

Describe and Explain the Distribution of Settlements on the Burgess Hill Map



Burgess Hill Map

The settlement pattern at Burgess Hill and its surrounding area is very much influenced by the physical geography of the area. In the south of the area, there is a high zone of land, averaging at about 110m in height, about 20% of the map. In contrast, there is about 150km² of low land, all around the same height, at about 35m. There are a large amount of settlements on the low land, with very little settlement on the high ground, only small, nucleated settlements in the valleys in between the high summits. The spot heights on the higher ground decrease as you move south. There is a distinct line on the map that separates the high ground from the low, roughly following the path of the South Downs Way. This is a convex escarpment. It is linked to the geology of the slope.

There is only one small town on the map, and this is Burgess Hill. The remaining settlements are villages and are all situated on the lower land. The only settlements on the higher ground are farms, and these are generally situated in the valleys in between the steep hills. These farms are situated here because of the protection available from the steep slopes surrounding them. The main reason for farms here is that because they are in such low ground in comparison to the high area, the water table will be very close to the surface, and farms have easy access to water via wells. There are also many farms at the bottom of the escarpment. These settlements were first formed here because of an ancient water source that is still available. Farmers

realised the economic potential of the ground because of its water supply. The water supply is available from the slope because of the nature of the slope.

Any precipitation that lands on the Downland slope will sink into the soil. It will be able to pass through the porous chalk, but it cannot pass through the Gault clay and Weald clay. This leaves the water in between the chalk and clay, creating a water table. The water has to leave either through the slope in the chalk to the south, or through the dip slope. Water that leaves through this slope will form a spring emanating from the soil. The spring is the water source that is still present for the farms to use, and this is why large numbers of farms settled here. This type of settlement pattern is called a 'spring line' settlement. The pattern of the farms settled matches the line of the springs.

On the lowland, there are strip parishes. This is where the parish boundaries are in strips. This is mainly apparent towards the east of the map. Parishes have boundaries in strips so that in the past they could have access to every rock type for grazing *and* growing. This was particularly important when farming was the main occupation, which is when these settlements were built, some dating back to the eighth century. The larger settlements are built on the sandstone and not the clay because it is much easier to farm on sandstone, because it is softer and absorbs water.

The main growth of the larger settlements was the twentieth century. For example, in Henfield, where the settlement is built around the rail network and the street layout is more Victorian (and later), there is a larger settlement. Also, there are main roads passing through Henfield, such as the A281 and A2037. The growth of this village is mainly through the growth of commuters to London. The village is accessible with road and rail links to London, and so housing has been built for commuters.

There are more linear settlements where there is only a road link to London, such as in Plumpton, where the housing follows the B2116. However, the main period of growth is still in the twentieth century.

There is an anomaly in the village of Stanmer, where there is no immediate water supply due to the high ground, and no immediate rail or road links to London.

In conclusion, the settlement pattern on the Burgess Hill map is varied. The smaller farm settlements are largely along the bottom of the slope due to the water supply. Also, farms are in the valleys because of the high water table. The hamlets and villages are built around having access to all the rock types, and the larger villages and the small town, Burgess Hill, have grown in the last century due to rail and road links to London.