive character, particularly phased cycles along sensitive skylines to ensure that the wooded backdrop is maintained.
- Particular care should be taken in the siting of communication masts or other vertical elements, which have the potential to be highly visible in this elevated landscape.
- Protect the strong perceptions of tranquillity and remoteness in the landscape, including the experience of dark skies, through the management of development.







## M: Forested And Settled Sands



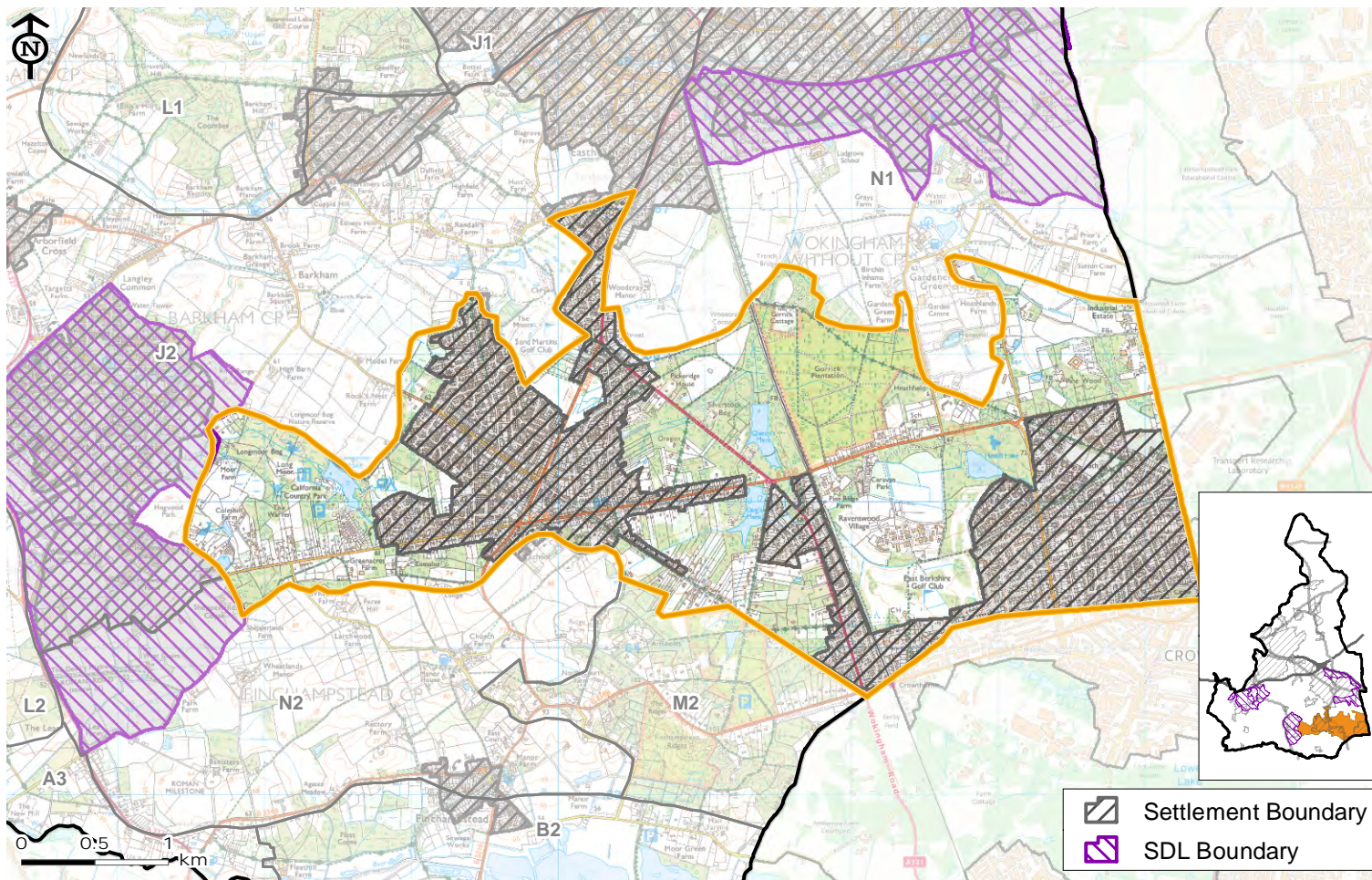
### Description

The LCT is characterised by the underlying acidic sandy Camberley Sand and Windlesham Formation, giving rise to a densely wooded area with mixed woodland and coniferous plantations. Low-density modern linear and estate development are arranged on long linear rides through the woodland. Heathland and wetland habitats, combined with numerous footpaths make these areas popular for recreation.

### Landscape Character Areas

The Forested and Settled Sands LCT is subdivided into two Landscape Character Areas:

- M1: Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands
- M2: Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands



## SUMMARY

An elevated plateau characterised by its densely wooded context, which creates a strong sense of enclosure. The woodland is varied with semi-natural areas and forestry plantation interspersed with heathland. Low density settlement is arranged along linear rides or in the settlements of Finchampstead (north) and part of Crowthorne. Away from areas of settlement, the landscape has a remote character, although it is still accessible due to numerous footpaths.

The eastern boundary of this area is defined by the borough boundary, although the character area extends into Bracknell Forest District. The northern and western boundaries broadly follow the edge of the woodland or settlement and changes in the underlying geology, from sands to clay and river terrace deposits. To the south the boundary is defined by the transition to the more open and topographically varied character of M2: Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands and N2: Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland.



## Key Characteristics

- An elevated landscape rising to 90m AOD, comprising a shelving plateau, underlain by acidic sands. The infertile sandy soils influence land cover and ecological character.
- Large swathes of interconnected forestry and woodland dominate the area, which has little farmland. These consist of large coniferous plantations as well as mixed woodlands with sandy heaths. Stands of Scots Pine and exotic species are particularly distinctive.
- A number of large lakes, including **Longmoor Lake, King's Mere and Queen's Mere**, originally excavated in late 19<sup>th</sup> century for brick making, now form a focus for recreation.
- The underlying heathland character typifies areas of woodland clearings such as California Park and adjacent to roads.
- Rich semi-natural habitats associated with the poorly draining acidic soils including BAP priority habitat lowland heathland and lowland dry acid grassland. Large acidic lakes or meres are surrounded by wetland and wet woodland; Longmoor Bog and Heath Lake are nationally important SSSIs.
- Long straight roads such as Nine Mile Ride (which originated **as historic 'rides'** created through the historically open landscape of the Royal Forest of Windsor) give a strong linear character to the landscape. Characterised **by roadside rhododendron 'hedges' and occasional** colourful patches of gorse and heather.
- The locally listed historic park at Ravenswood, which originated as a medieval deer park within the Royal Forest of Windsor.
- Strong settlement character, with a low density pattern of detached houses lining the historic rides, which have provided a framework for settlement. Residential properties of relatively unremarkable post-war and modern suburban character in a variety of styles.
- Good public accessibility including formal parks such as California Country Park, LNR (including Longmoor Bog and Heath Lake) and areas of open access Forestry Commission land (such as Gorrick Plantation) connected by a network of bridleways and footpaths.
- Localised area of remoteness within woodlands and smaller areas of pasture, mire and heath, which provide a sense of tranquility.
- A highly enclosed landscape created by the often continuous swathes of dense woodland, except for framed views along the rides.

## Natural Landscape

- M1.1 The character of the area is dominated by the presence of underlying sandy formations including the Bagshot Beds, fine to medium grained sandy deposits with clay and silt. There are localised deposits of the Camberley Sand Formation and Windlesham Formation and Sixth River Terrace at the highest elevation. These create gley-Podsols which impede drainage and create nutrient-poor acidic conditions unsuitable for arable farmland and dominated by forestry and woodland.
- M1.2 There are no watercourses. However, there are several relatively large lakes or meres and numerous small ponds located across the plateau, which originate from historic brick pits. **The most significant of these are Longmoor Lake, Queen's Mere, King's Mere and Heath Lake. These** water bodies tend to be acidic and are surrounded by boggy and marshy areas created by the

poorly draining soil, such as Longmoor Bog and Silverstock Bog. The largest meres contain BAP priority habitat eutrophic standing waters and mesotrophic lakes.

- M1.3 The principal land cover outside of settled areas is woodland frequently used as recreation areas. The dense woodland is varied with mixed woodland and large areas of forestry plantations which are tolerant of the underlying sandy and acidic soil conditions. It is also notable for the high incidence of conifers including Scots Pine and exotic species. The largest continuous swathe is Gorrick Plantation, owned by the Forestry Commission, located south of Gardeners Green. The plantations are managed on a commercial rotation, with public access permitted. Within woodland clearings a more colourful heathy character is evident with areas of heathland vegetation including bracken, gorse and heather. Elsewhere, much of the woodland is mixed with both coniferous and broadleaved species. BAP priority habitats lowland mixed deciduous woodland and wet woodland are both present.
- M1.4 The sandy acidic soils support a large number of sites with significant biological interest. The most characteristic are the sandy heaths, valley bogs, wet woods, and large expanses of mixed secondary woodland and includes BAP priority habitats lowland fens, lowland dry acidic grassland and lowland heathland. Longmoor Bog and Heath Lake are nationally important and designated as SSSSIs and are also protected as LNR. Longmoor Bog is one of the few base-poor valley mires remaining in Berkshire, and comprises well-developed wetland carr, mire, dry acid woodland and wet heath which supports several regionally restricted plants such as round-leaved sundew and common cotton grass and several species of bog moss. Heath Lake consists of a small shallow lake, surrounded by birch and pine woodland with areas of relict heathland. The site is of interest for its populations of restricted aquatic plants.
- M1.5 The area also contains seven Wildlife Heritage Sites, the majority of which are lakes and open heath surrounded by mixed woodland. These acid woodlands are characterised by birch, pine, oak and sweet chestnut, but many have been colonised by invasive rhododendron, which also grows along the roadsides in this area

## Cultural Landscape

- M1.6 Two round barrows northwest of Warren Lodge suggest there may have been Bronze Age expansion of settlement from the valleys onto less favourable sandy soils within this area. This led to the early development of commons and heathland as the ground was cleared and cultivated, and the soils depleted.
- M1.7 The Roman road between London and Calleva (Silchester) runs east-west through the area, and **is known locally as the Devil's Highway. There are remains of the agger (earthen embankment)** surviving in Crowthorne and Finchampstead parishes.
- M1.8 During the medieval period, this area was part of The Royal Forest of Windsor. At this time an area around the current site of Ravenswood was established as a deer park, Bigshotte Railes, one of a handful of Railes Parks in the Forest. Ravenswood Park is identified as a Local Historic Park and Garden. The Royal Forest of Windsor was enclosed in the early half of the 19th century, and the last remnants of heaths were replaced by plantations by 1857. A number of historic straight rides through this forested landscape e.g. Nine Mile Ride were created for Queen Anne (and later George III), so that when she was unable to hunt, she could follow in her carriage.
- M1.9 The built character of the landscape is one of the dominant elements affecting landscape character. Much of the settlement is characterised by long narrow land-parcels associated with individual dwellings, strung out along the long linear rides such as Nine Mile Ride (A340), **Duke's Ride** and Heath Ride. The scenic woodland landscape, close to London, made the heathland a popular setting for country houses surrounded by mostly small ornamental and landscaped parks. Sections of the rides have been suburbanised with kerbs, lighting, signage and roundabouts, but remain characterised by roadside rhododendron '**hedges**', and occasional colourful patches of gorse and heather with occasional views into woodland or forestry plantation. The rides are interconnected, which has led to many of the linear settled areas joining and the subsequent infill of the intervening areas with more settlement. In terms of character, the settled landscape is predominantly low-density two-storey residential and bungalows set in large gardens. The buildings are set back from the road behind walls and fences and the gardens retain mature

conifers, particularly Scots Pine. Schools and shops are associated with the residential areas but there are no large-scale industrial or commercial buildings.

- M1.10 The settlement is almost entirely post-Victorian and includes a high proportion of post-war and modern estate dwelling. There is no obvious local vernacular, and generally the architecture is unremarkable, although some Victorian buildings with yellow brick and bargeboards, such as Crowthorne Station, stand out. The absence of churches or obvious centres of development is notable.
- M1.11 **The woodland and wetlands provide the focus for recreational use in this area. The main 'formal' recreation area is California Country Park, first developed in the early 1950s as a holiday camp, which is focussed on Longmoor Lake and includes an outdoor swimming pool, caravan and camping park, visitor centre and café. Many of these areas are interconnected by the extensive system of bridleways and footpaths throughout this area, which permit long circular walks and also connect to the nearby town of Wokingham. In addition to the informal natural landscape there is also one golf course, the Royal East Berkshire Golf Course, on the edge of Crowthorne and well integrated into the surrounding wooded landscape.**

## Perceptual Landscape

- M1.12 The interconnected rides and subsequent infill of the intervening areas with settlement give the perception of an area considerably more settled than is actually the case, with an impression of extended linear ribbon development along roads.
- M1.13 Away from the areas of settlement, the landscape demonstrates a strong sense of enclosure and remoteness, with few views afforded by the often continuous swathes of large coniferous woodland, except for vistas along the historic rides, including views from this area up the avenue of giant redwoods on Wellingtonia Avenue (LCA M2). It remains a landscape highly valued for recreation and relative tranquillity.

### Valuable Landscape Attributes

- The elevated plateau and wooded skyline visible and forming a backdrop in the wider landscape.
- Large expanses of mixed woodland containing mature trees which are important ecological habitats and provide a sense of place and history as well as opportunities for recreation. Stands of Scots pine provide characteristic landmark features.
- The distinctive pattern of interconnected woodland and forestry, interspersed with sandy heaths, lakes, bogs and wet woodland and occasional pastoral fields which provide scenic quality and visual diversity (a variety of colours and textures and changing seasonal interest) and provide a naturalistic sense of place to the suburban development.
- Acid heathland, large lakes and bogs which provide nationally important BAP priority habitats, nationally recognised as SSSIs, as well as opportunities for recreation.
- Distinctive long straight historic roads following the route of rides through the former Royal Forest of Windsor which provide a cultural record of the past as well as allowing views into a landscape well enclosed by trees.
- The locally listed historic park at Ravenswood, one of only four medieval deer parks in the district.
- Settlement pattern of low density post-war properties in large plots along long straight rides and notably the occasional wooded gaps between areas of settlement. Integration of development in the wooded landscape and absence of commercial, industrial buildings /large or tall built structures.

- Valued areas for recreation including tracts of open access land and the extensive network of bridleways and public footpaths which allow enjoyment of the landscape.
- The continuous network of woodland and forestry which helps to provide physical and visual separation between settlements and to filter and screen views to the settlements within the area, as well as provide an attractive setting to housing.
- Important vistas to the Wellingtonia Avenue (within LCA M2) which provides a sense of place.
- Localised areas with a sense of tranquillity and even remoteness, removed from the roads and visual influence of settlement, which provide an escape in close proximity to the urban population.

### Landscape Condition

The landscape is in overall good condition, with a distinctive pattern of built and natural elements, including woodland, wetland, open pasture, and heathland habitats, with large lakes, continuous interconnected forestry and a cohesive settlement character. Although much of this landscape has a **'suburban' character is does have** a very strong sense of place; however there has been fragmentation of heathland and wetland habitats.

### Key Issues

- Changes in deciduous woodland structure through loss of species diversity and spread of sycamore, rhododendron and other invasive/exotic species. The expansion of the coniferous content of woodlands in the past has resulted in a change in character of the woodlands and had a negative impact on the ground flora. However, there are positive signs that woodlands are being brought back into management.
- Effects on tree health or species composition of woodland and heathlands as a consequence of pathogens and climate change.
- The influence of woodland fell cycles within forestry has an influence on wider landscape character, particularly along wooded ridgelines.
- Changes in management that could result in loss and fragmentation of heathland or wetland habitats as a result of scrub encroachment or conversion to forestry.
- Drainage operations associated with development altering ground water levels and affecting wetland habitats.
- High demands for recreation due to proximity to large centres of population, particularly mountain biking and quad biking, leading to erosion and impact on tranquillity. Erosion of rights of way, special archaeological, ecological and other landscape features is a continuing concern in this well-populated area.
- Pressure for intensification of golf courses that have an impact on the character of the landscape.
- Pressure for new residential development and supporting infrastructure, both inside and outside the area, impacting on landscape character. Development of a new settlement at the Arborfield Garrison SDL and the extension of the existing Hogwood Industrial Estate immediately to the west of the LCA (in adjoining LCA J2) could potentially impact California Country Park.
- Continued pressure for expansion, infill and densification within existing settlements, particularly at Crowthorne, leading to loss of open pasture, heathland and woodland habitat and potential

amalgamation with adjacent settlements, such as development at Oakham Park (off Old Wokingham Road and Hatch Ride) and extension of the caravan site on the east shore of Longmoor Lake. There is also pressure for backland development to the rear of properties of Nine Mile Ride and unauthorised development between Nine Mile Ride and Ravenswood Park potentially eroding the landscape of the parkland.

- Continuing pressure for new roads or improvements to existing roads, in this well-populated and commercially vibrant area, impacting tranquillity, particularly in relation to the Arborfield Garrison development and the consequent increase in traffic along Nine Mile Ride.
- Continued pressure for infill development between settlements, particularly along the A321 and B3016 along the southern side of Wokingham, and where the landscape provides tranquil, distinct gaps, and 'breathing space' of rural character between built forms.
- Increasing suburbanisation including frontage development and the use of close board fencing along the rides, which is incongruous to the character of the area and also leads to tree losses which themselves harm the character of the area and the Green Rides.
- Increasing demand for communication masts, pylons and poles leading to visual intrusion of these elements in the elevated landscape and in views to the wooded backdrop from elsewhere.

### Landscape Strategy

To maintain the landscape character of the *Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands* the following strategy is required: to conserve and enhance existing character. The key aspects to be conserved and actively managed are the characteristic forestry and woodland; the rarer open landscapes of heath, mire lakes and pasture; important wildlife habitats; historic landscape features associated with the Royal Forest and recreational use. In particular there is an opportunity to consider restoration of heathland within the woodland context. The aim should be to link and connect existing heathland areas.

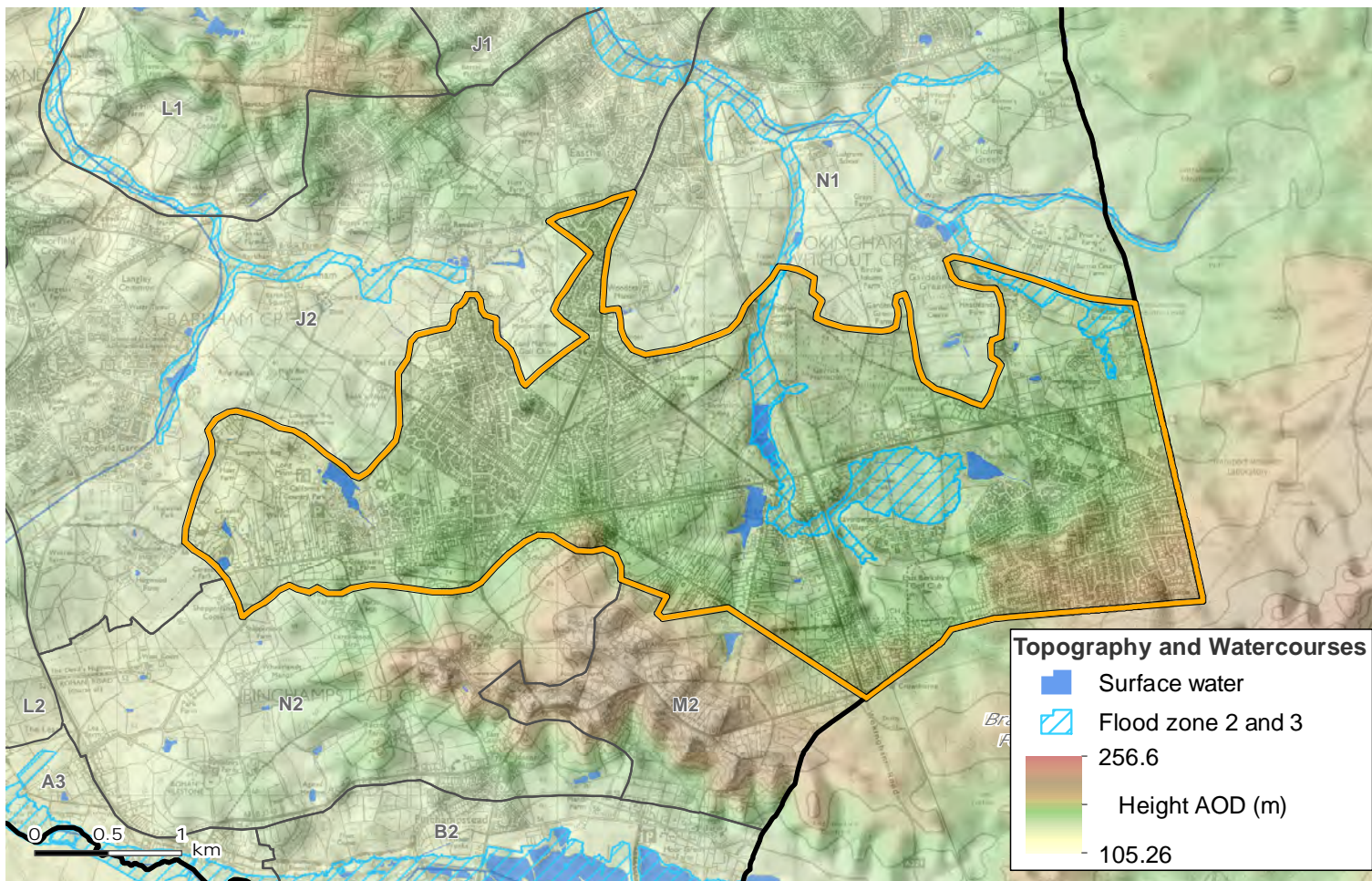
In terms of development, the aim is to conserve and enhance the rural setting and gaps between settlements and maintain the low density domestic character of development.

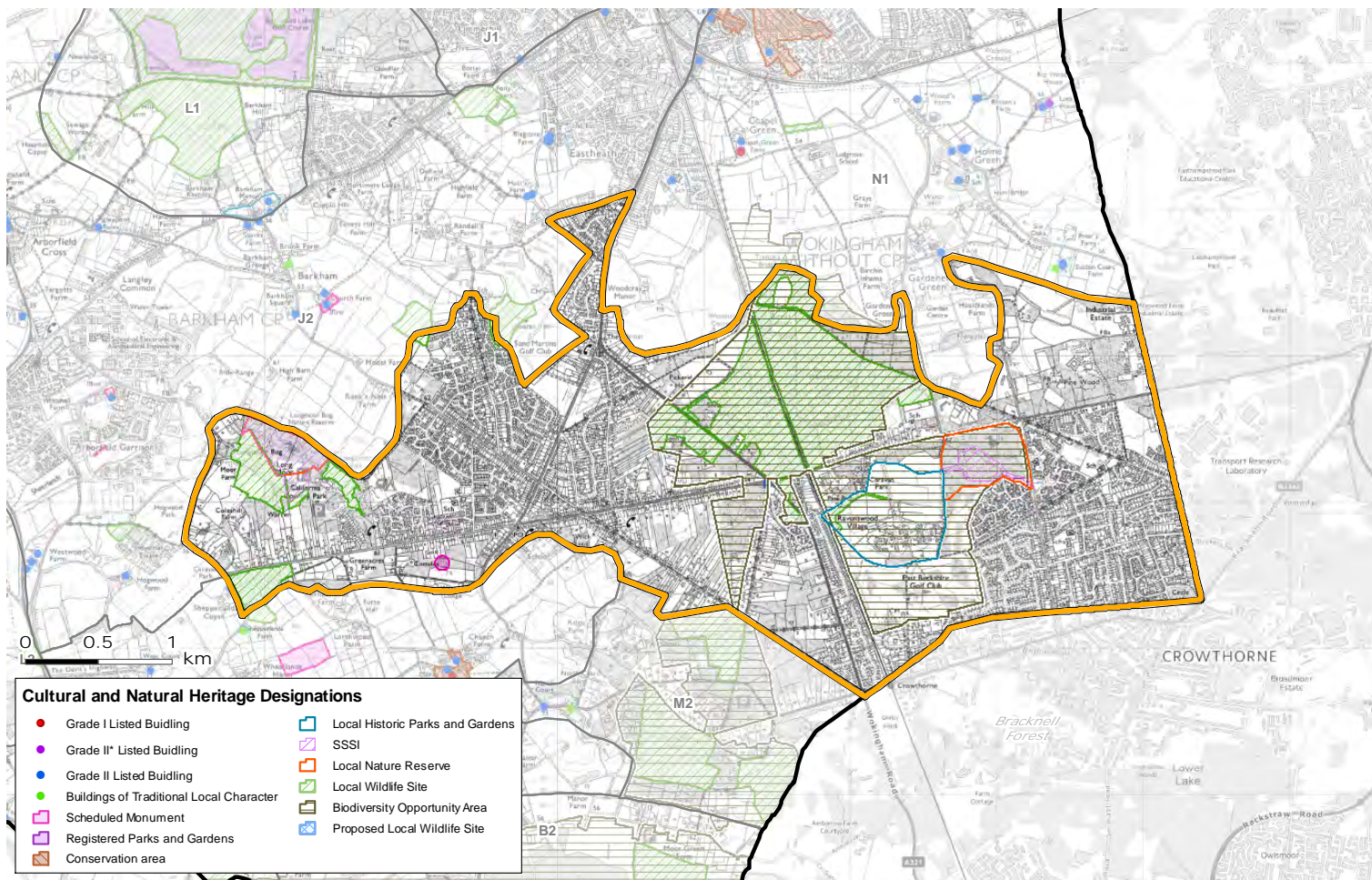
### Landscape Guidelines

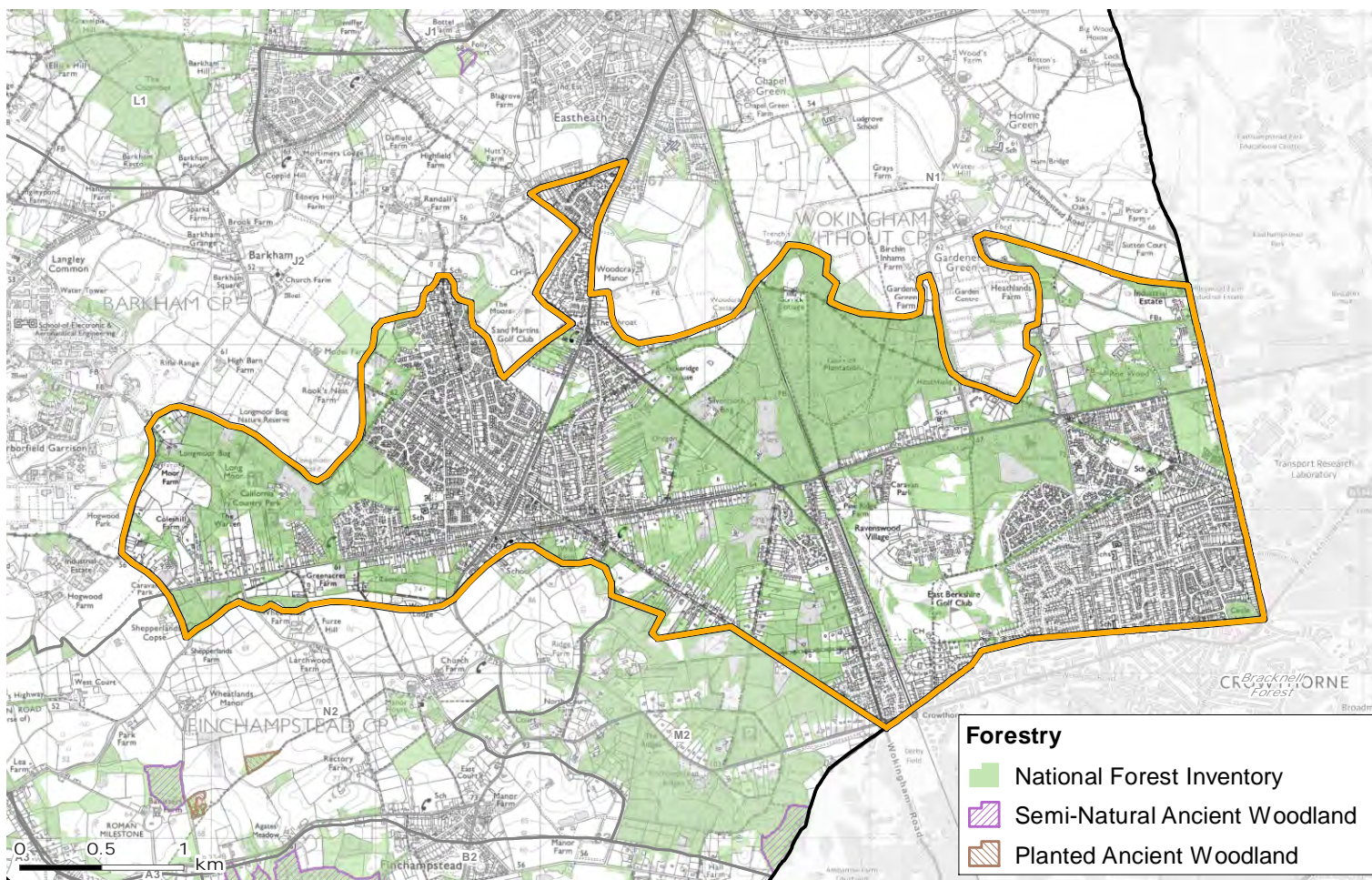
- Conserve distinctive wooded skylines. Consider the impact of any development on skylines, particularly where it would have the potential to be highly visible from adjacent character areas. Develop sympathetic fell cycles to maintain positive character, particularly phased cycles along sensitive skylines to ensure that the wooded backdrop is maintained. Particular care should be taken in the siting of communication masts or other vertical elements, which have the potential to be highly visible in this elevated landscape.
- Conserve and enhance the wooded character of the landscape. Increase the extent of BAP priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland in the forested areas using locally occurring native species in order to create a more mixed woodland character. Retain open areas of heath, mire, lakes and pasture within the forested areas and existing views into these areas, especially from historic rides. Continue to promote appropriate management through natural regeneration, control of non-native species and coppicing as a management tool for neglected woodland.
- Conserve, enhance and manage heathland, grassland, and wetland habitats particularly BAP priority habitats, from development, changes in land use and encroachment by secondary woodland and scrub. An area of land centred **around Gorrick Plantation, Queen's Mere and King's Mere** is part of the Thames Basin Heaths BOA. This network of natural habitats, which extend into Bracknell Forest, has been identified as a target for habitat creation and restoration and positive management of heathland and bog habitats. An appropriate heathland management regime is critical.
- Enhance integration of recreation into the landscape, avoiding features which would lead to

greater (sub) urbanisation of the rural character.

- Enhance informal recreational enjoyment of the landscape but balance this with continued conservation of valuable landscapes, heritage assets and semi-natural habitats. Consider zoning of activities to ensure ecologically valuable or more sensitive elevated landscapes are protected from damaging activities and ensure appropriate management of informal recreation, particularly in relation to the Rights of Way network.
- Conserve and enhance the integration of urban edges through wooded boundaries and large-species trees and maintain the important vistas along rides. In particular protect the sensitive areas of open land adjacent to Arborfield Garrison in the western part of this area.
- Enhance sense of place through careful planning and design (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape – and sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) to minimise the impacts of any potential new development and particularly vertical elements on valuable attributes.
- Conserve the rural character between adjacent towns and village centres, to protect the individual identity of settlements, and retain their sense of physical and visual separation that helps define them. In particular protect the sensitive areas of open land remaining along the B3016 and the A321 between Finchampstead and Wokingham, retain blocks of woodland along the rides and rear of properties under threat from backland development.
- Consider undertaking character appraisals/village design statements of key settlements in Wokingham Borough e.g. Finchampstead to identify features worthy of conservation. Maintain the small scale, low density domestic character of settlement set within large plots avoiding greater densities of development or tall/large structures.
- Use appropriate tree planting to help integrate roads in relation to proposed junction improvements and the extension of Nine Mile Drive to the west of the character area. Encourage retention of wooded edges and boundaries along roads, while retaining existing views to open countryside and wooded ridges. Minimise fencing and other boundary structures.
- Conserve and enhance historic features associated with the Royal Forest of Windsor including the medieval parkland at Ravenswood and the straight rides.
- Reduce and prevent further noise and light pollution through the sensitive siting of any new development, especially any proposed night-time lighting.







This topographic map of Finchampstead, UK, illustrates the settlement boundary (indicated by a thick black line) and the SDL boundary (indicated by a thick orange line). The map includes various geographical features such as Finchampstead Ridges, Moor Green Farm, and several ponds (Heath Pond, Spout Pond). It also shows infrastructure like the M1 motorway, N2 road, and local landmarks like the Church Farm and Manor House. A scale bar at the bottom left indicates distances up to 1 km, and an inset map at the bottom right shows the location of Finchampstead within the UK.

## SUMMARY

An undulating landscape with a distinctive ridgeline characterised by large areas of mixed forests interspersed with open heathland. The linear settlement pattern follows the long straight historic **'rides'** which **bisect the wooded landscape**.

The Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands character area is located in the far south east of the borough and is contiguous with M1: Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sand with which it shares many characteristics. The northern boundary, which follows Heath Ride, one of the former linear rides (from the A321 roundabout east of Wellington College to Finchampstead North) approximately along the 75m AOD contour, is representative of the transition from the more undulating topography of this area to the plateau of M1. The eastern boundaries are defined by the borough boundary and the character area extends into the adjoining Bracknell Forest Borough. To the south the boundary is defined by the current woodland edge above B2: Blackwater River Valley with Open Water. The western boundary is defined by N2: Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland.



## Key Characteristics

- An elevated landscape with a distinctive undulating ridgeline rising to 103m AOD. Underlain by acidic sands which give rise to agriculturally poor sandy soils, resulting in a landscape dominated by woodland and heath which has little farmland.
- Large areas of mature mixed and deciduous forest with a high proportion of conifers tolerant of the acidic sandy soil conditions interspersed with open heathland. Scots Pines are particularly distinctive.
- Acid heathland and associated bog habitats and small ponds are rich and increasingly rare BAP priority habitats. Together with the enclosing woodland, these habitats form part of the Thames Basin Heaths BOA which covers much of the area.
- Strong linear character evoked by long straight roads which originated from former historic forest 'rides' **through** the Royal Forest of Windsor.
- The dramatic Wellingtonia Avenue, with its impressive 150 year old giant redwood trees which is it is an iconic feature of the borough.
- Low-density linear settlement pattern with large detached houses set back from the rides, set within large gardens containing retained woodland and enclosed and screened by the surrounding woodland.
- Open access to the woodland and heathland, much owned by the National Trust (**Finchampstead Ridges and Simon's Wood**) provide an important recreational resource for the adjacent settlement of Crowthorne.
- Long distance southerly views from the elevated ridge over the Blackwater Valley (B2) and beyond into Surrey and Hampshire, as well as framed views associated with designed landscapes, such as the view along the tree-lined Wellingtonia Avenue.
- Areas of relative wildness within woodlands and areas of heath provide a sense of tranquility and experience of dark night skies. The enclosing woodland gives a sense of height and scale which contrasts with the openness in heaths.

## Natural Landscape

- M2.1 The character of the Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands is largely attributable to the presence of a distinctive ridgeline comprised of a unique assemblage of sandy geological formations not found elsewhere in the borough. The ridgeline is known as the Finchampstead Ridges and includes the National Trust land of the same name.
- M2.2 The dominant surface influence is the Camberley Sand Formation. However, at the uppermost point of the ridgeline, which reaches up to 100m AOD, the sands are overlain by the gravels of the Eighth River Terrace. Underlying the Camberley Sand Formation and emerging at lower elevations along the ridgeline (65m AOD along the boundary with the Blackwater Valley) are the Windlesham Formation and Bagshot Beds. These formations are dominated by sandy substrates that are laminated or inter-bedded with thin layers of clay, giving rise to gley-Podsols soils, which have impeded drainage and create nutrient-poor acidic conditions, unsuited for arable farmland.

- M2.3 There are no streams or brooks along the ridges. However, there are small ponds including the tiny Spout Pond and the more sizable and ecologically-significant Heath Pond (both within National Trust owned land).
- M2.4 The woodland character is varied with BAP priority habitat mixed lowland deciduous woodland and wet woodland as well as a high proportion of conifers tolerant of acidic sandy soil conditions. The landscape also has a high proportion of heathland. This attractive colourful and increasingly rare habitat is particularly evident on the National Trust land at Finchampstead Ridges.
- M2.5 Like Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands (M1) this landscape is notable for its absence of farmland although limited pockets do occur. This area is dominated by its recreational use within a natural setting of mixed woodland and heathland.
- M2.6 The majority of this area is covered by mixed woodland including a high proportion of conifers. Much of the woodland area is owned by the National Trust. These areas are Heath Pond, which includes the eponymous pond; Simon's Wood with its hundred-year-old Scots Pine, which contains the principal visitor car park for the area; and the Finchampstead Ridges. The Finchampstead Ridges includes a large common of managed heathland.
- M2.7 The Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands are characterised by areas of mixed woodland, together with mosaics of remnant heath and open water. The woodland, acid heathland and associated bog habitats are rich BAP priority habitat semi-natural habitats and are recognised as part of the Thames Basin Heaths BOA. Heathland and bog habitats are important for species such as Nightjar, Woodlark and Dartford Warbler as well as reptiles and butterflies such as Silver-studded Blue and Grayling.
- M2.8 The character area supports three Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), **two of which (Simon's Wood & Heath Pond, Finchampstead Ridges)** form relatively large blocks of mixed woodland with smaller areas of heathland, remnant bog and open water. The other Fishers Copse is a semi-natural woodland of birch, oak and hazel, much of which is ancient in origin.

## Cultural Landscape

- M2.9 With a similar historic development pattern to M1 it is likely that expansion of settlement from the valleys onto these sandy soils occurred during the Bronze Age leading to the early development of heathland in the area as the ground was cleared and cultivated.
- M2.10 **The former Roman road known as The Devil's Highway** - connecting London and Calleva (Silchester), runs east-west through the area although only small sections are visible. A public right of way follows The Devil's Highway on either side of the Hollybush ride.
- M2.11 This area was part of the Royal Forest of Windsor, and therefore largely unsettled with large tracts of woodland exploited for hunting and for timber. A number of straight rides were created through the forest for Queen Anne so that she could follow the hunt by carriage and these have formed the basis of the modern transport networks. The enclosure of the Royal Forest of Windsor was carried out mainly between 1813 and 1817, and most of the heaths replaced by plantations, albeit a significant proportion of heaths and woodlands survive in this area. The scenic woodland landscape, close to London, made this area a popular setting for country houses.
- M2.12 Nearby Crowthorne developed with the establishment of Wellington College and Broadmoor Hospital for the insane. Around this time, in the 1870s, the grand avenue of Wellingtonia sequoia known as the Wellingtonia Avenue was planted by John Walter II, owner of the Times newspaper, as a memorial to the Duke of Wellington. It remains an important landmark, providing a gateway to the borough from the south west.
- M2.13 The general absence of farmland in the landscape and the natural setting afforded by the woodland and heathland makes this a landscape of particularly important recreational value, with open access across the area owned by the National Trust.
- M2.14 This area appears sparsely settled because the residential development that has occurred in this area is of low-density being arranged linearly and consisting of large houses set within extensive wooded gardens linked to the rides by long driveways. In contrast to M1 the linear settlement tends to occur on only one side of the road often leaving the other side open.

- M2.15 The main focus of settlement is the B3348, which stretches from close to Wellington College on a **long 'ride'** until it reaches Finchampstead Ridges at which point it takes angular meanders to follow the ridge top. The first section of this drive is the long avenue of Wellingtonia trees, which are a dramatic sight and important local landmark reaching some 45m in height. The large detached houses along this avenue are mostly hidden behind rhododendron hedges and walls or fences in a woodland setting. This pattern continues along the more open ridgeline and extends to North Court at the end of the wooded ridgeline.

## Perceptual Landscape

- M2.16 There are spectacular views from the upland plateau into the Blackwater valley and adjoining counties of Hampshire and Surrey and complementary views of the wooded ridge from these areas.
- M2.17 The Finchampstead Ridges includes a large common of managed heathland - the colour of the gorse and heather in combination with the long views as far as the **Hog's Back** in Surrey and openness of the ridge top location contrasting with the darkness and enclosure of the woodland landscapes makes this area a popular local beauty spot.

### Valuable Landscape Attributes

- Distinctive wooded ridgeline which forms a backdrop to the wider landscape to the south.
- Large swathes of mixed woodland including coniferous plantation and ancient broadleaved woodland which are important BAP priority habitats, provides a sense of place and history as well as opportunities for recreation. Woodland also helps to filter views to the surrounding settlements from within the area. Stands of Scots Pine provide characteristic landmark features.
- Distinctive mosaic of woodland and heath which have a particularly strong sense of place, scenic beauty as well as being important habitats. The variety of habitats provides a sense of naturalness and visual diversity (a variety of colours and textures and changing seasonal interest) as well as setting for enjoyment of the landscape.
- Remnant heathland, associated bog habitats and open water, which provide an environment for flora and fauna as well as opportunities for recreation. Heathland is a relatively rare BAP priority habitat feature in the context of the UK.
- Distinctive long straight roads following the route of rides through the former Royal Forest of Windsor which provide a cultural record of the past.
- The magnificent Wellingtonia Avenue redwood trees provide a landmark feature and important historical associations with the development of the area.
- Distinctive settlement pattern of large houses set within extensive wooded gardens and arranged along long straight rides which are well integrated within the wooded landscape.
- Valued areas for recreation including tracts of open access land and an extensive network of bridleways and public footpaths which allow enjoyment of the landscape.
- Heavily enclosed character contrasts with distinctive long but framed views along historic straight rides through the trees and extensive views across the Blackwater Valley and into Surrey and Hampshire from the ridgeline at Finchampstead Ridges.
- The undeveloped character and sense of remoteness removed from the roads due to the lack of built development. The area provides an escape and chance to experience dark skies in close proximity to the urban population.

### Landscape Condition

The landscape within the Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands is in good condition as a result of the well-managed and maintained nature of the woodland, heathland and avenues of trees in this area.

### Key Issues

- Changes in deciduous woodland structure through loss of species diversity and spread of sycamore, rhododendron and other invasive/exotic species. The expansion of the coniferous content of woodlands in the past has resulted in a change in character of the woodlands and had a negative impact on the ground flora. However, there are positive signs that woodlands are being brought back into management.
- Effects on tree health or species composition of woodland and heathlands as a consequence of pathogens and climate change.
- Poor management and sometimes development affecting individual redwood trees and their rooting systems leading to reduced health and vigour.
- The influence of woodland fell cycles within forestry has an influence on wider landscape character, particularly along wooded ridgelines.
- Lack of the recruitment of young trees (through natural regeneration or planting) required to rebalance the age structure of parkland and hedgerow trees is an on-going threat to the character of the landscape.
- Changes in management that could result in loss and fragmentation of heathland and wetland habitats as a result of scrub encroachment or conversion to forestry.
- Drainage operations associated with development altering ground water levels and affecting wetland habitats.
- Recreational pressure, particularly mountain biking and quad biking, leading to erosion of tranquillity. Erosions of rights of way, special archaeological, ecological and other landscape features are a continuing problem in this well-populated area.
- Continued pressure for infill within existing low-density pattern of development and extension of linear development along roads, leading to loss of local character as well as woodland, mature trees, and heathland.
- Pressure for new residential development and supporting infrastructure outside the area impacting on landscape character, particularly in relation to the Arborfield Garrison development and the consequent increase in traffic along Nine Mile Ride and junction upgrades (in adjoining LCA M1). Traffic taking diversions to avoid delays in the urban areas lead to loss of tranquillity, erosion of road verges and increased levels of air pollution in rural areas.
- Increasing demand for communication masts, pylons and poles leading to visual intrusion of these elements in the elevated landscape and in views to the wooded backdrop from elsewhere. The wooded ridgeline is particularly sensitive to development.

### Landscape Strategy

To maintain the landscape character of the *Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands* the following strategy is required: to conserve and enhance existing character. This entails active management of all of the elements that are positive characteristics of this landscape as outlined above.

In particular there is an opportunity to consider restoration of heathland on former areas of heathland within the woodland context. The aim should be to link and connect existing heathland areas.

In terms of development, the aim is conserve the wooded setting and maintain the low density domestic character.

### Landscape Guidelines

- Conserve distinctive wooded skylines. Consider the impact of any development on skylines, particularly where it would have the potential to be highly visible from adjacent character areas. Develop sympathetic fell cycles to maintain positive character, particularly phased cycles along sensitive skylines to ensure that the wooded backdrop is maintained. Particular care should be taken in the siting of communication masts or other vertical elements, which have the potential to be highly visible in this elevated landscape.
- Conserve and enhance the wooded character of the landscape, including BAP priority habitats and ancient woodland. Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland using locally occurring native species in order to create a more mixed woodland character. Continue to promote appropriate management through natural regeneration, control of non-native species and coppicing as a management tool for neglected woodland.
- Conserve, enhance and manage the landmark trees, particularly along Wellingtonia Avenue. Encourage only sensitive development works in proximity to these trees thereby ensuring their long term retention. Plan for the next generation of landmark trees with an on-going planting strategy.
- Conserve, enhance and manage heathland and wetland habitats, particularly BAP priority habitat, from development, changes in land use and encroachment by secondary woodland and scrub. Much of the area, centred on **Finchampstead Ridges, Simon's Wood and** Heath Pond is part of the Thames Basin Heaths BOA. This network of natural habitats, which extend into Bracknell Forest, has been identified as a target for habitat creation and restoration and positive management of heathland and bog habitats. An appropriate heathland management regime is critical.
- Enhance integration of recreation into the landscape, avoiding features which would lead to greater urbanisation of the wooded/rural character.
- Enhance informal recreational enjoyment of the landscape but balance this with continued conservation of valuable semi-natural habitats. Consider zoning of activities to ensure ecologically valuable or more sensitive elevated landscapes are protected from damaging activities and ensure appropriate management of informal recreation, particularly in relation to the Rights of Way network. Maximise the contribution made by the forestry resource in M1 for recreational purposes, to draw pressure away from the more sensitive landscapes.
- Conserve and enhance the integration of urban edges through wooded boundaries and large-species trees to provide visual screening and maintaining the important wooded gaps along rides. In particular protect the sensitive areas of woodland adjacent to Crowthorne in the east of the area.
- Enhance sense of place through careful design (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape – and sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) to minimise the impacts of any potential new development, especially vertical elements, on valuable attributes.
- Encourage retention of wooded edges along roads through planting and minimising fencing and other boundary structures while retaining views of open heathland or pastoral land.
- Maintain the low density domestic character of settlement set within large plots, avoiding further infill and ribbon development.

- Retain the tranquillity of rural roads through the use of traffic calming and access restrictions. This would also make the use of rural roads more attractive for cyclists and recreational users.
- Protect the perceptions of remoteness and tranquillity, including the experience of dark skies, through the management of development, including infrastructure.

