

# LCT4 Mixed Farmland and Woodland - Small Scale

## General Description

The Mixed Farmland and Woodland – Small Scale landscape character type comprises a small-scale and intimate mosaic of grazing land and arable land with some woodland associated with farmsteads and areas of uncultivated land, as seen on the steeper slopes and around older disused pits. The character type is very similar to LCT3, but has predominantly smaller scale fields.

Scattered settlements provide a sense of the area being densely populated, however the majority of this development is linear, with areas of open countryside set behind. Small winding leafy lanes with thick hedgerows contrast with larger open areas. Open areas of mineral extraction are features of this landscape.

## Location

The type forms a part of the more complex and varied landscapes (which include LCT3) that separate the heathlands (LCT1) and pasture and woodlands associated with heathlands (LCT2) to the south and the chalk and clay wooded farmland (LCT6 and 7) and chalk downlands (LCT10) to the north.

There are two areas of this landscape character type found within the Borough. They are as follows:

- LCA4A Sherfield English
- LCA4B Michelmersh to Ampfield Wooded Farmland

## Physical Influences

**Geology and Soils:** Predominantly London Clay with Reading Beds.

**Landform:** An undulating landscape of small valleys, smooth ridges and local knolls.

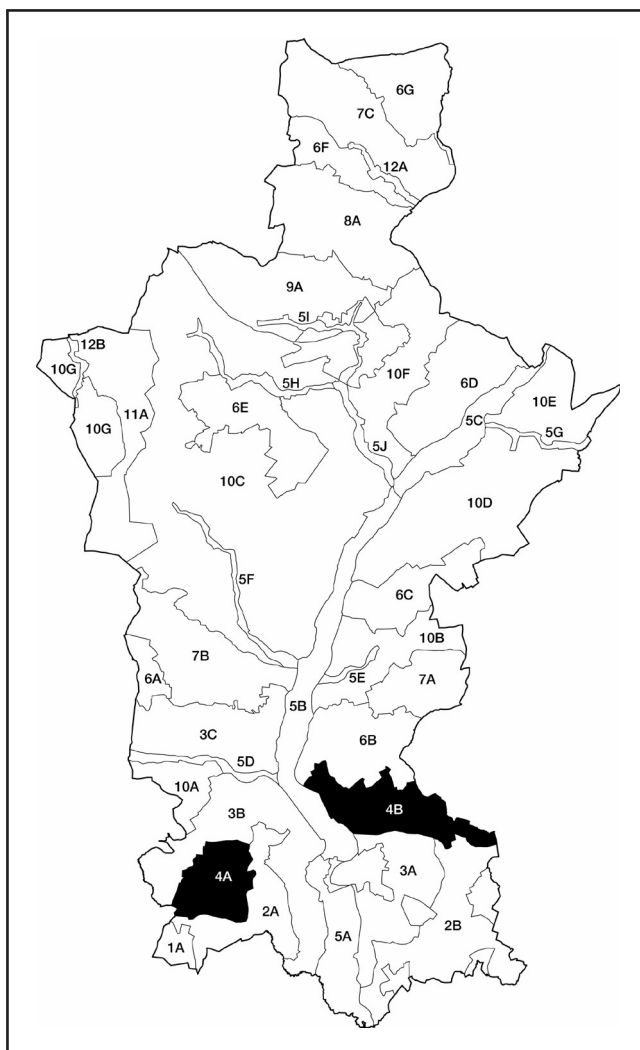
**Drainage:** The type lies within the River Test catchment area and is characterised by a mix of streams, small lakes and boggy areas.

## Biodiversity and Vegetation Pattern

Mixed Farmland and Woodland – Small Scale has a distinctly wooded character and with extensive, ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland, some managed as active coppice. There is a wide range of habitat features associated with this type including hedgerows with banks, large standard trees, streams, meadows and occasional pockets of heathland. The majority of species found are typical of neutral to calcareous soils and include Oak, Ash and Field Maple. Pastoral farmland is the dominant land use, with abundant arable and rotational grassland. Arable is often found on the higher, drier areas and pasture on the moister clay hollows.

## Notable habitats:

- Heathland
- Mire



## Historical Influences

The landscape is characterized by woodland clearance for generally small and medium scale assarted field systems. An area of large assarting is present around the farm at Woodington which may represent the later development and opening out of assarted fields. Also visible associated with river valleys are areas of small regular fields and regular fields with wavy boundaries and of parliamentary enclosure. The regular fields with wavy boundaries appear to be a development specifically associated with the patchwork of assarted field systems closer to the New Forest. The parliamentary field systems along the River Test represent a more concerted attempt to improve the comparatively more fertile landscape closer to the valley floor.

## Settlement Pattern

Settlements within the character type tend to be either of small or medium size and display essentially linear characteristics but focused around an early post-medieval settlement or farmstead core. The areas

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where small and medium assarted fields survive close to the New Forest retain a reasonably dense scattering of farmsteads each within a relatively limited 'territory'. The farmsteads, even within the larger assarted areas, continue to display a quite dense scattering while within the area of extensive parliamentary enclosure on the valley sides only two farms remain located some distance from each other.

## Communication Network

Throughout this landscape type winding droves and roads are visible, aiding animal movement from the uplands down to the water's edge, at the bottom of the Test Valley. Interestingly the later field enclosures appear to have adhered to these drove ways, e.g. Bunny Lane (Area 4B) and as such are shaped around them. These droves appear to connect the upland assarted areas via the valley slope parliamentary field

systems to the extensive bedwork water meadows located within the valley floor. These functioned to move stock between the upland grazing areas and the fertile water meadows at appropriate times in the farming calendar.

## Key Natural and Cultural Landscape Issues

- Infill development
- Poorly restored areas of mineral extraction
- Hedgerow fragmentation and loss
- Loss of unimproved mesotrophic grassland to arable or through application of fertilisers
- Declining farmland bird populations
- Enrichment of water bodies through fertiliser run off
- Loss of woodlands to development or to arable or pasture
- Decline in coppice management leading to a reduction of specialised species such as butterflies.