

Proposed Chipstead extension



View southwest across Chipstead Bottom towards Banstead Wood

Context

This area comprises the chalk valleys of Hogden Bottom and Chipstead Bottom including the undulating tributary valleys around Mugswell, Shabden Estate and Banstead Wood. This area extends northwards from the existing AONB towards the urban fringes of Kingswood and Chipstead.

Extent to which the natural beauty criterion is met

The extension includes:

- Distinctive steep sided, sinuous chalk valley landscapes of Hogden and Chipstead Bottoms.
- Extensive areas of ancient semi-natural woodland and open downland including Banstead Wood, Fames Rough, Chipstead Bottom and Shabden Park.
- Narrow sinuous rural lanes connecting rural cottages and estate buildings especially east of Mugswell and High Road/Elmore Road.

Significance

The area forms a series of steep sided chalk valleys and extensive areas of ancient semi-natural woodland and open downland valued for its grass swards and rare orchids, which collectively give rise to scenic landscape compositions. Here elevated open views contrast with the intimate enclosure of the ancient woods, carpeted in bluebells and wild garlic in spring. The scale of the valleys, matrix of open and wooded slopes and integrity of this area, exudes a deeply rural character where the dispersed pattern of historic rural buildings and narrow, tree lined lanes add interest.

Issues affecting the area's special qualities

The following issues are currently experienced in this area and are relevant to considering the difference AONB designation may make:

- Loss of hedgerows and woodland through the expansion of golf courses which intrude on to steep valley slopes.
- Ad hoc development along rural lanes which is visually intrusive in the wider landscape and has an urbanising effect on the character of rural lanes.
- Recreation pressure on areas of open downland including the impact of dogs on sheep grazing and ground nesting birds.

- Loss of chalk grassland to scrub invasion or over grazing through equestrian use.
- Fly tipping along rural lanes.
- Loss of woodlands which forms wooded skylines and prevents visual intrusion of areas of adjacent development.

The special qualities associated with this area could all benefit from the broader integrated management and protection that AONB designation would bring. This integrated management and the planning status of AONB designation could also address many of the issues noted above.

Other relevant factors

During the assessment process concerns were raised regarding the transitional landscape to the south and west where it abuts Lower Kingswood and the A217 and M25 junction. Here the combination of gentler topography, built development along lanes, urban fringe land uses such as pony paddocks, fly tipping and noise intrusion from the road corridors, results in a decline in natural beauty. The proposed boundary has therefore been drawn within this transition including areas of land where topographic variation is more pronounced and combined with rural lanes, vernacular buildings and patchwork of pasture fields and woodland, gives rise to higher levels of natural beauty. Consideration was given to drawing the boundary back as far as Rectory Road where the landform is clearly dropping into Hogden Bottom and where the network of narrow lanes and vernacular buildings is most concentrated.

However, this would have resulted in the exclusion of significant blocks of ancient woodland to the south (Grub Wood, Gatwick Wood and Colts Bushes). The boundary was therefore extended further south to include these features of interest on the edge which contribute to the natural beauty of the area, whilst still ensuring the boundary falls within the area of transition. A further area of transition occurs between High Road and Hogcross Lane. Consideration was given to defining the boundary along High

Road, but this would have resulted in the exclusion of a number of important listed buildings which form part of the Elmore Road and High Road Conservation Areas and which contribute to natural beauty of the area. On balance the boundary was drawn further to the east in order to include historic buildings of interest and a small valley between High Road, Elmore Road and Hogcross Lane.



Grub Wood

At Chipstead Bottom particular scrutiny was given to the relatively recent suburban housing which has occurred along Outwood Lane south of the railway, noted in the natural beauty assessment as not contributing to natural beauty. A boundary excluding this development would have resulted in a narrow corridor of excluded land and a convoluted boundary. The housing is relatively limited in extent, lies on lower land within the valley and is dominated by surrounding rolling landform. It was concluded that the housing sits within a sweep of qualifying land and has only a localised impact. A boundary was therefore drawn to the west, thereby including the housing within the proposed extension.

The proposed boundary

The boundary follows lanes, tracks, hedgerows and the edges of woodland for much of its length through this area. It does not follow any feature on the ground in two locations - on the margins of the Kingswood Golf and Country Club and northeast of Surrey Downs Golf Club. In these locations the boundary cuts across the break in slope in a straight line between areas of woodland.