

Surrey Landscape Character Assessment: Runnymede Borough



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The Surrey Landscape Character Assessment 2015 incorporates parts of the Guildford Landscape Character Assessment prepared in January 2007 by Guildford Borough Council and Land Use Consultants, modified as appropriate.

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Surrey Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) Map

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Surrey County Council commissioned a review of the Landscape Character of Surrey, to provide a consistent landscape character assessment across the county of Surrey, that accords with current best practice and published guidance for the Landscape Character Assessment. This document contains the parts of the Surrey wide assessment which cover Runnymede Borough. Written in context with the county-wide Landscape Character Assessment 2015, there are likely to be references to locations outside of Runnymede Borough within this document.

Background

- 1.2 In 1997, a landscape assessment was carried out entitled 'The Future of Surrey's Landscape and Woodlands', which covered the Surrey County Council administrative boundary. The approach adopted was based on the 1995 landscape assessment guidance and the Countryside Character map of England (1997), and therefore predates the current guidance on character assessment. The assessment identified 25 County Landscape Areas nesting inside 7 of the National Countryside Character Areas (figure 1). Within the study, each national area was broadly described, with more detail provided for each County Landscape Areas grouped within the National Countryside Character Areas.
- 1.3 The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a nationally protected landscape which covers 422km² of the county (figure 2). It includes part of the North Downs and stretches from Farnham, in the west, around Guildford, Dorking, and Reigate, to Oxted, in the east. In 1998, a landscape character assessment was carried out for the Surrey Hills AONB. The character assessment drew upon the 1997 Surrey County Landscape Assessment and the landscape assessment 'The Surrey Hills Landscape' published by the Countryside Commission in 1998. It identified 13 local landscape character areas, the boundaries of which were derived from the earlier county assessments.
- 1.4 Since the county assessment and Surrey Hills AONB assessment have been completed, a National Landscape Typology has been developed (see figure 3) and was published in 2001 by the Countryside Agency (now Natural England). In some parts of the county, the 1997 Surrey county-wide assessment fits comfortably within the national landscape typology, for example in the North Downs, in other areas there are anomalies which result from the greater level of detail provided by the national typology assessment.
- 1.5 In 2002, the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and Scottish Natural Heritage published its 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland'. The assessment methodology contained within the 2002 guidance was subsequently reaffirmed by National England in October 2014 with publication of 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment', which incorporates the assessment processes set out in the 2002 guidance.
- 1.6 The county of Surrey is made up of 11 Districts and Boroughs. Individually, some districts and boroughs have undertaken landscape character assessments, employing various methodologies, a number of which pre-date the current guidance. Guildford Borough has recently published a series of comprehensive studies in line with Natural England's guidance, which was originally set out in 2002.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

- 1.8 The landscape character assessment presented in this study, sits within the framework provided by the national landscape character areas and the national landscape typologies. The assessment draws on existing baseline information contained in the previous county assessment, the 1998 AONB assessment and management plan, and the existing District and Borough-wide landscape character assessments.
- 1.9 Landscape character assessment is a process by which the key characteristics of an area of landscape can be identified and which contribute to the sense of place of a locality. It is also a tool by which one can achieve an understanding of the landscape today and how it has changed over time. It is as an aid to decision making and the future management of the landscape.
- 1.10 Government guidance requires that Plans, including Local Development Frameworks should be “objective led”. To this end Landscape Character Assessment provides a clear statement of the landscape resource within a Plan area. The Surrey Landscape Character Assessment forms part of the evidence base from which development and management strategies can be derived, with particular reference to the conservation, enhancement or restoration of the landscape. This fulfils one of the core principles in national planning policy to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the requirement for Local Plans to include policies for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape.

2. METHOD STATEMENT

Introduction

- 2.1 The approach to this study followed best practice promoted by Natural England, as set out in the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002), and reaffirmed by Natural England’s 2014 ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’.
- 2.2 Geographic Information Systems (GIS) has been used to collate and present the graphical data provided as paper mapping within this study. This data will be maintained by Surrey County Council. Public access to the landscape character assessment will be available electronically through county and relevant District/Borough websites.

Stage 1: Desk Study/Review

- 2.3 The initial desk study reviewed the existing landscape character assessments that cover the county. The national framework provided by the Character of England Map (Joint Character Areas) and the National Landscape Typology (landscape character types) set the overall context for the study.
- 2.4 The desk study also reviewed the physical and human influences that have shaped the landscape of the county. Physical influences (natural factors) include geology, soils, landform, drainage, and land cover, which, in turn, have a strong influence on patterns of human occupation and activity. The study also reviewed cultural/social factors such as patterns of settlement and land use, enclosure, and socio-economic and cultural traditions and influences and looked at current change in the landscape and the pressures for change acting on the landscapes of the county.

Stage 2: Local Landscape Characterisation

- 2.5 Overlays of baseline information were produced using GIS mapping for geology, soils, landform, drainage, land cover, environmental designations, land use and historic landscape types/areas

(figures 4-9). Analysis of this range of data, covering both natural and cultural attributes of the landscape, were utilised in the development of draft characterisation prior to field testing.

- 2.6 The draft characterisation stage mapped draft landscape types and landscape character area boundaries and established a detailed methodology for the assessment across the county, in advance of the fieldwork.
- 2.7 The approach taken followed best practice as promoted by Natural England in maintaining a distinction between landscape types and character areas, and developing a hierarchical approach as follows:
- **Landscape Types:** generic, often extensive areas of landscape that share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation and human influences, e.g. 'Wooded Greensand Hills' or 'Chalk Ridge'.
 - **Character Areas:** which are unique, discrete geographical areas of the Landscape Type, e.g. 'Hindhead Wooded Greensand Hills' or 'Box Hill to Tatsfield Chalk Ridge', which exhibit all, or the majority of, the recognisable characteristics of the Type, depending on the location of the Character Area.

Stage 3: Field Survey

- 2.8 Field survey was used to verify draft landscape type classifications, to identify landscape character area subdivisions and define precise boundaries. The survey was systematic, using written observations, map annotations, and photographs. Standard survey checklists were used to ensure that landscape features and characteristics were recorded in a consistent and objective way. Photographs were used to record general landscape character, key characteristics and specific attributes.
- 2.9 The field survey assessed and recorded each area in terms of the extent and combination of its key characteristics and features as well as the perceptual characteristics of each area. It noted a description of landscape character, a list of landscape elements and characteristics, e.g. settlement form, landmarks and building style and assessed the aesthetic and perceptual factors e.g. pattern, scale, unity, remoteness and tranquillity of the landscape.
- 2.10 The field assessment also reviewed the current condition and management of the landscape.

Stage 4: Classification and Description

- 2.11 A final review of the draft area boundaries was undertaken having regard to the desk research findings, field maps and field record sheets and the guidance on current best practice. Summary descriptions of each landscape type and landscape character area were compiled in accordance with the guidelines.
- 2.12 The landscape character assessment has been mapped at the scale of 1:25,000 and the boundaries to specific areas defined using the level of detail available at this scale. The boundaries selected for landscape types and landscape character areas are firm and recognisable features on the ground and represent a 'best fit' to the change in landscape type or character within an area. Boundaries to landscape character areas are defined but field observation often identifies a gradual transition in landscape character, it seldom changes abruptly.

Stage 5: Evaluation and Guidance

- 2.13 The current status of the elements and features of the landscape was recorded and forces for change noted as examples of past change and the potential pressures for future change. Information from the desk study, fieldwork and consultation with the relevant Local Authorities was used to determine the forces for change. This evaluation identified a number of factors that may have an effect landscape character in future.
- 2.14 An outline landscape strategy was prepared for each landscape type. The strategy addresses the landscape area as a whole and identifies broad objectives for each landscape type. The aim is to set out broad objectives and principles to manage and direct landscape change in order to protect the highest quality and most sensitive landscapes from adverse change and to encourage positive change in weak or degraded landscapes.
- 2.15 For each landscape type there are a set of broad objectives; where individual character areas highlight specific issues of local importance more specific prescriptions are identified. The guidelines indicate the actions required, with reference to the overall landscape objective in order to ensure that distinctive character is maintained. To aid ease of reference the guidelines have been divided into prescriptions related to land management and prescriptions specifically related to development.

3. THE SURREY LANDSCAPE

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Stretching from the Thames Valley in the north, to the edge of the High Weald in the south-east, the county of Surrey contains a wide variety of landscape types. The county includes significant areas of high quality and attractive landscape, with a quarter of the county designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The county includes six of England's National Character Areas: the Thames Valley, Thames Basin Heaths, Thames Basin Lowlands, the North Downs, Wealden Greensand, the Low Weald and High Weald (see figure 2). The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty lies at the heart of the Surrey countryside, incorporating parts of the North Downs, the Wealden Greensands and the Wooded Low Weald. The south-eastern corner of the county includes a small section of the High Weald AONB.
- 3.1.2 To the north, the Surrey Hills give way to the Thames Basin, which includes a band of rolling claylands, areas of sandy heath and farmland, and river valley floor and floodplain. Bordering Greater London to the north, some of these areas have undergone significant change, and continue to face considerable pressure from the capital and its immediate hinterland.
- 3.1.3 To the south, between the Surrey Hills AONB and the High Weald AONB, the landscape is dominated by the Low Weald. The Low Weald is deeply rural, sparsely populated and to the west a heavily wooded landscape. Decreasing amounts of woodland are present in the south-east of the county, where the landscape turns to more open Wealden farmland.
- 3.1.4 Watercourses, mostly notably including the Wey and Mole rivers, transverse the county, flowing northwards from the Low Weald, and crossing the Surrey Hills, until eventually reaching the River Thames.
- 3.1.5 Surrey is one of the most densely wooded counties in England, with around 20% woodland cover. A significant proportion of the woodland is identified as ancient (see figure 8). Many areas

of the county are protected by nature conservation designations, including Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which require decision making authorities to consider the effects of development on the habitats of migratory and threatened birds found within the SPAs (see figure 7). SPAs are composed of many individual Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and within Surrey include parts of the South West London Water Bodies SPA, the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, and the Wealden Heaths SPA. Large areas of Surrey are also protected for their habitats as Special Areas of Conservation, and these are Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham, the Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment, and Windsor Forest & Great Park.

3.2 Surrey Hills AONB

- 3.2.1 The Surrey Hills AONB was one of the first landscapes in the country to be designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1958. It stretches across the county, meeting with the Kent Downs AONB to the east and the 'South Downs' National Park to the south and west. It includes three of England's National Character Areas: the North Downs, Wealden Greensand and Low Weald (see figure 2).
- 3.2.2 The Surrey Hills AONB lies within one of the most impressive geological features in the British Isles, the wealden uplift. Between 130-65 million years ago the landscape of South-East England was gradually inundated by the sea with the deposition of 800-1000m of sedimentary material. Layers of sand, silt, clay and chalk were laid down and compacted into what is now the wealden clays, the upper and lower greensands and gault clay and chalk. Following a period of uplift (commensurate with the formation of the Alps) the wealden dome was raised above the sea. The dome, some 215km long and up to 80km wide and lying on an east-west axis covered large parts of Kent, Sussex and Surrey. In the succeeding 20 million years the centre of the dome has been eroded to reveal the structure of the present day landscape (see figures 4 and 5).
- 3.2.3 All the rock types found in the wealden dome, with the exception of the Hasting Beds, occur in the Surrey Hills AONB and all have a profoundly different effect on the fabric of the landscape. There is a strong correlation between the geology and the landscape that has developed, which has been accentuated by the relative resistance to weathering of the various rock types.
- 3.2.4 The Surrey Hills has been shaped and used by man for thousands of years. The poor sandy soils of the Greensands and the Heavy clays of the Weald have been difficult to cultivate productively and the area has seen limited settlement. The towns around the AONB, Guildford, Godalming, Haslemere, Dorking and Reigate have all had an influence on the landscape. New roads, rail links and canals cross the Surrey Hills and the demands of growing populations in local towns and London require food, homes and recreation.
- 3.2.5 The countryside has gone through successive phases of agriculture, woodland management and quarrying and the fluctuating fortunes of rural communities has left their mark on the landscape. Although much of the archaeological evidence of early intervention lies undiscovered beneath the woodlands the history of the Surrey Hills can be seen in the architecture and settlement pattern of the area which makes a significant contribution to the landscape character of the AONB and its environs.
- 3.2.6 The most prominent feature of the Surrey Hills AONB is the chalk escarpment which marks the edge of the North Downs along the Chalk Ridge (Type CR) and provides a dramatic backdrop to the Weald to the south. The escarpment runs the length of the AONB, forming The Hog's Back

in the western section. It is generally consistent in height but the steepness of the scarp varies. On the south-facing scarp there is a mosaic of dense woodland, scrub and open downland, the woodland cover being more extensive along the eastern end of the scarp. The escarpment has been eroded by the River Mole to form the impressive and striking chalk cliffs of the Mole Gap above Dorking.

- 3.2.7 To the north of the escarpment, on the chalk dip slope, lies areas of Chalk Down with Woodland (Type CD), Open Chalk Farmland (Type CF), and Wooded North Down (Type CW). Dry valleys and coombes have been formed, set within open rolling farmland interspersed with woodland, whilst elsewhere significant later deposits of clay with flints have produced acid conditions, such as at Ranmore Common and Headley Heath, which contrast markedly with the surrounding chalk farmland.
- 3.2.8 To the south of the escarpment, the relatively soft Folkstone and Sandgate Greensands Beds form the Wooded Greensand Plateau (Type GP) south of Farnham, and also occur in the shallow and low lying Greensand Valley (Type GV) along the Tillingbourne and Pipp Brook. Harder and more resistant Greensand deposits, the Hythe Beds, form the high hills of the Greensand escarpment including the Wooded Greensand Hills (Type GW) at Hindhead, Hascombe and Leith Hill, and Open Greensand Hills (Type GO) to the south of Puttenham. Extensive woodlands cover substantial parts of the Greensand, along with important heaths, such as Thursley Heath. Fields have been carved out of the woodland and heaths fragmenting the landscape in some areas. The settlement within the Greensand Hills is sparse and road access limited to the distinctive sunken lanes which traverse the hills. The lack of access and ancient and tranquil character of the hills provides a tangible sense of remoteness within the area.
- 3.2.9 The weald clays lie at the southern foot of the greensand escarpment as a gently undulating plain. It comprises a mixture of sandstone and clays and mudstones. The soils associated with the weald are heavy and more difficult to work than the lighter soils of the adjacent greensands. The Wooded Low Weald (Type WW) is heavily wooded, much of it Semi Natural Ancient Woodland. The farmland is typically small scale with irregular field patterns and densely hedged with mixed hedgerows and hedgerow trees.

3.3 High Weald AONB

- 3.3.1 The High Weald AONB was designated in 1983. It covers only a small part of Surrey at its south-east corner. The High Weald AONB stretches far into Kent to the east, East Sussex to the south-east, and West Sussex to the south-west.
- 3.3.2 The high weald is underlain by bands of sandstone and clay. Following the wealden dome uplift, the soft clay has been worn away creating a rolling landscape, with the clay forming the low valleys and the harder sandstone forming the high ridges. Elevated sandstone underlays the Wooded High Weald (Type WH) within the south-east corner of Surrey.
- 3.3.3 The high weald is an historic landscape with a mosaic of small irregular fields, abundant woods and hedges, scattered farmsteads and sunken lanes. Steep-sided, wooded gills are a distinctive feature of the area, having been created by streams carving deep, steep sided, channels through the area's hillsides.

3.4 Northern Surrey

- 3.4.1 To the north of the Surrey Hills AONB, lies the broad Thames Basin, occupying the north-western quarter of the county. The North Downs are located both within the Surrey Hills AONB, to the north of Dorking and Reigate and outside the AONB, to the north-east of the county, where urban influences of London increase. Fingers of development, including Leatherhead, Tadworth and Kingswood, Caterham, and Woldingham penetrate southwards into the Downs from the northern edge of the county, and transport routes, in particular the M25 motorway, cut through the downland landscape. Exposed elevated locations within the downs afford extensive views of London to the north, with landmark buildings in the city discernible in the distance.
- 3.4.2 The Thames basin to the north-west of the county, is centred on the floodplains and valley floor associated with the River Thames, the basin is underlain by London Clay with superficial deposits of alluvium and river terrace gravels. The wider Thames Basin rises slightly to the south-west onto sand and gravel terraces, the flood plain being replaced by sandy heaths, woodland and farmland which surround Camberley, Woking and Weybridge. London Clays become exposed to the south to form the rolling claylands which rise to meet the dip slope of the North Downs to the south.
- 3.4.3 The River Thames itself occupies only a small part of the wide flat floodplain. Bordering London to the north, the areas of River Floodplain (Type RF) and adjacent River Valley Floor (Type RV) are characterised by heavy urban influence, including Built Up Areas, roads and gravel workings. A number of large elevated reservoirs, with high, steep and engineered embankments are also a distinctive feature in the area, and as such warrant their own landscape Type (Type RS).
- 3.4.4 Extensive areas underlain by sand and gravel drift geology which is found to the south and west of the River Thames floodplain. The extensive areas of intact heath and common, and large tracts of woodland define the distinct landscape types of Sandy Heath and Common (Type SH), and Sandy Woodland (Type SW). Areas of Sandy Heath and Common include extensive 'secret' areas of heathland used exclusively by the Ministry of Defence, but also popular recreational resources such as Chobham Common. The large tracts of Woodland often consist of plantation and can be dark and secluded. Remaining areas underlain by sand are less intact and have a significantly greater human influence upon them. They are predominately farmland, with varying degrees of settlement and woodland, and as such are classified as Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland (Type SS).
- 3.4.5 Further south, undulating clay lowlands rise up towards the north facing dip slope of the North Downs. Either side of Guildford, there is an extensive band of Wooded Rolling Clayland (Type LF), which comprises a somewhat fragmented mosaic of land cover, including dispersed woodland blocks, pastoral and arable farmland, and parkland. Land cover at the eastern end of the clay lowlands becomes more defined, with either continuous tracts of Clay Woodland (Type LW) or Rolling Clay Farmland (Type LF). Areas of Clay Woodland are largely common land, such as Epsom Common, and their proximity to significant areas of settlement make them valuable recreational resource. Although generally rural, areas of Rolling Clay Farmland have limited woodland cover, and therefore the surrounding settlements exert urban influence upon them.

3.5 Southern Surrey

- 3.5.1 Between the Surrey Hills AONB, to the north, and High Weald AONB to the south-east, the landscape is dominated by the Low Weald. The Wooded Low Weald (Type WW) is an extensive area, stretching east from within the southern parts of the Surrey Hills AONB, along the southern part of the county as far east as Charlwood. The area is underlain by a mixture of sandstone and clays, siltstone and mudstones, and generally has heavy, poorly drained soil, which is nutrient poor and better suited to pasture than arable farming. The area is heavily wooded with small scale farmland of irregular field patterns and densely vegetated boundaries of mixed hedgerows and hedgerow trees. The landscape is sparsely settled, remote and deeply rural in character.
- 3.5.2 The wealden landscape become less wooded and more open towards the east to give way to the larger scale and more regular field patterns of the Low Weald Farmland (Type WF). Towns and transportation routes are set in the landscape, but both the Wooded Low Weald and Low Weald Farmland are predominantly rural landscapes.
- 3.5.3 The river Mole and Wey, wind their way northwards across the county, cutting through the Surrey Hills, including at the dramatic 'Mole Gap', until reaching the Thames. In contrast to the Thames River Floodplain, the upper reaches of these rivers, which run through the low weald, are peaceful and bordered by a narrow floodplain of rural pastoral landscape.

4. LANDSCAPE CLASSIFICATION

- 4.1 Landscape types reflect the dominant influences on landscape character, often combining, geology, landform and landcover. In all cases the name conveys some sense of the character of the landscape.
- 4.2 A single landscape type (excluding Types UE and UW) has broadly similar patterns of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field pattern in every area where it occurs. This does not mean that it will be identical, rather that there is a common pattern, which can be discerned. The landscape types are further sub-divided into landscape character areas.
- 4.3 Landscape character areas are discrete geographic areas that possess the common characteristics described for the landscape type. Each character area has a distinct and recognisable local identity, and is therefore named to reflect the geographically specific qualities based on a place name or established locality.
- 4.4 The landscape types and character areas for the county are set out as follows. The areas are illustrated on figure 11, which has been prepared on a Geographic Information System (GIS), with mapping undertaken at a scale of 1:25,000.

4.5 The twenty one landscape types which create the unique and distinctive character of the Surrey landscape are listed below, (see figure 10):

CD	Chalk Down with Woodland
CF	Open Chalk Farmland
CR	Chalk Ridge
CW	Wooded North Down
GO	Open Greensand Hills
GP	Wooded Greensand Plateau
GV	Greensand Valley
GW	Wooded Greensand Hills
LF	Rolling Clay Farmland
LR	Wooded Rolling Clayland
LW	Clay Woodland
MP	Mudstone Plateau
RF	River Floodplain
RS	Reservoirs
RV	River Valley Floor
SH	Sandy Heath and Common
SS	Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland
SW	Sandy Woodland
WF	Low Weald Farmland
WH	Wooded High Weald
WW	Wooded Low Weald

4.6 The landscape types listed above frequently adjoin or encircle, but do not include, the Built Up Areas within settlement boundaries. The following landscape type is a group of small individual areas on the edges of, or surrounded by, the Built Up Areas of towns across the county. These are unique areas, with a variety of characteristic and uses, which do not readily fall within the landscape types set out above:

UE	Distinct Areas on the Edge of Urban Areas
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4.7 Additionally, this study has identified and briefly considered, several significant individual green space areas within the county's Built Up Areas of towns across the county. These areas are entirely within the Built Up Areas of settlements and are grouped as the following landscape type:

UW	Significant Greenspaces Within Urban Areas
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5. LANDSCAPE TYPES AND CHARACTER AREAS

(See figure 11. For more detail of Runnymede Borough only, see figure 12.)

- 5.1 For contextual completeness, every landscape type and character area identified in the Surrey Landscape Character Assessment 2015 is listed below. However, landscape types and character areas which are outside Runnymede Borough are not described in this document, refer to the Surrey countywide document for these areas.

LANDSCAPE TYPE CD: CHALK DOWN WITH WOODLAND	
Character Areas:	
CD1	Ashtead and Woodcote Parks Chalk Down with Woodland*
CD2	Tyrrell's Wood to Walton Oaks Chalk Down with Woodland*
CD3	Courtlands to Margery Chalk Down with Woodland*
CD4	Chaldon Chalk Down with Woodland*
CD5	South Woldingham Chalk Down with Woodland*
CD6	Forestdale to Woldingham Chalk Down with Woodland*
CD7	Tatsfield Chalk Down with Woodland*
Evaluation and guidance	

LANDSCAPE TYPE CF: OPEN CHALK FARMLAND	
Character Areas:	
CF1	Clandon Open Chalk Farmland*
CF2	Ranmore to Hawk's Hill Open Chalk Farmland*
CF3	Leatherhead to Epsom Downs Open Chalk Farmland*
CF4	North Looe Open Chalk Farmland*
CF5	Hooley to Chaldon Open Chalk Farmland*
CF6	Caterham to Woldingham Open Chalk Farmland*
CF7	Woldingham to New Addington Open Chalk Farmland*
Evaluation and guidance	

LANDSCAPE TYPE CR: CHALK RIDGE	
Character Areas:	
CR1	Hog's Back Chalk Ridge*
CR2	Albury to Ranmore Chalk Ridge*
CR3	Box Hill to Tatsfield Chalk Ridge*
Evaluation and guidance	

* These character areas are outside Runnymede Borough and therefore are not described in this document. See the Surrey Countywide document for these areas.

LANDSCAPE TYPE CW: WOODED NORTH DOWN	
Character Areas:	
CW1	Merrow and Clandon Wooded North Down*
CW2	Effingham Forest Wooded North Down*
CW3	Oaken Grove to Ranmore Common Wooded North Down*
CW4	Norbury Park Wooded North Down*
CW5	Box Hill to Oyster Hill Wooded North Down*
CW6	Banstead Heath Wooded North Down*
CW7	Chussex Plain Wooded North Down*
CW8	South Caterham Wooded North Down*
Evaluation and guidance	

LANDSCAPE TYPE GO: OPEN GREENSAND HILLS	
Character Areas:	
GO1	Shackleford Open Greensand Hills*
GO2	Godalming to Sutton Abinger Open Greensand Hills*
GO3	West Farnham Open Greensand Hills*
GO4	Dockenfield to Millbridge Open Greensand Hills*
GO5	Churt to Hascombe Open Greensand Hills*
GO6	Bramley West Open Greensand Hills*
GO7	Shamley Green Open Greensand Hills*
GO8	Betchworth and Chart Parks Open Greensand Hills*
Evaluation and guidance	

LANDSCAPE TYPE GP: WOODED GREENSAND PLATEAU	
Character Areas:	
GP1	Frensham to Witley Common Wooded Greensand Plateau*
Evaluation and guidance	

LANDSCAPE TYPE GV: GREENSAND VALLEY	
Character Areas:	
GV1	Tillingbourne and Pipp Brook Greensand Valley*
GV2	Pixham to Reigate Greensand Valley*
GV3	Gatton Greensand Valley*
GV4	Merstham to Clacket Lane Greensand Valley*
Evaluation and guidance	

* These character areas are outside Runnymede Borough and therefore are not described in this document. See the Surrey Countywide document for these areas.

LANDSCAPE TYPE GW: WOODED GREENSAND HILLS	
Character Areas:	
GW1	Puttenham Wooded Greensand Hills*
GW2	Chinthurst to Hurt Wood Wooded Greensand Hills*
GW3	St Martha's Wooded Greensand Hills*
GW4	Rowledge to Tilford Wooded Greensand Hills*
GW5	Hindhead Wooded Greensand Hills*
GW6	Wormley West Wooded Greensand Hills*
GW7	Wormley East Wooded Greensand Hills*
GW8	Loxhill to Catteshail Wooded Greensand Hills*
GW9	Leith Hill to Bury Hill Wooded Greensand Hills*
GW10	Dorking Wooded Greensand Hills*
GW11	Skimmington Wooded Greensand Hills*
GW12	Earlswood to Oxted Wooded Greensand Hills*
GW13	The Chart Wooded Greensand Hills*
Evaluation and guidance	

LANDSCAPE TYPE LF: ROLLING CLAY FARMLAND	
Character Areas:	
LF1	Knowle Hill to Leatherhead Rolling Clay Farmland*
LF2	Claygate Rolling Clay Farmland*
LF3	Lower Ashted Rolling Clay Farmland*
LF4	Horton Rolling Clay Farmland*
LF5	Ashted East Rolling Clay Farmland*
LF6	North Farnham Rolling Clay Farmland*
Evaluation and guidance	

LANDSCAPE TYPE LR: WOODED ROLLING CLAYLANDS	
Character Areas:	
LR1	Wanborough Wooded Rolling Claylands*
LR2	Ockham and Clandon Wooded Rolling Claylands*
Evaluation and guidance	

LANDSCAPE TYPE LW: CLAY WOODLAND	
Character Areas:	
LW1	Great Bookham Common Clay Woodland*
LW2	Prince Coverts to Leatherhead Common Clay Woodland*
LW3	Ashted and Epsom Commons Clay Woodland*
Evaluation and guidance	

* These character areas are outside Runnymede Borough and therefore are not described in this document. See the Surrey Countywide document for these areas.

LANDSCAPE TYPE MP: MUDSTONE PLATEAU	
Character Areas:	
MP1	Loseley Mudstone Plateau*
Evaluation and guidance	

LANDSCAPE TYPE RF: RIVER FLOODPLAIN		see page 20
Character Areas:		
RF1	Colne River Floodplain*	
RF2	Ash River Floodplain*	
RF3	Thames River Floodplain	see page 24
RF4	Northern Bourne River Floodplain	see page 26
RF5	Windlebrook and Southern Bourne River Floodplain*	
RF6	Blackwater River Floodplain*	
RF7	Lower Wey River Floodplain	see page 28
RF8	Upper Wey River Floodplain*	
RF9	Wey and Arun Canal River Floodplain*	
RF10	Lower Mole River Floodplain*	
RF11	Upper Mole River Floodplain*	
Evaluation and guidance		see page 30

LANDSCAPE TYPE RS: RESERVOIRS	
Character Areas:	
RS1	Thames Valley Reservoirs*
Evaluation and guidance	

LANDSCAPE TYPE RV: RIVER VALLEY FLOOR		see page 34
Character Areas:		
RV1	Colne River Valley Floor*	
RV2	Thames River Valley Floor	see page 36
RV3	Ash River Valley Floor*	
RV4	Send River Valley Floor*	
RV5	Slyfield River Valley Floor*	
RV6	Peasmarsh River Valley Floor*	
RV7	Shalford River Valley Floor*	
RV8	Badshot River Valley Floor*	
Evaluation and guidance		see page 38

* These character areas are outside Runnymede Borough and therefore are not described in this document. See the Surrey Countywide document for these areas.

LANDSCAPE TYPE SH: SANDY HEATH AND COMMON	
Character Areas:	
SH1	Deer Rock Hill Sandy Heath and Common*
SH2	Chobham Sandy Heath and Common*
SH3	Westend and Pirbright Sandy Heath and Common*
SH4	Ash Common to Cobbetthill Sandy Heath and Common*
SH5	Whitmoor Sandy Heath and Common*
Evaluation and guidance	

LANDSCAPE TYPE SS: SETTLED AND WOODED SANDY FARMLAND		see page 42
Character Areas:		
SS1	Cooper's Hill Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland	see page 44
SS2	Englefield Green West Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland	see page 46
SS3	Trumps Green to New Haw Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland	see page 48
SS4	Wentworth to Sheerwater Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland	see page 50
SS5	Bagshot to Windlesham Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland*	
SS6	Windlesham Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland*	
SS7	Windlesham to Knaphill Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland*	
SS8	Chobham East Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland	see page 52
SS9	Weybridge South Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland*	
SS10	Woking to Byfleet Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland*	
SS11	Pirbright to Hook Heath Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland*	
SS12	Wyke to Mayford Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland*	
Evaluation and guidance		see page 54

LANDSCAPE TYPE SW: SANDY WOODLAND		see page 58
Character Areas:		
SW1	Virginia Water Sandy Woodland	see page 60
SW2	Bagshot and Lightwater West Sandy Woodland*	
SW3	Foxhill Sandy Woodland	see page 63
SW4	Horsell Sandy Woodland*	
SW5	Wisley Sandy Woodland*	
SW6	Fairmile to Esher Sandy Woodland*	
SW7	Deepcut Sandy Woodland*	
SW8	Bricksbury Hill to Rowhill Copse Sandy Woodland*	
Evaluation and guidance		see page 64

* These character areas are outside Runnymede Borough and therefore are not described in this document. See the Surrey Countywide document for these areas.

LANDSCAPE TYPE WF: LOW WEALD FARMLAND	
Character Areas:	
WF1	Dorking to Hookwood Low Weald Farmland*
WF2	Flanchford to Horley Low Weald Farmland*
WF3	Horley to Swaynesland Low Weald Farmland*
Evaluation and guidance	

LANDSCAPE TYPE WH: WOODED HIGH WEALD	
Character Areas:	
WH1	Domewood to Dormansland Wooded High Weald*
WH2	Dormansland East Wooded High Weald*
Evaluation and guidance	

LANDSCAPE TYPE WW: WOODED LOW WEALD	
Character Areas:	
WW1	Chiddingfold Wooded Low Weald*
WW2	West Dunsfold Wooded Low Weald*
WW3	Tugley to Sidney Wood Wooded Low Weald*
WW4	Pinks Hill to Park Hatch Wooded Low Weald*
WW5	Grafham to Dunsfold Wooded Low Weald*
WW6	Dunsfold to Pollingfold Wooded Low Weald*
WW7	Rowly Wooded Low Weald*
WW8	Cranleigh to Charlwood Wooded Low Weald*
WW9	Shamley Green to Holmwood Wooded Low Weald*
WW10	Holmwood Common Wooded Low Weald*
Evaluation and guidance	

* These character areas are outside Runnymede Borough and therefore are not described in this document. See the Surrey Countywide document for these areas.

LANDSCAPE TYPE UE: DISTINCT AREAS ON THE EDGE OF URBAN AREAS	
Character Areas:	
UE1	Heathside*
UE2	Walton Common*
UE3	Epsom Downs*
UE4	Burgh Heath*
UE5	Banstead Downs*
UE6	Redhill Common*
UE7	Earlswood Common*
UE8	Petridgewood Common and Woodland*
UE9	Holmthorpe Pits and Mercer's Park*
Evaluation and guidance	

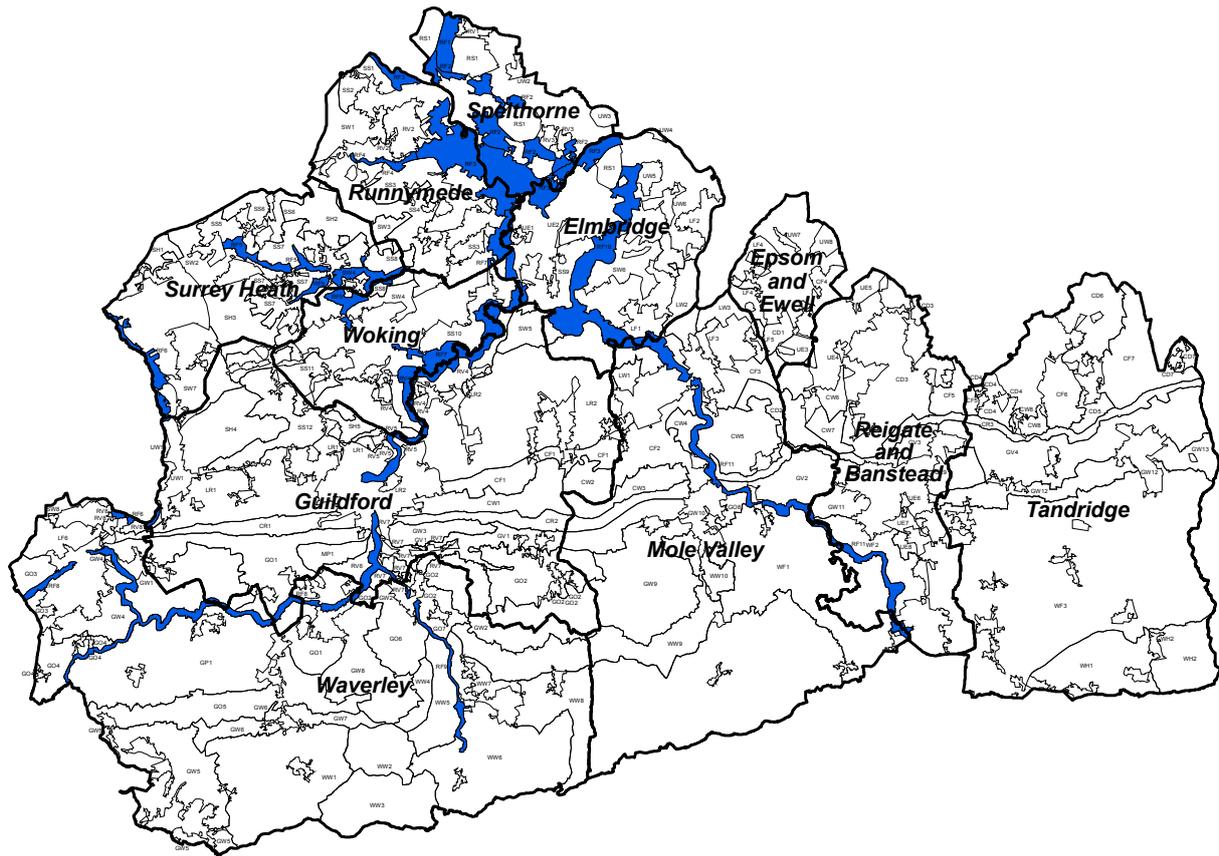
LANDSCAPE TYPE UW: SIGNIFICANT GREENSPACES WITHIN URBAN AREAS	
Character Areas:	
UW1	North Camp to North Town Lakes*
UW2	Princes Lakes*
UW3	Kempton Park*
UW4	Hurst Park*
UW5	Island Barn Reservoir and River Ember*
UW6	Lower Green to Weston Green and Littleworth Common*
UW7	Ewell Hogsmill*
UW8	Nonsuch Park*
Evaluation and guidance	

* These character areas are outside Runnymede Borough and therefore are not described in this document. See the Surrey Countywide document for these areas.

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6. LANDSCAPE TYPES AND CHARACTER AREAS WITHIN RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH

- 6.1 The following pages describe the landscape types and character areas located within Runnymede Borough. The location and boundaries, and the key characteristics, of each type and area are set out, followed by evaluation and guidance for the type.



LANDSCAPE TYPE RF: RIVER FLOODPLAIN

Landscape Character Areas

RF1	Colne River Floodplain*
RF2	Ash River Floodplain*
RF3	Thames River Floodplain
RF4	Northern Bourne River Floodplain
RF5	Windlebrook and Southern Bourne River Floodplain*
RF6	Blackwater River Floodplain*
RF7	Lower Wey River Floodplain
RF8	Upper Wey River Floodplain*
RF9	Wey and Arun Canal River Floodplain*
RF10	Lower Mole River Floodplain*
RF11	Upper Mole River Floodplain*

* These Character Areas are outside Runnymede Borough and therefore are not described in this document. See the Surrey Countywide document for these areas.

LANDSCAPE TYPE RF: RIVER FLOODPLAIN

Location and Boundaries

The River Flood Plain Landscape Type consists of low lying river terraces and valley bottoms following the courses of the rivers throughout the county. To the north, these include the wide floodplain of the Thames, along with associated tributaries including the Colne and Ash. The Wey and Mole have narrower floodplains snaking south towards the southern corners of the county. Boundaries are generally determined by the edge of the floodplain, as defined by the Environment Agency's Flood Zone 2, which equates to land having between 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000 annual probability of river flooding. The boundaries are generally taken to the nearest recognisable identifiable feature such as field boundaries and roads, however in some limited instances, such as where there are no nearby recognisable features on the ground, the boundaries follow a contour.

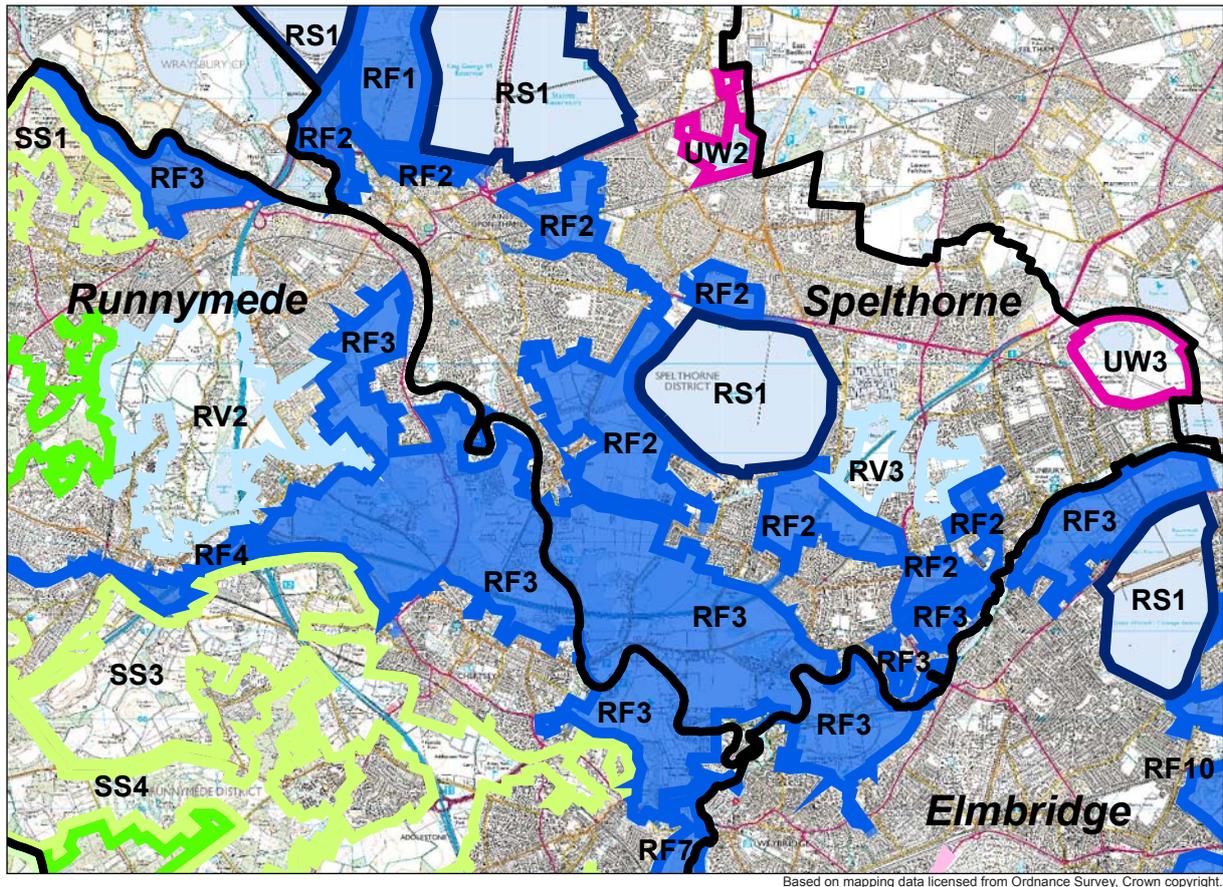


Key Characteristics

- Low lying level areas of flood plain situated on alluvial deposits.
- Presence of water in the form of rivers, with channels, open water bodies and drainage ditches.
- Pastoral land use often with meadows grazed by cattle.
- In character areas to the north, in particular the Thames River Floodplain (Area RF3), there are significant internal and surrounding urban influences including Built Up Areas, roads and utilities.
- character areas to the south of the Thames, have few buildings apart from those associated with the river, such as mills and lock keepers cottages, plus some encroachment by large industrial units in urban areas. There is a rich ecology with areas of wetland, unimproved meadows, riparian woodland and ditch line willows.
- Historical defence lines with associated World War II structures.
- Historic importance of the Wey Navigation built in the 17th century and central to the development of Guildford, now owned by the National Trust and designated as a Conservation Area.

- River floodplain character areas are also important for preserved underlying archaeology. Evidence for early settlement has been found on the terrace gravels of the valleys of the Thames, Colne, Blackwater and Wey.
- The River Mole forms the dramatic 'Mole Gap' which cuts through the North Downs of the Surrey Hills AONB and is bounded by Box Hill to the east and Norbury Park to the West.
- The Wey and Mole have a peaceful semi-enclosed landscape with a largely secluded, rural ambience enlivened in some instances by the movement and colour of boats navigating the waterways.

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RF3: THAMES RIVER FLOODPLAIN

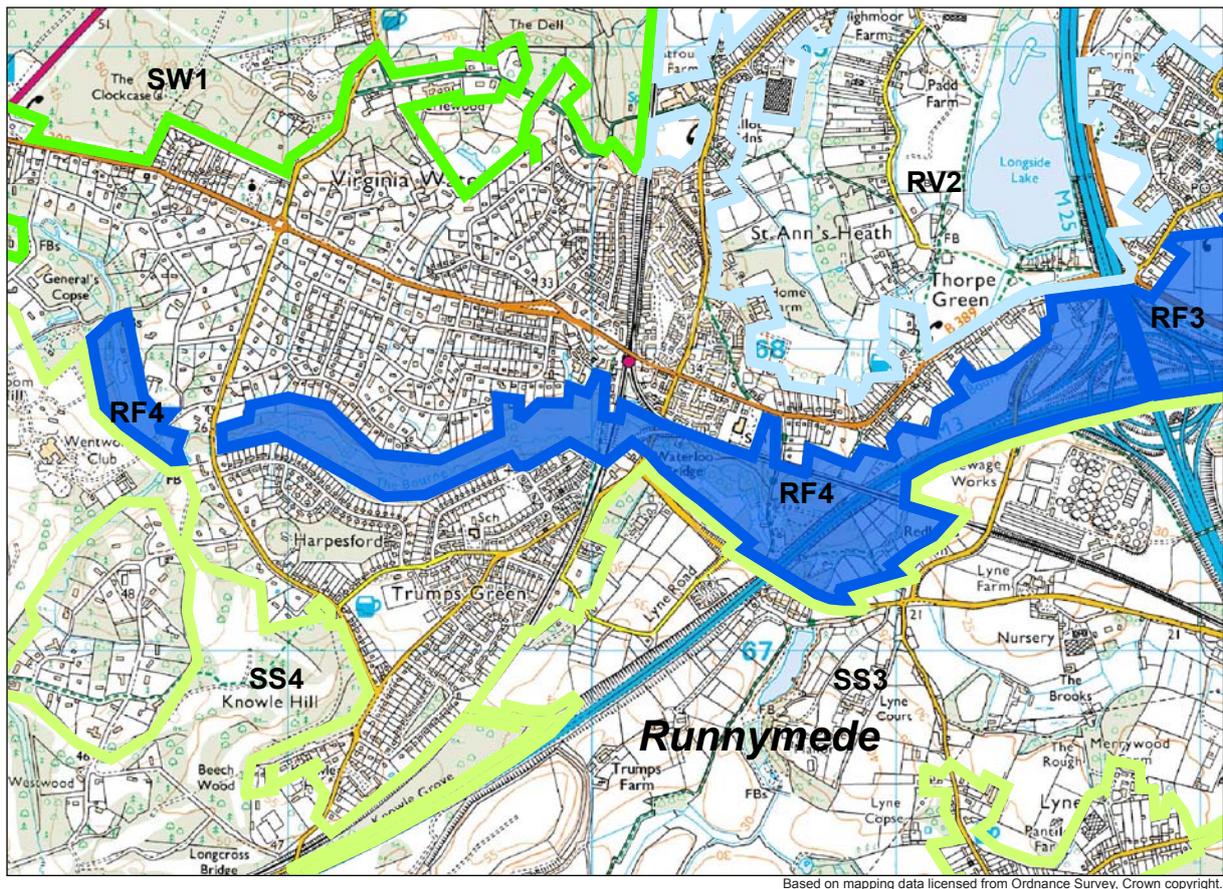
Location and Boundaries

The Thames River Floodplain is a relatively broad character area stretching across the northern part of the county from north of Egham to West Molesey. The character area is made up of four areas, with the eastern and western ends of the character area separated by settlement. The boundary of the character area broadly follows the edge of the flood zone, and where possible is taken to nearby easily recognisable features such as roads or field boundaries. The character area extends to settlement boundaries beyond the floodplain in places, to form a logical boundary.

Key Characteristics

- Underlain by London Clay Formation Clay, Silt and Sand, Claygate Member Sand, Silt and Clay, and Bagshot Formation Sand solid geology, with alluvium, silt, and gravel superficial deposits.
- Flat, low lying, wide floodplain of the Thames valley, surrounded by Built Up Areas. Adjoins a number of other floodplain character areas associated with Thames tributaries, including the River Ash, River Wey and River Mole.
- Significant parts of the character area are dominated by large lakes formed from gravel workings. Remaining land includes an irregular pattern of pasture, horse paddocks, occasional arable fields and horticulture, as well as light industry, and recreational uses such as golf. There are occasional riverside meadows, including a significant area of common land at Runnymede in the western end of the character area. The River Thames itself forms a small part of the character area. Small tree groups line the Thames in places, but tree cover across the character area in general is very limited.
- Relatively open, with some long distance views, particularly across large water bodies towards surrounding settlement.

- Major roads, elevated above the floodplain cross through the character area, including a significant stretch of the M3 motorway. A network of other roads criss-cross the character area linking settlements beyond.
- The Thames Path National Trail runs along or near the River Thames, and connects with a number of other public rights of way across the character area, although there are some areas with limited formal public access.
- There are scattered villages and hamlets, some quite significant in size, across the character area, such as at Dockett Eddy , and an area of park homes at Penton Park, along with other urban influences such as light industrial works and utilities buildings, mobile homes and marinas, recreation buildings and the Thorpe Park theme park complex.
- The western end of the character area, associated with historically significant Runnymede, is registered as Common Land. The character area contains Shepperton Conservation Area, and small parts of Laleham, Chertsey, and Thorpe Conservation Areas. It is adjacent to Lower Halliford Conservation Area. There are scheduled monuments west of Runnymede Bridge, at Chertsey Abbey and at Laleham Burway. Part of the Laleham Burway meadow was a famous venue in the 18th century.
- Oatland Park, a Grade II registered park is sited on the escarpment between Walton and Weybrige and overlooking the Thames floodplain. The historic park includes the 18th century lake, the Broad Water which was designed to look as if it was part of the River Thames.
- There are numerous ecological designations across the character area, in particular Sites of Nature Conservation Importance covering the lakes, designated for their wildfowl habitat and wet meadow. St. Ann's Lake, to the south-east of Thorpe is designated as a Ramsar, Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest. Important for a number of alluvial grassland SSSIs. Dumsey Meadow and Chertsey Meads area remnants of the original Thameside grazing meadows
- The Wey Navigation Conservation Area and associated locks links with the Thames character just adjacent to this character area.
- There are a few areas isolated by lakes and waterways where there is a degree of remoteness, but most of the character area has limited tranquillity due to internal and surrounding urban influence including Built Up Areas and roads. The River Thames does however exert a strong influence on the character of the area, adding colour and interest to its immediate environs, for instance, the pastoral meadows at Runnymede, attractive river islands and moorings.



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RF4: NORTHERN BOURNE RIVER FLOODPLAIN

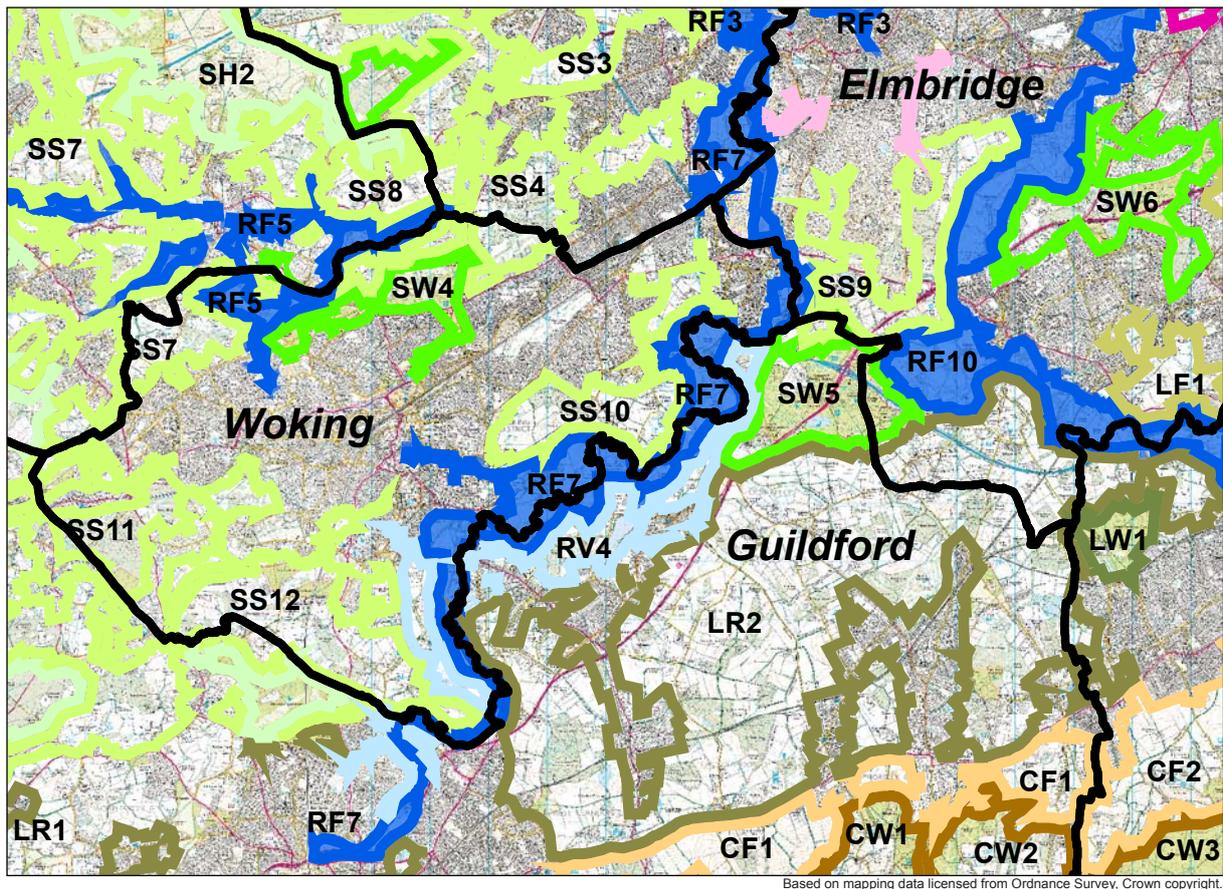
Location and Boundaries

A narrow character area south of Virginia Water and Thorpe Green, including a short stretch of The Bourne before it combines with the wider River Thames floodplain to the east. A small character area, but well defined by its boundaries and land cover. The boundary of the character area broadly follows the edge of the flood zone, although it is taken to the settlement edge as a nearby easily recognisable feature.

Key Characteristics

- Underlain by Bagshot Formation Sand solid geology with Alluvium superficial deposits.
- Flat, low lying and narrow floodplain associated with The Bourne, which joins the wider Thames Valley to the east. Contained by surrounding settlement and urban infrastructure.
- The western two thirds of the character area is covered by continuous woodland, including some areas of ancient woodland, associated with The Bourne and its associated watercourses. Other areas of woodland are less intact. Here The Bourne has a distinctive, twisting and relatively deep-sided, gill-like character.
- The eastern third of the character area becomes less wooded and bends in The Bourne begin to lengthen. There are a few irregular shaped pastoral fields, before the water course reaches the M25 / M3 motorway junction.
- Woodland within the western part of the character area restricts views. To the east, long distance views are generally restricted by surrounding settlement, vegetation and road infrastructure.

- The M3 cuts through the south-east of the character area and joins the M25 to form junction 2 of the M3, at the eastern corner of the character area. The Waterloo to Reading, and Chertsey branch railway lines cross the character area after diverging at Virginia Water railway station, located just to the north of the character area.
- Rights of way are relatively limited. However, there are permissive trails within the woodland along part of The Bourne as part of a Local Nature Reserve.
- The woodland within the western two thirds of the character area are designated Sites of Nature Conservation Importance for their Alder Carr and damp woodland.
- The western two thirds of the character area, with its woodland and gill-like winding watercourse, has a peaceful intimate feel and a sense of tranquilly, despite being entirely enclosed by housing. The M25 / M3 motorway junction is a major detractor to the tranquillity and remoteness of the western end of the character area.



RF7: LOWER WEY RIVER FLOODPLAIN

Location and Boundaries

The Lower Wey River Floodplain extends northwards from Guildford until it reaches the Thames. The boundary of the character area broadly follows the edge of the flood zone, although it is taken to nearby easily recognisable features in places. This stretch of the Wey is outside the Surrey Hills AONB.

Key Characteristics

- Flat, low lying flood plain of the River Wey, underlain by Bagshot Formation Sand, and London Clay Formation, Silt and Sand solid geology, with superficial Alluvium deposits.
- Presence of the River Wey in multiple channels, streams and open water bodies and the River Wey Navigation with its locks and towpath.
- A largely pastoral landscape, including meadows grazed by cattle. Includes other uses along its length, such as golf courses, sewage works, former quarry workings and the disused airfield at Brooklands.
- Irregular small to medium fields enclosed by ditches with ditch lined trees or by rural fences. There are blocks and belts of alder woods along the river plus willows and pollards lining the ditches. Occasional small areas of ancient woodland.
- Views at the southern and northern-most ends of the character area are enclosed by the adjoining Built Up Areas, but within the central part of the character area there are more distant views over the pastoral flood plain, except where the river is enclosed by riparian woodland.
- Very sparse settlement of a few farmsteads, buildings associated with the river and Wey Navigation, and occasional industrial buildings.
- The A3 road passes through the southern end of the character area. Elsewhere, rural lanes cross the river on small stone bridges but there is little road access overall.

- A triangle of railway lines cross the northern part of the character area. Byfleet and New Haw station on the Waterloo to Woking line is within the character area and Weybridge railway station, on the same line, is within walking distance of the character area. The elevated section of the M25 skirts the character area just to the west of the station.
- The character area is well served by public rights of way, including the Wey Navigation Long Distance Path, which are part of the varied leisure use of the character area including walking, boating and cycling.
- The ruins of Newark Priory form an important landmark in the level landscape of the flood plain, and there are several scheduled monuments associated with the river, such as Woking Palace moated site, fish ponds and ruins at Oldhall Copse. The character area contains a number of Conservation Areas including Brooklands, Ockham Mill, Wey and Godalming Navigations and Sutton Park. Significant lengths along the character area are designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, including Roundbridge Farm with its drains, hedges and river banks, and acid grassland at Brooklands.
- This is a generally peaceful, pastoral landscape with a secluded, rural ambiance with views across water meadows to historic buildings such as chapels, churches and the Newark Priory. Human influences and glimpses of surrounding Built Up Areas temper the sense of remoteness.

LANDSCAPE TYPE RF: RIVER FLOODPLAIN EVALUATION AND GUIDANCE

EVALUATION

Key positive landscape attributes

The key positive features that contribute to the character of the area and that should be conserved and enhanced are:

- Peaceful, often secluded, pastoral landscapes, along meandering watercourses of the Mole, Wey and canals, contrast with the suburban and urban character of The Thames and its tributaries.
- Wide river valleys associated with their meandering watercourses.
- Dramatic landscape along the River Mole where it cuts through the downs.
- Riparian vegetation and land use, such as waterside meadows, wet woodland (eg Alder), varied grassland and occasional marsh of biodiversity interest.
- River Wey, River Wey Navigation, restored sections of the Wey and Arun Canal, River Mole, and multiple channels and waterbodies.
- Areas of intact pattern of ditches with ditchline willows.
- Often grazed by cattle, particularly the Upper Wey River Floodplain (Area RF8).
- Largely unsettled, undisturbed ambiance with woodland belts screening development on the edges of the area particularly directly to the south of Guildford.
- Historic pattern of development and infrastructure linked to the waterways, particularly infrastructure of the Wey Navigation and restored parts of the Wey and Arun Canal (locks and connected buildings).
- Rural roads with narrow stone bridges.
- Attractive islands, moorings and riverside settlement within the Thames River Floodplain area
- Setting to the historically significant Runnymede.
- Provides amenity space for urban areas within the northern part of the County and major settlements of Dorking and Guildford through which they flow.
- Provides recreation opportunities for rural access through the river valleys.

Forces for change/sensitivities/pressures

Past change

- Decline in active management of meadows and pasture on the floodplain and conversion to improved grassland.
- Fragmentation and decline of agricultural holdings.
- Extensive gravel extraction with restoration to open water.
- Encroachment by scrub into meadows.
- Lack of pollarding and loss of boundary willows.
- Introduction of horse grazing.
- Abandonment and infilling of the Wey and Arun Canal.
- Impact of development in adjacent areas.
- Encroachment of development on to valley floor.
- Development of transport corridor along River Mole through gap in the North Downs.
- Urbanisation and fragmentation within more urban areas to the north of the County.

Future potential forces for change

- Decline in active or traditional management of meadows and pastures.
- Decline in active or traditional management of meadows and pastures.
- Further fragmentation of agricultural land.
- Loss of over-mature willows and field trees.
- Pressure for intensification of horse grazing with further horse paddocks and consequent subdivision of fields and installation of shelters.
- Pressures for tourism/leisure infrastructure, including that generated from continuing restoration of the Wey and Arun Canal, which would affect the peacefulness of the character area.

- Pressures for development at the margins of the area, particularly near Guildford, Godalming, Farnham, Bramley, Cranleigh, Leatherhead and Dorking, where views of development would affect the rural, secluded character of the flood plain and from adjacent high level topography.
- Pressure for further development within the Thames and Blackwater floodplains.
- Potential for intensification of transport related activity along the River Mole where it forms a corridor through the downs.
- Pressure to upgrade rural roads and replace narrow stone bridges due to increase in traffic.
- Activities around sand and stone extraction in the Thames and Ash floodplains, and restoration of landscape.
- Abstraction, or reduced rainfall patterns creating more frequent water shortages throughout river catchment area.
- Increasing pressure for urbanisation of areas to the north of the County and along river valley sides.
- Intense rainfall patterns causing rivers to rise suddenly.
- Schemes to alleviate flood risk.

GUIDANCE

Landscape Strategy

The strategy for River Floodplain is to conserve the rural, secluded areas of landscape with its river channels, pastures, wetlands and woodland, along with historic infrastructure and buildings associated with the Wey Navigation and the Wey and Arun Canal, and resist further development within the Thames and Blackwater floodplains. Elements to be enhanced are the management of the pastures, woodlands and ditchline willows associated with the river corridors, and continued restoration of the Wey and Arun Canal.

Landscape Guidelines

Land Management

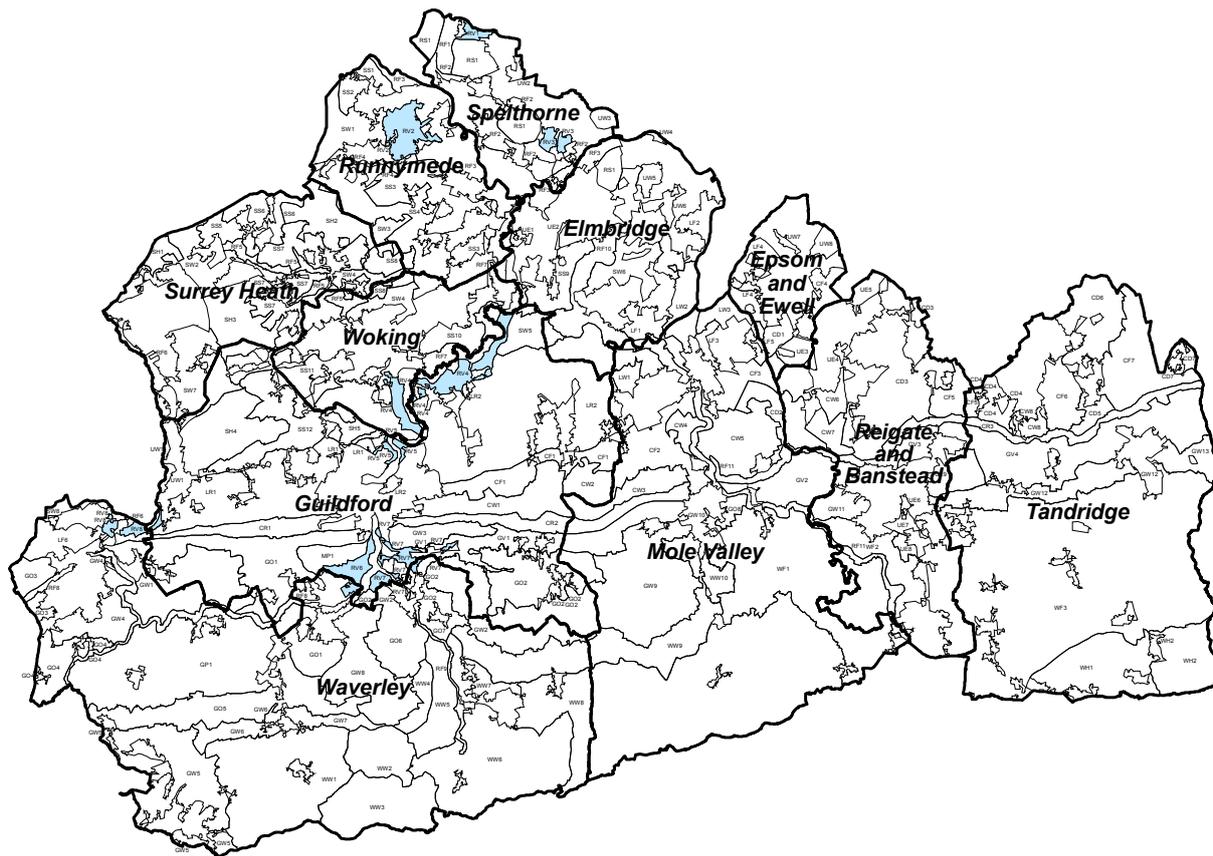
- Encourage landowners to maintain an appropriate management regime using traditional farming techniques, to conserve and enhance key landscape features such as relatively small-scale irregular field pattern, hedgerows and hedgerow trees, ditches and ditchline willows, meadows and wetlands.
- Conserve and enhance the waterside meadows and pastures with cattle grazing management, and resist the improvement of grasslands and drainage schemes which could disturb the characteristic landcover, vegetation or adversely affect ecological value.
- Protect the course of the Wey and Arun Canal to allow full restoration.
- Restoration and enhancement of worked out gravel pits. This character area type coincides with the Surrey's Rivers and Thames Valley biodiversity opportunity areas.
- Enhance A24 landscape through the Mole Gap. This area coincides with the Surrey's Rivers and North Downs biodiversity opportunity areas with potential to enhance or link together areas of high biodiversity in these areas.
- Promote strategies for the Thames and Blackwater floodplains avoiding inappropriate increase in development.
- Conserve and enhance the natural corridor and the rural setting of the Rivers Wey, Mole and Blackwater, particularly where they extend through urban areas. Ensure physical and biodiversity links to river valley character areas (Type RV) are maintained.
- Seek to ensure infrastructure associated with horses is sympathetic to the landscape character, e.g. sensitively designed fencing, and resist intensification of paddocks within the area.
- Conserve, enhance and restore riparian woodland, the stock of individual field and riverbank trees, and the blocks and bands of woodland at the edge of the area that screen development.
- Promote traditional woodland management techniques with local landowners and the farming community.
- Encourage sustainable and multi-purpose woodlands and the use of locally appropriate species such as willows, alder and oak trees.

- Seek to conserve and enhance the distinctive low key, rural character of leisure facilities such as the North Downs/Pilgrims Way, the Downs Link, the Wey Navigation towpath, Mole Gap Trail and other public footpath/bridleways or cyclepaths which cross the area, through the encouragement of appropriate surfacing, materials and signage.
- Seek appropriate siting of facilities and new access links for leisure and tourism through visitor management to support appropriate levels of circulation and movement patterns of different user groups.
- Encourage conservation of historic landscape pattern of meadows and waterways, and understanding of underlying archaeology.

Built Development

- Ensure any new development is sensitively sited and designed with, scale, form and detailing, including materials, which conserve the historic character and settlement pattern of the area. Refer to Surrey design guides; Surrey Design (Surrey Local Government Association) and Building Design in the Surrey Hills (Surrey Hills AONB) where rivers flow through the greensand hills and chalk downs.
- Retain the largely undisturbed, rural character of the Wey and Mole valleys.
- Avoid any development on the course of the Wey and Arun Canal which would hamper full restoration.
- Avoid intensification of transport related development along the River Mole where it forms a corridor through the downs.
- Avoid inappropriate increase in development within the Thames and Blackwater floodplains.
- Avoid the location of any new large mass or bulky structures where overly visually intrusive on this character area. Subject any development to rigorous landscape and visual impact assessment, site carefully, and design to minimise impact and integrate with the rural context.
- Encourage the continuing provision of suitable native boundary tree belts to existing adjacent large scale development to reduce adverse impact on this sensitive character area and reduce glare and mass from long-distance viewpoints.
- Resist potential mineral workings on the plateau adjoining the Upper Wey River Floodplain (Area A2) which could adversely affect the landscape character
- Promote appropriate scale and form of boundary treatment to avoid negative visual impact of inappropriate boundaries on the rural character of the flood plain.
- Encourage the retention of woodland planting that screens settlement and roads adjacent to the area and consider additional planting to screen existing or new development that intrudes in rural views.
- Conserve the rural roads and small bridges minimising small-scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network or bridges which would change their character.
- Resist urbanisation of roads through encouraging appropriate surfacing of existing pavements, enhancing the immediate landscape setting and ensuring minimum clutter.
- Ensure that lighting schemes are assessed for visual impact and encourage conservation of the existing 'dark skies' in the largely unsettled floodplain.
- Promote the use of traditional or rural signage features with particular regard to local style and materials.

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LANDSCAPE TYPE RV: RIVER VALLEY FLOOR

Landscape Character Areas

RV1	Colne River Valley Floor*
RV2	Thames River Valley Floor
RV3	Ash River Valley Floor*
RV4	Send River Valley Floor*
RV5	Slyfield River Valley Floor*
RV6	Peasmarsh River Valley Floor*
RV7	Shalford River Valley Floor*
RV8	Badshot River Valley Floor*

* These Character Areas are outside Runnymede Borough and therefore are not described in this document. See the Surrey Countywide document for these areas.

LANDSCAPE TYPE RV: RIVER VALLEY FLOOR

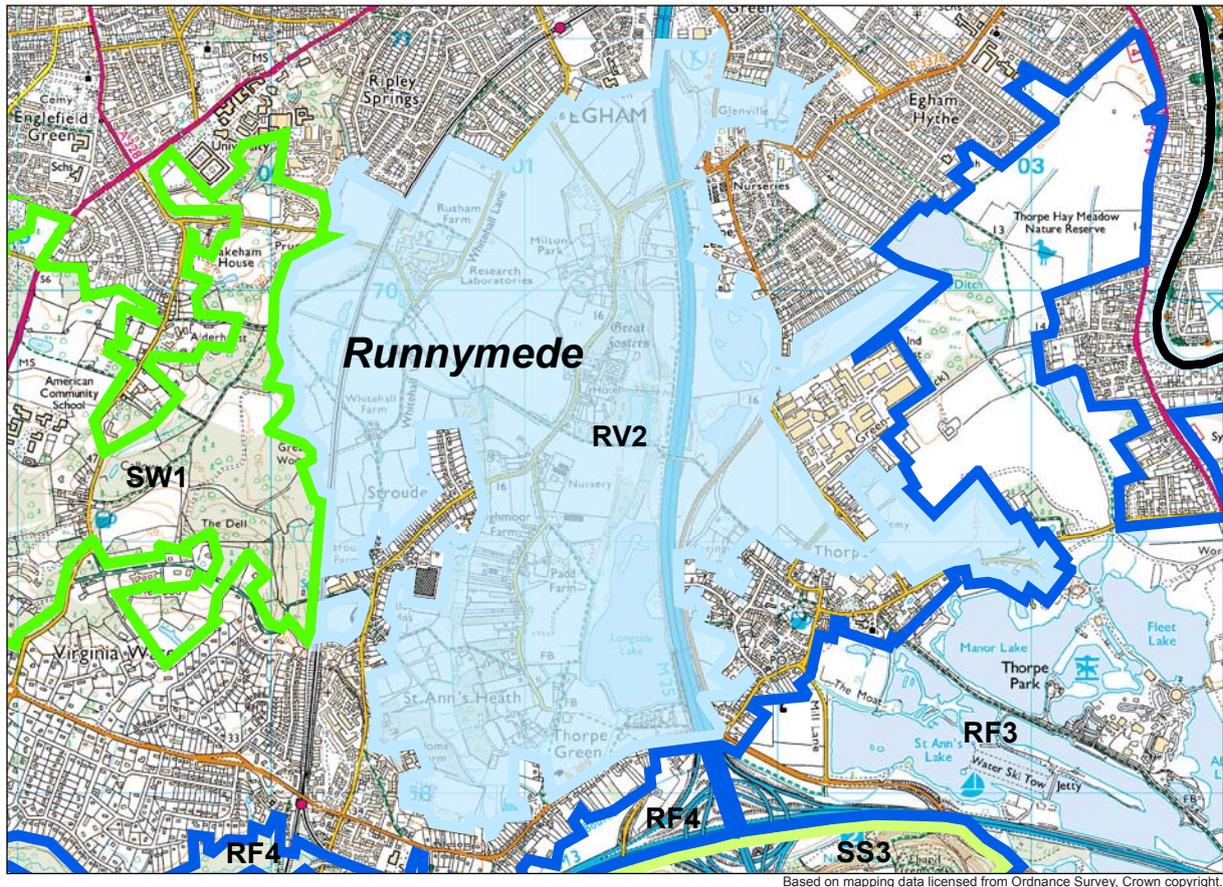
Location and Boundaries

The River Valley Floor Landscape Type comprises a number of separate areas of elevated river terrace fringing the floodplain which runs through the county. Boundaries are based on the change from the gravel terrace to the alluvium of the floodplain or to the surrounding sands, clays and greensand.



Key Characteristics

- Level or gently shelving areas underlain by river terrace gravel and elevated above the floodplain.
- Diverse landscape including pastoral and arable farmland, mixed woodland, industrial, and commercial land uses, and sports complexes.
- Variety of water bodies, developed by modification of naturally occurring water sources, including rivers, canals, streams, excavation of sand and gravel to form lakes and ponds.
- Settlement predominantly in the form of medium to large villages often expanded along transport corridors, becoming more urban to the north.
- Semi-enclosed areas with intermittent views over pastures and waterbodies, views of surrounding urban influence increase to the north, with the presence of gravel pits, and utilities such as sewage works.
- Gravel and alluvium areas important for preserving underlying archaeology. Evidence for early settlement has been found on the terrace gravels of the valleys of the River Thames, Colne, Blackwater and Wey.



RV2: THAMES RIVER VALLEY FLOOR

Location and Boundaries

The Thames River Valley Floor character area is a relatively small part of the wider Thames Valley which is not covered by Built Up Areas. It is located between Egham to the north and Virginia Water to the south. The majority of the character area boundary is defined by the edge of surrounding Built Up Areas.

Key Characteristics

- A level, low lying area, underlain by Thames Group Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel solid geology.
- A mainly pastoral, grassland landscape, but with a significant amount of low density dwellings and other larger buildings such as research facilities, nursery glasshouses, businesses and a hotel complex.
- The character area becomes more rural and unsettled to the west, with farmland adjoining woodland located to the west of the character area.
- There are some significant belts of woodland running through the character area, including riparian vegetation along watercourses. Field boundaries to the west are lined with hedges and trees. Domestic boundaries within areas of low density dwellings, are also well vegetated.
- There are a number of large lakes resulting from gravel extraction, restored to leisure uses.
- There is a network of public rights of way, providing access to most parts of the character area.
- The M25 motorway passes north-south through the character area, and joins the M3 at Junction 12 of the M25, immediately to the south of the character area. The Waterloo to Reading railway line passes through the western part of the character area.

- Tree cover and boundary vegetation restricts views and helps obscure built form, roads and the M25 motorway.
- Thorpe Green at the southern end of the character area is registered Common Land.
- Human influences including settlement, surrounding Built Up Areas, roads and the M25 motorway, prevent a sense of remoteness, although tree cover helps create areas with a degree of tranquillity, particularly along footpaths within the western pastoral part of the character area.

LANDSCAPE TYPE RV: RIVER VALLEY FLOOR EVALUATION AND GUIDANCE

EVALUATION

Key positive landscape attributes

The key positive features that contribute to the character of the area and that should be conserved and enhanced are:

- Commons and other open areas which provide a rural setting for settlements and a recreational resource as areas of Open Access Land, amenity land or via public rights of way.
- Mixed blocks of open areas, or areas with a rural character providing attractive visual break to large Built Up areas in the north of the county.
- Characteristic pattern of settlement of houses facing onto commons or open areas, in the south of the County.
- Natural open areas along the rivers Blackwater and Wey, which provide attractive edge to Built Up areas.
- River Ash corridor.
- Blocks of mature trees, hedgerows and hedgerow trees creating intimate areas of landscape
- Tree lined roads and boundaries, and small blocks of woodland or mature trees.
- Role as rural setting for the adjacent flood plains.
- Public rights of ways links to the adjacent wider river corridors.
- Views to wider unsettled or rural areas.

Forces for change/sensitivities/pressures

Past Change

- Loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Regeneration of woodland and loss of mature trees on commons.
- Intensification of edge of settlement.
- Road and rail corridors.
- Encroachment of car parking by residents, workers and commuters onto the common land.
- Spread of settlement out from villages, including along rural roads, resulting in loss of agricultural land.
- Standardisation of main roads.
- Mineral extraction and restoration.
- Urbanisation of areas to the north of the County.
- Proximity of Heathrow to the north of the County.
- Development of adjacent reservoir infrastructure in the north of the county.

Future potential forces for change

- Further requirements for mineral extraction and activities around restoration.
- Encroachment on valley floor from settlement edges and transport infrastructure.
- Further loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Further encroachment of car parking on common land and land restored for access.
- Pressures which will lead to urbanisation of commons and open areas such as for placing facilities like recycling centres or car parking.
- Pressures for further residential and industrial development.
- Sub-division of agricultural plots and piecemeal settlement extension impacting on the historic form of settlement and further fragmentation of open areas.

Landscape Strategy

The landscape strategy for the River Valley Floor is to conserve the commons, open areas and pastoral farmland, the historic village centres and a positive relationship between buildings and settlements edging the rural landscape.

Landscape Guidelines

Land Management

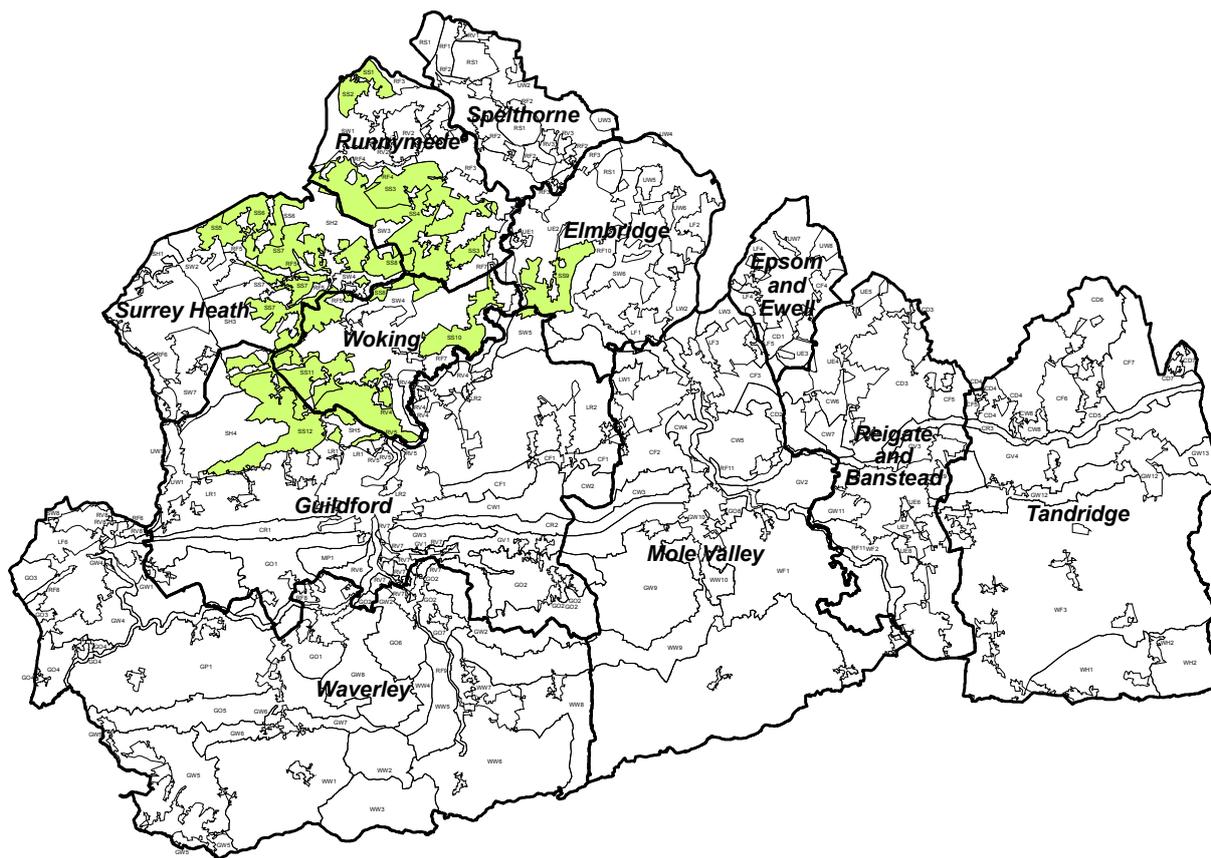
- Encourage landowners to maintain an appropriate management regime using traditional farming techniques where these will conserve and enhance key landscape features such as the pasture fields, hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodlands and maintain rural character.
- Encourage understanding of historic dimension of the landscape including underlying archaeology. Conserve historic elements of the landscape.
- Conserve and manage areas of common land.
- Conserve remaining intact areas of agricultural or open land surrounding settlement.
- Encourage restocking and consistent management of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree lined roads and boundaries.
- Encourage sensitively placed tree planting to maintain stock of trees on open areas and common land.
- Conserve, enhance and restore riparian woodland, and blocks and bands of woodland at the edge of the area that screen development.
- Promote traditional woodland management techniques with local landowners and the farming community.
- Encourage sustainable and multi-purpose woodlands.
- Consider opportunities for new tree and woodland planting to enhance the setting of settlements and for screening large scale development.
- Promote the use of locally appropriate species such as oaks and, close to the floodplain, willows poplar and alder.
- Conserve and enhance the rural setting of the River Wey, River Blackwater, and River Ash, particularly where they extend through urban areas.
- Ensure physical and biodiversity connections between river valley floor (Type RV) and river floodplain (Type RF) character areas are maintained and enhanced. These areas coincide with Surrey's Rivers and Thames Valley biodiversity opportunity areas.
- Conserve and enhance connectivity of key landscape attributes, paying particular attention to their positive contribution to the character of adjoining character areas (Types RF and RS).

Built Development

- Retain the distinct character of settlements and avoid merging these through linear development along roads, and by retaining the rural gaps between them.
- Maintain and enhance vegetated boundaries to transport corridors and adjacent infrastructure.
- Retain open space along the A331 corridor between Aldershot and Ash.
- Conserve the distinctive pattern of houses facing onto commons and open areas.
- Ensure that any new large scale development does not impact adversely on rural views. Maintain relationship and quality of views to adjoining river floodplains and valleys, commons or to wider surrounding areas.
- Improve understanding of the general pattern of settlements and their relationship to the landscape and to ensure that new development is sympathetic to the wider pattern of settlement.
- Resist urbanisation of the open areas and common land through the addition of inappropriate facilities such as car parking. Consider screening and enhancement of existing facilities to strengthen rural character.

- Protect landscape character and quality from negative impact of transport networks including the introduction of signs, gantries and lighting columns that impact on local distinctiveness.
- Work to foster local distinctiveness around settlements, where standard design criteria creates a lack of variation and 'urbanisation' of rural roads. Seek opportunities to 'downgrade' main roads through settlements, enhancing the immediate landscape setting and ensuring minimum clutter through encouraging appropriate surfacing of existing pavements, quality signage and reduced speed limits where possible.
- Ensure that road lighting schemes are assessed for visual impact, and impacts on biodiversity particularly where these may affect open areas, commons or the adjacent river floodplains.
- Promote the use of traditional materials and signage features with particular regard to local style and materials. Refer to Surrey design guidance; Surrey Design (Surrey Local Government Association).
- Consider function of the area as a setting to the river corridors of the Wey, Blackwater and Ash and ensure that development does not impinge on setting of the river valleys.

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LANDSCAPE TYPE SS: SETTLED AND WOODED SANDY FARMLAND

Landscape Character Areas

SS1	Cooper's Hill Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland
SS2	Englefield Green West Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland
SS3	Trumps Green to New Haw Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland
SS4	Wentworth to Sheerwater Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland
SS5	Bagshot to Windlesham Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland*
SS6	Windlesham Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland*
SS7	Windlesham to Knaphill Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland*
SS8	Chobham East Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland
SS9	Weybridge South Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland*
SS10	Woking to Byfleet Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland*
SS11	Pirbright to Hook Heath Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland*
SS12	Wyke to Mayford Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland*

* These Character Areas are outside Runnymede Borough and therefore are not described in this document. See the Surrey Countywide document for these areas.

LANDSCAPE TYPE SS: SETTLED AND WOODED SANDY FARMLAND

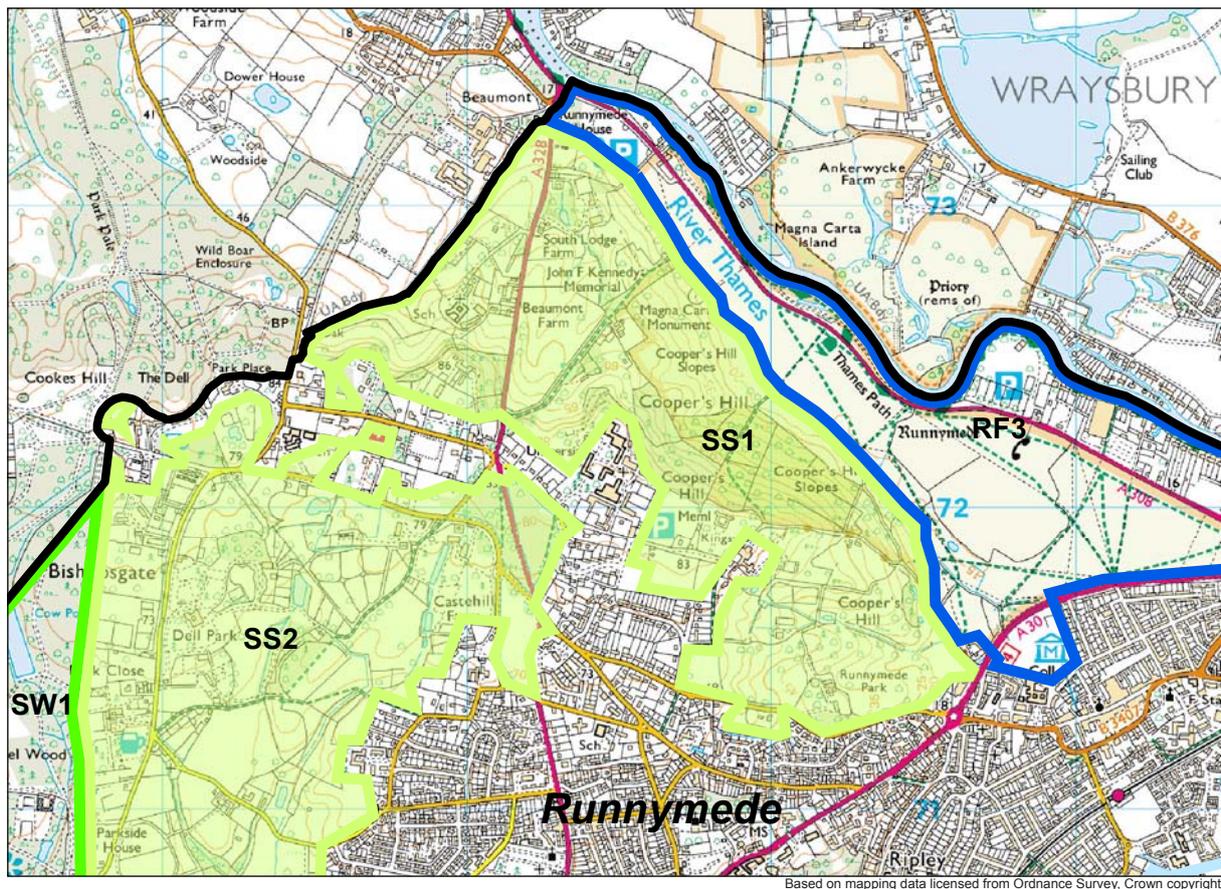
Location and Boundaries

The Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland Landscape Type consists of a number of character areas, covering a wide area within the north-western part of the county, to the north of the Claylands. The boundaries of the areas are based on the underlying sandy geology and the land cover consisting of a mixture of farmland, woodland and settlement. Boundaries follow the edge of roads, tracks, field boundaries and woodland.



Key Characteristics

- Rolling landscape based on the sand solid geology formations.
- Predominately farmland, with varying degrees of settlement and woodland, with the amount of these elements, along with varying field sizes, openness and the degree of other human influences including golf courses, horse paddocks, and nurseries, broadly defining the extent of each individual character area.
- Urban influence and activity from settlement and transport, increases to the north.
- To the south, settlement becomes more scattered, with dwellings often edging commons and rural roads.
- Heavily wooded in places, with heathland commons, now largely regenerated with secondary woodland, or plantation woodland creating an enclosed landscape with glimpses to pastures, open heathland and water bodies.
- A predominately intimate landscape, with intermittent views across farmland framed by woodland.
- Varied historical sites and designed landscapes including cemeteries and memorials with important local historic, architectural, cultural or military associations.



SS1: COOPER'S HILL SETTLED AND WOODED SANDY FARMLAND

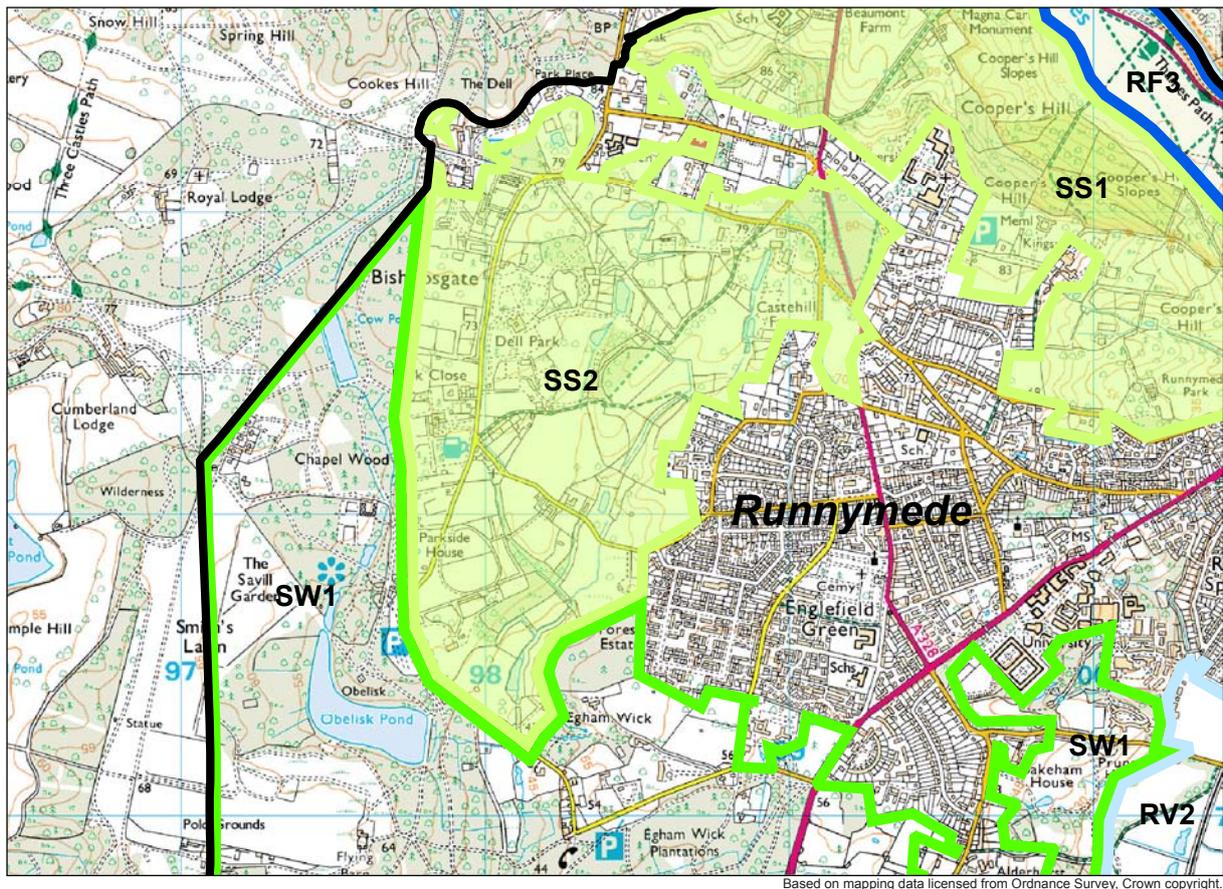
Location and Boundaries

The Cooper's Hill Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland Character Area lies to the north-east of Egham, at the far north-western corner of the county. It is defined by the edge of the River Thames floodplain to the north-east, the county boundary to the north-west, and the settlement edge of Egham to the south.

Key Characteristics

- Underlain by Bagshot Formation Sand solid geology, as well as areas of London Clay Formation Clay, Silt and Sand to the north and east.
- A sloping, north-east facing landscape. Generally falls from Cooper's Hill towards the River Thames floodplain.
- The character area consists of pastoral estate farmland and remnant parkland.
- There is a significant area of woodland, including some areas of ancient woodland. Well treed and hedged field boundaries, and parkland trees within fields such as at Runnymede Park to the south of the character area, provide an enclosed feel to the area.
- There are impressive panoramic views towards London from Cooper's Hill, as well as views framed by tree cover, towards Runnymede and the Thames floodplain.
- Open and wooded parts of the slopes to the north of Cooper's Hill are Open Access Land, but areas elsewhere have relatively limited formal public access with few public rights of way.
- The A328 climbs through the western part of the character area before crossing the edge of character area SS2 where it slopes back down again towards Englefield Green. It is the only main road in the area.
- Settlement is limited to scattered farmsteads and estate dwellings.

- There are a number of historical associations with keen visitor interest, including the Magna Carta Memorial, the Air Forces Memorial on Cooper's Hill, and the John F Kennedy Memorial.
- Parts of the slopes of Cooper's Hill are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Site of Nature Conservation Interest, for its ancient semi-natural woodland
- An important landscape for visitors with distinctive landform and views. Tree cover filters urban influence, but tranquil and remoteness is reduced by human activity.



SS2: ENGLEFIELD GREEN WEST SETTLED AND WOODED SANDY FARMLAND

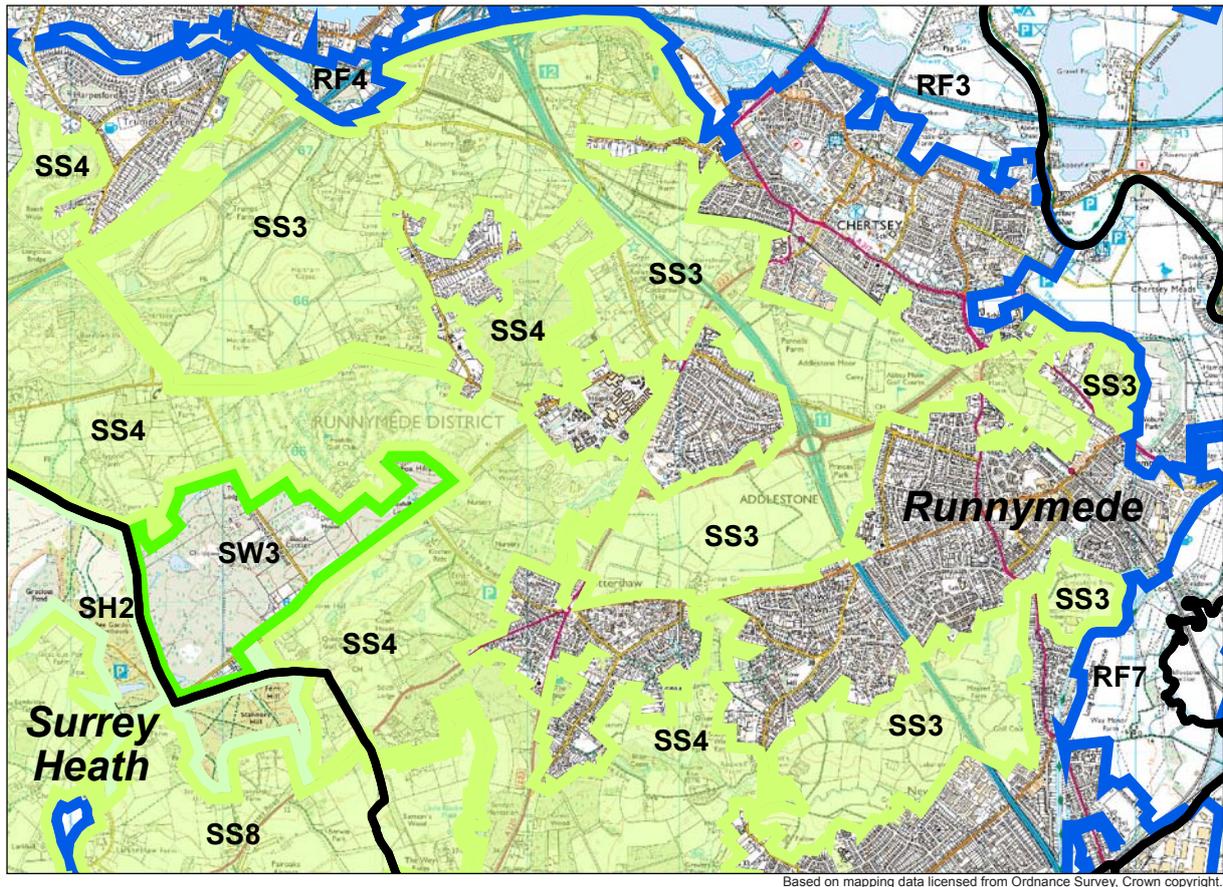
Location and Boundaries

The Englefield Green West Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland Character Area lies to the west of Egham, at the north-western corner of the county. It is defined by the edge of continuous woodland to the south and west, and by settlement to the north and east. In places the western boundary is aligned to roads.

Key Characteristics

- Underlain by Bagshot Formation Sand solid geology, as well as small areas of Claygate Member Sand, Silt and Clay, and London Clay Formation Clay, Silt and Sand to the south.
- A relatively flat landscape, although falling south towards water courses and ponds which flow south towards Virginia Water.
- The character area consists of pastoral estate farmland with a number of paddocks and horse related uses. There are smaller parcels of land associated with large houses, enclosed by boundary vegetation.
- Woodland cover is limited to a few blocks of woodland, including an area of ancient woodland, tree belts and riparian vegetation which follows watercourses.
- Rural, partially enclosed, with few long distance views.
- A limited number of public rights of way cross through the middle of the character area, although some areas have no formal public access.
- Settlements consists of large, very low density dwellings set back from the rural lanes, buildings often associated with horse riding and training, and occasional farm buildings.

- Englefield Green in the north-east of the character area is registered as common land and is part of Englefield Green Conservation Area.
- Park Wood towards the south of the character area is designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest for its ancient semi-natural woodland.
- A pleasant semi-rural landscape, but human influence in the form of large dwellings, horse ownership and farming is obvious across parts of the character area (albeit often filtered by vegetation), and limits the sense of remoteness and tranquillity. Public access is limited, with visitors drawn to nearby attractions such as the lake at Virginia Water and the Savill Garden, and Windsor Great Park to the west.



SS3: TRUMPS GREEN TO NEW HAW SETTLED AND WOODED SANDY FARMLAND

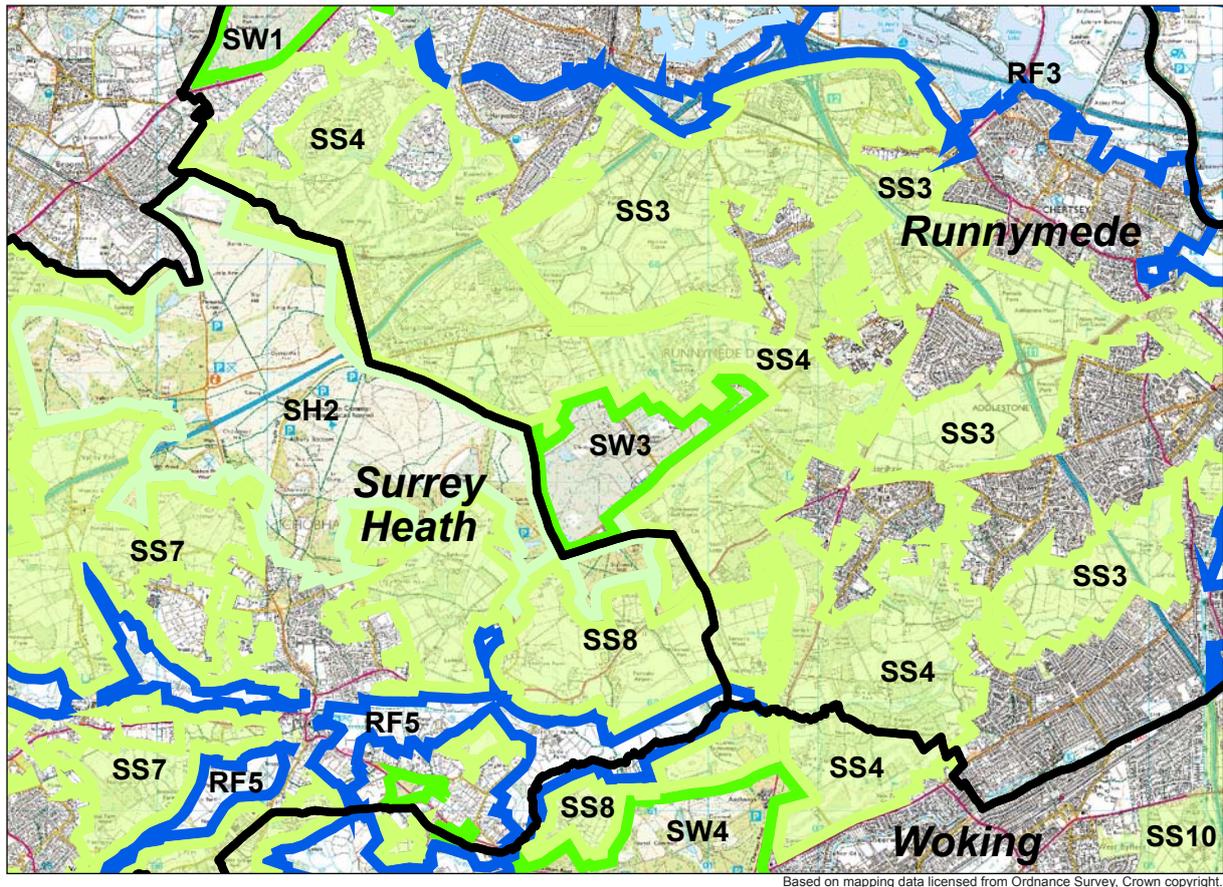
Location and Boundaries

The Trumps Green to New Haw Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland Character Area lies to the south and west of Chertsey. It is defined by the extent of relatively open farmland to the south of the Thames floodplain, in contrast to the adjoining character area to the south-west which is more wooded and less open. The character area is fragmented by settlement and falls into two broad parts, with its boundaries following the edges of settlement, floodplain and woodland, although in some places the boundary follows roads as easily identifiable features.

Key Characteristics

- A gently undulating landscape, underlain by Bagshot Formation Sand solid geology.
- The topography rises to a number of hills, including St Ann's Hill which overlooks the river floodplain to the north, Cockcrow Hill west of the M25, and Hershaw Copse south of Trumps Farm.
- The character area consists mainly of arable and pastoral farmland, with paddocks, nurseries, golf courses, and a large sewage works.
- Woodland blocks are small, and infrequent, particularly to the south.
- The field pattern is generally small to medium scale towards the northern part of the character area, bounded by hedges and tree lines, whilst fields to the south are more open.
- There are views from St Ann's Hill, north over the floodplain and nearby Thorpe Park. On lower ground views over the northern part of the character area are contained or framed by tree cover. To the south there are more extensive views across farmland.

- The M25 and M3 motorways and busy 'A' roads run through the character area. Junction 11 of the M25 is located in the southern part of the character area. Junction 12 is the M25/M3 intersection, and is adjacent to the north of the character area. Motorway and road traffic can be seen between and above roadside vegetation within the vicinity. The Chertsey branch railway line travels through the character area, with Chertsey railway station nearby.
- Settlement including low density dwellings and farmsteads is scattered across the character area.
- St. Ann's Hill and the Dingle, and St. Ann's Court are grade II and II* registered parks and gardens.. The remains of St. Ann's hillfort and 14th century chapel are registered as a scheduled monument.
- There are Sites of Nature Conservation Importance within the southern part of the character area, including Hardwick Court Farm Field, Pannells Farm, Simplemarsh Farm, and Spinney Wood.
- Some pleasant semi-rural areas, but human influence in the form of internal settlement, surrounding Built Up Areas, and busy vehicular routes (albeit often filtered by vegetation), restricts the sense of remoteness and tranquillity generally.



SS4: WENTWORTH TO SHEERWATER SETTLED AND WOODED SANDY FARMLAND

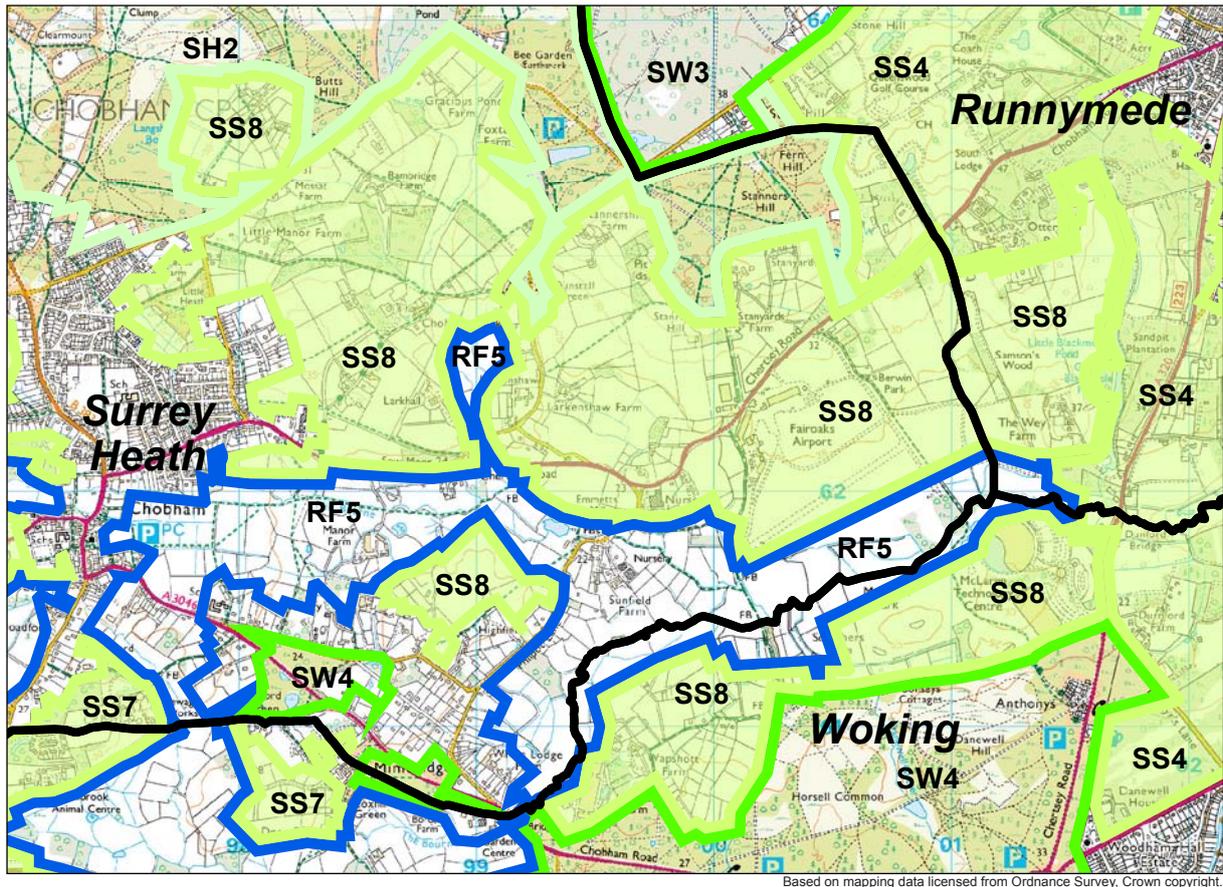
Location and Boundaries

The Wentworth to Sheerwater Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland Character Area is a swathe of land to the south of Chertsey. It is defined by the extent of a relatively enclosed mosaic of farmland, woodland and settlement, in contrast to the more open farmland character area to the north-east. The character area boundaries follow the edges of settlement, woodland, and roads.

Key Characteristics

- An undulating landscape, underlain by Bagshot Formation Sand solid geology, and small areas of Windlesham Formation Sand, Silt and Clay.
- Locally falls towards a number of watercourses and ponds, across the character area.
- There are watercourses and ponds throughout the character area, including The Bourne, which flows through the southern part of the character area.
- The character area consists of considerable areas of woodland, including some areas of ancient woodland. To the north of the character area is Wentworth golf course set in clearing in the woodland, and the former Ministry of Defence site at Longcross, now used for various commercial purposes, including film studios and a test track facility. Foxhills and Queenswood golf courses occupy the central part of the character area. Elsewhere, particularly to the south of Ottershaw, the character area is more rural, with wooded interspersed with arable and pastoral fields, although uses including horse paddocks and nurseries are also present.
- Field boundaries are generally well vegetated with hedges and trees.

- Although dispersed, settlement in the form of areas of very low density large dwellings, scattered small groups of settlement and farmsteads, is spread across the majority of the character area, mostly hidden by surrounding tree cover.
- Occasionally there are views across fields to the nearest woodland, but long distance views are restricted by tree cover in most parts of the character area.
- There is a moderate network of public rights of way, but some areas have limited public access due to land uses such as golf.
- A short length of the M3 motorway crosses the character area, screened by embankments and tree cover. A limited number of 'A' roads cross the area and connect with minor roads and tracks to provide access to dwellings.
- The Waterloo to Reading railway line also crosses the character area, with Longcross railway station located within the north-western part of the character area. However, there is limited direct public access, other than to the golf course to the north, and despite frequent passing services, few trains currently stop at Longcross during the week and none at the weekend.
- There are several bowl barrows listed as scheduled monuments, near Longcross, and two listed buildings at Longcross Church.
- There are a number of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, including woodland within the golf courses. The character area abuts the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area to the west.
- Human influence, including settlement is obvious in places, and tempers the sense of remoteness. This is however, generally a secluded landscape, with woodland providing tranquillity.



SS8: CHOBHAM EAST SETTLED AND WOODED SANDY FARMLAND

Location and Boundaries

The Chobham East Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland Character Area is located to the north of Woking. It consists of two parts, either side of the Bourne river floodplain. It is defined by the edges of river floodplain, the settlement edge of Chobham to the west, and areas of heathland and woodland to the north, south and east.

Key Characteristics

- Underlain by Bagshot Formation Sand, and Windlesham Formation Sand, Silt and Clay solid geology, falling gently towards the The Bourne floodplain.
- Consists of pastoral and arable farmland with occasional areas of woodland. Fields sizes are often larger than other surrounding areas of Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland.
- Fields and paddocks, particularly within the north-western part of the character area have a good hedgerow structure along their boundaries, but some fields, mainly the larger fields to the south and east have lost their hedgerows.
- There are scattered farmsteads, nurseries, and very occasionally groups of low density dwellings. There are larger buildings and hangers at Fairoaks Airfield and an extensive research and development complex at the McLaren Technology Centre.
- Views are often limited or framed by hedgerows and tree cover, but views become more open to the south.
- A good network of public rights of way cross the character area and link the two halves of the character area together via footbridges across The Bourne.

- An 'A' road and a minor road cross through the northern half of the character area, but elsewhere vehicle access is limited to private drives and tracks.
- There are two small areas of registered common land, including Little Heath at the north-western end of the character area, which is also designated as a site of Nature Conservation Interest.
- The character area abuts part of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area to the south.
- A pleasant landscape, part of the setting to The Bourne, with rights of way providing opportunities for interaction with the landscape including routes to the adjacent river itself. There are limited roads, but settlement, and large buildings reduce the sense of remoteness such as around the airfield and McLaren centre.

LANDSCAPE TYPE SS: SETTLED AND WOODED SANDY FARMLAND EVALUATION AND GUIDANCE

EVALUATION

Key positive landscape attributes

The key positive features that contribute to the character of the area and that should be conserved and enhanced are:

- Areas of rural, intimate and peaceful character.
- Commons with their heathland vegetation of high biodiversity interest, Open Access Land which function as both a recreational resource for more built up areas to the north, and as a rural setting for villages and roadside settlement.
- Ponds and streams.
- Varied woodlands including 19th century plantations and small belts and copses giving an enclosed secret character to parts of the area.
- Areas of pastoral farmland with intact field patterns.
- Remnant historic parkland.
- Historic villages centred on greens or commons, particularly to the south of the Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland.
- Pattern of dispersed and small scale linear settlement facing onto commons or roads.
- Designed landscapes and buildings with important local historic, architectural or cultural associations, such as, Painshill Park, Foxwarren Park, Sutton Place, and those associated with the cemeteries and memorials.

Forces for change/sensitivities/pressures

Past change

- Piecemeal linear settlement development associated with or along transport connections including railways and roads.
- Industrial developments including utilities, research centres, telecommunication establishments including masts etc.
- Increase in horse paddocks and golf courses.
- Conversion of fields for horse paddocks with consequent subdivision of the fields and installation of shelters.
- Loss of hedgerows.
- Secondary woodland encroachment onto pastures.
- Regeneration of scrub and woodland on heathland commons.

Future potential forces for change

- Pressures for further conversion to horse paddocks.
- Increased leisure use of public rights of way network and Open Access Land.
- Increased traffic on rural road network leading to urbanisation through kerbing, lighting and signage.
- Pressure for expansion of settlement along rural roads leading to merging of villages and hamlets and loss of rural character.
- Further regeneration of woodland in more open areas, for instance where pastures are under grazed or on the surviving heathland.
- Further loss of hedgerow boundaries.

GUIDANCE

Landscape Strategy

The landscape strategy for the Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland is to conserve peaceful enclosed areas with their mosaics of heathland, woodland, and pastoral farmland, and to conserve historic villages and small scale settlement set around greens and commons, including careful consideration of the impact from any further development and enhancement of recreation opportunities. There are opportunities for enhancement include management of the open heathlands and pastures to prevent encroachment by woodland and restocking hedgerows, as well as reducing visual impact of transport corridors locally.

Landscape Guidelines

Land Management

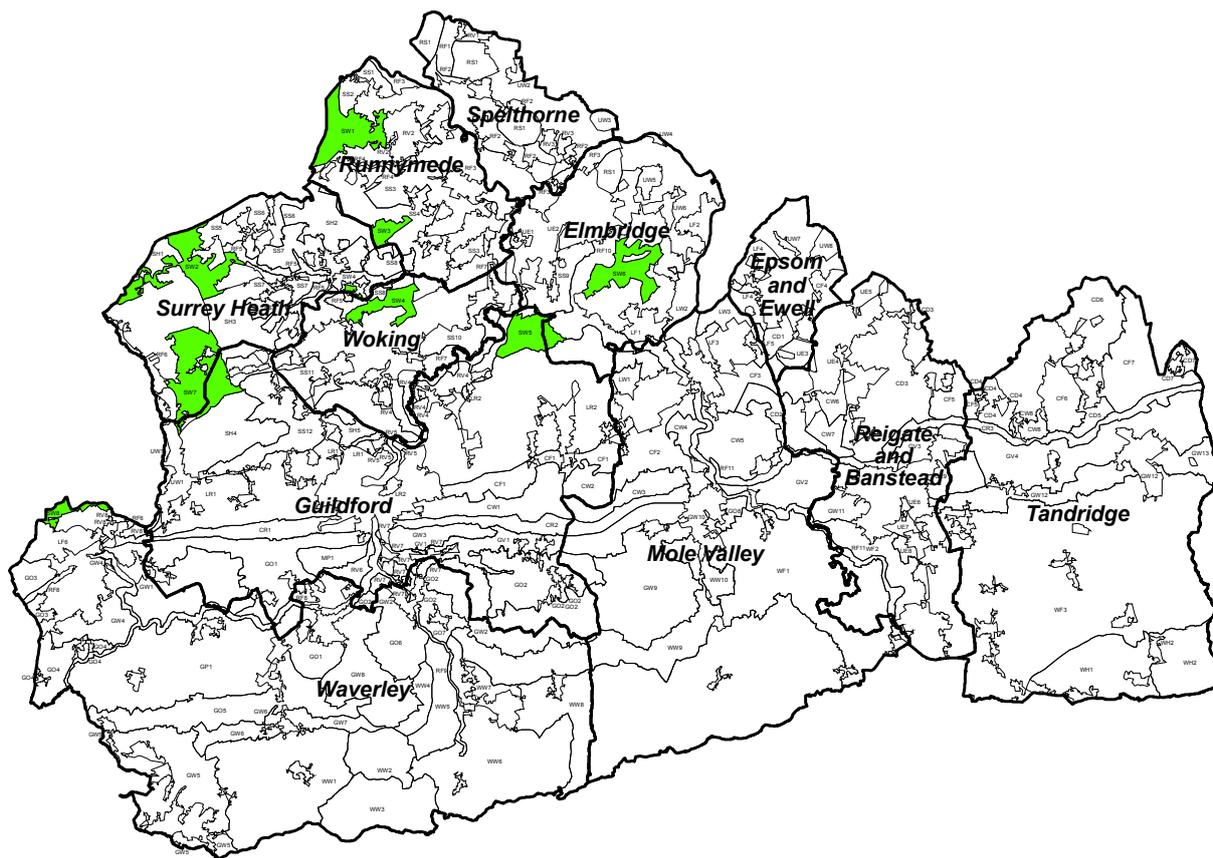
- Encourage landowners to maintain an appropriate management regime using traditional farming techniques where these will conserve and enhance key landscape features such as the commons, woodlands and pastures.
- Raise awareness of the historic dimension of the landscape to landowners including the commons, parklands and woodlands.
- Conserve, manage and encourage the increase of the heathland habitats, continuing to promote local community and volunteer involvement, preventing further encroachment by woodland and taking opportunities to restore and extend these habitats.
- Encourage sustainable and multi-purpose woodlands and promote traditional woodland management techniques with local landowners and the farming community.
- Promote the use of locally appropriate species such as oak, birch and Scots pine.
- Conserve and, where appropriate, encourage repair of the historic parkland to maintain and restore key elements such as parkland trees, avenues and woodland blocks.
- Enhance the hedgerows by replanting and consistent management and resist development that will result in further loss/fragmentation of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Encourage sensitive design and management of horse paddocks for instance in retaining hedges and resist development of other facilities such as manège that would affect the rural character of the area.
- Seek appropriate siting of facilities for leisure and tourism (such as car parks, play areas or picnic sites on the commons). Through active visitor management plans to predict and support appropriate levels of circulation and movement patterns. Ensure recreation use and facilities respect the low key rural character of the commons.

Built Development

- Retain the pattern of villages, hamlets, isolated farmsteads and short rows of houses facing onto roads or commons set within the matrix of woodland, heathland and open farmland.
- Conserve the greens and commons that form the rural settings for villages.
- Retain the individual settlements avoiding merging these through linear development along roads.
- Ensure that new development is designed to retain tree cover that is essential to the character of this area and consider opportunities for new woodland planting to enhance existing and new development and integrate it within the landscape.
- Improve understanding of the general pattern of settlements and their relationship to the landscape and maintain development control to ensure that new development is sympathetic to the wider pattern of settlement.
- Conserve the rural roads minimising small-scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network or bridges which would change their character.

- Resist urbanisation of roads within settlement through encouraging appropriate surfacing of existing pavements, enhancing the immediate landscape setting and ensuring minimum clutter.
- Ensure that lighting schemes are assessed for visual impact and encourage conservation of existing areas of 'dark skies'.
- Promote the use of traditional signage features with particular regard to local style and materials.
- Oppose the erection of new masts where they will be visually dominant and where they would adversely affect views of the wider landscape. Ensure sympathetic siting and design of any new tall features.
- Refer to Surrey design guidance: Surrey Design (Surrey Local Government Association).

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LANDSCAPE TYPE SW: SANDY WOODLAND

Landscape Character Areas

SW1	Virginia Water Sandy Woodland
SW2	Bagshot and Lightwater West Sandy Woodland*
SW3	Foxhill Sandy Woodland
SW4	Horsell Sandy Woodland*
SW5	Wisley Sandy Woodland*
SW6	Fairmile to Esher Sandy Woodland*
SW7	Deepcut Sandy Woodland*
SW8	Bricksbury Hill to Rowhill Copse Sandy Woodland*

* These Character Areas are outside Runnymede Borough and therefore are not described in this document. See the Surrey Countywide document for these areas.

LANDSCAPE TYPE SW: SANDY WOODLAND

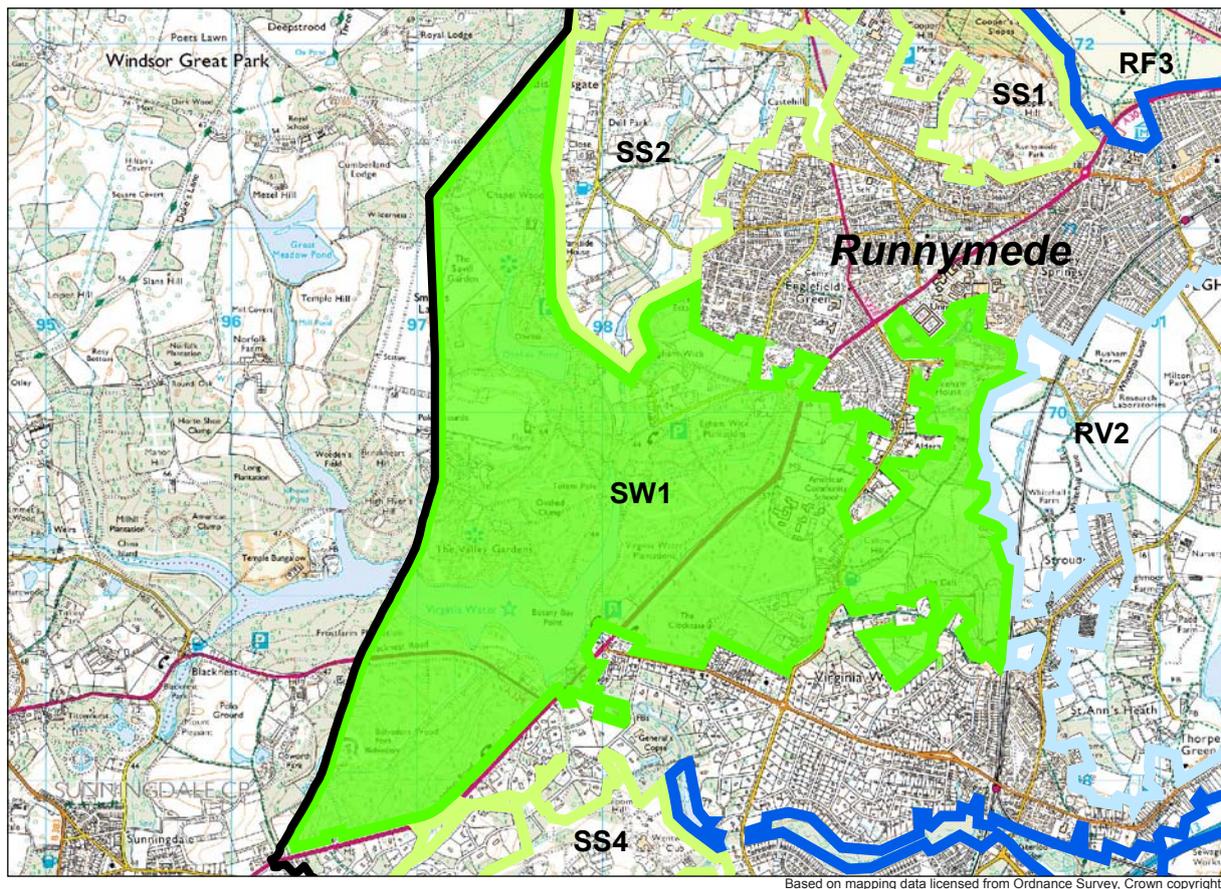
Location and Boundaries

The Sandy Woodland Type comprises a number of dispersed character areas within the northern and western parts of the County, identified as relatively continuous tracts of woodland, with few interventions. The boundaries of the Type are based on land cover and the underlying geology.



Key Characteristics

- An undulating landscape underlain by a solid sandy geology, and acid sandy loam soils.
- Predominately wooded with large mixed woodland blocks and plantations.
- Overall, a relatively limited amount of the woodland is recorded as ancient woodland.
- Large lakes often secluded and within woodland.
- Settlement is limited.
- In places, woodland is dissected by transport corridors, including motorways and major 'A' roads.
- An intimate, enclosed landscape, occasionally dark and oppressive within dense forest plantations.
- Designed landscapes, buildings and structures with important local historic, architectural or cultural associations.



SW1: VIRGINIA WATER SANDY WOODLAND

Location and Boundaries

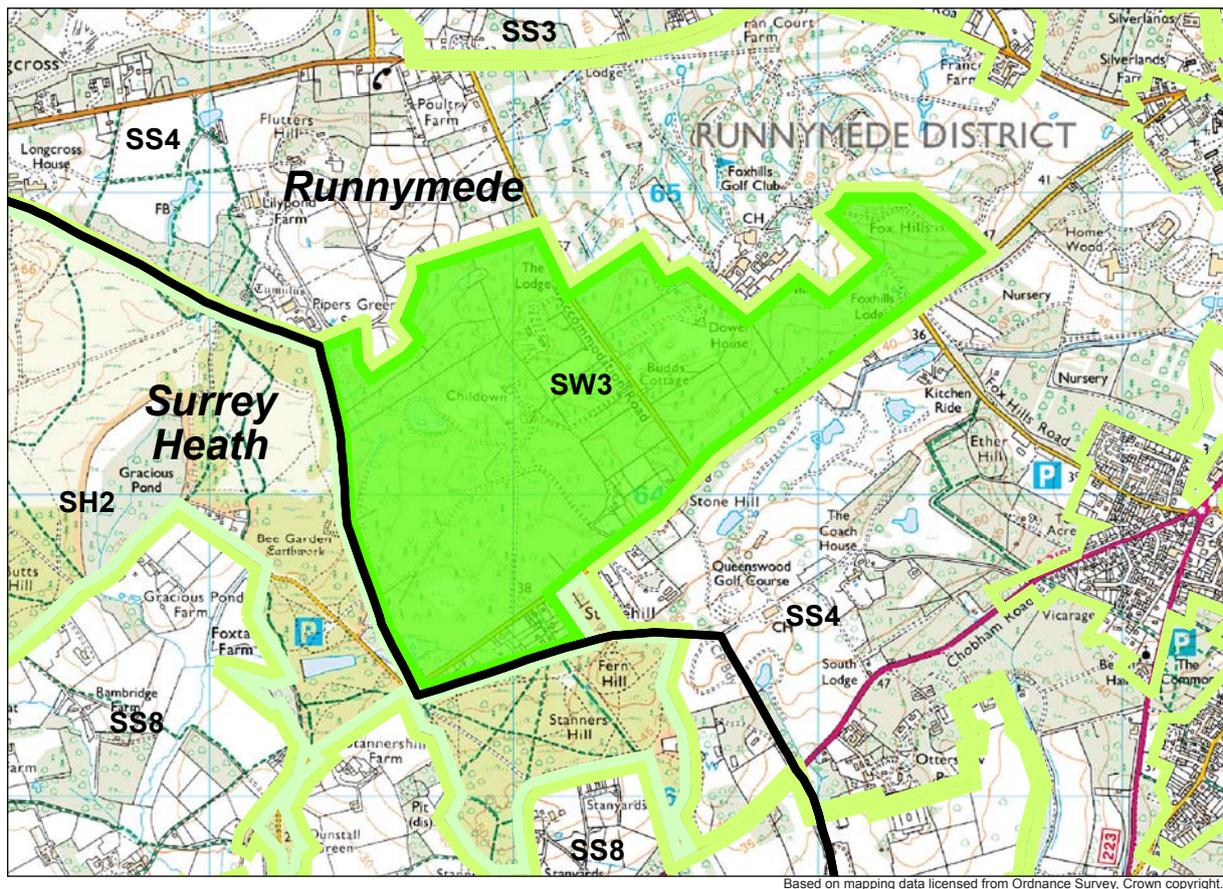
The Virginia Water Sandy Woodland Character Area lies to the south-west of Staines-upon-Thames and Egham, at the north-western edge of the county. The character area is defined by edge of the Thames River Valley Floor to the east and by the county boundary to the west. The surrounding character areas are settled with housing or farmland and have much less continuous woodland. Boundaries largely follow the county boundary, the A30, and edge of settlement. In places, the boundary is taken to the nearest build up area edges, and the edge of the adjacent valley floor, resulting in a few open areas being incorporated into the character area.

Key Characteristics

- Underlain by Bagshot Formation Sand solid geology, and a small area of Windlesham Formation Sand, Silt and Clay.
- An undulating landscape, with western and central areas draining into the lake of Virginia Water, whilst the eastern areas slope down to the Thames floodplain.
- The character area consists of extensive areas of deciduous and coniferous woodland and plantation, including areas of ancient woodland, surrounding large lakes, including Virginia Water and the Obelisk Pond within The Savill Garden. The majority of the area is owned and managed by The Crown Estate as part of the Windsor Great Park to the north-west. Views are obscured by woodland generally, but there are often long vistas along routes cleared through woodland, and across Virginia Water and Obelisk Pond.
- The A30 and A329 roads cross the character area, but elsewhere there are few roads. The Waterloo to Reading railway line skirts the south-eastern edge of the character area.

- Although there are limited formal public rights of way, there are numerous tracks and paths across The Crown Estate, allowing access through the woodland and to Virginia Water lake.
- The Savill Garden, Valley Garden and other landscape associated with Virginia Water are significant visitor attractions.
- There are occasional scattered large houses, small groups of low density dwellings along roads, and complexes of buildings, including the American International School. Buildings are contained within surrounding woodland and are not overly intrusive.
- The Savill Garden, Valley Garden and other landscape associated with Virginia Water are grade I registered parks and gardens, and areas are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and/or Sites of Nature Conservation Importance. Virginia Water lake itself was constructed in 1750, and when extended in 1780, was the largest artificial lake in Britain.
- This is a generally enclosed, intimate landscape, with remote peaceful areas of woodland, however, heavy recreational use does reduce the sense of tranquillity in many areas. Human influence including roads and filtered views of settlement limits remoteness in places, more noticeably to the east. However, the eastern part of the character area separates Egham from the settlement of Virginia Water, and provides a wooded setting to the Thames Valley floor adjacent to the east.

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SW3: FOXHILL SANDY WOODLAND

Location and Boundaries

The Foxhill Sandy Woodland Character Area is situated to the north-west of Ottershaw. The character area is an area of relatively continuous woodland, surrounded by less wooded, settled areas to the north and east, and extensive areas of intact heathland to the south and west. The character area boundary follows the edge of woodland, golf courses and Chobham Common.

Key Characteristics

- Underlain by Bagshot Formation Sand, and Windlesham Formation Sand, Silt and Clay solid geology.
- The character area gently rises towards Foxhills to the north-east.
- The character area consists of extensive areas of mixed woodland, with a few clearings for small groups of secluded houses and isolated dwellings, and occasional ponds.
- The minor road which crosses through the woodland, is enclosed on both sides, but has occasional gated driveway entrances.
- There are tracks through the woodland, but no public rights of way.
- This is a secluded private landscape, with a sense of remoteness due to the sense of enclosure provided by woodland. However, appreciation of the remoteness and tranquillity of the woodland reduced slightly due to the fact that the road through the centre of the character area, with its occasional driveway entrances, is the main point of access and view point.

LANDSCAPE TYPE SW: SANDY WOODLAND EVALUATION AND GUIDANCE

EVALUATION

Key positive landscape attributes

The key positive features that contribute to the character of the area and that should be conserved and enhanced are:

- Varied woodlands, including some areas of ancient woods, with biodiversity and historic value.
- Areas of dense, dark, undisturbed woodland.
- Peaceful, mostly secluded landscape with limited settlement.
- Roads through woodland forming corridors with overhanging trees.
- Pockets of open heath and glades within the woodland.
- Sense of intimacy, with views contained by woodland.
- Significant open areas, tracks and public rights of ways combine to provide recreational resource.

Forces for change/sensitivities/pressures

Past Change

- Loss of broadleaf woodland and increase in conifer plantations.
- Regeneration of scrub and woodland on heathland commons.
- Increased use of the area for leisure leading to the creation of car parks and picnic areas (suffering problems with fly tipping), and golf courses.

Future potential forces for change

- Further regeneration of woodland in more open areas, where pastures are under grazed.
- Where surviving heathland is undermanaged.
- Pressure for further recreational facilities such as car parks and increasing use of footpaths and Open Access Land.
- Pressure for expansion of settlement and roads.

GUIDANCE

Landscape Strategy

The strategy for the Sandy Woodland landscape is to conserve the peaceful, intimate landscape. Opportunities for enhancement requiring management of varied woodlands to conserve their ecological and historic interest, and maintain areas of heathland.

Landscape Guidelines

Land Management

- Raise awareness of the historic dimension and underlying archaeology of the landscape to landowners. Conserve the historic elements of the landscape.
- Conserve, enhance and restore the woodlands and heath where appropriate through effective long term management and replanting to retain their varied character and their ecological value. This character area type coincides with Surrey's Thames Basin Heaths biodiversity opportunity area. Character area SW1 links with Surrey's Thames Valley, and character area SW6 links with Surrey's Thames Basin Lowlands biodiversity opportunity areas.
- Promote traditional woodland management techniques such as coppicing with local landowners and the farming community.
- Encourage sustainable woodland and the use of locally appropriate species.
- Seek appropriate siting of facilities for leisure and tourism through visitor management plan to predict and support appropriate levels of circulation and movement patterns.

- Resist the loss of rural character through the spread of urbanising features associated with leisure use such as car parks.
- Encourage appropriate surfacing, materials and signage for footpaths and car parks to retain the rural, unsettled character of the landscape.
- Removal of fly tipping as soon as possible.
- Encourage the use of suitable fence styles, in keeping with the local style or material, including metal park fencing where a local parkland character creates precedence.
- Avoid development of permanent exercise areas and siting of exercise equipment such as treadmills, pens, and jumps where this is visually intrusive on the landscape.

Built Development

- Conserve the sense of seclusion with sparse settlement enclosed by woodland.
- Maintain the wooded and undeveloped skyline.
- Ensure that road lighting schemes are assessed for visual impact and encourage conservation of the existing 'dark skies' on the ridge slopes and skyline.
- Promote the use of traditional materials and signage features with particular regard to local style and materials. Refer to Surrey design guides; Surrey Design (Surrey Local Government Association).