

## LCA7B Broughton Downs

### General Description

Broughton Downs is an elevated landscape, rising from around 55m in the south to a ridge around 150m on the southern side of Broughton Downs in the north. The underlying geology is predominantly chalk, with only a small number of areas (limited to the ridges) covered with clay and flint, creating a generally uniform topography of undulating and rolling downland with a pronounced scarp slope along Broughton Down.

The woodland cover is limited to small copses with larger woodlands mainly associated and in close proximity to large parks and farmed estates. These areas of woodland in places are linked by long thick hedgerows and shelter belts as seen around Queenwood Farm. Tracts of adjoining arable fields form large open areas within this semi-enclosed landscape. Areas of woodland are also found on steep slopes, which are generally uncultivated.

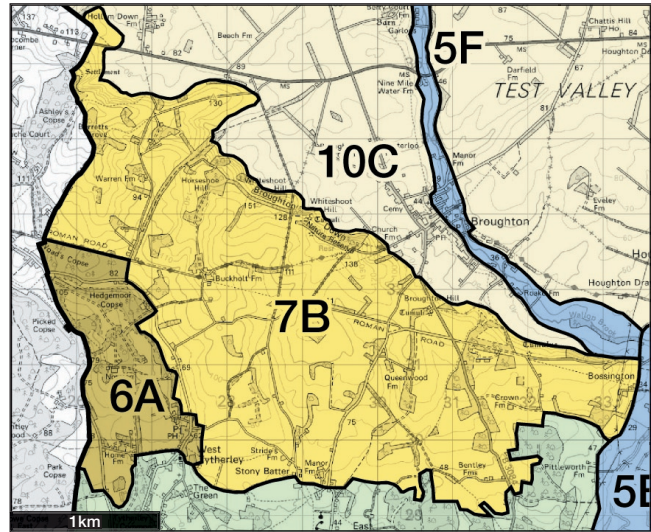
Smaller enclosed fields of pasture are located adjacent to areas of settlements and adjacent farmsteads, while other areas of grassland form parts of designed parkland.

### Location

Broughton Downs is defined by and includes the Broughton Down scarp face to the north, and extends to the Borough boundary in the north-west, to the east of Norman Court in the west and to West Tytherley in the south.

### Local Physical Influences

**Geology and Soils:** Upper chalk with small patches of Clay with Flints.



**Landform:** Undulating landform rising to higher ground in the west and a steep north facing slope.

**Drainage:** Well drained, within Wallop Brook catchment.

### Local Biodiversity and Vegetation Pattern

This area is principally arable farmland and unimproved grassland, divided by hedgerows. There are important patches of ancient semi-natural woodland and the hedgerow structure provides some linkages between areas of woodland. The woodlands are mostly small copses and game spinneys and shelter belts. Most of the ancient semi-natural woodland is dominated by Ash with some Oak where the presence of Oak indicates more acidic pockets of soil. Ash is the most common tree species with Field Maple and Yew. Other trees found in low frequencies include Lime, Hornbeam and Elm. The shrub layers are generally composed of



# LCT7 Semi Enclosed and Clay Farmland

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.

Other notable habitats include occasional remnants of unimproved calcareous grassland, that are typically a rich mixture of grasses and herbs and are characteristic of a vegetation with a long history of grazing. The grasslands are dominated by fine-leaved grasses such as Sheep's Fescue and Red Fescue with Velvet Bent, and there is a variety of flowering plants that comprise a substantial proportion of the herbage, these include Salad Burnett, Selfheal, Birds-Foot Trefoil, Harebells, Lady's Bedstraw, Devils-Bit Scabious. Less frequent plants include Fairy Flax, Gentian, Eyebright, Kidney Vetch and Stemless Thistle. Typical orchids include Bee Orchid, Common Spotted Orchid, Pyramidal Orchid, Early Purple Orchid, Fragrant Orchid, Green-Winged Orchid, Burnt Orchid, Frog Orchid. Chalk grasslands are noted for their rich floristic diversity and also for their invertebrate populations.

## Local Historical Influences

Parliamentary fields extend to the south of the Roman Road although the pattern is less well defined. Here there is an expanse of fields bounded only by trackways and paths which would appear to be the result of post-medieval enclosure. Also present within this area are a series of small rectilinear fields with wavy boundaries; evidence of late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century informal enclosure.

A Roman Road extends through this Landscape Character Area from west to east. The earthworks associated with such a feature do not survive although its course is fossilized within the route of the 'Monarch's Way' which crosses the Test Valley at this point.

To the north of the Roman Road is largely a landscape of parliamentary field systems interspersed with some pre-1810 woodland.

## Settlement Pattern

No villages or other formal settlements are present within LCA 7B. The farmsteads which occupy this character area are generally well dispersed particularly throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century parliamentary field systems but also in the small rectilinear fields with wavy boundaries. This may have resulted from the nearby

presence of pre-1810 parkland with a 'Home Farm' remaining which may have managed this outlying farmland on behalf of the estate during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Roads and routeways align in a north southerly alignment following the dry river valleys and ridgelines.

## Features of Built Form

Traditional building styles include brick, white rendered and brick and flint walls with clay tile and thatched roofs.

## Community Perceptions

This area is regarded as very open and arable, and also remote and tranquil. The loss of hedgerows is an issue, as is the increased introduction of barbed wire fencing.

## Remoteness and Tranquillity

Due to the lack of settlements, this is a landscape with high tranquillity levels particularly within the intricate series of dry river valleys and around the gentle hill tops.

## Key Characteristics

- Varied elevated downland topography of steep valleys and softer ridges
- Small sinuous woodland copses and shelter belts
- Remnant unimproved chalk grassland
- Contrasting areas of enclosure and areas of openness with wide views
- Isolated farmsteads
- A remote tranquil landscape with inaccessible valleys
- 19<sup>th</sup> century parliamentary enclosure abounds within this area although some earlier 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century informal enclosure does survive
- A Roman Road extends through the area with evidence fossilized within the line of the 'Monarch's Way'.

## Local Natural and Cultural Landscape Issues

- Vulnerability of remaining unimproved chalkland.

## Designations

### Nature Conservation

SSSI

- Broughton Down - Unimproved calcareous grassland, broadleaved woodland and scrub
- Mottisfont Bats (<1% of SSSI) - Broadleaved woodland

SINC

- 28 SINCS, mostly ancient semi-natural woodland and other woodland; some agriculturally unimproved and semi-improved grassland