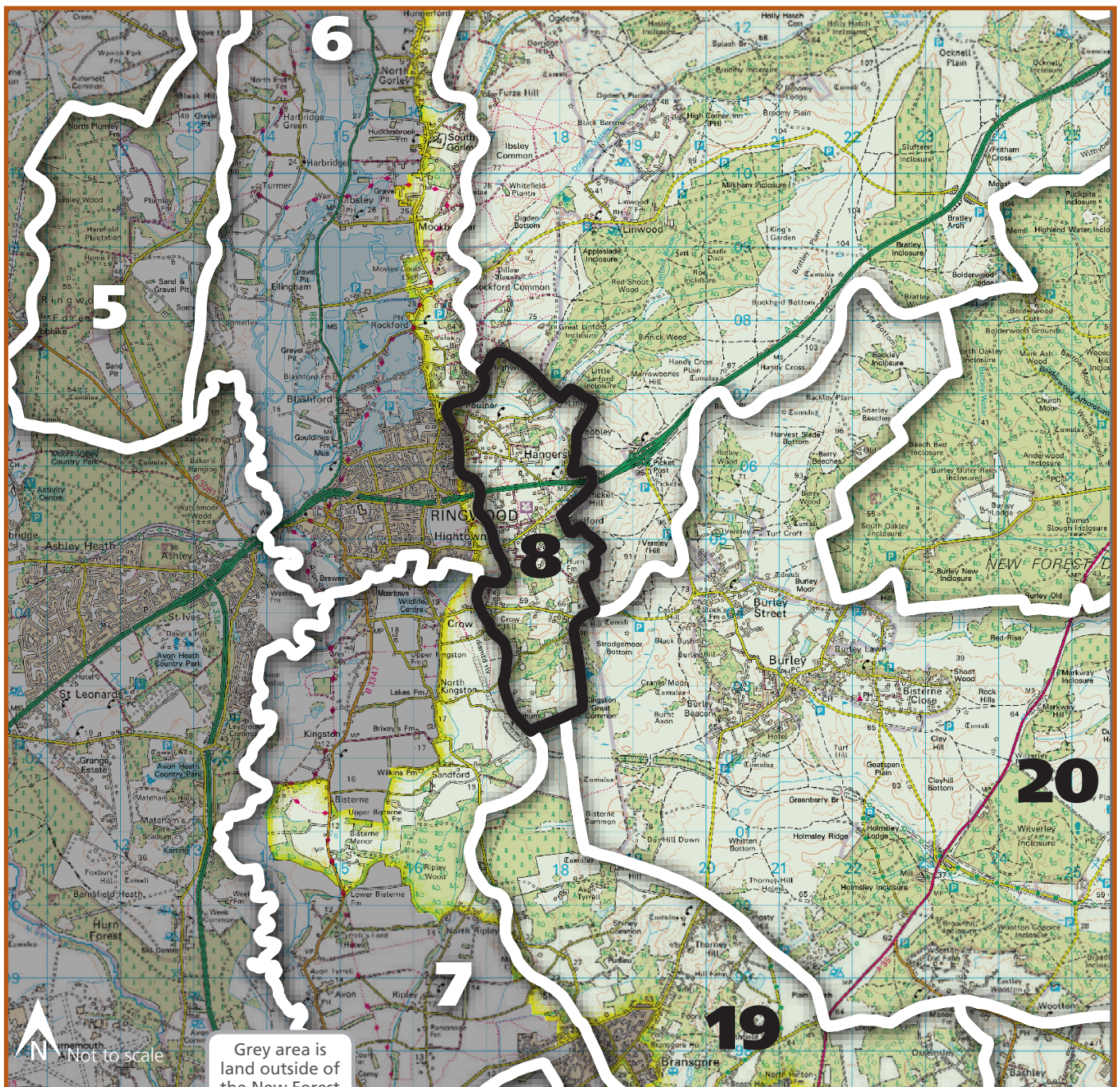




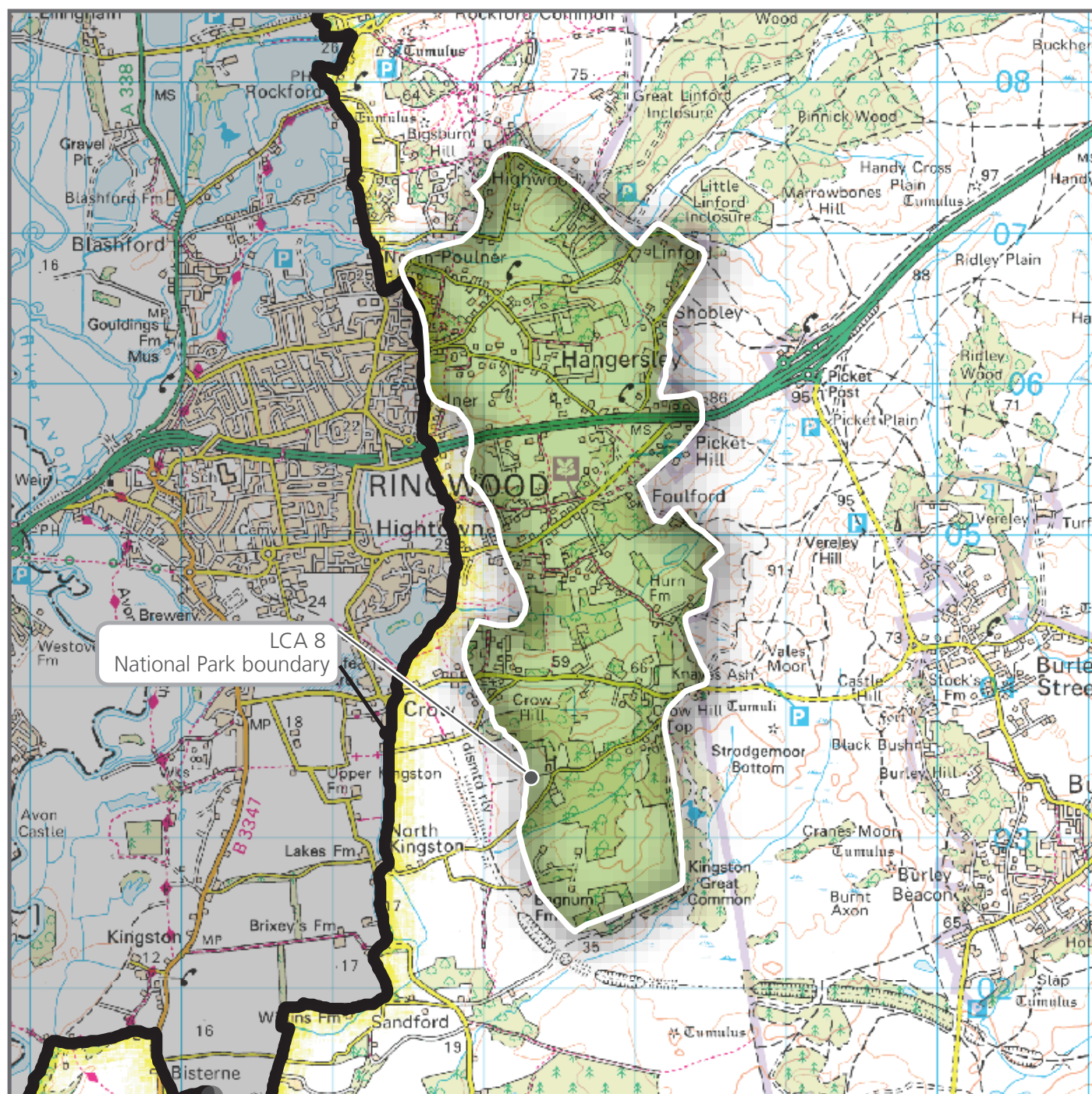
Hightown Common

LCA 8: POULNER WOODS AND PASTURES

Location of LCA in the National Park



Component landscape types within LCA 8



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Not to scale

Area in shadow- outside National Park

- 7. Ancient Forest Farmlands

A. LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

Key landscape characteristics

- Forest smallholdings and dwellings in irregular historic field pattern of small pastures surrounded by hedgerows reinforced by tin sheeting or post and wire fencing.
- Ancient semi-natural woodlands and roadside oaks give a feeling of being 'in the forest'.
- Leafy lanes wind up the valley side; the modern A31 (T) dual carriageway cuts through the ancient landscape, dividing the area into two.
- Wide variety of housing styles; ornamental gardens have an influence on surrounding landscape character.
- The high density of private dwellings means there is little public access or recreational opportunities.
- Views over Ringwood and the Avon Valley.

Component landscape types

The main landscape type found within this LCA, in the New Forest National Park, is:

7. Ancient Forest Farmlands

Key positive landscape attributes

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Small scale regular pasture fields and meadows bounded by hedgerows and mature oaks. ■ Piecemeal enclosures of former commons creating small, irregular fields contrasting with the later regular enclosures. ■ Farmland interspersed by large blocks and copses of ancient semi-natural woodlands and some coniferous plantation, providing a link to the nearby Forest. ■ Valued area of common land at Hightown. ■ Network of winding leafy lanes with roadside oaks and wide verges linking small areas of wayside common. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scattered properties along roads, in woodland clearings and located at funnels into the Forest. ■ Timber frame, cob, brick, thatch, slate and tile local vernacular reflecting the cultural history of the area. ■ Long views west to the Avon Valley and east to the Forest. Generally, views are restricted by dense hedgerow and tree cover giving the feeling of being 'in the forest'. |
|--|---|

Relevant designations relating to positive landscape attributes

Key landscape features	Relevant designations
Small scale regular pasture fields and meadows bounded by hedgerows and mature oaks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some meadows around Poulner are designated as SINCS.
Piecemeal enclosures of former commons creating small, irregular fields contrasting with the later regular enclosures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N/A
Farmland interspersed by large blocks and copses of ancient semi-natural woodlands and some coniferous plantation, providing a link to the nearby Forest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Small areas along the eastern boundary lie within the New Forest SAC and SSSI. ■ Many of the copses are SINCS.
Valued area of common land at Hightown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hightown Common is owned and managed by the National Trust.
Network of winding leafy lanes with roadside oaks and wide verges linking small areas of wayside common.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The northern part of the LCA (Hangersley, Highwood) falls within the Western Escarpment Conservation Area.
Scattered properties along roads, in woodland clearings and located at funnels into the forest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The northern part of the LCA (Hangersley, Highwood) falls within the Western Escarpment Conservation Area.
Timber frame, cob, brick, thatch, slate and tile local vernacular reflecting the cultural history of the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The northern part of the LCA (Hangersley, Highwood) falls within the Western Escarpment Conservation Area.
Long views west to the Avon Valley and east to the Forest. Generally, views are restricted by dense hedgerow and tree cover giving the feeling of being 'in the forest'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N/A

B. LANDSCAPE EVALUATION

Current condition

Landscape structure: The landscape structure is largely intact, with a strong pattern of fields and thick hedgerows linking to large blocks and copses of semi-natural woodland. This structure is, however, diluted in places by the loss of hedgerows and individual oaks– removing the intimate relationship between farmland and woodland that characterises this landscape. The field pattern has been subdivided to some extent by change in land use. The presence of coniferous planting sometimes detracts from the ancient woodlands that are typical of this traditional landscape. The valuable remaining piece of common land at Hightown is suffering from secondary woodland encroachment impacting on its open character, due to a lack of appropriate grazing. The A31 trunk road is a strong, physical and noise intrusion into the landscape, which effectively cuts it in two. Although a relatively well developed landscape, residential properties and lanes are generally well integrated into their woodland setting, retaining their scattered form.

Landscape elements: This is a landscape defined by its high woodland and tree cover – elements which have been affected by fragmentation and neglect in some locations. Gappy sections of hedgerow are stock-proofed with the addition of sections of post-and-wire fencing, whilst elsewhere whole sections have been removed to create larger fields. Some of the landscape’s ancient woodlands have declined in condition through the planting of conifers and a lack of traditional management. However, the presence of numerous ancient oak and beech specimens within this landscape provide a strong reminder of its New Forest character and give the landscape a strong sense of enclosure and separation from the nearby urban centre of Ringwood. Hightown Common, an important unenclosed common within this landscape, is declining in condition due to a spread of bracken and secondary woodland at the expense of its original heathland habitats. Although this landscape is in close proximity to an urban centre, the continued presence of valued landscape elements ensures that it retains its identity as an important Forest-edge landscape.

Landscape change

Key issues and trends

- Hedgerow fragmentation and the use of fencing at odds with the ancient character of this landscape.
- Removal of individual boundary trees as key landscape features.
- Alteration of field pattern by changes in land use. Planting of conifers within the area’s semi-natural woodlands, decreasing their nature conservation interest and ancient character.
- Changing pests and diseases leading to decline or death of certain tree species.
- Bracken and secondary woodland encroachment onto Hightown Common impacting on traditional open character as a result of declining grazing levels.
- Suburban buildings and ornamental garden plantings out of keeping with local vernacular styles and local landscape setting.
- Some inappropriate modern development, including infill development along roadsides and large, individual properties sited within woodland copses. This has eroded the small-scale, traditional settlement pattern of the area.
- Significant visual and noise intrusion of the A31 dual carriageway has a major impact on local levels of tranquillity.

C. LANDSCAPE QUALITY OBJECTIVES (LQOS) / STRATEGY

Vision

A well managed, traditional forest-edge landscape with an intimate mosaic of small pasture fields and semi-natural woodlands connected by thick, well managed hedgerows and mature oak specimens. The landscape retains its historic sense of place, with scattered traditional buildings and settlements well connected by quiet rural lanes and integrated into their woodland setting. The area of common land at Hightown is managed by grazing, maintaining its open character and cultural associations with the nearby New Forest core. Visual links to the Avon Valley and Open Forest are retained, and the impacts of the nearby urban fringe and A31 road corridor are minimised through the landscape's strongly wooded character.

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 8)

Future landscape management guidelines

Field patterns and boundary features

1. Manage and strengthen the hedgerow network and protect/replace hedgerow oaks to conserve these important landscape features and maintain the historic field patterns.

Biodiversity

2. Manage and maintain grazing on meadows and the common land at Hightown to enhance biodiversity interest and prevent scrub/tree encroachment in line with the New Forest SAC plan and relevant HLS agreements.

Forestry and woodlands

3. Manage the landscape's semi-natural woodlands and copses including a gradual replacement of conifers with broadleaf species.
4. Protect native woodlands from a spread of exotic species. Reinforce traditional landscape character through the selection of native plants and trees in private gardens.

Development and settlement edge

5. Protect the scattered settlement pattern of the area by integrating new development into its landscape setting through association with woodland and hedgerow planting and, where possible, locating new buildings within existing settlement curtilages.
6. Refer to the Western Escarpment Conservation Area Appraisal 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.

Transport pattern

7. Protect the network of rural roads by maintaining their character including keeping signage and street lighting to a minimum.
8. Protect the landscape's levels of tranquillity by filtering views of the A31 road corridor with woodland planting/allowing vegetation succession.

Summary table LCA 8 showing landscape issues and guidelines by Landscape Type

Landscape type	Summary of issue	Management guidelines (number)
Ancient Forest Farmlands	Hedgerow fragmentation and gaps filled with post-and wire fencing.	1
	Loss of field boundary trees.	1
	Shrub/tree encroachment on meadows and common land.	2
	Planting of conifers within semi-natural woodlands.	4
	Spread of bracken and secondary woodland on common land.	3
	Modern non-vernacular development and ornamental garden plantings.	5,6,7
	Infill development along roadsides.	7,8
	Noise and visual intrusion of the A31 dual carriageway.	8
ALL – LANDSCAPE-WIDE ISSUES	Development pressure (National Park-wide issue)	6, 8

PHOTOGRAPHS OF LCA 8: POULNER WOOD AND PASTURES

Hightown Common



Pony grazing near Highwood

