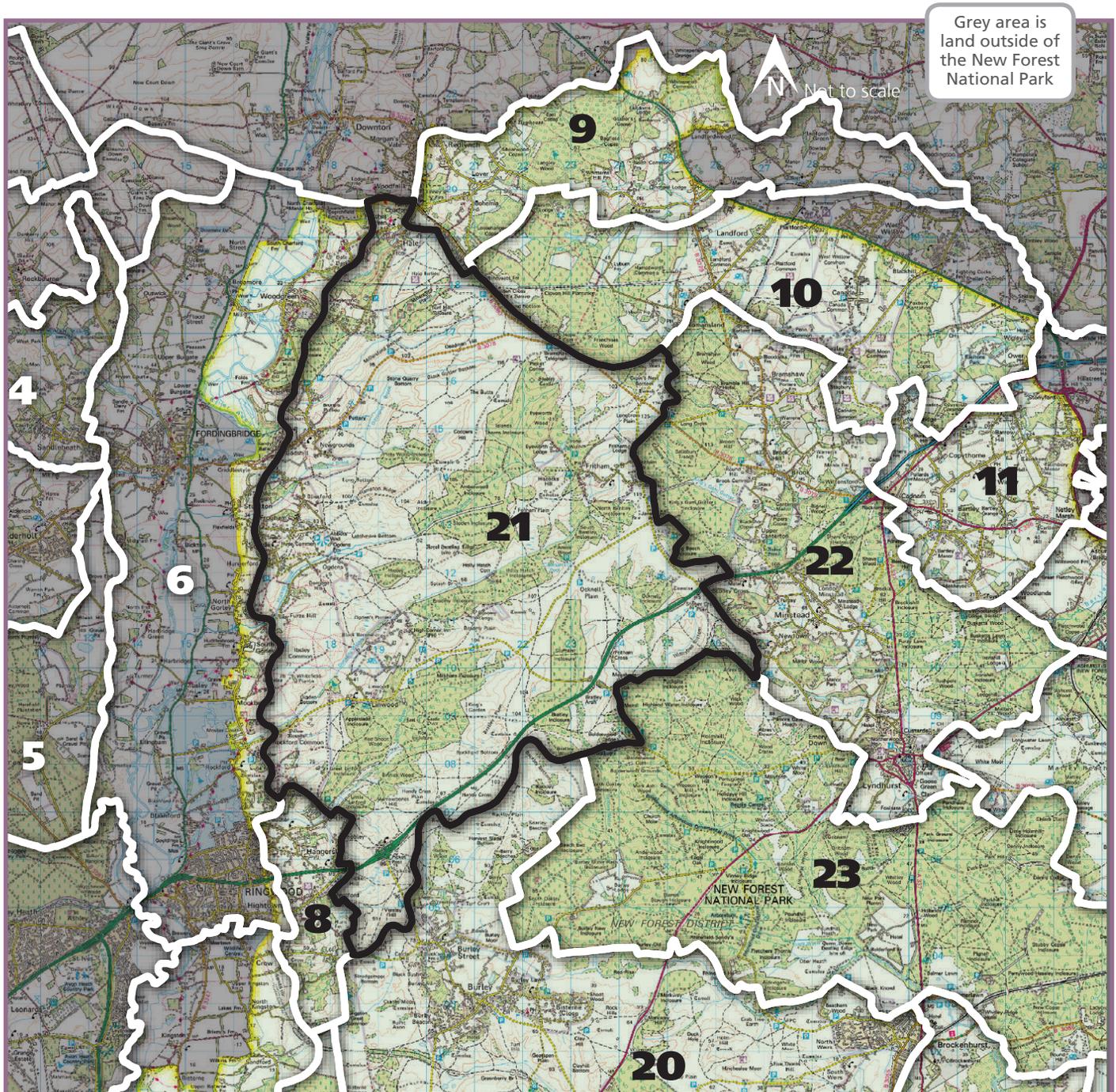




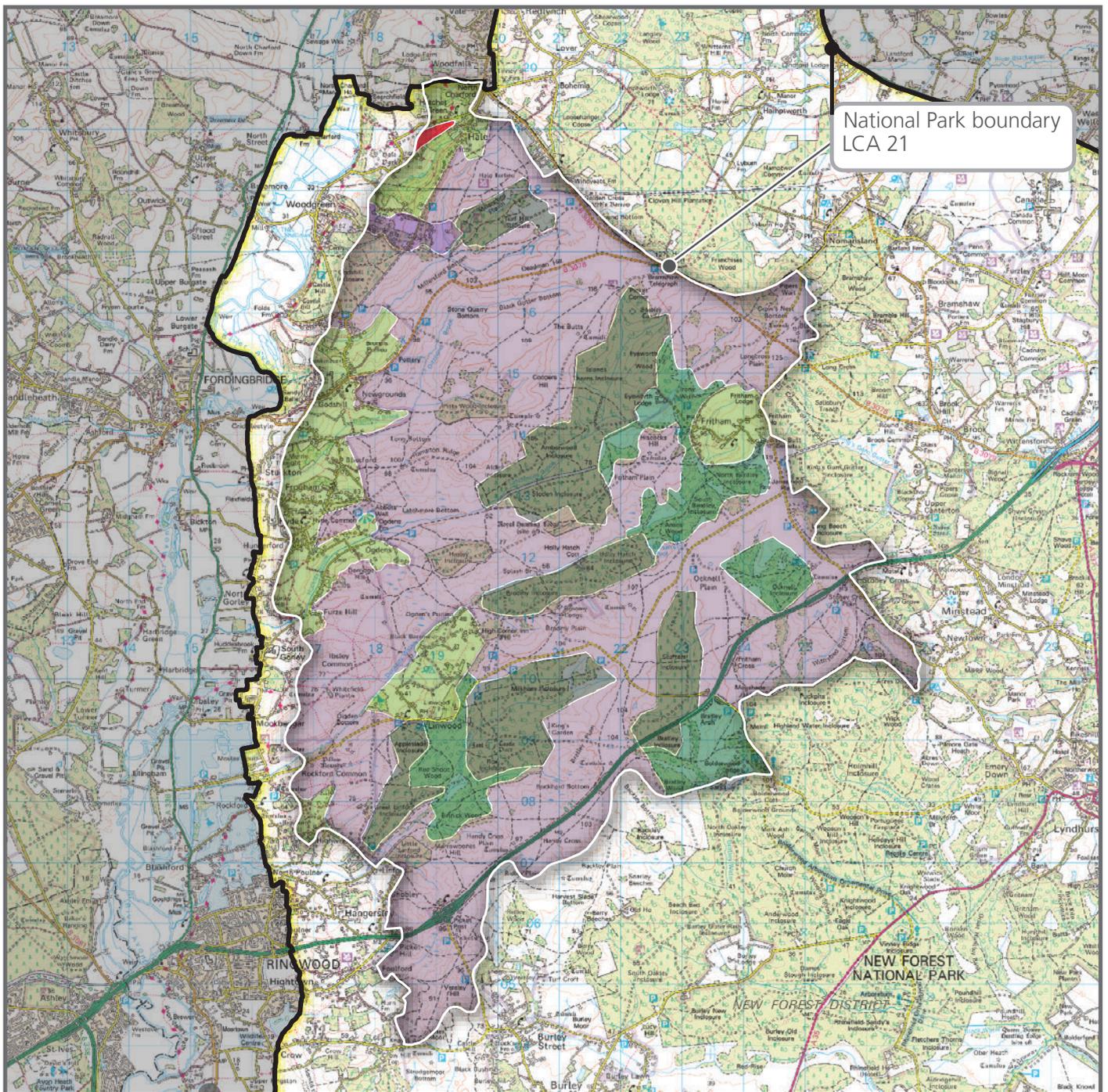
Mire restoration work at Ocknell Plain

LCA 21: NORTHERN HEATHLAND AND FOREST

Location of LCA in the National Park



Component landscape types within LCA 21



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Not to scale

Area in shadow- outside National Park

- 6. Heath Associated Smallholdings and Dwellings
- 7. Ancient Forest Farmlands
- 18. Ancient and Ornamental Woodlands
- 19. Timber Inclosures/Plantations
- 20. Heathland
- 21. Historic Parkland

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

A. LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

Key landscape characteristics

- Flat topped plateaux divided by four parallel steep sided U-shaped valleys containing Ditchend Brook, Latchmore Brook, Dockens Water and Linford Brook creating a ridge and valley landform.
- Dominated by large expanses of open unenclosed heathland on acidic soils with enclosures, unenclosed ancient and ornamental woodlands and Forest lawns forming the other parts of the mosaic.
- Conifer plantations create dark lines in the landscape.
- New Forest ponies and cattle freely roam across heath and open Forest roads which follow straight routes, often along ridge tops.
- Undulating wooded edge on the west of the area where brooks of the north-western drainage basin have eroded sheltered valleys.
- Enclosed Forest settlements of Fritham and Linwood.
- Wild and exposed landscape with a 'remote' feel – long views to the horizon and expansive skies.

Component landscape types

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

6. Heath Associated Smallholdings and Dwellings
7. Ancient Forest Farmlands
18. Ancient and Ornamental Woodlands
19. Timber Inclosures/Plantations
20. Heathland

Key positive landscape attributes

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extensive tracts of lowland heath, punctuated by clumps of Scots Pine, which are valued landscape features and small Ancient and Ornamental Woodlands. ■ Valley bogs, mires and broadleaved Inclosures within shallow valleys. ■ Closely cropped New Forest Lawns and ancient wood pasture grazed by ponies and cattle. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numerous Bronze Age burial mounds and other prehistoric earthworks. ■ Historic forest villages with village greens and verges with strong commoning traditions. ■ Strong local vernacular of red brick cottages and farmsteads surrounded by small enclosed fields. ■ Long-range views across the open heaths and beyond. |
|---|--|

Relevant designations relating to positive landscape attributes

Key landscape features	Relevant designations
Extensive tracts of lowland heath, punctuated by clumps of Scots Pine, which are valued landscape features and small Ancient and Ornamental Woodlands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The majority of the LCA is within the New Forest SSSI, SAC, SPA and Ramsar.
Valley bogs, mires and broadleaved Inclosures within shallow valleys.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The majority of the LCA is within the New Forest SSSI, SAC, SPA and Ramsar. ■ Some of the area's woodlands are SINCs.
Closely cropped New Forest Lawns and ancient wood pasture grazed by ponies and cattle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The majority of the LCA is within the New Forest SSSI, SAC, SPA and Ramsar.
Numerous Bronze Age burial mounds and other prehistoric earthworks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Many prehistoric sites are designated as Scheduled Monuments.
Historic forest villages with village greens and verges with strong commoning traditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fritham is defined as a Conservation Area. ■ The western part of the LCA is within the Western Escarpment Conservation Area.
Strong local vernacular of red brick cottages and farmsteads surrounded by small enclosed fields.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fritham and Eyeworth are defined as a Conservation Area. ■ The western part of the LCA is within the Western Escarpment Conservation Area. ■ There is a significant number of Listed Buildings within the LCA.
Long-range views across the open heaths and beyond.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is a viewpoint at Hyde Common.
Designed landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hale Park is listed on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens.

B. LANDSCAPE EVALUATION

Current condition

Landscape structure: This is a classic New Forest landscape containing a rich mosaic of New Forest lawns, heathland, commons, ancient woodlands and plantations backed by historic settlements with strong commoning communities. The main issues that have impacted on the structure of this landscape include: those relating to development – e.g. the A31 dual carriageway dissects the southern part of the area (within the Heathland landscape type) with significant local landscape impacts and afforestation – prominent conifer plantations within the Timber Inclosures/Plantations type stand out as dark shapes within the open heath. A presence of conifer species is also altering the form and composition of the area's historic Inclosures. Historic variations in habitat management and grazing have led to a spread of scrub and bracken onto the open heaths, altering their integrity and landscape value. Past drainage operations have resulted in the drying out of wetlands as important components of the ancient habitat mosaic.

Landscape elements: This landscape contains all of the elements characteristically associated with the traditional Forest landscape. Together these elements maintain the area's distinct sense of place, although some have declined in condition due to a number of factors. The open heathland, so characteristic of this part of the National Park, has been impacted upon by varying levels of grazing and consequential scrub encroachment. Visitor pressure has also led to localised erosion of heath, further affecting its condition. Mires and associated wetlands have been affected by drainage operations over past decades, leading to a loss and decline in these valued habitats. Restoration is ongoing to reverse this decline. The mixed plantations within the Timber Inclosures/Plantations type are often dominated by conifer species at the expense of native beech and oak, and the ancient and ornamental woodlands have suffered from a spread of exotics, decreasing their importance for nature conservation. The area's traditional settlements within the Ancient Forest Farmlands and Heath Associated Smallholdings and Dwellings retain their historic building styles and landscape settings, although this has been diluted in parts by unsympathetic boundary treatments and modern development. Traditional grazing land surrounding the area's villages has suffered from a lack of active management, with undergrazed fields often surrounded by gappy, overgrown hedges disrupting valued wildlife networks and diluting ancient field patterns.

Landscape change

Key issues and trends

- Further loss or fragmentation of hedgerows is altering the structure the landscape by affecting the small scale field pattern sense of enclosure. Loss of hedgerow oaks, as key features associated with the Forest, is also an issue (in the Ancient Forest Farmlands landscape type).
- Succession of conifer and birch within the Inclosures with a decline in the area and age range of native species, particularly oak (in the Timber Inclosures/Plantations landscape type).
- Overgrazing of verges and hedges and varying levels of grazing on some common areas leading to bracken and scrub encroachment.
- Scrub, bracken and secondary woodland encroachment can be an issue on the heathland commons due to varying levels of grazing and other interventions (in the Heathland, Heath Associated Estates, Timber Inclosures/Plantations and Ancient Forest Farmlands landscape types).

- Past planting of conifer plantations within the heathland, with dark, dominant features on the area's open heathland character (in the Heathland and Heath Associated Estates landscape types).
- Levels of control of exotic and invasive species, including bracken and rhododendron.
- Drainage and channel modifications leading to a drying out of valued wetland habitats – particularly mire, wet heath and riverine woodland. Restoration is ongoing to positively reverse this trend (particularly in the Heathland and Timber Inclosures /Plantations landscape types).
- Changing pests and diseases leading to decline or death of certain tree species.
- Recreational pressures leading to localised erosion of heathland and lawns, along with the presence of visitor facilities (e.g. picnic areas, car parks, camp sites) impacting on the area's strong sense of remoteness (particularly in the Heathland landscape type).
- Telecommunications masts and pylons standing out prominently in the open heathland landscape. The A31 dual carriageway has a significant impact on local landscape character and levels of tranquillity (in the Heathland landscape type).
- Lack of hedgerow management on the enclosed land around settlements, with gaps and overgrown sections diluting landscape structure and their historic / biodiversity value (in the Ancient Forest Farmlands and Heath Associated Smallholdings and Dwellings landscape types).
- Modern development in some village locations out of keeping with local vernacular styles, materials, scales and traditional landscape settings (in the Ancient Forest Farmlands and Heath Associated Smallholdings and Dwellings landscape types).
- Inappropriate use of close boarded fencing around dwellings instead of traditional boundary treatments such as metal estate fencing and railings, hedgerows, picket fences, low timber posts and brick walls (in the Ancient Forest Farmlands and Heath Associated Smallholdings and Dwellings landscape types).

C. LANDSCAPE QUALITY OBJECTIVES (LQOS) / STRATEGY

Vision

An open forest landscape containing extensive tracts of lowland heath, freely grazed by commoners' ponies and cattle, with visible evidence of prehistoric activity in the form of burial mounds and other earthworks. The open landscape is complemented by a mosaic of small ancient and ornamental woodlands, historic Inclosure woodlands, clumps of Scots Pine, which are valued landscape features, valley bogs and mires and well-managed wood pasture and lawn. It affords long views across the landscape and beyond. The Inclosures are predominantly composed of native broadleaves with some returned to pasture woodland, while Ancient and Ornamental Woodlands have an uneven age structure with many ancient and veteran trees. All areas of woodland have a diverse structure and age range of trees with some wood pasture. Recreational users continue to enjoy the landscape whilst minimising their impacts on its special habitats and species. The area has high levels of tranquillity with a lack of high intensity recreation use. Historic red brick forest villages have a thriving commoning community, with cottages and farmsteads fringed by small fields used for grazing enclosed by a well managed and intact hedgerow network.

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 21)

Future landscape management guidelines

Agricultural land use and field patterns / boundary features

1. Protect traditional commoners' smallholdings and the stock of grazing land around villages. Protect and strengthen the landscape's small-scale fields, bounded by well managed hedgerows to reflect the historic origins of the landscape (in the Ancient Forest Farmlands and Heath Associated Smallholdings and Dwellings landscape types). Reduce grazing pressure on some verges and hedges. Balance grazing pressure on some common areas to avoid bracken and scrub encroachment.

Biodiversity

2. Protect and reinstate areas of heathland through grazing and restoration work, including the gradual conversion of further conifer plantations within the Inclosures to create more open habitats and the removal of invasive species in line with the New Forest SAC plan. Refer to the appropriate Forest Design Plan for more detailed information (in the Heathland, Heath Associated Estates and Timber Inclosures/Plantations types).
3. Protect long views across the open plains and beyond, including maintaining grazing levels and open forest management to keep high level vegetation at bay (in the Heathland landscape type).
4. Manage and restore areas of ancient wood pasture and New Forest Lawn through grazing by commoners' livestock and control of scrub/ invasive species in line with relevant HLS agreements (particularly in the Ancient Forest Farmlands landscape type).
5. Protect and restore areas of mire, wet heathland and riverine woodland by re-establishing water flows and reinstating natural channel courses (in the Timber Inclosures / Plantations and Heathland landscape types).

Forestry and woodlands

6. Protect and manage the area's ancient and ornamental woodlands including controlling rhododendron and bracken. Allow natural regeneration to encourage a diverse age and species range within the woodlands (in the Ancient and Ornamental Woodlands landscape type).
7. Manage the Inclosure woodlands to achieve a gradual conversion of conifers to mixed woodland (with a higher proportion of native broadleaves) through thinning and natural regeneration. Refer to the appropriate Forest Design Plan for more detailed information. (In the Timber Inclosures/Plantations landscape type).
8. Manage and enhance the Inclosures' ground flora and habitats including heathland, wood pasture and lawns, including potentially opening them up to commoners' livestock if appropriate and carefully monitored. Refer to the appropriate Forest Design Plan for more detailed information (in the Timber Inclosures/Plantations landscape type).
9. Protect and retain clumps of Scots Pine where they are valued as landscape features within the open plains.

Recreation

10. Use the screening benefits of vegetation and topography to manage the setting of recreational facilities in the landscape (in the Heathland landscape type).

Development and settlement edge

11. Protect undeveloped views/skylines, including the use of strategic tree planting, or allowing vegetation succession, to screen the landscape impacts of the A31 road corridor, pylons and telecommunications masts (in the Heathland landscape type).
12. Protect and enhance the rural character of the landscape's historic forest villages, with property boundaries of metal estate fencing and railings, hedgerows, picket fences, low timber posts and brick walls rather than suburban close board fencing (in the Ancient Forest Farmlands and Heath Associated Smallholdings and Dwellings landscape types).
13. Refer to the Fritham, Eyeworth and Western Escarpment Conservation Area Appraisals for details on historic landscape setting, layout and plan form of the historic settlements, and architectural styles, materials and detailing of buildings within these settlements (in the Ancient Forest Farmlands and Heath Associated Smallholdings and Dwellings landscape types).

Summary table LCA 21 showing landscape issues and guidelines by Landscape Type

Landscape type	Summary of issue	Management guidelines (number)
Heathland	Varying levels of grazing levels on heath – scrub, bracken and secondary woodland encroachment.	2,3
	Past planting of heath with conifer plantations.	2
	Past drainage operations leading to a loss of wetland habitats.	5
	Recreational pressure and siting of facilities in open landscape.	10
	Pylons, telecommunications masts and presence of A31 road corridor.	11
Timber Inclosures / Plantations	Succession of birch and conifer; loss of native species such as oak.	7,8
	Past drainage operations leading to a loss of wetland habitats.	5
Ancient Forest Farmlands	Varying levels of grazing on New Forest Lawns.	4
	Lack of hedgerow management.	1
	Modern development out of keeping with local vernacular styles.	13
	Use of unsympathetic close-board fencing around properties.	12
Heath Associated Smallholdings and Dwellings	Past planting of heath with conifer plantations.	2
	Lack of hedgerow management.	1
	Modern development out of keeping with local vernacular styles.	13
Ancient and Ornamental Woodlands	Spread of exotic and invasive species, including rhododendron and bracken.	6
ALL – LANDSCAPE-WIDE ISSUES	No issues identified applicable to the whole LCA.	N/A

PHOTOGRAPHS OF LCA 21: NORTHERN HEATHLAND AND FOREST

Mire restoration work at Ocknell Plain



Pasture fields around Fritham

