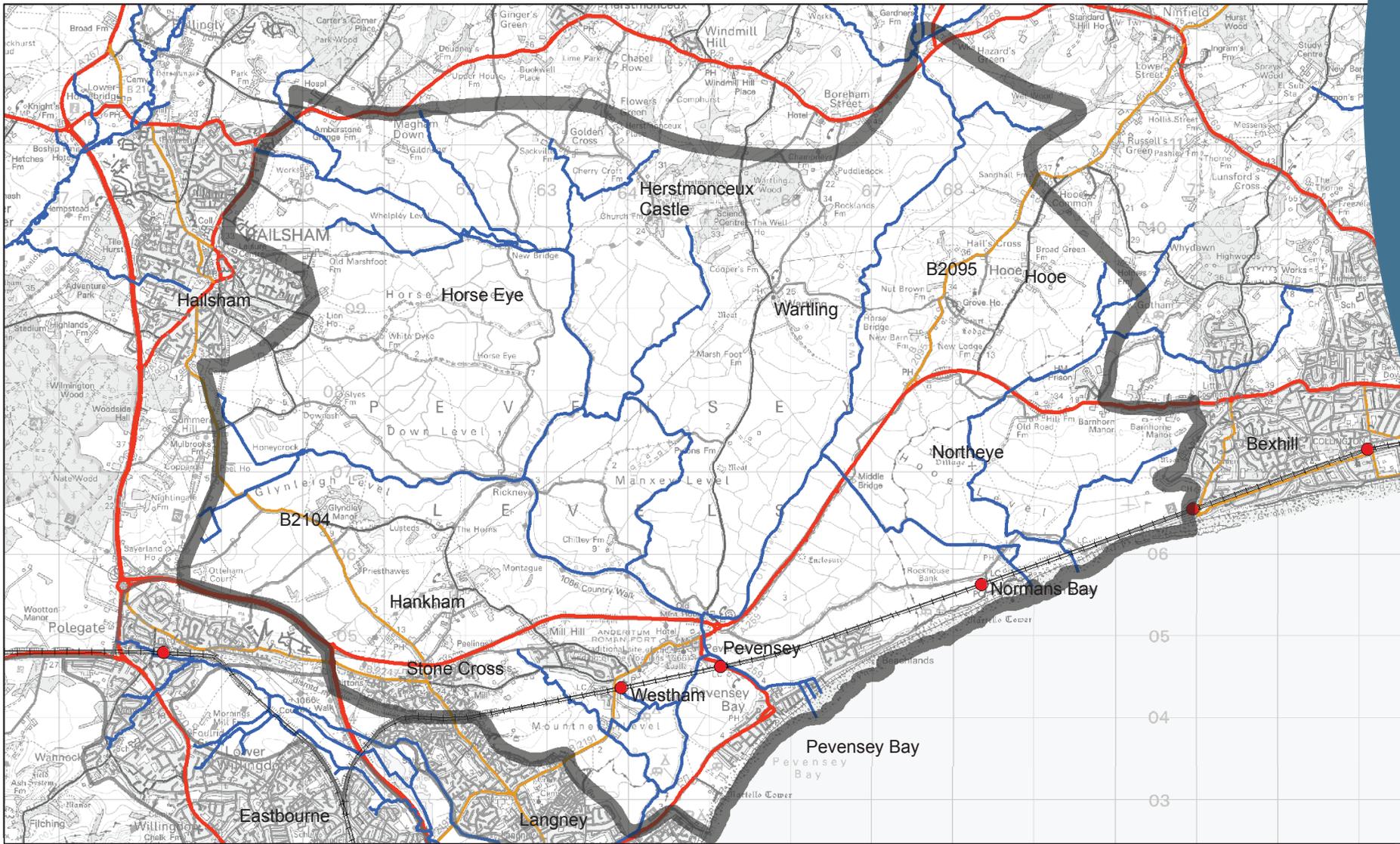
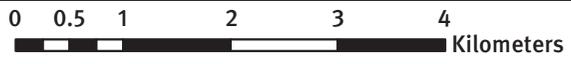


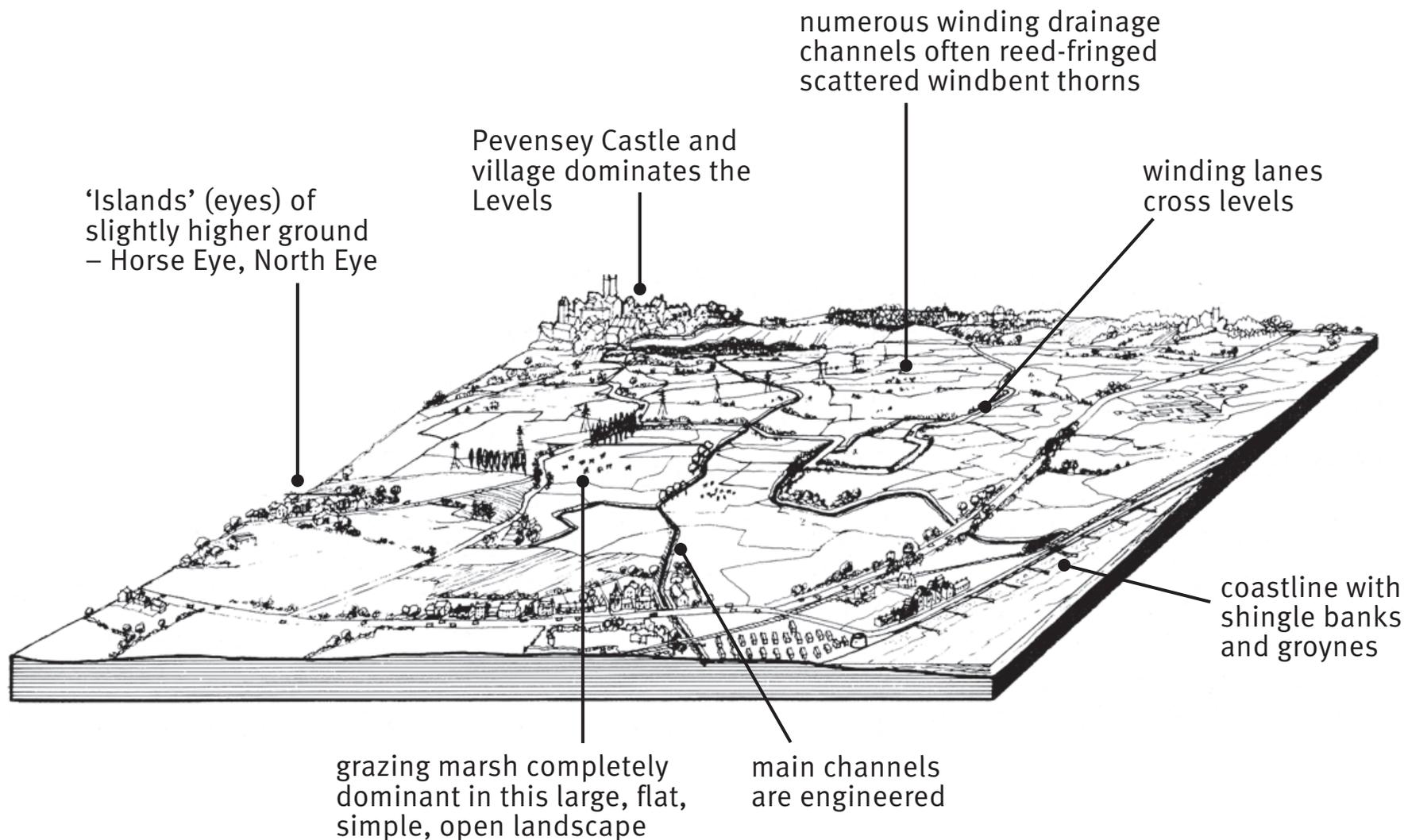
Pevensey Levels



25 Pevensey Levels Landscape Character Area



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- A. Landscape Description
- B. Landscape Evaluation
- C. Vision and Strategy
- D. Guidelines for Managing Change

A Landscape Description

Key Landscape Characteristics

- Extensive flat open grazing marsh as one of the largest continuous wet grazing systems (3500ha) in south east England.
- Unspoilt and distinctive rural character with no large urban intrusions.
- A sense of remoteness and tranquillity in the heart of the area with big skies and cries of wetland birds.
- Islands or 'eyes' of slightly higher ground e.g. Northeye and Horse Eye.
- Scattered farms and cottages generally associated with eyes or on the gentle spurs of higher ground which extend into the levels.
- Reed fringed winding river channels in open wetland pasture.
- Many of the main river channels have been straightened and are managed with engineered structures.
- Evidence of many centuries of human intervention to reclaim an area which was once salt marsh.
- An intricate pattern of manmade ditches as historic field enclosures and drainage systems.
- Few roads cross the area and windy lanes connect the scattered settlements.
- East to west byways connect the grazing marshes to the historic market town of Hailsham.
- Few trees and hedges but scattered willow and thorn scrub, typically wind sculpted nearer the coast.
- More tree cover on the higher ground which is important for containing development, typical species: ash, sycamore, beech and some large conifers.
- The importance of the area as a habitat is reflected in the designations of SSSI and Ramsar site across much of the area and 182ha are a National Nature Reserve.
- The historic settlement of Pevensey and the impressive medieval castle dominate the landscape to the south.
- Herstmonceux castle and church sit on a spur overlooking the north of the area.
- The Registered parkland and gardens at Herstmonceux Castle.
- Wartling village and church on a prominent spur overlooking the levels.
- An extensive shingle beach and coastline vulnerable to erosion and subject to intervention such as redistribution of the shingle and sea defence groynes.
- Some distinctive historic manor and farm houses e.g. Ottenham Court, Glyndley Manor, Hankham Hall, Preisthawes and Marshfoot.
- Seaside settlement of variable quality, but with distinctive character, which has developed from holiday homes and caravans along the coast from Pevensey to Normans Bay.

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- War time artefacts and in particular pill boxes and tank traps are scattered across the area.
- The busy A259 trunk road crosses the southern part of the area separating the coastal marshes from the inland levels. Other B roads link the A259 with settlements to the north.
- The south coast railway runs across the southern part of the area.

Cultural Associations

Longleys organic farm was featured in the internationally renowned film *The Moo Man*.

The area was also renowned for smugglers as the remote coast and hinterland allowed them to come ashore unnoticed.

Pevensey and the surrounding area have featured in or been the inspiration for novels by Rudyard Kipling, Salman Rushdie, George Gissing, Peter Cheney and C.S. Lewis.

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Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- Extensive flat open grazing marsh as one of the largest wet grazing systems (3500ha) in south east England.
- A sense of remoteness and tranquillity in the heart of the area with big skies and cries of wetland birds.
- Islands or 'eyes' of slightly higher ground e.g. Northeye and Horse Eye.
- Historic farms and cottages generally associated with eyes or on the gentle spurs of higher ground which extend into the levels.
- Reed fringed winding river channels in open wetland pasture.
- An intricate pattern of manmade ditches as historic field enclosures and drainage systems.
- Few roads cross the area and windy lanes connect the scattered settlements.
- East to west byways connect the grazing marshes to the historic market town of Hailsham.
- The historic settlement of Pevensey and the impressive medieval castle dominate the landscape to the south.
- Herstmonceux Castle and church sit on a spur overlooking the north of the area.
- The Registered parkland and gardens at Herstmonceux Castle
- Wartling village and church sit on a prominent spur overlooking the levels.
- An extensive shingle beach and coastline vulnerable to erosion and subject to intervention such as redistribution of the shingle and sea defence groynes.
- War time artefacts and in particular pill boxes and tank traps are scattered across the area with Napoleonic Martello towers on the coast.

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B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

This is largely unspoilt and pleasant rural landscape with few intrusive features and areas of relative remoteness. The Pevensey Levels area is generally a well managed pastoral landscape. The landscape is largely intact with many historic features which provide a sense of place and local distinctiveness. The nationally important wildlife designations over much of the area have improved the management of the levels and water bodies. The scattered hamlets and villages have a strong sense of place and there are few intrusive suburbanising elements to detract from this. The coastal areas have a scatter of typical holiday development but these areas are generally well managed and have a seaside character of their own.

The A259 is the busiest road in the area but does not detract from the more remote parts of the levels or the coast. The rural lanes serving the coast can be congested and busy at the height of summer. The coastal habitats on the shingle are in good condition where not disturbed by coastal defence works.

Forces for Change impacting on positive Landscape Attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- Expansion of the surrounding urban areas of Hailsham and Stone Cross.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- The spread of plot land and holiday chalet development along the coast.
- Expansion of caravan and mobile home parks, especially on the coast.
- Water quality in the channels and ditches and Nitrite Vulnerable Zone in the west of the area.
- Loss of vegetation along rivers and dykes due to maintenance regimes, agricultural intensification and drainage works.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- Farm Environment Plans, much of the land is under Higher Level Stewardship Agreements and is farmed organically.
- A Nitrate Vulnerable Zone covers much of the area and a Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative extends across the area.
- Intrusive modern farm buildings.

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- Positive management of habitats and water quality and levels in ditches due to the internationally important wildlife interests.
- Increasing traffic on the A259 and rat running on rural lanes.
- Power lines crossing the open landscape.
- The continuing reinforcement of man made coastal defences to protect property along the coast.
- Invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (*Crassula helmsii*), Parrots Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*), Mink and European Marsh Frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophthora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Improving water quality in the Waller's Haven catchment and in the Nitrate Vulnerable Zone which extends into the North West corner of the area.
- Rising sea levels increasing the demand to build defences to protect coastal properties.

Future Forces for Change

- Expansion of Polegate, Stone Cross and Hailsham encroaching into the edges of the character area, urban edges are highly visible from the open landscapes.
- Increasing traffic on rural lanes and in villages impacting on tranquillity and on the rural character where passing vehicles cause erosion to banks and verges.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks and allotments for local food production.

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Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch,
- Changes in ground flora which produce distinctive seasonal displays.
- Increased magnitude of storm events changing the character of the coastal areas.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Phytophthora of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.

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C Vision and Strategy

**Table 4 Vision
(as an update of the County Landscape Assessment 2009)**

A tranquil landscape of predominantly green meadow pasture. A sense of wildness and remoteness in the more isolated areas. An open landscape with wide uninterrupted views. The setting of local landscape features conserved and enhanced including historic buildings and their settings. Historic designed landscapes conserved. Conserved and enhanced reed beds, channels and ditches supporting rich flora and fauna.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies “*what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?*”

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the Biodiversity Opportunity Area in the Pevensey Levels and improving habitat continuity.
2. Protect and manage existing habitats and plan for restoration of ditches and riverside vegetation to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
3. Plan for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure (GI) on the eastern fringes of Hailsham and Stone Cross as a buffer to the open levels from the expanding built up areas.
4. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.
5. Ensure that the expansion of settlements of Hailsham, Polegate and Stone Cross does not encroach on the visual quality or character of the levels.
6. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside.
7. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
8. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
9. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and landscape features.
10. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity but also adaptation to climate change influences.

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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

The main pressures for development in this character area will be the expansion of the surrounding settlements of Hailsham, Polegate and Stone Cross. There will be some demand to accommodate housing for the rural populations in the smaller rural settlements. The coastal areas are vulnerable to rising sea levels and coastal flooding leading to demands for intrusive coastal defence developments. The area is under pressure as a potential area for sustainable energy schemes such as wind farm and solar array developments. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above. Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-10 above.

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Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
<p>Countryside and Farmland Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc.</p> <p>Expansion of caravan sites on the coast and elsewhere.</p> <p>Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings.</p> <p>Loss of traditional pasture and wetland meadows.</p> <p>Clearance of natural vegetation from drainage channels and ditches.</p> <p>Low water levels and poor water quality in some drains and streams.</p> <p>Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives.</p> <p>Damage to verges on narrow country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic.</p> <p>Flooding of farmland and properties affecting the viability of farms.</p> <p>Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality.</p>	<p>Countryside and Farmland Encourage farm conservation schemes to conserve the landscape structure of wetland, ditches and streams on the levels. Conserve hedges, trees and small woods on the higher ground. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features.</p> <p>Maintain water levels in drains and ditches.</p> <p>Conserve and enhance byways and rural lanes. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and caravan sites.</p> <p>Enhance the biodiversity value of wet meadows, drainage and stream channels.</p> <p>Extend organic and catchment sensitive farming initiatives.</p> <p>Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change.</p> <p>Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management and by identifying areas which can provide flood alleviation.</p> <p>Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture.</p>	<p>Provisioning services Water availability Food production</p> <p>Regulating services (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation)</p> <p>Water quality and protected aquifers.</p> <p>Regulating water flow and preventing flooding</p> <p>Soil conservation and erosion control</p> <p>Habitat and species resilience to climate change</p> <p>Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees, reed beds and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO₂.</p>

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
	<p>Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.</p>	<p>Cultural Services Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity</p>
<p>Trees and Woodland Woods and tree belts are not in positive management. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases A Trees and Woodland Grant Scheme covers Wartling Wood Invasive species competing with natives e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed.</p>	<p>Woodland Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development. Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate to habitat.</p>	<p>Provisioning Fuel (woodfuel for local communities from woodland management)</p> <p>Regulating Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO₂. Habitat and species resilience to climate change</p> <p>Cultural Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity</p>

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
<p>Pevensey Levels</p> <p>Deterioration and loss of habitats</p> <p>Loss of river and streamside vegetation.</p> <p>Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds</p> <p>Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of wet meadows reducing the biodiversity value.</p> <p>Improvements to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness.</p> <p>Loss of wetland meadows to arable farming.</p> <p>Invasive species of plants and animals which compete with native flora and fauna.</p>	<p>Other key Habitats</p> <p>Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation.</p> <p>Extend organic and catchment sensitive farming initiatives.</p> <p>Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats.</p> <p>Farm stewardship schemes to maximise biodiversity.</p> <p>Opportunities to maximise reed bed creation.</p> <p>Encourage measures to improve water quality.</p> <p>Continue to control the spread and prevent introduction of invasive species of animals and plants.</p>	<p>Provisioning</p> <p>Nature's larder of free berries and herbs.</p> <p>Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops.</p> <p>Regulating</p> <p>Habitat and species resilience to climate change</p> <p>Cultural</p> <p>Appreciation of nature</p> <p>Educational value</p> <p>Biodiversity</p>

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
<p>Other Key Habitats Herstmonceux Parkland SSSI</p> <p>Coastal vegetated shingle.</p> <p>Loss and deterioration of species rich shingle habitats due to coastal erosion works and recreational pressure.</p>	<p>Encourage land management practices through the existing stewardship agreements to maximise biodiversity.</p> <p>Protect the remaining shingle habitats and seek opportunities to create new ones.</p>	<p>Provisioning Nature's larder of free berries and herbs.</p> <p>Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops.</p> <p>Regulating Habitat and species resilience to climate change</p> <p>Cultural Appreciation of nature</p> <p>Educational value</p> <p>Biodiversity</p>

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
<p>Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS (glossary) Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Pressure on sensitive wetland habitats Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Need for improved access to natural green space for all users both close to homes and in the wider countryside. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.</p>	<p>Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population in surrounding towns (Hailsham, Polegate and Stone Cross). Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Maximise opportunities provided by the coast for access and recreation. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes.</p>	<p>Provisioning Protected farmland.</p> <p>Regulating Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration</p> <p>Cultural Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity</p>
<p>Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Can detract from historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Can cause soil erosion.</p>	<p>Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow and ditch network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production as part of multifunctional GI network.</p>	<p>Provisioning Grazing</p> <p>Regulating Habitat and species resilience to climate change</p> <p>Cultural Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness</p>

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
<p>The character of the villages</p> <p>Gentrification</p> <p>Urbanisation</p> <p>Development pressures</p> <p>Gradual loss and deterioration of Heritage features.</p> <p>Fast traffic on rural lanes</p>	<p>Protect and Enhance the character of the villages</p> <p>Encourage the production of Neighbourhood plans which incorporate village design guides.</p> <p>Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place.</p> <p>Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting.</p> <p>Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans.</p> <p>Consider traffic management on rural lanes.</p>	<p>Provisioning</p> <p>Local amenities and facilities.</p> <p>Regulating</p> <p>Use of sustainable materials</p> <p>Habitat and species resilience to climate change</p> <p>Water quality and protected aquifers.</p> <p>Regulating water flow and preventing flooding</p> <p>Cultural</p> <p>Sense of Place and local distinctiveness</p> <p>Heritage assets</p>
<p>Flood management and SUDS schemes?</p> <p>Coastal flooding.</p> <p>Flash floods and run off.</p> <p>Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water.</p>	<p>Flood management and SUDS schemes?</p> <p>Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains.</p> <p>Resist further development in areas at risk of coastal flooding.</p> <p>Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats</p> <p>Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features.</p> <p>Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.</p>	<p>Provisioning</p> <p>Water conservation</p> <p>Regulating</p> <p>Flood control</p> <p>Protection of aquifers</p> <p>Cultural</p> <p>Sense of Place and local distinctiveness</p> <p>Amenity and recreation</p> <p>Biodiversity</p>

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Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

ANGS: Accessible Natural Green Space Natural England - Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Clunch Barn: constructed of a building material composed of hardened clay or chalk marl.
Ecosystem Services: The services provided by nature which support living systems and can be evaluated.

Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

Local Nature Reserve: Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance for biodiversity designated under the Ramsar Convention.
SNCI or Local Site: a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.