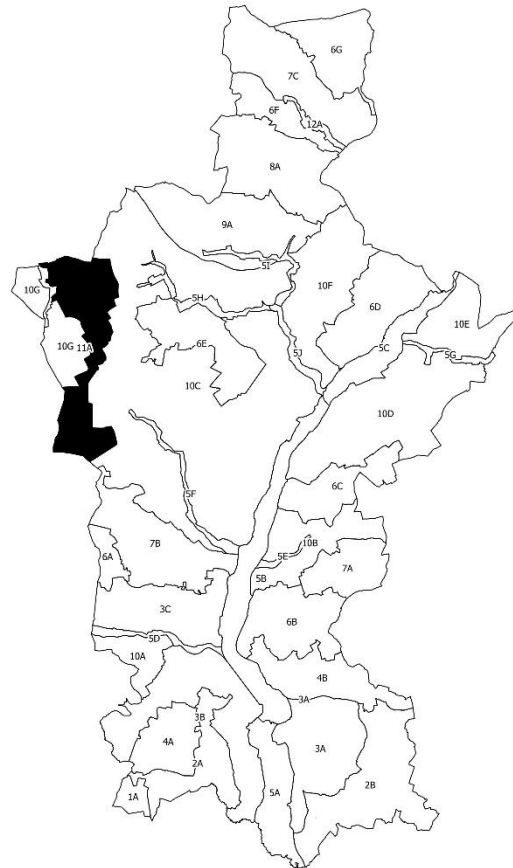


LCT11 Chalk Downland Ridges

General Description

11.1 The Chalk Downland Ridges are distinguished by series of small hills forming a ridgeline with sculptural and often dramatic scarps, although these are less frequent than found within the Chalk and Clay Landscape Character Types LCT6 and 7. Due to the topography, these landforms have few roads or settlements associated with them and a low density of farmsteads.



11.2 The type is a mix of arable, with a weak hedgerow structure and groups of hedgeless fields creating further larger open expansive areas, and pasture. Woodlands predominantly located on the more inaccessible slopes, including scarps and adjacent farmsteads to provide enclosure.

Location

11.3 The Chalk Downland Ridges are similar in character to the Open Chalklands to the west and east but are distinguished by their prominent topography and a greater extent of unimproved chalk grassland. There is one area within the Borough where this Landscape Type occurs, to the east of Shipton Bellinger, on the western side of the Borough.

- LCA 11A Quarley Hill Downs

Physical Influences

11.4 **Geology and Soils:** Predominantly underlying Chalk geology.

Landform: A loose alignment of small hills, ridges and valleys, with some scarps, which contrast with the flatter open plains of the Open Chalklands Landscape Type.

Drainage: A pervious base, with no surface drainage.

Biodiversity and Vegetation Pattern

11.5 There are extensive areas of arable farmland across this area, but in addition, there are significant areas of important calcareous grassland. In particular, a substantial part of Porton Down SPA dominates the southern part of the LCA.

11.6 In addition to Porton Down, there are several smaller patches of calcareous grassland, including Quarley Hill Down SSSI, and several SINC's to the north of the LCA.

Notable habitats

- Unimproved chalk grassland

Historical Influences

11.7 Topographic highpoints within a landscape have attracted interest for thousands of years including as ridgeways by which the landscape could be traversed, as highly visible locations for the burial of dead and as a provider of readily defensible positions for local communities. Consequently burial mounds or barrows (Bronze Age) and hillforts (Iron Age) are prevalent upon these high points and can still be clearly identified today. Also present may be Celtic field systems (Iron Age) which have survived within land deemed too marginal to be worth bringing into cultivation.

11.8 The Chalk Downland Ridges, which are to be found upon the western border of the Borough, appear to retain several elements of largely later post-medieval formal (parliamentary) and informal enclosure. These tracts of

agricultural land cut through the downland ridge at apparent right angles to the ridgeline although elements of downland survive relatively intact.

Settlement Pattern

- 11.9 No modern settlements can be identified within the Chalk Downland Ridges, although a small amount of low density settlement at Palestine village and around Grateley station fall within the area. No farmsteads are located upon the ridge but tend to take advantage of the lower more gentle relief provided away from the ridge lines and only occasionally occupying the pasture present upon the ridge.

Communication Network

- 11.10 Roadways extend down the slopes of the downland ridge and only very rarely cross it. This allows access to the lower portions of the valley and up onto the pasture lands often located upon the downland ridges.

Key Natural and Cultural Landscape Issues

- 11.11 Key natural and cultural landscape issues are as follows:
- Intensification of farming resulting in large fields and the loss of biodiversity and archaeological features
 - Isolation of small patches of unimproved chalk grassland habitat due to arable or scrub encroachment
 - Hedgerow fragmentation and loss
 - Declining farmland bird populations.

Land Management Guidelines

- 11.12 All of the Borough wide land management guidelines in the introduction apply to this Landscape Character Type. Specific to this Landscape Character Type are:

11.13 Agriculture

- Manage the agricultural landscapes for biodiversity such as incorporating hedgerows or grass field margins
- Encourage replanting of hedgerows and hedgerow trees

11.14 **Hedgerows**

- Seek opportunities to enhance and extend hedgerow structure
- Restore hedgerows and encourage replanting of former hedgerow lines, ensure oak standards grow up to form hedgerow trees

11.15 **Woodland and Trees**

- Maintain existing pattern of woodland cover
- Promote good management of woodlands

Land Use and Development Guidelines

11.16 All of the Borough wide land use and development guidelines in the introduction apply to this Landscape Character Type. Specific to this Landscape Character Type are:

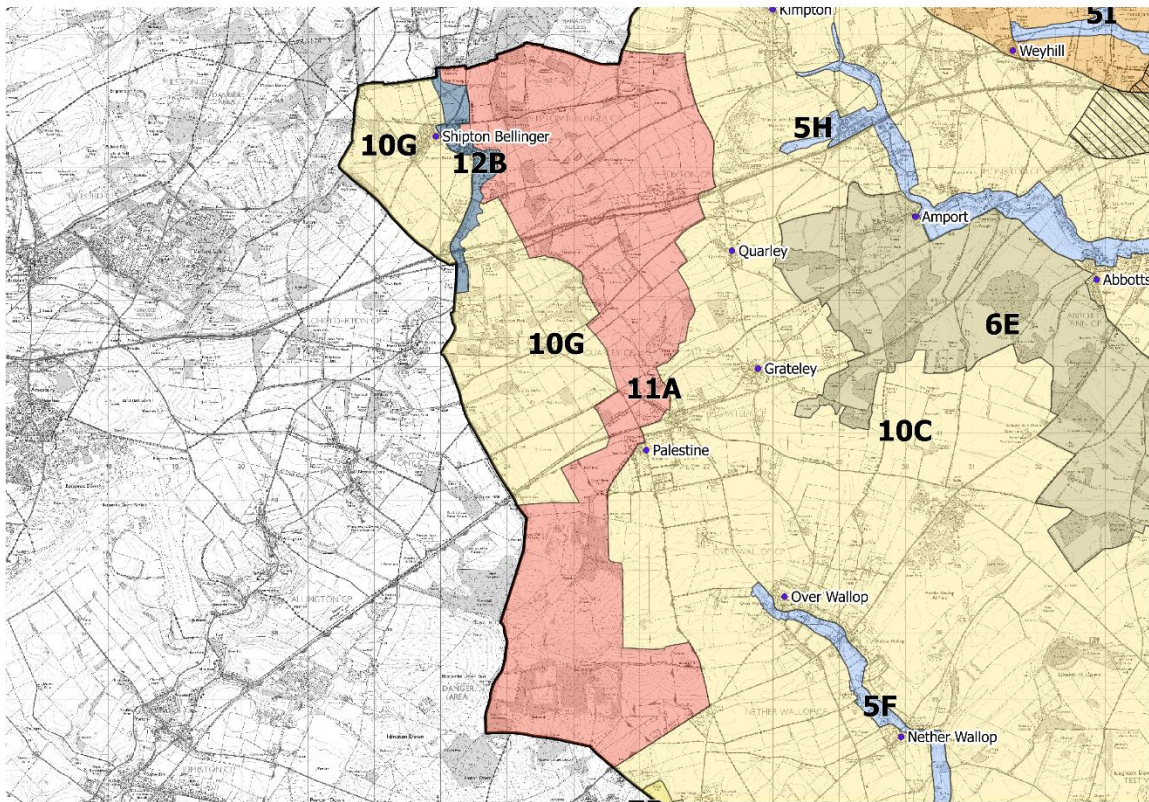
11.17 **Built Development**

- Proposals for solar development should consider the cumulative impacts on the valued remote and tranquil character of the area and open views

11.18 **Infrastructure**

- Seek to minimise the visual intrusion and suburbanising effect arising from highway infrastructure

LCA11A Quarley Hill Downs



General Description

- 11.A.1. Quarley Hill Downs is formed from two main areas linked in the middle. The north of the area is dominated by arable farmland and the south (owned by the Ministry of Defence (MOD)) is covered in grassland, scrub and woodland. There are a number of wooded small scarps within this area, including at Shipton Plantation, and at Cholderton Hill.
- 11.A.2. The area to the north starts by gently rising from the east from the elevated adjacent chalk plateau of Thruxton and Danebury Chalk Downland LCA 10C. At around 125m the slopes become steeper with more pronounced dry valleys, climaxing at the ridge at around 170m. This ridge then steeply falls away to the west.
- 11.A.3. The landform of the area to the south is similar to the north but with less of a pronounced ridge and with smaller hills. The vegetation structure forms an irregular pattern of regenerating areas of rough grassland, scrub, small

woodland copses, which contrasts with the adjacent Open Chalklands. Towards the southern boundary, there is a loose grid of newly planted woodland blocks.

Location

- 11.A.4. Quarley Hill Downs is located to the west of the Borough and covers an area of low lying hills aligned in a north south direction, which includes Snoddington Hill, Thrupton Hill, Quarley Hill, Boar Knoll and the Isle of Wight Hill.

Local Physical Influences

- 11.A.5. **Geology and Soils:** Chalk.

Landform: Gently rising land, giving rise to a series of distinctive and prominent small hills along a north-south ridgeline.

Drainage: Well drained area, mostly lying outside the River Test catchment area.

Local Biodiversity and Vegetation Pattern

- 11.A.6. There are extensive areas of arable farmland across this area, but in addition, there are significant areas of important calcareous grassland. In particular, a substantial part of Porton Down SPA dominates the southern part of the LCA.
- 11.A.7. In addition to Porton Down, there are several smaller patches of calcareous grassland, including Quarley Hill Down SSSI, and several SINCs to the north of the LCA.
- 11.A.8. The table below identifies the broad habitat types for LCA11A.

Broad habitat type	Area of habitat (Hectares)	Percentage of the LCA (%)
Arable and horticulture	1109.97	52.00
Boundary and linear features	29.86	1.40
Broadleaved, mixed, and yew woodland	196.30	9.20
Built-up areas and gardens	33.44	1.57
Calcareous grassland	462.56	21.67
Coniferous woodland	26.56	1.24
Fen, marsh and swamp	0.41	0.02

Improved grassland	225.53	10.57
Inland rock	6.60	0.31
Standing open water and canals	0.06	0.01
Unidentified habitat	43.26	2.03
Unidentified water	0.05	0.01
Total	2134.59	

Local Historical Influences

- 11.A.9. Four different historic landscape types exist in this long narrow chalk upland area, which is found on the western side of the Test Valley. The majority of the area is downland with areas of 19th century plantations running through. Much of the area is still unimproved and identified as grazing land, particularly used for sheep pasture as unsuitable for growing crops.
- 11.A.10. In the northern section of this character type there is a large expanse of regular “ladder” fields, along the upper Test basin. As expected, these fields are associated with an area of Parliamentary enclosure and links the valley floor enclosure to downland on higher ground. It is highly likely that this area resulted from informal enclosure of the downland in post medieval times and is not directly associated with formal enclosure.
- 11.A.11. This landscape character type is historically significant with numerous features of archaeological importance including surviving Bronze Age burial mounds occupying the length of the downland ridge. Also surviving is a Neolithic long barrow and the site of a flint mine south of Martin’s Clump, an Iron Age hill fort on Quarley Hill and numerous undated earthworks (either field systems or a settlement) to the north of Martin’s Clump. Finally the Portway Roman Road extends a short distance across this character area to the south of Quarley Hill and is fossilised within the minor road north of Grateley.
- 11.A.12. As mentioned above, regular “ladder” fields are present in this area. This means that long and regular natured trackways or footpaths (which make up the “ladder” effect) can be seen crossing the area. Throughout the downland areas, winding drove/track ways are visible. These would have aided the movement of sheep across the pasture area.

11.A.13. A band of 19th century plantations extend along the border between this area and the downland ridge to the east. These discrete stands of purposely planted trees most probably resulted from the desire to create a view for the two parks close by to the west; Cholderton Park and Snoddington Manor. Also within this area along Thrupton Hill is an extensive and undated linear earthwork.

Designations

11.A.14. Designations that lie wholly or in part within this Landscape Character Area comprise:

11.A.15. **Nature Conservation**

SAC

- Salisbury Plain

SPA

- Porton Down

SSSI

- Porton Down - Unimproved calcareous grassland, broadleaved woodland and dense scrub
- Quarley Hill Fort - Unimproved calcareous grassland

SINC

- 17 SINCS, mostly agriculturally unimproved grassland, and other grassland sites, with sites which support notable species and some ancient semi natural woodland

11.A.16. **Historic**

Scheduled Monuments

- Quarley Hill Camp
- Flint mines, linear boundary and two bowl barrows at Martin's Clump, Porton Down
- Bowl barrow 795m WSW of Franklin's Well
- Bowl barrow 250m south of Martin's Clump
- Long barrow and adjoining bowl barrow, 250m south of Martin's Clump

Listed buildings

- Very few listed structures

Settlement Pattern

- 11.A.17. Quarley Hill Downs has no associated formal settlements, although a small amount of low density settlement at Palestine village and around Grateley station fall within the area. Isolated farmsteads are scattered throughout the landscape of this LCA with considerable distance between any two farming complexes. No farms occupy the open downland.
- 11.A.18. Farmsteads associated with parliamentary fields systems in this LCA tend to be located on the outskirts of field groups, usually associated with formal and surveyed roads or lanes. Where regular ladder fields survive the farmsteads appear to have originally been located within the centre of field groups presumably to maximise access to the surrounding field systems (as at Racedown Farm). With the encroachment of 19th century agricultural practices upon the landscape such farmsteads have become partially or completely disassociated from what would have been their contemporary field systems.
- 11.A.19. Roads cross this area predominantly on an east west alignment, through the dry river valleys. Additionally the railway also aligns in an east west direction. No roads cross the area of land owned by the MOD.

Local Settlements

- 11.A.20. None within area.

Remoteness and Tranquillity

- 11.A.21. Parts of this LCA are remote, especially where the land is inaccessible due to the steep slopes, for example to the north around Shipton Wood and Cholderton Hill. These areas will therefore offer a high level of tranquillity.
- 11.A.22. The area owned by the MOD in the south, and the extreme north, have a remote quality, with high levels of tranquillity except when there are exercises taking place. However this area is not accessible to the public.

Key Valued Characteristics

11.A.23. Key valued characteristics of LCA11A are as follows:

- Area has a remote and tranquil character
- Range of small hills, becoming more pronounced in the north
- Mainly pasture with open arable farmland to the north on gentler slopes
- Wide open vistas including across farmland to hills sometimes with wooded hilltops
- Large area of grassland, scrub and woodland in the south owned by the MOD often undisturbed and providing valuable habitat
- The pattern of woodlands on the western slopes and wooded scarps
- Significant patches of unimproved calcareous grassland are of ecological value and characteristic of a long history of grazing
- Areas of distinctive field patterns contribute to the time depth of the area including regular ladder fields (aligned east-west), closely associated with the surrounding parliamentary field systems extend up onto the downland, representing later post-medieval rationalisation of the more marginal soils of the downs
- Historically significant area due to numerous features of archaeological importance
- Band of 19th century plantations forming a part of parkland design for the adjacent Cholderton Park
- Absence of settlements and a very sparse scatter of farmsteads which contribute to the rural character and sense of time depth
- Few roads travel along the top of the downland
- Traditional building styles are mainly brick walls and clay tiled roofs
- Quarley Hill is a local landmark

Key Detractors

11.A.24. Key detractors of LCA11A are as follows:

- Some visual impact of MOD uses in the south and the extreme north, with tranquillity intermittently affected by training activity
- Public access restricted by MOD uses

- Occasional visually prominent built form on ridge tops and in open farmland breaking the skyline

Local Natural and Cultural Landscape Issues

11.A.25. Local natural and cultural landscape issues for LCA11A are as follows:

- Future use of decommissioned military bases and increase in MOD activity or change of use eroding rural character
- Extension of modern settlement south from Tidworth onto the downland threatening historic monuments and their landscape context
- Pressure for additional development and the potential erosion of the surrounding historic landscape and remaining wetlands arising from further development extending from the main settlements
- This area is particularly vulnerable to the impact of changes within the open landscape and undeveloped ridgelines
- Expansion of farmsteads and conversion of farm buildings to residential
- Solar and other renewable energy development eroding the rural character of the area

Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

11.A.26. Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for LCA11A are as follows:

- Quarley Hill Downs has some important unimproved downland habitats, historic landscapes and a strong landform that is presently accentuated by the vegetation pattern. The overall strategy is to conserve these characteristics and the open unsettled character of Quarley Hill Downs; to seek new opportunities for habitat restoration on farm and MOD land; and protect and enhance the key valued characteristics.

Land Management

11.A.27. All of the Borough wide and landscape type land management guidelines apply to this Landscape Character Area. Specific to this Landscape Character Area are:

11.A.28. **Landscape Distinctiveness**

- Conserve the sense of remoteness and tranquillity
- Maintain wide open vistas free of intrusive development

11.A.29. **Agriculture**

- Ensure the careful siting of new agricultural buildings

11.A.30. **Biodiversity**

- Conserve, enhance and expand unimproved calcareous grassland
- Create buffer strips and uncultivated margins around arable farmland to encourage the creation / extension of biodiversity-rich arable field margins
- Explore opportunities for improving and linking habitats for farmland birds

11.A.31. **Historic Landscapes**

- Ensure that the surviving earthworks upon Quarley Down are protected from further damage by farming and scrub encroachment
- Maintain the existing pattern of field systems with the associated parliamentary and regular ladder fields extending up onto the downland
- Ensure the survival of the 19th century plantations associated with Cholderton Park

Land Use and Development

11.A.32. All of the Borough wide and Landscape Character Type land use and development guidelines apply to this Landscape Character Area. Specific to this Landscape Character Area are:

11.A.33. **Built Development**

- Proposals for solar development should consider the cumulative impacts on the valued remote and tranquil character of the area and open views

11.A.34. **Infrastructure**

- Avoid intrusive development of tall and large structures except where they can be successfully integrated into the landscape



Pronounced range of small hills in the north of the character area



Quarley Hill is a local landmark



Wide open vistas



Area of regular ladder fields



Areas of grassland owned by MOD