

## LANDSCAPE TYPE GV: GREENSAND VALLEY

### Landscape Character Areas

GV1	Tillingbourne and Pipp Brook Greensand Valley*
GV2	Pixham to Reigate Greensand Valley*
GV3	Gatton Greensand Valley*
GV4	Merstham to Clacket Lane Greensand Valley

\* These Character Areas are outside Tandridge District and therefore are not described in this document. See the Surrey Countywide document for these areas.

## LANDSCAPE TYPE GV: GREENSAND VALLEY

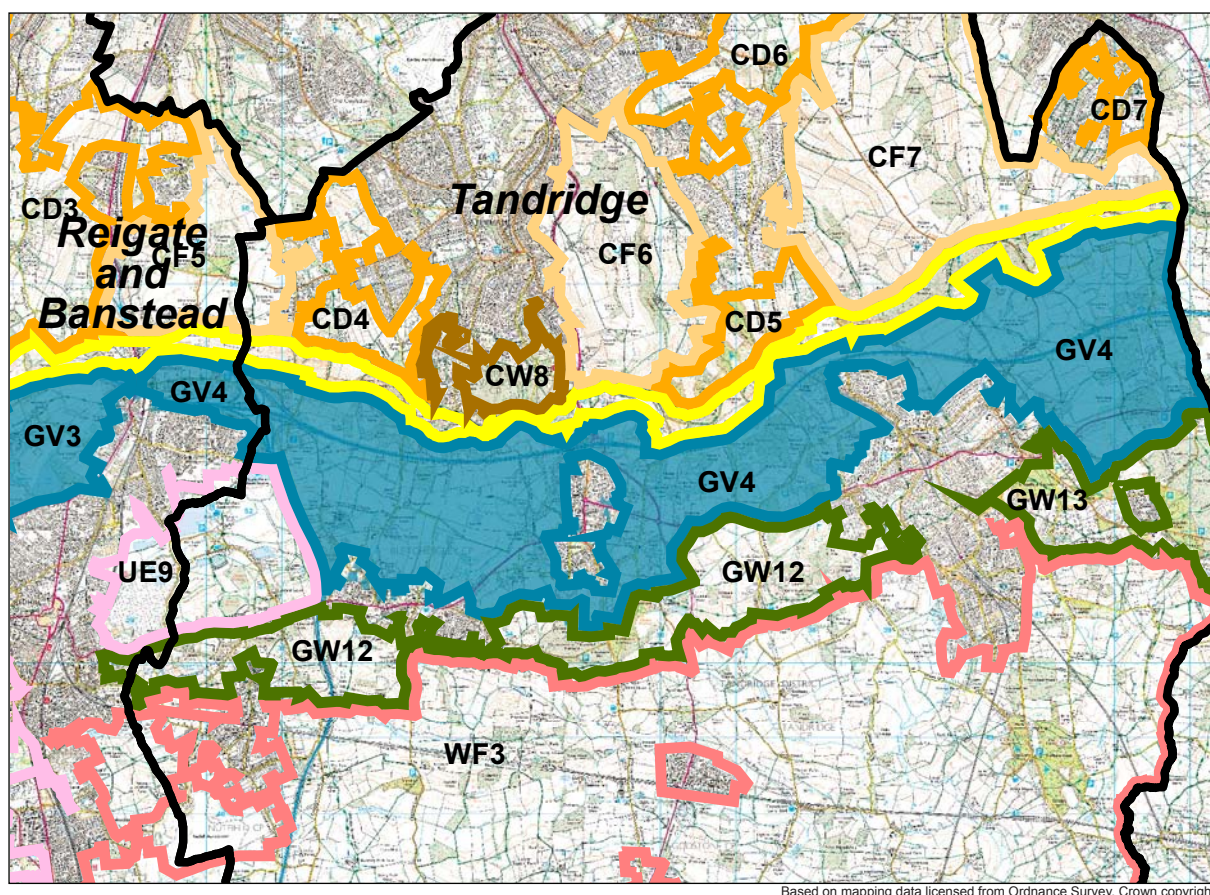
### Location and Boundaries

The Greensand Valley Type runs broadly east-west along the southern foot of the North Downs ridge scarp slope between Guildford and Oxted. Between Guildford and Dorking, the Greensand Valley is relatively narrow, associated with the Tillingbourne River and Pipp Brook. To the east of Dorking the Greensand Valley broadens and encompasses land between the more elevated greensand hills to the south and the North Downs to the north covering an area referred to as the Vale of Holmesdale. The Vale is divided by Redhill and Reigate, and then continues between Redhill and around Godstone and Oxted, following the foot of the North Downs in to neighbouring Kent. Boundaries are based on topography and land cover marking the transition from the open valley sides to the wooded hills to north and south.



### Key Characteristics

- Valley based on greensand with alluvium, diamicton and sand and gravel drift geology.
- Moderately flat or gently undulating farmland enclosed by the North Downs scarp to the north and the hills of the greensand ridge to the south.
- The area is crisscrossed the headwaters of a number of important river catchments. The Pipp Brook which flows in to the River Mole, the Tillingbourne which flows in to the Wey, and the River Eden
- Presence of the Tillingbourne with ponds, streams and weirs and the Pipp Brook with lakes, ponds and streams.
- The Tillingbourne, flowing west, is set within an intimate, small scale valley floor with a chain of historic villages set amongst pastures, woodland and parkland.
- The Pipp Brook, flows east to the River Mole around Westcott and through Dorking.
- The headwaters of the River Eden flows south from Godstone and Oxted towards Edenbridge in Kent.
- Semi-enclosed area with rural views to the open pastoral valley sides, the North Downs scarp and the wooded slopes of the greensand hills.
- Contains east west transport links running parallel with the scarp to the north.
- Historic landscape pattern based on mixed farming on the easily cultivated lighter soils between the chalk of the North Downs and the heavier clay soils of the low weald.



## GV4: MERSTHAM TO CLACKET LANE GREENSAND VALLEY

### Location and Boundaries

The Merstham to Clacket Lane Greensand Valley is a broad character area running east-west in the eastern part of the county, between the chalk ridge to the north and more wooded greensand hills to the south. It is defined by the underlying geology, degree of woodland cover and the edges of Built Up Areas. The boundary follows settlement edges, and other recognisable features such as woodland, roads and field boundaries. Northern section at the eastern end of the character area is within the Surrey Hills AONB.

### Key Characteristics

- Underlain by Folkestone Formation Sandstone, with areas of Gault Formation Mudstone to the north.
- Undulating landform, rising up to meet the chalk ridge scarp to the north and wooded greensand hills to the south.
- The predominant land use consists of medium-large scale, open arable fields, but there is a mixture of other uses including, generally smaller pastoral fields, large scale sand quarry workings, golf courses, road and motorway corridors and settlement.
- Blocks of woodland occur across the character area, with more substantial areas of woodland to the west of Oxted. Hedgerows line field boundaries, but are limited in some places with larger arable fields. Smaller parcels of land associated with settlement often have good tree cover. There is ancient woodland, the size and occurrence increasing at the eastern end of the character area.
- Northerly views from the character area include the chalk ridge scarp.



- The M25 motorway runs along the length of the northern edge of the character area. Junctions 6, 7 and the Clacket Lane services, of the M25 are located within the character area. A limited number of roads, including the A25 and rural lanes cross the character area.
- A comprehensive network of public rights of way criss-cross every part of the character area, including the Tandridge Border Path, Greensand Way and Vanguard Way Recreational Paths and the North Downs National Trail.
- The character area includes the village of Godstone and settlements such as Merstham, and wraps around Oxted and Bletchingley. Elsewhere, there are isolated dwellings and farmsteads, with settlement becoming more limited at the eastern end of the character area. Merstham is a linear, low density settlement designated as a Conservation Area, and is encircled by motorway, road and rail routes at the north-west corner of the character area.
- There are a number of other Conservation Areas, including Pendell Court and Place Farm and Brewer Street, at the western end of the character area, and Godstone in the centre of the character area. The character area includes a small area of registered common land at Clacket Common in the eastern end of the character area, a few scheduled monuments, and part of the historic park/garden at Titsey Place.
- There are a number of small woodland areas designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance. A few larger blocks of woodland are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, around Titsey Woods.
- Relatively rural landscape, with tranquilly and remoteness varying across the Character Area due to the degree of urban influence from settlement and roads.

## LANDSCAPE TYPE GV: GREENSAND VALLEY EVALUATION AND GUIDANCE

### EVALUATION

#### Key positive landscape attributes

The key positive features that contribute to the character of the area and that should be conserved and enhanced are:

- Enclosed intimate valley floor landscape west of Dorking.
- Between east of Dorking and Oxted, wider valley floor of undulating farmland from foothills of North Downs.
- Dramatic views of North Downs scarp slope
- Open pastoral, unsettled lower slopes of valley sides.
- Views across pastures to wooded hills of North Downs to north and Greensand hills to south, often simultaneously.
- Varied woodland including valley floor woods and ancient woodland.
- Watercourses and water bodies associated with River Eden, Tillingbourne and Pipp Brook
- River Tillingbourne and linked historic remnants of former industries such as gunpowder manufacturing, mill ponds, fishing lakes, weirs and watercress beds.
- Historic parks and gardens forming large blocks of landscape with a parkland character.
- Historic village centres and manors.

#### Forces for change/sensitivities/pressures

##### *Past Change*

- Loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Decline in active management of woodland and fragmentation of farmland.
- Introduction of horse paddocks.
- Considerable areas of mineral extraction with exposed sand working faces.
- Open water areas as a result of wet restoration of old mineral sites.
- Expansion of villages along roads and on the lower slopes of the valley to north and south threatening the open rural views and the individual identity of the settlements.
- Growth of car based tourism and visitor pressure on villages, particularly along the A25 such as at Shere, Buckland and Bletchingley.

##### *Future potential forces for change*

- Further loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Fragmentation of farmland and farm holdings.
- Increase in demand for horse paddocks with associated infrastructure such as fencing and shelters.
- Pressures of increased recreational use, and for more fishing lakes.
- Activities around mineral extraction and restoration of the landscape.
- Upgrading of rural roads through additional kerbing and signage to accommodate increasing traffic volume.
- Pressure for further residential development within and around the villages.
- Erosion of distinctive architectural forms and character within settlements.
- Continuing traffic congestion.
- Introduction or upgrading of urban road lighting schemes
- Development creating a higher density of built elements within existing plots resulting in changes in the character of village structure over the long term.

## **GUIDANCE**

### **Landscape Strategy**

The landscape strategy for the Greensand Valley is to conserve the rural character of the open pastoral valley sides, the historic village cores, the varied water bodies, the historic parks and gardens and the views to the wooded backdrop of the greensand hills and chalk downs. Elements in need of enhancement include the hedgerows and management of the woodlands.

### **Landscape Guidelines**

#### ***Land Management***

- Encourage landowners to maintain an appropriate management regime using traditional farming techniques where these will conserve and enhance key landscape features such as the hedgerows and woodlands.
- Encourage consistent management and restocking of hedgerows.
- Nurture new hedgerow trees.
- Promote restoration and traditional management techniques for woodlands and species rich grassland with local landowners, horse owners and the farming community.
- Encourage sustainable and multi-purpose woodlands.
- Fragments of ancient woodland extend across the valley floor. Encourage traditional management techniques such as coppicing where appropriate to maintain the character and ecological interest of the woodlands such as Colyers Hanger near Guildford, Holehill Copse near Dorking, Colley Copse near Reigate, and Titsey Wood .
- Promote the use of locally appropriate species such as oak, hazel and birch and alder along the river edge.
- Encourage sensitive restoration of the landscape following mineral extraction.
- Enhance or link areas of high biodiversity value and positive landscape attributes where there is opportunities through landscape restoration and land management. Character Area GV4 coincides with Surrey's Wealden Greensand biodiversity opportunity area WG11.
- Raise awareness of the historic dimension of the landscape to landowners including the designed landscapes, woodlands and features connected to the river such as fishponds and watercress beds.
- Conserve and, where appropriate, encourage repair of the historic designed landscape to maintain and restore key elements such as avenues, woodland blocks, designed views and boundary features.
- Encourage understanding and conserve archaeological, historical and cultural aspects of the landscape. .
- Encourage sensitive design and management of horse paddocks for instance in retaining hedges and resist development of other facilities such as manèges that would affect the rural character of the area.
- Conserve the diverse water bodies along the valley floor including historic feature such as fish ponds, leats and mill ponds.
- Conserve and enhance the open views up to wooded ridge of chalk ridge to the north and greensand hills to the north and south.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the low key, rural character of the many footpaths and occasional small car parks through the encouragement of appropriate surfacing, materials and signage.

#### ***Built Development***

- Conserve the historic cores of the villages along the valley floor (such as Gomshall, Shere, Albury, Buckland, Betchworth, Bletchingley, Godstone and Church Town) with particular regard to the proportion and scale between elements and their settings.

- Retain the character of the individual settlements avoiding merging these through dense linear development along roads, for instance between Albury and Chilworth, Betchworth and Buckland, and Bletchingley and Godstone. But also between smaller settlements and the larger urban areas of Dorking, Redhill and Reigate.
- Seek to incorporate traditional building materials with vernacular building styles. Refer to Surrey design guides; Surrey Design (Surrey Local Government Association) and Building Design in the Surrey Hills (Surrey Hills AONB).
- Encourage any new built development, to respect local character, including support of sympathetic contemporary architecture, through high quality detailing, architectural features, and use of natural building materials.
- Promote the use of appropriate plant species and boundary treatments at village edges to better integrate development into the adjacent rural character.
- Maintain the open character of the valley sides with their sparse settlement of farmsteads.
- Improve understanding of the general pattern of settlements and their relationship to the landscape and ensure that new development is sympathetic to the wider pattern of settlement.
- Conserve the rural roads and sunken lanes minimising small-scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network which would change their character.
- Work to foster local distinctiveness in villages where standard design criteria creates a lack of variation and 'urbanisation' of rural roads. Seek to 'downgrade' main roads through village centres, enhancing the immediate landscape setting and ensuring minimum clutter through encouraging appropriate surfacing of existing pavements, quality signage and reduced speed limits where possible.
- Ensure that road lighting schemes are assessed for visual impact and encourage conservation of the surviving 'dark skies' in the valley floor and ridge slopes – ensure any lighting proposals are essential and assessed for their visual impact in order to conserve the existing 'dark skies', especially on the ridge sides and skyline.
- Promote the use of traditional signage features with particular regard to local style and materials.
- Discourage inappropriate siting and management of horse paddocks, and utilise existing hedges or planting new native hedges as boundary treatments.
- Encourage the use of suitable fence styles, in keeping with the local style or material, including metal park fencing where a local parkland character creates precedence.
- Avoid development of permanent exercise areas and siting of exercise equipment such as treadmills, pens, and jumps where this is visually intrusive on the landscape.
- Encourage sustainable tourism and investigate further traffic management schemes in villages in association with schemes to improve visitor management, access and interpretation.