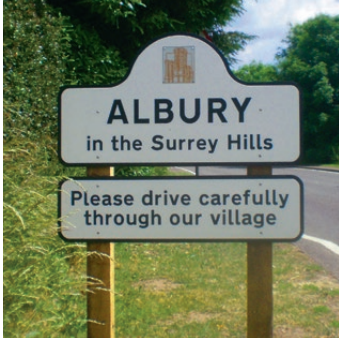


ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN GUIDANCE



Guidance on conserving and enhancing
country lanes and villages in the Surrey Hills



Typical sunken lane within the Surrey Hills

INTRODUCTION

The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of 38 AONBs in England and Wales, covering 15% of the land area. They are designated by Government for the purpose of ensuring that the special qualities of our finest landscapes are conserved and enhanced.

The appearance of the Surrey Hills has been shaped for centuries by the changing patterns of land use and settlement. The end result is a rich and diverse built heritage featuring many small farmsteads, pleasant hamlets with village greens, and grand houses set in parkland. Local materials like stone, flint, tile, brick and timber are featured throughout the Surrey Hills, defining the sense of place.

An essential constituent of the Surrey Hills AONB is the network of winding, narrow, secluded lanes, often with high banks and hedgerows, connecting villages and hamlets. These lanes are often rich in history reflecting centuries of human use and still retain much of their traditional charm.

This document sets out guidance for conserving and enhancing country lanes and villages in the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to help Surrey County Council, local planning authorities, transport planners, contractors, developers, parish council's and other parties. It sets out some principles and best practice that should be considered in managing country lanes and the design of development within the Surrey Hills.

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The Hindhead Tunnel helps protect the environment above from traffic impact

1 PRINCIPAL ROADS THROUGH THE SURREY HILLS

As Surrey has a higher level of car ownership than any other county, the impact of traffic on the Surrey Hills is perhaps greater than on any other AONB or National Park. This is largely due to its close proximity to London and other urban areas, and high car ownership rates resulting in high volumes of traffic passing through the area. Encouraging through traffic and HGVs to keep to principal roads will help to protect the quality of the area, particularly the country lanes which are not designed to cope with large volumes of traffic and HGVs.

1.1 Through-signing along principal roads

The principle is to keep through traffic and HGV movements to the principal road network. This should be reflected in the signage strategy. Signage to minor roads should only indicate local access and should avoid encouraging through traffic to larger destinations.



1.2 Reduce the impact of high traffic volumes

Reduce the speed of traffic and introduce traffic management measures through villages. This may include speed limit reductions, where there is justification in line with national and county policy. (Picture shows traffic calming feature on A248 in Albury).



1.3 Promote 'Drive slowly - enjoy'

As journey times are often significantly impacted by congestion at junctions, there should be appropriate awareness and educational messages that reducing speed should not significantly affect overall travel time. In traveling through the Surrey Hills drivers are encouraged to 'drive slowly and enjoy' the surroundings and not attempt to take short cuts through country lanes.





Typical Surrey Hills wooded country lane

2 COUNTRY LANES IN THE SURREY HILLS

Designing and managing country lanes in line with the following principles will create an environment that is more attractive and help to encourage a safer and more considerate approach to driving in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These photographs identify how the principles have been implemented in the Surrey Hills often with local funding and low maintenance measures.

2.1 Choose appropriate materials

Timber bollards, marker posts and other roadside furniture should be used as they are generally more in keeping with the rural scene, do not need painting or become dirty in appearance and are not easily damaged. Plastic roadside furniture (eg verge posts) and reflective metal signs should be kept to a minimum.



2.2 Value the treatment of boundaries

Traditional boundary features such as walls, fences and hedges are important elements of local landscape character and should be retained and repaired where feasible by the landowner. New boundary features should reflect local traditions in the use of materials and construction, especially in conservation areas. For hedges a mix of native species will usually be the best option. Exotic species such as leylandii should be avoided.



2.3 Use the 'natural' geometry of country lanes to influence drivers

Highway improvements should consider reinforcing the existing geometry of country lanes. The use of surface dressing can be helpful in certain situations but colour changes should be achieved through the natural colour of the aggregates used rather than the use of colour additives which can look alien and will quickly fade. Urban materials and solutions, for example concrete kerbing, will look incongruous in rural locations and should be avoided.



2.4 Resist excess road markings

In accord with the traffic signs manual, road markings should be avoided or in some cases removed. Edge lining should be used with care, usually to highlight road space for vulnerable road users or where other solutions to verge erosion are impractical. Rumble strips should have a sensory rather than visual impact.



2.5 Reduce clutter and urbanising influences

The appropriateness of signage should be reviewed regularly with a view to removing unnecessary or redundant signs and amalgamating signs onto fewer posts. Through signing should be avoided along country lanes. Signs directing traffic into and along country lanes should only indicate the next village or hamlet. Local requests for additional signs should be considered carefully based on evidence that additional signs have little or no effect on road safety (See section 5).



2.6 Celebrate local distinctiveness

Where practical, preserve and restore existing distinctive and historical finger posts, village signs and other roadside furniture. Where this is not possible, replace with similar materials and design details. Some highway furniture is listed and afforded statutory protection. Extra care is needed to protect them from damage. The design of new finger posts and village signs should reflect local traditions and materials. (See section 4).



2.7 Highlight local names and features of historic interest

For street names, traditionally black and white signs are generally preferable where local funding is available. Where street names occur adjacent to other timber structures then timber support will be more appropriate, but recycled plastic posts are acceptable for most situations.



2.8 Enhance the biodiversity of verges








Verge management is a complex issue that requires careful planning to ensure that safety and operational considerations are thought through. However, there are opportunities within the AONB to increase the biodiversity of highway verges and to manage verges that already have floristic interest. Changes to the management of verges need to reflect local circumstances and will need to be agreed with the responsible local authority. Within safety guidelines maintain sight lines, particularly at junctions, enhance the biodiversity value of verges with appropriate mowing regimes.

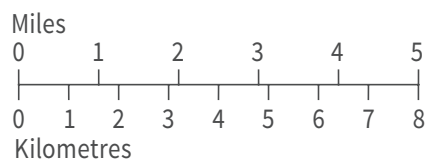


Surrey Hills

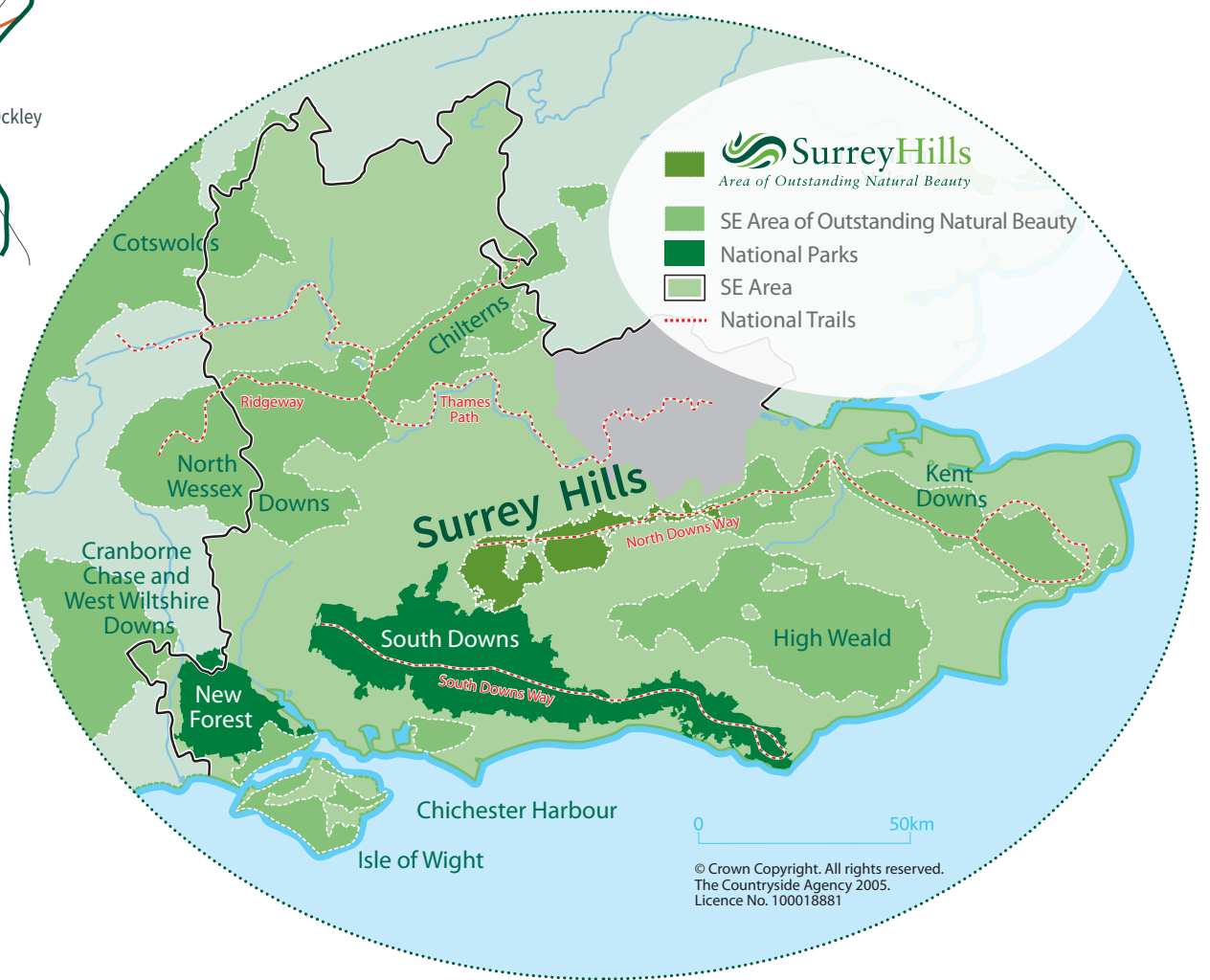
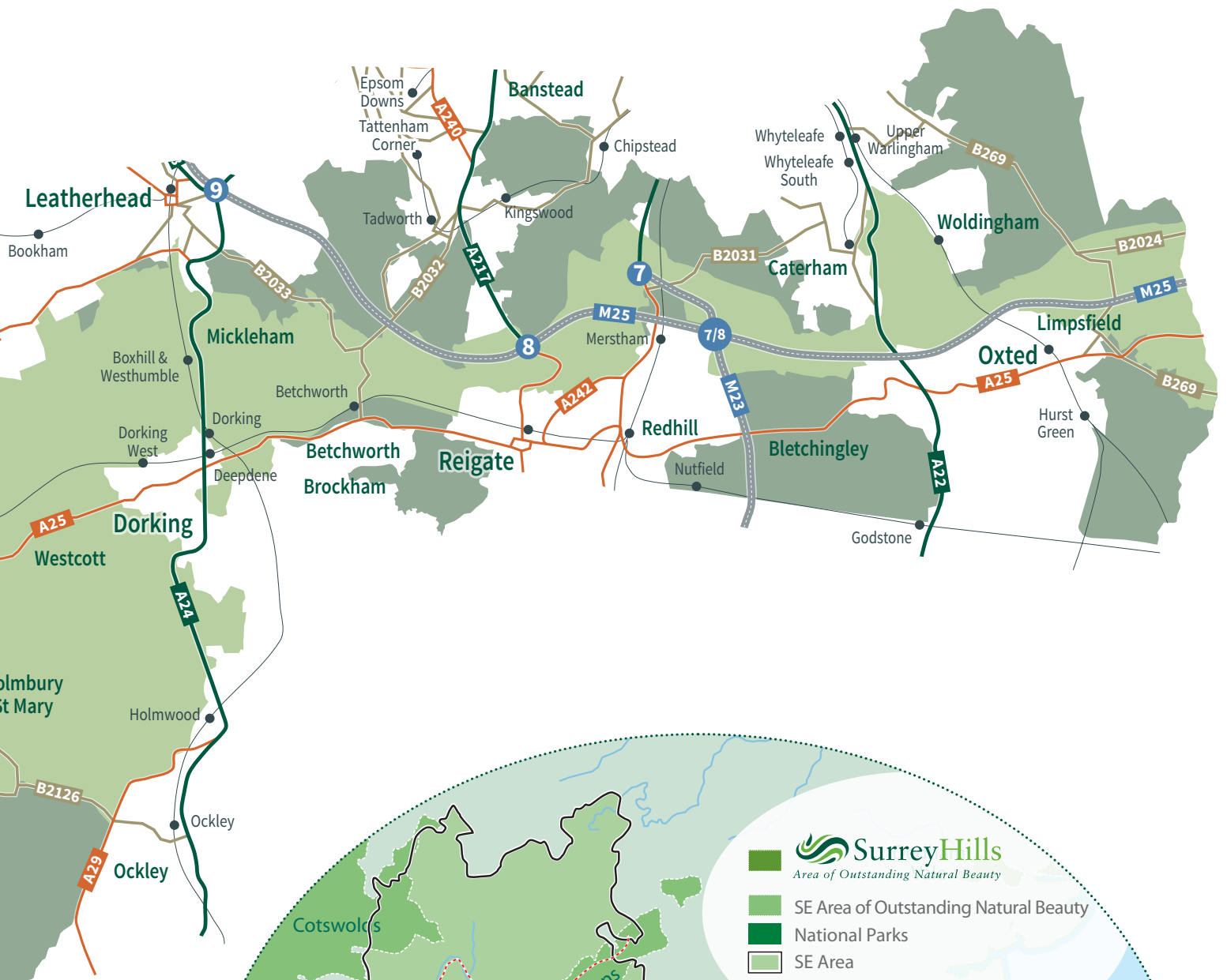
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



-  Motorway
-  Primary Route
-  Other A Road
-  B Road
-  Railway/Station
-  AONB
-  AGLV



Note: This map is designated for approximate location purposes only.





Hambleton Village

3 BUILDING DESIGN IN THE SURREY HILLS

The following principles should be adopted for all forms of development within the Surrey Hills AONB, whether inside or outside settlements, or for large and small developments, including those for which planning permission is not required. These principles should be referred to in the Design and Access Statement accompanying a planning application to demonstrate how the proposal helps to conserve and enhance the beauty of the Surrey Hills landscape.

3.1 Respect the pattern of the settlement, its open spaces and greens

Contain development within the settlement; reflect established (historic) street and plot patterns; maintain variable building lines; respect the contribution of open spaces and village greens to character and form and generally avoid closes and cul-de-sacs.



3.2 Conserve the character of the setting

Avoid development on skylines, prominent spurs and open slopes; make maximum use of existing trees and landscape features to shield development; new buildings adjacent to traditional ones should link through elements such as scale, form, colour and materials to create a coherent larger group.



3.3 Complement the scale, height and proportion of buildings

Aim for harmony with the height and massing of existing development; retain density and relationship between roofscape and tree cover when viewed from outside the settlement.



3.4 Celebrate the detailing of buildings and architectural features

Surrey buildings have a wide range of styles; extensions should respect the host; new buildings should pick up local characteristics – forms of building, existing proportions (windows and doors), roof designs and elevational details.



3.5 Choose appropriate materials and finishes

Surrey buildings use a wide range of materials and finishes which may be locally specific; maintenance, improvement or extensions should respect the host and new buildings should explore the existing local palette of colour and finishes or justify innovative solutions.



3.6 Promote contemporary architecture

High quality contemporary architecture can extend the diversity and character of settlements, and if sensitively designed can be suitable in open countryside.



3.7 Value the treatment of boundaries

Retain the variety in, and characteristics of, boundary treatments – walls, hedges, fencing as appropriate; natural boundaries should use native species not conifers such as cypresses.



3.8 Use native trees and shrubs

The Surrey Hills is a heavily wooded landscape which is a key part of its character. Retain existing trees wherever possible; use native varieties of trees and shrubs in planting schemes.



3.9 Cherish designed landscapes

Parkland makes an important contribution to the area's picturesque scenery and provides a sense of continuity and grand scale. Retain estate and parkland character, boundary walls, gates, fencing, lodges and estate cottages.



3.10 Celebrate local distinctiveness

The diversity in the geology, soils and land use has created a diverse landscape. This is a key feature of the Surrey Hills and local character should be cherished and reinforced.



3.11 Be creative on access and parking

Seek to minimise the impact of vehicular access and parking, including hard surfacing; improve the network of pedestrian and cycle routes; seek opportunities to increase footpath access between settlement and countryside.



4 SIGNAGE

Signage plays a vital part in promoting and reinforcing the rural character of the Surrey Hills area.

4.1 Village Signs

These signs work very effectively to show that a particular village is within the Surrey Hills boundary and help to re-inforce the rural character of a village. An individual village emblem encourages the distinctiveness of each village.



Rushmoor Village Sign

Village gateway signs consist of four components which are constructed in two parts;

- A1** Village Identity/Logo
- A2** Village Name
- A3** in the Surrey Hills message
- B1** please drive carefully message (optional)

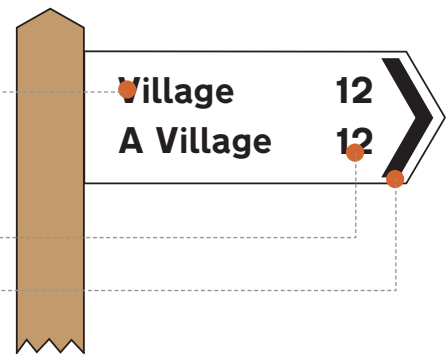


View the Surrey Rural Highways Design Guidelines document at www.surreyhills.org/board/country-lanes-2/ for exact specifications.

4.2 Finger Posts

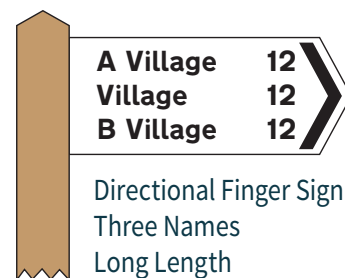
Surrey Hills directional finger posts should contain the following elements;

- 1** Village Name
- 2** Mileage
- 3** Chevron (optional)



Surrey Hills Finger Posts are designed using 6 x 6 inch wooden oak posts which are generally 3.5m long of which 0.8m is in the ground. The white directional sign is constructed from hard wearing lightweight foamex which is 19mm thick. The finger posts come in three lengths, standard, medium and long to accommodate the number of characters in village names.

Example of standard, medium & long length finger posts;



These directional posts are used on country lanes with lower speed limits (not on principal roads).

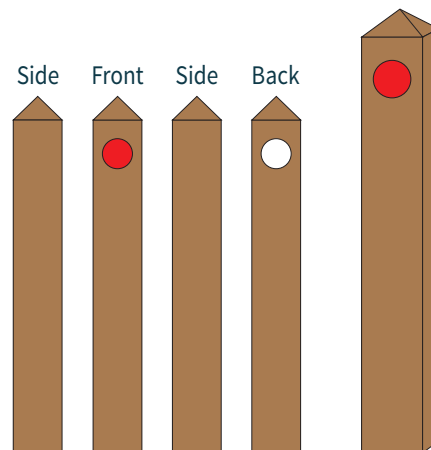
4.3 Verge Posts

Verge Posts are useful for indicating the edges of roads and potential hazards, and contain reflective areas which increase their visibility to motorists both in the day and at night. Surrey Hills verge posts are made from 4 x 4 inch wooden oak posts. These are generally 1.6m long with a reflective circle on the front and back and can be sourced from local sawmills.

Diagram shows that a red reflector should be sited on the front of the post and a white reflector on the back.

For further information on signage in the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty please visit

<https://www.surreyhills.org/board/country-lanes-2/> or email surreyhills@surreycc.gov.uk



5 DE-CLUTTERING THE ENVIRONMENT

De-cluttering is the process of removing unnecessary roadside and village signage clutter in the Surrey Hills.

5.1 Why De-Clutter?

- Trying to promote and reinforce the rural character on country lanes
- Discourage through traffic and HGV movements
- Reduce maintenance and replacement costs of signs

Examples of De-cluttering

Here are some examples of de-cluttering work that has taken place in the Surrey Hills;



Unnecessary signs removed



Removal of unnecessary signs in Burstow



Removal of signage on grass verge



5.2 Get involved with De-Cluttering in the Surrey Hills

Many road signs are not mandatory. They are put in place by the local highway authority and can be removed at its discretion. We want to encourage local people through their parish council to assess their local road signs and recommend any individual signs should be removed or relocated.

Visit <https://www.surreyhills.org/board/de-cluttering/> for guidance on what signs can be removed. Once you have done this you will be required to fill in two simple forms which Surrey County Council Highways will check and make the final decision.



Settlements nestled within the beautiful landscape of the Surrey Hills

The Surrey Hills AONB stretches across a quarter of the county of Surrey and includes the chalk slopes of the North Downs from Farnham in the west to Oxted in the east, and extends south to the deeply wooded Greensand Hills which rise in Haslemere.

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This has been published by the Surrey Hill AONB Board. The Surrey Hills AONB Board is a joint committee that leads on the preparation, monitoring and review of the AONB Management Plan on behalf of its constituent bodies and partner organisations.



www.surreyhillsboard.org