



Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Boundary Variation Project

Consultation Document

A proposal to extend the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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About Natural England

We are the government's adviser for the natural environment in England, helping to protect England's nature and landscapes for people to enjoy and for the services they provide.

Within England, we are responsible for:

- Promoting nature conservation and protecting biodiversity
- Conserving and enhancing the landscape
- Securing the provision and improvement of facilities for the study, understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment
- Promoting access to the countryside and open spaces and encouraging open-air recreation
- Contributing in other ways to social and economic wellbeing through management of the natural environment.

To find out more about our work visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england>

This document contains useful information that will help you to comment on a proposed extension to the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

We recommend that you read it before completing the response form.

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Foreword

Landscape is how many people come to understand the scale and richness of the natural world around them, whether it is through the view from their window or the majesty of distant mountains. It helps them to appreciate nature's diverse habitats, distinctive species and a whole range of public benefits such as carbon storage, clean water and opportunities for recreation. But it is beauty in the landscape that draws and holds the eye. We are very fortunate to have some fantastic landscapes in the south east of England, many of which are already legally protected as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. For some years there has been discussion about whether the Surrey Hills, a chain of varied upland landscapes, should be reviewed in relation to their outstanding natural beauty. Natural England has now produced proposals for extending the existing Surrey Hills AONB and this consultation seeks your views about these proposals. I'd like to recognise the amount of work that has been undertaken via informal evidence gathering and I thank all who were involved for this.

We are keen to hear from everyone who has an interest in the area and cares about its future. If you would like to have your say, please spend some time reading this consultation document and send us your views by completing the enclosed response form. The consultation ends on 13 June and you can send us your comments any time before this date. If you would like to speak directly to the team working on this project then please drop in at one of the events we are holding locally in the area (see local press or visit the website for details): <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/ne-landscape-heritage-and-geodiversity-team/surrey-hills-boundary-variation>

We will keep everyone informed of progress by publishing the outcome of this consultation later next year. We look forward to receiving your responses to this important consultation.



Tony Juniper
Chairman of Natural England

Introduction

Natural England is the public body responsible for conserving and enhancing the natural environment in England. One of Natural England's responsibilities is to decide whether an area should be given special status and protection by designating it as a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance an area's natural beauty. AONBs are designated by Natural England using statutory powers in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

For many years there has been a local desire to extend the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (SH AONB) to include locally valued landscape such as Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and wider countryside. These proposals have been supported by the AONB Board and local authorities and a formal request was put to Natural England by the AONB Board proposing a variation to the AONB boundary based on an early study by Hankinson Duckett Associates (HDA) in 2013.

In December 2013 Natural England's Board confirmed it would take forward a project to determine if the AONB boundary should be varied and to define a recommended boundary. In 2020 the Natural England Board committed to testing and trialing a new approach to designation work with a strong emphasis on collaboration and engagement. Subsequently Natural England Officers established a project Management Advisory Group (MAG) and Technical Advisory Group (TAG) in order to include partners in project governance and improve engagement. An Area of Search was defined collaboratively between Natural England and the MAG, and used as a starting point for assessment. A consortium of specialist consultants was appointed to undertake the assessment which began with an extensive phase of stakeholder engagement, including the general public as part of a 'Call for Evidence' which ran throughout December 2021 and January 2022.

Assessments to determine which landscapes meet the legal requirements for inclusion in an AONB have now been completed and proposals have been developed to designate specific areas. We would now like to give all those with an interest in the proposed extensions the opportunity to express their views on whether these areas should be designated.

The purpose of this consultation is to seek your views on whether these areas have the qualities required for inclusion within an AONB, whether they should be designated and whether the proposed boundaries are appropriate.

A response form is enclosed for you to express your views, but please read this Consultation Document first – it contains important information that you will find useful in making your comments.

Further information, expressing the detailed analysis which led to these recommendations, is also available as separate Supporting Documents. Copies of the Supporting Documents can be downloaded from <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/ne-landscape-heritage-and-geodiversity-team/surrey-hills-boundary-variation> or by emailing us at SurreyHillsAONBboundaryreview@naturalengland.org.uk or by writing to:

Meg Johannessen, Natural England, 5th Floor, Northgate House, 21 – 23 Valpy Street, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 1AF

The closing date for comments to arrive is 13th June 2023.

What are Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are designated for the purpose of conserving and enhancing their natural beauty. There are 34 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England including the Surrey Hills AONB. Designation as AONB means giving an area special legal protection.

Once an area has been designated by Natural England, activities relating to the purpose of AONB designation are coordinated and led by local authorities, who also have a legal responsibility to produce a Management Plan for the area. In carrying out their duties they often form wider partnerships with other organisations. Any public body taking a decision or undertaking activity that affects land in an AONB has a duty to have regard to the purpose of the designation when carrying out its work.

AONBs are largely funded by a contribution from the local authorities in the area and a grant from Defra and may also seek additional funding from other sources.

Who looks after Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

Most AONBs have a management team whose role encompasses the management of the staff team and its finances. The Surrey Hills AONB team is hosted by Surrey County Council. Individual posts on the team include the AONB Director, Marketing and Communications Officer and a Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme Manager. It is supported by a Finance and Officer Manager, Surrey Hills Working Group and Grants Administrator and Planning Advisor. The AONB management team is overseen by the Surrey Hills Board and wider AONB Partnership.

Section 89 (2) of the CROW Act 2000, places a duty on relevant local authorities to prepare and publish a plan which formulates their policy for the management of an AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it and a further duty to review the plan at "intervals of not more than five years". An AONB Management Plan sets out the policy for the management of an AONB and includes an action plan for carrying out activity in support of the purpose of designation. The AONB Team co-ordinates, facilitates and delivers certain countryside management functions as set out in the Management Plan.

The local authorities whose area wholly or partly includes land currently designated as part of the Surrey Hills AONB and to which the statutory powers and duties relating to AONBs apply, are Surrey County Council (SCC), Waverley District Council (WDC), Guildford Borough Council (GBC), Mole Valley District Council (MVDC), Reigate and Banstead Borough Council (RBBC) and Tandridge District Council (TDC). Planning and development control in an AONB remain the responsibility of the local authorities.

How are Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty designated?

Natural England is responsible for considering which areas in England meet the criterion, set down in law, for being included in an AONB, and also whether to proceed with their designation. To do this Natural England carries out assessments, consults local authorities and people and undertakes the legal process that results in an area being designated. The final decision, however, lies with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. An area only becomes part of an AONB when the Secretary of State confirms a legal order made by Natural England.

What is the legal criterion for designating an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

Natural England has a power under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 to designate land as AONB as set out in Section 82(1) of the Act. In summary this states that Natural England can designate an area in England as AONB if it is satisfied that it has such natural beauty that its designation is desirable for the conservation and enhancement of its natural beauty. Section 83(7) of the same Act gives Natural England the power to vary the boundaries of existing AONBs.

Natural beauty is more than just “beautiful scenery.” The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006, clarified that the wildlife and cultural heritage of an area as well as its natural features can contribute to the natural beauty of landscapes. For example the presence of particular wildlife or visible archaeological remains can make an appreciable contribution to an area’s sense of place and heighten perceptions of natural beauty. Natural beauty can also be found in landscapes that have been altered by humans through agriculture, forestry or in parkland.

How are landscapes assessed for designation?

The approach used for the Surrey Hills AONB partial boundary review follows Natural England’s approved “Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England” (2021).

To designate an area as AONB, Natural England must answer the questions below:

- Does this landscape have outstanding natural beauty?
- Is it desirable to designate this landscape as an AONB for the conservation and enhancement of its natural beauty?
- Where should the boundary be drawn?

Only if it is considered that there is sufficient natural beauty, will an assessment of desirability be warranted and only if the conclusion of this is positive, will detailed boundary proposals be developed. Having reached this conclusion, the legislation also requires Natural England to consult the relevant county and district councils.

Each of these stages is described briefly below. The full assessments are available as Supporting Documents and accessible via <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/ne-landscape-heritage-and-geodiversity-team/surrey-hills-boundary-variation>.

Identifying a Study Area for assessment

Firstly, a decision must be taken on the extent of the area to be assessed for designation. This is in order to make the assessment manageable and to ensure that resources are concentrated on areas which are likely to have potential for designation. This process is guided by Natural England and the MAG and refined through the 'Call for Evidence' /public engagement, and initial assessments of an area.

Stakeholder Engagement

This involves participative evidence gathering utilising a 'Citizen Space' approach to enable stakeholders (including the general public) to contribute their 'local expertise'. This is facilitated through the creation of a website, development of a smart phone app enabling people to gather evidence (including photographs) in the field, an interactive Story Map within the website where people can review their evidence and that of others, and communication and support mechanisms including online webinars.

Describing the character of an area

The European Landscape Convention 2000 defines ‘landscape’ as: “An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.” The first step in understanding what makes any landscape special is to describe it in a relatively neutral way.

Landscape character is defined as a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse. Landscape character assessment is the tool used to define areas of differing landscape character and to describe them in a neutral way. The Surrey Landscape Character Assessment and other assessments are used by Natural England (along with other data sets and field assessment) to define ‘Evaluation Areas’ for assessment.

Evaluation stage

The **Evaluation Areas** identified are then tested against the single statutory criterion of ‘outstanding natural beauty’. The outcome of this stage is the identification of areas which are considered likely to

meet the natural beauty criterion and which can then be considered as a **Candidate Area** for further consideration in relation to the desirability of designation.

Making judgements about natural beauty

Once an Evaluation Area has been described, it is evaluated to establish whether it has sufficient natural beauty for it to be designated. Natural beauty is a subjective characteristic of a landscape and ultimately involves value judgments. In deciding whether an area has outstanding natural beauty, Natural England must consider the merits of an area in comparison with ordinary countryside.

In order to make this judgment in a transparent and consistent way, Natural England uses a set of factors which are considered to contribute to natural beauty. These are set out in Table 1. A more detailed version of this Table can be found in the Supporting Documents.

Table 1: Factors Related to Natural Beauty

Landscape Quality This is a measure of the physical state or condition of a landscape.
Scenic Quality The extent to which a landscape appeals to the senses (mainly, but not only, the visual senses).
Relative Wildness The degree to which relatively wild character can be perceived in a landscape and contributes to its sense of place. (NB all of England's landscapes have been influenced by human activity over time, which is why we use the term relative wildness).
Relative tranquillity The degree to which relative tranquillity can be perceived in a landscape (i.e. whether an area appears quiet, remote and relatively free from human influence or development).
Natural Heritage Features The influence of natural heritage on people's perception of the natural beauty of a landscape. Natural heritage includes features formed by natural processes, wildlife, wild flowers and geological features.
Cultural Heritage The influence of cultural heritage (such as buildings, archaeology and designed landscapes) on people's perception of the natural beauty of a landscape and the degree to which associations with particular people, artists, writers or events in history contribute to such perception.

Not every factor listed in Table 1 needs to be present in a landscape in order for it to have sufficient natural beauty. By considering all the factors together a judgement can be made as to whether an area meets the criterion for designation overall. Applying this analysis enables the extent of land likely to meet the statutory criterion to be more precisely defined. These refined areas are called Candidate Areas for designation.

Once an area has been identified as qualifying for inclusion in a Candidate Area, Natural England must determine whether designation of the area is desirable.

Deciding whether it is desirable to designate

An area of land that satisfies the natural beauty criterion is capable of being included in an AONB. However, designation does not follow automatically: it is for Natural England to exercise its judgment as to whether a Candidate Area, which meets the natural beauty criterion should become part of an AONB in order to achieve the statutory purpose of the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.

To establish whether it is desirable to designate an area as an AONB, Natural England asks the five questions set out in Table 2:

Table 2: Is it Desirable to Designate?

Is there an area which satisfies AONB technical criterion?

Is the area of such **significance** that the AONB **purpose** should apply to it?

What are the issues affecting the area's **special qualities** and understanding and enjoyment?

Can AONB purposes be best pursued through the **management mechanisms, powers and duties** which come with AONB designation?

Are there **other relevant factors** which tend to suggest whether it is or is not desirable to designate the area?

Having considered these questions and relevant evidence, it is for Natural England to decide whether or not, a particular area is of such national significance that it should be designated as AONB and managed to achieve the statutory purpose.

Identifying a suitable boundary

A detailed boundary is drawn for each proposed AONB extension area to show where it is desirable for a particular designation to begin and end. Natural England develops proposed boundaries using a suite of principles, including those in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Boundary Setting Considerations

Transition areas: Natural beauty often changes gradually over a sweep of country rather than suddenly from one field to another. In these 'areas of transition,' the boundary should be drawn towards the high quality end of the transition in a manner that includes areas of high quality land and excludes areas of lesser quality.

Types of boundary: Wherever possible, a clear physical feature should be chosen.

Other administrative boundaries: Administrative boundaries (such as county or parish boundaries) are often unsuitable because they are hard to see on the ground or do not correspond with the area of high natural beauty. Similarly, land ownership is not itself a reason for including or excluding land from designation – there will often be instances where part of a landholding sits within the designated area and part sits outside.

Inclusion of settlements: Towns and villages at the edge should only be included if they are within and part of a sweep of qualifying countryside.

Splitting of settlements: Towns or villages should not normally be cut in two by an AONB boundary where it can be avoided.

Incongruous development: Unsightly development on the edge of an AONB should generally be excluded unless it is of a temporary or transient nature.

Proposed Developments: Land at the edge of a proposed designation that is identified for development in development plans, or has existing planning permission should normally be excluded. Land should not be included merely to seek to protect it from specific development proposals.

Features of interest: Areas and features of wildlife, geological, geomorphological, historic, cultural or architectural value should be included where practicable.

Applying the approach to the review of the Surrey Hills AONB Boundary

This Consultation Document presents only outline information on the process undertaken for this project and about the proposed extension areas identified during the process. If you would like more detailed information about these areas or about the initial identification of the Area of Search (Study Area), Evaluation Areas or Candidate Area or the assessment of the desirability of designation or development of the proposed boundaries then please refer to the Supporting Documents.

Defining the Study Area

The Study Area was initially defined by the Natural England and the MAG and was loosely based on the extent of the existing Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) as illustrated on Figure. 1. Two other factors were also relevant in defining the extent of land selected for evaluation:

- Firstly, the responses and evidence provided by stakeholders during the 'Call for Evidence.' This led to the extension of the Study Area.
- Secondly, preliminary assessment which determined areas at some distance from the AONB and separated by land which was unlikely to qualify. This led to the exclusion of areas from further study.

The 'Call for Evidence' on factors which support natural beauty, resulted in over 2000 representations from stakeholders, including local communities, and provided a wealth of information as illustrated on Figure 8. This information was used to inform and plan site work, supplement the collation of information in relation to natural beauty factors, and provided a valuable collection of images which have been used throughout this report. It therefore made a material difference to assessment and informed professional judgements.

Characterisation stage

The Surrey Hills Landscape Character Assessment provides information on landscape character for the majority of the Study Area and assisted in the definition of the Evaluation Areas for assessment. Character assessments for relevant adjoining areas were also consulted. Variations in character informed the subdivision of Evaluation Areas where necessary, in order to make assessment more manageable.

Evaluation stage

Fourteen discrete Evaluation Areas were defined to be taken forward to the detailed evaluation stage. They are illustrated on Figure 2.

Each Evaluation Area and subdivision was tested against the factors outlined in Table 1. The evaluation included in-depth assessment of published information and data on a wide range of relevant issues. The relevance and significance of this information was also further tested in the field.

In some places, the initial Study Area and 'Call for Evidence' highlighted boundary anomalies. These included small parcels of land between an urban area and the existing AONB boundary, or where the existing AONB boundary does not follow a feature on the ground. These minor boundary anomalies have also been reviewed.

Defining a Candidate Area

The evaluation process resulted in the identification of areas considered to meet the statutory natural beauty criterion (Figure 10). These areas include river valleys and Greensand hills, areas of chalk dip slope, chalk valleys in the North Downs, as well as areas of Low Weald, and have been used as a basis for defining a proposed boundary variation to the Surrey Hills AONB. The evaluation process also identified a number of minor boundary refinements.

The Proposed Extension Areas

The proposed boundary is illustrated on Figure 12 Index Map and on detailed maps Figures 13-29. Taken together the land within the proposed boundary comprises the area for designation and includes land at:

- Wey Valley, Farnham
- Hog's Back
- Binscombe Hills
- Enton Hills
- Wey Valley, Farley Hill
- Cranleigh Waters
- Hatchlands and East Clandon
- Headley Hills
- Chipstead
- Happy Valley
- Caterham Woods
- Woldingham Valleys
- Limpsfield
- Godstone Hills
- Betchworth Hills and River Mole
- Ockley Low Weald
- Dunsfold Low Weald
- Dockenfield Hills

Each of these eighteen proposed extension areas is considered separately below. The text summarises the case for designation of each area. It sets out the extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met, the desirability of designation and the proposed boundary.

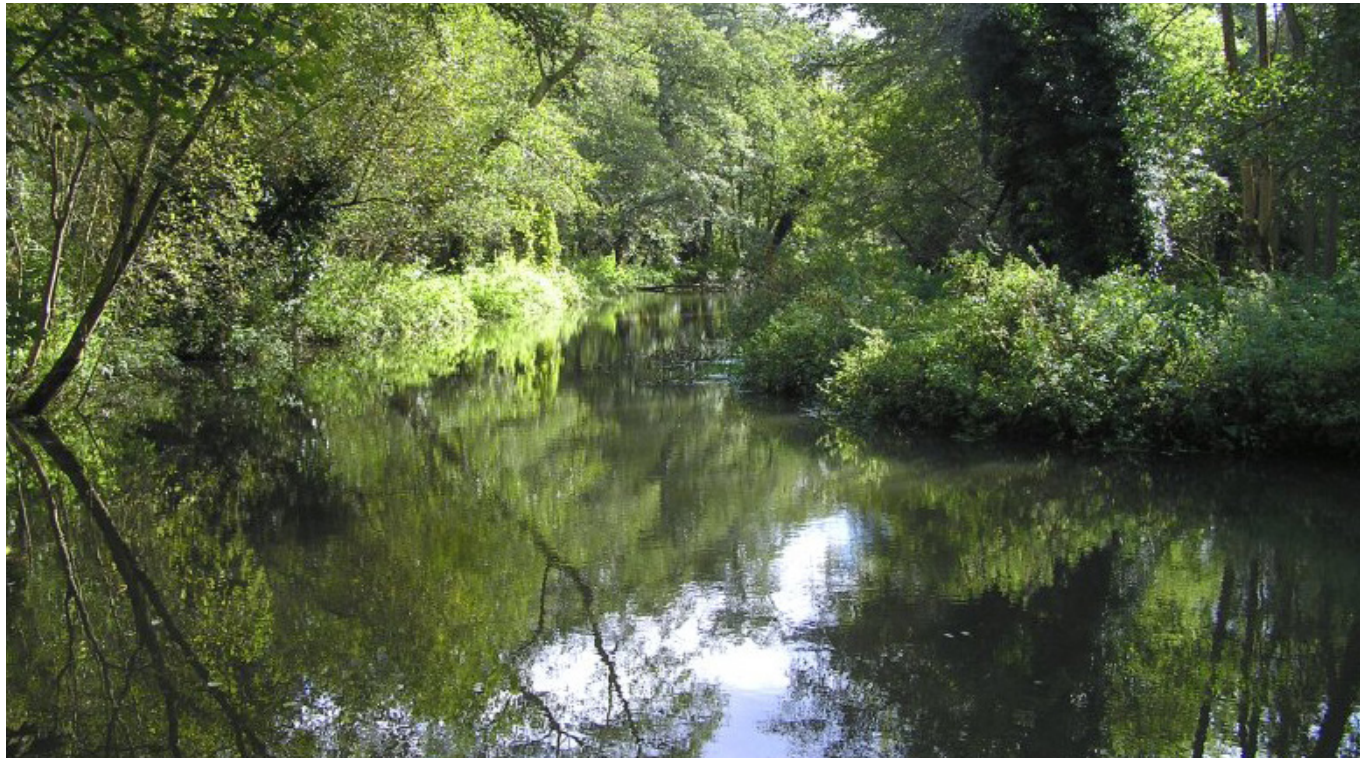


Beech tree at Banstead Woods

Proposed Wey Valley, Farnham extension

Context

This area comprises the Wey Valley between Waverley Abbey and Farnham. It is contiguous with the existing AONB and forms a continuation of the distinctive and visually contained pastoral valley, comprising both valley floor and wooded slopes. It is defined by the main break in slope on the upper valley sides and the edge of



Moor Park Nature Reserve

adjacent built-up areas.

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The Wey Valley is considered suitable for inclusion within the proposed extension because of its:

- Distinctive and intact, rural pastoral character comprising traditional meadows, wetland habitats (rare in the context of Surrey) and mature wooded slopes.
- Narrow sinuous and sometimes incised lanes and tracks that impart time depth and continuity.
- Collection of historic buildings and features which contribute to scenic qualities/add interest including High Mill, Moor Park House, Mother Ludlam's Cave and WWII pill boxes.

Significance

Valley landscapes are an important component of the Surrey Hills AONB. The AONB as currently designated includes a significant section of the Wey Valley which weaves its way through Greensand Hills to the south. The existing AONB boundary follows roads including Waverley Lane and Camp Hill and as a result does not extend north of Waverley Abbey.

This proposed extension area, encapsulates typical qualities of the Wey Valley, bringing into the AONB the continuing valley (and its tributary - Bourne Stream) as far as the railway line on the edge of Farnham. Special qualities are derived from the meandering watercourse, traditional meadows and wetlands which combine with deciduous wooded slopes and pasture to create a landscape which is textured and colourful through the seasons, intimate in scale and is perceived as separate from adjoining areas of denser built development. Views across the valley floor to wooded slopes are framed and sometimes contain historic buildings which add to scenic qualities, while along rural tracks and lanes through the wooded slopes, there are historic features of interest and natural habitats which enhance perceptions of tranquillity and contact with nature.

Key Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- Domestication of valley slopes where back gardens extend from low density housing either side of the valley.
- Suburbanisation of lanes as a result of residential development.
- Invasion of non-native vegetation affecting biodiversity interest.
- Decline of active management of meadows and pastures.

The area is closely linked (in visual, natural and cultural heritage terms) with the continuation of the valley to the south which lies within the existing AONB. Natural England considers that strategic management of the valley as a whole (given its natural beauty and special qualities), and extending it close to the settlement of Farnham, would be beneficial. This would ensure more consistent forward planning and decision making through the focus provided by the statutory duties and powers which would apply. The dedicated purpose of the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan and the assistance that the AONB team can provide through partnership work, in supporting land managers and others, will help to resolve issues affecting the Wey Valley as noted above.

Other relevant factors

Low Density Housing on Valley Slopes: Low density development associated with Compton and Moor Park occurs within the Wey Valley slopes. Given the wooded nature of these slopes, this development does not exert a strong influence on the valley landscape, despite the fact that some boundary curtilage treatment is having a domesticating influence in places. The Natural Beauty Assessment concluded that the wooded valley slopes met the natural beauty criterion forming part of the valley landscape. These slopes were therefore included in the Candidate Area. Natural England considers that since the area meets the natural beauty criterion overall, inclusion of the wooded slopes, even where they form part of low-density development, would encourage sensitive curtilage treatments and woodland management. Natural England has therefore concluded that it is desirable that this land, where it forms part of the valley slopes, is included in the proposed extension.

Transitional Areas: In the north of the area the valley floor is affected by infrastructure which physically severs the valley and which exerts noise and light intrusion. Consideration was given to defining a boundary within this transition and also to the inclusion of features of interest on the edge such as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). On balance the railway line was considered a suitable boundary within the transition. The SNCIs to the north of the railway were not included as they do not lie within a tract of qualifying land.

The proposed boundary

The proposed boundary has been drawn to include the valley unit as a whole following roads, lanes, railway and hedgerows/woodland. The boundary includes the valley slopes, even where they contain some low density development. As a result, the proposed boundary splits the Built Up Area Boundary and the South Farnham Arcadian Area as defined in the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan. Natural England Boundary Considerations state that settlement should not normally be split in two, however, in this instance the importance of the wooded undulating slopes which define the Wey Valley, the loose character of development and the dominance of landscape qualities, have collectively weighed in favour of including these areas within the proposed extension. This did not extend to include non-qualifying areas which lie beyond the valley, including low density development on more elevated and flatter land to the northeast (part of the Moor Park Arcadian Area), or the inclusion of denser urban development to the west.

Proposed Hog's Back extension

Context

This area broadly includes the northern slopes to the Hog's Back. It extends from the existing AONB boundary (which cuts across the mid slopes) northwards to the fringes of Ash Green and Flexford. It includes a number of extensive areas of ancient woodland, natural springs, settlement and farmland which collectively, and together with close proximity views of the Hog's Back ridge, express high landscape and scenic qualities.



View looking northwards from public right of way west of Wildfield Copse.

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The area includes:

- The sweep of agricultural landscape which forms the lower slope and immediate context to the Hog's Back - an iconic and distinctive feature of the existing AONB.
- The historic spring line village of Wanborough, extensive blocks of ancient woodland with carpets of spring flowers, and broad open arable fields defined by hedgerows with veteran oaks.
- Historic lanes and tracks.

Significance

This proposed extension includes the broad sweep of landscape which forms the immediate context to the Hog's Back and comprises open arable slopes, extensive areas of ancient woodland and the spring line village of Wanborough. The gentle undulations of landform and blocky nature of woodland give rise to a visual simplicity within which mature oaks in woods, hedgerows and fields (reflecting former parkland) and historic lanes and tracks add time depth and visual interest. The area retains a rural tranquil character despite close proximity to the A31 and development to the north. Compositions created by its landscape elements, combined with close proximity views of the Hog's Back, give rise to scenic qualities and local distinctiveness.

Key Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- Establishment of leisure plots/recreation activity and ad hoc development which is visually intrusive or fragments landscape pattern.
- Neglect of woodland and loss of structure and diversity.
- Visual intrusion from adjacent future allocated development.
- Loss of visual simplicity of open slopes, and unity of the Hog's Back as a distinctive topographic feature, due to land use change.

Statutory designation as AONB with the immediate application of relevant statutory powers and duties and its formal inclusion in the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan would strengthen the future

conservation and enhancement of the area's natural beauty and would place a statutory duty on all public bodies to have regard to the area's conservation and enhancement. Particular benefits may include greater support to Local Authority planning enforcement and also implementation of the Nature Recover Strategy to connect ancient woodlands.

Other relevant factors

Transitional Landscape: The assessment identified that the qualities of the landscape were transitional moving away from the Hog's Back, in part due to weaker visual links to this topographic feature, but also due to influences from adjacent urban areas and land uses which have caused visual and physical fragmentation. In the west, the assessment identified non-qualifying land around Tongham and Ash Green. Here the boundary was pulled back to White Lane - a clear feature within the transition. Between Ash Green and Flexford the boundary was drawn around the most intact areas of woodland/farmland that formed part of the sweep of lower slopes adjacent to the Hog's Back, excluding areas which had become fragmented by ad hoc development and urban fringe land uses. East of Flexford, the transitional nature of the landscape was given careful consideration, including the extension of the boundary as far as the railway line. However, the gently falling topography towards the railway and areas of secondary woodland associated with Backside Common, were not considered to be outstanding. Consideration was also given to the adoption of West Flexford Lane as the boundary, however this was judged to cut across the sweep of land, especially east of Homestead Farm, where the land rises slightly at Wildfield Copse. On balance the boundary was drawn within the transition, ensuring the inclusion of farmland which formed part of an uninterrupted sweep of land and areas of prominent woodland such as Wildfield Copse, whilst excluding land which was less visually or physically connected and of lesser quality.



Wanborough Manor, Wanborough - 16th century (Grade II Listed)

Allocated Development: Land at Blackwell Farm is allocated for development within the Guildford Borough Local Plan: strategy and sites (site allocation 26). It is also associated with a separate allocation for the proposed access route (site allocation 27) off the A31 to the south, which will cut across an area of existing AONB. Natural England Guidance on boundary considerations is clear that where land is allocated for development on the margins of an area of qualifying land it should be excluded. Whilst the land covered by the Blackwell Farm allocation/access was considered to meet the natural beauty criterion and is consistent with land further west, it nonetheless has been excluded due to the development allocation.

The proposed boundary

The proposed boundary provides an appropriate join with the existing Surrey Hills AONB boundary and includes the qualifying higher quality land and woodland to the north of the Hog's Back, whilst excluding land which is of lower quality due to fragmentation and transitions in landscape and scenic quality. A boundary line has been identified adopting clear features on the ground such as roads, the edge of woodland and tracks. At Down Place consideration was given to adopting the edge of the Blackwell Farm allocation. However, this was not marked by a clear feature on the ground. A decision was therefore made to take the boundary further west and along the track and public right of way west of Down Place and Wellington House. This enabled the boundary to follow a clear line on the ground while also excluding the allocated site in its entirety.

The proposed boundary addresses boundary anomalies associated with the existing AONB boundary where it cuts across open slopes and does not follow clear features on the ground.

Proposed Binscombe Hills extension



Looking north across The Grange and Compton Common to the Hog's Back on the skyline

Context

This area comprises the wooded scarp slopes that define Eastbury Park and farmed slopes surrounding The Grange and Compton Common on the edge of Binscombe, with views across to the Hog's Back to the north.

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The areas which are considered suitable for inclusion within the proposed extension include:

- Steep sandstone scarp clocked in ancient ash, oak, hazel and sweet chestnut woodland with carpets of bluebells, wild garlic and other woodland ground flora in spring.
- Open arable slopes which provide the context to Compton Conservation Area associated with Compton Common and The Grange.

Significance

The significance of this area relates to its association with Eastbury Park, the wooded scarp slopes comprising areas of ancient woodland (namely Fox Hanger, Eastbury Copse and Kiln Copse) which define and enclose the parkland. These woodlands extend eastward along the steep slope including Glebe Wood SNCI beyond which are open arable slopes across the Glebe Conservation Area and Compton Common, both of which are split by the current AONB boundary. The open slopes afford uninterrupted views across the AONB to the Hog's Back and include the brick farmhouse and surrounding farmland associated with the artist and potter Mary Wondrausch.

Key Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- Ash dieback within woodlands along the scarp slope
- Recreational pressure on landscape due to proximity of adjacent conurbations.
- Inappropriate tree and woodland planting which can disrupt vegetation patterns.
- Suburbanisation of lanes including changes to hedgerows relating to property boundary treatment.

The area is closely linked (in visual, natural and cultural heritage terms) to land already within the existing AONB. Natural England considers that strategic management of this area as a whole would be beneficial. Including these areas within the AONB would ensure more consistent forward planning and decision making through the focus provided by the statutory duties and powers which would apply. The

dedicated purpose of the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan and the assistance that the AONB team can provide in supporting land managers and others will help to resolve issues affecting the area as noted above.

Other relevant factors

During the assessment process, issues associated with defining a boundary included the extent to which wooded and arable slopes between built development at Binscombe/Farncombe and north of Charterhouse should be included. Here the landscape extends as a narrow finger into the urban area and becomes increasingly influenced by proximity to development. In addition, particular scrutiny was given to Binscombe village. This settlement was noted as having cultural heritage interest and local vernacular buildings but has also become conjoined with Farncombe along its southern edge. Although the settlement still relates to the wider landscape context, Natural England Guidance is clear that settlements on the edge of an area of qualifying land should normally be excluded and that settlements should not be split by a boundary. The Waverley Borough Local Plan includes Binscombe within the Farncombe settlement boundary. On this basis, and to avoid the splitting of a settlement, it was concluded that Binscombe should be excluded in its entirety, and the boundary drawn around its outer edge.



Bluebell woods on the steep slopes above Eastbury Park

The proposed boundary

The proposed boundary has been drawn to include higher quality land which forms an uninterrupted sweep of landscape with the wider AONB, and which is unaffected by adjoining housing development. The boundary follows the edge of roads, tracks and woodland. Between Binscombe and the property named Endsleigh, the boundary follows a mature hedgerow which also defines the boundary of the Waverley Borough administrative area.

Where the boundary skirts the edge of development it follows property boundaries. Many of these locations were not readily accessible and reliance has been placed on OS Mastermap to define the extent of property boundaries where they back onto woodland.

Proposed Enton Hills extension



Johnston's Lake looking south to the wooded hills west of Witley.

Context

This area includes the undulating wooded hills between Witley and the existing AONB and areas of contrasting open water. It also includes some small boundary changes in the Busbridge area to include the Registered Park and Garden associated with Gertrude Gykell and ancient woodland hangers.

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The area includes:

- The 17th century mill complex at Enton and associated mill ponds and hammer pond as well as the former designed parkland connected to Witley Manor.
- Intimate wooded hills around Enton Green and Great Enton including Potter's Hill and Parson's Hanger as well as Enton Hall and the narrow winding incised Water Lane.
- Contrasting open water of Johnston's Lake which nestles at the foot of rising land to the south.
- Registered Park and Garden at Munstead Wood associated with Gertrude Gykell and containing a collection of listed buildings which reflect local vernacular.

Significance

This proposed extension forms a continuation of the intimate, enclosed and secretive landscape typical of the greensand hills. This area has a high concentration of woodland, with notable linear hanging woodlands, and historic interest expressed in its vernacular listed buildings, registered parkland and incised winding lanes which, combined with complex and sometimes steep slopes and hills, give high landscape and scenic quality. This is an inward-facing, traditional pastoral and small-scale landscape which has local visual complexity, and a tranquil, remote character.

Key Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- Intrusion of development beyond the area and urban fringe land uses such as pony paddocks which can create visual clutter.
- Pressure for recreation development including fishing activity, commercialisation and golf

- course development resulting in built infrastructure and changes in landscape patterns.
- Road and rail improvements such as widening, lighting and signage which can impact on tranquillity and rural character.
- Introduction of non-native hedgerows along lanes, and lack of woodland management.

Statutory designation as AONB with the immediate application of relevant statutory powers and duties and its formal inclusion in the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan would strengthen the ability of the AONB team to ensure the future conservation and enhancement of the area's natural beauty and would place a statutory duty on all public bodies to have regard to the area's conservation and enhancement.

Other relevant factors

During the assessment process, issues were raised regarding the inclusion of Witley village, urban fringe land uses in the vicinity of the village and the impact of the railway line. South of the village the cricket pitch and play area sit within a wider sweep of high quality well wooded landscape. Similarly, the former parkland landscape associated with Witley Manor provides a high quality setting to Witley Ponds, connecting to the historic Enton Mill complex. The railway was not considered a dominate feature, being set down on lower lying land and passing through areas of woodland, such that high quality landscape to the west was possible to include. However to the west of Enton Mill the landscape is influenced by the urban edge of Witley and landscape patterns have become disrupted by pony paddocks and associated post and rail fencing. Further north, Upper and Lower Enton Lakes sit in a peripheral location in less undulating landscape and are separated from qualifying land by the railway. These areas have therefore been excluded along with the whole of the settlement of Witley.

In the area of Enton Green boundary options to exclude or include linear housing along the lanes were considered. Dwellings do not have a significant impact on the character and qualities of the wider area and therefore the simpler boundary along Station Road, which includes the settlement was judged to be most robust. Consideration was also given to features on the edge including Busbridge Lakes.

The proposed boundary

The proposed boundary provides an appropriate join with the existing Surrey Hills AONB boundary and includes the high quality undulating and wooded landscapes between the existing AONB and Witley. A boundary line has been identified along roads and rear of properties as well as the railway and tracks. The boundary does not split the settlement of Witley but does include land which forms a sweep of higher quality landscape to the east of the village.

After careful consideration Natural England has concluded that the boundary should not be taken west to include the Registered Park and Garden at Busbridge Lakes due to its mixed condition and quality and the potential for the boundary to become convoluted. The existing boundary along Hambledon Road was therefore preferred.



Seventeenth century mill complex at Enton Mill

Proposed Wey Valley, Farley Hill extension



View south from River Wey Navigation towards wooded slopes of Farley Hill

Context

This area comprises the Wey Valley meadows where they lie adjacent to Farley Hill. Here the juxtaposition of flat open meadow and meandering course of the River Wey, contrasts with the rising wooded backdrop of Farley Hill to create a landscape of high scenic quality. The textured valley floor appears seamless with the greensand hills beyond, forming a well-defined and visually contained traditional valley floor landscape.

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The extension includes:

- The valley floor meadows of the River Wey between Penny Bridge and Tilthams Corner Road.
- The wooded lower slopes of Farley Hill, west of Unsted Wood.

Significance

The area forms a small section of valley floor which is physically and visually connected to the wooded slopes of Farley Hill. Its special qualities are derived from the juxtaposition of flat open and textured meadow with the rising wooded greensand hills. The meandering course of the River Wey through this section retains its natural character and there is little visual intrusion from surrounding built up areas. As a result this section of the Wey Valley forms a seamless extension to the AONB enabling the inclusion of an area of unspoilt traditional valley floor meadows.

Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- Visual and noise intrusion from adjacent development.
- Ad hoc development and urban fringe land uses along rural lanes.
- Establishment of non-native invasive species along the river course.
- Loss of wet pastures due to drainage and lack of appropriate grazing.
- Lack of active traditional woodland management such as coppicing.

The special qualities associated with this section of the Wey Valley include intact valley character defined by the valley meadows and strong wooded slopes to the south and east. Its wetland and woodland habitats, as well as natural meandering watercourse, could all benefit from the broader integrated management and protection that AONB designation would bring. This integrated management and the planning status of AONB designation could also address many of the issues noted above.

Other relevant factors

During the assessment process, the Wey Valley was identified as comprising areas of fragmented valley floor affected by adjacent infrastructure and development, which have impacted on the qualities of the valley as a whole and fragmented it from the wider AONB. Overall the Wey Valley was not considered to have sufficient natural beauty to warrant designation as part of the AONB. However, the assessment did highlight an area of floodplain meadow adjacent to the AONB at the foot of Farley Hill which remained contiguous with the AONB and benefited from strong visual links to Farley Hill.

This was considered in detail at the boundary assessment stage along with boundary anomalies relating to the existing AONB boundary west of Unsted Wood (here the boundary does not follow a feature on the ground). This area of valley floor was considered to be in good condition, to express high levels of scenic quality as well as areas and features of historic and natural interest.

Consideration was given to the effect of noise intrusion from traffic on the A3100 and of development which backs onto the towpath to the west. Whilst these issues undermine the natural beauty of parts of this area, the intact character of the valley floor and its seamless views towards the rising wooded slopes of Farley Hill were considered to outweigh these issues.

The proposed boundary

The proposed boundary enables the whole of the Unsted Wood and Bunker's Hill SNCI to be included in the AONB. This area of woodland sits on steep slopes and is currently split by the existing AONB boundary which does not follow a clear line on the ground.

The SNCI at Tilthams Rough sits on the northern edge of the proposed boundary extension. Consideration was given to including this area of woodland within the boundary. However, the woodland has a mixed character and condition and is influenced by adjacent development and road noise. On balance it was excluded from the extension and the boundary drawn along the towpath.

The proposed boundary extension includes part of the Wey Valley Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), where it lies adjacent to the wooded slopes of Farley Hill, but excludes the remainder of the designation north of Tilthams Corner Road. This is not unusual where natural heritage designations cover significant areas. The natural beauty of the landscape for inclusion in the AONB designation is the primary consideration and in the valley to the north of Tilthams Corner Road the natural beauty is undermined by adjacent development and infrastructure.

Proposed Cranleigh Waters extension



View east from Whitley Manor Farm across the farmland of Cranleigh Waters towards the rising hills at Winterfold and Hurtwood

Context

This area comprises the undulating farmland between the existing AONB and extends across the valley of Cranleigh Waters from the A281 in the west to the B2128 in the east. It includes the settlements of Wonersh, Chilworth, Shamley Green and the hamlet of Burley Green as well as areas of former common including Run Common, Rushett Common, Lordshill Common, Norley Common, Wonersh Common and Shalford Common. In the north of the area are two distinctive greensand hill outliers namely Chinthurst and Bartlett Hills which share many of the qualities of the wider AONB greensand hills. In the central and southern areas there are long distance views to the wooded greensand hills of the wider AONB which visually contain the area and contribute to its scenic qualities.

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The extension includes:

- The mixed farmland landscape between the A281 and B2128
- Greensand hill outliers of Chinthurst Hill and Bartlett Hill
- Network of ancient woodland shaws and former commons
- Linear historic features including Wey & Arun Canal and disused railway now used by the Downs Link long distance route

Significance

The area forms undulating and richly wooded farmland through which the meandering course of Cranleigh Waters weaves, past former commons on gravel terraces and between greensand hill outliers such as Chinthurst and Bartlett Hills. Ericaceous vegetation in road verges and woodlands, along with mixed arable and pasture farming, gives rise to a mosaic of land uses, colour and texture through the seasons that delight the senses. Historic settlement including that of Wonersh, Birtley Green and Shamley Green nestle in this landscape surrounded by the rising greensand hills. The intact historic buildings on the high street in Wonersh or the historic buildings that cluster around the green at Shamley Green contribute strongly to natural beauty and are accompanied by the ever-present backdrop of wooded greensand hills. This is a settled and sometimes busy landscape, but areas of tranquillity can be found on the elevated hills and within the ancient woodlands that impart a timeless and established feel.

Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- Pressure for housing development that does not respond to local vernacular styles, settlement form or visually intrudes into the landscape.

- Urbanisation of road routes through kerbing, signage, new junction arrangement and commercial development.
- Lack of management of field boundaries, ancient and veteran trees, coppiced woodland and sunken routes and former commons.

The special qualities associated with this landscape including the network of ancient woodland and former commons as well as watercourses and historic features could all benefit from the broader integrated management and protection that AONB designation would bring. This integrated management and the planning status of AONB designation could also address many of the issues noted above.

Other relevant factors

A particular issue in this area has been the inclusion/exclusion of settlement (Bramley and Chilworth) and the avoidance of a convoluted boundary. Given the size, extent and location of Bramley, it was judged preferable to exclude the settlement utilising the settlement boundary as defined in the Waverley Borough Local Plan. Where the settlement boundary did not follow a clear feature on the ground in the east of the village, the boundary was drawn out to the watercourse. In the case of Chilworth, consideration was also given to a boundary which excluded the settlement. However, the narrowness of the village, its relatively small scale and the strong visual connection to the wider landscape (even from the sports grounds and allotments to the west), meant that on balance the settlement was considered to form part of a wider sweep of qualifying land. Here a boundary was drawn further west to enable the qualifying land to extend up to the existing AONB boundary – this was judged to be preferable to a more convoluted boundary which created a very narrow corridor between two qualifying areas.



Wondersh high street



View south from Chinthurst Hill

The transitional nature of the landscape to the south was highlighted in the natural beauty assessment. Care was taken to draw the boundary conservatively within this transition. The boundary includes land which is of high quality and where the surrounding greensand hills within the existing AONB contribute to the scenic qualities of the area. Where the greensand hills recede, the landscape is less undulating and the urban fringes of Little Mead, Cranleigh and Rowly exert an influence, land has been excluded. The boundary has adopted lanes, hedgerows and tracks through this area.

The proposed boundary

Two sections of proposed boundary has been drawn (in the northwest and in the south) to include the higher quality land between the existing AONB where strong visual links to the rising greensand hills contribute to the scenic quality. The boundary follows the meandering course of Cranleigh Waters in some locations. No boundary change has been made at Smithwood Common, despite the common extending both sides of the road. This is because the current boundary along the road is regarded as most robust and clear.

Proposed Hatchlands and East Clandon extension

Context

This area comprises the lower slopes of the chalk dip slope extending to the designed parkland of Hatchlands and associated estate village of East Clandon. It is contiguous with the existing AONB, the Boundary of which does not follow a clear line on the ground and cuts across the farmed mid slopes.



View across pastures towards tree lined route of Blake's Lane

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The areas considered suitable for inclusion within the proposed extension include:

- The farmed slopes of the dip slope and historic route of Blake's Lane and small scale pastures.
- The estate village of East Clandon and its farmed setting.
- The Registered Park and Garden at Hatchlands.

Significance

This section of the dip slope and associated lower-lying clay landscapes which contain features of interest is significant for its rural character, historic buildings and designed landscape, which make a strong contribution to the natural beauty of the area. This area encapsulates an excellent example of a spring line village with an associated parkland both of which connect to the chalk dip slope historically and visually. From the parkland landscape there are views south beyond the park towards the wooded chalk ridge within the AONB. To the north and east the parkland is contained by ancient woodland while to the west is the estate village with its collection of knapped flint vernacular buildings and landmark church.

Key Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- Urbanisation of the A286 corridor including duelling, signage and traffic management infrastructure.
- Ad hoc development and introduction of new individual dwellings in the countryside off Blake's Lane which are having a suburbanising influence.

- Loss of field boundaries due to hedge removal, and subdivision of fields for equestrian uses.
- Introduction of new incongruous elements such as large-scale barns or uncharacteristic planting which can disrupt patterns and create eyesores.

Including these areas within the AONB would ensure more consistent forward planning and decision making through the focus provided by the statutory duties and powers which would apply. The dedicated purpose of the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan and the assistance that the AONB team can provide in supporting land managers and others will help to resolve issues affecting the area as noted above.

Other relevant factors

The key issue affecting this section of boundary has been the existing AONB boundary which cuts across the open farmed mid slopes and does not follow a clear feature on the ground. In addressing this boundary anomaly consideration was given to the use of Blake's Lane and the A246 as a proposed boundary. A number of properties including some new development was noted along Blake's Lane. Consideration was given to the exclusion of this development but the rear boundaries to properties were often poorly defined. Furthermore, the small pasture fields and woodland between Blake's Lane and the A246 were considered to be of high quality and part of the sweep of landscape from the edge of the existing AONB. It was concluded therefore that the boundary should be extended as far as the A246. However, it was noted that the natural beauty assessment identified land within Hatchlands Park and East Clandon village as meeting the natural beauty criterion. In defining a boundary to include these features of interest on the edge, attention was given to the effect of the A246 corridor in fragmenting the landscape and the extent to which land north of the road qualified in terms of natural beauty. It was concluded that the extent of qualifying land north of the road was greater than the immediate features of interest and was of considerable extent. Furthermore, the A246 corridor in this section was noted as being single carriageway and less influenced by urbanising elements such as duelling, lighting, signage and junctions which are seen further west and east. Taking all factors into account Natural England concluded that the land north of the A246 is of sufficient scale and quality to extend the AONB designation across the A246 corridor, and that the corridor itself has minimal impact on the sweep of landscape as whole. The boundary has therefore been drawn to include the lower dip slopes, East Clandon village, Hatchlands parkland and ancient woodland north of the park.



View across pastures towards tree lined route of Blake's Lane

The proposed boundary

The proposed boundary has been drawn to include the immediate setting of East Clandon village and rural landscape and ancient woodland north of Hatchlands. It follows the A246 and security fencing of the railway for significant sections through this area and also field boundaries, woodland, rural lanes and tracks. Land which slopes away from the parkland towards West Horsley and which is affected by development and land uses on the edge of the settlement is excluded. Similarly the Clandon Regis Golf Course to the west of East Clandon has been excluded due to changes to land use and landscape patterns which reduce natural beauty.

Proposed Headley Hills extension

Context

This proposed extension includes the undulating pastoral and wooded landscape which surrounds the village of Headley. Located immediately north of Headley Heath and the existing AONB, this landscape shares many of the same characteristics and qualities including the ancient woodlands of Cherkley Wood, Nower Wood, Oyster Hill, Hook Wood and Costal Wood.



View east along Mill Way looking towards Headley village and Headley Heath

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The area includes:

- The historic village of Headley comprising knapped flint/brick buildings and landmark church.
- Significant areas of ancient woodland which combine with undulating topography to create unfolding views and vistas.
- An intimate landscape traversed by narrow, rural, winding lanes and tracks, lined with mature beech trees.

Significance

This area comprises undulating pastoral farmland with areas of ancient woodland and narrow lanes that impart an established feel and express many of the special qualities of the adjacent AONB. Its special qualities relate to its vegetation patterns and enclosed character which frame and reveal wider views across the folds in landform to wooded horizons. Vernacular buildings unified by the use of red brick and knapped flint, along with the landmark spire of Headley Church, combine with the sometimes steep topography to give high landscape and scenic quality. This is a small-scale landscape which has local visual complexity, and a tranquil character.

Key Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- New housing development in the Headley Court area which may have a visual influence and impact on rural lanes.
- Coordination of woodland and access management across different conservation organisations.
- Scrub encroachment and non-native planting within woodland.
- Pressure for recreational use of the area including extension of golf courses and equestrian uses.

Statutory designation as AONB with the immediate application of relevant statutory powers and duties and its formal inclusion in the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan would strengthen the ability of the

AONB team to ensure the future conservation and enhancement of the area's natural beauty and would place a statutory duty on all public bodies to have regard to the area's conservation and enhancement.

Other relevant factors

The key issues which influenced the boundary in this area included those raised in the natural beauty and desirability assessment in relation to land north of the M25.

The natural beauty of Langley Vale to the north of the M25 was considered to be borderline, in part due to lack of strongly defined scenic qualities, and the significant noise intrusion from the M25 which reverberates within the vale due to prevailing wind and topography. In the south, land uses such as motor racing, subdivision of fields for equestrian use, signage, lighting, masts and pylons, result in cumulative effects of incongruous features. Further north the landscape is transitional as it extends towards Walton on the Hill and Epsom Racecourse. The definition of a boundary within this transitional landscape raised concerns regarding a boundary which was overly complex and convoluted. Furthermore, those areas

of greatest quality fall under active management by the Woodland Trust as part of the establishment of a Commemorative Woodland. The qualities are likely to be conserved and enhanced through this initiative.



View along bridleway north of Cherkley Wood

In relation to Banstead Heath the natural beauty was considered to be marginal in part due to the homogenous character of the area and lack of strongly defined scenic qualities. In addition, detailed assessment confirmed that traffic noise impacted on perceived tranquillity and relative wildness, as well as perceptions of scenic quality. Close to the M25, around Mogador, these effects were found to be particularly pronounced and coupled with adjoining land uses such as the Walton Heath golf course and open farmland towards Lower Kingston (areas not considered to meet the natural beauty criterion), gave rise to a more tenuous link to the existing AONB. Application of the 'wash-over' principle was considered for Walton Heath/Lower Kingswood farmland but discounted on the basis that Walton Heath/Lower Kingswood farmland, are not surrounded by qualifying land. Furthermore, the qualities of Banstead Common are under active management by the Banstead Common Conservators and likely to be conserved and enhanced through this active management.

On balance it was concluded that a pragmatic boundary along the southern edge of the M25 would enable the inclusion of areas of high quality around Headley, whilst excluding areas of lower quality to the north.

The proposed boundary

The proposed boundary provides an appropriate join with the existing Surrey Hills AONB boundary enabling all of the Mole Gap and Reigate Escarpment SSSI to be included within the designation.

In defining a boundary south of the M25 consideration was given to the current planning position at Headley Court which has outline planning permission for 70 homes. The emerging Mole Valley Local Plan also identifies this site and wider area, as a housing allocation (Policy DS40) for up to 120 homes, and the listed building of Headley Court is proposed for redevelopment as Senior Living Homes (currently at appeal). The former Ministry Of Defence (MOD) site is therefore likely to experience change and development in future. Taking these factors together a judgment was made to exclude the whole of the area from the proposed boundary. The boundary therefore follows rural lanes and property boundaries excluding Headley Manor House and associated grounds and setting. East of Headley village the boundary has been drawn along the top of the M25 embankments.

Proposed Chipstead extension



View southwest across Chipstead Bottom towards Banstead Wood

Context

This area comprises the chalk valleys of Hogden Bottom and Chipstead Bottom including the undulating tributary valleys around Mugswell, Shabden Estate and Banstead Wood. This area extends northwards from the existing AONB towards the urban fringes of Kingswood and Chipstead.

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The extension includes:

- Distinctive steep sided, sinuous chalk valley landscapes of Hogden and Chipstead Bottoms.
- Extensive areas of ancient semi-natural woodland and open downland including Banstead Wood, Fames Rough, Chipstead Bottom and Shabden Park.
- Narrow sinuous rural lanes connecting rural cottages and estate buildings especially east of Mugswell and High Road/Elmore Road.

Significance

The area forms a series of steep sided chalk valleys and extensive areas of ancient semi-natural woodland and open downland valued for its grass swards and rare orchids, which collectively give rise to scenic landscape compositions. Here elevated open views contrast with the intimate enclosure of the ancient woods, carpeted in bluebells and wild garlic in spring. The scale of the valleys, matrix of open and wooded slopes and integrity of this area, exudes a deeply rural character where the dispersed pattern of historic rural buildings and narrow, tree lined lanes add interest.

Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- Loss of hedgerows and woodland through the expansion of golf courses which intrude on to steep valley slopes.
- Ad hoc development along rural lanes which is visually intrusive in the wider landscape and has an urbanising effect on the character of rural lanes.
- Recreation pressure on areas of open downland including the impact of dogs on sheep grazing and ground nesting birds.
- Loss of chalk grassland to scrub invasion or over grazing through equestrian use.

- Fly tipping along rural lanes.
- Loss of woodlands which forms wooded skylines and prevents visual intrusion of areas of adjacent development.

The special qualities associated with this area could all benefit from the broader integrated management and protection that AONB designation would bring. This integrated management and the planning status of AONB designation could also address many of the issues noted above.

Other relevant factors

During the assessment process concerns were raised regarding the transitional landscape to the south and west where it abuts Lower Kingswood and the A217 and M25 junction. Here the combination of gentler topography, built development along lanes, urban fringe land uses such as pony paddocks, fly tipping and noise intrusion from the road corridors, results in a decline in natural beauty. The proposed boundary has therefore been drawn within this transition including areas of land where topographic variation is more pronounced and combined with rural lanes, vernacular buildings and patchwork of pasture fields and woodland, gives rise to higher levels of natural beauty. Consideration was given to drawing the boundary back as far as Rectory Road where the landform is clearly dropping into Hogden Bottom and where the network of narrow lanes and vernacular buildings is most concentrated. However, this would have resulted in the exclusion of significant blocks of ancient woodland to the south (Grub Wood, Gatwick Wood and Colts Bushes). The boundary was therefore extended further south to include these features of interest on the edge which contribute to the natural beauty of the area, whilst still ensuring the boundary falls within the area of transition. A further area of transition occurs between High Road and Hogcross Lane. Consideration was given to defining the boundary along High Road, but this would have resulted in the exclusion of a number of important listed buildings which form part of the Elmore Road and

High Road Conservation Areas and which contribute to natural beauty of the area. On balance the boundary was drawn further to the east in order to include historic buildings of interest and a small valley between High Road, Elmore Road and Hogcross Lane.



Grub Wood

At Chipstead Bottom particular scrutiny was given to the relatively recent suburban housing which has occurred along Outwood Lane south of the railway, noted in the natural beauty assessment as not contributing to natural beauty. A boundary excluding this development would have resulted in a narrow corridor of excluded land and a convoluted boundary. The housing is relatively limited in extent, lies on lower land within the valley and is dominated by surrounding rolling landform. It was concluded that the housing sits within a sweep of qualifying land and has only a localised impact. A boundary was therefore drawn to the west, thereby including the housing within the proposed extension.

The proposed boundary

The boundary follows lanes, tracks, hedgerows and the edges of woodland for much of its length through this area. It does not follow any feature on the ground in two locations - on the margins of the Kingswood Golf and Country Club and northeast of Surrey Downs Golf Club. In these locations the boundary cuts across the break in slope in a straight line between areas of woodland.

Proposed Happy Valley extension

Context

This area comprises the deeply incised Happy Valley, a chalk valley system which extends into the fringes of south London, to the east of the A23. It is contiguous with the existing AONB and is defined by the main break in slope between the valley sides and wider built-up areas.



View across the downland slopes and wooded ridgelines of Happy Valley

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The area considered suitable for inclusion within the proposed extension includes:

- The dramatic chalk valley system of Happy Valley and surrounding farmland.
- Network of ancient woodland and wooded shaws that create a patchwork across areas of downland and arable farmland.
- Extensive areas of nationally significant calcareous grassland habitat.
- Narrow rural lanes and tracts of land only accessible on foot.

Significance

Chalk grassland landscapes are an important component of the Surrey Hills AONB. The AONB as currently designated includes significant areas of chalk grassland on the steep scarp slopes but little land within the incised valleys of the North Downs.

This area, along with Marden Park and Stoney Hill to the east, encapsulates some of the best chalk grasslands north of the existing AONB. Special qualities are derived from the scale and drama of the valley and its areas of chalk grassland and ancient woodland which create scenic compositions and unfolding views. This landscape has smooth, rounded convex slopes emphasised by linear woodland shaws and expresses a range of colours and textures throughout the seasons. The water tower of Netherne-on-the-Hill and Chaldon church punctuate the skyline and add interest reflecting the history of the area. This landscape abuts areas of significant population, but retains a high degree of tranquillity, especially in the heart of area which can only be accessed on foot.

Key Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- High public usage of this area resulting in compaction of chalk grassland and conflict between livestock grazing and dogs.
- Loss of field boundaries due to hedge removal, lack of management or over-trimming and limited take up of environmental stewardship in some areas.

- Introduction of incongruous elements such as large-scale agricultural buildings or masts which can disrupt patterns and create eyesores.
- Suburbanisation of lanes due to high traffic volumes and verge erosion.
- Expansion of urban fringe land uses including golf courses and playing fields.

Including this area within the AONB would ensure more consistent forward planning and decision making through the focus provided by the statutory duties and powers which would apply. The dedicated purpose of the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan and the assistance that the AONB team can provide in supporting land managers and others will help to resolve issues affecting the area as noted above.

Other relevant factors

During the natural beauty assessment, concerns were raised regarding the transitional nature of the landscape to the south, where it abuts the AONB. Between Lord’s Wood, Court Farm and Rook Lane, a less undulating and intensive arable landscape, with evidence of boundary loss and caravan development within Furze Field Wood, was considered to be of lower landscape quality. However, in the context of the wider extension area, these lower quality areas fall between qualifying land within the AONB to the south and the Happy Valley to the north and were considered to be localised. On balance these areas were regarded as sufficiently small in extent to be considered as part of a wider tract of qualifying land.

The extent of urban fringe land uses such as playing fields, visual influence of urban areas on the qualities of the landscape, and the extent to which incongruous features such as masts fragment the area, were also key considerations. The strong topography and high levels of vegetation on the fringes of Happy Valley and along urban edges has enabled the boundary to be defined close to the built edge and as a result it often follows fence lines along the perimeter of properties and is subsequently convoluted in some places. At Farthing Down consideration was given to the drawing back of the boundary to exclude transitional landscape influenced by the surrounding urban development. This would have resulted in almost all of the down being excluded due to a lack of clear features to follow on the ground. Given the ridge of downland is valued for its scenic views



Upper reaches of the Happy Valley east of Furze Field Wood



Chaldon Church

into Happy Valley, natural heritage (part of the Site of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserve) and cultural heritage (Scheduled Monument), a pragmatic decision was taken to extend the boundary to the urban edge. This enabled the feature to be included in its entirety.

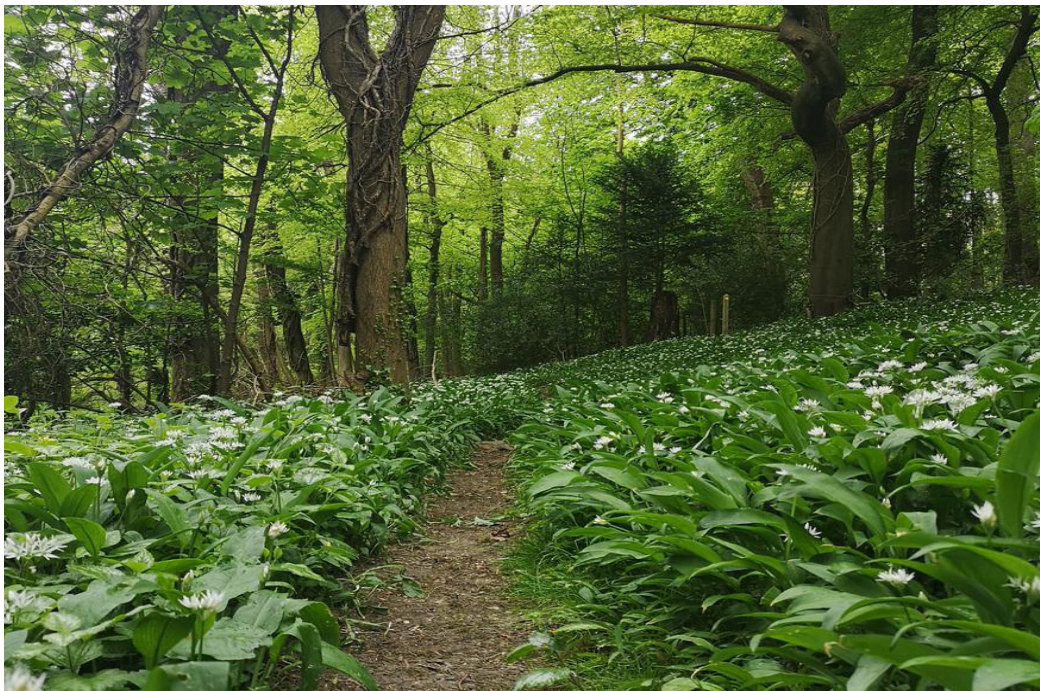
The proposed boundary

The county boundary across the southern section of Happy Valley has been used as the proposed boundary, in the absence of a clear feature to follow and the need to exclude land to the south which is increasingly influenced by urban context and includes the Surrey National Golf Course. The proposed boundary does not include the whole of the Farthing Downs and Happy Valley SSSI nor the South London Downs NNR - this is not unusual where natural heritage designations cover significant areas. The natural beauty of the landscape for inclusion in the AONB designation is the primary consideration.

Proposed Caterham Woods extension

Context

This boundary extension includes the steep folded wooded chalk slopes which lie between the chalk scarp at Gravelly Hill (within the existing AONB) and the settlement of Caterham. It also includes ancient woodland and historic defence sites on the edge of the chalk scarp south of Chaldon.



Carpets of wild garlic in Old Park Wood

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The area includes:

- Dramatic, steep and folded chalk slopes.
- Extensive areas of woodland including ancient woodland sites (e.g. Old Park Wood) and woodland which frames and defines the chalk scarp to the south.
- Arts and Crafts housing and historic sites which contribute to natural beauty.

Significance

This proposed extension is unique within the context of the chalk valleys to the north of the Surrey Hills AONB forming some of the steepest and most dramatic chalk slopes and extensive areas of woodland. Special qualities relate to the drama and scale of the topography, elevated and glimpsed views across wooded slopes, extensive areas of intact semi-natural habitat close to built-up areas and historic features which add interest and contribute to the natural beauty of the area. This is an inward-looking landscape but one which seamlessly connects to the existing AONB to the south.

Key Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- Loss of chalk grassland sites due to establishment of secondary woodland and scrub.
- Lack of woodland management resulting in a loss of structural diversity and biodiversity.
- Potential loss of heritage including Whitehill Tower and the integrity of Arts and Crafts housing.
- Extension of garden curtilage and domestic clutter into woodland resulting in loss of semi natural character through gradual urbanisation.

The inclusion of the Caterham Woods provides an important connection between existing communities to the north and the chalk scarp to the south. This area is integral to the wider North

Downs Way and acts as a green corridor maintaining strong east-west continuity. The inclusion of this area helps to widen the AONB landscape at one of its narrowest points. Designation would support continuity in the active management of woodland enhancing biodiversity along with calcareous grassland restoration supporting Biodiversity Opportunity Area initiatives including connecting existing SSSI and SNCI sites e.g. Quarry Hangers, currently managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust.

Other relevant factors

The definition of a boundary to include the steep wooded slopes to the south of Caterham has been particularly challenging due to the nature of the wooded/urban interface and the risk of the boundary becoming overly convoluted. Where the landscape drops northwards towards the settlement of Caterham, care has been taken to include the steepest wooded or open slopes where the folded nature of the topography is strongly expressed and there are features of interest including ancient woodland, whilst avoiding the splitting of settlement. Tandridge Local Plan was consulted to determine the extent of urban areas and Caterham Conservation Area. The proposed boundary does not include any of these built-up areas. Nevertheless, the proposed boundary extension does include some areas of built development associated with the Arts and Crafts housing along Weald Way and Woodland Way (part of the War Coppice Garden Village). These areas have been included due to their low density and local distinctiveness with contributes to the area's natural beauty. It also includes the Mottrams/Caterham Preparatory School and loose development along Harestone Hill as this built form is set within established grounds and wooded hillsides and is subservient to the surrounding landscape.

In terms of the boundary at Chaldon the landscape was considered to be in transition, becoming influenced by the presence of the urban edge and pony paddocks south of the village. Whilst the pattern of development is relatively low density, the urbanising effects of built form, property boundaries combined with post and rail fencing, horse shelters and storage, has created a degree of visual clutter. On balance Natural England has concluded that this area does not meet the natural beauty criterion and the location of the existing AONB is judged to be correct (save for a number of boundary anomalies). Only minor changes were made to the boundary here.

The proposed boundary

The proposed boundary provides an appropriate join with the existing Surrey Hills AONB boundary and includes the qualifying higher quality wooded slopes above Caterham whilst excluding the lesser quality equestrian land uses on the south side of Chaldon.

The boundary follows lanes, tracks and the edge of properties and woodland. Given the heavily wooded and settled fringes of this area, not all sections of the boundary have been possible to verify in the field. Where access has not been possible aerial photographs and OS MasterMap have been used to assist with identifying a suitable boundary feature to follow. The use of property boundaries in many instances means that the boundary is complex in some locations. This is judged to be acceptable in order to bring in qualifying areas of extensive dramatic chalk topography and areas of ancient woodland.



Whitehill Tower - a non-designated heritage asset at Tower Farm

The boundary includes areas of ancient woodland and Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (including Foxburrow Fields and The Valley) on the margins of the area. It also enables the inclusion of Whitehill Tower, a local landmark and the whole of the large multivalent hillfort at War Coppice Camp (scheduled monument) to be included within the AONB in its entirety.

Proposed Woldingham Valleys extension



Smooth dramatic slopes of the North Downs east of Woldingham

Context

This area comprises the dramatic, smooth and flowing slopes of the North Downs which extend seamlessly from the existing AONB located to the south and west. It includes the ridge top settlement of Woldingham, Nore Hill and the Halliloo Valley.

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The extension includes:

- Smooth, flowing dramatic chalk topography creating a series of sinuous valley systems.
- Mosaic of ancient woodland and shaws emphasise topography and combine with areas of chalk grassland and arable farmland create scenic compositions.
- Garden village settlement of Woldingham sits on a ridge top and extends down valley sides set within mature woodland and leafy grounds.

Significance

This area contains some of the most intact and dramatic North Downs chalk valley landscapes. Views across valley slopes and along the sinuous valleys, combined with woodland and contrasting open slopes creates a range of scenic compositions and visual interest which exude drama. The scale of the landscape means that land uses such as golf courses remain subservient set within a high quality and visually dominant landscape. Similarly the village of Woldingham reads as part of this wider valley system having little influence on views from the wider landscape due to high tree cover and its loose arrangement of dwellings enabling many views out from the settlement to the surrounding hillsides. This area offers tranquil rural countryside with noise intrusion from roads increasing at its fringes to the north and east.

Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- Visual intrusion of masts which break the skyline and sinuous flow of landform.
- Impact of road noise and loss of tranquillity on the margins of the area due to traffic noise.
- Introduction of non-native woodland and poplar plantations disrupting traditional landscape patterns.
- Loss of chalk downland and grassland diversity due to lack of management and scrub encroachment.
- Land use change such as intensive arable farming and expansion of golf courses resulting in disruption to landscape patterns.
- Loss of woodlands/trees which frame views and integrate existing development.

The semi-natural woodlands and chalk grassland habitats, within this proposed extension could

benefit from the broader integrated management and protection that AONB designation would bring. This integrated management and the planning status of AONB designation could also address many of the issues noted above.

Other relevant factors

The definition of the boundary in relation to Woldingham has been a key issue. Initially consideration was given to defining a boundary which excluded the settlement. The Tandridge Local Plan was referenced to determine the extent of the settlement however this was found to exclude built-up areas along The Ridge and on the edges of the Halliloo Valley. If a boundary was to be defined which excluded development within Woldingham then it would also need to exclude development in these locations too. Defining a boundary to achieve this was found to be problematic given the leafy character of the area and permeable edges to development. It was also likely to become convoluted if Halliloo Valley was to be included. The merits of including Woldingham within the extension was therefore considered further. The natural beauty assessment highlighted that the settlement does not detract from the surrounding landscape as a result of its mature wooded context – this means that only glimpses of individual housing can be seen from the wider valley sides. Furthermore, within the village the individual rural character of the narrow privately maintained and unlit streets, loose arrangement of dwellings (many of which are of architectural merit) set within generous leafy grounds and the Conservation Area all contribute to its distinctive sense of place. From within the village there are frequent elevated views out towards the surrounding high-quality landscape such that the surrounding landscape is perceived to extend into and through the settlement. These qualities are reflected in the village design guide and Conservation Area Appraisal.



Sinuous Halliloo Valley looking east across the Woldingham

undulating chalk landscape which extends seamlessly from the existing AONB.

On balance, and for the reasons given above, Natural England has concluded that the settlement of Woldingham should be included within the proposed boundary. This enables a less convoluted boundary to be defined which includes the Halliloo Valley, Nore Hill and Woldingham Valley up to Botley Hill Farm. On the southern and eastern sides of the village it enables the inclusion of the north downs

Within the Halliloo valley particular attention has been given to the transitional nature of the valley and influence of equestrian uses and fragmentation as a result of roads and railway in its western reaches. A boundary has been drawn within this transition, including the higher quality areas.

The proposed boundary

The proposed boundary follows a long section of road (Limpsfield Road) on the eastern side of this area which forms a robust and easily identifiable boundary. To the north the boundary follows the edge of woodland and property boundaries, lanes and tracks. The boundary includes the Woldingham and Oxted Downs SSSI in its entirety.

Proposed Limpsfield extension



Stockenden Farm with the rising land of the greensand hills behind

Context

This area comprises a mosaic of woodland, acid grassland and remnant heath habitat south of Limpsfield and is associated with former commons of Limpsfield and Itchingwood. It connects the greensand hills where they extend west from the Kent Downs AONB with the former commons south of Limpsfield. This area lies immediately to the east of Oxted.

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The area includes:

- Undulating and steep slopes of the greensand hills where they extend from the Kent Downs supporting a high concentration of ancient woodland shaws and historic settlement.
- Mosaic of woodland, acid grassland and remnant heath habitat displaying colour and textural variation throughout the seasons and high biodiversity value.

Significance

This proposed extension is a relatively small scale and intimate landscape, with a richly textured and colourful mosaic of small-scale medieval field patterns, woodland shaws, former common and remnant heath. The sometimes steep and complex topography of the greensand hills afford occasional longer distance views southwards which add to scenic quality, along with historic farmsteads and manor houses which form local focal points. Whilst this is a settled landscape, it is one in which tranquillity and connection to nature can easily be found.

Key Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- Urbanisation of rural lanes due to ad hoc development and intensification of areas of existing development
- Pressure for recreation development including golf courses and playing fields.
- Road and rail improvements such as widening, lighting and signage which can impact on tranquillity and rural character.
- Ash dieback in woodlands and loss of heath habitat due to fragmentation
- Recreational pressures due to the proximity of conurbations.

Statutory designation as AONB with the immediate application of relevant statutory powers and duties and its formal inclusion in the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan would strengthen the ability of the AONB team to ensure the future conservation and enhancement of the area's natural beauty and would place a statutory duty on all public bodies to have regard to the area's conservation and enhancement.

Other relevant factors

The fragmentation of the landscape in the north of the area as a result of development and land use such as the Limpsfield Chart golf course was noted in the natural beauty assessment. As a result, the Limpsfield Common area was not included in the Candidate Area although highlighted for particular scrutiny when defining the boundary. This was revisited and initially a boundary was defined along Kent Hatch Road and rural tracks including Pastens Road to exclude this area. However, after careful consideration this boundary was considered to make little sense on the ground, including development set within woodland in some areas whilst excluding it in others. The quality and character of woodland and heathland associated with Limpsfield Common and The Chart was also considered to be similar to that within the existing AONB and whilst containing areas of development, areas of semi-natural habitat were nonetheless perceived as dominant. In particular Limpsfield Chart golf course was considered to be limited in extent and influence and built development was either relatively loose in arrangement (Ballards Lane), nestled within woodland (Pains Hill), and/or limited in extent (The Chart). Given the mosaic of semi-natural habitats and their contribution to the special qualities of the area as a whole, Natural England has on balance concluded that the area of Limpsfield Common warrants inclusion within the proposed extension. Areas of small-scale development were considered to form part of a wider tract of qualifying land.

In terms of defining the southern boundary, consideration was given to the transitional nature of the landscape where the steep and convoluted slopes of the greensand hills gradually reduce and flow into the Low Weald. A boundary was identified within the transition enabling the steepest slopes and historic settlement to be included, along with wooded shaws and Itchingwood Common. The boundary adopts rural lanes within the transition wherever possible.

The proposed boundary

The proposed boundary provides an appropriate join with the existing Surrey Hills and Kent Downs AONB boundaries and includes the qualifying higher quality land and woodland associated with the greensand



Mature beech trees



Remnant heath habitat

hills and areas of former common and woodland/remnant heath. A boundary line has been identified at the higher end of the transition and follows continuous clear ground features. After careful consideration Natural England has concluded that the boundary should not be taken further south into the Low Weald farmland. Whilst the Low Weald has many positive attributes and forms attractive countryside it was not considered to express the outstanding qualities required for recognition as a nationally important landscape.

Proposed Godstone Hills extension



The Mount - motte and bailey castle earthwork north of Old Oxted

Context

This area comprises the Greensand Hills to the east and south of Godstone and stretches from South Park in the southwest to Oxted in the northeast. It comprises an area of undulating wooded landscape which affords close proximity views to the chalk scarp and elevated views south across the Low Weald. These greensand hills share many of the characteristics of the Surrey Hills AONB but on a smaller scale.

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The extension includes:

- The upper greensand vale northwest of Oxted.
- Main spine of greensand hills between Tandridge and South Park including important areas of ancient woodland, historic defensive sites and incised rural lanes.
- Fringes of Low Weald landscape which lie adjacent to the hills.
- Areas of remnant parkland including Tandridge Park and South Park.
- Minor watercourses such as Gibbs Brook and water bodies such as Townland Pond/Godstone Ponds support valued wetland habitats and form important wildlife corridors.

Significance

The significance of this area derives from its distinctive undulating topography across which is a diverse, interconnected mosaic of deciduous woodlands including shaws, fields, farmsteads and parklands. These hills comprise a sequence of low summits which are visually connected to the dramatic chalk scarp to the north and afford views southwards across the Low Weald farmland.

Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- The fragmentation of the landscape due to transport infrastructure and land use change.
- Heritage at risk due to lack of management and maintenance.
- Restoration of former minerals sites in keeping with the special qualities of the area.
- Land use change in areas beyond the proposed boundary extension which can affect the special qualities of the area and valued views between the chalk escarpment and greensand hills.
- Lack of active traditional woodland management.
- Loss of woodlands, ancient and veteran trees and parkland boundary features which perform an

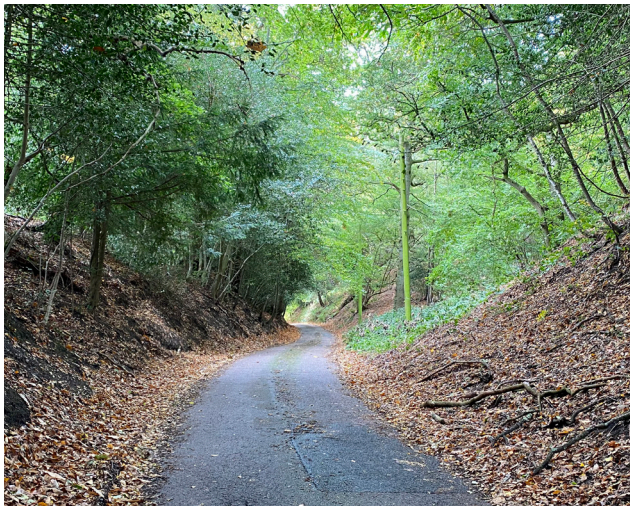
important role in framing views and reinforcing parkland character.

The extensive ancient semi-natural woodlands and habitats, streams and narrow incised lanes within this proposed extension could all benefit from the broader integrated management and protection that AONB designation would bring. This integrated management and the planning status of AONB designation could also address many of the issues noted above.

Other relevant factors

The natural beauty assessment identified a number of issues affecting land to the northeast of Godstone. Natural beauty was met at the upper end of the vale, but declines towards Godstone due to noise impact from traffic (M25, A25 and A22), road junctions, lighting and signage, current land uses including Godstone golf club, Highways England compound and, garden centre (Nags Hall), Rooks Nest business park and oil well site, and disused workings at Coney Hill Sandpit. A boundary has therefore been sought to include the qualifying land at the head of the vale connecting it across to the chalk scarp to the north, whilst excluding land between the existing AONB boundary and the A25, and between the edge of Tyler's Green and Tandridgehill Lane. Although change is anticipated in the excluded area which may bring future enhancement (restoration of Palmers Wood oil field to woodland by 2025 and restoration of the Highways England compound site, albeit for possible use within the Godstone golf course), this area will nonetheless continue to be fragmented.

The natural beauty assessment identified land to the south of the greensand hills as transitional and the boundary assessment work noted significant noise intrusion to the east of the M23 due to topography and prevailing winds. In accordance with Natural England guidance the boundary has been defined conservatively within these areas of transition. The boundary is therefore drawn to the east away from the M23 and is located north of the railway, except in the area around South Park, where it is extended to include the more undulating and well wooded landscape associated with former parkland and built heritage features, which contribute to natural beauty. Care was



View south along the incised route of Coldharbour Lane



Church at South Park

taken to exclude the planning allocation at Lambs Business Park – this site is a former brick clay quarry allocated for waste development in the Surrey Waste Local Plan.

The proposed boundary

The boundary follows roads, lanes, hedgerows and the edge of woodland and excludes the settlements of Old Oxted, Oxted, Tandridge, Tyler's Green and Godstone, White Post and Bletchingley. It does include the village of Church Town which is small in scale and sits within a sweep of qualifying land. In defining a boundary around settlement edges consideration was given to the influence exerted by the urban edge, urban fringe land uses and current allocations and planning permissions. Where potential development sites have been identified as part of the emerging Local Plan they have been noted but have not been afforded significant weight.

Proposed Betchworth Hills and Mole Valley extension



Views north across the former parkland along the River Mole floodplain with the rising chalk scarp in the distance

Context

This area comprises the greensand hills to the west of Reigate and the Mole Valley where it flows between the hills and the chalk scarp within the existing AONB to the north. It stretches from the fringes of Brockham in the west to the fringes of Reigate in the East.

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The areas considered suitable for inclusion within the proposed extension include:

- Reigate Heath with its acidic vegetation, valued semi-natural habitat and elevated views.
- The Mole Valley floodplain and adjacent parkland landscapes associated with Betchworth, Wonham and Broom Park.
- Historic settlements of Betchworth and Buckland.

Significance

The special quality of this area derives from the combination of undulating hills, River Mole valley floor and superb views towards the dramatic chalk scarp to the north and west. These qualities have supported the establishment of parklands which have taken advantage of the scenic qualities, and historic settlements and key landmark buildings which add a rich layer of cultural significance. The underlying sandstone geology is reflected in the topography, heath habitat and incised lanes. Reigate Heath contains extensive areas of lowland dry acid grassland and lowland heathland which are rare within the context of the Surrey Hills AONB as well as extensive areas of good quality semi-improved grassland along the River Mole and marshy meadows which are rare in Surrey.

Key Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- Land use change in areas beyond the proposed boundary extension which may affect the special qualities of the area and valued views between the chalk escarpment and greensand hills.
- Linear development along the A25 corridor resulting in cumulative urbanising effects and fragmentation of the landscape
- Loss of woodlands, ancient and veteran trees and parkland features which perform an important role in framing views and reinforcing parkland character.

- Introduction of new incongruous elements such as large-scale buildings or inappropriate planting which can disrupt patterns and create eyesores.
- Potential for future minerals extraction.

The area is closely linked (in visual, natural and cultural heritage terms) with the adjacent chalk scarp which already lies within the AONB. Natural England considers that strategic management of this area as a whole would be beneficial. Including these areas within the AONB would ensure more consistent forward planning and decision making through the focus provided by the statutory duties and powers which would apply. The dedicated purpose of the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan and the assistance that the AONB team can provide in supporting land managers and others will help to resolve issues affecting the area as noted above.

Other relevant factors

Particular scrutiny has been given to the transitional nature of the landscape to the south and west. Here the greensand hills are declining in elevation giving way to an open and flatter agricultural landscape which lacks the scenic qualities of the parkland landscapes along the River Mole and close proximity views to the chalk scarp to the north. The boundary was extended to the south to include the rising slopes of the greensand hills where they define the River Mole corridor around Ricebridge Farm and where there are strong signs of former parkland and intact enclosure patterns. The boundary includes qualifying land at the higher end of the transition, excluding areas of flatter open farmland to the south and west.

Detailed assessment at the boundary stage revealed that the elevated woodland of Reigate Park was separated from the wider area of qualifying land by a lower lying area. Here the landscape has been influenced by urban fringe land uses (including allotments and sports pitches), as well equestrian uses around Littleton Lane. This has resulted in a decline in landscape quality and condition such



Elevated views northeast across parkland and pastoral slopes from Oldpark Wood

that the elevated woodland of Reigate Park has become isolated. Furthermore, its northern boundary was difficult to define - woodland extending as a feathered edge into the Reigate Priory Playing Fields and around Reigate Pond. On balance a judgment was made to exclude this area and a boundary was defined further to the west.

Detailed consideration was also given to the inclusion of Buckland Park Lake. The natural beauty assessment concluded this area did not meet the natural beauty criterion but was finely balanced. This was reviewed. There is a clear distinction between the qualities of Buckland Park Lake and other former mineral sites to the north of the A25. This, coupled with the location of the site adjacent to qualifying land to the north, west and south, has led to the conclusion that a less convoluted boundary could be defined to the east along the Shag Brook, resulting in the inclusion of the lake as part of a tract of qualifying land.

The proposed boundary

The boundary follows roads, tracks, hedgerows and the edge of fields as well as a section of the River Mole and its tributary Gad Brook. It has excluded areas of development along the A25 corridor including the waste recovery facility at Reigate Road Quarry whilst including the settlements of Betchworth and Buckland.

Proposed Ockley Low Weald extension

Historic farmhouse at Plough Farm



Context

This area comprises land between the railway and the fringes of Ewhurst and a smaller area west of Ewhurst. The former stretches to the south to include Vann Lake, Ockley village and Jayes Park and the small-scale pastoral landscape to the southwest of Forest Green. It includes the historic settlements of Ockley (including Ockley Court) and Forest Green as well as a large number of traditional farmhouses.

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The area includes:

- A mosaic of mixed farmland and woodland which extends from the existing AONB forming a rich tapestry of small fields backdropped by Leith Hills and Holmbury Hill.
- Nature Reserves at Vann Lake and Sayers Croft including areas of steep wooded ghylls and open water.
- Historic settlements of Ockley, Ockley Court and Forest Green as well as a high concentration of vernacular farmsteads connected by rural lanes and tracks.

Significance

This proposed extension is a gently undulating pastoral landscape comprising small scale fields, species rich meadows, ancient woodlands (including linear shaws) where close proximity views to the rising greensand hills to the north lift scenic quality. It is a settled landscape with a high concentration of traditional rural farm buildings connected by a series of minor lanes and tracks which form a grid of greenways. Water is an important component of this landscape including incised ghyll valleys cloaked in woodland and numerous water bodies including those at Forest Green and Vann Lake. This landscape has a tranquil and long-established feel and reflects the important land management connections between the Low Weald and Greensand Hills.

Key Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

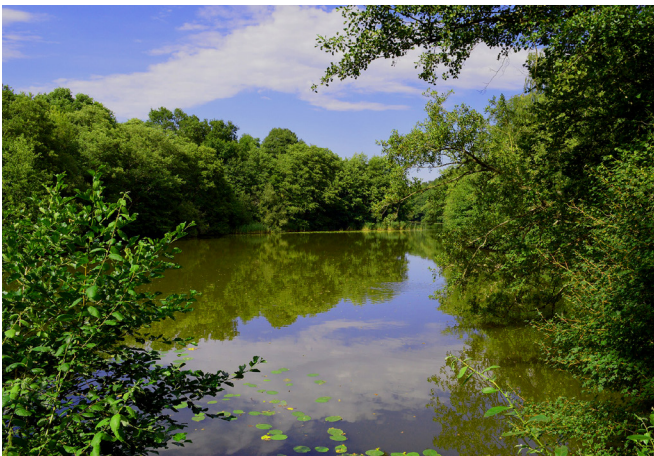
- Decline in coppiced woodland due to lack of management.
- Suburban development along lanes altering settlement pattern and rural routes.
- Equestrian land uses and intensive arable cultivation both of which cause the loss of landscape patterns and a decline in landscape condition.

- Loss of species rich meadows due to lack of management.
- Introduction of non-native and invasive species along watercourse and in ancient woodlands.

Statutory designation as AONB with the immediate application of relevant statutory powers and duties and its formal inclusion in the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan would strengthen the ability of the AONB team to ensure the future conservation and enhancement of the area's natural beauty and would place a statutory duty on all public bodies to have regard to the area's conservation and enhancement.

Other relevant factors

A key issue in defining the extent of this area has been the transitional nature of the landscape as it moves away from the greensand hills. Careful consideration has been given to those factors which are judged to lift the qualities of this landscape above ordinary or attractive countryside. Land close to the AONB is most influenced by the presence of the rising hills at Leith Hill and Holmbury Hill which are seen as a backdrop in views. Small knolls of higher land create topographic variation and interest and steep wooded ravines also add variety and texture. The intact pattern of small-scale pastures, defined by thick hedgerows and linear woodlands, adds a sense of longevity, along with vernacular farm buildings. Where these factors



Vann Lake Nature Reserve



View across Jayes Park to Leith Hill

come together, the natural beauty of the landscape is considered to be high. On this basis the boundary has been defined conservatively within this transitional landscape and extends south to include: distinctive small knolls from which there are elevated views e.g. Mayes Court; areas of intact meadow southwest of Forest Green; parkland landscape at Jayes Park; and historic settlements which contribute to the scenic qualities. Where the land flattens out, becoming less topographically interesting and lacks wider views, or has undergone change as a result of management which affects landscape condition (e.g. intensive farming, equestrian uses or golf course), it has been excluded. The east west historic lanes and tracks which traverse this landscape have frequently been used as suitable boundary features.

In accordance with Natural England Guidance, features of interest on the edge have been included where they form part of a wider area of qualifying land. However, some features of interest such as Vann Lake Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), cover a significant area - in this case woodland extends south into land on the margins of the transition. After careful consideration Natural England has concluded that the proposed boundary includes the SSSI where it is also a nature reserve and where the landscape is most scenic due to varied topography, steep wooded ravines and ghylls as well as the open water of the lake. The boundary therefore excludes some of the SSSI woodland to the south. Similarly ancient woodland to the south of Sayers Croft Nature Reserve has not been included within the proposed boundary - including only the nature reserve and associated meadows. This is not unusual where natural heritage designations cover significant areas. The natural beauty of the landscape for inclusion in the AONB designation is the primary consideration.

The proposed boundary

The proposed boundary follows roads, lanes and tracks, and occasional hedgerows and the edge of woodland. In the west it follows Coneyhurst Gill. The boundary around Sayers Croft was particularly difficult to define and is therefore complex. Natural England has concluded this is acceptable in order to bring the nature reserve and adjacent meadows into the AONB.

Proposed Dunsfold Low Weald extension



View north across Dunsfold Pond to the greensand hills

Context

This area comprises the Low Weald landscape which surrounds the village of Dunsfold to the south of Hascombe Hill and Breakneck Hill and to the east of Vann Lane. It includes the small incised tributary streams of the River Lox which weave through this small scale pastoral farmland in the shadow of the greensand hills.

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The extension includes:

- The historic common edge settlement of Dunsfold.
- Undulating pastoral farmland comprising small, incised streams, extensive blocks of woodland, and small scale pastoral fields with strong visual links to the greensand hills.
- Narrow rural lanes flanked by hedgerows and mature trees and occasional traditional farm buildings with sequential framed views to the hills.

Significance

The area forms a small scale, undulating, pastoral landscape which has a settled and established character, cloaked in ancient woodland and traversed by narrow lanes flanked by hedges and mature trees. This part of the Low Weald affords close proximity framed views to the rising hills to the north, across the undulating landform. These scenic qualities are complemented by the intimacy of the incised wooded ghylls which support significant populations of mosses and liverwort. There is a strong local vernacular of red brick, hanging tiles and pantile roofs which provide visual unity and interest, and the area has a high tranquillity with a rural backwater quality.

Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- Erosion of rural lanes due to increased traffic and curtilage treatment associated with new and existing development including the loss of hedgerows and grass verges, close board fencing and gated access.
- Loss of tranquillity due to increased levels of activity and development in adjacent areas including increased night lighting.
- Lack of woodland management, including traditional coppicing and historical replanting of ancient woodland with mixed or conifer plantation.

- Loss of unimproved or semi-improved pastures due to conversion to arable or grazing regimes.
- Introduction of non-native and invasive species along ghyll streams.
- Erosion of vernacular styles and integrity due to expansion/redevelopment of farms and farmhouses including large scale modern barns.

The special qualities associated with this proposed extension could all benefit from the broader integrated management and protection that AONB designation would bring. This integrated management and the planning status of AONB designation could also address many of the issues noted above.

Other relevant factors

During the assessment process concerns were raised regarding the transition in landscape quality away from the rising greensand hills and existing AONB boundary, and also the effects of fragmentation related to linear development along Plaistow Road and Chiddingfold Road and expansion of farm or commercial activity resulting in close board fencing and larger scale buildings considered to be incongruous. Careful consideration was given to the need to define a clear boundary such as the northern side of Chiddingfold Lane (which would include some areas of development), with the need to exclude incongruous development on the edge, adopting a more complex boundary to the north, which follows the edge of woodland and a stream course. On



Traditional vernacular buildings on edge of Dunsfold



Incised ghylls lined with ferns and woodland

balance, Natural England has concluded that the boundary exclude incongruous development on the edge and that a more complex boundary, but nonetheless one which can be defined on the ground, is preferable. This ensures that land to be included in the proposed extension comprises high quality landscape with strong visual association to the wider greensand hills.

Consideration was also given to recent planning permission for an exploration into a hydrocarbon exploration site, off High Loxley Lane, and also the proposed Garden Village development at Dunsford Aerodrome, both of which lie close to the qualifying area. The boundary was drawn to the west of these developments but also west of New Pond Farm, excluding the large barns and development as well as areas of equestrian use. These areas were considered to be of lesser quality as a result of fragmentation and management, but also due to less distinctive typography and few wider views.

The proposed boundary

Care was given to the boundary along High Loxley Road in light of the access proposals for the approved hydrocarbon exploration site to the east. The boundary was located to the west of the lane, excluding it from the proposed extension where it is likely to be affected by the development. However south of the proposed access the boundary crosses to the east of the lane, including it within the proposed extension.

Proposed Dockenfield Hills extension



View across pastoral landscape at Old Lane

Context

This area includes an area of undulating pastoral farmland between the existing Surrey Hills AONB and the South Downs National Park, south of Rowledge.

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The proposed extension includes:

- Areas of ancient woodland and high concentration of mature hedgerow and trees and veteran trees associated with former parkland at Frensham Heights.
- The rural villages of Dockenfield and Spreakley and a dispersed pattern of vernacular farmhouses and oast houses connected by a network of small rural lanes.
- The east west tributaries of the River Wey which flow through defined valleys and contribute to the varied topography.

Significance

The special qualities of this landscape relate to its tranquil and rural backwater ambience. This is reinforced by the established character of ancient woods, the pattern of well managed hedgerows and majestic oaks, and rural winding lanes which impart an established character. In this landscape settlements nestle in the gentle folds of the landscape and higher ridges afford long distance views.

Key Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- Loss of woodland through lack of management and loss of historic management techniques such as coppicing leading to a loss of hazel coppice stools along lanes.
- Establishment of recreational land uses which can impact on landscape quality such as glamping.
- Loss of field boundaries due to hedge removal, lack of management or over-trimming and limited take up of environmental stewardship in some areas.
- Large scale individual dwellings which may be visually prominent or alter lane character through curtilage treatment and introduction of gated access.

- Suburbanisation of lanes including changes to hedgerows relating to property boundary treatment.

Including this area within the AONB would ensure more consistent forward planning and decision making through the focus provided by the statutory duties and powers which would apply. The dedicated purpose of the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan and the assistance that the AONB team can provide in supporting land managers and others will help to resolve issues affecting the area as noted above.

Other relevant factors

During the natural beauty assessment, concerns were raised regarding the peri-urban influences associated with the edge of Rowledge, and schools in extensive grounds, where the landscape is considered to be transitional. This especially affected land north of West End Lane where there is also evidence of equestrian uses, which have visually disrupted landscape patterns. These issues were revisited at the boundary setting stage. Frensham Heights School (whilst containing significant built form) sits within an area of woodland and steep slopes which form the valley sides of the River Wey tributary. The school is also located within the former grounds of Frensham Hill, and signs of former parkland, including park railing and veteran trees set within pasture, are still evident. On this basis it was concluded that the boundary should be drawn further to the north, along The Long Road, including the school, its grounds and woodland, within the proposed extension. Further east, the landscape was considered to be more significantly influenced by development along lanes and equestrian uses. This area was excluded, along with the settlement of Shortfield Common, and the boundary was again defined using local lanes.

The proposed boundary

In defining the boundary to the south consideration was given to the inclusion of land south of Old Lane. Whilst land beyond the County boundary and into Hampshire has many similar qualities, there are also influences from Frith End Quarry and equestrian uses at Gum Hill. It was therefore



View southeast across oast house at Pitt Farm

concluded reasonable to pull the boundary northwards. Consideration was given to the use of the County boundary as the proposed boundary to the extension area, however this was found to not follow a clear feature on the ground, in part because it followed the River Wey, the course of which had changed over time and due to field boundary loss. The proposed boundary was therefore pulled northwards to Old Road, which forms a clear line on the ground within the transition.

The boundary excludes the settlement of Rowledge and Shortfield Common on the margins of the qualifying area, where the landscape shows signs of fragmentation and is transitional.

Shortheath Common is a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) on the margins of the proposed extension area. Consideration was given to including it in its entirety, as a feature on the edge. However, the common is fragmented by roads and the northern section, north of West End Lane, is more closely associated with the settlement edge. On balance a simple boundary was defined along West End Lane, excluding a small part of the SNCI, but including the majority of the common within the proposed extension.

Proposed Minor Boundary Refinements

Minor boundary changes are also proposed where there are known anomalies with the existing AONB boundary. These anomalies were highlighted in the Areas of Search around Haslemere, through the call for evidence and during the natural beauty assessment. Minor changes have been made where the existing AONB boundary does not follow a clear feature on the ground, where the land in question relates strongly to the wider AONB forming part of a sweep of qualifying land, and where a suitable alternative boundary can be defined.

Minor changes have been made in the following locations:

Guildford

The Mount
Land South of Woodcote

Milford

Land Southwest of Sandy Lane

Catteshall

Land at Munstead Heath
Land at Scizdons and Squirrels' Hill

Bookham

Land South of the A246

Oxted

Land North of Park Road

Dorking

Land north of Punchbowl Lane
Land Northwest of Dorking

Haslemere

Land East of Strut Road
Land South of Grayswood Common
Woodland along Railway
Land Between Bunch Lane and Weydown Road
Land West of Farnham Lane
Land South of Polecat
Land North of Critchmere Hill

Grayshott

Land at Tyndalls Wood
Land North of Linkside North and Eight Acres



Bluebell woods fringing Eastbury Park, Binscombe Hills area

The area proposed for designation as part of the Surrey Hills AONB

The ultimate decision to extend the Surrey Hills AONB is not taken on the basis of the individual Extension Areas set out above in their own right, but rather on the total area of the proposed designation. Natural England must stand back and consider the area as a whole to satisfy itself whether it is desirable to designate the qualifying areas as part of the Surrey Hills AONB.

Together, the proposed extension areas are closely related to the existing Surrey Hills AONB, forming largely contiguous land which shares the same geology as the wider AONB, comprising greensand hills and sinuous rolling chalk valleys as well as lower lying wooded wealden clays. These extension areas reflect qualities found elsewhere within the AONB and are thus representative of the existing designated landscape.



Remnant Wey & Arun Canal at Run Common, Cranleigh Waters area

Collectively the Extension Areas, in association with the existing AONB, comprises outstanding wooded hills, valleys and lowland farmland. The area has special qualities which are rare in the national context and for which a local consensus regarding the value of much of this landscape has existed for many years. In addition, the relative national rarity of the area's heath, chalk and ancient woodland habitats adds further weight to this conclusion.

The special qualities of the area proposed for designation as a whole, its national significance and the pressures impacting on the specific qualities of each Extension Area, are such that the legislative provisions provided by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, combined with the particular focus given to these qualities in planning management, the application of specific integrated management initiatives and increased access to a broader range of specialist skills and

other resources, make the inclusion of these areas within the Surrey Hills AONB desirable. This is particularly important with regard to the issues noted above in relation to each of the areas and particularly threats of loss of habitats including chalk grassland and woodland, visual intrusion from major development and heavy recreational use.

Designation would formalise activity which has for many years been undertaken by the Surrey Hills AONB team within the qualifying parts of the Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) in relation to furthering the conservation and enhancement of the area's natural beauty. This is both via direct engagement in management activity and through influencing the work of other organisations with responsibility for activities relevant to the area. It would also formalise activity to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the parts of the AGLV included within the proposed AONB extension should this local designation be removed in future.

In addition the area would benefit from the specific additional planning protection in the National Planning Policy Framework relating to AONBs. Designation would also extend the duty to have regard to the statutory purpose of the AONB to the many authorities whose responsibilities encompass the Extension Areas such as the local authorities, the Environment Agency, Natural England and the utilities companies.

Including the proposed extension within the Surrey Hills AONB would ensure a more consistent approach to this nationally important landscape in accessing resources, forward planning and decision making and through the focus provided by the statutory duties and powers which would apply, and in particular through the delivery of the statutory AONB Management Plan and its associated action plans.

Natural England has concluded that the area proposed for designation as indicated on maps accompanying this consultation document has outstanding natural beauty and that it is desirable that it should form part of the AONB and that the proposed new boundary should be subject to statutory and public consultation.

What happens next?

Natural England is required by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act, 2000, to consult the County and District Councils affected by the proposed boundary variations. In addition, this consultation is being extended to allow everyone with an interest in the proposed extensions to comment on the proposals. At the end of the consultation, we will analyse all the responses and review the proposals and if necessary, amend them to take account of any further relevant evidence provided. Depending on the number of responses received this is likely to take around six months. If no fundamental objections arise which cannot be overcome, and assuming no additional land needs to be included as a result of the consultation, the next stage will be to draw up a draft Order and to publish Notice of the Order in the London Gazette and other papers as required by Section 83(2) of the CROW Act.

The Notice period allows anyone who wishes to do so to make representations to Natural England, objecting to, supportive of, or proposing amendments to the Order, and stating the grounds on which they are made.

If however, as a result of the statutory and public consultation, additional land needs to be included within the proposed boundary variation, an additional statutory consultation will be required in relation to this additional land only.

Following the Notice period, a further period of response analysis will be required, and any further consequent changes made to the draft legal Order. It is worth noting that during the last landscape designation project over 3,500 responses were received, so it is difficult to provide a time estimate for this at this stage. Natural England Board approval will then be sought to allow the Order to be 'made' and submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation. If there are any unresolved objections, these

will be submitted to the Secretary of State with the Order, who has discretion to call a Public Inquiry to consider such objections further, before deciding whether or not to confirm the Order.

The Secretary of State may or may not confirm the Order, with or without amendment. This decision is not made to any specific timescale.

Implications of designation

Designation as AONB would provide formal statutory recognition of the national importance of the natural beauty of the area concerned, and as a consequence, would provide the basis for a more coordinated and integrated approach to management which would give specific focus and priority to the natural beauty of the area. The proposed area, if designated, would then formally come within the ambit of the statutory AONB Management Plan and benefit from the incentives, powers, duties, responsibilities and resources that designation brings.

The benefits can be summarised as follows:

- Statutory application of the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan across the proposed area including much of the Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and other areas of wider countryside regarded as meeting the natural beauty criterion.
- Full access to the AONB Team and the specialist skills and advice they can offer, providing an integrated focus on conserving and enhancing the area's special qualities through partnership working.
- Formal inclusion of Croydon Borough Council on the AONB Board through the inclusion of land at Happy Valley, such that the powers and duty 'to have regard' to the AONB purpose would extend to Croydon Borough Council in this area.
- All public bodies, statutory undertakers and holders of public office would have a statutory duty to have regard to the conservation and enhancement of the area brought within AONB.



Woodland and deep ravines in Dunsfold Low Weald area

Front cover image:
Looking west along Old Road, Dockenfield

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