

Introduction to Landscape Character Areas

The field and desk studies have identified five broad landscape types (Figure 13) and forty-two local character areas (Figure 14). It should be noted that whilst the current guidance suggests that smaller scale landscape character areas should nest within larger scale landscape character areas, the landscape character areas defined within Swale Borough do not nest within all of the county scale areas defined within the Landscape Assessment of Kent (Jacobs Babbie, 2004). This is because the character areas in Landscape Assessment of Kent for Swale Borough are derived from earlier studies. These studies are The Kent Downs Landscape (Countryside Commission 1995), the Kent Thames Gateway Landscape Character Assessment (Cobham Resource Consultants 1995) and the Landscape Assessment of the Eastern Swale Marshes and Eastern Fruit Belt (1996). These assessments predate current LCA Guidance (2002) and, whilst judgements (condition, sensitivity and guidelines) made in LAK accord with the current guidance, the character areas that they are based upon were defined by these earlier assessments rather than based on the true character area boundaries. Across most of the Borough the Kent Downs AONB and Thames Gateway generally share the A2 as a common and artificial landscape character area boundary, whilst the Eastern Swale LCA was undertaken as a top up to cover the remainder of the Borough.

The landscape character areas within this report are identical to those identified in the previously adopted Swale Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines (Jacobs Babbie, 2005). They are undertaken using the same methodology used in LAK (where areas were not pre-defined by earlier studies) and for a number of other district level studies within Kent, most notably Canterbury District where the character areas adjoin and are cross referenced where necessary.

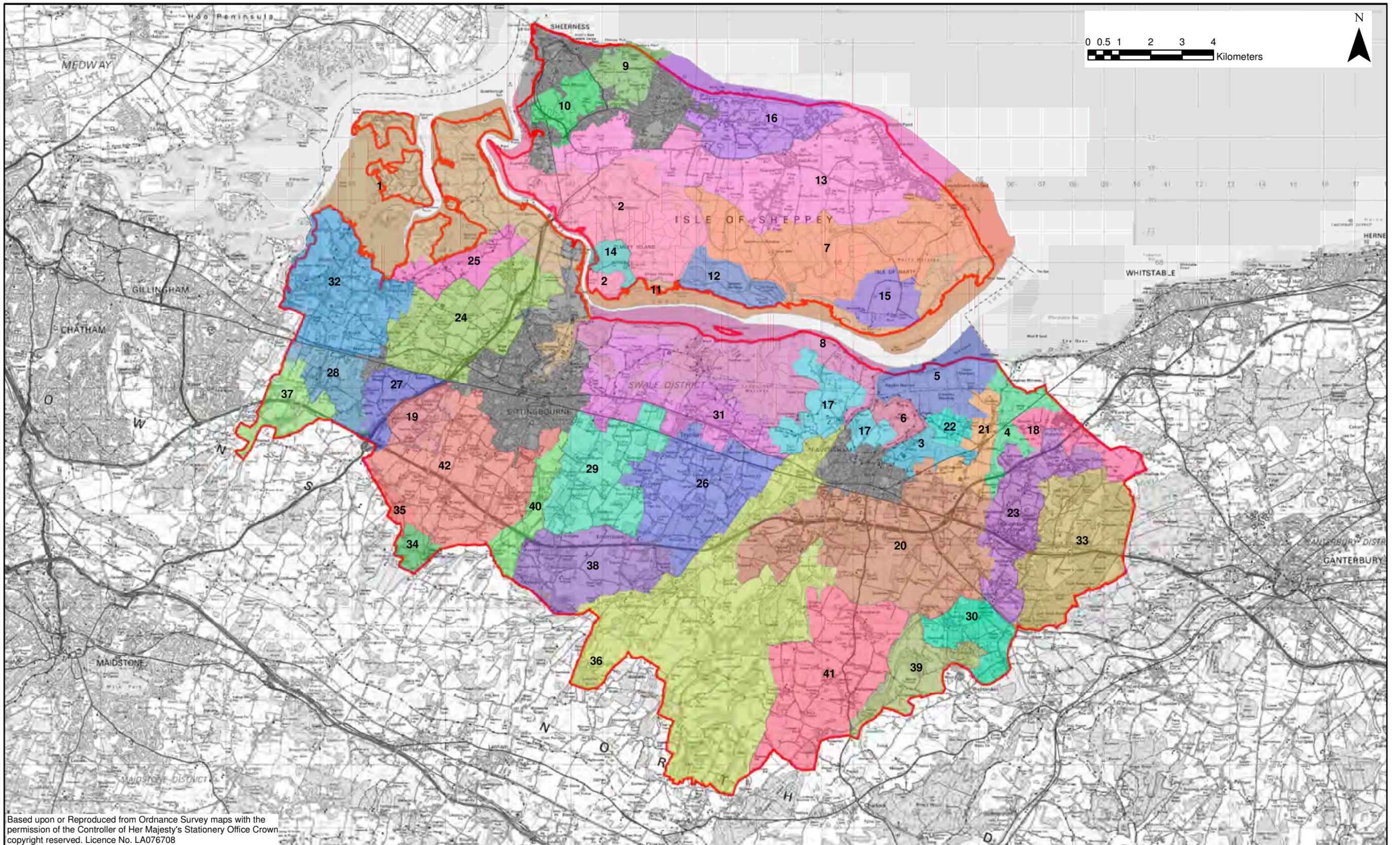
There will always be some minor anomalies due to the different scales of national, regional and local character assessments. However as a general rule, assuming all were undertaken using the same version of guidance, the more local assessment will provide the greatest level of detail and accuracy. The landscape analysis (in terms of sensitivity, condition and guidelines) differs between the county scale Landscape Assessment of Kent, the Kent Downs landscape character areas and this appraisal because the areas are not the same and landscape analysis takes an average across the area in question.

Landscape character areas do not necessarily stop along Borough boundaries, and usually extend across them. The relationship between the landscape character areas within Swale and landscape character areas within adjoining boroughs (where they have been published) has been considered in terms of boundary alignment to ensure consistency.

In the following sections the landscape character areas are described and their key characteristics noted. Descriptions of landscape character areas are grouped alphabetically within the document in accordance with landscape types. An analysis is undertaken to identify the condition and sensitivity of the landscape and following the methodology, guidelines for each area are proposed. It should be noted that changes in the natural landscape are often gradual, relating closely to changes in geology and soil type. It is therefore common to find some characteristics of one area overlapping into another.

Not all areas within a landscape character area exhibit all the characteristics of that area and it is usual to have some pockets with very few distinctive features. Often this is due to changes in land use that have resulted in the loss of landscape features, or the addition of features not typically associated with that area. The proximity of the built environment often affects the condition of the landscape, particularly on the boundaries where pressures are greatest. The landscape character areas therefore identify common characteristics across an area rather than grouping areas that are identical. Where there are marked changes across an area these are described and, where appropriate, different guidelines provided.





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Legend					
	Swale Borough Boundary		6. Ham Marshes		14. Elmley Island
	Urban Areas		7. Leysdown and Eastchurch Marshes		15. Isle of Harty
Character Areas					
	1. Chetney and Greenborough Marshes		9. Minster Marshes		17. Stone Arable Farmlands
	2. Elmley Marshes		10. Sheppey Court and Diggs Marshes		18. Waterham Clay Farmlands
	3. Goodnestone Grasslands		11. South Sheppey Saltmarshes and Mudflats		19. Borden Mixed Farmlands
	4. Graveney Grazing Lands		12. Spitend Marshes		20. Faversham and Ospringe Fruit Belt
	5. Graveney Marshes		13. Central Sheppey Farmlands		21. Graveney Arable Farmlands
					22. Graveney Fruit Farms
					23. Hernhill and Boughton Fruit Belt
					24. Iwade Arable Farmlands
					25. Lower Halstow Clay Farmlands
					26. Lynsted Enclosed Farmlands
					27. Newington Arable Farmlands
					28. Newington Fruit Belt
					29. Rodmersham Mixed Farmlands
					30. Selling Fruit Belt
					31. Teynham Fruit Belt
					32. Upchurch and Lower Halstow Fruit Belt
					33. Blean Woods West
					34. Bicknor Orchards
					35. Deans Bottom
					36. Doddington and Newnham Dry Valleys
					37. Hartlip Downs
					38. Milstead and Kingsdown Mixed Farmlands
					39. Perrywood Hills and Dry Valleys
					40. Rodmersham and Milstead Dry Valley
					41. Sheldwich and Leaveland Farmlands
					42. Tunstall Farmlands

Figure 14: Landscape Character Areas