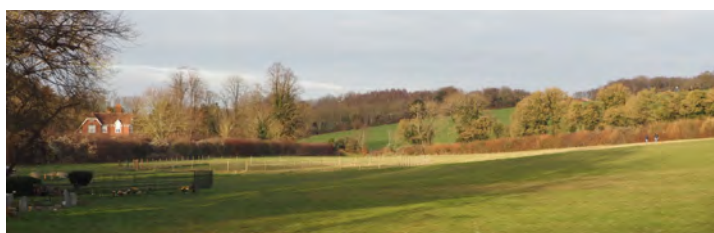


Fawkham Parish Landscape Character Assessment For Fawkham Parish Council

Final Report
April 2022



FIONA FYFE
Associates Ltd.

Contents

	Page
Part 1: Introduction	
1.0 Commissioning, purposes and structure of report	3
2.0 Introduction to landscape character assessment	3
3.0 Methodology and approach	5
Part 2: Landscape Background	
4.0 Location and context of Fawkham parish	7
5.0 The natural environment	7
6.0 The cultural environment	12
7.0 Perceptual qualities	15
8.0 Forces for change	18
9.0 Landscape character context	20
Part 3: Landscape Character Assessment	
10.0 Local Landscape Character Areas identified within Fawkham parish	25
Horton Wood Ridge LLCA	27
Upper Fawkham Valley LLCA	33
Central Fawkham Valley LLCA	39
Pennis Valley LLCA	45
Lower Fawkham Valley LLCA	50

Acronyms used in this report

LCA	Landscape Character Area
LCT	Landscape Character Type
LLCA	Local Landscape Character Area
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
TPO	Tree Protection Order

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the residents of Fawkham parish for taking part in the consultation workshop, and to the parish clerk for organising it. The author is very grateful to members of the project steering group for their input of local knowledge. Because the fieldwork was undertaken in winter, members of the local community and the steering group have kindly provided photographs from other seasons. These have been acknowledged where possible. All other photographs were taken by Fiona Fyfe in January 2022.

Part 1: Introduction

1.0 Commissioning, purposes and structure of report

This Landscape Character Assessment was commissioned by Fawkham Parish Council in December 2021. It was undertaken by Fiona Fyfe Associates between January and April 2022, and included an online consultation workshop for local residents on 9th February 2022. The neighbouring parish of Hartley commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment at the same time, so the fieldwork and consultation for the assessments were undertaken jointly.

The Landscape Character Assessments are intended to inform the Fawkham and Hartley Neighbourhood Plans, which are currently in preparation. The existing Landscape Character Assessments (at National, County and District level) were not considered to provide sufficient level of detail, so this Assessment was commissioned to provide a finer-grain study which picks up the variations in landscape character within the parishes. This Landscape Character Assessment includes those character areas which lie exclusively within Fawkham Parish and those which straddle the boundary with Hartley Parish.

The document is structured in three parts. Part 1 (Introduction) introduces the concept of landscape character assessment and the methodology employed. Part 2 (Landscape Background) provides background information on Fawkham parish and its landscape, including a summary of existing Landscape Character Assessments covering the parish. Part 3 (Landscape Character Assessment) describes the five Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs) identified within Fawkham parish. Following the map showing the LLCAs, a series of profiles describe each of the LLCAs and make recommendations for the future protection and enhancement of their special qualities.

2.0 Introduction to landscape character assessment

Defining 'landscape'

The European Landscape Convention (ratified by the UK in 2007 and not affected by Brexit) defines 'landscape' as:

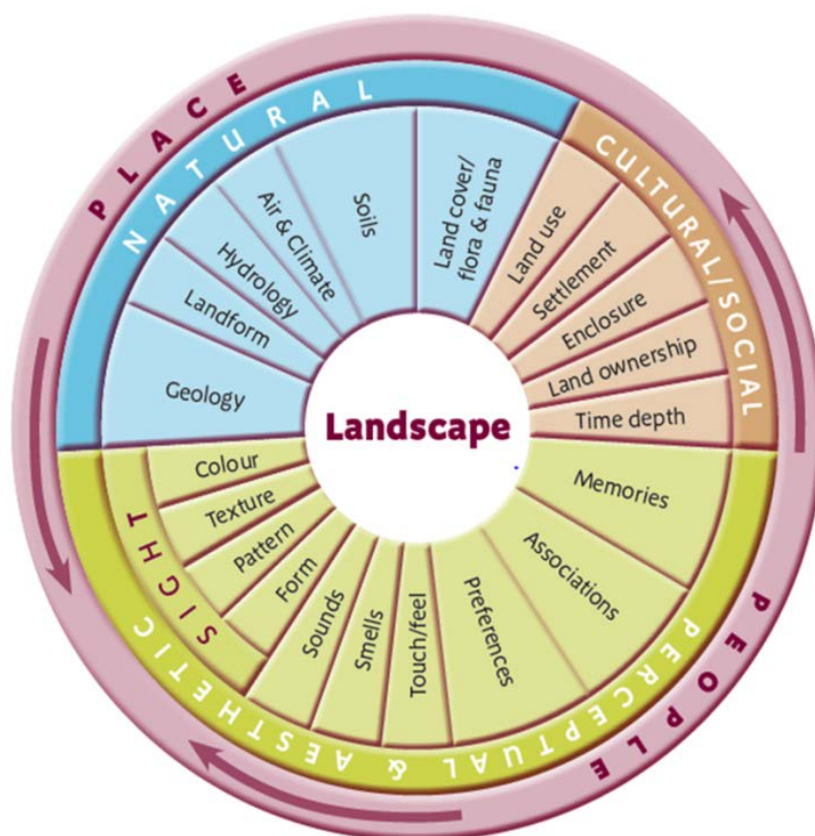
An area of land, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.¹

An holistic approach to landscape is a key principle of the thinking behind the European Landscape Convention, which acknowledges in its preamble:

¹ European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe 2000 p.9

- That landscape has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields, and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activity...
- That landscape contributes to the formation of local cultures...
- That the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality.
- That developments... planning... and infrastructure... are in many cases accelerating the transformation of landscapes.
- That the landscape is a key element of individual and social wellbeing and that its protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone...

The following diagram² explains the different elements of landscape which capture its natural, cultural and perceptual qualities. All are considered when undertaking landscape character assessment.



Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape character assessment has been a recognised tool within the UK planning system for many years, used to inform the management of change and to deliver sustainable development. It provides a framework for people to think about what gives their area its unique sense of place.

² From *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* (Natural England, 2014 p.9)

*Landscape character assessment is a tool to help understand what the landscape is like today, how it has come to be like that, and how it may change in the future. Its role is to help ensure that change and development does not undermine whatever is characteristic or valued about any particular landscape.*³

*Landscape character assessment is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive.*⁴

Landscape Character Assessments can be undertaken at a range of scales from national to local, depending on the purpose for which they are required. More information on the existing national, county and district-wide Landscape Character Assessments covering Fawkham parish – and how this Assessment relates to them - is provided in section 9.0.

3.0 Methodology and approach

The Fawkham Landscape Character Assessment was carried out by a Chartered Landscape Architect with extensive experience in landscape character assessment, and local knowledge of the chalk landscapes of the Kent Downs.

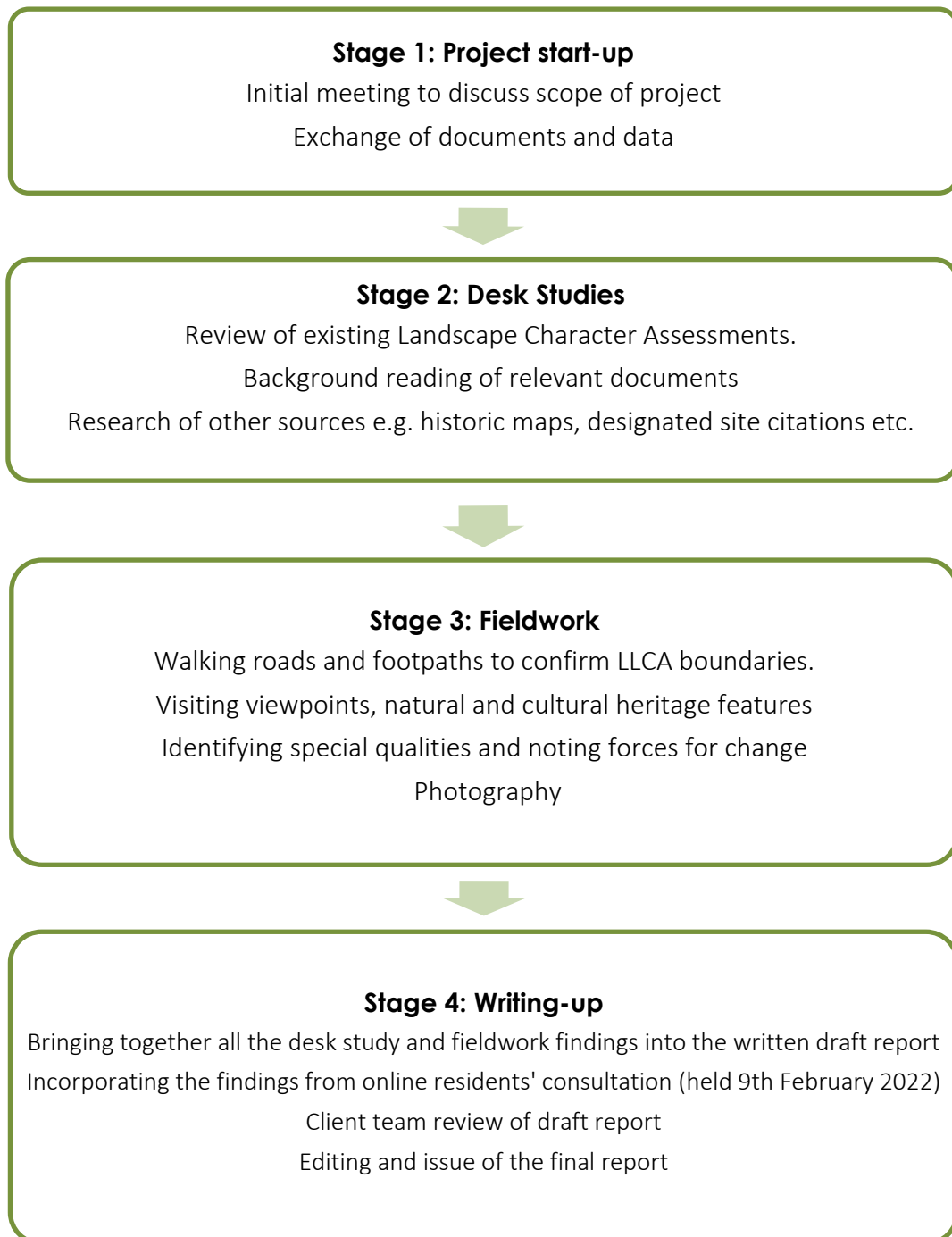
The project methodology is in line with the approach set out in the current Best Practice Guidelines for Landscape Character Assessment⁵ and Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment⁶. It can be divided into four stages, as shown:

³ From *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland* Natural England 2002 p.3

⁴ *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* Natural England, 2014 (glossary)

⁵ *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* Natural England, 2014

⁶ *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition* Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013



Part 2: Landscape Background

4.0 Location and Context

Fawkham is a linear parish, covering approximately 3 miles from north to south, and 1 mile wide (see Map 1). It is located in the north-east of Sevenoaks District, between Hartley (to the east) and Horton Kirby and South Darenth (to the west). To the south-east is Ash-cum-Ridley parish, which includes the late-20th Century settlement of New Ash Green, and to the south (south of the M20) is the parish of West Kingsdown. Fawkham's northern parish boundary follows the London Victoria-Chatham railway line, with the settlement of Longfield (Dartford District) to the north.

Fawkham parish contains three small clusters of settlement (at Fawkham Green, around the school / village hall, and at Baldwin's Green) as well as dispersed properties. Despite its proximity to London, Fawkham parish is strongly-rural in character and the Green Belt designation washes over the parish.

5.0 The natural environment

5.1 Geology and Topography

Fawkham parish is located on the northern edge of the Kent Downs, on the Lewes nodular chalk formation. The bedrock chalk geology is consistent across the parish, but there are variations in the superficial geology. The highest land is covered with clay-with-flints deposits (formed by surface weathering of chalk) giving heavy but fertile soils. Alluvial surface deposits (also relatively fertile) are found in the valley bottom.



Fig. 1: Fallen tree in Churchdown Wood showing shallow soils and underlying chalk geology

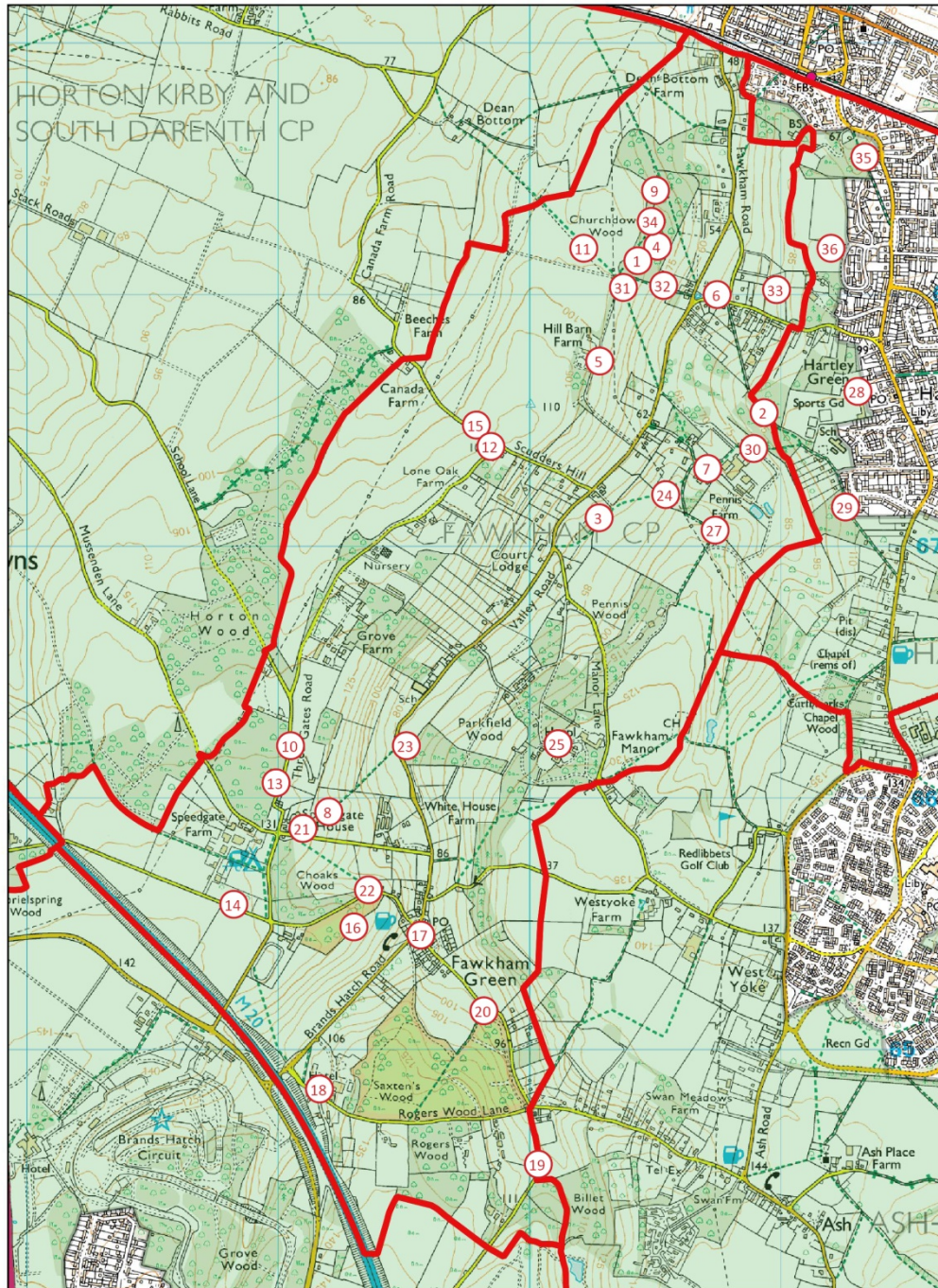


Fig. 2: Flint nodule, Pennis valley footpath

Fawkham Landscape Character Assessment

Map 1: Fawkham Parish Boundary and Photograph Locations

March 2022



Key

Parish Boundaries

1 Approximate photo location

Metropolitan Green Belt within Sevenoaks District



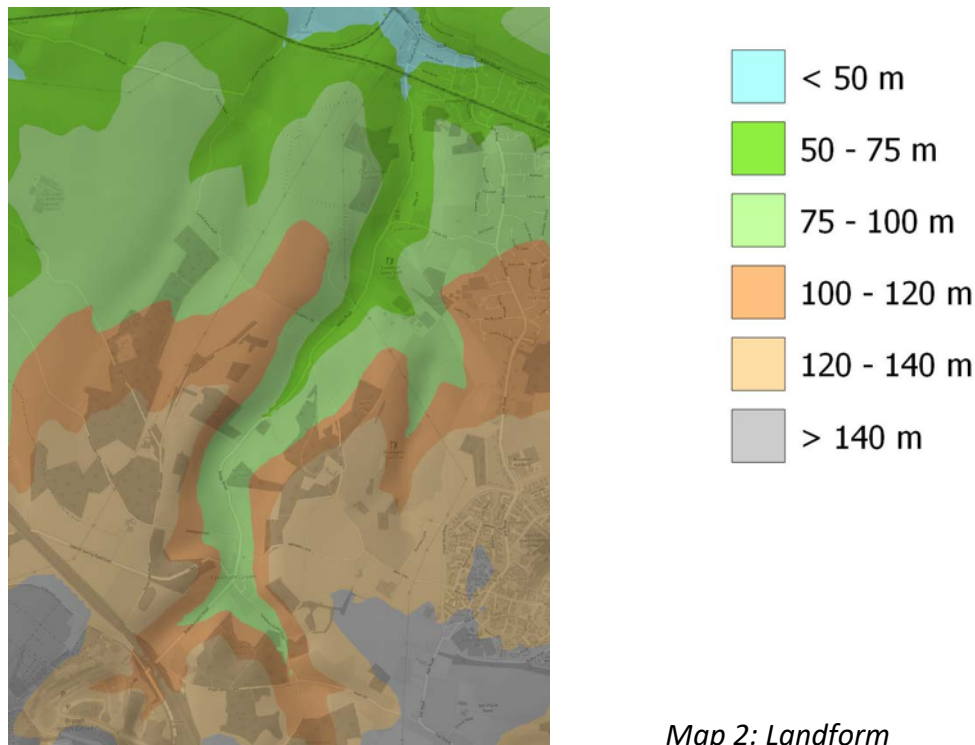
0 250 500 m



Mapping © Ordnance Survey. Crown copyright 2022. Licence no. 100065644

Map 1: Map of Fawkham parish, showing photo locations used in this document

Map 2 (landform) shows the steep dry Fawkham Valley running north-south. At the southern end are twin valley heads, and a further dry valley (the Pennis Valley) feeds in on the eastern side. To the west of the Fawkham Valley is a ridge of high land which separates the Fawkham Valley from the Darent Valley. To the east is a wider plateau on which the settlements of Hartley and New Ash Green are situated.



Map 2: Landform

5.2 Vegetation and habitats

Natural environment designations within Fawkham parish are shown on Map 3 below. The parish contains significant blocks of Ancient Woodland, including Churchdown Wood (in the north of the parish), Parkfield Wood and Pennis Wood (in the east of the parish), Saxten's Wood, Cage's Wood and Rogers Wood (in the south of the parish), and Choaks Wood, Wilmay Copse and part of Horton Wood (in the west of the parish). There are also several smaller blocks of Ancient Woodland, including narrow strips known as 'shaws'.

Historic maps show that Parkfield Wood and Pennis Wood were more extensive than today. It is possible that some of the hedges and avenues visible today were created by modifying earlier woodland vegetation.

There are further areas identified as deciduous woodland (but not Ancient Woodland) on the Priority Habitat Inventory, which are also shown on Map 3. In addition to the woodland blocks and shaws, there are also many individual trees in fields, hedges and gardens, and associated with the golf courses, which add to the well-treed feel of the parish. There are small areas of traditional orchard Priority Habitat adjacent to the railway line in the far north of the parish, along Three Gates Road, and near Speedgate Farm. There is some wildflower-rich chalk grassland in the vicinity of Churchdown Wood, and a flower-rich chalk bank and field edge near Dean Bottom is partially within Fawkham Parish.

There are several Local Wildlife Sites within the parish, including part of Horton Wood (SE01), Churchdown Wood (SE02), Choaks Wood, Wilmay Copse, Saxten's Wood, Cage's Wood and Rogers Wood (SE 58) and the flower-rich bank near Dean Bottom (SE61). There are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest or other nature conservation designations within the parish.

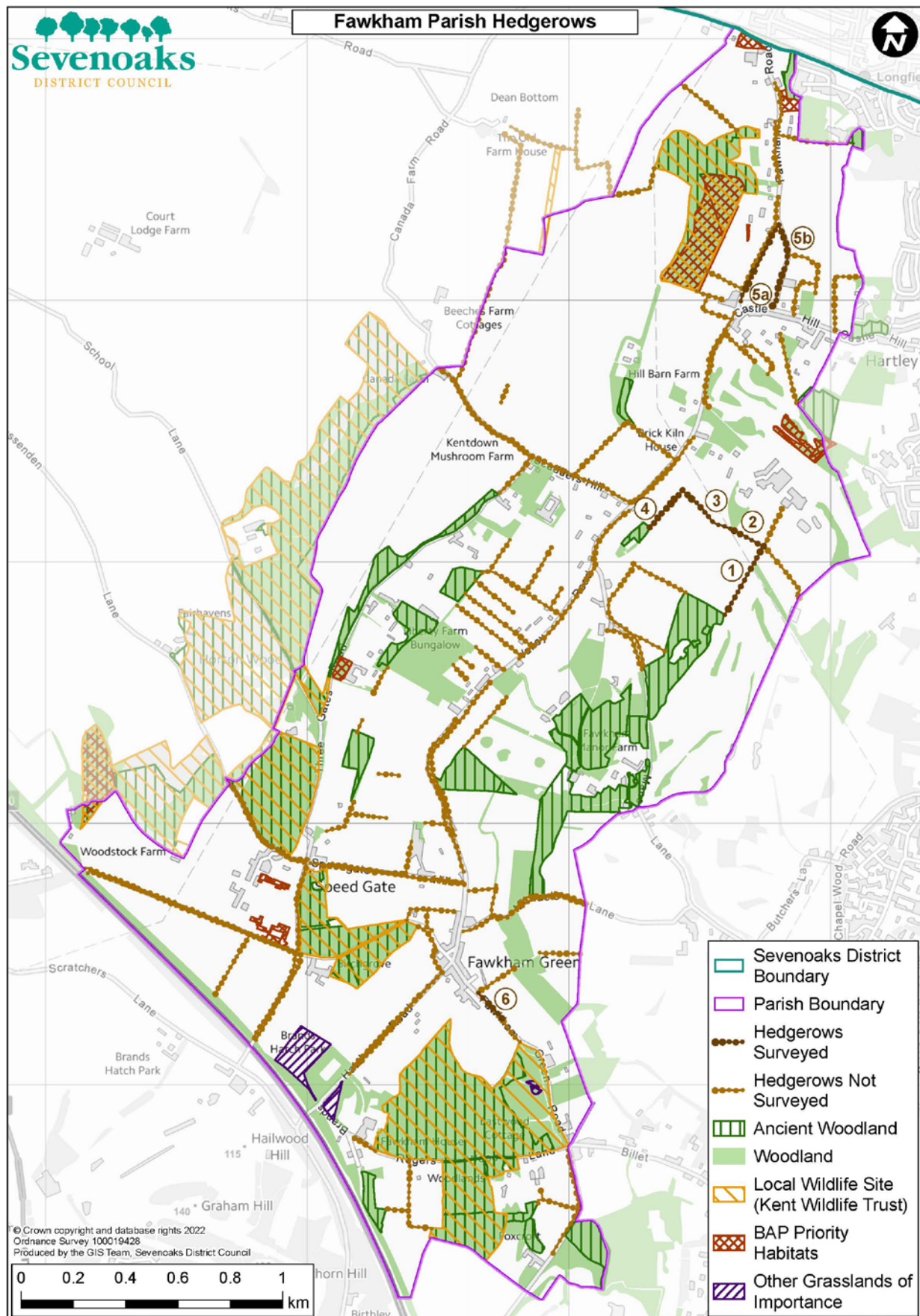
Within Fawkham parish there are other habitats such as hedges, grassland and verges which are not currently designated, although some have been identified by Kent Country Council within the Kent Habitat Survey 2012 as "other grasslands of importance", meaning they are capable of being restored to BAP habitats with appropriate management. They are nevertheless of importance to biodiversity and contribute to the network of habitats found throughout the parish. These provide habitat and food for a wide range of plants, insect, animal and bird species. Hedges and other habitats also add to the amenity and aesthetic value of the area, and contribute to its rural character.



Fig. 3: Bluebells in Ancient Woodland near Scudders
Photo Credit: Fawkham Parish Council



Fig. 4: Early Spotted Orchid, Churchdown Wood
Photo credit – Fawkham Parish Council

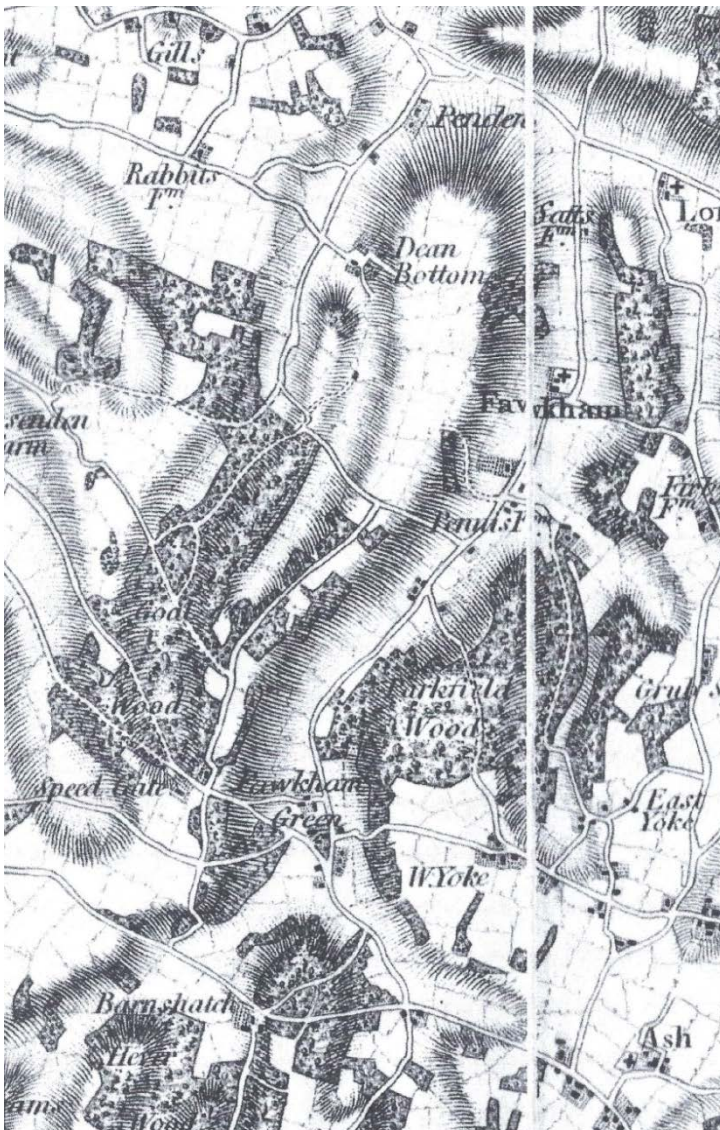


Map 3: Fawkham Environmental Assets (Map provided by Fawkham Parish Council for the purposes of Neighbourhood Plan production) Hedgerows identified from aerial photographs and local survey

6.0 Cultural Heritage

6.1 Historic features

Fawkham is a rural parish which has changed relatively little since the Mudge Map of Kent was published in 1801 (extract shown in Map 4 below). The pattern of roads, paths, farms and woodland is largely recognisable today. Two of today's three clusters of settlement within the parish can be seen on the Mudge Map: around the Church (Baldwin's Green – now designated a Conservation Area) and at Fawkham Green. The third cluster (around the school and village hall) is not shown on the Mudge Map, but other houses and farms along Valley Road and in the Pennis Valley are recognisable. These generally correlate with those designated as Listed Buildings and/or identified as historic farmsteads in the Kent Historic Environment Record (HER)(see Map 5). There are no Scheduled Monuments within the parish, but the Kent HER identifies archaeological evidence for earlier occupation, including cropmarks of prehistoric enclosures on the ridge on the western side of the parish; Romano-British burials in the south; a possible deserted medieval village near Fawkham Green, and the site of a medieval manor house next to the church.



Map 4: Extract from the 1801 Mudge Map of Kent (thanks to Gerald Cramp for use of this image)

19th Century changes within the parish included the construction of straight roads (at Speedgate Hill and between Brands Hatch and Fawkham Green), the construction of the school in 1873, and the building of Fawkham Manor in Parkfield Wood in the 1860s. This also involved the creation of parkland, ornamental planting, and fields within formerly-wooded areas which formed the grounds of the Manor. In the 1860s the Hohler family purchased the Fawkham Manor estate and, soon after, it is understood they purchased the other part of the medieval manor, thereby owning most of the land in the parish.

In the early 20th Century a new road was constructed past the church which removed the need for traffic to negotiate the steep and narrow lane now known as Steep Hill. Land to the south of Castle Hill was divided into linear plots and sold off in the interwar period. The resulting properties comprised small houses and bungalows set within large gardens, which did not significantly alter the rural character of the road or landscape. A similar process took place between Valley Road and Three Gates Road (from Scudders Hill south to the school) when some parts of the Fawkham Manor Estate were sold. This resulted in widely-dispersed properties and some horticultural land use within the Fawkham Valley.

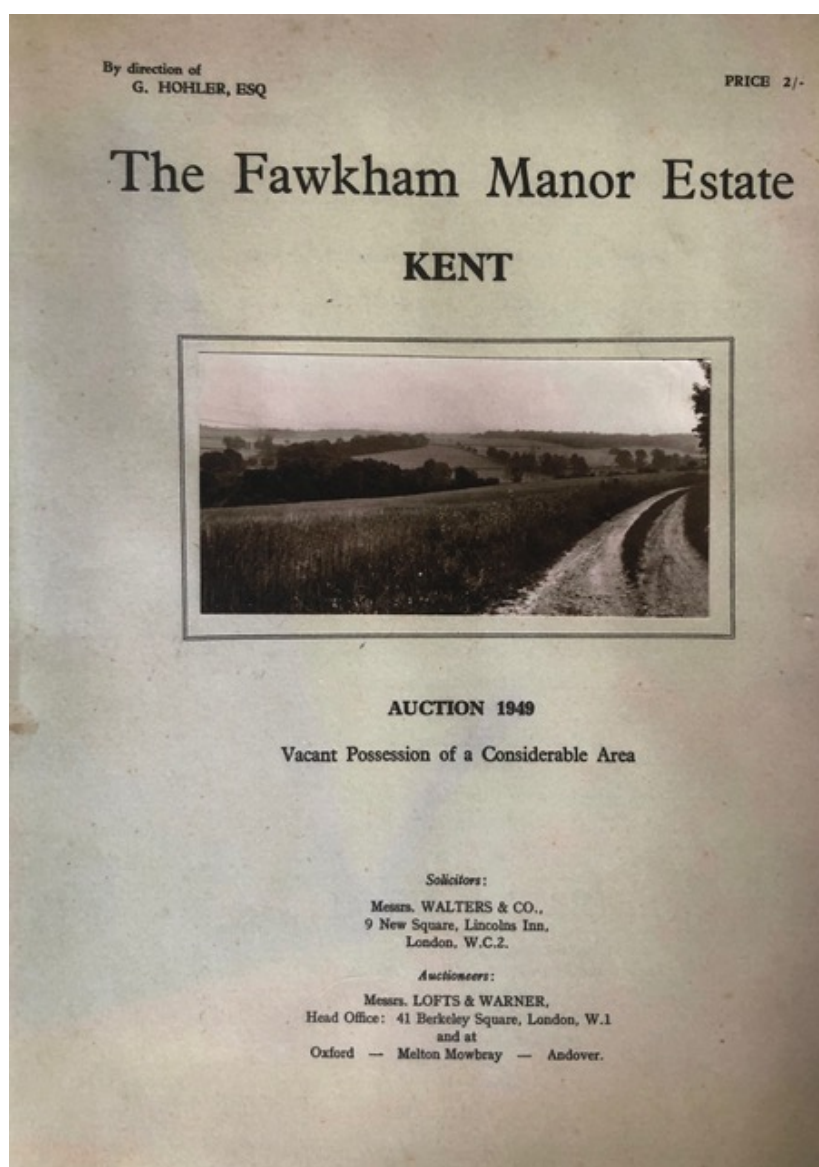
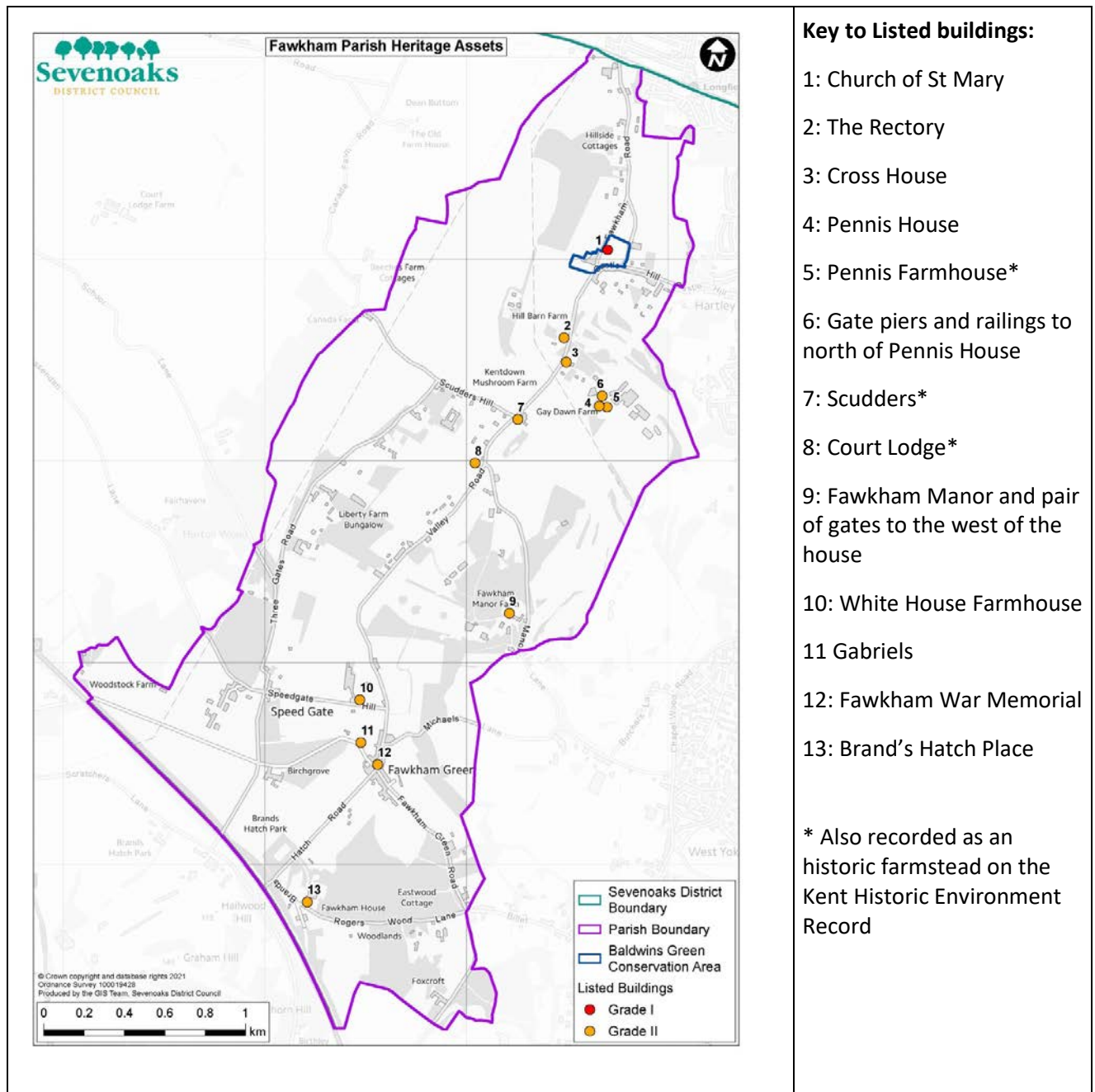


Fig. 5: Brochure from sale of Fawkham Manor Estate in 1949 (thanks to Gerald Cramp for use of this image)

The remainder of the Fawkham Manor Estate was sold in 1949 (see fig. 5 above). Much of the land remains in the ownership of the 1949 purchasers, but properties such as Pennis House, Pennis Farm, Scudders, Dene Cottage, Manor Cottage, and the Fawkham Manor House itself were subsequently sold off as individual properties.

In the Mid-20th Century some new housing was constructed in Fawkham Green, and recreational land use increased with creation of golf courses and Corinthian Sports Club in the Pennis Valley. The M20 was constructed on the southern periphery of the parish, opening in 1977.



Map 5: Fawkham Parish Heritage Assets (Map provided by Fawkham Parish Council for the purposes of Neighbourhood Plan production)



Fig.6: St Mary's Church, Fawkham (Listed Grade I)



*Fig. 7: Pennis House (Listed Grade II)
Photo credit: Fawkham Parish Council*

7.0 Access, perceptual qualities and views

7.1 Access and open space

A network of footpaths extends across Fawkham parish. Many of these Public Rights of Way (ProW) have been in existence for centuries, such as the hollow way which leads up behind Pennis House and can be seen on the 1801 Mudge Map (SD223). Most of the PROW are paths across/ around fields or through woodland, but occasionally they have become narrow passageway between garden fences (e.g. path SD221 leading south-east from the western end of Castle Hill). An informal footpath extends from SD212 along the field-edge beside Valley Road, providing a safer route for pedestrians than walking in the carriageway.

Saxten's Wood, Cage's Wood and Wilmay Copse are owned and managed by the Woodland Trust, and are access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. There are also public rights of way and informal paths through Churchdown Wood. Church Meadow is open to the public, although partially in private ownership.

7.2 Perceptual qualities

Fawkham parish has a strongly rural character, despite its proximity to London, and to the nearby denser settlements of Hartley, Longfield and New Ash Green. The landform combines with extensive woodland and trees to create gentle and verdant landscape with a strong sense of place. Despite the proximity of the M20, Brands Hatch and dense settlements, Fawkham retains a sense of tranquillity and a sense of visual and physical isolation from surrounding developments. The varied deciduous vegetation creates a seasonally-changing backdrop with a rich variety of colours and textures. Spring bluebells and autumn leaves are particularly appreciated by residents of the parish and can be enjoyed from PROWs and woodland with open access.



Fig. 8: Autumn view from footpath, Speedgate Hill, looking north-east. Photo credit: Fawkham Parish Council



*Fig.9: Path through Churchdown Wood in spring
Photo credit – Fawkham Parish Council*

7.3 Views

The combination of landform, vegetation and historic buildings means that Fawkham parish contains some outstanding views. These include several views across and along the Fawkham Valley which are strongly rural in character, as well as views from high land with visibility beyond the parish (occasionally as far as Central London, Canary Wharf and across the Thames to Essex).

8.0 Present and future forces for change affecting Fawkham's landscape

8.1 Types of changes

There are many different forces for change acting on the landscape of Fawkham parish. Some are natural processes whilst others are man-made. Some are single, large-scale changes whilst others are smaller incremental changes which can have a strong cumulative impact on the landscape. Some changes may be sudden, whilst others may occur gradually. Many of the changes will be exacerbated by climate change. As well as visual impacts, these changes may impact on the local economy, and on the health, safety and wellbeing of local people.

Climate change

- Increased high intensity rainfall events leading to more frequent flooding along the valley floor and soil loss from the valley sides.
- Increased likelihood of summer drought affecting which tree species can thrive, and increasing stress on trees.
- Stronger and more frequent storms making trees vulnerable to wind damage.
- Increased risk of pests and diseases (e.g. tree disease spreading from warmer climates).
- Changes in choices of crops (e.g. vines) affecting the appearance of the landscape.

Changes in land use, and in agricultural and woodland management practices

- Intensive farming methods leading to loss of habitats, biodiversity and bioabundance.
- Lack of management of hedges, including replacement of some sections with barbed wire.
- Increase in use of land for horses or recreation, affecting the appearance of the landscape and the vegetation present.
- Erosion of footpaths, especially in the winter months.
- Pollution from fertilizer and agricultural runoff.
- Soil loss through water and wind erosion (this problem is exacerbated by the removal of some field boundary hedges in the second half the 20th Century).
- Lack of traditional woodland management (e.g. coppicing).
- Tree disease (e.g. ash dieback).
- New grant schemes offer opportunities for more environmentally-friendly farming methods.

Development and infrastructure

- Large-scale development.
- Small-scale development and property extensions, potentially out of character and lacking local distinctiveness, and increasing the visibility of buildings within the landscape.
- Conversion/ replacement of agricultural/ industrial buildings with residential development.
- Loss of open space and large gardens to development.
- Gradual suburbanisation through road schemes, insensitive property boundary treatments and lighting.

- Renewable energy projects.
- Agricultural development (e.g. new barns).
- Telecommunications masts.

Loss of rural character

- Increased traffic resulting in highways changes, increased signage, and damage to verges, banks and hedges.
- Presence of motorway impacting on tranquillity, with sudden increases in traffic on rural lanes as satnavs redirect people.
- Fly tipping and littering.
- Changing character of footpaths from rural to urban where they run between high close-boarded fences which restrict views and make the paths very narrow.



Fig. 10: Ash dieback in Horton Wood

9.0 Landscape Character Context

9.1 Landscape Character Types and Areas

Landscape Character Assessments identify and map the units which make up the landscape. These are known as Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). Landscape Character Assessments can identify LCTs, LCAs or both. Most of the Kent-based Landscape Character Assessments focus on LCAs. LCAs can be further divided into Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs) as identified in this Assessment for Fawkham parish.

Landscape Character Types LCTs are generic types of landscape which can occur in different places. They have similar characteristics wherever they occur, and are called by a descriptive name (e.g. 'chalk downs').

Landscape Character Areas LCAs are geographically-unique areas, each with a distinctive 'sense of place' reflecting local distinctiveness. They are called by a place-based name (e.g. 'Horton Kirby Downs').

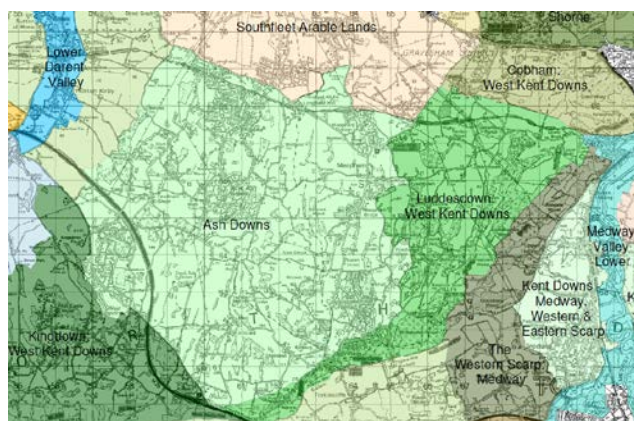
9.2 Scales of assessment

Landscape Character Assessments can be undertaken at a range of scales and levels of detail (from national to local) depending on the purpose for which they are required. As the area covered gets smaller, then the level of detail of the Assessment increases. This is shown in the table below, which sets out the Landscape Character Assessment context for Fawkham parish.

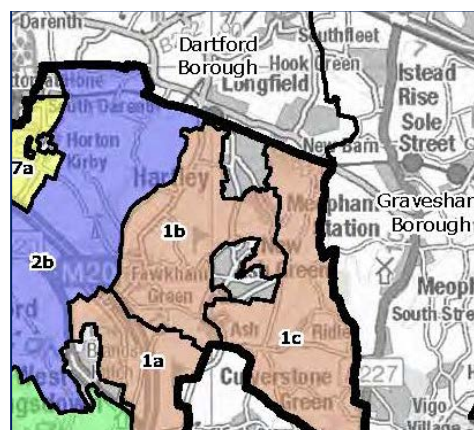
Scale of Assessment	Title of Assessment	How Fawkham fits
National	The Character of England (Countryside Agency/Natural England 2005 onwards)	Fawkham parish is within National Character Area 119 <i>North Kent Downs</i> which extends from Dover in the east to Guildford in the west.
County	Landscape Assessment of Kent (Jacobs Babbie, 2004)	Fawkham parish is within the Ash Downs LCA, which covers Hartley, Fawkham, New Ash Green, Brands Hatch, Stansted, Culverstone Green and Meopham (See map extract below).
District	Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment (LUC, 2017)	The western part of Fawkham parish is within the <i>Downs</i> LCT (<i>Horton Kirby Downs</i> LCA). The remainder of the parish is within the <i>Settled Downs</i> LCT (<i>Fawkham and Hartley Settled Downs</i> LCA and a tiny bit of <i>West Kingsdown Settled Downs</i> LCA) (see map extract below)

Local	Fawkham Parish Landscape Character Assessment (Fiona Fyfe Associates 2022) – This document	Five Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs) are identified within Fawkham Parish
-------	--	---

9.3 Existing Landscape Character Assessments covering Fawkham Parish



*Extract from Landscape Assessment of Kent showing Fawkham Parish and surroundings
Jacobs Babbie 2004*



*Extract from Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment showing Fawkham Parish and surroundings
LUC 2017, fig. 5.1)*

1a = West Kingsdown Settled Downs;
1b= Fawkham and Hartley Settled Downs;
1c = Ash-cum-Ridley Settled Downs;
2b=Horton Kirby Downs

The table and maps above shows how Fawkham parish ‘nests’ within existing Landscape Character Assessments. These Assessments identify landscape characteristics at appropriate scales, which are as follows.

National Character Area 119: North Downs

Key characteristics

- Cretaceous Chalk forms the backbone of the North Downs. A distinctive chalk downland ridge rises up from the surrounding land, with a steep scarp slope to the south providing extensive views across Kent, Surrey and Sussex and across the Channel seascape to France.
- The broad dip slope gradually drops towards the Thames and the English Channel, affording extensive views across London and the Thames Estuary. The carved topography provides a series of dry valleys, ridges and plateaux.
- Chalk soils are predominant across the NCA but the upper part of the dip slope is capped by extensive clay-with-flint deposits. Patches of clay and sandy soils also occur with coombe deposits common in dry valleys.

- The North Downs end at the dramatic White Cliffs of Dover, one of the country's most distinctive and famous landmarks. Most of the coast between Kingsdown and Folkestone is unprotected, allowing for natural processes. The cliffs are home to internationally important maritime cliff-top and cliff-ledge vegetation.
- The area is cut by the deep valleys of the Stour, Medway, Darent, Wey and Mole. The river valleys cut through the chalk ridge, providing distinctive local landscapes which contrast with the steep scarp slope. The fertile and lighter soils of the footslopes and valley bottoms support arable farming.
- The south-facing scarp is incised by a number of short, bowl-shaped dry valleys, cut by periglacial streams and often referred to as combes. The undulating topography of the dip slope has also been etched by streams and rivers, today forming dry valleys, some of which carry winterbournes that occasionally flow in the dip slope, depending on the level of the chalk aquifer.
- The footslope of the escarpment supports arable cropping, the dominant land use within the NCA. In the east, the richer, loamy soils of the lower dip slope support large tracts of mixed arable and horticultural production.
- Woodland is found primarily on the steeper slopes of the scarp, valley sides and areas of the dip slope capped with clay-with-flints. Well-wooded hedgerows and shaws are an important component of the field boundaries, contributing to a strongly wooded character. Much of the woodland is ancient.
- Tracts of species-rich chalk grassland and patches of chalk heath are important downland habitats and of international importance.
- Ancient paths, drove roads and trackways, often sunken, cross the landscape and are a distinctive feature of the dip slope. Defensive structures such as castles, hill forts and Second World War installations, and historic parks, buildings and monuments are found throughout.
- Small, nucleated villages and scattered farmsteads including oasts and barns form the settlement pattern, with local flint, chalk and Wealden brick the vernacular materials.
- In the western part of the area, around and to the west of Sevenoaks and into Surrey, there is increased urban development.

NOTE – the full description can be found at
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/7513013>

Ash Downs County LCA

Characteristic Features

- A pleasant mix of deep, dry pastoral valleys enclosed by wooded ridges and species-rich

hedgerows, with broad plateau-tops beyond.

- Small valley-bottom villages, and large 20th Century settlements on plateau.
- A winding network of narrow, historic lanes often eroded by traffic.

NOTE – the full description can be found on pages 19-20 at

https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/12461/Landscape-Assessment-of-Kent-October-2004_Part1.pdf

Sevenoaks District LCAs

Settled Downs LCT Key Characteristics

- Undulating chalk downland with plateaux, valleys and some dramatic steep slopes.
- Mixture of large scale open prairie fields and smaller scale enclosures, most derived from parliamentary enclosure.
- Mixture of arable and pasture farmland with woodland on hilltops.
- Thick hedgerows and coppice woodlands including beech and oak standards.
- Historic settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and hamlets, with modern houses scattered along roadsides.
- Urban influences from adjacent residential development of Hartley and New Ash Green.
- Characteristic narrow rural lanes follow contours and valley floors, linking existing settlements.
- Large areas of recreational open space including golf course and a racing circuit.
- Views mostly well-contained by woodland and topography with occasional views out from higher ground.

LCA 1b: Fawkham and Hartley Settled Downs Key Characteristics

- Small scale and enclosed landscape with dramatic chalk valleys with steep slopes rising to chalk plateaux.
- Varied land cover includes ancient coppice woodland, open field systems, enclosed pastures, golf courses, parkland and estate woodland.
- Fields are enclosed by mature hedgerows with mature oak and beech and dead and regenerative elm.
- Narrow rural lanes follow contours. On the plateau are wide sweeping roads with infill development.

- Older farmsteads on higher ground with newer residential buildings in sheltered areas.
- Well-contained views limited by tall hedges and areas of tree cover.
- High levels of tranquillity.

Downs LCT Key Characteristics:

- Rolling chalk downland overlain by a medium scale pattern of regular parliamentary fields as well as some older fields, and occasional assarts.
- A mixture of arable and pastoral farmland (with a high incidence of arable cultivation on the plateau) bounded by fragmented hedgerows and shaws.
- Blocks of woodland are found on the ridges, including species mixes characteristic of Ancient Woodland, including yew and beech.
- Sparse settlement pattern comprising scattered farms and limited linear development in sheltered locations.
- Many historic features including Roman remains and a medieval deer-park.
- Recreational usage including golf courses and parklands.
- Narrow rural lanes with passing places, lined by hedgerows often with standard oaks.
- Dense woodland and steep topography tend to restrict views, but there are long views from open areas.

LCA 2b: Horton Kirby Downs Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating chalk landscape with deep dry valleys, broad plateau tops and a steep slope adjacent to the Darent Valley.
- Medium-large scale parliamentary field pattern used for arable crops and pasture, enclosed by mature hedgerows or post and wire.
- Small paddocks are associated with farmsteads and chalk grassland survives on some steeper slopes.
- Mixed woodland on valley ridgelines and on valley slopes, including areas of coppice.
- Scattered, isolated farmsteads often with traditional flint and weatherboard buildings.
- Small isolated hamlets with some vernacular flint and weatherboard houses.
- Narrow winding lanes, contained by banks, juxtapose with the busy roads of A20/M20.

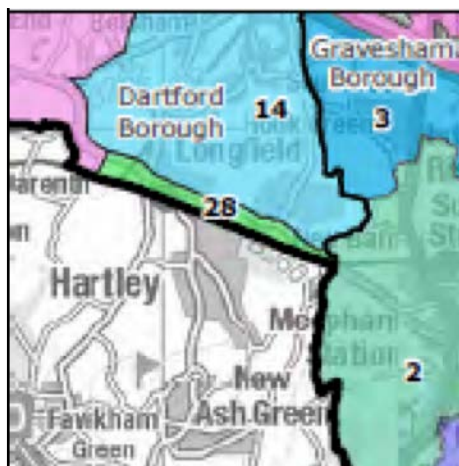
- Mostly rural and tranquil, although there is urban development adjacent to South Darenth and at Horton Kirby.
- Strong feeling of enclosure in the woodlands contrasts with long views along the Darent Valley from the valley sides and across the Eynsford Downs.
- Views towards London from high ground.

NOTE – the full description can be found on pages 19-37 at

[https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1517/env004_sevenoaks_landscape_character_assessment - main report january 2017.pdf](https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1517/env004_sevenoaks_landscape_character_assessment_-_main_report_january_2017.pdf)

9.4 Surrounding Assessments

Fawkham parish is at the boundary of Sevenoaks District, and is bounded to the north by Dartford Borough. Dartford Borough does not have its own Borough-wide Landscape Character Assessment and so relies on the County-wide Landscape Assessment of Kent. The part of Dartford Borough bordering Fawkham parish is therefore within the wider Ash Downs Landscape Character Area described above. This is shown as no. 28 on the map below.



Extract from Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment (LUC, 2017 fig. 1.3) showing Landscape Character Areas surrounding Sevenoaks District

Part 3: Landscape Character Assessment

10.0 Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs) identified within Fawkham parish

Five LLCAs have been identified within Fawkham parish. One is within Sevenoaks LLCA 2b: *Eynsford and Horton Kirby Downs* and four are within Sevenoaks LCA 1b: *Fawkham and Hartley Settled Downs*. One field at the southern edge of the parish is within Sevenoaks LCA 1a *West Kingsdown Settled Downs*, but there is no discernible change in character on the ground at this point.

The LLCAs are shown on Map 6 below, and are as follows:

- Horton Wood Ridge LLCA
- Upper Fawkham Valley LLCA
- Central Fawkham Valley LLCA
- Pennis Valley LLCA (extends into Hartley parish)
- Lower Fawkham Valley LLCA (extends into Hartley parish)

The following pages contain illustrated profiles for each of the LLCAs, describing their key characteristics, landscape value, landscape sensitivity and guidance for future management.

A note on boundaries

In general, the boundaries of LCAs from the Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment have been respected and followed in the creation of the LLCAs, in order to aid the ‘nesting’ of the Assessments. However, during preparation of the Fawkham Parish Landscape Character Assessment an anomaly was identified in the Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment, at the northern end of the boundary between LCA 1b *Fawkham and Hartley Settled Downs* and LCA 2b *Horton Kirby Downs*. Here, the *Horton Kirby Downs* LCA extends down into the floor of the Fawkham Valley, into an area much more closely related physically, visually and culturally to the *Fawkham and Hartley Settled Downs* LCA.

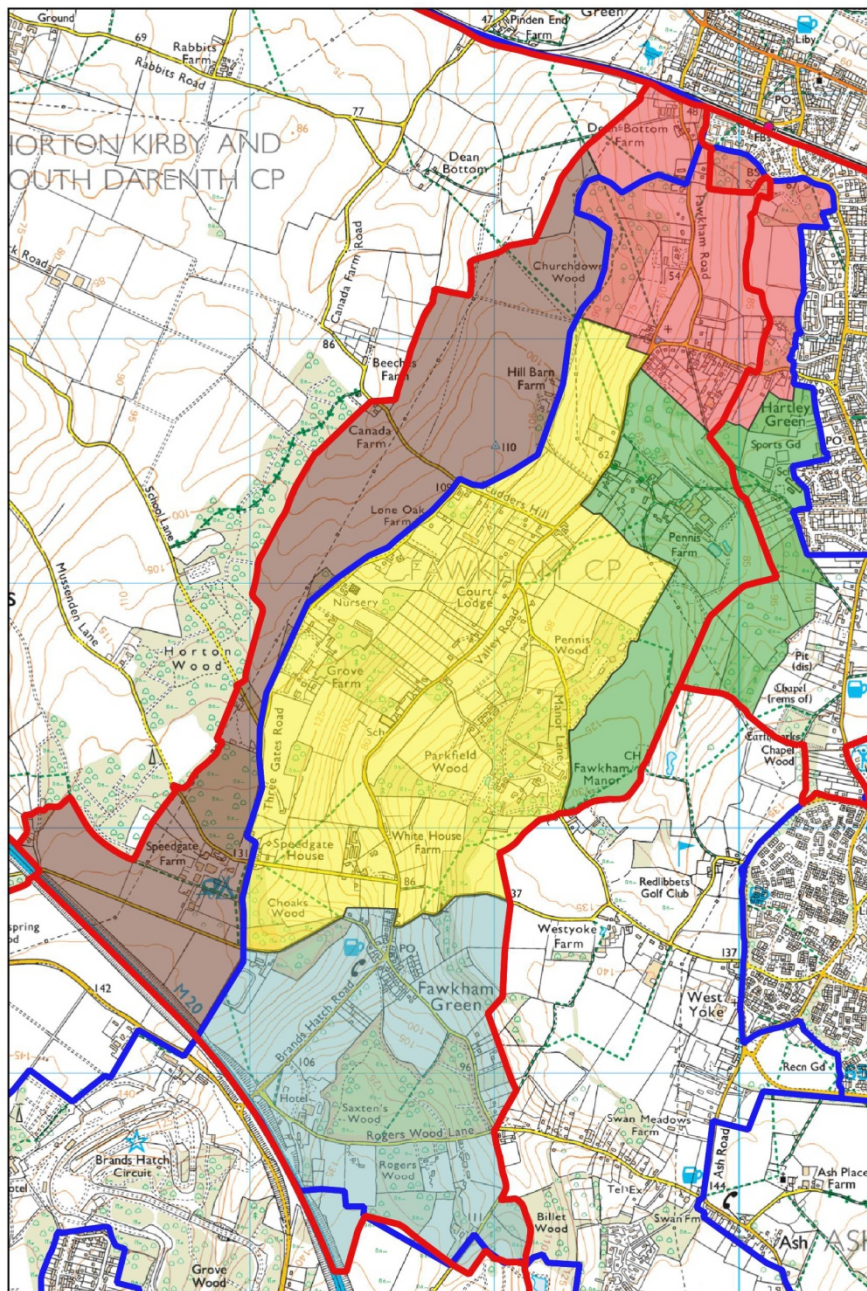
This anomaly has been addressed in the Fawkham Parish Landscape Character Assessment, which includes the side and floor of the Fawkham Valley within the Lower Fawkham Valley LLCA, rather than the Horton Wood Ridge LLCA.

Although LLCA boundaries are shown as a clear line on maps, in reality the boundaries are often transitional, with a gradual change between LLCAs. Therefore potential developments or land use changes near LLCA boundaries should be mindful of the special qualities of all LLCAs potentially affected and follow guidance for all the relevant LLCAs.

Fawkham Landscape Character Assessment

Map 6: Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs) within Fawkham Parish

March 2022



Key

- Parish Boundaries
- Sevenoaks Landscape Character Areas
- Horton Wood Ridge LLCA
- Upper Fawkham Valley LLCA
- Central Fawkham Valley LLCA
- Pennis Valley LLCA
- Lower Fawkham Valley LLCA



0 250 500 m



Mapping © Ordnance Survey. Crown copyright 2022. Licence no. 100065644

Map 6: Fawkham Local Landscape Character Areas

Horton Wood Ridge

Local Landscape Character Area (LLCA)

National Character Area: 119 North Downs

County Landscape Character Area: Ash Downs

Sevenoaks Landscape Character Area: 2b Eynsford and Horton Kirby Downs



Fig. 11: The Horton Wood Ridge, looking north from the footpath across the ridge to Dean Bottom. Churchdown Wood can be seen on the right of the picture. There are long views across the large open field to the ridge beyond, adding to the sense of elevation and expansiveness.

Summary Description

This LLCA is located in the far west of Fawkham parish, and spans almost its full north-south extent, from Churchdown Wood in the north to the M20 in the south. It comprises the ridge of high land which forms the watershed between the Fawkham Valley to the east and the Darent Valley to the west. It therefore forms the skyline for both valleys.

This is a relatively large scale landscape, comprising generally large fields and woodland blocks. The majority of Horton Wood is outside the parish boundary, but still contributes to the character of the LLCA, which has an open, elevated and exposed feel, and few buildings.

The landform of the LLCA means that there are big views to the west and north, with central London, Canary Wharf and Essex visible on a clear day. The wide horizons and distant views contrast with the more enclosed feel of the Fawkham Valley elsewhere in the parish.

Key Characteristics

- Underlying **geology** comprises bedrock of the Lewes nodular chalk formation, and a small patch of sand (Thanet formation) on Scudders Hill. In the south, the bedrock is overlaid by clay-with-flints (weathered Head). In the north the superficial Head deposits comprise clay, silt, sand and gravel, and are not weathered.
- **Topography** comprises a ridge which rises gradually towards the south. The highest point is at c. 130m above sea level. The ridge separates the Darent and Fawkham Valleys. There is very little surface water.
- Large blocks of **woodland** (mostly Ancient Woodland) add to the character of this LLCA, although most of the woodland is actually outside the LLCA (either in Horton Kirby and South Darenth Parish or in the adjacent Lower Fawkham Valley LLCA. A small part of Horton Wood is within Fawkham parish, and is designated Ancient Woodland and LWS. Linear Ancient Woodland alongside Three Gates Road adds to the well-treed character and sense of enclosure.
- **Semi-natural habitats** include woodland, occasional hedgerows, verges and field margins. There are remnants of traditional orchard priority habitat at Speedgate Farm in the south. A section of field margin and bank on the parish boundary near Dean Bottom is a LWS, designated for its arable weeds of calcareous soils, including pheasant's eye – an extremely rare plant which is flourishing here. Skylarks can also be seen and heard overhead.
- **Land use** is primarily agricultural (mostly arable, with some pasture in the south), and some woodland. Around Speedgate Farm there is equestrian land use, as well as a campsite and light industrial use in former agricultural buildings.
- **Field patterns** are relatively large and regular in shape, bounded by woodland, hedgerows or grassland strips. The Historic Landscape Characterisation identifies *Irregular fields bounded by roads, tracks and paths* in the north of the LLCA, and *Medium regular fields with straight boundaries* in the centre and south. There are some *pre-19th Century coppices* and a small area of *Scattered settlement with paddocks* around Speedgate Farm in the south.
- **Settlement** is very sparse within this LLCA, and comprises scattered farms.
- **Historic features** include historic farmsteads at Speedgate Farm, Canada Farm and Hill Barn Farm. None are Listed Buildings. There is evidence of prehistoric and Romano-British settlement in the form of cropmarks and pottery, but these are not visible features in the landscape.
- **Roads and footpaths** tend to run east-west with the M20 forming the southern boundary. The network of roads and paths is less dense than elsewhere in the parish, and there is no **access land**.

- Woodland blocks create a sense of **contrast** with the open fields, and changing seasonal **colour and texture**.
- Elevation and lack of settlement creates a sense of **detachment** from the valleys below. The lack of roads and settlement mean that this LLCA has the darkest skies in the parish.
- The long **views** provide context and add to the sense of place. There are distant views west and north, with Central London visible on a clear day.
- The LLCA forms the **skyline** in views from lower ground, with pylons and trees forming prominent features where they occur on the horizon.



Fig. 12: Horton Wood from Scudders Hill



Fig. 13: Ancient coppice woodland (Horton Wood, within Fawkham Parish)



Fig. 14: Remnant Traditional Orchard, Speedgate Farm



Fig. 15: Long view west from Scudders Hill towards London

Landscape value

Valued landscape qualities which should be respected:

- General lack of built development.
- Open character with contrasting large woodland blocks (including Ancient Woodland) within and adjacent to the LLCA, and small areas of surviving traditional orchard and field margins.
- A sense of detachment from surrounding settlements.
- An agricultural landscape with a simple pattern of fields and woodland blocks.
- An elevated feel, with long views from the LLCA, particularly to the west and north.
- Forms the skyline when seen from lower land.

Landscape sensitivity

The table below shows the valued landscape qualities to respect (see Landscape Value section above), together with the threats and issues currently or potentially affecting them. The following Guidance section makes recommendations on how these special qualities can be managed.

Valued quality	Threats and issues
General lack of built development	<p>There is currently relatively little built development within this LLCA, and buildings are generally limited to the peripheries. Some agricultural/ industrial buildings are large in size and quite visually intrusive where they are not screened by woodland or trees.</p> <p>Development (particularly into areas currently open and/or away from existing development) would impact on the predominantly undeveloped character of this LLCA, and is also likely to be visually intrusive within this open landscape.</p> <p>At present, the small number of buildings within the LLCA are dispersed and of very low density. Future conversion of agricultural/ industrial sites or redevelopment of residential properties to more intense residential use would change the character of the built form and introduce a new type of development into this LLCA. However, this may be acceptable if the proposal, along with any associated use of land surrounding the building, would not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the existing character of the area.</p>

Valued quality	Threats and issues
Open character with contrasting large woodland blocks (including Ancient Woodland) within and adjacent to the LLCA, and small areas of surviving traditional orchard and field margins.	<p>A lack of traditional woodland management such as coppicing can lead to a decline in niche woodland habitats and reduce the age and species diversity of trees. This in turn increases vulnerability to tree disease and climate change impacts.</p> <p>Ash dieback is already a problem in this LLCA, and ash trees in woodlands are particularly vulnerable as it spreads quickly between trees.</p> <p>Traditional orchards have been reduced in size with only remnant trees left. Intensification of farming has reduced the abundance and variety of arable plants, although some lengths of field margin have survived.</p>
A sense of detachment from surrounding settlements	<p>The lack of settlement and people within this LLCA is generally a positive characteristic, creating an opportunity for local residents to come up here and 'get away from it all'. However, the combination of seclusion and proximity to main roads means that the LLCA is vulnerable to fly tipping.</p>
An agricultural landscape with a simple pattern of fields and woodland blocks.	<p>Hedgerow boundary loss within this LLCA occurred during the 19th Century. There are opportunities to restore the earlier pattern (or to create a new one) of hedges and verges, which would add visual interest to the landscape and create biodiversity corridors. Hedges running parallel to the contours would also help to reduce flooding and soil run-off.</p>
An elevated feel, with long views from the LLCA, particularly to the west and north	<p>Large-scale development immediately to the west and north are likely to be visually intrusive from this elevated LLCA. New hedgerow or tree planting (particularly alongside footpaths) could block long views.</p>
Forms the skyline when seen from lower land.	<p>Structures within this LLCA may well appear on the horizon when seen from lower land across valleys, and therefore be particularly visually intrusive. The existing pylons are an example of this.</p>

Guidance

Protect

- Protect the largely undeveloped character of the LLCA.
- Protect long views, allowing gaps in any new tree planting so views can still be appreciated.
- Protect skylines from intrusive development. Consider views from Horton Kirby and South Darenth, as well as from Fawkham.
- Protect the rural character of lanes and footpaths within and along the boundaries of the LLCA, resisting changes to frontages and property boundaries. Engage with local residents to raise awareness of the importance of retaining traditional rural hedges and entrances. Any highways works should be carefully designed to respect the rural character, and not introduce urbanising elements.
- Protect Ancient Woodland from inappropriate use and damage.

Manage

- Retain coppice woodland in coppice management to perpetuate the niche habitats found in this environment. There may be opportunities for community involvement in woodland management. Seek opportunities to expand and connect deciduous woodland.
- Replace trees lost to ash dieback with a range of native species (contact Kent Ash Project for advice and information).
- Encourage continued use and expansion of traditional orchards, for example through establishment of a community orchard.
- Manage protected field margins, avoiding use of fertilizers or weedkillers in the vicinity. Seek to expand field margin habitats, creating a linked network.
- Manage existing hedgerows where necessary, and seek to expand the hedgerow network within the LLCA to create wildlife corridors, enhance biodiversity, reduce flooding, reduce soil erosion and improve the variety and interest of the landscape.

Plan

- Seek to minimise the visual impacts of future conversion of agricultural/ industrial sites or redevelopment of residential properties so that they would not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the existing character of the area.

Upper Fawkham Valley

Local Landscape Character Area (LLCA)

National Character Area: 119 North Downs

County Landscape Character Area: Ash Downs

Sevenoaks Landscape Character Area: 1b Fawkham and Hartley Settled Downs. Very small area of 1a West Kingsdown Settled Downs



Fig. 16: Part of Fawkham Green from Wilmay Copse, Sun Hill. Fawkham Green can be seen in the middle ground, with steep landform rising behind. Woodland covers the higher valley sides, and there are abundant trees and hedges.
Photo credit: Fawkham Parish Council

Summary Description

The Upper Fawkham Valley is located in the south of Fawkham parish, and comprises the two steep dry valleys at the head of the Fawkham Valley, and the high land between them. The dramatic landform, which is emphasised by the wooded vegetation, is therefore a dominant characteristic.

The nucleated cluster at Fawkham Green is located where the two tributary valleys meet. It is identified on early 19th Century maps, and contains a number of historic buildings, including the Rising Sun pub. Lanes run along the tributary valley floors and also link them. Many of the lanes are deep, narrow and steep.

The LLCA is well-wooded, particularly on high land between the valleys, and on the upper valley sides. Large parts of the woodland are publicly accessible, and some are Ancient Woodland and Local Wildlife Sites. The combination of landform, vegetation and historic features create an enclosed, strongly textured landscape with a distinctive sense of place.

Key Characteristics

- Underlying **geology** comprises bedrock of the Lewes nodular chalk formation. It is overlaid by head (clay, silt and sand gravel) in the valley floors, and clay-with-flints (weathered Head) on the highest land.
- **Topography** comprises a high plateau, incised by a pair of steep dry valley heads which meet at Fawkham Green. Due to the underlying geology there is little surface water.
- There is extensive **woodland** (including Ancient Woodland) on the plateau and upper valley sides, including Saxten's Wood, Cage's Wood, Rogers Wood, Wilmay Copse and part of Choaks Wood. Other **tree cover** includes trees in gardens and open spaces at Fawkham Green, and ornamental parkland species in the grounds of Brands Hatch Place.
- **Semi-natural habitats** include extensive areas of Ancient Woodland, hedges, grassland and parkland. Saxten's Wood is designated as LWS (which includes Cage's Wood, part of Rogers Wood, Wilmay Copse and Choaks Wood). Deciduous woodlands are identified on the priority habitat inventory, and there are also patches of grassland of importance identified in the 2012 Kent Habitat Survey.
- **Land use** includes agriculture (arable and pasture), woodland, parkland/gardens.
- **Field patterns** are varied within the LLCA. The Historic Landscape Characterisation identifies much of the LLCA as being parliamentary-style enclosure of *Medium-regular fields with straight boundaries*. There are also areas of *Scattered Settlement with Paddock, Assarted pre-1801 woodland, and post-1810 Settlement* Fawkham Green).
- **Settlement** includes the nucleated cluster at Fawkham Green, Brandshatch Place and a small number of properties and farms along lanes. Fawkham Green is focussed on a triangular open space at the junction of Valley Road/ Brands Hatch Road, Fawkham Green Road and Sun Hill. Houses, the Rising Sun pub, and the war memorial surround the green. Houses line the roads approaching the green, and there are 20th Century terraced properties set back from Fawkham Green Road to the south-east ('Fairview' and 'Small Grains'). The small size and low density of Fawkham Green mean that there are views out towards the surrounding landform and woodland, so it has a strong sense of place.
- **Historic features** include historic farmsteads (Brands Hatch and outfarms), and Listed Buildings in Fawkham Green ('Gabriels' and the war memorial) and Brandshatch Place (18th Century Country House, now a hotel). Other landscape features such as lanes and woodland are also of considerable antiquity. There is a possible site of a deserted medieval village near Fawkham Green.
- A network of lanes **and footpaths** run along valley floors and climb the valley sides. A considerable proportion of the LLCA at Wilmay Copse, Saxten's Wood and Cage's Wood is **access land** owned and managed by the Woodland Trust. The paths (PRoW and informal) and access land are appreciated and well-used by local residents.

- Historic buildings, lanes and woodland create a strong **sense of place and of history**.
- A **strongly-rural character**, although the motorway, Brands Hatch Racing Circuit, and traffic on Brands Hatch Road impact on tranquillity in parts of the LLCA.
- Woodland and variety of vegetation creates variety of **colour and texture** in the landscape – the bluebells in spring and the autumn colours are particularly appreciated.
- **Views** are often limited by landform within the valleys, but there are some views from high land, and accessible woodland provides opportunities to enjoy a sense of peace and tranquillity.



Fig. 17: Fawkham Green in spring
Photo credit: Fawkham Parish Council



Fig18: Brandshatch Place country hotel, set within ornamental grounds



Fig. 19: Narrow, winding sunken lane – Crowhurst Lane



Fig. 20: Entrance to Saxten's Wood (publicly accessible woodland)

Landscape value

Valued landscape qualities which should be respected:

- The strongly-rural character, including lanes.
- The nucleated form of Fawkham Green and the relative lack of ribbon development along lanes within this LLCA.

- Woodland and trees, including Ancient Woodland and access land.
- The strong relationship between woodland and landform (with open land below and woodland above) which emphasises the dramatic landform.
- A variety of historic buildings, including Listed Buildings.

Landscape sensitivity

The table below shows the valued landscape qualities to respect (see Landscape Value section above), together with the threats and issues currently or potentially affecting them. The following Guidance section makes recommendations on how these special qualities can be managed.

Valued quality	Threats and issues
The strongly-rural character, including lanes.	Suburban style property boundaries (e.g. close-board fencing, ornamental gates and walls, lighting, and hard surfaces) can have cumulative suburbanising effects on character of the LLCA. Widening or straightening roads, or introducing traffic-calming measures can also undermine the rural character of roads and lanes.
The nucleated form of Fawkham Green and the relative lack of ribbon development along lanes within this LLCA.	Introducing development along roads at the periphery of the cluster of development here would undermine the essentially nucleated character of Fawkham Green. The small size of Fawkham Green means that it is easy to see out between/ over houses, creating a strong awareness of the surrounding landscape. This could be lost if the settlement became too large or dense. There are few houses outside Fawkham Green, and linear spread of houses alongside lanes elsewhere in the LLCA would change the existing character and pattern of settlement and intrude on the strongly-rural character.

Valued quality	Threats and issues
Woodland and trees, including Ancient Woodland and access land, and other grassland habitats.	<p>A lack of traditional woodland management such as coppicing can lead to a decline in niche woodland habitats and reduce the age and species diversity of trees. This in turn increases vulnerability to tree disease and climate change impacts.</p> <p>Fragile woodland ground flora and habitats may be damaged by trampling if paths are not clearly defined or if visitor numbers are high.</p> <p>Ash dieback is already a problem in this LLCA, and ash trees in woodlands are particularly vulnerable as it spreads quickly between them.</p> <p>Fly tipping and litter is also a problem in some woodland entrances.</p> <p>Intensification of farming practices has seen a general reduction in farmland habitats such as unimproved grassland.</p>
The strong relationship between woodland and landform (with open land below and woodland above) which emphasises the dramatic landform.	Changes in the pattern of land use or vegetation (for example planting trees on lower slopes) would reduce the strong and distinctive relationship between woodland and landform.
A variety of historic buildings, including Listed Buildings.	Development on or close to historic sites may adversely affect their fabric or their settings.

Guidance

Protect

- Protect the strongly-rural character of this LLCA.
- Protect the nucleated form of Fawkham Green, and its strong relationship with the surrounding landscape.
- Protect and enhance the distinctive pattern of woodland on high ground and upper valley sides.
- Protect Listed Buildings and their settings, ensuring that changes in the vicinity are sensitive to their history and context.
- Protect the rural character of lanes and footpaths within and along the boundaries of the LLCA, resisting changes to frontages and property boundaries. Engage with local residents to raise awareness of the importance of retaining traditional rural hedges and entrances.

Any highways works should be carefully designed to respect the rural character, and not introduce urbanising elements.

Manage

- Retain coppice woodland in coppice management to perpetuate the niche habitats found in this environment. There may be opportunities for community involvement in woodland management.
- Elsewhere manage Ancient Woodland to maintain diversity of native ground flora, and age and species diversity of trees.
- Manage hedgerows to preserve and enhance their function as wildlife corridors. Where hedgerows have become gappy, replant rather than using post-and-wire.
- Encourage people to keep to paths/ less sensitive areas of woodland to avoid damage to ground flora.
- Manage footpaths, where necessary providing sensitive surfacing (e.g. boardwalks) to keep access open year-round.
- Replace trees lost to ash dieback with a range of native species (contact Kent Ash Project for advice and information).
- Manage parkland trees at Brandshatch Place and plant new trees to become the specimen trees of the future.
- Manage existing grassland sites, and encourage their expansion and connection.

Plan

- Seek opportunities to expand woodland habitats on high land within this LLCA.

Central Fawkham Valley LLCA

Local Landscape Character Area (LLCA)

National Character Area: 119 North Downs

County Landscape Character Area: Ash Downs

Sevenoaks Landscape Character Area: 1b Fawkham and Hartley Settled Downs



Fig. 21: The Central Fawkham Valley, looking north-east from Speedgate Hill. Parkfield Wood can be seen on the far side of the valley, adding to the well-treed and strongly-rural appearance of this LLCA.

Summary Description

This LLCA is located in the centre of Fawkham parish and comprises the central part of the Fawkham Valley. It includes the small cluster of development around the school and village hall, as well as more dispersed properties along roads. These include several historic farmsteads and other historic buildings along the valley floor.

This is a well-wooded and treed landscape, with blocks of woodland (including some Ancient Woodland) and many mature trees and hedges. The eastern valley side is characterised by remnants of Parkfield Wood, later adapted to form ornamental grounds for Fawkham Manor, along with the remains of Pennis Wood and also Hatchfield Wood.

This is a peaceful, gentle and strongly-rural landscape, with striking dramatic views across and along the valley. The LLCA has high visual quality, and many opportunities to enjoy the views from roads and footpaths. It also has areas (particularly away from roads) with a sense of peace and tranquillity.

Key Characteristics

- Underlying **geology** comprises bedrock of the Lewes nodular chalk formation. In the valley floor it is overlaid by head (clay, silt and sand gravel), and there is some clay-with-flints (weathered Head) on the upper parts of the valley sides.
- **Topography** comprises the deep dry Fawkham Valley. The LLCA includes the valley floor, and the slopes on both sides of the valley. Because of the underlying chalk geology there is little natural surface water within the LLCA. There is a small pond close to the bottom of Scudders Hill.
- Irregular-shaped blocks of **woodland**, including extensive areas of Ancient Woodland (e.g. Choaks Wood, Pennis Wood and Parkfield Wood). Much of the woodland around Fawkham Manor (including Pennis Wood) is covered by TPOs. A small area of Ancient Woodland around Fawkham Manor has been replanted. Copses, wooded hedgerows, roadside trees, parkland trees and garden vegetation combine to increase the **tree cover** create a very well-treed landscape.
- **Semi-natural habitats** in addition to woodland include hedges (some woody), verges and grassland. There is a small area of traditional orchard priority habitat on Three Gates Road.
- **Land use** is primarily agriculture (arable and pasture) and woodland. There are some former plant nursery sites along Three Gates Road, and also grounds and gardens.
- **Field patterns** within the LLCA are quite varied, reflecting different ages and patterns of enclosure. However, the fields are generally relatively small in scale compared to the larger fields of the ridge to the west. The Historic Landscape Characterisation identifies *Fields predominantly bounded by tracks, roads and other rights of way, Medium-regular fields with straight boundaries (parliamentary-type enclosure)* and (on the western side of the valley, south of Scudders Hill) an area of *Scattered Settlement with Paddocks* reflecting 20th Century division of land into plots. The HLC also distinguishes between *Pre-19th Century coppice*, *Other Pre-19th Century woodland*, and *Replanted 19th Century woodland*. The mature hedgerows forming the boundary with the Pennis Valley LLCA contain many woody species, including whitebeam (relatively rare in hedgerows).
- **Settlement** includes a cluster of buildings on Valley Road focused around the school and village hall, and dispersed houses and farms along Valley Road, Scudders Hill and Three Gates Road. These mostly date from the 20th Century, but there are some older properties (see below). Fawkham Manor is a large house (a Listed Building) set within woodland on the eastern valley side. It is currently being restored with enabling residential development in the grounds.
- **Historic features** within the LLCA include several substantial historic properties such as Fawkham Manor, Scudders, Court Lodge, The White House, the Old Rectory and Cross House. All are Listed Buildings Grade II. Fawkham Manor was designed by eccentric Victorian architect E. B. Lamb for himself in the 1860s. It subsequently became a hospital

and is now being converted back to residential use. The 1801 Mudge Map of Kent shows much of the eastern valley side to be wooded (Parkfield Wood). By 1888, following construction of Fawkham Manor within the woodland, the area of woodland was smaller than previously, having been adapted into parkland with avenues and tree clumps. Some remnants of these features remain today. In addition to buildings and woodland, many of the lanes, paths and hedges within this LLCA are also of considerable antiquity.

- **Roads** are narrow and strongly rural in character due to their narrow, varying width, informal edges, landscaped boundaries and limited development. Valley Road runs along the valley floor and is a key feature within the valley. It is lined by hedges or trees, and is of variable, but narrow, width. Nevertheless it can be a busy road during peak traffic, with relatively fast vehicles, making it dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists. Manor Lane and Scudders Hill are ancient hollow lanes which climb the valley sides, whilst Speedgate Hill is a straighter road constructed in the 19th Century. **Footpaths** also provide access to the valley sides, and there are fine views from many of them. The footpaths are well-used by local residents.
- The LLCA has a strong **sense of place and of history**, resulting from the combination of historic buildings, lanes, woodland and hedges.
- A relatively strong sense of peace and **tranquillity** (particularly away from Valley Road) due to the lack of development within this LLCA, the presence of woodland, and the dark skies.
- Landform and vegetation combine to create a relatively small-scale and intimate character. Fields, trees, hedges and woodlands create varied textures and colours within the landscape, which also demonstrates strong seasonal changes.
- Long **Views** across and down the valley, and also beyond as far as London to the west and across to Essex to the north. Many can be enjoyed from roads or footpaths.



Fig. 22: View north from Sun Hill footpath



Fig. 23: Valley floor scene showing Valley Road and steep valley-side grassland fields



Fig. 24: Long view from footpath looking south-west towards Scudders Hill



*Fig. 25: Fawkham Manor
Photo supplied by Fawkham Parish Council*

Landscape sensitivity

Valued landscape qualities which should be respected:

- A dominance of landform and vegetation, rather than buildings.
- Strongly-rural character with little settlement, small-scale buildings and narrow rural lanes.
- A mosaic of farmland and woodland (much of which is Ancient Woodland) creating a varied and well-treed character and a diversity of habitats.
- Many views across and along the valley from roads and footpaths.
- Historic buildings (including historic farmsteads) and their settings, which retain strong connection with their immediate rural surroundings.

Landscape sensitivity

The table below shows the valued landscape qualities to respect (see Landscape Value section above), together with the threats and issues currently or potentially affecting them. The following Guidance section makes recommendations on how these special qualities can be managed.

Valued quality	Threats and issues
A dominance of landform and vegetation, rather than buildings.	At present, views are dominated by natural features of landform and vegetation, rather than by built development. Introducing large-scale buildings or structures would fundamentally change this balance and undermine the strongly rural landscape character.

Valued quality	Threats and issues
A strongly-rural and intimate character with little settlement, small-scale buildings and narrow rural lanes.	Dense or large-scale development here could adversely affect the strongly-rural character of this LLCA. Gradual suburbanisation of roads and property boundaries (for example ornamental walls and gates, close-board fencing, lighting and hard surfacing) risks undermining the existing rural character of roads. This is also a risk that signage, safety and traffic calming measures could create a more urbanised character unless they are undertaken very sensitively.
A mosaic of farmland and woodland (including Ancient Woodland) creating a varied and well-treed character and a diversity of habitats.	A lack of traditional woodland management such as coppicing can lead to a decline in niche woodland habitats and reduce the age and species diversity of trees. This in turn increases vulnerability to tree disease and climate change impacts. Fragile woodland ground flora and habitats may be damaged by trampling if paths are not clearly defined or if visitor numbers are high. Ash dieback is already a problem locally, and ash trees in woodlands are particularly vulnerable as it spreads quickly between them. Intensification of farming practices has seen a general reduction in farmland habitats such as unimproved grassland.
Views across the valley from viewpoints on valley-side footpaths and roads	The introduction of new buildings and structures, and changes in land use, may affect views. Views can also be blocked by new or unmanaged vegetation.
Historic buildings (including historic farmsteads) and their settings, which retain strong connection with their immediate rural surroundings.	Unsympathetic or poorly-sited residential or agricultural development could impact on the character or setting of Listed Buildings. Alterations to farm buildings can lead to loss of character or context. 'Everyday' agricultural structures such as outbuildings can be particularly vulnerable as their importance is not always realised.

Guidance

Protect

- Protect the strongly-rural character and the current dominance of landform and vegetation over buildings. This includes the undeveloped horizons.
- Protect existing views within the LLCA. Seek to keep popular viewpoints open, accessible and clear of vegetation.
- Protect the rural character of roads and lanes (Valley Road, Three Gates Road, Scudders Hill, Speedgate Hill, Manor Lane, Sun Hill and Michael's Lane), resisting changes to frontages and property boundaries. Engage with local residents to raise awareness of the importance of retaining traditional rural hedges and entrances. Any highways works should be carefully designed to respect the rural character, and not introduce urbanising elements.
- Protect Listed Buildings and their settings, ensuring that changes in the vicinity are sensitive to their history and context. This includes dwellings and agricultural buildings.

Manage

- Retain coppice woodland in coppice management to perpetuate the niche habitats found in this environment. There may be opportunities for community involvement in woodland management.
- Elsewhere manage Ancient Woodland to maintain diversity of native ground flora, and age and species diversity of trees.
- Encourage people to keep to paths/ less sensitive areas of woodland to avoid damage to ground flora.
- Manage footpaths, where necessary providing sensitive surfacing (e.g. boardwalks) to keep access open year-round.
- Replace trees lost to ash dieback with a range of native species (contact Kent Ash Project for advice and information).
- Manage surviving remnants of traditional orchard.
- Manage hedgerows and seek to expand the hedgerow network to create biodiversity corridors.
- Seek opportunities to enhance habitats within farmland, such as verges, orchards and field margins, and to promote birds such as Turtle Doves and skylarks. There may also be opportunities here for larger-scale restoration of chalk grassland.

Plan

- Consider re-introducing orchards into the LLCA, perhaps as a community scheme.

Pennis Valley

Local Landscape Character Area (LLCA)

National Character Area: 119 North Downs

County Landscape Character Area: Ash Downs

Sevenoaks Landscape Character Area: 1b Fawkham and Hartley Settled Downs



Fig. 27: The secluded and enclosed character of Pennis Valley looking from Fawkham Parish towards the southern edge of Hartley Parish.

Summary Description

This LLCA is located in the eastern part of Fawkham parish and the western part of Hartley parish. It also extends into Ash-cum-Ridley parish to the south. It comprises the discrete dry valley of the Pennis Valley - a tributary of the main Fawkham Valley.

Its landform creates a secluded and enclosed feel within the valley, although there are views into it from surrounding high land, including adjacent LLCAs. The Pennis Valley LLCA has a strongly recreational character as it contains a number of sports and recreation facilities, including golf courses and sports grounds. The golf courses have a particularly strong impact on its character, especially in terms of the species, ages and patterns of trees, the past loss of Ancient Woodland, and the erosion of traditional field patterns (although some lines of mature trees and ancient hedges remain). It is valued for private and public recreation facilities, including footpaths.

Buildings/ structures are often recreational in function. There are relatively few domestic properties (limited to the peripheries of the LLCA), and the larger-scale agricultural/ industrial/ recreational buildings at Gay Dawn Farm form a single cluster in the valley floor at the centre of the LLCA.

Key Characteristics

- Underlying bedrock **geology** of the Lewes nodular chalk formation. Overlain by Head (clay, silt, sand and gravel) in valley floor, and some clay-with-flints (weathered Head) on the highest ground.
- **Topography** forms a steep dry tributary valley on the eastern side of the Fawkham Valley. There are some open water lakes/ reservoirs in the valley floor.
- Extensive **woodland** and **tree cover**, although much is ornamental planting relating to the golf course and sports grounds. It is therefore relatively young, and contains different patterns and tree species than other LLCAs. There are some mature trees in former hedgerows, and small patch of Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site near the parish boundary.
- **Semi-natural habitats** include trees, grassland and mature hedges. There are no designated wildlife sites, but there are areas of woodland priority habitat and Ancient Woodland.
- **Land use** is predominantly recreational: golf courses, sports grounds, etc. There are a small number of houses and a school set within gardens and grounds. Gay Dawn Farm contains a mix of agricultural, industrial/business and recreational land uses.
- **Field patterns and Historic Landscape Character** have been disrupted by the later golf courses, although some traces remain. The HLC identifies *fields predominately bounded by tracks, roads, etc.*, some *post-1810 settlement*, and some *parliamentary enclosure*, but this has been overlain by later property division. A mature hedge forms the western boundary of the LLCA which includes 9 woody species, including whitebeam.
- **Settlement** Gay Dawn Farm (adjacent to the historic farmstead at Pennis Farm and Listed Building of Pennis House) has expanded to include agricultural/ industrial buildings and recreation facilities. Although these include football pitches, parking areas, fencing, signage etc., they are located in the valley bottom and surrounded by vegetation, which helps to reduce their visual prominence and limit any urbanising impact on the wider surrounding landscape. The buildings and sports facilities form a single cluster, and appear as a nucleated group of buildings in long views of the valley. There are a few low-density residential properties (set in treed grounds) to the west of Gay Dawn Farm (Fawkham) and along Fairby Lane at the top of the valley side (Hartley). School and Country Club buildings and grounds on the western edge of Hartley are also included in this LLCA. These comprise isolated buildings in extensive landscaped grounds which also have a recreational and non-urban character.
- **Roads** are limited within this LLCA. There is a short public road providing access to Pennis Farm and other houses, a private access road leading to Corinthian Sports Club, and part of Fairby Lane (in Hartley). Valley Road forms the western edge of the LLCA.
- **Historic features** include Pennis Farm - a historic farmstead which includes a cluster of three Listed Buildings (Pennis House, Pennis Farm and the gates). The holloway running up the hillside behind Pennis House is an ancient route between Fawkham and West Yoke / Ash. It appears as a track on the 1801 Mudge Map of Kent.

- Several popular **footpaths** cross the LLCA. These show on historic maps and pre-date the golf courses. They would originally have been tracks between/ across fields.
- The enclosed landform and abundant trees create a sense of **enclosure and seclusion** in the valley floor, particularly in the upper parts of the valley which are further from the buildings at Gay Dawn Farm.
- The combination of trees and open areas within the golf courses create a distinctive small-scale **pattern** to the landscape, with strong variety of **colour and texture**.
- Dramatic **views** across the valley from the surrounding high land.



Fig. 28: Sports Ground at Hartley Country Club, framed by trees and woodlands (some ancient)



Fig. 29: View west across the Pennis Valley from footpath near Fairby Lane, Hartley



Fig. 30: Corinthian Sports Club within valley floor at Gay Dawn Farm, Fawkham



Fig. 31: The Pennis Valley as seen from the opposite side of the Central Fawkham Valley. The buildings at Gay Dawn Farm appear as a single cluster within the Pennis Valley.

Landscape value

Valued landscape qualities which should be respected:

- Enclosed landform and abundant trees create a sense of enclosure and seclusion in the valley floor.

- Rural recreational character which retains traces of its earlier agricultural land uses (e.g. mature trees along former hedgelines, mature hedges, and bluebells in former woodland areas).
- Long views into the LLCA from surrounding high land, including the Central Fawkham Valley and Hartley Hill Plateau LLCAs.
- Relatively little development, with few domestic properties, and the larger buildings at Gay Down Farm forming a single cluster of low rise buildings in a limited part of the valley floor.
- The soft green edge – including Ancient Woodland - to existing development on the western side of Hartley.
- Extensive tree, grassland and woodland cover with associated wildlife habitats (although little is currently designated).
- Extensive network of public rights of way (including ancient holloway behind Pennis Farm).

Landscape sensitivity

The table below shows the valued landscape qualities to respect (see Landscape Value section above), together with the threats and issues currently or potentially affecting them. The following Guidance section makes recommendations on how these special qualities can be managed.

Valued quality	Threats and issues
Enclosed landform and abundant trees create a sense of enclosure and seclusion in the valley floor.	This LLCA is highly sensitive to development which would impact on its rural character; sense of seclusion; long views; the existing vegetated edge to development in Hartley, or the sense of separation between Fawkham and Hartley.
Rural recreational character which retains traces of its earlier agricultural land uses (e.g. mature trees along former hedgelines, mature hedges, and bluebells in former wooded areas).	
Long views into the LLCA from surrounding high land, including the Central Fawkham Valley and Hartley Hill Plateau LLCAs.	
Relatively little development, with few domestic properties, and the larger buildings at Gay Dawn Farm forming a single cluster of low-rise buildings in a limited part of the valley floor.	
The soft green edge – including Ancient Woodland - to existing development on the western side of Hartley.	

Valued quality	Threats and issues
Extensive tree, grassland and woodland cover with associated wildlife habitats (although little is currently recognised)	Non-recorded habitats are vulnerable to loss, particularly in areas where habitats are associated with recreational use (such as golf course roughs and trees).
Extensive network of public rights of way (including ancient holloway behind Pennis Farm)	Public access to the landscape via footpaths may conflict with private recreational use (golf course)

Guidance

Protect

- Protect this visually-rural and predominantly undeveloped landscape from inappropriate large-scale or visually-prominent development.
- Ensure the visual impact of the single nucleated cluster in the valley floor at Gay Dawn Farm is not increased, including when seen from the footpath at the corner of Churchdown Wood.
- Retain a strong green southern edge to the urban area of Hartley created by gardens, trees, Ancient Woodland and sports grounds.
- Retain the low density and unobtrusive character of existing residential development at the peripheries of the LLCA.
- Protect the alignment and character of the historic paths from alteration or damage (e.g. re-routing, or removal of earth banks).

Manage

- Work with landowners to promote good habitat management, and aim to further extend and link habitats.
- Survey grassland, mature hedges and woodland/ treed areas to identify existing areas of priority habitat which are not currently recorded.
- Manage Public Rights of Way, ensuring access to the LLCA is not reduced further, and that footpaths are safe and enjoyable to use.

Plan

- Should demand for recreational use within this LLCA reduce in the future, seek opportunities to restore the landscape to further enhance biodiversity and bioabundance (for example by encouraging new woodland and grassland habitats).

Lower Fawkham Valley

Local Landscape Character Area (LLCA)

National Character Area: 119 North Downs

County Landscape Character Area: Ash Downs

Sevenoaks Landscape Character Area: 1b Fawkham and Hartley Settled Downs; small part of 2b Eynsford and Horton Kirby Downs



Fig. 32: The Lower Fawkham Valley, from footpath to Churchdown Wood. Churchdown Wood is on the left, and Fawkham Church and conservation area is on the right. Woodland and trees on the horizon are within Hartley Parish.

Summary Description

The Lower Fawkham Valley is located in the north of the study area, and contains land within both Fawkham and Hartley parishes. It comprises the fields and woodlands on both sides of the Fawkham Valley, as well as land along Castle Hill. There is strong visual connectivity across the LLCA, with views east-west across the valley from the upper valley sides. There is therefore strong intervisibility between the parishes within this LLCA. The sloping nature of the topography means that much of the LLCA is highly visible, and there are many views from roads, footpaths and accessible areas within it. The open land around Fawkham Church is also valued as a recreational space with a strong visual connection to the surrounding rural landscape.

Much of the land is in agricultural use, but there are also significant blocks of woodland (including Ancient Woodland) and rough grassland. Rectory Meadow in Hartley is a LWS managed as a Local Nature Reserve and Churchdown Wood (Fawkham) is also a LWS. Baldwin's Green Conservation Area is located in the south-west of the LLCA, and includes the Grade I Listed St Mary's Church set in open land within the valley floor. Castle Hill is a rural lane with properties set back from the road, often in large grounds. There are glimpsed views north over open fields or into woodland.

Key Characteristics

- Underlying **geology** comprises bedrock of the Lewes nodular chalk formation. It is overlaid by Head (clay, silt and sand gravel) in the valley floor, and clay-with-flints (weathered Head) on the highest part of the eastern valley side.
- **Topography** comprises slopes on either side of the dry valley. The landform here is not as steep as further south, but is still marked. There is a small pond to the south of the church.
- **Woodland** is extensive, particularly in the north and west. Woodland blocks include some Ancient Woodland (Churchdown Wood, Bramblefield Wood, Old Downs), as well as 19th Century plantation. Further tree cover occurs in gardens and grounds, in hedges, and alongside roads. There is a 'ghost wood' of Hoselands Wood to the west of Hartley, which is now visible as a hedge of woodland trees.
- **Semi-natural habitats** include woodland (including Ancient Woodland), grassland (Rectory Meadow, and the slopes below Churchdown Wood), hedges and verges. Churchdown Wood and Rectory Meadow are designated Local Wildlife Sites, and Rectory Meadow is also a Local Nature Reserve. Deciduous woodland (including but not limited to Ancient Woodland) is recorded on the priority habitat inventory, along with a small traditional orchard near the northern boundary.
- **Land use** is predominantly agricultural (arable) with some paddocks, woodland and properties, including some in large grounds.
- **Field patterns and Historic Landscape Character** Fields are fairly large, and mostly described in the HLC as *Fields Bounded by tracks, roads and other rights of way*. Historic maps show some areas of woodland as today, but Churchdown Wood has been extended since 1888, and Hoselands Wood (on the high land on the Hartley side of the valley) has been lost. The HLC notes both *pre 19th Century Coppice* and *19th Century Plantation*. Church Meadow is bounded by mature hedgerows containing a diversity of woody species.
- **Settlement** within the LLCA is relatively low density and dispersed in character compared to the denser 20th Century development in Hartley (Banckside and Downs Valley estates) which adjoins the eastern edge of the LLCA. These 20th Century properties in Hartley are not visible from Valley Road, and because they are set down only the roof tops of properties in Downs Valley are glimpsed from the footpath below Churchdown Wood. Similarly, the Bramblefield area to the north of the LLCA abutting the railway line is well screened from the valley by dense woodland. This 20th Century development therefore does not have a strong impact on the rural character of the LLCA.

Within the LLCA there is a cluster of historic buildings near the church at Baldwin's Green (designated a Conservation Area) and isolated properties of rural character along Valley Road. There is also a small area of light industrial use (Fawkham Business Park) set slightly back from Valley Road in the far north of the LLCA.

There is some inter-war and later residential development along the southern side of Castle Hill. The properties were set back from the road within large garden plots, and were small in size.

- **Historic features** are concentrated in the south-west of the LLCA, including St Mary's Church (Listed Building Grade I), the site of the adjacent Manor House and chapel, and Baldwin's Green Conservation Area. St Mary's Church is Norman with many internal 13th and 14th Century details, and a distinctive white painted weatherboarded bellcote. The Conservation Area Appraisal notes the small number of buildings from different periods, each with its own architectural style. These include the Parish Church of St Mary, Churchdown Farm, Churchdown House and The Shaws (now two dwellings: Beech House and The Laurels). The Appraisal also notes *the treescaped setting of the church when seen along roads; the superb views of the church, houses and the countryside beyond; the low walls, open fencing and hedgerows which add to the rural qualities of the area, and that the village as a whole presents an idyllic rural scene*. Outside the Conservation Area there is a historic farmstead at Salts Farm, and several areas of Ancient Woodland. Cropmarks have been recorded on valley sides, including a prehistoric banjo enclosure west of Salts Farm.
- **Valley Road** runs north-south through the LLCA, and Castle Hill runs east-west. The southern part of Valley Road (past the church) was re-routed in the early 20th Century to create an easier alternative to the narrow lane known as Steep Hill. It has a rural character, with hedges, mature trees, and occasional properties which are generally set back from the road within treed grounds. Castle Hill is an ancient hollow-way recorded in a 16th Century document and remains a narrow, winding enclosed lane which retains a rural character with woodland, open fields and occasional larger properties in grounds to the northern side. Between the properties are stretches of open land with views across the fields to the north. The 20th Century ribbon development on the southern side comprises detached properties which are generally not prominent from the lane as they have retained their hedged boundaries and narrow gateways. Occasional more suburbanised openings do not detract from the overall rural character of the lane. The long gardens help to screen these properties in longer views from the south. The older and substantial property of Old Downs is located at the top of Castle Hill on the northern side, largely hidden within wooded grounds. Steephill School is also set within extensive treed grounds, and is rural in character.
- There are several **footpaths** through the woodland and around the periphery. As mentioned above Rectory Meadow is open to the public as a Local Nature Reserve, Church Meadow is also accessible, and much of Churchdown Wood is open to the public via PROW and informal paths.
- The open fields and relatively large woodland blocks create a relatively **large scale** landscape with a simple **pattern**. There is a stronger sense of enclosure within woodland and along Castle Hill. Woodland and trees create seasonal variation in colour and texture.
- The area around St Mary's Church and Baldwin's Green has a strong **sense of place and of history** created by the historic buildings within their rural settings, and is valued by the community for its sense of **peace and quiet**.
- There are long **views** in both directions across the valley. Within Fawkham parish, views looking east from Churchdown Wood, north from Church Meadow, south along the valley,

and north from high land north of Churchdown Wood are particularly striking. Views looking west across the valley from Hoselands Wood and along the fields behind Banckside are appreciated by the residents of Hartley.



Fig. 33: Fawkham Church and Conservation Area



Fig. 34: Ancient Woodland (left) and 19th Century plantation (right) at Churchdown Wood (Fawkham)



Fig. 35: Rectory Meadow (Hartley) Local Nature Reserve



Fig. 36: View from Hartley towards Fawkham. The hedge on the right is a 'ghost wood' – the remnants of a former wood which survives as a hedge boundary

Landscape value

Valued landscape qualities which should be respected:

- Prominent non-developed slopes which contribute to views and sense of place.
- The strongly-rural character of the LLCA.
- Open/ treed horizons which reinforce the rural character of the LLCA (properties in Hartley are not visible from Valley Road, and only limited rooftops may be glimpsed from the footpath below Churchdown Wood on the opposite side of the valley).
- The rural character of Castle Hill with woodland, open fields and occasional larger properties in grounds to the northern side and generally discrete detached houses on the southern side with long back gardens which screen the properties in longer views from the south.
- Nature Conservation Sites, including Rectory Meadow and Churchdown Wood Local Wildlife Sites and Rectory Meadow Local Nature Reserve. Along with Ancient Woodland,

traditional orchard, grassland and historic hedges, they have landscape, heritage and ecological value.

- Baldwin's Green Conservation Area (and the Listed St Mary's Church building within it) and their settings, which create a strong and much appreciated sense of place and history.
- Easy access from both parishes to the countryside via footpaths and accessible areas e.g. Rectory Meadow (Hartley) and Church Meadow (Fawkham).
- Notable views within the LLCA and also beyond as far as London to the west.
- The rural character of Valley Road and Steep Hill with narrow winding lanes, informal edges and dispersed properties.

Landscape sensitivity

The table below shows the valued landscape qualities to respect (see Landscape Value section above), together with the threats and issues currently or potentially affecting them. The following Guidance section makes recommendations on how these special qualities can be managed.

Valued quality	Threats and issues
Prominent non-developed slopes which contribute to views and sense of place	The LLCA is highly sensitive to large-scale development which would impact on the open and rural character of the area; the views across and from the LLCA, and the open or treed skylines. The LLCA is highly visible from many roads, footpaths and properties and can be seen from a wide area. Introducing development into this LLCA is also likely to remove or reduce the sense of physical and visual separation which currently exists between the rural settlement of Fawkham (and Castle Hill) and the much more urban character of Hartley.
The strongly rural character of the LLCA.	
Open/treed horizons which reinforce the rural character of the LLCA	
The rural character of Castle Hill with woodland, open fields and occasional larger properties in grounds to the northern side and generally discrete detached houses on the southern side with long back gardens which screen the properties in longer views from the south.	
The rural character of Valley Road and Steep Hill, with narrow winding lanes, informal edges and dispersed properties.	At present the roads largely retain their traditional hedges, and property boundaries and entrances have generally not become suburbanised. However there is a risk that the rural character of the lanes will be gradually lost through the introduction of suburban-style fencing, walls, gates, lights, and surfacing. Increasing the size of houses and their proximity to the road also risks creating a more suburban character. Conversion of current light industrial areas to residential use could also create a more suburban character, particularly if houses are placed right up to the road.

Valued quality	Threats and issues
Baldwin's Green Conservation Area (and the Listed St Mary's Church building within it) and their settings, which create a strong and much appreciated sense of place and history.	Further development in the vicinity (for example along Valley Road) or a change in the character of the surrounding agricultural landscape will impact on the sense of place, and the settings of the Conservation Area and Listed Building. The Conservation Area Appraisal notes that telegraph poles and overhead wires intrude into the visual context of the houses.
Nature Conservation Sites, including Rectory Meadow and Churchdown Wood Local Wildlife Sites and Rectory Meadow Local Nature Reserve. Along with Ancient Woodland, traditional orchard, grassland and historic hedges, they have landscape, heritage and ecological value.	<p>Lack of management of grassland and woodland sites can lead to decline in habitat-specific species.</p> <p>Fragile woodland ground flora and habitats may be damaged by trampling if paths are not clearly defined or if visitor numbers are high.</p> <p>Some areas of grassland (specifically Rectory Meadow and grassland below Churchdown Wood) are not currently identified on the Priority Habitat Inventory, and therefore have limited protection.</p> <p>Woodland and grassland on the edge of Hartley is particularly vulnerable to new development.</p> <p>Woodland which is of similar age and/or species is particularly vulnerable to climate changes and tree disease.</p>
Easy access from both parishes to the countryside via footpaths and accessible areas e.g. Rectory meadow (Hartley) and Church Meadow (Fawkham).	Current access could be impeded by new development, or a change in land ownership which limits the access currently allowed to open spaces and informal paths (for example the northern part of Church Meadow, and the informal footpath along the field edge alongside Valley Road).
Views within the LLCA and also beyond, as far as London to the west.	Views are highly sensitive to large or small scale development which may limit or alter them. Views can also be adversely affected by vegetation growth.

Guidance

Protect

- Protect this visually prominent, rural and undeveloped landscape from inappropriate large-scale development.
- Retain and enhance a strong green edge to Hartley.
- Retain the undeveloped horizons which are characteristic of this LLCA.
- Protect the existing open rural settings to the Church and Conservation Area.

- Retain public access to open spaces and footpaths. Seek to formalise access arrangements where appropriate, especially unofficial footpaths which are important for the safety of pedestrians.
- Protect existing views within the LLCA. Seek to keep popular viewpoints open, accessible and clear of vegetation.
- Protect the rural character of roads and lanes (Valley Road, Steep Hill and Castle Hill), resisting changes to rural frontages and property boundaries. Engage with local residents to raise awareness of the importance of retaining traditional rural hedges and entrances. Any highways works should be carefully designed to respect the rural character, and not introduce urbanising elements.

Manage

- Continue to manage nature conservation sites, for example clearing scrub to prevent encroachment into grassland areas.
- Work with Kent Wildlife Trust to ensure that all eligible grassland sites are identified on the Priority Habitat Inventory.
- Consider re-introducing traditional management such as coppicing into woodland areas, and aim to create a diversity of ages and species of trees.
- Work with landowners to promote biodiversity and climate change resilience within agricultural areas. Consider re-instating former hedges shown on the 1831 Tithe map to act as biodiversity corridors and landscape features. Additional new hedgerows running parallel to the contours would help reduce flooding and soil loss down the slope.

Plan

- Seek opportunities to move services underground and remove poles and wires.
- Consider extending existing woodland, for example re-establishing woodland on the high land on the Hartley side of the valley. 'Hoselands Wood' was still extant there in 1888.
- Formalise informal footpaths.
- Seek to minimise the visual impacts of future conversion of agricultural/ industrial sites or redevelopment of residential properties so that they would not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the existing character of the area.