

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

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Crawley Landscape Character Assessment is to conserve and enhance the distinctive characteristics of the landscape surrounding Crawley. The area covered can be described as Crawley's urban/rural fringe for which the National Planning Policy Framework states the following:

*"take account of the different roles and character of different areas... recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it" (Para 17).*

*"The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by...protecting and enhancing valued landscapes" (Para 109).*

With a clear understanding of the Crawley's landscape, opportunities can be taken and change can be managed in ways that conserve and enhance the setting of Crawley.

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

Landscape Character:

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

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

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is an approach to understanding the differences between landscapes, and can serve as a framework for decision-making that respects local distinctiveness. It is a way of 'unpacking' the landscape and understanding how its distinctive elements contribute to sense of place. As such, LCA is a useful tool for engaging stakeholders in identifying the characteristics that make a particular landscape unique, and using this understanding to plan and manage landscape change.

### 1.2 The purpose and outcomes of LCA

The overarching purpose of LCA's is to conserve and enhance 'character' areas. In the context of Crawley's Local Plan this is also to accommodate change in order to meet social, economic and environmental objectives:

An LCA can be used to inform the Local Plan through mechanisms such as:

- Adopting strong landscape character-based Development Plan policies.
- Assessing the sensitivity of landscapes and townscapes and their ability to accommodate new development.
- Guiding the location and design of new development and the adaptation for new uses of existing buildings in the countryside.
- Providing a landscape framework for development briefs related to specific development proposals.
- Providing the basis for Supplementary Planning Documents relating to the protection and enhancement of landscape and townscape character.

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

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

### **1.3 Relationship with Landscape Character Assessments**

England has been divided into areas with similar landscape character, called National Character Areas. Crawley is surrounded by the Low Weald and the High Weald National Character Areas.

West Sussex County Council completed a landscape character assessment in 2003 to provide an information base to increase the understanding of what makes West Sussex unique. There are four areas of landscape adjoining Crawley that are considered distinct at a County level – High Weald, High Weald Forests, Northern Vales and Low Weald Hills.

The Local Authorities surrounding Crawley have undertaken their own Landscape Character Assessments in accordance with Natural England Guidance<sup>1</sup>. These assessments compliment the County Assessment and form part of their Local Plan evidence base. This enables the formulation of development plan policy and land management guidelines to conserve and enhance landscape character.

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<sup>1</sup> Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland, Countryside Agency (2002)

## The Spatial Hierarchy of Landscape Character Areas/Types.

National Character Area	County Landscape type	County landscape areas	County Landscape character Type	District/Borough character area
Low Weald	Clay Vale Farmlands	Low Weald Hills	Wooded Ridges	Warnham and Ruser Wooded Ridge (Horsham)
		Northern Vales (or Crawley and Horsham Vale)	Narrow Clay Vale farmland	Upper Mole farmlands (Horsham)
				Warnham (or Narrow Vale) and Faygate Vale (Horsham)
High Weald	Forest Plateau and Ridges	High Weald		High Weald Plateau (Mid Sussex)
		High Weald Forests	Forest Ridges and Ghylls	Worth Forest (Mid Sussex)
				St Leonards Forest (Mid Sussex)

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

### 1.4 Approach and Methodology

The information within this assessment is based on the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Guidance for England and Scotland published in April 2002 by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage. This comprised of the following stages:

1. **Desk Study**
2. **Field Study to confirm/amend desk study findings (to be completed)**
3. **Characterisation**
4. **Making Judgements**
5. **Consultation**

#### 1.4.1 Desk Research

- Collation of national, regional and local studies concerning landscape character relevant to Crawley.
- Review of national, regional, and local policy and guidance relating to the environment including the policies and programmes of non statutory organisations.
- Collation of GIS data, aerial photographs, and mapped information that concerns the landscape character of Crawley: geology, landform,

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

#### **1.4.2 Characterisation**

This stage of the assessment identifies maps and describes areas of distinctive character 'At Crawley'. This stage shows what makes one area different or distinctive from the other.

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

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

Landscape Character Assessments have been completed by the districts surrounding Crawley. West Sussex County Council has also completed a LCA of the County which contains landscape character types. This, along with a LCA completed for the north and west of Crawley as part of the Urban Rural Fringe Study (2006) and the character study of Crawley's urban area<sup>2</sup> form a great deal of analysis and information regarding Crawley's landscape within and outside the borough boundary.

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

#### **1.4.3 Classification and Description**

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

#### **1.4.4 Making Judgements**

For the purposes of consultation draft judgements have been made which are set out under the Objective, Guidelines and Enhancement sections of each Character Area. These have been formed through officer consideration of character, quality (condition of features), value of the landscape and its sensitivity to change.

#### **1.4.5 Consultation**

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<sup>2</sup> Crawley Baseline Character Assessment (May 2009)

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

**Shaping the objectives:**

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

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

**Challenging and identifying issues.**

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

**Shaping the planning guidelines and enhancement opportunities.**

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

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

## **2.0 CRAWLEY AND ITS SETTING**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This section provides an understanding of the key characteristics of Crawley's landscape setting to inform the identifying and describing of the distinctive character areas/edges. It is essential to have this information to progress to a stage where judgements can be made to define the objectives and planning and enhancement guidelines. The Local Plan maps show designated sites and features within and surrounding the town.

### **2.2 Geology, landform and soils**

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

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

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

### **2.3 Landuse**

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

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

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

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

### **2.4 Access**

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

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

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

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

An extensive network of public rights of way and cycle paths provide a framework for pedestrian access and recreation to and within the countryside. These links are particularly strong to the west and north-west sides of Crawley where public rights of way run directly from the urban area out into attractive countryside. Opportunities for pedestrian access from Crawley to the countryside to the east and south of the town are more limited where the M23 and A264 provide barriers to pedestrian access to the countryside. Despite this, there are crossing points over the M23 into Buchan Country Park and Tilgate Forest as well as from Maidenbower into Worthlodge Forest and from Pound Hill towards Copthorne. Where these roads cross over the M23, pavements tend to run from Crawley up to the bridge crossings and then stop, leaving pedestrians to walk on the road or grass verges.

## **2.5 Views**

The north and west of Crawley is set within the lower lying land of the Low Weald. The enclosed flat to gently undulating nature of the land and wooded character restricts clear views across the western limits of Crawley. Views north towards Gatwick Airport are filtered or screened by intervening topography and woodland. The presence of the airport is generally heard before it is seen.

The western fringes of the built up area are often screened or softened by trees and, therefore, are not exposed to open views from the countryside. Houses on the urban edge can be seen from the landscape outside the town in some locations, for example at the western edge of Bewbush where trees along Spruce Hill Brook only partially screen buildings. There are other limited locations on elevated public rights of way or country lanes to the north-west where buildings within Crawley can be seen above a treed rural foreground. The most distinctive landmark within the north and west area is the spire of St Margaret's Church at Ifield.

Along the urban fringes to the north and northwest (Ifield, Langley Green and Lowfield Heath) views are limited to short distances over the rural fringe landscape. The contained nature of the urban area breaks up, allowing views over the intimate rural landscape with fields of pasture delineated by mature hedgerows and trees. In some places these views are filtered due to the break up in density of the hedgerows and tree cover; in others slightly more extensive views are possible due to larger field layouts, created by the intensification of modern farming.

The presence of Gatwick Airport is also clearly evident in these fringe areas. Although the airport is not directly visible from the edge of the built up area, aircraft continually puncture the skyline as they take-off. This land use also impacts on the rural character of the northern pastoral plain as the large units and warehouses (many associated with airport services) in Manor Royal and Lowfield Heath provide an industrial character to the landscape.

Amenity green spaces such as school playing fields, cemeteries, allotments and the urban parks provide breathing spaces within the town while also allowing longer distance and wider views across the built up area.

To the south, southeast and southwest, where the topography rises and falls more often, views out of the urban area to the surrounding High Forest areas are more frequent. Glimpses of mixed tree species within the forests are visible in the distance from various viewpoints or breaks in the built form.

Within the surrounding Country Parks, extensive long distance views to the wider area are possible due to the higher elevation and exposure, allowing views northward over the southern neighbourhoods of the town and beyond to neighbouring ridgelines such as Rusper to the northwest.

## **2.6 Ecological character**

There are a diverse range of designated sites and features that contribute positively to the town and its setting. Many of these also provide potential constraints to new development, or would need careful design and mitigation to ensure that they are not harmed by development.

### Woodland

Woodlands are a characteristic feature of the landscape setting of Crawley. To the south and east the countryside is exceptionally heavily wooded. To the west and north-west woodlands are less extensive but remain a prominent feature.

To the south and east of Crawley within the High Weald AONB, there are large commercial conifer plantations which are interspersed with beech and oak/birch woodland.

The landscape contains a number of Ancient Woodlands. These habitats and the species that they contain are sensitive to disturbance and some will have statutory protection as part of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's). There are also many Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) which place strict conditions on changes to tree(s) or woodlands with a TPO.

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

### Hedgerows

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

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

### Grassland/Heathland

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

### Arable land

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

### Wildlife sites

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

There are no SSSI's within Crawley's administrative boundary but there are four adjacent to or very close to Crawley:

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Broadfield Park**

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

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

Crawley has a number of SNCIs that link the urban area to the countryside within Crawley:

Worth Meadows (TQ 301360)  
Worth Way (TQ 289366 – 304366)  
Tilgate Park (TQ 280343)  
Ifield Pond and surroundings including Woldhurst Wood (TQ 244360)  
Ifield Brook Wood and Meadows (TQ 246373)  
Willoughby Fields (TQ 258387)  
Rowley Wood (TQ 279392)  
Horley Land Wood (TQ 290405)  
Grattons Pond (TQ 293383)

Adjacent or close to Crawley:

Oaken Wood, Stony Plats and High Lanes (TQ 312359)  
Buchan Country Park (TQ 241340)  
Hyde Hill SNCI (TQ 234362)  
Wood near Lower Prestwood Farm (TQ 235380)  
Oritons Copse (TQ 227385)  
Cophorne Common (TQ 320388)

Other notable areas of ecological and amenity value on the edge of Crawley include:

**Ifield Mill Pond** (TQ 244360) is considered to be the most important wetland site in Crawley. It is situated in tranquil surroundings and supports a rich bird community. The mill pond was originally a hammer pond which would have powered forge hammers and bellows for the medieval iron industry. There has been a corn mill here since 1684 which is in operation today. Close by is

Bewbush Water Garden which is a large pond inhabited by a number of aquatic plants.

**Manor Royal Flood Pond** (TQ 282387) is located in the Manor Royal Industrial Estate near Fleming Way. It is of value for nature conservation. Most of the area comprises a flood meadow where plants, such as ragged robin which prefer the moist conditions, flourish. Crawler's Brook flows through the site and whilst man's influence is evident, many flowering plants have colonised the margins and banks of the stream.

## **2.7 The Historic Landscape**

Archaeological Sensitive Areas (ASAs), Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM), Historic Parks and Gardens, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas are present within and on the urban/rural fringes of Crawley. These are highlighted as part of each character area/edge.

The Low Weald landscape surrounding Crawley has changed significantly throughout time due to the influences and impacts of farming, industry, deforestation and the growth of the town from a village to regional centre of almost 100,000 people.

Changes in land use, lack of management and/or farm diversification and intensification has resulted in fragmentation of the landscape structure. Hedgerows have been removed and groups of smaller pastoral fields have been combined into large arable fields.

Historic waterways now weave through the Crawley neighbourhoods as brooks, streams and drainage ditches. There are ponds (often formed as a result of past quarrying for brick-making, marl pits or early iron industry), mill pools and moats that provide valuable habitats and key features within the wider recreational and green infrastructure of Crawley. Unfortunately these are often under pressure due to limited management and a decline in quality, and many have become over grown with vegetation, littered with rubbish or silted up. They would benefit from an improved management regime and ecological enhancements.

Historical deforestation for shipbuilding, farming and charcoal smelting has changed the North and West of Crawley's landscape from predominantly tree cover to a varied landscape of fields, settlements and tall hedgerows and mature trees. Wooded Shaw's remain where forest once stood (mature tree belts forming field boundaries).

The evolution of the new town has pushed the forests southward to where they stand on the high ground today - indicating the edge of the High Weald.

### **3.0 Landscape Character Areas and Edges**

This section sets out the unique character areas and edges based on the key characteristics identified in the previous section. The unique characteristics and issues facing each area enable the formulation of objectives and the guidelines to achieve them.

The landscape character areas and edges within this assessment fit within the National Character Areas and also the character areas already defined within adjacent districts. Due to the tight administrative boundary around Crawley and adjacent authorities having undertaken district level assessments, in most areas it is possible to identify Crawley's landscape as a continuation of areas that have already been defined. Where this occurs, the assessment focuses on the urban/rural edge and its relationship with the countryside. Where a significant area of countryside lies within Crawley, character areas are defined to reflect the key characteristics and issues. Local Authority Character Areas are cited where relevant and are shown spatially on Figure 3 and detailed in Appendix A and B.

The profile of Crawley's Character Areas/Edges is based on the standard Landscape Character Assessment Guidelines. For Character Areas a full profile is set out. Where the landscape character assessment of an adjacent authority comes right up to Crawley's urban area the profile may refer to the adjacent District/Borough's Character Area to avoid duplication.

A full profile is as follows:

#### **Characterisation**

- Key characteristics – summary of character
- Access, approaches and gateways
- Character of the urban edge

#### **Evaluation**

- Landscape Value - Historic Features, Biodiversity etc
- Landscape character/visual sensitivity
- Key Issues
- Landscape condition

#### **Guidelines**

- Area objective – conserve, enhance, restore and/or create.
- Planning guidelines – actions to realise the objective
- Enhancement - actions to realise the objective

## **Area 1 – Upper Mole Farmlands Rural Fringe**

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

### **Key Characteristics**

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

### **Access/approaches and gateways**

Gatwick Airport provides a physical barrier to the north but the area is well connected to the urban edge via a series of Public Rights of Way. The A23 runs around the SE of Gatwick Airport and through the character area towards the town centre. This urban gateway is treed on either side.

### **Character of the Urban Edge**

There is a negative urban edge where the area meets Manor Royal. Further to the west adjacent to Langley Green the edge is more neutral where the overall appearance is more attractive. Housing adjoins the countryside here with limited public access or links between urban and rural.

### **Landscape Value**

SNCI, Ancient Woodland, 3 Archaeological Sensitive Areas, Strategic Gap, listed buildings, tree preservation areas and an extensive network of ancient hedgerows are located within this area

### **Landscape Character/Visual Sensitivity**

Overall the area has a moderate sensitivity to change. Thick hedgerows, hedgerow trees and occasional woodlands to some extent reduce its visual sensitivity. Despite some noise intrusion from Gatwick much of the area is tranquil. Sensitivities are to:

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

### **Key issues**

- Localised loss of hedgerow field boundaries, often replaced by post and wire fencing.
- Localised visual impact of urban fringe uses, including development of horse paddocks, small holdings, untidy small scale industrial uses, fly tipping.
- Increasing traffic eroding road verges and hedgebanks.
- The potential for housing development and the expansion of Gatwick Airport.

**Landscape Condition**

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

**Area Objective**

This area plays an important role in separating Crawley from Gatwick allowing greater access to the countryside for residents who live in the neighbourhoods at the north of the borough.

**Planning Guidelines:**

- Proposals must respect the important role of the area as separating Gatwick from Crawley and maintaining links from the northern neighbourhoods of Crawley into the countryside.
- Incremental development should be resisted to prevent the actual and perceived reduction in the highly valued open character of this area.

**Enhancement:**

- A Community Woodland for multi purpose objectives including active and passive recreation, timber production and coppicing.
- Pedestrian and cycle links between Crawley and the area should, where possible, be improved.

## **Edge 2 – West of Ifield Rural Fringe**

This area lies adjacent to Ifield and is part of Horsham's landscape Character Area – Upper Mole Farmlands. A small amount of the area lies within Crawley Borough consisting of Ifield conservation area, Ifield Brook Wood and Meadows SNCI and Rusper Road Playing fields.

Planning and Land Management Guidelines for the Upper Mole Farmlands are set out in Horsham's landscape character assessment. The small area within Crawley is considered to be a continuation of this character area and therefore proposals within Area 2 must be in accordance with Horsham's guidelines (Appendix B) as well as the guidelines in this section.

### **Key Characteristics of area within Crawley**

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

### **Access/approaches and gateways**

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

### **Character of the Urban Edge**

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

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

### **Landscape Value**

SNCI, listed buildings, TPO's, Ancient Woodland and Ifield Conservation Area, are located within the urban edge within the borough boundary. Also close by are Ifield Park and Langley Lane ASEQ. This area has a medium to high landscape value.

### **Landscape Character/Visual Sensitivity**

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

The area is sensitive to:

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

#### **Landscape Condition**

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

#### **Area Objective**

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

#### **Planning Guidelines:**

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

#### **Enhancement:**

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

## **Edge 3 – West of Gossops Green/Bewbush Rural Fringe**

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

This area is the location of the West of Bewbush JAAP which will see a new neighbourhood of approx 2500 houses. A planning application is expected in 2010.

In this context the guidelines relate to integrating the new development into the existing qualities of the urban/rural fringe.

### **Access/approaches and gateways**

A bridleway runs along the urban edge and leads south into Buchan Country Park and west along a wooded ridge of Ancient Woodland on either side, SNCI and a Historic Park/Garden. Horsham Road lies to the south of the area which is a well treed gateway to Crawley from Horsham and the west.

### **Character of the Urban Edge**

The relationship between the urban area and countryside is neutral. Housing adjoins the countryside with limited public access to the west other than following the urban edge north or south. There is however, an attractive green finger with public access that penetrates into the urban edge towards Ifield Mill Pond and Gossops Green.

### **Area Objective**

The green finger and playing fields play an important role in providing green infrastructure links and recreational opportunities from within the urban area out into the countryside.

### **Planning Guidelines:**

- The green infrastructure along Bewbush Brook and Spruce Hill Brook is of high value and should be preserved and linked to green infrastructure in the new neighbourhood.

### **Enhancement:**

- There is an opportunity to integrate Bewbush Brook into the new neighbourhood providing a continuous green corridor through the new neighbourhood along Bewbush Brook to Ifield mill pond and up to Ifield Brook and Meadows SNCI.
- Access and appropriate rural recreational opportunities for the residents of Crawley should be encouraged.

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

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

### **Key Characteristics**

The landscape character of this area is set out Horsham's Landscape Character Assessment. In summary, the area is heavily wooded, with flat top ridges and steep sided ghylls. The forest cover and landform combine to create a strongly enclosed landscape.

### **Access, Approaches and Gateways**

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

### **Character of the Urban Edge**

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

### **Landscape Value**

The landscape with Crawley's boundary is designated as AONB. SSSI's, SNCI, Archaeological sites, historic parks and gardens, a local nature reserve and tree preservation areas are present. These designations signify an area of high landscape value.

### **Landscape Character/Visual Sensitivity**

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

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

### **Area Objective**

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

### **Planning Guidelines**

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

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

**Enhancement**

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

## **Edge 5 – Tilgate/Worth Forest and Fringes**

This area lies within the Worth Forest and High Weald Plateau character areas which reach the M23 at the South East of the Borough. With the exception of Tilgate Park and Worth Conservation Area/Worth way, the countryside is outside of and abruptly separated from Crawley by the M23.

### **Key Characteristics**

The landscape character of this area is set out in Mid Sussex's Landscape Character Assessment. The relevant sections are repeated in Appendix A. In summary, this area has similar characteristics to Area 4 but to the north the character changes to a less wooded landscape of small irregular shaped fields.

### **Access, Approaches and Gateways**

The M23 creates a physical and psychological barrier for pedestrian access to the Countryside. Despite this, there are crossing points over the M23 into Tilgate Forest as well as from Maidenbower into Worthlodge Forest and from Pound Hill towards Cophorne. Where these roads cross over the M23, pavements tend to run from Crawley up to the bridge crossings and then stop, leaving pedestrians to walk on the roads or grass verges.

### **Character of the Urban Edge**

The M23 creates a negative edge that prevents a positive integrated relationship between Crawley and the countryside. Whilst the M23 may act as a barrier to development spreading into this character area it also acts as a barrier to achieving the most positive use of this area of countryside.

Worth Way SNCI is the only green corridor within Crawley but does not cross the M23. Access to the countryside is provided further south from Worth Conservation Area which creates disjointed green infrastructure.

### **Landscape Value**

The landscape with Crawley's boundary includes SNCI's, Local Nature Reserve, Historic Park and Gardens, Conservation Areas, Ancient Woodland, listed buildings and tree preservation areas. These designated sites are located in Tilgate Country Park and Worth Conservation area/worth way making these areas high in landscape value.

### **Landscape Character/Visual Sensitivity**

Landscape character sensitivity is medium to high. The area is in good condition with densely wooded areas of high value.

South of Crabbet Park, woodland and forest cover limits the visual sensitivity of the landscape and confers a sense of intimacy, seclusion and tranquillity. To the north of area, visual sensitivity is higher as the blocks of assart pastures impart breadth and depth to the scenic quality of the landscape.

### **Area Objective**

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

### **Planning Guidelines**

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

**Enhancement**

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

## **Area 6 – North East Crawley High Woodland Fringes**

Within the Borough Boundary this area comprises approx 270 hectares of countryside and the Strategic Development Location of the North East Sector. This is bounded by the M23 to the north and east and separated from Area 1 by development along the Beehive Ring Road.

The borough boundary follows the M23 beyond which the Tandridge Green belt lies to the east and countryside surrounding Horley to the North. Proposals beyond the borough boundary must be in accordance with the countryside/landscape character policies of Tandridge District Council and Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.

However, the area within Crawley has the character of land to the west which is detailed in the West Sussex landscape management guidelines of the Low Weald Northern Vales (Appendix A). Proposals within Crawley must be in accordance with the County Guidelines as well as those set out below.

### **The key characteristics**

- Flat to gently undulating narrow clay vale, with floodplain and upper tributaries of the River Mole in the north east.
- Pattern of small, medium and large fields with a variable density of hedgerows.
- Predominantly pasture farmland.
- Scattered tree cover, isolated woodlands and copses.
- Distinctive field trees and farm ponds.
- Major road and rail corridors and pylon lines.
- Strong suburban and urban fringe influences of Crawley and Gatwick Airport.

### **Access, Approaches and Gateways**

To the east the M23 creates a physical and psychological barrier for pedestrian access to the Countryside. Where roads cross over the M23, pavements tend to run from Crawley up to the bridge crossings and then stop, leaving pedestrians to walk on the road.

To the west of the area development around the beehive ring road blocks what would be a continuous corridor of green infrastructure linking Area 1 and 6. Pedestrian access across this area of development is difficult with no footpath along the road that links the two areas.

Pedestrian access to the north is very limited. Where Balcombe Road crosses the M23 a footpath runs alongside. A footpath also runs alongside the airport boundary but its fragmentation makes it difficult to follow and is limited in its access to towards Horley to the north.

Gateways into Crawley include from Junction 10 of the M23 along a well treed Crawley Avenue. The London Road approach is also treed with views of the airport to the west and airport car parking to the east.

### **Character of the Urban Edge**

As with Area 5, the M23 creates a negative boundary that prevents a positive integrated relationship between Crawley's countryside and the wider countryside beyond the M23. The development around the Beehive Ring Road also acts as a negative edge as the built form does not integrate with public access and recreation opportunities.

As access across the M23 is limited, the countryside within this area is of high value due to its proximity to the urban area.

### **Landscape Value**

The landscape with Crawley's boundary includes a network of ancient hedgerows, ancient woodland, tree preservation area, listed buildings, SNCI, Local Nature Reserve, Scheduled Ancient Monument, and an Archaeological Sensitive Area.

To the East of the M23 outside the Borough boundary lie small areas of ancient woodland and the Tandridge Green Belt.

### **Landscape Character/Visual Sensitivity**

Overall the area has a moderate sensitivity to change. Thick hedgerows, hedgerow trees and occasional woodlands to some extent reduce its visual sensitivity.

Sensitivities are to:

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

### **Key Issues**

- Visual and noise impact of Gatwick Airport and M23
- Pressure of traffic on rural lanes eroding road verges and hedge banks
- Potential for increased recreational pressure
- Localised visual impact of urban fringe uses, including development of horse paddocks, airport car parks, smallholdings and small scale industrial uses.
- Pressure for further urban development

### **Landscape Condition**

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

### **Area Objective**

This area is of high landscape value which should be retained for public access benefits and maintaining the separate identities of Gatwick Airport, Crawley and Horley.

### **Planning Guidelines**

- Proposals must respect the important role of the area to maintaining the separate identities of Gatwick Airport, Crawley and Horley.
- Incremental development should be resisted to prevent the actual and perceived reduction in the highly valued open character of this area.
- Proposals should follow the wider planning and land management guidelines of the Low Weald Northern Vales character area.

### **Enhancement**

- Pedestrian/cycle routes and green corridors crossing over the physical barrier of the M23 to the north and east and the Beehive Ring Road to the west.
- Encouraging recreational opportunities on the urban fringe rather than leaving main roads to act as boundaries to the urban area.
- A Community Woodland for multi purpose objectives including active and passive recreation, timber production and coppicing.

## 3.1 General Guidelines

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

### General Development and Land Use Change Guidelines

#### Siting and design of development

- Ensure that buildings and infrastructure are located to avoid loss of important on-site views, and off site views towards features such as church towers, fine buildings or wider landscapes, as well as avoiding intrusion on sensitive ridgelines, visually prominent slopes, and damage to settlement settings.
- Ensure the design of new developments reflects local distinctiveness and characteristics, for example in terms of settlement form, height, scale, plot shape and size, elevations, roofline and pitch, overall colour and texture and boundary treatment (walls, hedges, fences and gates)
- Ensure, whenever possible, local building materials are incorporated into new development
- Ensure that development in rural areas retains a sense of identity and separateness between settlements.
- Seek to minimise the impact of lighting, for example through the use of cut off lanterns and high pressure sodium lights which cast whiter light downwards rather than standard lighting which can result in a diffuse orange glow.
- Ensure outdoor storage and parking areas are not visually prominent.

#### Agricultural and rural developments

- When siting new farm buildings seek to avoid sensitive ridgelines, visible slopes, and adverse visual impact on historic farmsteads.
- Ensure where possible, new developments reflect traditional building layouts.
- Minimise more 'urban' features such as closed board fencing and fast growing non native species, for example conifers such as cypresses in rural areas.

#### Landscape design and habitat conservation

- Conserve and enhance green corridors into settlements and retain where possible existing wildlife habitats, hedgerows, shelterbelts, orchards, and trees and shrubs.
- Seek opportunities for habitat creation on or close to development sites.
- Use mainly native tree and shrub species in planting schemes