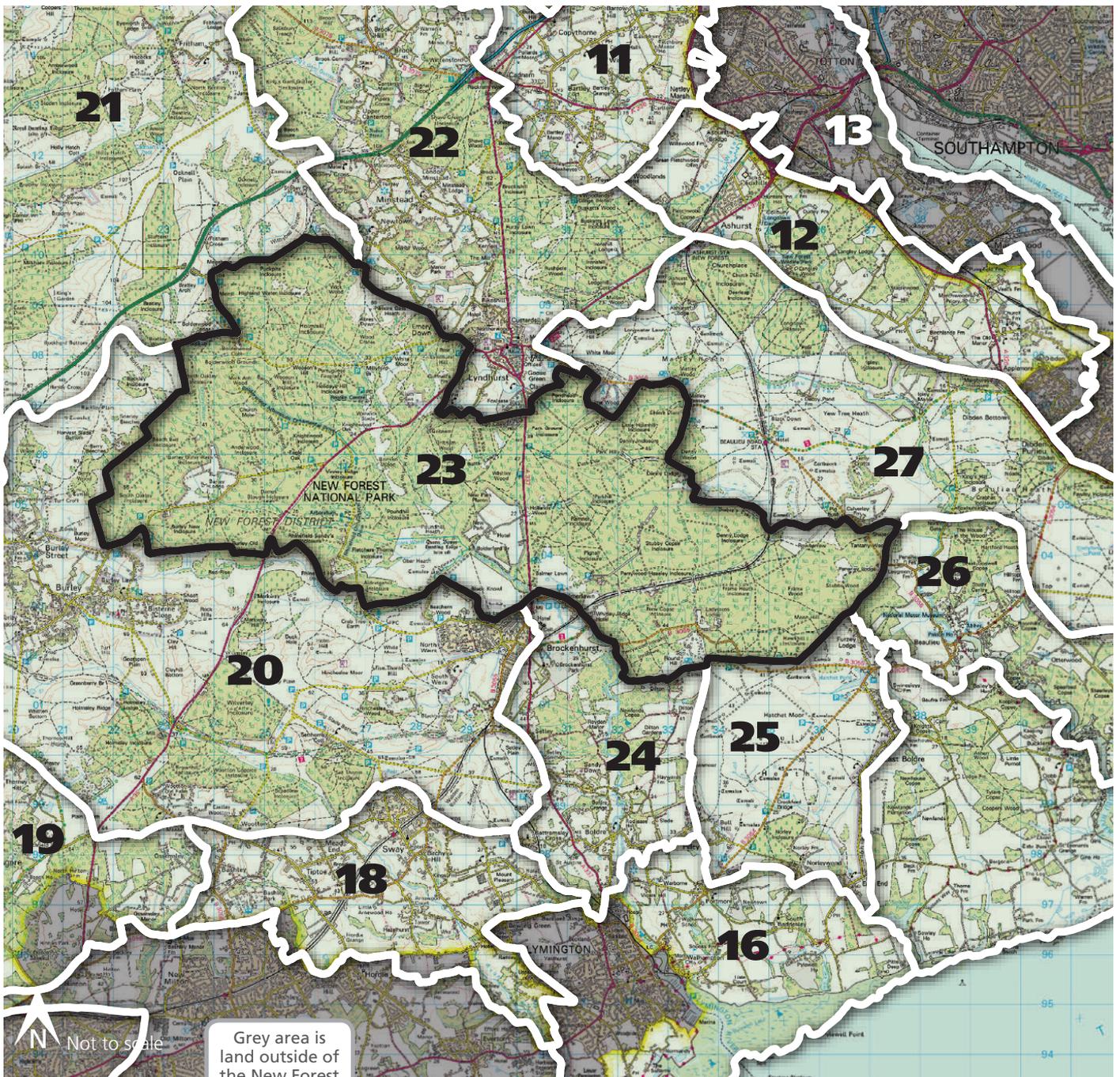




Bracken-dominated woodland glade, Church Moor

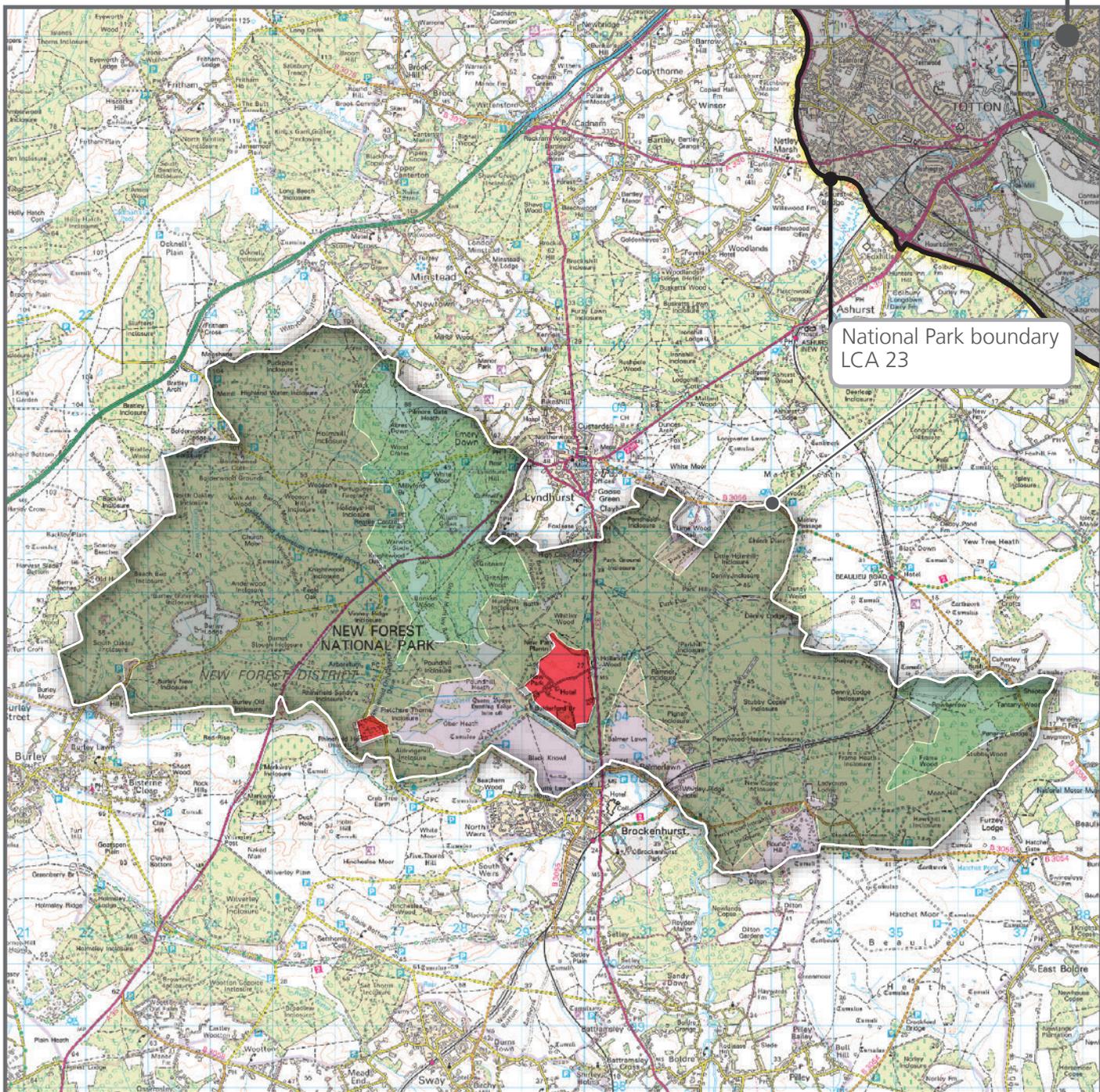
LCA 23: NEW FOREST CENTRAL WOODLANDS

Location of LCA in the National Park



Component landscape types within LCA 23

Area in shadow- outside National Park



National Park boundary
LCA 23



Not to scale

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- 18. Ancient and Ornamental Woodlands
- 19. Timber Inclosures/Plantations
- 20. Heathland
- 21. Historic Parkland

All of this LCA lies within the New Forest National Park.

A. LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

Key landscape characteristics

- Gently undulating landscape in the centre of the New Forest District (on an underlying of Barton Sands and Bembridge Marls which give rise to good brown forest soils).
- Woodland enclosures dominate the landscape demonstrating the full range of woodland combinations including majestic beech woods, oak plantations and mixed plantations.
- Large areas of unenclosed ancient and ornamental woods and wood pasture scattered between enclosures contributing to the largest remaining area of ancient woodland in lowland Britain.
- Winding ornamental drives bordered by majestic pines, rhododendrons and ornamental tree species.
- Small areas of parkland and grass lawn; with few settlements or field systems.
- Isolated country houses, forest lodges and hotels set in forest clearings.
- Two types of communication routes: dead straight main roads (A35 and A337) and winding ornamental drives which show off exotic species.
- Cars, car parks, campsites, people and picnic sites are features of the landscape today.

Component landscape types

The main landscape types found within this LCA, in the New Forest National Park, are:

18. Ancient and Ornamental Woodlands
19. Timber Inclosures/Plantations
20. Heathland
21. Historic Parkland

Key positive landscape attributes

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Large ancient unenclosed oak and beech woodlands with holly understorey. ■ 19th century Inclosures of oak and beech. Riparian woodlands, pine woods birchwoods and holly groves make up the landscape's strong wooded character. ■ Wood pasture, lawns, mires, heathland, and open glades making up the mosaic. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ornamental drives winding through the landscape, showcasing exotic tree species. ■ Prehistoric earthworks and sites. ■ Small areas of parkland with veteran trees. ■ Sparse settlement – restricted to isolated country houses, lodges and hotels in forest clearings. |
|---|---|

Relevant designations relating to positive landscape attributes

Key landscape features	Relevant designations
Large ancient unenclosed oak and beech woodlands with holly understorey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The majority of the LCA is within the New Forest SSSI, SAC, SPA and Ramsar designations.
19th century Inclosures of oak and beech. Riparian woodlands, native pine woods birchwoods and holly groves make up the landscape's strong wooded character.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The majority of the LCA is within the New Forest SSSI, SAC, SPA and Ramsar designations.
Wood pasture, lawns, mires, heathland, and open glades making up the mosaic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The majority of the LCA is within the New Forest SSSI, SAC, SPA and Ramsar designations.
Ornamental drives winding through the landscape, showcasing exotic tree species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N/A
Prehistoric earthworks and sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There are some Scheduled Monuments outside the areas of woodland, including part of Bishop's Dyke.
Designed landscapes and veteran trees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rhinefield House is on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens.
Little settlement which is restricted to isolated country houses, lodges and hotels in forest clearings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The site of the medieval hunting lodge at Queen Bower is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

B. LANDSCAPE EVALUATION

Current condition

Landscape structure: This is a renowned part of the National Park due to the extensive areas of historically important ancient and ornamental woodlands, crossed by winding ornamental drives. The remaining heathland areas have survived through centuries of common grazing following woodland clearance in the Bronze Age. Today, the landscape is dominated by woodland cover, but important links to areas of wood pasture, heathland and open forest glades do remain. This structure is dynamic due to varying grazing pressure, leading to a decrease in the area of wood pasture, glades and open heathland as a result of scrub, secondary woodland and bracken growth. Presence of conifers has introduced hard edges to woodland and also led to a decline in the extent and integrity of other habitats such as wood pasture, wetlands and heathland which are now being restored in some locations through a phased felling programme. The structure has also been broken by the presence of the main road corridors of the A337 and A35, along with visitor facilities such as car parks, camp sites, and signage, eroding local levels of tranquillity and the area's strong rural character.

Landscape elements: The Ancient and Ornamental Woodlands which dominate the western part of this LCA remain strong features associated with this area of the National Park. Wood pasture, open glades and open heathland, important aspects of landscape character, have also suffered from a spread of bracken due in part to varying levels of grazing, affecting their biodiversity value. The condition and integrity of the small areas of historic parkland in the south of the LCA have been affected by the improvement of land for agriculture, including the loss of veteran trees. Planting of conifers has both impacted on the species composition of the woodlands and the presence of other valued habitats, including heathland, wetlands and wood pasture. Action to restore previously lost and fragmented elements of the habitat mosaic is progressing through the clear felling of areas to restore heathland, and the reinstatement of drainage channels to restore wetlands.

Landscape change

Key issues and trends

- Presence and spread of exotic species such as rhododendron within the area's ancient and ornamental woodlands is impacting on the species diversity and nature conservation value of the understorey.
- Ongoing traditional woodland management in the ancient and ornamental woodlands, including holly pollarding to keep this species at bay (also decreasing the biodiversity value of the forest floor by shading out other species). Overgrazing in some locations has led to an even age structure of these woodlands.
- Changing pests and diseases leading to decline or death of certain tree species.
- Recent conifer removal from the Inclosures to restore broad-leaved woodland and heathland habitats to enhance the habitat mosaic and improve overall landscape structure, e.g. Knightwood Inclosure.
- Past drainage of wetlands and channel modifications causing a loss of important wetlands including mires. Restoration is ongoing to reverse this decline.
- Varying levels of grazing pressure on areas of heathland leading to scrub and secondary woodland succession in places and impacting on their open landscape character.
- Conversion of areas of parkland to agricultural land uses, diluting historic landscape character and leading to a loss of veteran trees.
- Continued pressure for recreation and visitor facilities across the landscape with car parks, verge parking, camp sites and visitor traffic impacting on the landscape.
- Busy road corridors of the A337 and A35, eroding local levels of tranquillity.

C. LANDSCAPE QUALITY OBJECTIVES (LQOS) / STRATEGY

Vision

A landscape strongly associated with large tracts of ancient pasture woodland and many ancient and veteran trees set within a mosaic of parkland, heathland, mire, riparian woodlands, birch woods, pine woods and open forest glades. Ornamental drives winding through the landscape afford scenic views of the woodlands. These contain a range of species, such as pollarded holly, of a diverse age range, which are complemented by a rich ground flora distinctive of more acid woodland soils enhanced by sensitive livestock grazing. The Inclosure woodlands contain a mixture of predominantly broadleaved tree species within a pattern of restored open heathland, wetland and wood pasture habitats. The landscape retains its sparsely settled character, with country houses, lodges and hotels hidden within their woodland setting. The area's valued archaeology is preserved and enhanced, including within areas of woodland. This is a landscape that continues to be enjoyed in a sensitive manner, with visitor facilities screened by tree and woodland cover and signage blending into its forest surroundings.

Overall Landscape Strategy

The priority in this landscape character area is to **protect** the positive landscape attributes valued within it. This will require active protection.

This should be accompanied by a strategy to **manage** the landscape to improve those attributes that are in poorer condition to improve overall quality.

Management guidelines number
(as per following table LCA 23)

Future landscape management guidelines

Forestry and woodlands

1. Protect the area's important ancient and ornamental woodlands, including rhododendron and bracken control and selected holly pollarding and continued grazing by commoners' stock to maintain a diverse age structure and species range. Refer to the appropriate Forest Design Plan for further detailed information.
2. To assist regeneration of ancient and ornamental woodlands allowing dead wood to remain.
3. Manage and enhance the Enclosures' ground flora and habitats including heathland, wood pasture and lawns. This includes potentially opening up the Inclosures to commoners' livestock if appropriate and carefully monitored. Refer to the appropriate Forest Design Plan for more detailed information.
4. Manage the Inclosure woodlands for the gradual conversion of conifers to native broadleaves through thinning, natural regeneration and the planting of native species. Refer to the appropriate Forest Design Plan for further detailed information.

Biodiversity

5. Manage and restore further areas of heathland through the gradual thinning and removal of conifer plantations within the Inclosures (refer to the appropriate Forest Design Plan for further detailed information). Manage and enhance the remaining areas of open heath through grazing by commoners' stock in line with the New Forest SAC plan.
6. Manage and restore areas of valued mire, wet heathland and riverine woodland by re-establishing water flows and reinstating natural channel courses, particularly within the Inclosures. Refer to the appropriate Wetland Management Plan for further detailed information.

Historic landscapes and features

7. Protect and sensitively manage archaeological sites and enhance their character and setting where appropriate, including through light grazing and targeted tree removal.
8. Protect and manage areas of historic parkland, including important veteran tree specimens.

Recreation

9. Use the screening benefits of vegetation and topography to manage the setting of recreational facilities in the landscape.

Development and settlement edge

10. Protect the sparse settlement pattern of the area, avoiding new development outside existing forest clearings and ensuring new development is constructed in sympathy with the local vernacular.
11. Protect undeveloped views and levels of tranquillity, including retaining conifer stands, allowing natural regeneration of shrubs and gorse and the planting of broadleaf trees along road verges to minimise the visual/noise impacts of the A337 and A35 corridors.

12. Protect the remote rural character of the landscape, including the removal of excessive signage and utilising materials such as locally-sourced timber to help blend signs into their natural setting.

Summary table LCA 23 showing landscape issues and guidelines by Landscape Type

Landscape type	Summary of issue	Management guidelines (number)
Timber Inclosures / Plantations	Varying levels of grazing leading to a spread of bracken and decline in the area of wood pasture, heathland and open glades.	3
	Presence of conifers in semi-natural landscape.	4
	Potential damage to archeological sites.	7
	Conifer removal and restoration of open forest habitats including heathland.	5
	Past drainage and channel modification leading to a loss of wetlands. Some areas of restored wetland.	6
Ancient and Ornamental Woodlands	Spread of exotics, such as rhododendron, in the woodland understorey.	1
	Varying levels of grazing in some locations, leading to an even-age structure of the ancient and ornamental woodlands.	2
	Lack of traditional woodland management techniques, including pollarding and coppicing.	1
Heathland	Varying levels of grazing leading to a spread of bracken and secondary woodland on heathland.	5
Parkland	Conversion of historic parkland to intensive agriculture,	8
ALL – LANDSCAPE-WIDE ISSUES	Visitor and recreation pressure – including the location of car parks, camp, sites and prominent signage.	9,12
	Development pressure (National Park-wide issue).	10
	Intrusion of the A35 and A337 road corridors.	11

PHOTOGRAPHS OF LCA 23: NEW FOREST CENTRAL WOODLANDS

Pony grazing an area of clearfell,
Knightwood Inclosure



Bracken-dominated woodland glade,
Church Moor

