3.1 Croydon Downs

N

Wandsworth

Lambeth

Southwark

Lewisham

Lewisham

Greenwich   Bexley

Merton

Historic England

Bromley

Historic England

Sutton

Croydon

3.1

Historic England

3.1

3.1

Historic England

Tier 3
Archaeological
Priority Area

Scale (at A4): 1:85,000

Historic England

Area descriptions and map extracts for Tier 3 Archaeological Priority Areas

Croydon APA 3.1
Croydon Downs

Legend:

Croydon Downs APA

Pottery Sites

Rivers

Modern Boroughs

Tier 1 Archaeological Priority Area

Tier 2 Archaeological Priority Area

Tier 3 Archaeological Priority Area

Scale (at A4): 1:48,500

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Notes:
Any Listed Building information shown on this map extract is provided solely to indicate the location of the listed building(s) and does not attempt to indicate the curtilage or the full extent of the listing(s). Any archaeological priority area(s) shown on this map extract are those used by the Historic England archaeological advisors and there may be minor differences when compared to the relevant borough UDP or LDF.
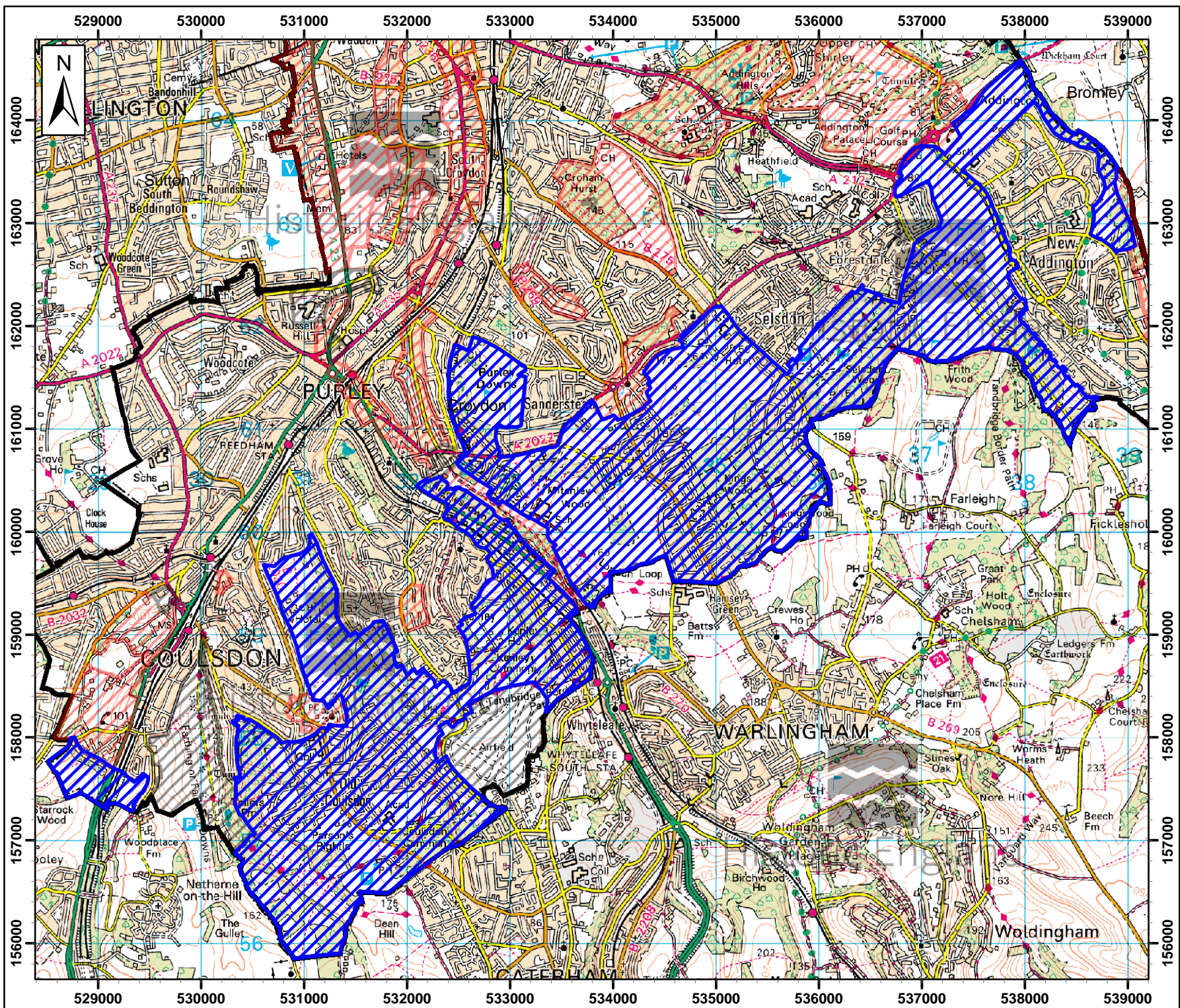
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Croydon APA 3.1: Croydon Downs

Summary and Definition

The Croydon Downs Archaeological Priority Area covers a large area in the southern part of Croydon between Old Coulsdon and New Addington and includes a smaller section on the southern part of Cane Hill. This part of the borough is on higher ground compared to the northern part of the borough and the geology consists primarily of chalk. While parts of it have been developed it still retains large open areas which have never been built on. These open areas include Coulsdon Common, Kenley Common, Riddlesdown, Purley Downs, Mitchley Wood, Kings Wood and Selsdon Wood. The APA has potential for finds and features dating from all periods particularly in open areas. The APA is classed as Tier 3 because it is an extensive topographical area which includes distinctive historic rural landscapes such as commons and woodland.

Description

The southern part of Croydon is located on the higher ground of the North Downs where the geology is primarily comprised of chalk bedrock. The area is thought to have been densely wooded for much of its documented history although in some areas of the flat plateau there are pockets of clay which would have provided potentially good agricultural land. Iron Age fields were identified on Coulsdon Golf Course and Riddlesdown but those on Riddlesdown are now thought to be medieval fields and those at Coulsdon might also date from the medieval period.

Prehistoric material, particularly tools made of flint, has been found across the APA which indicates that some level of human activity was taking place throughout the period. Flint seams within the chalk may have been exploited by the local population which has led to the abundance of flint finds. However, evidence for prehistoric settlement within the APA has been less prevalent. One area where a settlement may have been located is Riddlesdown where a scheduled bank and ditch known as Newe Ditch is located which may have been associated with a nearby settlement. Other ditches, banks and pits identified on Riddlesdown might also relate to a settlement although some of the pits may be Second World War bomb craters and some of the banks could be associated with woodland management.

Settlements were undoubtedly established across the APA but few have so far been positively identified. An exception is the site found during the construction of Atwood School near Sanderstead in the early 1960s. Numerous huts and pits were found and the pottery

dated the site to between the early Iron Age and the 2nd century AD. Another site was found nearby in Kings Wood in 1955 which consisted of a number of huts, an enclosure bank and a cremation cemetery. The Kings Wood site is thought to have been a small farmstead dating to the late Iron Age and early Roman periods. Similar small settlements or farmsteads would have existed across the area during the same period. Such settlements were linked by a network of prehistoric roads and trackways that ran across the North Downs. Limpsfield Road, which runs south from Sanderstead, is one such road which is thought to follow the route of a prehistoric trackway.

Sanderstead, Coulsdon and Addington are historic settlements located in the North Downs area which are all mentioned in the Domesday Book but smaller farms and hamlets would have existed at the same time. A small medieval settlement is thought to have been located near Featherbed Lane near Addington on what is now the Addington Court Golf Course. Field systems have been identified in the area and the excavation of a well in the 1970s led to the conclusion that it had been associated with a small settlement. The well appears to have been filled in during the 13th or 14th centuries indicating that the settlement was abandoned at the same time. There are a number of reasons why the settlement was abandoned which could be related to economic factors or natural catastrophes. The remains of other small settlements may survive in other undeveloped parts of the APA.

The Rocque map of Surrey from the 1760s shows the area to be covered by woods, fields, roads and intermittent farms and the area had changed little by the end of the 19th century. It was during the 20th century that housing started to be built within the APA although large parts of it are still undeveloped.

Significance

The topography and geology of the APA indicates that it has potential for features and finds dating from all historic periods and its Tier 3 status is based on this potential. While numerous finds such as flint tools and coins have been made and former field patterns have been identified there have been fewer discoveries of other significant features such as settlements or major cemeteries. If features such as these were found it is possible that sections of the APA could be raised to Tier 1 or 2. Any discoveries of settlements, such as those found at Atwood School and Kings Wood in the 1950s and 1960s, would enhance our knowledge of how the settled population was distributed across the area during any given historical period. Future aerial or ground based surveys of this historic landscape would present an opportunity to shed light on its past use. It is also possible that prehistoric sites in the dry valleys and lower slopes have become buried (and protected) beneath colluvium (hillwash). Ancient woodlands, commons and field patterns are of historical and

archaeological interest in themselves and may preserve traces of historic land use such as boundary banks, managed trees and hedgerows (coppices and pollards) or small quarries.

Key References

The Excavation of a Romano-British Settlement in Kings Wood, R. I. Little, Surrey Archaeological Collections, Vol. 58, 1961

The Atwood Iron Age and Romano-British Site, Sanderstead, 1961, R. I. Little, Surrey Archaeological Collections, Vol. 61, 1964

Coulsdon Common, Heritage Conservation Plan, Wessex Archaeology, 2011

Riddlesdown, Purley, Heritage Conservation Plan, Wessex Archaeology, 2011

Glossary

Archaeological Priority Area: Generic term used for a defined area where, according to existing information, there is significant known archaeological interest or particular potential for new discoveries. They are sometimes called other names including Archaeological Priority Zones, Areas of Archaeological Significance/Importance/Interest or Areas of High Archaeological Potential.

Archaeological interest: There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places and of the people and cultures that made them (NPPF definition). There can be an archaeological interest in buildings and landscapes as well as earthworks and buried remains.

Conservation: The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance (NPPF definition).

Designated heritage asset: A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation (NPPF definition).

Heritage asset: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing) (NPPF definition).

Historic environment: All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged and landscaped and planted of managed flora (NPPF definition).

Historic environment record: Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use (NPPF definition). Historic England maintains the Historic Environment Record for Greater London.

Potential: In some places, the nature of the archaeological interest cannot be specified precisely, but it may still be possible to document reasons for anticipating the existence and importance of such evidence. Circumstantial evidence such as geology, topography, landscape history, nearby major monuments and patterns of previous discoveries can be used to predict areas with a higher likelihood that currently unidentified heritage assets of historic and archaeological interest, will be discovered in the future.

Research framework: A suite of documents which describe the current state of knowledge of a topic or geographical area (the 'resource assessment'), identifies major gaps in knowledge and key research questions (the 'agenda') and set out a strategy for addressing them. A resource assessment and agenda for London archaeology has been published and a strategy is in preparation.

Setting of a heritage asset: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral (NPPF definition).

Sensitivity: The likelihood of typical development impacts causing significant harm to a heritage asset of archaeological interest. Sensitivity is closely allied to significance and potential but also takes account of an asset's vulnerability and fragility.

Significance: The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence but also from its setting (NPPF definition).