

# Worthing Gap and Landscape Capacity Study



July 2007

Produced for Worthing Borough Council by

**Hankinson Duckett Associates**



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## **PREFACE**

In order to promote urban regeneration and sustainable patterns of development Government Guidance encourages the concentration of new housing and employment development within sustainable locations, according to a sequential search approach.

The search sequence should start with the re-use of brownfield land within urban area, then progress to Greenfield sites as urban extensions and finally consider new settlements around nodes in good transport corridors.

As part of a series of studies to inform the Local Development Framework process, Worthing Borough Council have commissioned this study to assess the physical and environmental constraints on development in the Borough with a view to identifying the landscape capacity of the Worthing Borough landscape to accommodate future development and the extent of Gap policy areas.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This study has been co-funded by Worthing Borough Council and West Sussex County Council.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Worthing Borough Council appointed Hankinson Duckett Associates (HDA) to review and consider the boundaries of Gap policy areas. This study also considers the landscape capacity for development in Worthing Borough within or adjacent to landscape designated as gap. The study is to inform decision making on where major development might be accommodated within the Borough without an unacceptable impact on landscape character, gap between settlements or on the setting of outstanding assets within Worthing Borough. The final assessment on which areas may be taken forwards as Development Options will be made by Worthing Borough Council weighing the results from all of the studies currently being undertaken as part of the LDF process.

## **2 APPROACH**

2.1 Landscape capacity is defined as the extent to which a particular area or type of landscape is able to accommodate change without significant effects on character; or overall change in landscape type<sup>1</sup>. It reflects the inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself and its sensitivity to the development in question; and the value attached to the landscape, or to specific elements within it.

2.2 The assessment of capacity has therefore been based on a series of judgements on landscape sensitivity and landscape value and mapped on a landscape character area basis.

2.3 The assessment of landscape character and visual sensitivity, takes into account the following factors, namely:

- Inherent landscape quality, i.e. the intactness and condition of the landscape<sup>2</sup>
- Contribution each area makes to the distinctive setting of a particular settlement.
- Consistency with the form or pattern of existing settlement and the relationship the settlement has with the underlying landscape structure.
- Contribution to the rurality of the surrounding landscape, either by virtue of its own inherent rurality or the containing influence of the landscape being assessed on neighbouring settlements.
- Contribution to the separation between existing settlements.

2.4 Landscape value includes consideration of:

- National and local landscape designations, which do not include gap policies.
- Non-landscape designations for example; Heritage, amenity, biodiversity and flood zones.
- Contribution to outstanding assets which includes the AONB.
- Special cultural or historic associations and

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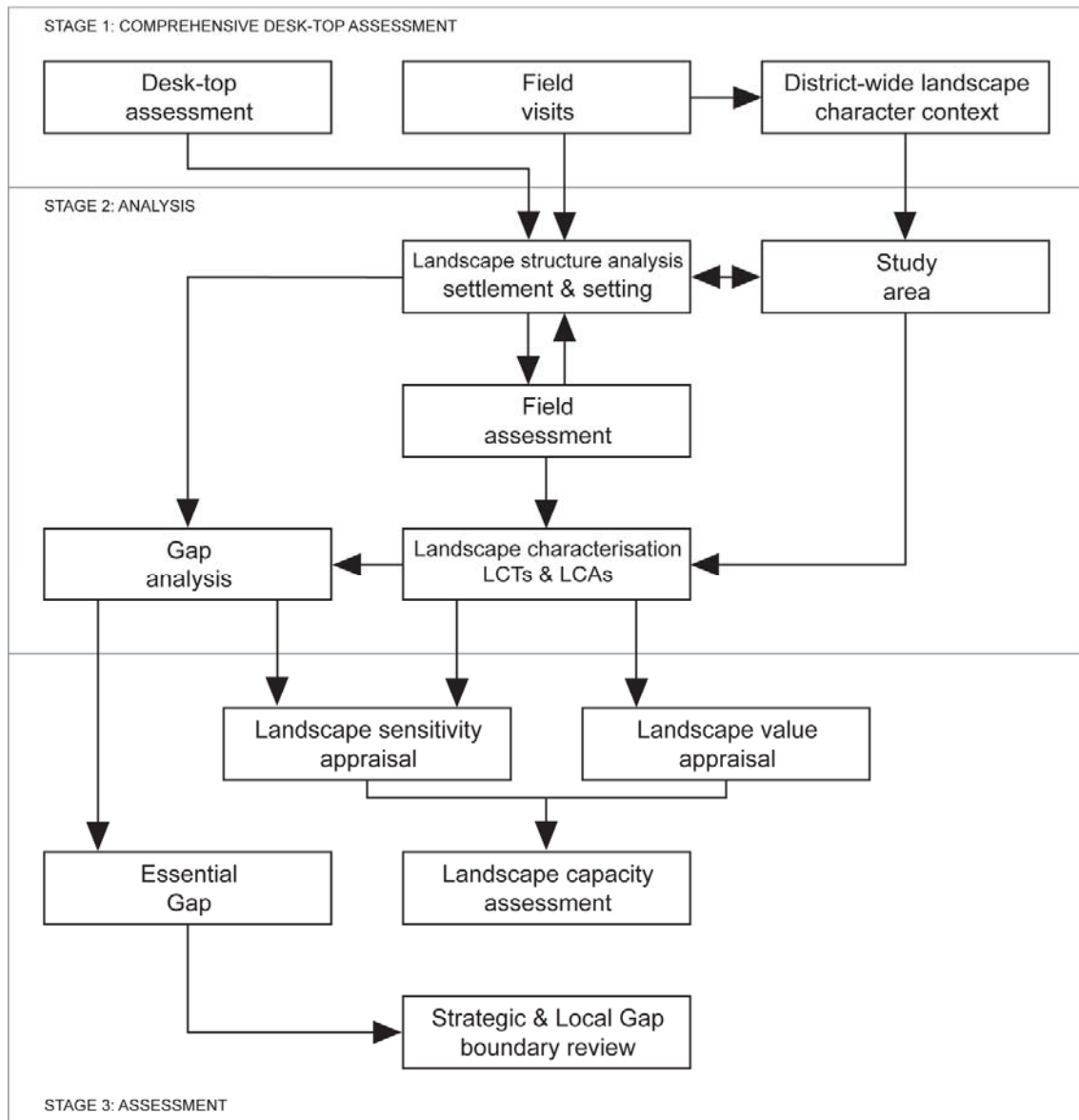
<sup>1</sup> The Countryside Agency: Topic Paper 6 Techniques and Criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity

<sup>2</sup> The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage: Landscape Character Assessment April 2002

- Perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or remoteness.

- 2.5 Each aspect of the sensitivity and landscape value analysis has been assessed on a five point scale (very low, low, medium, high, very high) and a corresponding value (1-5) assigned. For the purposes of arriving at an overall rating for sensitivity or value the scores have been aggregated, subject to a two stage process. Initially, the scores for each character area have been added together to give a single value which falls within bands of sensitivity and value ranging from negligible to slight, moderate, substantial and major. As a second and final stage, the overall rating and the initial profile for each landscape character area have been reviewed to assess whether a specific or overriding aspect of sensitivity or value is being lost in the consolidation of the profile into a single overall rating. Values have then been adjusted up or down to reflect individual situations. This review ensures that professional judgement is the final arbiter in the assessment process. The results from these assessments have then been combined to give an overall judgement relating to landscape capacity. Capacity for new development within the identified landscape character areas will not necessarily be uniform across the whole character area and proposals for development will need to respond to site specific constraints and opportunities.
- 2.6 The study has considered the Gap policy areas that fall within the Borough. The object has been to test the extent to which every part of the designated gaps fulfil their policy function, that is, prevent coalescence and contribute to the separate identify of settlements and in the case of strategic gaps protect the undeveloped coastline.
- 2.7 The structure, character and effectiveness of each of the Gaps is described, based on landscape structural analysis, intervisibility and landscape characterisation. The conclusions of the gap review have been fed into the capacity study and draft recommendations reviewed and confirmed at the end of the study process.
- 2.8 The detailed methodology for the capacity study and gap assessment are set out in the technical appendices, and the key project stages summarised in Box 1.

**BOX 1: Approach and Methodology**



## **Outputs**

- 2.8 The outputs from this study are:
1. This report setting out the key findings of the study.
  2. Full technical appendices setting out the results of the study with tables and maps.
  3. A GIS data base.

## **3 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT**

3.1 In order to establish a comprehensive baseline of information and provide a robust basis for determining and mapping the landscape capacity of the Borough, a landscape character assessment was undertaken. The study area (illustrated on HDA1) included all designated gap policy areas, together with additional surrounding areas of the Borough identified by HDA as essential context for the capacity study between Worthing and adjacent settlements. The extent of the additional areas of study was determined by desk top assessment, site work and preliminary local landscape characterisation.

3.2 In the absence of a Borough-wide Landscape Assessment, HDA has refined the West Sussex County Landscape Assessment for the study area to a level of detail appropriate to the objectives of the study. The character assessment has been carried out in accordance with the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland<sup>3</sup> and the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment<sup>4</sup>.

### **3.3 The landscape of Worthing Borough**

3.3.1 Worthing Borough lies across the West Sussex coastal plain and the undulating dip slope hills of the South Downs. The contrasting geology and topography of the northern and southern parts of the Borough give rise to marked differences in character.

3.3.2 The majority of Worthing Borough occupies the coastal plain from the East Preston area of Littlehampton to the west, and Lancing to the east. The only breaks in an almost continuous band of urban development along the coast, are at the far eastern and western ends of Worthing. Inland, the settlement pattern comprises extensive settlement and twentieth century suburbs which extend to the foot of the South Downs. The north-west corner of the Borough contains wooded hills, the north-east corner of the Borough rises to relatively intact, mostly open, downland.

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<sup>3</sup> Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance 2002'

<sup>4</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) 2002

3.3.4 Worthing Borough is covered by two regional character areas: South Coast Plain (126) and South Downs (125)<sup>5</sup>. Within the Borough boundary, the West Sussex landscape character assessment sub-divides these regional areas into a number of county Landscape Character types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). Key characteristics of the county-wide Landscape Character area are set out in the technical appendices.

### **3.4 Local Landscape Characterisation**

3.4.1 The aim of the local landscape character assessment has been to identify landscape types and areas at an appropriate scale to understand the localised variation in character within the Areas of Search, with the objective of providing the framework for the assessment of sensitivity, value and capacity.

3.4.2 A schedule of draft generic landscape units, Landscape Character Types (LCTs) was prepared based on information gathered through the familiarisation site visits, the desk-top assessment and county landscape character study. Each LCT was identified by a code, and used as part of the field assessment to map the occurrence of LCTs within the Areas of Search. The characteristics of each LCT were described and evaluated using field survey sheets, which have provided a record of the associated field assessment, together with photographs. The final schedule of LCTs with summary descriptions is set out in the technical appendices and illustrated on Figure HDA 2.

3.4.3 Within the Area of Search, and leading on from the LCT work, local landscape character areas (LCAs –areas of common landscape character related to a specific place) were identified, described and mapped. The LCAs (as opposed to the LCTs) provide the framework for the qualitative assessments. Summary descriptions of each local landscape character area are set out in the technical appendices and the location of the 12 character areas is shown on Figure HDA 3.

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<sup>5</sup> The Countryside Agency 'Countryside Character Volume 7: South East and London' 1999  
Worthing Gap and Landscape Capacity Study/454.1/SE/June 07



**4 LANDSCAPE STRUCTURE ANALYSIS**

**4.1 Introduction**

4.1 In addition to the landscape characterisation of the study area HDA undertook a landscape structural analysis of the Borough.

4.2 The aim of landscape structure analysis is to identify the main elements which contribute to the structure, character and setting of the settlements, Gaps, and the AONB. This technique, in conjunction with the local character assessment, forms a basis for then identifying appropriate directions for settlement growth, in landscape terms. If development is consistent with the setting and structure of the local settlement pattern and its landscape context, then the essential character of the settlement and the surrounding area will be retained. If future development is not consistent with that structure, then the relationship between the town or village and its setting will be damaged, and the landscape character of the Borough adversely affected.

4.3 HDA’s Landscape Structure Analysis uses a ‘sieve-mapping’ technique, drawing on both the desk assessment and detailed field assessment.

<b>Baseline 1</b> (OS mapping)	<b>Sieve A</b> (Local Plan)	<b>Sieve B</b> (Site survey)	<b>Sieve C</b> (variety of sources)	<b>Sieve D</b> ( <i>Environment Agency and others</i> )
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Topography</li> <li>● Extent of built development (built up areas)</li> <li>● <b>Baseline 2</b> (published assessments/SPG)</li> <li>● Landscape character assessment</li> <li>● Townscape assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Local Plan designation incl, Landscape Nature Conservation, Conservation Area, Listed park/garden, SAM and associated appraisals, design statements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Local topographical analysis</li> <li>● Land use</li> <li>● Nature of the settlement edge</li> <li>● Relationship with neighbouring town/village</li> <li>● Relationship with principal transport links</li> <li>● Local landscape/townscape assessment and associated guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cultural associations</li> <li>● Locally valued features, eg landmark</li> <li>● Right of Way (greater than local significance)</li> <li>● Historic development of the settlement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Flood plain</li> <li>● Proximity to land use which may limit devt, (noise, smell), eg. sewage works</li> </ul>

Detailed maps and figures containing the baseline data are included in the technical appendices.

**4.2 LANDSCAPE STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS**

4.2.1 Worthing is located between Littlehampton to the west and Lancing to the east. The southern part of Worthing is located on the coastal plateau, the northern part of the town gently rises on the upper coastal plain. Further north, the suburbs of High Salvington and Findon Valley are located within the foothills of the South Downs.

- 4.2.2 The lower, southern part of the town is contained to the west by a combination of open space, the continuing urban areas of Goring-by-Sea and Ferring, and Ferring Rife further to the west. There is an indentation in the settlement pattern which leaves the coastline undeveloped between Goring-by-Sea and Ferring.
- 4.2.3 As Worthing continues northwards on to the upper coastal plain, containment is provided by a more rural landscape of wooded hills and the lower, south facing, slopes of the South Downs. Further to the west, the landscape falls towards Angmering and is predominately pasture and arable land with scattered farmsteads.
- 4.2.4 The north-eastern part of the Borough contains relatively intact, mostly open, downland of the South Downs AONB. The complex topography provides a rural backdrop to the eastern end of Worthing.
- 4.2.5 The eastern edge of Worthing descends from the foot of the Downs southwards to the coast. The town is bounded along most of its eastern edge by large-scale, industrial use buildings, beyond which are small scale pasture fields with vegetated streams and ditches. On the upper coastal plain, a hamlet extends eastwards towards Sompting along the A27 and B2222.
- 4.2.6 South of the railway, an extensive area of floodplain includes a lake and open space used for recreation, a restored landfill site and a strip of undeveloped coastline, contained by Lancing to the east and Worthing to the west.

## **5 LANDSCAPE CAPACITY APPRAISAL**

### **5.1 Introduction**

- 5.1.1 Baseline information collated as part of the desk top study and site survey work, together with the structural analysis and landscape characterisation have all been fed into the landscape sensitivity and landscape value assessments. Each landscape character area has been evaluated using the following matrices derived from the techniques and criteria identified in Topic Paper 6 of the Countryside Agency's landscape Character Assessment Guidance<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The Countryside Agency: Topic Paper 6: techniques and criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity. Worthing Gap and Landscape Capacity Study/454.1/SE/June 07

**Landscape Sensitivity**

LCA	Inherent Landscape Qualities (intactness and condition) <sup>7</sup>		Contribution to distinctive settlement setting	Inconsistency with existing settlement form / pattern  * Note 1	Contribution to rurality of surrounding landscape	Contribution to separation between settlements	Sensitivity 1-5 Negligible 6-10 Slight 11-15 Moderate 16-20 Substantial 21-25 Major	Final Assessment Landscape Sensitivity
	low	high						
							5 10 15 20 25	

**\* Note 1** “inconsistency” is used as the measure of sensitivity eg. flood plain has a high score for inconsistency with existing settlement pattern because these landscapes are seldom built upon and are inconsistent with the existing settlement pattern. By contrast areas of coastal plateau adjacent to existing settlements have a low score because they are largely consistent with the existing settlement pattern, locally many existing settlements are largely situated on the coastal plateau.

**Landscape Value**

LCA	Landscape Designation		Other Designation (nature conservation, heritage, amenity, including flood zone)	Contribution to setting of ‘outstanding assets’ (eg. AONB)	Special cultural/ historic associations	Perceptual aspects (eg. scenic beauty, tranquillity, wildness)	Landscape Value 1-5 Negligible 6-10 Slight 11-15 Moderate 16-20 Substantial 21-25 Major	Overall Assessment Landscape Value
	low	high						
							5 10 15 20 25	

5.1.2 In order to assess the sensitivity of the landscape to built development, assumptions have been made as to the likely form of any new settlement areas. It has been assumed that buildings would be largely 2 or 3 storeys in height with occasional landmark buildings of 4-5 storeys. There would be open space provision and a strong landscape framework with tree planting of appropriate scale, area and design to ensure that the development achieves a good fit in the landscape.

5.1.3 The results of the landscape sensitivity and landscape value assessments are set out in Tables 1 and 2 and are combined to give an overall judgement relating to landscape capacity as follows:

<sup>7</sup> “ from visual, functional and ecological perspectives” p53 The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage ‘Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002

<sup>8</sup> excluding gap policy

		<b>Landscape Value</b>				
		<b>Major</b>	<b>Substantial</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Slight</b>	<b>Negligible</b>
<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Major</b>	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible / low	Low	Low / medium
	<b>Substantial</b>	Negligible	Negligible / low	Low	Low / Medium	Medium
	<b>Moderate</b>	Negligible / Low	Low	Medium	Medium / high	High / medium
	<b>Slight</b>	Low	Low / medium	Medium /high	High	High / Very high/
	<b>Negligible</b>	Low / medium	Medium	High / medium	High / Very high/	Very high

**Table 1**

**Landscape Sensitivity**

No	Landscape Character Area	Inherent Landscape Qualities (intactness <sup>9</sup> and condition) low high	Contribution to distinctive settlement setting	Inconsistency with existing settlement form / pattern	Contribution to rurality of surrounding landscape	Contribution to separation between settlements	Sensitivity	Final Assessment Landscape Sensitivity	
							1-5 Negligible 6-10 Slight 11-15 Moderate 16-20 Substantial 21-25 Major		
01	Ecclesden Hills	Moderately intact hedgerow network with some woodland.	Distinctive setting to east of Angmering.	Rising ground beyond settlement.	Predominantly arable and pasture. Part of wider foothills to Downs.	No separation function except wider separation with Worthing.			SUBSTANTIAL
02	Angmering Coastal Plain	Golf course and agricultural landscape; shelter belts and boundary hedgerows, moderately intact.	Moderate contribution to setting of Angmering and development within golf course.	Largely consistent with form of adjacent settlements.	Golf course and agricultural land contribute to wider landscape. Partially contains Angmering	Separates Angmering from Littlehampton and Angmering from Ferring.			SUBSTANTIAL
03	Kingston Lower Coastal Plain	Relatively intact hedgerow and rife network to periphery of site with moderate to high ecological value.	Rife to eastern side relatively distinct setting to Ferring.	Rife cuts across coastal plateau.	Intervisibility with Ecclesden Hills to north.	Separates Littlehampton from Ferring.			SUBSTANTIAL
04	High Down – Titnore Hills	Substantially wooded. Some ancient woodland, moderate hedgerow network.	Provides elevated wooded backdrop to Worthing.	Rising ground beyond settlement.	Largely wooded. Part of wider foothills to Downs.	Wooded high ground which contributes to wider separation between Worthing and Ferring.			SUBSTANTIAL

<sup>9</sup> “ from visual, functional and ecological perspectives” p53 The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002  
Worthing Gap and Landscape Capacity Study/454.1/SE/June 07

No	Landscape Character Area	Inherent Landscape Qualities (intactness <sup>10</sup> and condition) low high	Contribution to distinctive settlement setting	Inconsistency with existing settlement form / pattern	Contribution to rurality of surrounding landscape	Contribution to separation between settlements	Sensitivity	Final Assessment Landscape Sensitivity	
							1-5 Negligible 6-10 Slight 11-15 Moderate 16-20 Substantial 21-25 Major		
05	Goring Coastal Plain							SUBSTANTIAL	
		Little intactness and low internal hedge structure	Provides open aspect between Ferring and Goring-by-Sea.	Floodplain cuts across southern part of Character Area.	Low rurality, high urban influence. Intervisibility with High Downs Hill.	Separation between Ferring and Worthing.			
06	Ferring Lower Coastal Plain							SUBSTANTIAL	
		Some hedgerow structures and small woodland belts.	Woodland edge to Worthing/Goring-on-Sea	Largely consistent with settlement form.	Land locked by settlement but rural in character and undeveloped shoreline	Separates south Ferring from Worthing.			
07	Durrington Upper Coastal Plain							SLIGHT	
		Moderate Hedgerow network.	Provides open aspect with wooded hills as backdrop.	Consistent with settlement form.	Moderate intervisibility with wider landscape to north, seperated by A27 corridor	Not required for separation High Down and Eccleston Hills form main separation			
08	Mount Carvey Downs							SUBSTANTIAL	
		Good hedgerow network (particularly to the west). Maintained golf course. With naturally vegetated steep slopes.	Distinctive setting to settlement, particularly eastern edge of Findon Valley.	Exposed complex topography adjacent to Findon Valley.	Rural, widely visible from surrounding areas.	No separation function.			

\* Uplift due to importance of gap function.

<sup>10</sup> " from visual, functional and ecological perspectives" p53 The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002  
Worthing Gap and Landscape Capacity Study/454.1/SE/June 07

No	Landscape Character Area	Inherent Landscape Qualities (intactness <sup>11</sup> and condition) low high	Contribution to distinctive settlement setting	Inconsistency with existing settlement form / pattern	Contribution to rurality of surrounding landscape	Contribution to separation between settlements	Sensitivity	Final Assessment Landscape Sensitivity	
							1-5 Negligible 6-10 Slight 11-15 Moderate 16-20 Substantial 21-25 Major		
09	Titch Hill Downs	Largely intact downland with moderately good hedgerow network and vegetated steep slopes.	Highly distinctive setting to settlement.	Downland above town.	Downland, widely visible.	No separation function.		SUBSTANTIAL	
10	Sompting Upper Coastal Plain	Copses and hedged boundaries.	No contribution.	Sits within upper coastal plain.	Limited, includes settlement within character area.	Strong boundaries make significant contribution to visual separation between Worthing and Sompting.		MODERATE	
11	Loose Lane Coastal Plain	Moderate ,peripheral vegetation intact.	Provides a generally pastoral setting to immediate urban edge.	Significant areas of floodplain along both urban edges.	Open coastal plain, wider setting to AONB.	Separation between Broadwater area of Worthing and Sompting.		SUBSTANTIAL	
12	Brooklands Lower Coastal Plain	Limited intact landscape structure. Significant treed boundaries to north and western edge of Lancing.	Lake and open coastal edge provide moderately distinct setting.	Almost entirely floodplain.	Undeveloped shoreline.	Seperation between East Worthing and Lancing.		SUBSTANTIAL	

<sup>11</sup> " from visual, functional and ecological perspectives" p53 The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002  
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**Table 2**

**Landscape Value**

No	Landscape Character Area	Landscape Designation <sup>12</sup>		Other Designation (nature conservation, heritage, amenity, including flood zone)	Contribution to setting of 'outstanding assets'	Special cultural/historic associations	Perceptual aspects (eg. scenic beauty, tranquillity, wildness)	Landscape Value					Final Assessment Landscape Value
		low	high					1-5 Negligible	6-10 Slight	11-15 Moderate	16-20 Substantial	21-25 Major	
01	Ecclesden Hills			Ancient Woodland, LBs, RSI, Setting to Conservation Area.	Setting to Downs.	None.	Moderate scenic beauty.						MODERATE
		Adjacent to AONB.											
02	Angmering Coastal Plain			Setting to listed building, historic parkscape setting to Conservation Area.	None.	None.	Limited scenic beauty.						SLIGHT
		None.											
03	Kingston Lower Coastal Plain			LBs, flood, SNCI, eastern fringe in floodzone, PSI, RSI, historic parkscape.	None.	Long established consensus on importance of local area.	Moderate scenic beauty.						MODERATE
		None.											
04	High Down – Titnore Hills			Ancient Woodland, RSI/PSI, floodzone, SNCI, Conservation Area, historic parkscape, SAM.	National Trust High Down Hill, setting to AONB.	National Trust historic parkland. Fortification earthworks and registered gardens	Moderate scenic beauty.						SUBSTANTIAL
		Adjacent to AONB.											

<sup>12</sup> excluding gap policy





No	Landscape Character Area	Landscape Designation <sup>14</sup>	Other Designation (nature conservation, heritage, amenity, including flood zone)	Contribution to setting of 'outstanding assets'	Special cultural/historic associations	Perceptual aspects (eg. scenic beauty, tranquillity, wildness)	Landscape Value	Final Assessment Landscape Value
		low high					1-5 Negligible 6-10 Slight 11-15 Moderate 16-20 Substantial 21-25 Major	
09	Titch Hill Downs							MAJOR
		AONB.	Open Access, SSSI, nature conservation, SNCI.	None.	South Downs.	High.		
10	Sompting Upper Coastal Plain							SUBSTANTIAL
		Partly AONB.	LBs, historic parkscape, conservation area, RSI/PSI.	LBs and AONB.	Proximity to Downs and historic parkscape.	Moderate.		
11	Loose Lane Coastal Plain							MODERATE
		Proximity to AONB.	Abuts Conservation Area, LBs, significant floodzone, nature conservation area.	Middle distant setting to AONB>	None.	Moderate.		
12	Brooklands Lower Coastal Plain							MODERATE
		None.	Substantial area of floodzone, RSI/PSI.	Undeveloped coast.	None.	Open coastal context.		

<sup>14</sup> excluding gap policy

**Table 3**  
**Landscape Capacity**

**Combining Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Value to give Landscape Capacity**

		<b>Landscape Value</b>				
		<b>Major</b>	<b>Substantial</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Slight</b>	<b>Negligible</b>
<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Major</b>	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible / low	Low	Low / medium
	<b>Substantial</b>	Negligible	Negligible / low	Low	Low / Medium	Medium
	<b>Moderate</b>	Negligible / Low	Low	Medium	Medium / high	High / medium
	<b>Slight</b>	Low	Low / medium	Medium /high	High	High / Very high/
	<b>Negligible</b>	Low / medium	Medium	High / medium	High / Very high/	Very high

<b>No</b>	<b>Landscape Character Area</b>	<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Landscape Value</b>	<b>Landscape Capacity</b>
01	Ecclesden Hills	Substantial	Moderate	Low
02	Angmering Coastal Plain	Substantial	Slight	Low / Medium
03	Kingston Lower Coastal Plain	Substantial	Moderate	Low
04	High Down – Titnore Hills	Substantial	Substantial	Negligible / Low
05	Goring Coastal Plain	Substantial	Moderate	Low
06	Ferring Lower Coastal Plain	Substantial	Moderate	Low
07	Durrington Upper Coastal Plain	Slight	Slight	High
08	Mount Carvey Downs	Substantial	Substantial	Negligible / Low
09	Titch Hill Downs	Substantial	Major	Negligible
10	Sompting Upper Coastal Plain	Moderate	Substantial	Low
11	Loose Lane Coastal Plain	Substantial	Moderate	Low
12	Brooklands Lower Coastal Plain	Substantial	Moderate	Low

**5.2 Summary of Assessment**

5.2.1 In relation to this study a medium, low or negligible rating for landscape capacity indicates that the allocation of a strategic level of development would have a significant and detrimental effect on the character of the landscape as a whole and, or, on the setting to existing settlement or outstanding assets within the Borough. A rating of Medium/High or High/Medium identifies a landscape character area with the capacity for limited development, in some areas, having regard for the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas. High or very high capacity identifies landscape character areas of low sensitivity and low landscape

value which, from a landscape perspective, could accommodate significant allocations of development, subject to the same caveats set out above for landscape character areas with High/Medium capacity. Table 3 identifies the overall rating for each character area. The potential impact of small-scale development on the character and appearance of settlement is not considered in this assessment.

5.2.2 Each LCA is briefly summarised below taking into account the detailed sensitivity and value profiles. Figure HDA 5 illustrates the distribution of capacity across the study area.

#### **Landscape Capacity – Negligible**

- Titch Hill Downs (LCA 09). Largely intact downland, within AONB, highly visible from the surrounding downland..

#### **Landscape Capacity – Negligible/Low**

- High Down – Titnore Hills (LCA 04). Substantially wooded backdrop to settlement below. Provides rural gap between Worthing and Angmering.
- Mount Carvey Downs (LCA 08). Mostly open downland, consisting mainly of golf course. Hard urban edges.

#### **Landscape Capacity – Low**

- Ecclesden Hills (LCA 01). Mixed agricultural landscape on rising ground, adjacent to AONB, prominent in view from Angmering and the wider landscape.
- Kingston Lower Coastal Plain (LCA 02). Relatively intact agricultural landscape, includes rife features, it separates Littlehampton and Ferring and includes areas of ecological and heritage interest.
- Goring Coastal Plain (LCA 05). Largely open horticultural land uses. Provides the separation between Ferring and Goring-by-Sea.
- Ferring Lower Coastal Plain (LCA 06). Undeveloped coastline, separates Ferring and Worthing, arable landscape with a woodland edge to Worthing.
- Sompting Upper Coastal Plain (LCA 10). Mixture of small-scale pasture, paddocks, recreation and arable fields. Constitutes part of the separation between Broadwater area of Worthing and Sompting.
- Loose Lane Coastal Plain (LCA 11). Predominately arable fields, contained to the north and south by fields in pasture which are bounded by vegetated streams/ditches, partially enclosing the character area.
- Brooklands Lower Coastal Plain (LCA 12). Mostly recreational uses but includes inaccessible restored landfill site. Significant urban influence, but with undeveloped coastline.

#### **Landscape capacity Low/Medium**

- Angmering Coastal Plain (LCA 42). Mixed urban edge landscape, partially enclosed, separates Angmering from Littlehampton

### **Landscape Capacity: High**

- Durrington Upper Coastal Plain (LCA 07). Arable and pastoral fields enclosed by woodland to the west, with strong relationship to existing development in Worthing to the south and east.

## **6 REVIEW OF GAP POLICY BOUNDARIES**

### **6.1 Introduction**

6.1.1 The West Sussex local authorities have for decades sought to maintain the county network of small to medium-sized towns and villages, seeking to maintain and where possible enhance, the separate identity and character of all settlements. Development that would undermine this objective or lead to the actual or perceived coalescence of settlements has been resisted. Structure Plan Policy CH3 (Settlement pattern and strategic gaps) seeks to protect the fundamental purpose and integrity of gaps between settlements. This has been achieved by defining gap boundaries in successive local plans. The Borough contains the whole or part of four Gap policy areas.

6.1.2 Gaps have not been based on landscape character and quality. They contain countryside that is by definition generally free from development and are treated as countryside for the purposes of strategic and local planning. They benefit from designation as gaps as development proposals in them are given an extra layer of scrutiny. The purpose of this study has been to test the extent to which designated gaps fulfil their policy function, based on a landscape structural analysis, landscape characterisation and visual context of each gap.

### **6.2 Policy Context**

#### **6.2.1 National Guidance**

Planning guidance note PPS 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas 2004 sets out the government's objectives for rural areas. Specifically PPS7 promotes

- Good quality, sustainable development that respects and, where possible, enhances local distinctiveness and the intrinsic qualities of the countryside, and offers;
- Continued protection of the open countryside for the benefit of all, with the highest level of protection for our most valued landscapes and environmental resources.

PPS 7 confirms the status of nationally designated areas such as National Parks and AONB's and recognises a limited role for locally designated areas, where they are properly justified and based on a formal and robust assessment of the qualities of the landscape concerned<sup>15</sup>.

#### **6.2.2 Regional Guidance**

The South East Plan has confirmed the role of Strategic Gap policy in preventing the coalescence of settlements and directed Local Authorities to identify and define strategic

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<sup>15</sup> ODPM 'Planning Policy Statement 7: 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas' PPS7 2004

gaps<sup>16</sup>. In addition reference is made to Local Gap policy and the need to assess potential gaps against the criteria set out in the guidance in PPS7.

#### 6.2.3 County and District Council Guidance

Policy CH 3 of the Structure Plan and its supporting text<sup>17</sup> set out the justification for gap policy and the criteria by which Local Plans should assess the extent and boundaries for gaps.

### 6.3 Gap Appraisal

6.3.1 Each of the Gap policy areas within Worthing Borough has been assessed on the basis of the structural landscape analysis, landscape characterisation and visual assessment to address the following criteria:

- the potential for coalescence between settlements.
- the potential for the erosion of settings of a settlement and loss of separate identity
- the potential for impact on Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and significant views to landmarks.
- intervisibility with adjacent settlements.
- protection of undeveloped coastline.

#### Gap Policy Areas (see plan HDA 6)

#### 6.3.2 Worthing and Ferring

The gap between Worthing and Ferring is split into two sections by development that spans the District/Borough boundary, to the south of the railway.

#### 6.3.3 Worthing and Ferring (southern section)

Existing structure

6.3.3.1 The gap extends across the Arun District and Worthing Borough boundary. The structure across the whole gap includes largely open large scale arable fields with smaller peripheral fields, in the northern corners, which includes some pasture. A substantial woodland belt separates Worthing from the gap landscape and undeveloped coastline forms the southern boundary to the gap.

Character and visual context

6.3.3.2 Although relatively narrow, the gap and associated woodland does provide visual separation between Ferring and Worthing. The gap has an open character with visual continuity between the open agricultural landscape and the undeveloped coastline.

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<sup>16</sup> South East England Regional Assembly; Regional Planning Committee Dec 2005.

<sup>17</sup> West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016 Feb 2005

#### Gap Assessment

- 6.3.3.3 The gap consists of a single landscape character area which functions as one visual compartment. The boundaries are robust given the policy requirements to protect the undeveloped coastline and avoid the potential for coalescence of the existing settlements.

### **6.3.4 Worthing and Ferring (northern section)**

#### Existing structure

- 6.3.4.1 The northern portion of this gap is bounded by the A259, Littlehampton Road to the north, the railway to the south and is surrounded by development on three sides. The gap consists entirely of large scale arable fields. Ferring rife, with limited associated vegetation runs east-west across the northern half of this portion of the gap. Part of the gap extends across the Arun District and Worthing Borough boundary. A broken line of vegetation runs along the District/Borough boundary within the gap.

#### Character and visual context

- 6.3.4.2 Vegetation along the District/Borough boundary and at the edges of the development that surrounds the gap, help filter views of development and provide a degree of visual separation between Ferring and Worthing. Within the gap the landscape is open and relatively flat, typical of lower coastal plain. Views extend north across the A259 towards elevated land west of Worthing around High Down. The visual separation between Ferring and Goring on Sea and Worthing is reliant on the Goring Coastal Plain on both sides of the A259.

#### Gap Assessment

- 6.3.4.3 The northern section of the Worthing and Ferring Gap extends to include the agricultural land lying between the settlements south of the A259. The effectiveness of this northern section of gap is reliant on the visual continuity with rural land to the north of the Littlehampton Road. Development within the Goring Coastal Plain, north of the road, would lead to an erosion of the setting to Worthing and the potential coalescence between Ferring and Worthing increasing intervisibility between settlements. In order to better reflect the landscape and visual context of the gap and provide a robust edge to the policy area the policy boundary should be moved north to coincide with the Goring Coastal Plain character area boundary.

### **6.3.5 Worthing and Sompting**

#### Existing structure

- 6.3.5.1 The gap is a narrow strip of land between north-east Worthing and the Adur District/Worthing Borough boundary. The gap combines with a larger gap within Adur District to form the overall gap between Worthing and Sompting. The A27 cuts east-west through the gap. South of the A27, the gap consists of small-scale enclosed pasture,

arable fields and paddocks. The southern part of the gap is bounded by the A27 to the north, housing to the south and west and low density housing and pastoral fields, to the east. North of the A27, the gap consists of a large-scale pastoral field and open downland. The northern portion of this gap is bounded by the A27 to the south, business/retail park buildings and open downland to the west and a partly sunken lane to the east. To the north, the gap boundary cuts diagonally across the lower part of an open downland field.

#### Character and visual context

- 6.3.5.2 To the south of the A27, views are contained by boundary vegetation and settlement. To the north of the A27, the gap is largely open downland. Views of development within Worthing are possible, at varying distances, from most the existing gap area. From the more elevated, northern parts of the gap, there are views across the whole gap which extend over open downland outside the existing gap area. Views extend westwards, and include filtered views of the housing that backs onto Charmandean Lane. Views extend southwards to include the filtered edge of Downlands industrial/retail park. Vegetation associated with the partly sunken lane along the eastern edge of the gap limits views to the east.

#### Gap Assessment

- 6.3.5.3 To the south of the A27, the gap functions largely as an area of visual containment, as part of the wider Worthing, Sopting Gap. In reviewing the extent of the gap to the north of the A27, the assessment has been considered in relation to the landscape characterisation of the area, features on the ground, topography and the visual context. Currently, to the north of the A27, the gap ends on a line diagonally across the bottom of one field and along other field boundaries unrelated to the edge of settlement. The open character of the downland landscape continues further north to a distinct ridgeline and west to housing that backs onto Charmandean Lane. In order to provide a robust edge to the policy area and reflect the landscape character, topography and visual context of the proposed gap policy area, the gap policy should extend further north and west, as identified on plan HDA 6.

### **6.3.6 Worthing and Lancing**

#### Existing structure

- 6.3.6.1 The gap lies largely within the flood zones bounded to the north by the railway and along its eastern and western edges by development, including industrial use buildings. To the south of the gap included is a strip of undeveloped coast. The gap largely consists of recreational uses, including the Brooklands Pleasure Grounds in the southern part of the gap, and allotments and a partially restored landfill site to the north.



#### Existing character and visual context

- 6.3.6.2 The southern half of the gap policy area is enclosed along the east and west by development, and is subject to significant urban influences, the open nature of the Brooklands Pleasure Grounds also allows intervisibility between development either side of the gap. However, the open character of the gap and the undeveloped coastline do provide a clear and distinct separation between the settlements of Worthing and Lancing. The central and northern part of the gap contain rough ground, allotments and informal recreational uses, the central and northern areas of the gap are narrow but enclosed by vegetation which limits views across this part of the gap.

#### Gap Assessment

- 6.3.6.3 The gap is generally narrow and significantly influenced by the adjacent areas of development. At the northern end of the gap the treed nature of boundary features and the vegetated character of the partially restored landfill areas maintains the visual separation between the settlements. The adjacent allotment areas contribute to the sense of separation between the settlements when viewed from the railway line. Managed open space and woodland belts provide a setting to Lancing through the central section of the gap and largely maintain visual separation. To the south the character of the gap is more open with some intervisibility between settlements, however the open character with views towards the open undeveloped coastline provide a clear sense of separation between the two settlements. The current gap policy boundaries are therefore considered robust.

## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

### **7.1 Landscape Capacity**

- 7.1.1 A substantial proportion of the Study Area is situated on the West Sussex Coastal Plain. The landscape character assessment identified 12 character areas, including a number of subsets of coastal plain, hills and downland. The majority of these landscape character areas (approximately 80%) exhibited a substantial level of landscape and visual sensitivity in relation to new development. Of the remaining areas, one character area was of moderate sensitivity and one character area was of slight sensitivity. Areas of slight or moderate landscape and visual sensitivity are located adjacent to existing settlement, of generally low-moderate inherent landscape quality and make little contribution to the setting of existing settlement. The area of slight sensitivity is located in an area which is consistent with the existing settlement form and pattern and makes no significant contribution to gap between settlements.

- 7.1.2 The rating for landscape value is generally less than that identified for landscape and visual sensitivity. Most landscape character areas are located outside designated landscapes e.g. the South Downs AONB, however, they often make a contribution to the

setting of the outstanding assets associated with the Borough but include few cultural and historic associations. Approximately 65% of the character areas (8 no.) within the study area exhibited a slight or moderate rating in relation to landscape value. The remaining areas were of substantial or major landscape value, reflecting either their association with the South Downs AONB, or, perceptual aspects, such as scenic beauty.

7.1.3 Landscape capacity analysis, which has been based on the results of the landscape sensitivity and landscape value analysis, has identified one character area which could accommodate a degree of change, in the form of new development. Durrington Upper Coastal Plain could from a landscape perspective, accommodate a significant allocation of new development without significant detrimental effects on the character of the landscape as a whole. Such development would need to have regard for the setting and form of the existing settlement and the character and sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas. Capacity for development within the identified character area varies e.g. there is less capacity in areas in close proximity to the ANOB and the adjacent conservation area, and proposals would need to respond to site specific constraints. This study identifies at a strategic level the areas of landscape which have capacity for new development. Further detailed study of the Dunnington Upper Coastal Plain character area and its environs should be undertaken so as to inform a Development brief for any future development proposals

7.1.4 Out of the remaining character areas, 7 areas have been judged to have a low landscape capacity for development. From a landscape perspective, these character areas are unsuitable for large-scale strategic development proposals. The assessment is not intended to provide detailed guidance on the appropriate location of all forms or scale of development. However, the landscape capacity study can inform the decision making process by flagging up the issues relating to both landscape sensitivity and landscape value which should be addressed by applicants proposing small-scale development proposals.

## **7.2 Gap Appraisal**

7.2.1 The study has considered the Gap policy areas within the Borough. The landscape structure, landscape characterisation and visual context has been assessed in relation to policy function i.e. the prevention of coalescence and maintenance of setting and separate identity of settlements and the protection of the undeveloped coastline.

7.2.2 There are no changes proposed for two of the four gap policy areas. The southern section of the Worthing and Ferring gap and the Worthing and Lancing gap retain their existing policy boundaries which are considered robust given the need to protect the undeveloped coastline, prevent coalescence and maintain visual separation.

- 7.2.3 An extension to the Worthing and Sompting gap and the northern section of the Worthing and Ferring Gap have been proposed in order to provide a robust edge to the policy areas and reflect the landscape character, topography and visual context of the area.