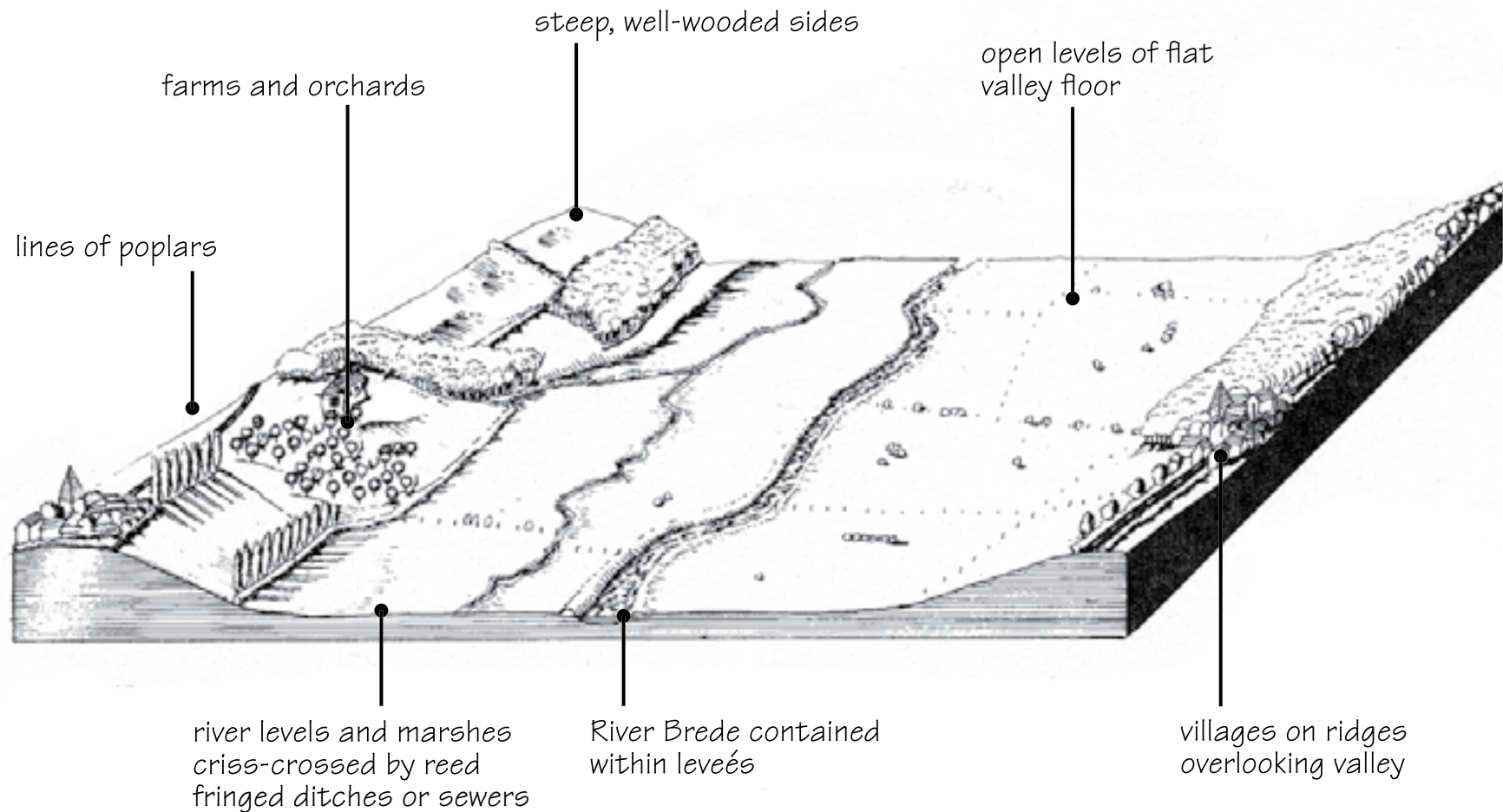




Relevant extracts from East Sussex County Landscape Assessment, East Sussex Country Council, 2010.

For Battle and Brede Landscape Partnership Scheme, Round 1 Application May 2013

Brede Valley



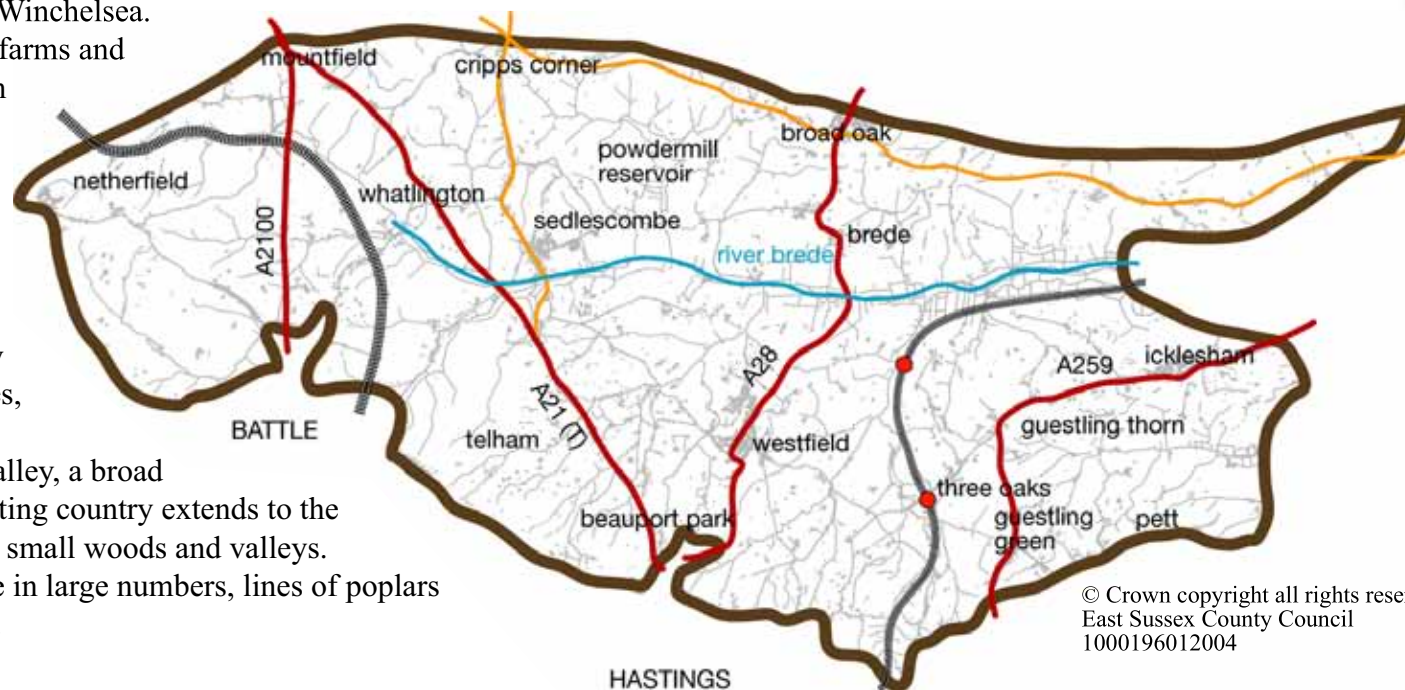
Brede Valley

The bold Brede valley runs from Netherfield in the West to Icklesham in the east. The well wooded sides are steep and contrast with the flat predominantly open levels on the valley floor. This is a landscape of long views. The expanses of uncluttered farmland are fundamental to the character and beauty of this landscape. There is a remoteness here which is rare in the South East today.



Characteristics

- River levels and marshes criss-crossed by reed fringed ditches or 'sewers'.
- Great uncomplicated vistas along the floodplains; flat river levels lead the eye towards Pett Levels and Winchelsea.
- Well-wooded sides with farms and orchards contrasting with flat, predominantly open levels on the valley floor.
- Greatest concentration of woodland around valley head.
- Quite steep sloped valley sides, patterned with trees, woods and farms.
- Southwest of the main valley, a broad belt of fairly low, undulating country extends to the Battle ridge, with ridges, small woods and valleys.
- Although not appropriate in large numbers, lines of poplars are part of the landscape.



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Brede Valley

Special features

- The villages of Brede, Udimore and Icklesham are on ridges overlooking the valley.
- Powdermill reservoir in the north-west is largely concealed by woodland.
- Designed parkland landscape at Beauport Park.
- Swans and herons feature in the landscape.

Problems, pressures, detracting features

- Extensive caravan and chalet developments.
- Coniferisation.
- The river has lost some of its scenic and wildlife value to flood defence schemes.
- Urban fringe problems to the north of Battle and Hastings, including: holiday and recreational developments, pylons, sheds and warehouses, new housing development and nurseries.
- Transport improvements to A21 and A259, and the junction between A21 and The Ridge at Hastings.
- Loss of traditional orchards.

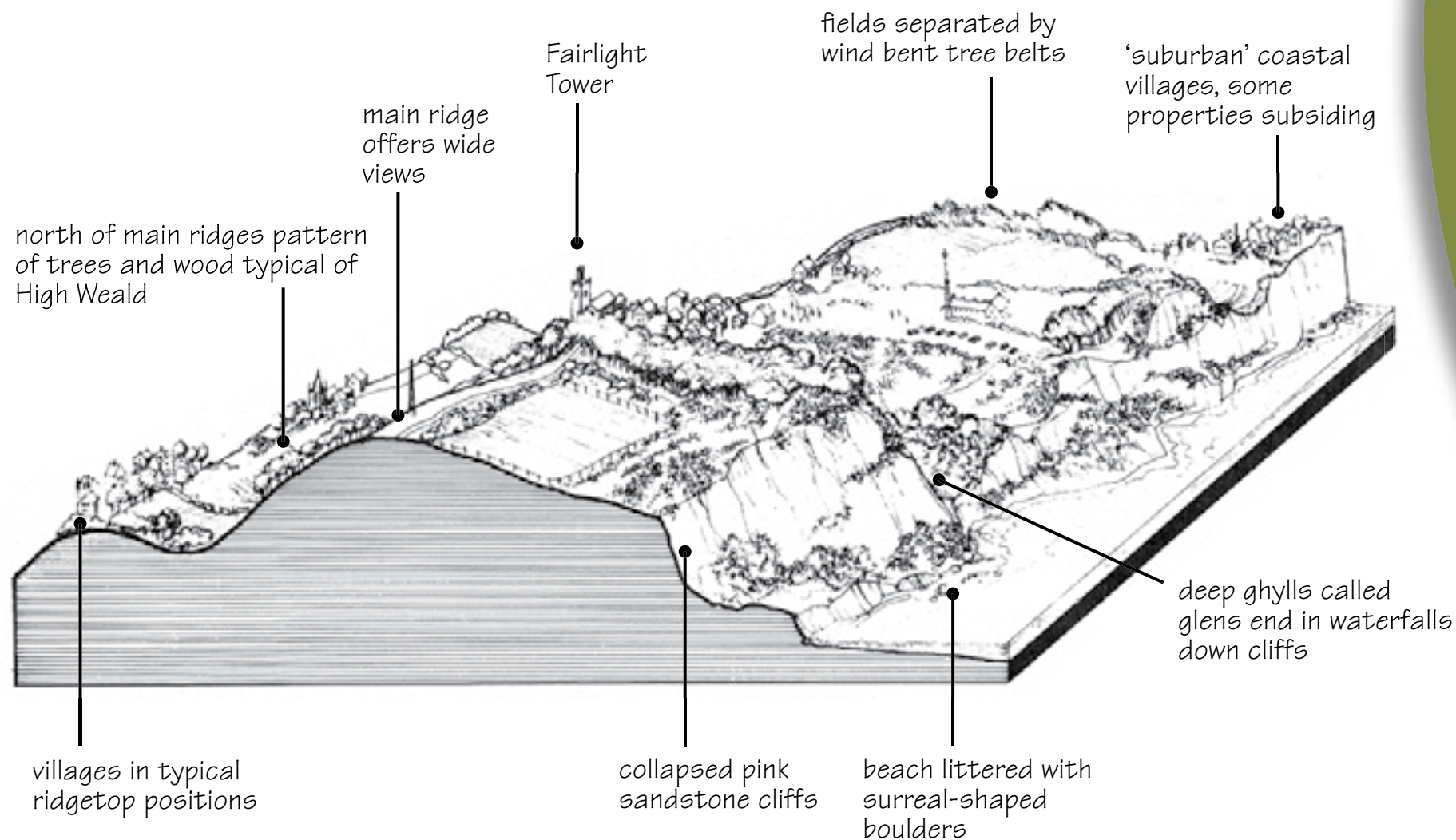
Vision

A quiet valley of long, open views, with the river winding amidst remote levels, set within a rolling and spacious countryside of fields, extensive woodland, farms and traditional orchards.

Landscape action priorities

- Exercise more rigorous control over caravan and chalet developments.
- Protect the naturalness of the valley by encouraging sensitive river management and the restoration of grazing and wetland under agricultural grant schemes.
- Replace conifers with broadleaves where possible.
- Strengthen the urban edge by means of tree planting and rigorous control of development on the slopes of the ridge.
- Consider traffic management and calming measures on the lanes near Hastings, with signage respecting rural character.
- Encourage conservation and restoration of traditional orchards.

High Wealden Coast

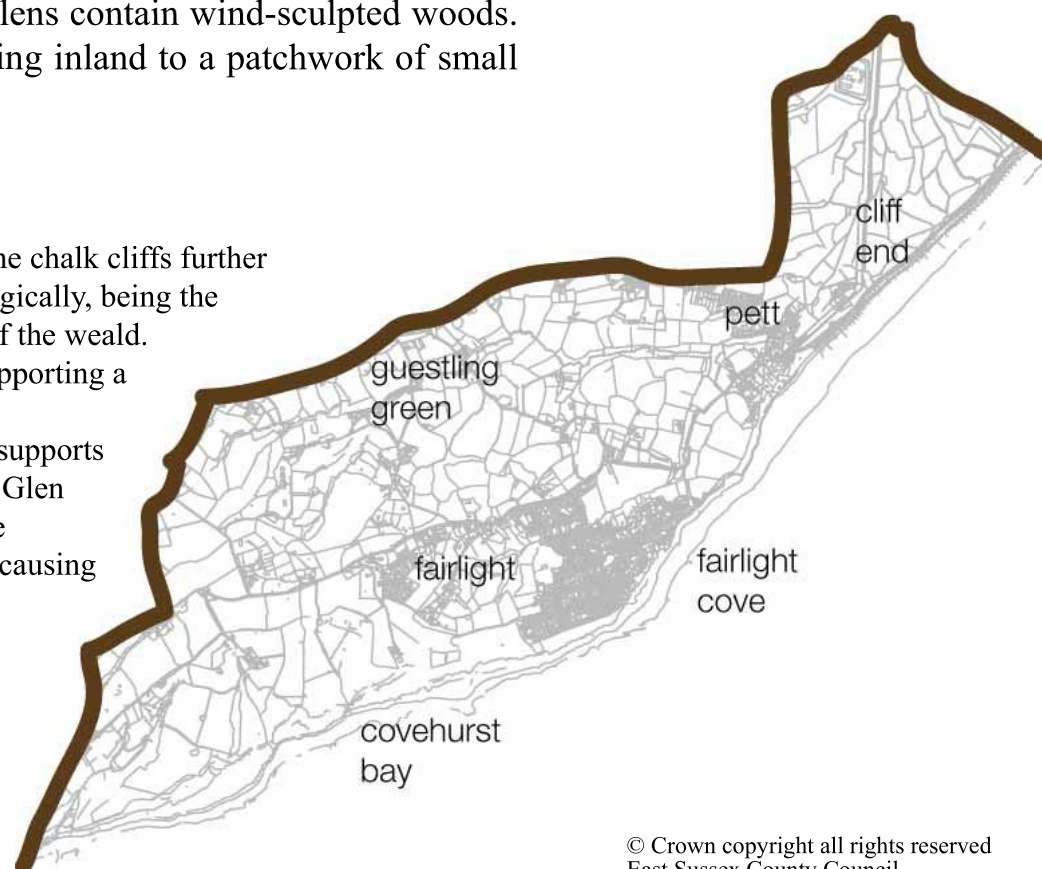


High Wealden Coast

This stretch of coast lies between the eastern edge of Hastings and Pett Levels. The Heathfield-Battle-Hastings ridge reaches the sea to form an invigorating coastline of highly distinctive character. Terraced, crumbling cliffs of soft sandstone are separated by deep ghylls (here called 'glens') which fall steeply to the sea, ending in cliffs and waterfalls. The glens contain wind-sculpted woods. Otherwise scrubby heathland is typical, grading inland to a patchwork of small fields, woodland wind-bent trees.

Characteristics

- Collapsed cliffs seem ungainly compared with the chalk cliffs further west. They are of outstanding significance geologically, being the best place to examine the geological evolution of the weald.
- The area is extremely important ecologically, supporting a number of rare species.
- The two glens are very different. Fairlight Glen supports 30m oaks whilst the vegetation of Ecclesbourne Glen rarely reaches 5 metres. Differing angles into the prevailing wind create different exposure levels causing stunting in Ecclesbourne Glen.
- Inland, the main ridge offers wide views north across the Brede Valley and east to Winchelsea, Rye, Dungeness and even the coast of France.
- Elsewhere fields separated by wind-bent tree belts are typical.
- On the sheltered north side of the main ridge the patchwork of fields and woods is typical of the High Weald.



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High Wealden Coast

Special features

- Fairlight church, a landmark for miles around.
- Inland the villages Fairlight, Guestling Green and Pett stand in typical ridge-top positions. However Fairlight Cove is a typical patch of coastal 'suburbia'.

Problems, pressures, detracting features

- Recreational pressure at Hastings Country Park is causing serious erosion of footpaths, and clutters such as signage, notices and furniture, which detracts from the sense of remoteness.
- An unfortunate mast competes with Fairlight Tower.
- Visual intrusion of caravan parks.
- The farmland behind the Country Park has been fragmented by piecemeal removal and decay of structural elements in the landscape such as hedgerows.

Vision

A dramatic and interesting coastline backed by a rich and intricate countryside, combining visitor and recreational facilities with remote and tranquil areas.

Landscape action priorities

- Conserve and manage the woodland, heath and grassland of the glens and Country Park generally; also the ancient woods inland.
- Carry out tree planting within and on the edges of caravan sites and car parks to reduce their impact on the landscape.
- Increase tree cover within and on the edges of Fairlight Cove and other developed areas.
- Conserve and strengthen the pattern of hedges, copses and shaws in the inland areas.
- Consider traffic management and calming measures on the lanes, together with the offroad paths to reduce conflict with walkers, cyclists and riders and enhance remoteness.
- Implement a landscape management policy that will conserve the special landscape character and ecological value of this area, in the face of recreational pressure.

The Levels

This is an open, expansive landscape of grazed wet meadows, criss-crossed by reed filled ditches. This windswept landscape of wide skies with few trees and hedges is framed in the south-west against the dramatic and distinctive backdrop of the South Downs and in the south east the High Weald. It inspires some of the most intense feelings of remoteness in south east England.

Location

This landscape area is not continuous but occurs in two separate units: the Eastbourne and the Pevensey Levels, and the Rye – Winchelsea area. Both areas are low-lying and are bounded on the south side by the sea, and they are adjacent to the High Weald.

The Pevensey Levels are surrounded by Eastbourne, Polegate, Hailsham and Bexhill. The Rye-Winchelsea area includes the Pett and Rye Harbour Levels and the most western part of the East Guldeford Level east of Rye. Pevensey Levels is the largest wetland tract in East Sussex. This area and Rye Harbour are of international importance for wildlife and have RAMSAR status.

Landform

The Levels are a dynamic landscape which is very young in geological terms. Their formation is dominated by the changing relationship between land and sea. The Levels are very low-lying with local landscape diversity added by ‘eyes’ – islands of high ground. Both the Eastbourne- Pevensey Levels and Pett and Rye Harbour areas were tidal inlets and in Roman times all land below 4m AOD was submerged at high tide. In the Middle Ages the eastward drift of coastal shingle cut them off and a salt marsh developed. From then onwards human influence on the drainage regime was the dominant force in the creation of the landscape of the Levels.

Camber Sands lie west of Rye Harbour and are the only sand dune system in East Sussex. This relatively narrow band of dunes is slowly accreting and is formed predominantly from sand brought down by the River Rother, the mouth of which lies to the west.

Historical impact of man

The landscape character is also young in historical terms. At the time of the Norman invasion in 1066 at Pevensey, much of the area was still a tidal inlet which was used for salt production. During the Middle Ages land began to be reclaimed to take advantage of the relatively fertile soils. Thus began a continuing effort to exploit the marsh.

Numerous drainage ditches were dug, creating a checkerboard of irregular fields fringed with reeds. For centuries a pattern of summer grazing and winter flooding was maintained, the drainage ditches acting as green fences. This continued until the 1960s when pump drainage was carried out and arable farming became more feasible. Aggregate extraction at Rye Harbour and Pett has created a series of lagoons which are of international importance as Rye Harbour Nature Reserve.

Woodland

The open windswept feel of The Levels is enhanced by the lack of trees and hedges. The few trees are mainly Willow and Hawthorn, these are often dramatically windsculpted.

Agriculture

The Levels are a large open landscape of predominantly pasture with some arable in drier areas. Cattle dominate to the west of Rye Harbour with sheep in the east.

Other habitats and features.

In addition to grazing marsh The Levels have a number of open waterways and reed filled waterways. Rye Harbour and Pett have lagoons and also substantial areas of vegetated shingle. The dune system at Camber is another special coastal habitat.

The Levels

Settlement pattern and routeways

The pattern of scattered settlements and open roads reflects the history of land reclamation from wetland. Isolated farmsteads are on higher ground or “eyes” this can be seen in placenames with the suffix ‘ey’ such as Manxey in Pevensey. Roads tend to be slightly raised above the surrounding land forming visual striations in the landscape.

Historic features

Military fortifications are scattered across the area. Pevensey and Camber castles were the sites of Roman military bases. Pevensey was expanded by the Normans, and Camber by Henry VIII. Martello Towers from the Napoleonic period are also evident.

Other details

Brick and flint buildings, weatherboarding and tiles are characteristic.

Remoteness

These flat low lying landscapes have very little tree cover, so the effects of disturbance are much more apparent. Fortunately much of the Levels are well away from sources of disturbance. This quiet simple landscape, with wide skies, the cries of wetland birds and the sighing of the wind in the reeds can provide some of the most intense feelings of remoteness in south east England.

Problems, pressure and change in the Levels

Agriculture: The change to pump drainage and arable agriculture has had a very detrimental effect on the natural ecology of the area; Modern agricultural buildings are particularly obvious in this open landscape.

Urban Influence Urban fringe problems: Urban edges are highly visible in this open landscape.

Development: Pressure for expansion of surrounding towns is a particular issue.

Recreation: Caravan sites, especially those at Camber Sands, are prominent in such open landscape. The coast in general is subject to intense visitor pressure with the dunes at Camber, a vulnerable habitat, receiving 20,000 visitors a day at the height of the season.

Water resources: Abstraction, pumped drainage as opposed to gravity drainage and pollution has had a marked effect on wetland and riparian habitats. There has been a large decrease in winter flooding resulting in a decline habitats for wetland birds. It has also meant that the seasonal refertilisation with alluvium has not occurred so arable production is maintained by artificial fertilizers. Nitrogen

run-off and spray drift from arable areas is increasing. Physical changes to watercourses, to increase discharge speed, mean that features such as meanders and shingle banks have been removed, thus further degrading riparian habitats.

Landscape Action Priorities for the Levels

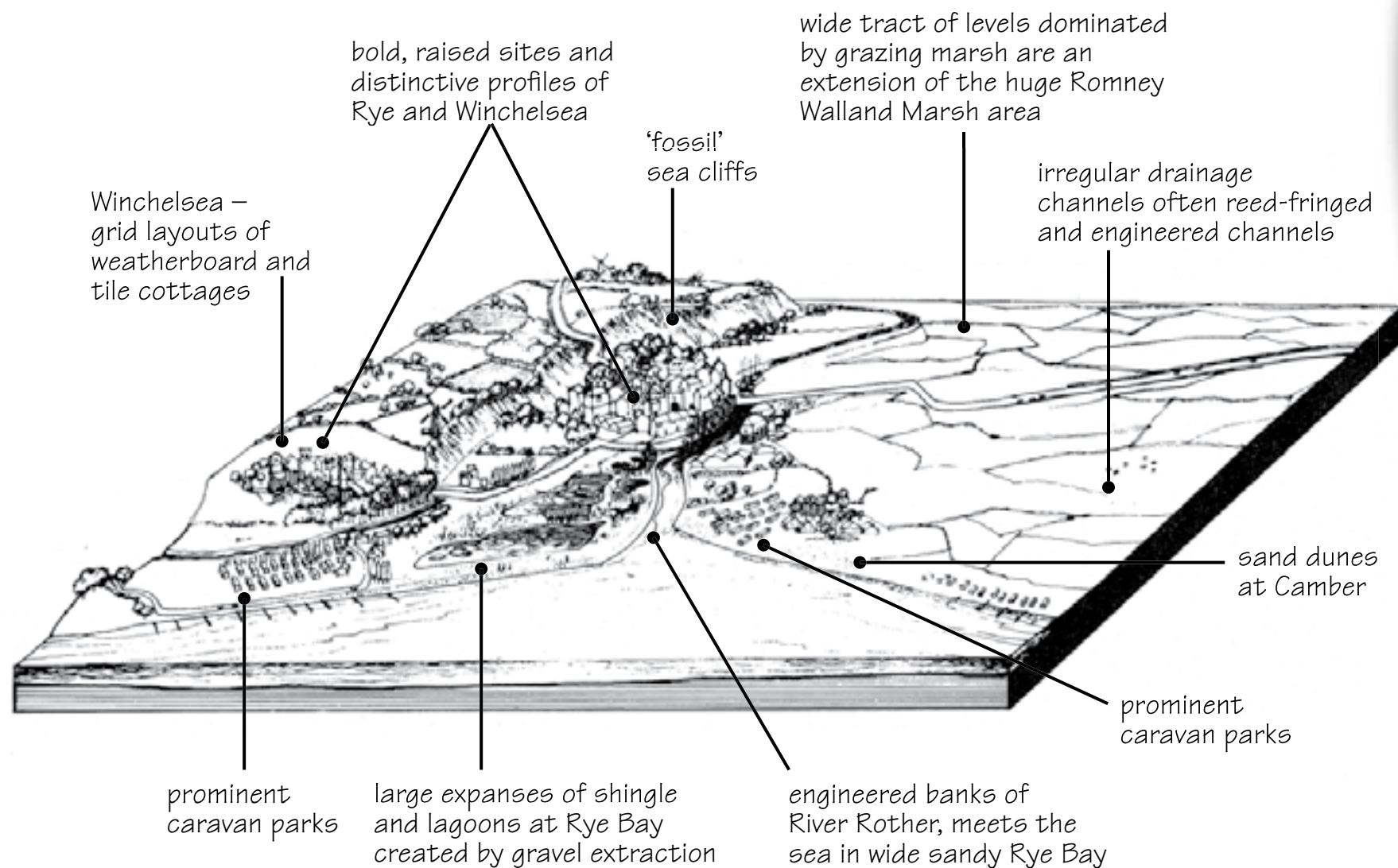
The distinctive network of ditches should be maintained and enhanced. Channels should be less frequently and less intensively dredged. Water levels need to be maintained and pollution should be controlled.

Encourage seasonal wetland flooding to create areas of damp pasture. Create new reedbeds on land with low nature conservation interest.

Tree planting around farm buildings, settlements and caravan sites would help minimise their effect on the open landscape.

Manage visitor pressure, diverting visitors away from vulnerable habitats.

Rye-Winchelsea Area

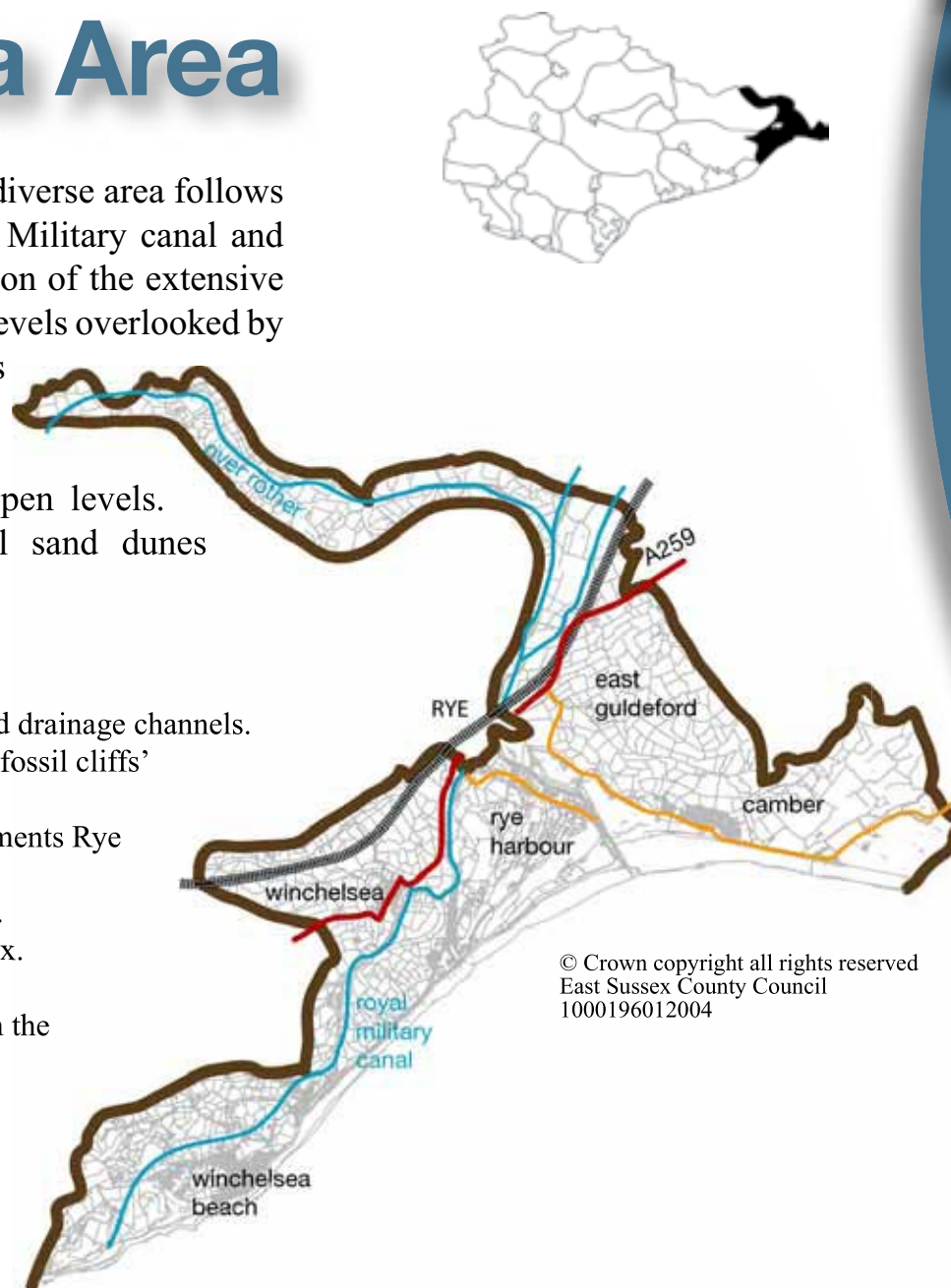


Rye - Winchelsea Area

Forming the most easterly corner of the county, this diverse area follows the River Rother to its confluence with the Royal Military canal and continues eastwards to Camber. This area is an extension of the extensive Romney – Walland Marsh and is a wide tract of coastal levels overlooked by bold spurs and ‘islands’ of high ground. The twin citadels of Rye and Winchelsea dominate the area from their bold, raised sites. The woods, farms and valleys of the rising ground contrast with the flat, open levels. The seaside village of Camber lies behind coastal sand dunes and an outstanding sandy beach.

Characteristics

- Open coastal and valley levels with straightened or engineered drainage channels.
- Dominated by spurs and ‘islands’ of high ground, with steep ‘fossil cliffs’ descending to Levels.
- Bold, raised sites and distinctive profiles of the historic settlements Rye and Winchelsea.
- Expanses of shingle with lakes resulting from gravel working.
- Dunes at Camber and wide sandy beach, unique in East Sussex.
- Coastal flood banks, shingle beaches and groynes.
- Pasture and sheep a feature, though much more arable than on the Pevensey Levels.
- Contrast between woods, farms and fields of higher ground and the flat, open levels with their sense of space and wide open skies.
- Extensive remote areas and strong sense of history.
- Views towards Dungeness power station and the wind farm at Little Cheney Court Farm.



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Rye - Winchelsea Area

Special features

- Winchelsea's historic grid layout of weatherboard and tile cottages, accessed through medieval gates.
- Steep wooded bluffs formed from the characteristic raised beach and "sea cliffs" isolated from the sea.
- Royal Military Canal, a broad quiet waterway.
- Camber Castle amidst the Levels.
- Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, an extensive area of lakes in old gravel workings. The sounds of the nationally important bird life are part of the landscape.
- Martello towers.
- Eastern extremity included within the Lydd Military Firing Range.

Problems, pressures, detracting features

- Unsightly coastal development, static caravan parks and clutter at Camber and Winchelsea Beach.
- Industrial development at Rye harbour detracting from views from Rye and the setting of the town.

- Loss of pasture to arable farming, creating expanses of featureless landscape.
- Canalisation of drainage channels, with hard engineered features along River Rother.
- Major electricity transmission lines.
- Pressure for intensified industrial development at Camber and Rye.

Vision

A dramatic landscape of interaction between the slopes, levels and beaches, with long views, remote areas, rich wildlife and a strong sense of history.

Landscape action priorities

- Diversify and enhance river channel and valley with the aid of agricultural grant schemes.
- Conserve and restore pasture, wetland and associated wildlife.
- Conserve and enhance remote areas.
- Improve the coastal environment, contain and reduce intrusive features, at Camber, Winchelsea Beach and Rye Harbour.
- Improve access to the countryside for walkers, riders and cyclists.
- Control and manage traffic and access.
- Strengthen maritime character.
- Conserve and enhance the setting of Rye and Winchelsea citadels.

Battle

historic ridge-top town, with skyline of historic buildings.

medieval & Georgian High Street

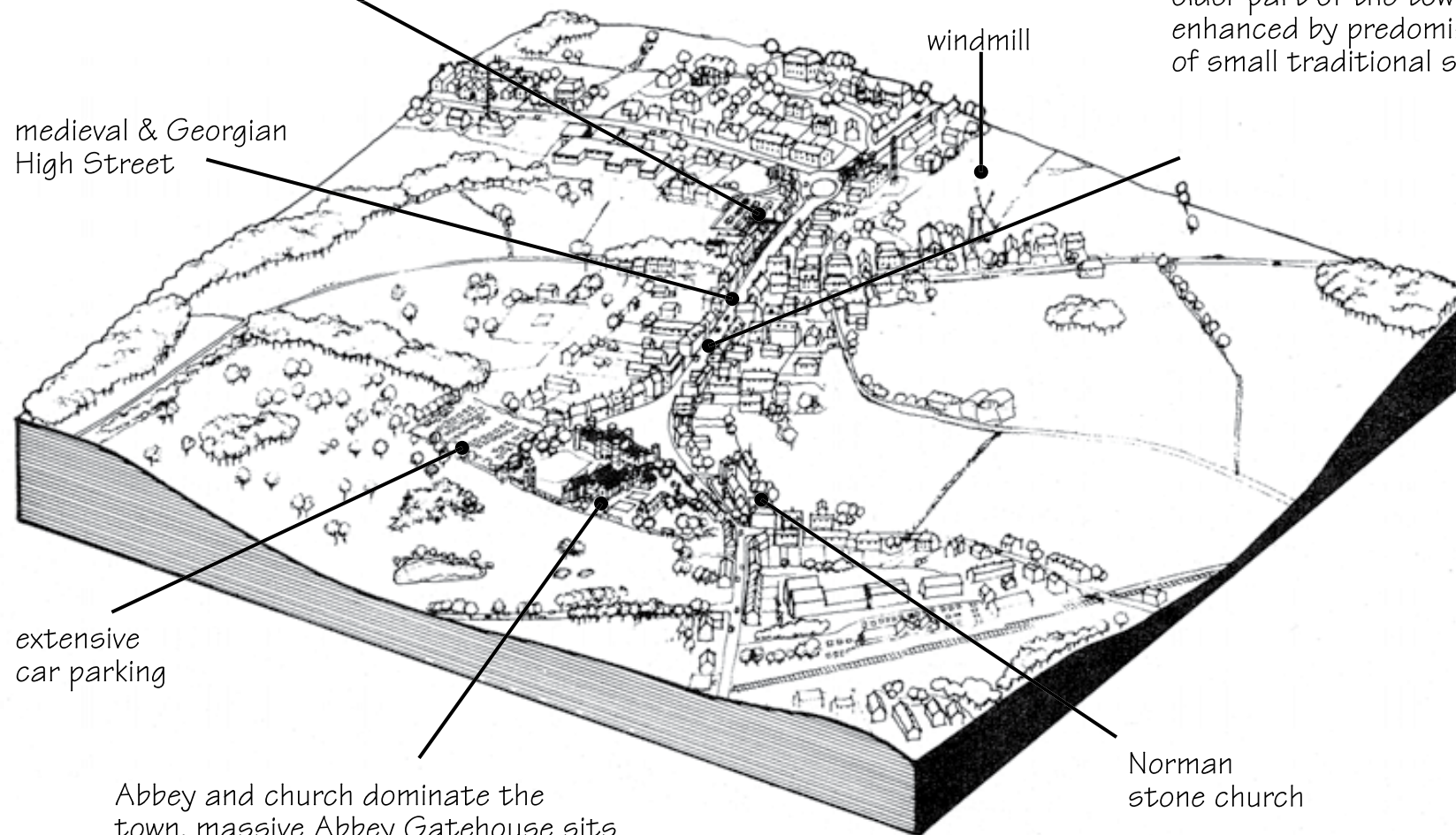
windmill

enclosed character of the older part of the town, enhanced by predominance of small traditional shops

extensive car parking

Abbey and church dominate the town, massive Abbey Gatehouse sits at eastern end of High St. giving wonderful sense of enclosure

Norman stone church



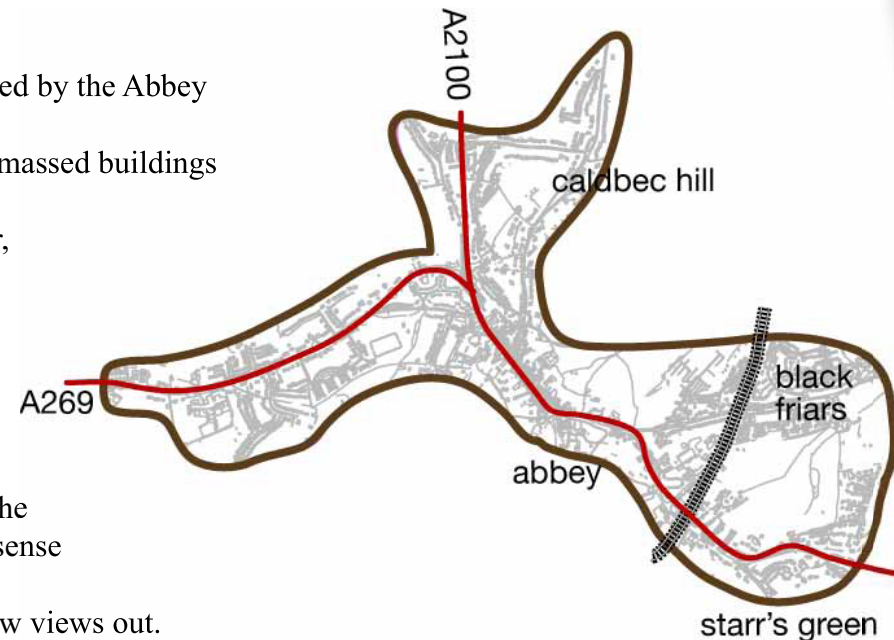
Battle

Battle sits in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, at the eastern end of the southern sandstone ridge. It is a fine historic market town, with medieval and Georgian buildings. The growth of Battle has been restricted by its position in the High Weald AONB and other environmental and heritage designations, giving it a compact layout. Its special intimate character and urban grain have survived intact. Settled on Battle ridge the town sits in a heavily wooded landscape.



Characteristics

- This ridge-top town has a skyline of historic buildings, dominated by the Abbey and the church.
- The medieval and Georgian High Street has a small scale, well massed buildings with good continuity of facades.
- There are picturesque frontages of red tile, timber-frame, render, white weatherboard and the local sandstone.
- The character of the town is enhanced by the predominance of small and traditional shops.
- The original stone from the substantially destroyed great religious buildings in Battle has been widely recycled in later historic periods, which gives the town great cohesion
- The massive Battle Abbey Gatehouse sits at the eastern end of the High Street above its triangular court yard, giving a wonderful sense of enclosure and character.
- The old town has an enclosed inward-looking character, with few views out.
- Views over the High Weald countryside from outer parts of town.



Special features

- Battle Abbey, with its grounds is a character focus but visually separate from the rest of the town.
- The Norman stone church

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Battle

Problems, pressures and detracting features

- Traffic in the town centre.
- Undistinguished ribbon development along the road towards Hastings, and on other approaches.
- Pressure for parking and poor landscape design of town car parks.

Vision

A ridge-top historic Wealden town with a central focal space and High Street dominated by pedestrians and events rather than traffic, with strong links to countryside and Wealden views.

Landscape action priorities

- Consider traffic management and improvements to street design in the High Street.
- Prepare a Tree Conservation Plan for the town, particularly to enhance the approaches and peripheral residential areas.
- Implement landscape improvements to the main town centre car park, particularly tree planting, to reduce its impact.
- Improve pedestrian links between the town centre, viewpoints and the countryside.
- Take forward initiatives in the Battle Conservation Area Appraisal, and the Local Transport Plan.