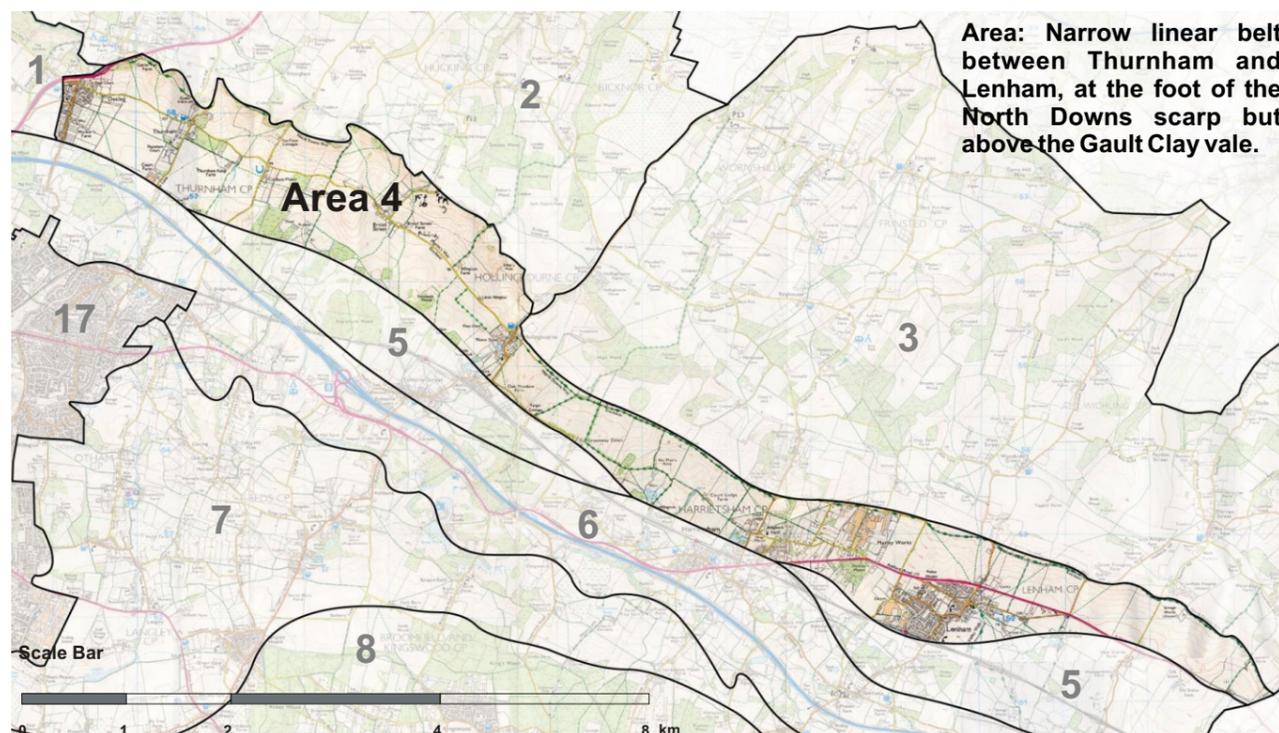
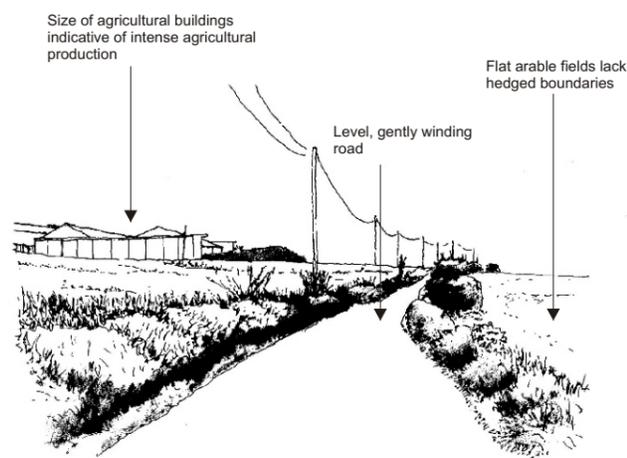


Area 4: Hollingbourne Vale Landscape Character Areas



Landscape Character

This area is distinguished by topography and fertility. It consists of a narrow band of sloping, south-facing arable fields on the down-wash at the scarp foot of the North Downs and a band of pasture and intermittent woodland which marks the top of the scarp above and separates this area from the extensive dip slope (Area 2). Many field boundaries have been removed but there are some scattered trees marking them. This landscape is very open, with little tree cover, and the transport corridor along its southern boundary has caused a loss of tranquillity. The Marley works between Harrietsham and Lenham are clearly visible and present an intrusion of industry into this predominantly rural area. This is characteristically an area of large arable fields, with pasture on the steeper slopes. The recent loss of field boundaries and hedgerow trees has increased the scale of the landscape. This, together with the flatter topography, has led to undue simplification of the landscape, which could be quite readily remedied.



Landscape Designations

The AONB and SLA designations for the Kent Downs extend down the steepest part of the scarp but not into the fertile downslope. They also skirt around the Marley works between Harrietsham and Lenham. These designations provide protection for the natural beauty of the landscape, over all other planning considerations, and therefore affect the Borough Council's response to any planning application. They are discussed more fully in the Landscape Guidance section.

Physical Influence

The continual down-wash of soil from the scarp onto the heavy Gault Clay beneath, combined with the sheltered aspect of the resulting fields, produces a belt of very productive agricultural land, protected by the scarp slope to the north, with its mix of woodland and pasture. The comparative wealth derived from this productivity in turn encouraged the development of larger settlements than are found on the poorer soils of the North Downs.

Area 4: Hollingbourne Vale Landscape Character Areas

Towards the eastern end of this area industrial works tend to dominate, contrasting with the smaller scale of field pattern and pasture on the edge of Harrietsham.

Historical and Cultural Influences

- Site of Roman villa west of Thurnham (prejudiced by CTRL);
- Thurnham Court, Howe Court, moated site at Ripple, Cobham Manor, Hollingbourne Manor (good example of Elizabethan brickwork), Greenway Court, Marley Court;
- Pilgrim's Way ancient trackway.

The local pattern of large regular fields has been in existence for at least 100 years, but in recent years additional clearance of hedges has in parts produced a 'prairie' landscape more reminiscent of East Anglia. The arable fields sweep up over the scarp, blurring the distinctive topography and its traditional land cover.



Building and Settlements

Spring-line villages, such as Hollingbourne, are characteristic of this area, while their accompanying 'manors' and 'courts' distinguish these villages from the tiny hamlets found elsewhere in the North Downs. Settlements such as Harrietsham and Lenham are long established, with substantial houses denoting the comparative wealth of this area (see photos). Both settlements contain a variety of vernacular buildings, timber framed, tile hung, weatherboarded or red brick.



Extravagant timber framing in Harrietsham

Landcover and Biodiversity

Arable production defines this area, with traditionally large fields on the fertile downwash, contrasting with the smaller-scale pasture on the slope above. Now both arable and pasture demonstrate a field scale which is large, fringed with shaws and copses. There are no SSSIs or SNCIs within this area, due to intensive agricultural production over many years.

Key Characteristics:

- band of fertile downwash at the foot of the North Downs scarp;
- undulating, with dramatic scarp face to the north. Flatter and less dramatic to the east;
- mainly in arable production, with little woodland and few hedgerows, giving 'prairie' character;
- small spring-line villages at scarp foot intersection of north-south deep lanes and line of 'manors', 'courts' and Pilgrim's Way;
- open, offering wide views;
- small pieces of ragstone are often included in garden walls;
- the east-west road rolls and twists around the curves of the Downs;
- sharp distinction between arable and pasture.

Landscape Condition

Detracting features: industrial buildings, transport corridor
 Visual unity: high; very simple
 Cultural integrity: N/A
 Ecological integrity: poor
 Functional integrity: strong

Robustness:

Pattern of elements: very simple and limited
 Consistency of pattern: strong
 Distinctive features: landform and land use
 Historic continuity: Victorian at least
 Impact of landform: strong
 Extent of tree cover: very limited
 Extent of visibility within area: extensive

CONDITION	Good	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	Moderate	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
	Poor	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		ROBUSTNESS		

Landscape Guidance: conserve and restore

Principles

- avoid any development that could have a significant impact on the AONB. Ensure that all planning applications pay due regard to views from the AONB/SLA and that development is carefully designed in scale, orientation, materials and associated planting to ensure that it will not form an eyesore when viewed from the scarp or the dip slope above;
- seek to return areas of pasture on the scarp to species-rich grassland;
- screen the transport corridor and intrusive industrial development, using the existing field pattern but creating denser hedgerows and narrow belts (shaws) of woodland;
- restore a healthy hedgerow network on the scarp foot, based on remaining or lost historic field boundaries, by careful infill and management;
- do not seek to create an artificial hedgerow pattern where none has previously existed;
- extend the principle of securing management agreements for high quality habitats.

Practical Measures

- appropriate species for hedgerow planting would be hawthorn and hazel, mixed or planted as a single species hedge. Hedgerow trees and specimens should be oak, beech or ash. Woodland shaws should be a mix of oak, birch, ash, hawthorn and field maple;
- retain existing hedges and individual trees along field boundaries;
- replant individual trees as long-term replacements;
- ensure retention of thick hedges along Pilgrim's Way;
- maintain/increase pasture/grassland on scarp slope;
- building materials should be traditional, usually red brick. Timber frame construction is also traditional in this area, as are cross-driven timber spile fences as garden boundaries.

Landscape Sensitivity

Neither topographical variation nor woodland cover are characteristic of this area, although the historic settlements tend to be larger than elsewhere in the Borough. Nonetheless it is a robust area, but sensitive to change.

It would be difficult to integrate large-scale development, which would be very visible even with screen planting. Small-scale development associated with existing settlements would have to respect and echo the existing field patterns.

Typical Planting Mixes (Area 4: Chalky Clay)

Within this area there are likely to be few opportunities for planting woodland, and many hedgerows have been removed. The opportunity to replace this landscape pattern should also encourage biodiversity through planting mixed species hedges appropriate to the soils (see below). Individual hedgerow oaks should also be planted. Ensure that all species used are of local provenance.

Woodland:

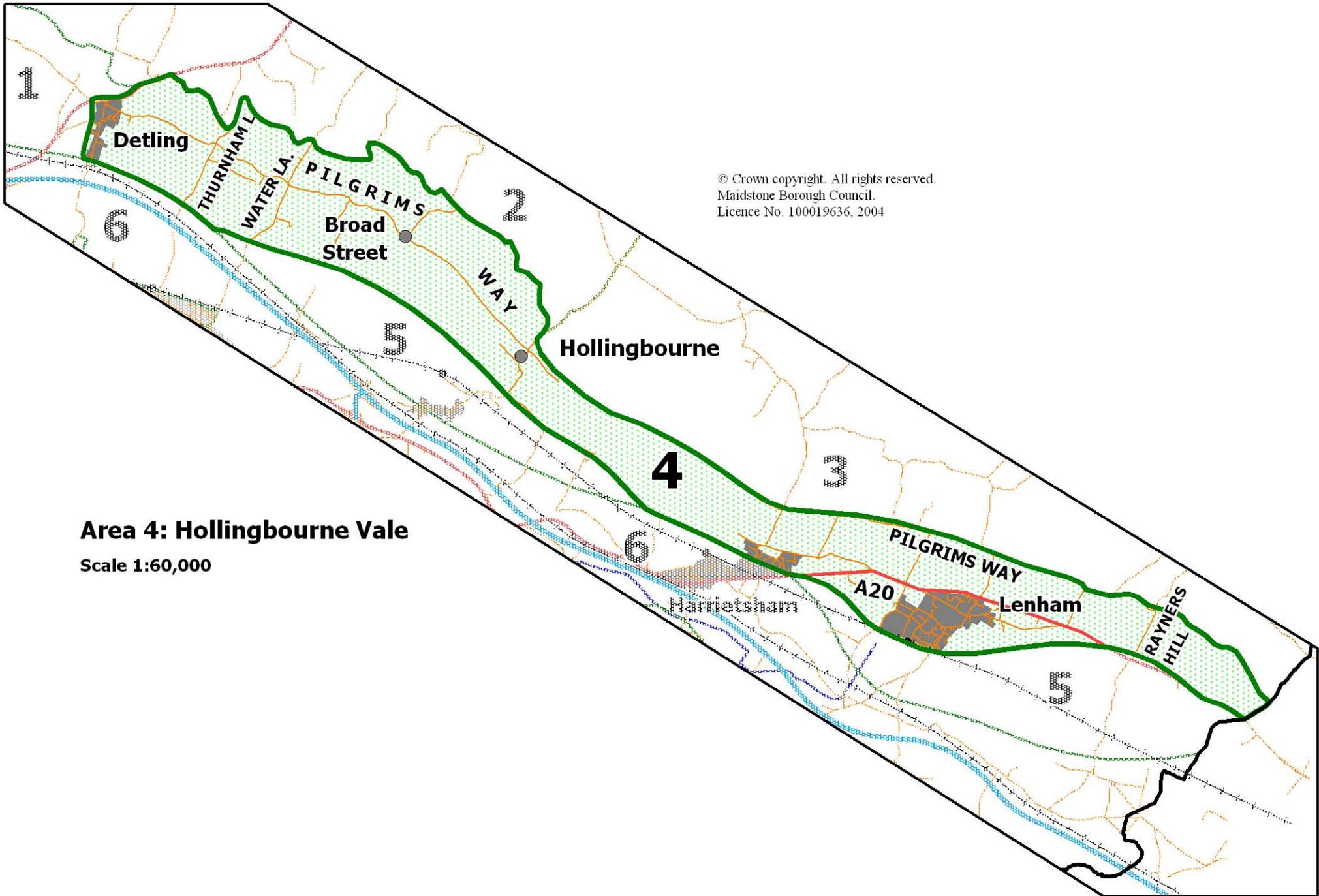
Chestnut	80	Ash	10
Pedunculate Oak	10	Field Maple	30
Hazel	10	Hawthorn	20
		Pedunculate Oak	15
		Silver Birch	25
	100%		100%

NB: Linear tree belts are typical of this area

Hedges:

100% Hawthorn or 100%	Field Maple	10
Hazel with hedgerow trees at 12m centres:	Hawthorn	70
	Hazel	15
Pedunculate Oak or Beech	Holly	5
		100%

Plant at 45cm centres in a double staggered row. 30cm between the rows



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Area 4: Hollingbourne Vale
Scale 1:60,000