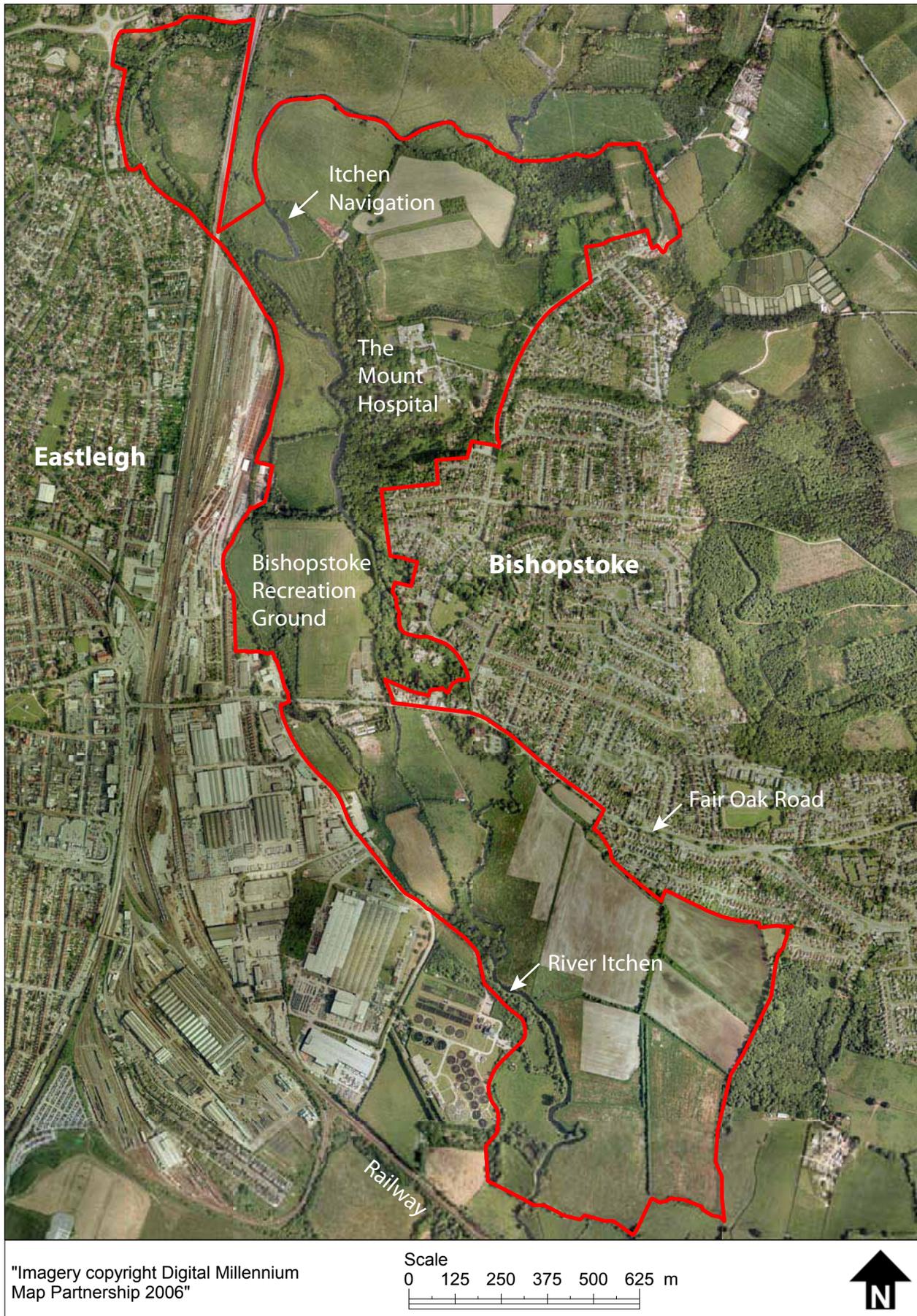


## Area 2: Upper Itchen Valley



## Description

- 4.22 The River Itchen cuts through the Eastleigh-Bishopstoke ridge to create a distinctive area. Steep, partially urbanised valley sides impinge on a narrow floodplain, in contrast to the wide rural valley to the north and the wide floodplain in varied uses south of West Horton Farm. The contrast between the flat floodplain and the steep valley sides which appear as predominantly wooded despite the proximity of the urban areas, give the area a distinctive character..
- 4.23 In the top northwest corner, the area crosses the main north-south railway line to include a loop of the River Itchen and a small section of floodplain. The eastern boundary runs along the settlement boundary of Bishopstoke, although a small area of Old Bishopstoke, which falls between the river and the Itchen Navigation, is included. In the north of the area is the Mount Hospital site. This was formally a large site acquired by HCC in 1921 as a tuberculosis sanatorium. There is quite extensive parkland associated that include an ancient coppice bounded by the river. The majority of the site currently has planning permission to be redeveloped. The western boundary runs along the edge of Eastleigh where the sidings and works primarily associated with the railway and the sewage works in Chickenhall lane are located.
- 4.24 On the floodplain the land is dominated by recreation grounds north of the Bishopstoke Road. These council-managed grounds have a range of facilities including a sports centre, children's playground, artificial football pitches and grass rugby pitches. The remainder of the floodplain is primarily improved pasture with sparse tree cover, but fragments of wetland vegetation survive.
- 4.25 The river valley runs north to south. To the north it is bisected by pylons; the busy Bishopstoke Road, B3037, runs through the middle. Although outside of the character area the elevated railway line creates a visual boundary. Views are available from the north, looking up the river valley and the south, towards the south east. Public access to the river is allowed by footpath where it joins with the Navigation.



Figure 3. View across River Itchen and flood plain

## Historic Features

- 4.26 The River Itchen cuts through the conservation area of Old Bishopstoke creating a distinctive area that is fairly heavily-built upon, but well covered by trees. The Itchen Navigation runs along the western boundary of the area and was authorised as a river for improvement to provide a means of moving heavy goods by an Act of Parliament of 1665. On the floodplain outside the conservation area the land is dominated by recreation grounds and improved pasture with sparse tree cover and fragments of wetland vegetation. Much of the area would have been flood meadows that flooded naturally, and water meadows containing ‘drains and drowners’ that allowed water to flow over fields depositing silt and minerals to fertilise the soil. Established between 17-19th century, they fell into disuse due to the high labour costs and the introduction of artificial fertilisers and herbicides.
- 4.27 Within the conservation area itself, the legacy of Reverend Thomas Garnier as discussed in the *Bishopstoke Conservation Area Appraisal (EBC,2010)*, means the quality of the tree and shrub planting is high, providing a significant setting for development with high amenity value for local residents. There are two listed buildings in the conservation area and two historic gardens that are registered on the Hampshire Historic Parks and Gardens list:
- 4.28 The Mount Hospital – “Formal gardens, ancient coppice bounded by River Itchen; gardens made more ornamental late C19 with elaborate water garden and aviaries; acquired by HCC in 1921 for TB sanatorium; lawns, fine trees remain.” Most of these features are now gone with none remaining in the land to the north of the site.
- 4.29 Bishopstoke Manor - “In the 1870s large well laid garden with orchard, greenhouses, large fishpond fed by the Itchen Navigation; Itchen Grange built over orchard, fishpond remains.”



Figure 4. Panorama of footpath near Allbrook

## HCC Historic Landscape Types:

### 4.30 Historic landscapes types in this area are:

- 1.6 Medium to large regular fields with wavy boundaries (late medieval to 17th/18th Century Enclosure)
- 7.1 Miscellaneous valley floor fields and pasture
- 7.2 Valley floor woodland
- 7.3 Marsh and rough grazing
- 7.4 Water meadows

## Ecological Features

- 4.31 The *Eastleigh Biodiversity Action Plan* identified this area as part of the Itchen Valley Priority Area. The river has a chalk bed with populations of protected species of southern damselfly, fine-lined pea mussel, white clawed crayfish and other important species. The River Itchen and the Itchen Navigation both have local, regional, national and European levels of biodiversity protection. The structure of the disused water meadows, mentioned above, serves an important ecological function by providing habitats for a diverse range of flora and fauna.
- 4.32 The character area contains ancient semi-natural woodlands and semi-improved grasslands which have significance for nature conservation and designated as SINCs.

## Key Characteristics

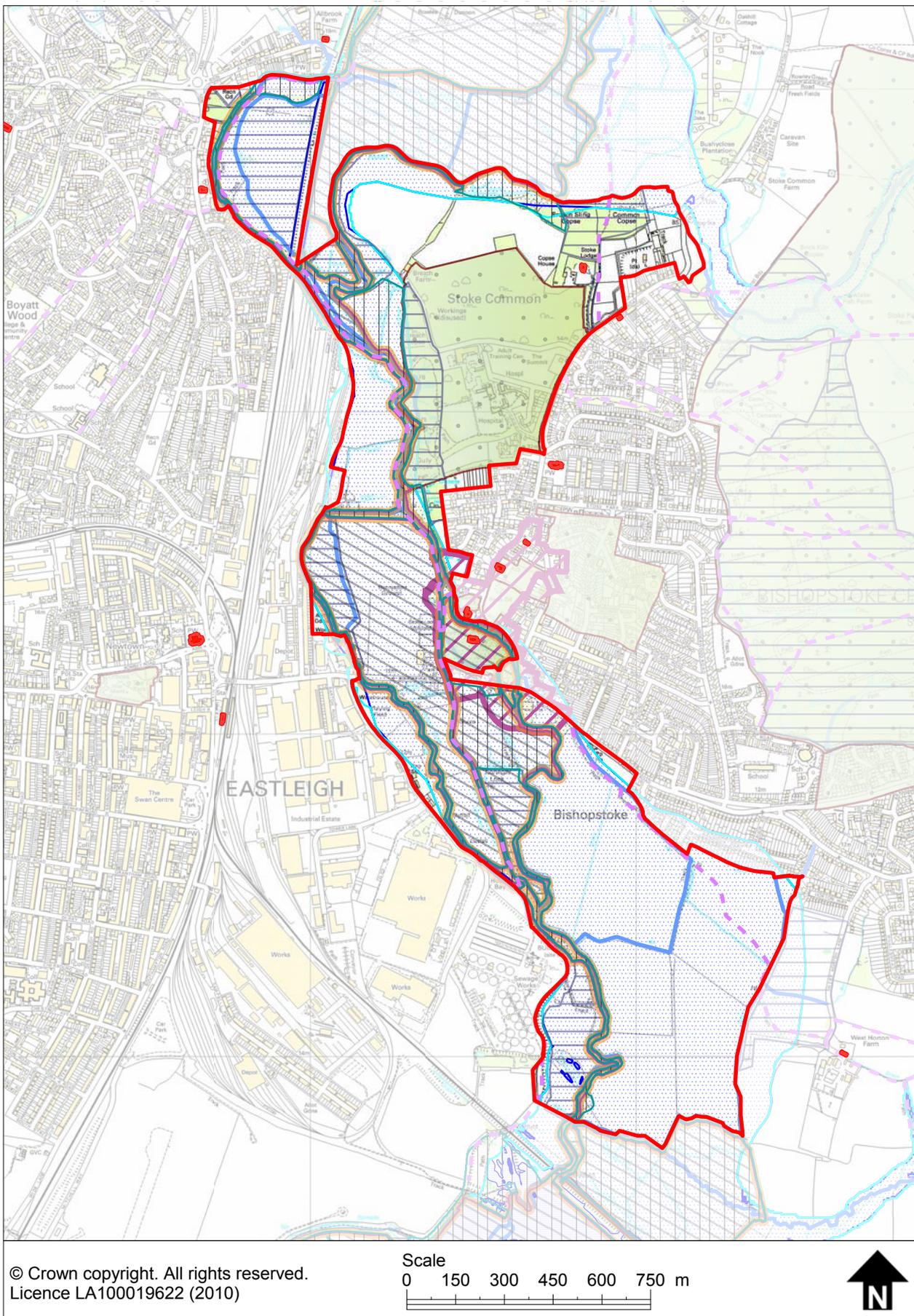
### 4.33 Key characteristics of this area are:

- Flat uninterrupted pasture of floodplain with absence of tree cover



Figure 4. Panorama of footpath near Allbrook

## Designations and Constraints



## Key for Designation &amp; Constraints:

	Character Area Boundary		Main River
	Area designated Ramsar, SPA* & SSSI Area		Floodzone 2
	SAC - Special Area of Conservation		Floodzone 3
	SSSI - Site of Special Scientific Interest		Right of Way
	SINC - Site of Important Nature Conservation		
	LNR - Local Nature Reserve		
	Historic Parks and Gardens		
	Conservation Area		
	Scheduled Ancient Monument		
	Listed Building		

\*SPA - Special Protection Area

- Contrast between open pasture and wooded and urbanised valley sides
- Natural and man-made water courses crisscrossing the valley floor
- Fragmented wetland habitats
- The parkland associated with The Mount Hospital
- The open floodplain and recreation grounds separate the two settlements of Eastleigh and Bishopstoke

### Landscape Types

4.34 Landscape types as set out in the Hampshire County Council Integrated Character Assessment 2011 for this area are:

- Lowland Mosaic Medium Scale
- River Valley Floor

### Landscape Character Sensitivity

4.35 Although it has substantially built up areas around it, the overriding impression of the area is of open floodplains, meandering water courses and a rich biodiversity.



Figure 5. Bishopstoke Recreation Ground panorama

### Visual Sensitivity

4.36 The floodplain is flat and open with many significant views across the area. The built forms of Eastleigh and Bishopstoke, in their current form and with the present level of screening, are not intrusive; however the Bishopstoke Road does introduce an urbanising feature into the landscape.

### Key Issues

4.37 The key issues for this area are:

- The conflict between priorities of facilitating public access and nature conservation.
- Sensitivity to change of the ecology of the watercourses and undeveloped floodplain.
- Sensitivity of the undeveloped floodplain to visual intrusion as a result of its openness and the proximity of neighbouring settlements.
- Balance required between the need for formal recreation with its associated land form and structures and the existing open pasture
- The presence of the Bishopstoke Road, B3037, bisecting the area at its narrowest point, increases the risk of future development abutting the road splitting the landscape character area into two.
- Some development pressure on land on the western edge of Bishopstoke.



Figure 5. Bishopstoke Recreation Ground panorama