

**CRAWLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
DRAFT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT –
OCTOBER 2012**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Crawley Landscape Character Assessment is to conserve and enhance the distinctive characteristics of the landscape surrounding & UDZOH\ 7KH DUHD FRYHUHG FDQ EH GHVFULEHG DV & U for which the National Planning Policy Framework states the following:

³ WDNH DFFRXQW RI WKH GLIIHUHQW WJHROHV DQG FKDUDF recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and VXSSRUWLQJ WKULYLQJ UXUDO FRPPXQLWLV ZLWKLQ L

³ 7KH SODQQLQJ V\ VWHP VKRXOG FRQWULEXWH WR DQG HQYLURQPHQW E\ « SURWHFWLQJ DQG MEKSLQV LQJ

: LWK D FOHDU XQGHVWDQGLQJ RI WKH & UDZOH\ V ODQ taken and change can be managed in ways that conserve and enhance the setting of Crawley.

1.1 What is Landscape Character and what are Landscape Character Assessments?

Landscape Character:

'a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse'.

Put simply, landscape character is that which makes an area unique.

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is an approach to understanding the differences between landscapes, and can serve as a framework for decision-making that respects local distinctiveness. It is a way of 'unpacking' the landscape and understanding how its distinctive elements contribute to sense of place. As such, LCA is a useful tool for engaging stakeholders in identifying the characteristics that b1 i 0 0 1 12r()-4(can)3()a -4(t)6(t)-4(r)-3(acteacte.6(w)15m(t)-4or()-4[])

Land management decisions by landowners, farmers, statutory bodies and the local authorities themselves have a fundamental impact on the landscape. This assessment compliments the landscape character assessments undertaken by surrounding local authorities and the West Sussex land management guidelines which seek to influence landowners involved in managing land in ways that benefit landscape character:

- f* Inform decision-making on land management issues and the targeting of resources.
- f* Assist in targeting significant increases in the areas of semi-natural habitats.
- f* Contribute to setting priorities for Environmental Stewardship Agri-Environmental Schemes.
- f* Assist in setting strategic environmental improvement priorities.
- f* Form the basis for the development of urban fringe strategies.
- f* Assist with strategies for woodland management and creation including priorities for woodland grant schemes.
- f* Assist with the development of indicators to monitor landscape change.
- f* Encourage the conservation and enhancement of biological diversity, supporting the objectives and actions of biodiversity action plans.
- f* Provide a basis for influencing land management on major estates and land holdings.

1.3 Relationship with Landscape Character Assessments

England has been divided into areas with similar landscape character, called National Character Areas. Crawley

The Spatial Hierarchy of Landscape Character Areas/Types.

The table above is also shown spatially in the Crawley context as Figures 3 and 4

1.4 Approach and M

drainage, soils, land use, vegetation and habitats, biodiversity, field and woodland patterns and types, settlement pattern, communications,, historic landscape, townscape character and archaeology.

1.4.2 Characterisation

This stage of the assessment identifies maps and describes areas of different or distinctive from the other.

Landscape character types are identified. These have broadly similar patterns of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field pattern in every area that it occurs. E.g. arable farmlands, wooded ridges, etc

Landscape character areas draw out the individually distinctive features. It may share the same generic characteristics with landscape types in other areas but has its own individual character and identity. Landscape areas take on specific names such as Mole Farmlands or Worth Forest.

Landscape Character Assessments have been completed by the districts surrounding Crawley. West Sussex County Council has also completed a LCA of the County which contains landscape character types. This, along with a LCA completed for the north and west of Crawley as part of the Urban Rural Fringe Study (2006) and the character study of the town and surrounding areas and outside the borough boundary.

This study will rely largely on existing information from these studies including typologies and areas to characterise areas within Crawley this will be shaped further through consultation with stakeholders.

1.4.3 Classification and Description

This step defines landscape character types and/or areas and maps their extent followed by clear descriptions of their character. Existing information was used to do this as the landscape within Crawley is an extension of other character areas. Existing character areas were refined to focus specifically on the areas within Crawley and further locally distinctive description was added. This was particularly for Areas 1 and 6 which have a large extent of countryside within the Borough boundary. Areas 2 to 5 are assessments of the urban edge character and access to the countryside. This is to avoid

1.4.4 Making Judgements

For the purposes of consultation draft judgements have been made which are set out under the Objective, Guidelines and Enhancement sections of each Character Area. These have been formed through officer consideration of

This stage is about challenging the draft judgements and creating new objectives, guidelines and opportunities for enhancement.

Shaping the objectives:

Define an objective for each character area. What is the balance between the following objectives for each character area/urban edge?

- f* Conservation and maintenance
- f* Enhancement of existing character
- f* Restoration of character
- f* Creation of a new character
- f* Combination

Challenging and identifying issues.

- f* What are the consequences of current land use trends and development pressures for the area?
- f* What are the effects of predicted change on key characteristics, negative and positive?

Shaping the planning guidelines and enhancement opportunities.

Depending on the objective of the area, the guidelines should reflect what should be maintained, protected and/or enhanced?

- f* What are the threats to the key characteristics as a result of adverse consequences of change?
- f* What guidelines are required to counter threats and realise opportunities?
- f* Opportunities for enhancement where there is beneficial change.

2.0 CRAWLEY AND ITS SETTING

2.1 Introduction

7 K L V V H F W L R Q S U R Y L G H V D Q X Q G H U V W D Q G L Q J R I W K H M
landscape setting to inform the identifying and describing of the distinctive character areas/edges. It is essential to have this information to progress to a stage where judgements can be made to define the objectives and planning and enhancement guidelines. The Local Plan maps show designated sites and features within and surrounding the town.

2.2 Geology, landform and soils

Crawley is sited at the junction of the Low and High Weald Character Areas (as defined by the Countryside Agency). The Low Weald located to the north, west and encompassing the urban extent of Crawley is typically low lying to gently undulating. This contrasts with the steep ridges and valleys of the High Weald to the south and east.

The underlying geology has had a strong influence on the development of the rolling landform and landscape character. The rolling landform (Figure 2), combined with the extensive pattern of trees, woods and forests, creates a relatively enclosed landscape with few vantage points with panoramic views across the landscape or town.

Man made landform features include the Arun Valley Railway Line which crosses the lower section of the study area (generally at grade) running north east to south west linking the settlements of Crawley, Horsham and Billingshurst to the south west.

2.3 Landuse

The landscape surrounding Crawley is deeply rural in places, with woodland a prominent feature of the landscape setting of Crawley. This is influenced by the presence of Crawley, Gatwick Airport, industrial activities and urban fringe land uses.

To the north of the town there is a large industrial estate known as Manor Royal. The area is devoted to light industry and offices with a number of hotels providing accommodation for Gatwick Airport users. Within the wider setting of the Industrial estate there are a number of farms and a network of arable fields. Some fields are also used for grazing horses.

In close proximity to the industrial area to the immediate north of the Area of Study is Gatwick Airport; this was sited on the flatter plain between Crawley and Horley to the north.

There are a number of golf courses surrounding Crawley; these include courses near Ifield to the west, Cottessmore to the south and Shipley Bridge to the north near Gatwick Airport. Two country parks lie south of Crawley, Buchan and Tilgate Country Parks.

2.4 Access

Crawley has good communications via a network of major and minor roads including the M23 (north to the M25 and London), the A23 (to Brighton and the south coast) and the A264 (west to Horsham).

The town is also well connected to the railway system via the Horsham and Arun Valley line (London to Arundel) and Brighton Main Line (London to Brighton). There are three train stations within Crawley located in the Town Centre, Three Bridges and Ifield.

Gatwick International Airport is located to the north of the town. Some 90 airlines operate services to around 200 destinations. The airport is well connected internally via a monorail train which links the two terminals and externally via a comprehensive rail network (Gatwick Express a high speed link between Gatwick Airport and London Victoria), a road system and a network of bus services.

Fastway is a bus based public transport service linking Crawley with nearby Horley and Gatwick Airport. It is a rapid transit system which uses sections of guided bus way and dedicated bus lanes. This is in addition to Metrobus which is a comprehensive local bus service providing access across Crawley and West Sussex.

An extensive network of public rights of way and cycle paths provide a framework for pedestrian access and recreation to and within the countryside. These links are particularly strong to the west and north-west sides of Crawley where public rights of way run directly from the urban area out into attractive countryside. Opportunities for pedestrian access from Crawley to the countryside to the east and south of the town are more limited where the

The Sussex Biodiversity Partnership Woodland Habitat Action Plan (September 2000) contains ambitious objectives and targets for woodland restoration and planting to 2010 and, in some cases, beyond.

Hedgerows

Crawley has an extensive network of Ancient Hedgerows particularly to the north of the Borough between Crawley and Gatwick Airport. These are an important feature of the landscape

The Sussex Biodiversity Partnership Hedgerows Habitat Action Plan (June 2004) inter alia places high priority on identifying the current extent of ancient and/or species-rich hedges and encouraging the favourable management of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.

Grassland/Heathland

Natural England has located an area of undetermined grassland within Tilgate Country Park. This is the area covered by Tilgate Forest Golf Centre which was built in 1982. Undetermined grassland consists of semi-natural grassland sites which were on the original grassland inventory (1979-1997) but which have not yet been allocated to a specific Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority grassland type due to absence of sufficient supporting information.

Arable land

Land use in the wider area is predominantly pastoral due to the heavy, poorly drained soils; however there are pockets of arable farmland on the lighter soils on higher ground or where drainage has been improved. Quality of agricultural land is classified from 1 ±highest quality to 5 ±lowest quality. The quality of agricultural land surrounding Crawley is Grade 3 and 4.

Wildlife sites

There are a number of designated wildlife sites within and around Crawley including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) and Local Nature Reserves (LNR).

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four adjacent to or very close to Crawley:

- f House Copse ±West of Bewbush
- f Buchan Hill Ponds ±next to Target Hill/Southgate
- f Worth Forest ±South of Tilgate Country Park
- f Glovers Wood ±West of Gatwick Airport (just outside Borough Boundary)

There are five Local Nature Reserves within Crawley all of which are located on the urban/rural fringe:

Target Hill Park (TQ 250347), formerly a refuse tip, is a large area of grassland, scrub and birch woodland on a hill top site with fine views to the North Downs. The steep east and west slopes and the terraced north slope are covered in developing scrub and young woodland.

Tilgate Forest (TQ 287352). Habitats include broadleaved woodland, coniferous woodland, lowland heathland, and tall herb and fern. The site is also of historical interest with mine-pits associated with the medieval iron industry.

Grattons Park (TQ 290382) is located in Pound Hill North. The main habitats in this extensive area are broad-leaved woodland which flanks a stream for most of its course, with an extensive flood meadow nearby.

Waterlea Meadow (TQ 287363) is a valuable wildlife site in Furnace Green. It has flower rich meadows on either side of a meandering stream. The area remains wet for much of the year.

Broadfield Park

Across the A23 from Tilgate Park, Broadfield Park is set in the grounds of Broadfield House, a Grade II Listed Building dating back to 1830. The parkland around the house comprises an attractive mix of landscaped lawns and a variety of ponds and meadows. Further downstream the valley has been dammed to form a small lake.

Willoughby Fields (TQ 257387) is located in Langley Green. This site, previously a lowland farm has changed to accommodate a sports field, but nevertheless there is valuable flower-rich grassland alongside the pitches, bounded by thick hedges, which are managed for nature conservation. Two brooks, flanked by trees and shrubs form the eastern and western boundaries.

Area 1 – Upper Mole Farmlands Rural Fringe

This area is located in-between Gatwick and Crawley with 90% lying within Crawley Borough and 10% within Horsham.

Key Characteristics

- f* Rural landscape strongly influenced by proximity of Crawley to south and Gatwick Airport to north.
- f* Variable field pattern and land use divided by hedgerows with small farm ponds.
- f* Mixed land use ranging from industrial units and hotels/motels along the A2219, pastoral and arable across the wider area with a concentration of playing fields to the south and a caravan park to the north.
- f* Flat to very gently undulating landscape, crossed by the upper tributaries of the River Mole.
- f* Generally confined views with the exception of localised high point at Rowley Farm.
- f*

Edge 2 – West of Ifield Rural Fringe

7 KLV DUHD OLHV DGMDFHQW WR ,ILHOG DQG LV S+DUW RI +RU Upper Mole Farmlands. A small amount of the area lies within Crawley Borough consisting of Ifield conservation area, Ifield Brook Wood and Meadows SNCI and Rusper Road Playing fields.

Planning and Land Management Guidelines for the Upper Mole Farmlands are set RXW LQ +RUVKDP ¶V ODQGVFDSH FKDUDFWHU DVVHVVP HQW 7 considered to be a continuation of this character area and therefore proposals within Area 2 must be in accordance with +RUVKDP ¶V JXLGHOLJ QSHW ASD SHQGL [% guidelines in this section.

Key Characteristics of area within Crawley

- f* Flat to gently undulating landscape, crossed by the upper tributaries of the River Mole.
- f* Small to medium scale irregular field pattern divided by thick hedgerows.
- f* Predominantly pasture farmland.
- f* Small blocks of woodlands and copses.
- f* Distinctive field trees and farm ponds.
- f* Country lanes bounded by hedgerows.
- f* Noise and visual intrusion in the north and east of the area due to proximity of Crawley and Gatwick airport.
- f* Golf Course and Country Club near Ifield.

Access/approaches and gateways

This area is well connected through a series of public rights of way particularly around Ifield conservation area. Two minor roads are within the area, Rusper Road to the south and Charlwood road to the north. Ifield train station is a 5 minute walk from the urban/rural fringe.

Character of the Urban Edge

The relationship between the urban area and countryside is a mixture of positive and neutral.

- f* The immediate rural setting of Ifield Conservation area and the SNCI is attractive and integrates well with the town. This area provides public access and recreational opportunities between urban and rural.
- f* Further south where Ifield Golf course meets the urban area the integration between housing and countryside is not feathered as well. However, the urban area is screened by vegetation and a public footpath runs from the urban area around the golf course and into the countryside.

Landscape Value

6 1 & , OLVWHG EXLOG LQJV 7 3 2 ¶V d Conservation Area, R+G ODQG DQG , located within the urban edge within the borough boundary. Also close by are Ifield Park and Langley Lane ASEQ. This area has a medium to high landscape value.

Landscape Character/Visual Sensitivity

Overall the area has a medium to high sensitivity to change. Thick hedgerows, hedgerow trees and occasional woodlands to some extent reduce its visual sensitivity which is low to medium.

The area is sensitive to:

- f* Large scale commercial and residential development
- f* Expansion of horse paddocks
- f* Small scale incremental changes eroding rural character

Landscape Condition

The landscape condition is considered to be declining due to increasing visual/noise intrusion in some parts.

Area Objective

This area plays an important role in providing recreational opportunities and public access to the countryside for residents of Ifield and the wider community.

Planning Guidelines:

- f* This area of countryside and the positive relationship between the urban edge and the rural landscape is a special quality of Crawley which should be preserved.
- f* The high value sites and features should be protected.
- f* Proposals should follow the wider planning and land management guidelines of the Upper Mole Farmlands character area.

Enhancement:

- f* The high value sites should be enhanced and the function of the working rural landscape maintained.
- f* Access and appropriate rural recreational opportunities for the residents of Crawley should be encouraged.

Edge 3 – West of Gossops Green/Bewbush Rural Fringe

This area lies to west of Bewbush and Gossops Green neighbourhoods and comprises of two landscape character areas that lie within Horsham ±Warnham and Faygate Vale and Warnham and Rusper Wooded Ridge (Appendix B). Unlike Area 2 the character areas meet the urban area rather abruptly which makes it unnecessary

Edge 4 – South of Broadfield into Buchan Hill Forest and Fringes

This area lies to the south of Broadfield neighbourhood and is within the St Leonards Forest landscape Character Area. Approximately 21 hectares of AONB lies within Crawley which is considered a continuation of the St Leonards Forest character area. Proposals on land beyond the BUAB in this location must be in accordance with Horsham Districts Landscape Guidelines (Appendix A) as well as those set out here.

Key Characteristics

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Assessment. In summary, the area is heavily wooded, with flat top ridges and steep sided ghylls. The forest cover and landform combine to create a strongly enclosed landscape.

Access, Approaches and Gateways

Public Rights of Way run from Broadfield out into Buchan Country Park towards Colgate and Pease Pottage. The area is bound to the east by the A23 and to the west by the A264. Both of these approaches are well treed which is consistent with the heavily wooded character of the area.

Character of the Urban Edge

The relationship between the urban area and countryside is negative. Pedestrian and cycle access to the countryside is generally blocked by the A264 which creates an abrupt barrier between the urban area and the Countryside. The two Public Rights of Way either side of target Hill cross the A264 by subway and bridge but do not allow wildlife to move across the A264. Green fingers of Ancient Woodland stretch from Broadfield House/Forest up to the A264 but no access across the road exists.

Landscape Value

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Archaeological sites, historic parks and gardens, a local nature reserve and tree preservation areas are present. These designations signify an area of high landscape value.

Landscape Character/Visual Sensitivity

Landscape character sensitivity is medium to high with the landscape in good condition with densely wooded areas and Buchan Country Park.

The lower lying areas along the A264 have low visual sensitivity where views are confined by higher ground and hedgerows, trees and dense woodland. Land at Pease Pottage is elevated and more exposed. This area has a medium to high visual sensitivity.

Area Objective

This is an area of high landscape value which should be accessible for residents to enjoy the quiet recreational opportunities that it provides.

Planning Guidelines

- f The green fingers and local nature reserve should be protected as they provide existing and potentially improved green infrastructure links for the purposes of access to the countryside and wildlife corridors.
- f Proposals should follow the wider planning and land management guidelines of the St Leonards Landscape Character Area.

- f* Proposals should not conflict with the High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives.
- f* The area should be preserved for quiet recreational opportunities.

Enhancement

- f* Improve and increase pedestrian/cycle access across the A264.
- f* Create wildlife corridors from Target Hill Local nature reserve over the A264.
- f* Open up the corridor of Ancient woodland to create a green finger for wildlife and pedestrian access from Southgate into Pease Pottage Forest.

Edge 5

- f* Tilgate Country Park and Worth Conservation Area/Worth Way SNCI should be protected for its high landscape value and potentially improved green infrastructure links to other areas.
- f* Proposals must be in accordance with the wider planning and land management guidelines of the Worth Forest and High Weald Plateau character areas

Enhancement

- f* Integration of Worth Conservation area and Worth Way SNCI into the countryside would greatly improve access for the public and wildlife movement.

3.1 General Guidelines

In addition to the guidelines contained in Section 3 which are specific to each character area, more general guidelines applicable across all the landscape character areas are set out below. These must be taken into consideration when examining planning and landscape proposals beyond the Built-up Area Boundary.

General Development and Land Use Change Guidelines

Siting and design of development

- f* Ensure that buildings and infrastructure are located to avoid loss of important on-site views, and off site views towards features such as church towers, fine buildings or wider landscapes, as well as avoiding intrusion on sensitive ridgelines, visually prominent slopes, and damage