

In many cases the Guidelines will be specific to a particular landscape character type or area, but general Guidelines are common across the Borough. These general guidelines are set out below.

In all cases it is important that the Key Characteristics of each landscape character area are taken into consideration, with locally valued features maintained and enhanced and deteriorating features enhanced and recreated where possible.

Consideration should be given to the Guidelines set out for the character areas within Test Valley Borough in Hampshire County Council's 'The Hampshire Landscape; a Strategy for the Future 2000' and the 'North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2004' and 'North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Character Assessment 2003'.

Land Management

Landscape Distinctiveness

- Opportunities to be sought to continue involvement of the local community in the landscape character assessment process
- Areas noted for their sense of remoteness, tranquillity and seclusion to be protected from intrusive and inappropriate human activity
- Reference to be made to the Borough's historic landscape character when considering change in the landscape
- Maintain the contrast between open downland, 'where earth meets sky', the sense of enclosure within the wooded farmland, and the intimate pastoral riverine landscape of the River Test and its tributaries
- Maintain the characteristic seasonal winterbourne pattern
- As far as possible changes to the landscape should seek to compliment and reflect the landscape character and not rely on mitigation measures to disguise intrusive or uncharacteristic features

Agriculture

- New forms of crops, such as energy crops, pasture, such as equestrian facilities, and agricultural management should respect the local landscape patterns
- Large agricultural buildings are to be carefully sited and designed to avoid visual intrusion, especially in areas with mainly unspoilt open views
- Encourage greater use of organic and sustainable farming practices to increase landscape diversity and reduce diffuse pollution
- New structures associated with farming and horticulture (such as polytunnels) to be carefully sited and of a scale and design appropriate to the landscape character area

- Encourage further take up of agri-environmental schemes including Countryside Stewardship and ESA, particularly in areas of unimproved chalk downland and river valleys

Hedgerows

- Hedgerow cutting to be designed to maintain or restore the diversity, quality and density of the hedgerows in keeping with best local practice

Woodland and Trees

- Use appropriate native tree and shrub species, local to the character area in any new planting adjoining or within open countryside
- Seek opportunities to encourage active management of woodlands including coppicing and replanting
- Encourage good woodland management as part of the rural economy

Biodiversity

- Areas that have been designated for their ecological and historic significance, internationally, nationally and locally, are to be conserved and enhanced not only for their primary reason for designation but also for their contribution to landscape character and local distinctiveness
- New landscapes and the management of existing landscapes should seek to provide opportunities to increase bird populations and diversity
- Seek opportunities to improve the quality of woodland, heathland and grassland habitats
- Restoration projects should be based on a sound understanding of current ecological and species requirements for each area

Historic Landscapes

- Protect the landscape setting to historic features
- Protect, enhance and, where practical, restore historic landscape patterns created by field boundaries, woodlands, roads and tracks
- Manage archaeological features in accordance with best practice to prevent loss or damage to the feature or its immediate setting

Land Use and Development

Built Development

- New building layouts, styles and use of materials should respect the local variations in settlement and built form character in order to conserve and enhance local distinctiveness
- New hard and soft landscape proposals should reflect locally distinctive landscape patterns and materials and be appropriate to their location in the landscape
- The conversion of farm buildings should retain local landscape and built form features and respect the historic relationship between the farm and its landscape setting

Borough-Wide Guidelines

- Consideration to be given to the visual impact of isolated and cumulative development on skylines
- Opportunities to be sought for creating new landscape features, habitats and green corridors within new development to reflect and enhance the key characteristics of each area

Infrastructure

- Seek to minimise the visual intrusion and sub-urbanising effect on the rural network arising from new highway infrastructure and increasing traffic
- Lighting in the countryside and in towns to be designed to minimise light pollution and sky glow. Areas noted for their 'dark skies' to be protected from further erosion from unnecessary light sources
- Opportunities to be sought to reduce the visual impact of overhead power lines
- Establish a sensitive approach to the management of soft landscapes associated with infrastructure development in order to increase landscape diversity and minimise diffuse pollution

Recreation, Tourism and Access

- Seek opportunities for additional and improved access to the countryside for the public