

Fareham ASLQ Designation - Response to Inspector's questions of 6 June 2022

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This paper responds to the issues raised by the Planning Inspector in her letter of 6 June 2022 (ref INSP015), under **Development Strategy – Strategic Policy DS3 Landscape** and, as suggested at Para 18, revisits the areas of ASLQ and addresses the matters raised in the letter, including:

- Why ASLQ designation is appropriate, rather than adopting the 'all-landscapes' approach (reference paragraph 14 of INSP015)
- Why areas scoring 'good' were proposed to be designated alongside areas scoring 'high' (reference paragraph 16 of INSP015).
- How the identification of landscape value can be applied proportionately and applies to landscape that has physical attributes which take it 'out of ordinary' (reference paragraph 17 of INSP015).

2.0 Why ASLQ designation is appropriate, rather than the 'all landscapes' approach?

2.1 The 2017 Fareham Landscape Assessment¹ (DS001) reviewed landscape policy and designations. It recognised that local landscape designations (LLDs) can be helpful in providing a clearly defined picture of areas of greater or lesser landscape value to help guide strategic planning decisions about where new development could be located. However, the Assessment went on to say that this could be *'misleading in terms of actual suitability for development'*. It went on to recommend that a holistic, criteria-based policy approach be adopted in the local plan review that applied across the whole countryside, rather than an approach based on local landscape designations.

2.2 In reaching this conclusion, the Assessment reviewed the Planning Policy context provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). In doing so, the Assessment states, *'There is no reference to local designations [in the NPPF] and landscape considerations are seemingly wrapped up as an implicit part of the 'natural and local environment' and 'Green Infrastructure networks'.*²

2.3 Planning policy and guidance have however changed since the publication of the Assessment.

2.4 While there is no official guidance on designating local landscapes in England, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) acknowledges the role of locally designated sites: *'Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites;*

¹ [EV40 Fareham Landscape Assessment](#)

² Section 2.2, page 13, [EV40 Fareham Landscape Assessment](#)

allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.’³

- 2.5 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) has also been updated subsequent to the publication of the Assessment and clearly states that plans can include locally-designated landscapes: *‘The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.’⁴*
- 2.6 The Landscape Institute, in its recent 2021 Technical Guidance Note (TGN 02/21)⁵, suggests at Para 2.2.1 that: *‘Landscape value at the local authority or neighbourhood level can be assessed and mapped spatially, i.e. through identifying areas for local landscape designation.’*
- 2.7 With reference to policy approaches to local landscape designation, the TGN states at Para 2.2.6 that *‘Guidance on how to identify local landscape designations has been produced in Scotland and Wales. This TGN is intended to support the approach set out in these guidance documents.’* It goes on to state in Para 2.27 that *‘The guidance produced by NatureScot and NRW may be helpful for other nations that do not have their own guidance.’*
- 2.8 Consistent with the advice now set out in the TGN, ‘Guidance on Local Landscape Designations’ published by Historic Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage in 2006 was referenced in the research for Areas of Special Landscape Quality for Fareham Borough Council. It was considered that this edition which had been used to help identify local landscape designations elsewhere in England, for example at Aylesbury⁶ and Stratford⁷ and which had been tested in public, would provide a robust approach.
- 2.9 The approach set out in ‘Guidance on Local Landscape Designations’ continues to be supported, and the document was revised and updated in 2020.⁸ On page 3 of the Guidance on Designating Local Landscape Areas, it states that *‘The 2006 guidance has been widely used as part of the*

³ Chapter 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment Paragraph 175
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NP_PF_July_2021.pdf

⁴ Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721 Revision date: 21 07 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment>

⁵ LI TGN 02/21: [tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations.pdf \(windows.net\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment)

⁶ [Defining the special qualities of local landscape designations in Aylesbury Vale District \(aylesburyvalecd.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment)

⁷ [Special Landscape Areas Study - June 2012 \(stratford.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment)

⁸ [Guidance on Designating Local Landscape Areas.pdf \(nature.scot\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment)

Local Development Plan (LDP) process in designating local landscapes. It remains relevant today as part of a wider, 'all landscapes' approach to managing landscape change' and 'Local landscape designations are a valuable tool in the development plan toolbox.

- 2.10 At para 2.7, the 2006 'Guidance on Local Landscape Designations' (SNH Guidance), comments on the 'all-landscapes' approach as follows: *'An 'all-landscapes' approach is not itself a substitute for identifying and taking action for landscapes which merit special attention, either because they are recognised as being of particular value and warrant safeguard[sic] or because they are degraded and require more active management or positive restoration. Within this all-landscapes approach, LLDs can continue to play an important role in protecting and enhancing those landscapes which are recognised as being of particular value and merit special attention.'*⁹
- 2.11 The SNH Guidance goes on to say in paragraph 2.8: *'As a tool for local authorities ... experience suggests that they [LLDs] can be particularly useful in the following circumstance:*
- *to **safeguard** important landscapes and ... features;*
 - *to **promote understanding and awareness of the distinctive character** of the special qualities of the landscapes of a local authority area;*
 - *to **promote some of the most important outdoor settings for recreation and tourism** within the local authority area; and*
 - *to **contribute to wider policies where guiding urban expansion** by specifically identifying and safeguarding areas of landscape importance within or close to existing settlements.'*
- 2.12 Planning inquiry decisions have also indicated that LLDs can be an accepted means of identifying Valued Landscapes. For example, the planning inspector for 55 Dwellings at Funton Brickworks in Kent (2017)¹⁰ considered that the area could be deemed a Valued Landscape *because* it was designated.
- 2.13 Comments in the planning inspector's report for the local inquiry Old Street, Stubbington (2019)¹¹, imply that designation could strengthen the recognition of Valued Landscapes. At para 31, the planning inspector, Christina Downes, states: *'In view of the policy in para 170 the matter of landscape value will no doubt be considered through the emerging Local Plan process. That is the proper forum for any designation to be made. ...'*
- 2.14 Fareham Borough Council identified a potential need for this designation, and it is considered that there is now sufficient national guidance, appeal decisions and examples of Local Landscape Designations to warrant the designation of Areas of Special Landscape Quality in Fareham. Whilst the 2017 Fareham Landscape Assessment has merit, the National Planning Policy

⁹ Historic Scotland & Scottish Natural Heritage, Guidance on Local Landscape Designations, 2006, P11

¹⁰ LUC's 'Valued landscapes: where are we 3 years on from the Stroud judgement', P3 [Valued-landscapes.pdf \(landuse.co.uk\)](#)

¹¹ Appeal Decision, Old Street, Stubbington, 22.01.2019 [GetFile.aspx \(fareham.gov.uk\)](#)

Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) have both been updated subsequently and lend support to the use of local designations.

3.0 Determining a proportionate extent of ASLQ designation

- 3.1 In her letter of 6 June 2022, the planning inspector asks why it is appropriate to designate ‘good’ as well as ‘high’ areas?
- 3.2 Two sets of criteria were used to assess each of the borough’s landscape character areas (LCAs). ‘High’ and ‘good’ relate to the first stage assessment, where Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) Box 5.1 criteria¹² were used to determine how well each area matched the widely accepted ‘Valued Landscape’ attributes. They were graded against four levels of match, with ‘high’ and ‘good’ being the closest match. ‘Good’ was applied where LCAs with high matches were affected in certain areas by intrusive influences which did not, however, detract from their overall qualities. This recognised they had the qualities of a ‘Valued Landscape’ but also highlighted the potential for improvement. Designation can be useful where active management or positive restoration is required, as acknowledged in Para 2.7 of ‘Guidance on Local Landscape Designations’ (SNH guidance), referred to above.
- 3.3 A further set of criteria were applied in a second stage assessment, see pages 16-20 of FBC073 Detailed Analysis of Areas of Special Landscape Quality. These criteria focused on whether LCAs conform to three key characteristics that had emerged from recent planning appeal decisions. These consider the important aspect of how the individual areas relate to their wider landscape setting. For areas to be considered ‘Valued Landscapes’, they are expected to: **a)** have a demonstrable physical attribute; **b)** be something out of the ordinary¹³; and **c)** be an integral part of a wider ‘valued landscape’¹⁴ (NB in the context of the borough, not necessarily the whole country).
- 3.4 The borough’s best landscapes, combining these characteristics and the higher ‘value’ ratings, are the river valleys, coast, downland and forest, all features that extend beyond its boundaries. However most of these include some LCAs or sub-areas affected by detracting influences, making them a less than ‘high’ match to the Valued Landscape criteria.
- 3.5 Excluding them from ASLQ designation would break up the integrity of the wider coherent landscape feature. It was considered particularly important to include these slightly lower rated areas, recognising the part they play in the valued landscape, and using designation as a means

¹² Landscape Institute & IEMA, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 2013, P84

¹³ LUC’s ‘Valued landscapes: where are we 3 years on from the Stroud judgement’, P3 [Valued-landscapes.pdf \(landuse.co.uk\)](#)

¹⁴ Landmark Chambers ‘The Revised NPPF (2018) The Meaning of ‘valued landscape’, P8 [PowerPoint Presentation \(landmarkchambers.co.uk\)](#)

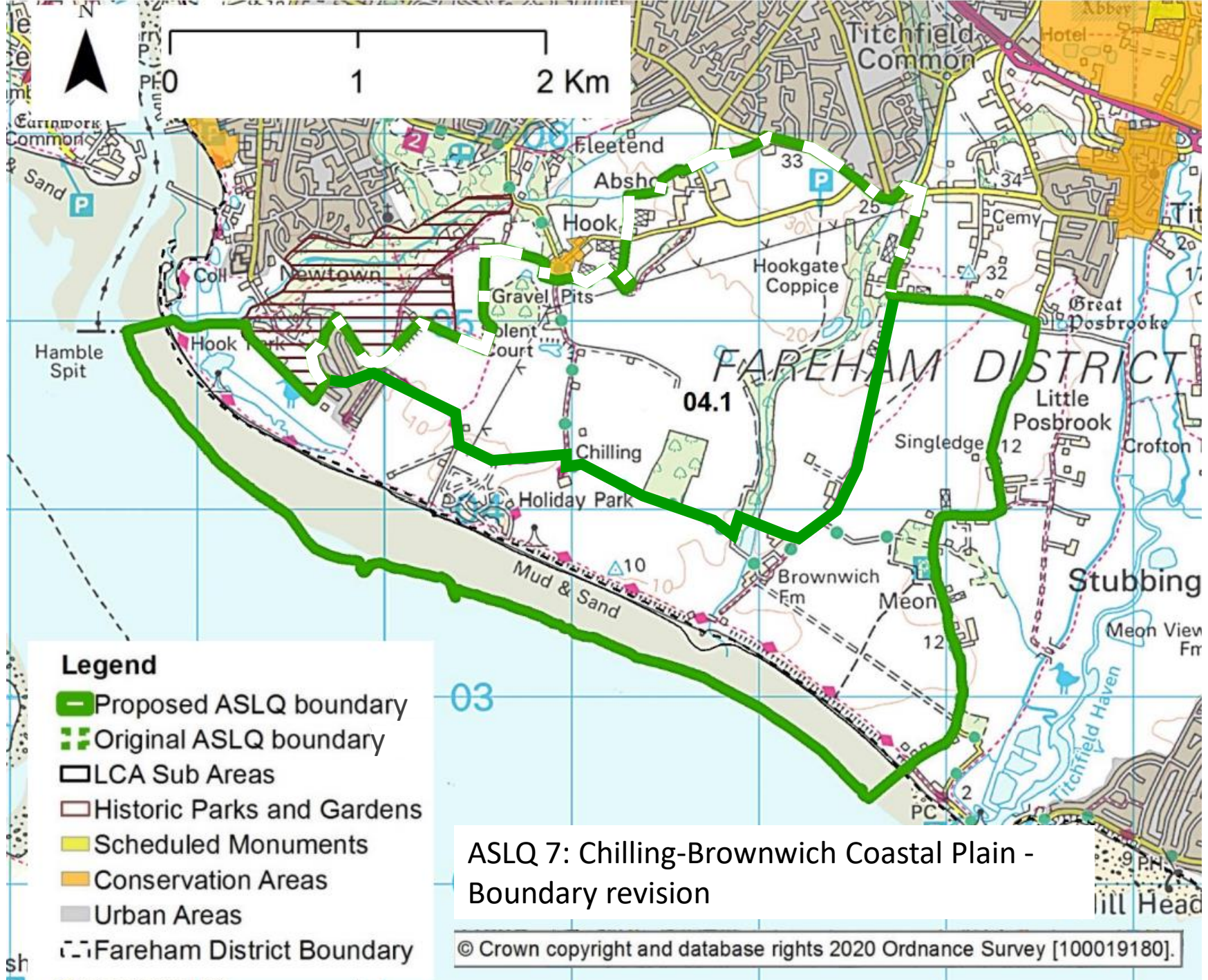
to support enhancing and strengthening their value through the planning process. This view is supported by the SNH Guidance as quoted in 3.2 above.

- 3.6 For example, the part of Portsdown Hill (ASLQ 6) within the borough has some intrusive and detracting features as well as its high qualities of chalk downland and panoramic views, so was assessed a 'good' match. However it was considered to merit protection because it forms an integral part of the wider valued landscape extending beyond the borough. The designation increases the potential for planning policy to encourage more sympathetic development, helping to enhance the landscape.
- 3.7 In the Meon Valley (ASLQ 4) the central LCA has detracting features as well as exceptional heritage value and was therefore assessed as a 'good' match. Because it forms an integral part of the wider river valley, it was considered to merit protection.

4.0 Proportionate designation in Fareham?

- 4.1 In her letter of 6 June 2022, the planning inspector asks how the identification of landscape value can be applied proportionately and applies to landscape that has physical attributes which take it 'out of ordinary' (reference paragraph 17 of INSP015).
- 4.2 The extent of recommended designation reflects the number of distinctive and coherent landscape features within the borough, including river valleys, chalk downland and the coast.
- 4.3 The additional coastal areas were identified for designation in response to NPPF paragraph 170 c) '*maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate.*' In the case of Chilling-Brownwich Coastal Plain (ASLQ 7), NPPF Para 180 states that planning policies should: '*b) identify and protect tranquil areas ... and c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light...*' For example, the Chilling-Brownwich Coastal Plain was considered to be out of the ordinary for several reasons: it is an area of undeveloped coast with high tranquillity ratings and low levels of light pollution, representing a rare regional resource; it has expansive views of the Solent and Isle of Wight; and it has an exceptionally high level of nature conservation interests. It has the distinct physical attribute of the coastline and is an integral part of the wider undeveloped coast landscape to the east and west.
- 4.4 The ASLQ assessment was based on LCAs and their subdivisions, allowing reasonable fine tuning of ASLQ boundaries. However, in the case of Chilling-Brownwich, one large character area covered the whole, with no subdivisions. It may be argued that a finer grain analysis is required to define more accurately which part of this area is most closely associated with the coastal character. Were the LCA to be subdivided, much of the inland part would only qualify as a 'fair' match to the Valued Landscape criteria, as its scenic quality is good but unexceptional and there

is some intrusion from the pylon line. The extent over which the coast has a direct visual and other perceptual influence is indicated on the attached plan. It covers an area along the coast south of Workman's Lane and Chilling Lane from where the sight, sounds or smell of the sea can be experienced, and extends into the higher land between Brownwich Lane and Posbrook Lane to the east, from where the panoramic views extend across the Meon Valley to Portsmouth. This revised boundary could be taken forward as a change to the plan to address the Inspector's concerns expressed in her letter (INSP015).



- Legend**
- ▬ Proposed ASLQ boundary
 - - - Original ASLQ boundary
 - LCA Sub Areas
 - Historic Parks and Gardens
 - Scheduled Monuments
 - Conservation Areas
 - Urban Areas
 - Fareham District Boundary

ASLQ 7: Chilling-Brownwich Coastal Plain -
Boundary revision