

LCA6G Facombe Wooded Downs

General Description

Facombe Wooded Downs is characterized by its extensive and connected woodland cover, which occurs in association with the valley sides. This produces a distinct landscape pattern comprising large open predominately arable fields on the higher areas, long sinuous hangers clinging to the slopes of the steep combs where woodland is intermixed with pasture i.e. Netherton Hanging Copse and Hart Hill Down and large blocks of woodland, predominantly plantation located on the middle slopes of the valleys. Scarps feature strongly within LCA 6F, with examples found at Pilot Hill, Hart Hill Down and Cleve Hill Down. The scarp at Pilot Hill is characterized by open grassland on the upper slopes and scrub with woodland on the lower slopes, while the Scarps at Hart Hill Down and Cleve Hill Down are mainly wooded with some areas of scrub and grassland.

The farmland mosaic, which includes areas of arable farmland, is enclosed by intact hedgerows with mature trees and in some areas screen belts as found north of Facombe Wood. Smaller fields, with some pasture are associated with the settlement of Facombe. The designed parkland associated with Facombe Manor brings further variation to this LCA.

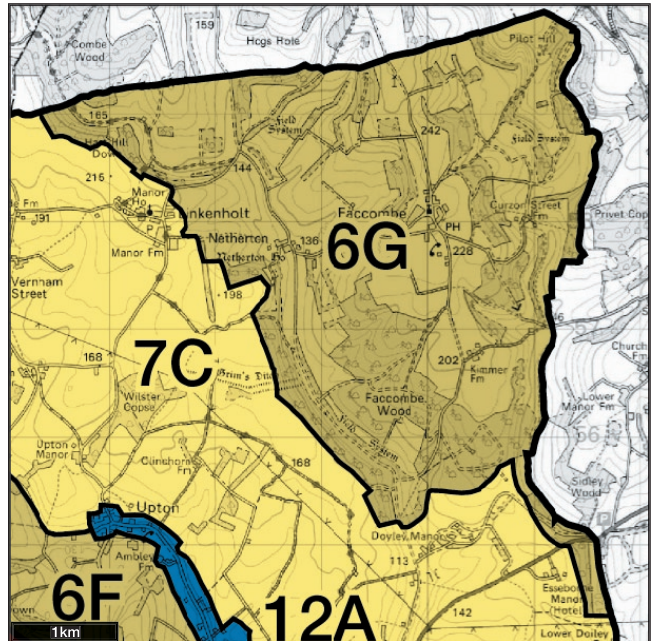
Location

Facombe Wooded Downs is located within the northern eastern tip of the Borough, to the north east of Linkenholt and the southwestern edge of Netherton Hanging Copse and extending down to include Doyley Wood.

Local Physical Influences

Geology and soils: The ridges are predominantly covered with Clay and Flints over the Upper Chalk, softening their form. The valleys are a mix of Middle Chalk, and Valley Gravels.

Landform: A great deal of topographical variation with high rolling hills on the Upper Chalk cut by steep sided dry valley, scarps and dramatic combs over the Middle Chalk.



Drainage: The southern part of Facombe Wooded Downs lies within the River Test catchment area. The areas well drained with no streams or waterbodies.

Local Biodiversity and Vegetation Pattern

This landscape still has the steeper aspect found in LCA 6E but has a greater incidence of woodland and hedgerows. The woodlands vary from small copses and game spinneys to the larger woodland of Facombe Wood. Frequent tree species are Ash, Field Maple and Yew and other trees found in lower frequencies include Lime, Hornbeam and Elm with occasional Oak. The shrub layers are generally composed of Hazel, Elder, Blackthorn, Dogwood, Spindle and Privet. Typically Hazel was planted as a coppice crop. Ground flora includes Dogs Mercury, with Bluebells, Enchanters Nightshade, Arum Lily, Early Dog Violet, Yellow Archangel, Sanicle, Moschatel, and Pignut. Wetter areas often have dense covers of Ransoms/Wild Garlic. Typical orchids include Early Purple Orchid, Twayblade Birds-Nest Orchid.

Small pockets of unimproved calcareous grassland are also found.

Local Historical Influences

The eastern element of Facombe Wooded Downs is composed of generally large irregular assarted field systems interspersed with areas of 19th century plantations and 19th century hangers. Within this area of assarting is a ridge of downland and pre-1810 hangers which are all located along the eastern boundary of the borough. Associated with the area of large irregular assarting is a woodland environment (Facombe Wood) at the southern end of this LCA. This represents a pre-



LCT6 Enclosed Chalk and Clay Woodland

1810 replanting episode of previously assarted field systems. An area of assarted pre-1810 woodland known as Netherton Hanging Copse extends along the south western side of Facombe Wood.

The northern and western portion of this LCA is occupied by extensive parliamentary field systems and later 20th century prairie field developments of what would appear to have been a previously assarted landscape.

Several probably prehistoric field systems survive both within the large assarted fields and within Facombe Wood.

Settlement Pattern

The area is sparsely populated, with a low settlement density comprising of the small village of Facombe (a ridge top nucleated settlement) and Netherton (a valley nucleated settlement), as well as scattered isolated farmsteads, again located on ridges for example Kimmer Farm and within the valleys i.e. Curzon Street Farm. Facombe is comprised mainly of later post-medieval buildings although a small historic core does remain close to Facombe Manor.

The farmsteads within the area of large irregular assarted fields are comparatively densely packed whilst there are no farmsteads within the parliamentary field systems to the west. These fields are a part of larger landholdings characteristic of the development of larger fields during the 19th and 20th centuries.

An intricate network of rural lanes winds through the area linking settlements, following ridges but mainly dry valleys i.e. the road along Netherton Bottom.

Local Settlements and Features of Built Form

- Facombe: Clay Upland and Plateau Settlement Type
- Netherton: Chalk Downland. Dry Valley Settlement Type

The built form includes harder chalk sometimes used in walls, brick and flint, chalk cob and thatch, with some older buildings retaining timber framing.

Community Perceptions

Few comments were made for this area but it is noted for being exceptionally quiet and secluded. The Facombe Estate is considered to be an important influence on the landscape and the wind turbine a feature of the area, although there were mixed views on its landscape merits.

Remoteness and Tranquillity

A landscape of great diversity with experiences ranging from the intimate and enclosed, to dramatic and open, which has resulted in an area which has retained a remote and tranquil rural character.

Key Characteristics

- Dramatic topographical variation with scarps
- Long sinuous wooded hangers on coomb slopes
- Woodlands mainly small copses and spinneys except at Facombe Wood
- Small winding lanes with an intimate remote character
- Open ridges of arable land
- Sparsely settled with very small villages and farmsteads found on higher ground
- Quite rural and secluded character
- Extensive assarting of what appears to have been an extensively wooded landscape during the later medieval and early post-medieval period
- Survival of replanted assarted pre-1810 woodland at the southern limit of this character area
- Presence of possible prehistoric field systems or settlement within Facombe Wood.

Local Natural and Cultural Landscape Issues

- Increased agricultural mechanisation allowing more marginal landscapes to be brought into intensive arable cultivation threatening the survival of an area of late-medieval/early post-medieval field systems
- Potential further demand for wind turbines.

Designations

Landscape

- North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Historic

- Facombe Manor: Early 18th century house (Grade II Listed Building).
Post 1810 park.

Nature Conservation

SSSI

- Hogs Hole (<1% of SSSI) - Broadleaved semi-natural woodland
- Combe Wood & Linkenholt Hanging (<50% of SSSI) - Broadleaved semi-natural woodland

SINC

- 21 SINCs including ancient semi-natural woodland and agriculturally unimproved grassland