

Chiltern District Landscape Character Assessment

Prepared for Buckinghamshire County Council
and Chiltern District Council
by
Land Use Consultants
October 2011



Chiltern
District Council



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Land Use Consultants (LUC) prepared this report on behalf of Buckinghamshire County Council and Chiltern District Council. We are grateful for the guidance provided by the Steering Group and information provided by local stakeholders through a participatory workshop held at the draft stage of the report. We also acknowledge that to achieve a consistent landscape character assessment for the whole County, the format and structure of the character area and landscape type descriptions reflects that set out by Jacobs for the Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment produced in 2008.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Buckinghamshire County comprises the Districts of Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, Wycombe and South Bucks. The County has a rich and varied landscape including the expansive flat clay vale in the north, prominent chalk escarpment, undulating dip slope cut by river valleys and the Thames and Colne Valleys in the south. The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), recognised as a landscape of national importance, extends across the middle of the County predominantly in the Districts of Chiltern and Wycombe.
- 1.2 Chiltern District lies in the south east of Buckinghamshire County (refer to **Figure 1.1**). It adjoins the Districts of Aylesbury Vale to the north west, Wycombe to the west and South Bucks to the south. To the east it borders Hertfordshire County.
- 1.3 The District lies on chalk strata and ‘dip slope’, which gradually falls south eastwards towards Greater London. It is largely overlain by clay with flints, which typically give rise to acidic soils with calcareous soils on chalk. Steep-sided valleys have eroded the landscape and flow south east, namely the Chess Valley and the Misbourne Valley, with many additional branching tributary valleys. Valleys are typically ephemeral with some ‘winterbourne’ sections. The chalk geology creates a rolling and sweeping landform and often supports arable cultivation and pasture with some pockets of chalk grasslands. The District has a wooded character with woodland occurring on valley tops and interspersed with farmland. There are significant areas of ancient woodland and beech is a dominant species.
- 1.4 Historic country houses, within designed parkland landscapes have a strong influence on the landscape e.g. Latimer Park and Shardeloes Park prominent on valley hill sides and Missenden Abbey on the valley floor. Ancient sunken lanes are an important feature traversing valleys sides and a range of archaeological features including Grim’s Ditch, Roman villas and earthworks contribute to time depth as well as areas of pre 18th century co-axial field enclosure and assarts. Amersham and Chesham are the principal towns within Chiltern District, with other settlements, including, Chalfont St Peter, Chalfont St Giles and Great Missenden. The historic villages of Latimer and Chenies occur in the Chess Valley and settlement around historic heathy commons occurs at Lee Common and Cholesbury. Farmsteads are scattered throughout. Brick and flint are common building materials with black weatherboard also characteristic. Despite its proximity to London the District retains a relatively rural and peaceful character with remote areas of rolling farmland and tranquillity in river valleys. A significant proportion of the Chiltern District lies within the Chilterns AONB recognising the highly scenic quality of the landscape.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.5 The Chiltern District Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) has been prepared on behalf of Buckinghamshire County Council and Chiltern District. This assessment has been carried out in parallel with assessments for South Bucks and Wycombe using a format consistent with the existing Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment produced in May 2008. The aim being to provide an integrated Landscape Character Assessment for the entire County of Buckinghamshire.

- I.6 The character assessment has been carried out to provide a greater understanding of the landscape character of Chiltern District which can be used to influence and inform policy and planning and management actions from the outset.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

- I.7 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:
- **Chapter 2 Assessment Methodology:** Summarises the approach for undertaking the study.
 - **Chapter 3 The Character of the Chiltern District Landscape:** Provides a summary of each landscape type and a description and evaluation for each character area, following a standard format.
- I.8 In addition to this report, the main outputs have also been prepared as a GIS database.

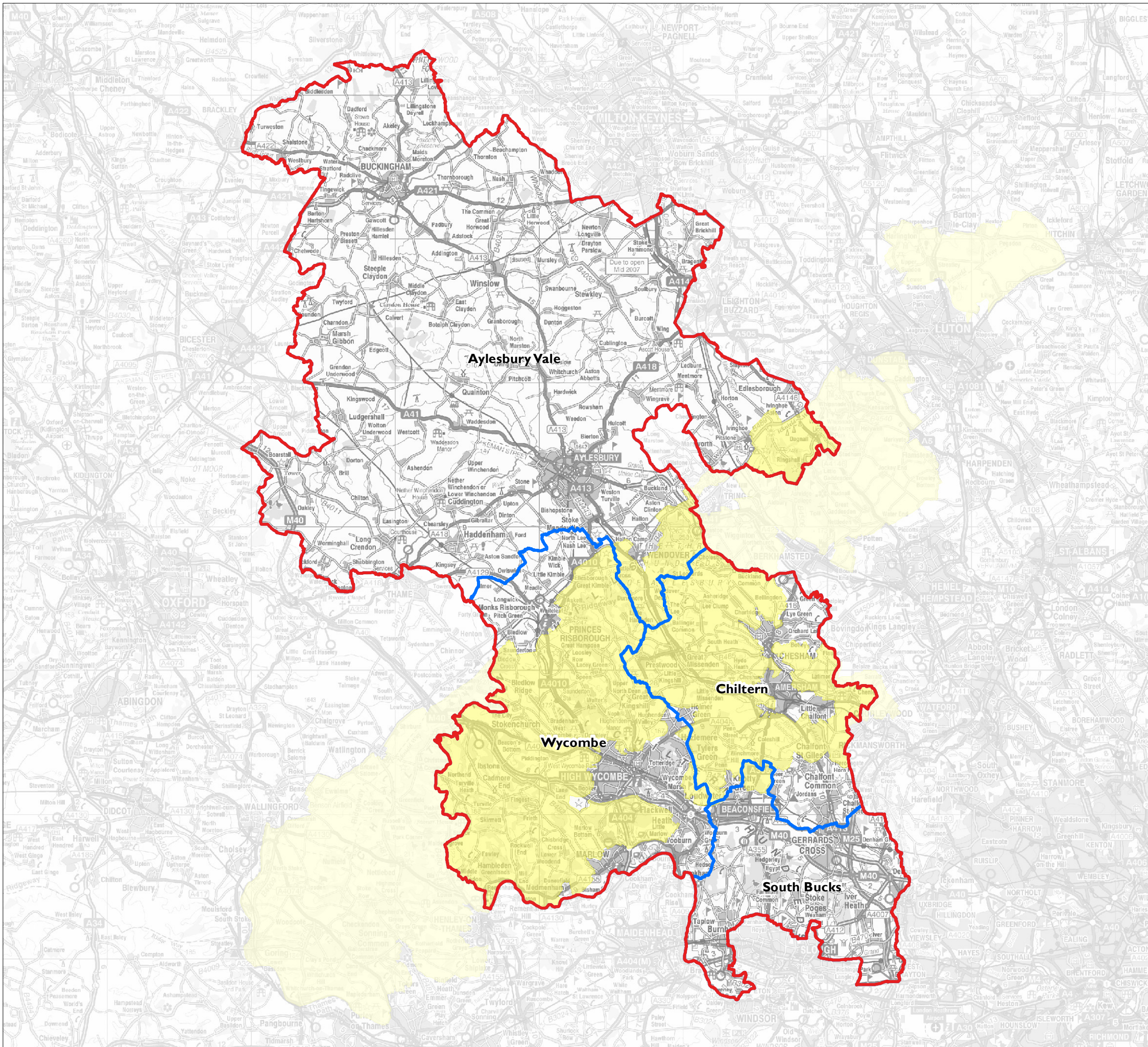



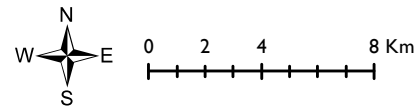


Figure I.1: Location Plan

Key

-  Buckinghamshire County boundary
-  District boundaries
-  Chilterns AONB



Date: 16/08/2011



2 Method Statement

- 2.1 The study follows the accepted method for landscape character assessment as set out in '*Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland*' published by The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage in 2002.
- 2.2 The District-wide assessment has been prepared within the framework of the 'Character of England Landscape, Wildlife and Cultural Features Map' produced in 2005 by The Countryside Agency with support from English Heritage (refer to **Figure 2.1**). It is also undertaken with in the context of and with reference to:
- The Chilterns Landscape – A landscape assessment (1992) by Land Use Consultants for the Countryside Commission.
 - The Landscape Plan for Buckinghamshire – part 1 landscape character assessment (2000) by Hyder Consulting for Buckinghamshire County Council.
 - The Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment (2008) by Jacobs Babbie for Aylesbury Vale District Council and Buckinghamshire County Council.
 - South Bucks Landscape Character Assessment (2003) by Atkins for South Bucks District Council.
- 2.3 The method aims to be transparent, objective, robust and consistent with that used in the existing Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment. It has involved five main stages, described below:
- Data Collation
 - Characterisation
 - Field Survey
 - Evaluation
 - Consultation
- 2.4 Geographic Information Systems (GIS) was used throughout the study as the tool for collating, manipulating and presenting data.

DATA COLLATION

- 2.5 **Baseline Data:** This stage involved the collation and mapping of a wide range of existing information on the characteristics of Chiltern District principally from the BLIS GIS dataset including baseline maps of landform, geology, hydrology, historic landscape, biodiversity, land use, settlement and archaeology (refer to **Appendix I**). It also included collation of information relating to the 'perceptual' characteristics of the landscape, such as literary references or as a source of artistic inspiration.

CHARACTERISATION

- 2.6 The process of characterisation draws together all the information outlined above, to develop a draft classification of the landscape character of Chiltern District. The approach follows best practice as promoted by the Countryside Agency in the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002) in maintaining a distinction between landscape types and character areas, and developing a hierarchical approach as follows:
- **Landscape Types** - which are generic and share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation and human influences, e.g. 'Chalk River Valley' and 'Settled Plateau'.
 - **Landscape Character Areas** - which are single and unique, discrete geographical areas of the landscape type, e.g. 'Chess Chalk River Valley' or 'Great Kingshill Settled Plateau.'
- 2.7 For the purposes of this District-wide assessment emphasis has been placed upon the definition and subdivision of the landscape at a scale of 1:25 000 and at the Landscape Character Area scale i.e. the identification of particular geographical areas of distinctive landscape.

FIELD SURVEY

- 2.8 A field survey was undertaken to validate the draft characterisation. This specifically focussed on:
- Verification and fine-tuning of the classification of the landscape character areas (and types) identified.
 - Making refinements to landscape character area (and type) boundaries and names.
 - Recording landscape character.
 - Assessing sensitivities and strength of character/ intactness to inform the landscape strategy and guidelines.
- 2.9 A systematic and rigorous approach was adopted for the survey, with information recorded on 1:25,000 scale maps and a Field Survey Sheet (see **Appendix 2**). A comprehensive photo record was also made.

NOTES ON THE CHARACTERISATION

- 2.10 **A note on boundary lines:** The precision of boundaries drawn around landscape character areas and types varies with the scale and level of detail of the assessment. This assessment has been mapped at a scale of 1:25,000 which means that it is suitable for use at this scale only.
- 2.11 In reality landscape character rarely changes abruptly and the boundaries indicated in The Chiltern Landscape Character Assessment therefore sometimes represent zones of transition in character relating to changes in topography, geology, soils, cultural patterns, land use etc. rather than marked changes on the ground. In practice boundaries of this nature have frequently been drawn to follow physical or mappable features such as roads, lanes or field boundaries which provide 'best fit'.

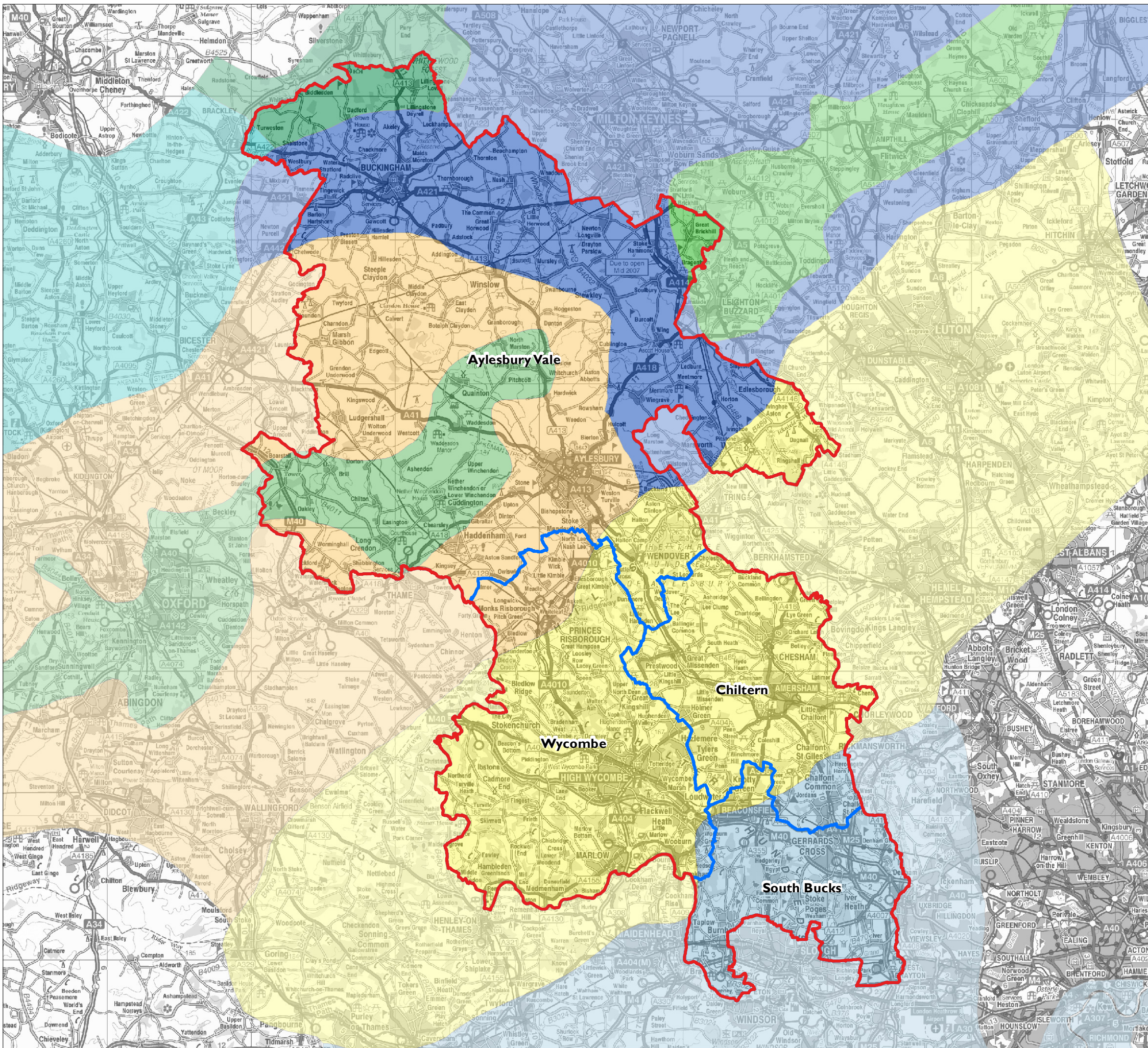


Figure 2.1: National Character Areas

Key

Buckinghamshire County boundary

District boundaries

National Character Areas

Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge

Bedfordshire & Cambridgeshire Claylands

Chilterns

Cotswolds

Midvale Ridge

Thames Valley

Upper Thames Clay Vales

Yardley-whittlewood Ridge

Date: 17/08/2011

- 2.12 **A note on built areas:** This is an assessment of the rural landscape. The land within the development limits of villages and settlements was not studied in detail as part of the LCA. The smaller villages have been considered and form part of the description on landscape character, with a particular emphasis on understanding settlement pattern and the relationship of settlements to their landscape setting. However, no specific townscape or urban character assessments were undertaken of the more built-up areas such as Amersham. Where these occur within the boundaries of Character Areas it is the undeveloped area surrounding the settlement to which the description refers.

EVALUATION

- 2.13 The approach for the evaluation undertaken as part of the Chiltern District LCA aims to follow current best practice and make judgements on the landscape highlighting potential sensitivities and identifying future management needs. More detailed is provided in the following 'Format of the Assessment' section.

CONSULTATION

- 2.14 A stakeholder workshop was held in February 2011 with an invited audience of c.40 participants including representatives of National Agencies (e.g. National Trust, English Heritage, Natural England and the Environment Agency) local interest groups (wildlife groups, local history, local societies etc) plus County and District councillors. The objectives of the workshop were to:
- Explain the process and purpose of Landscape Character Assessment and relevance to Buckinghamshire.
 - Validate the characterisation map including boundaries, names and key characteristics.
 - Understand what people value as important/special about the Districts of Chiltern, Wycombe and South Bucks and the reasons why.
- 2.15 The views and comments of participants were recorded and integrated into the relevant character area descriptions to validate the report. A summary of the workshop is provided at **Appendix 3**. Values recorded at the stakeholder workshop are shown organised by character area in **Appendix 4**.

FORMAT OF THE ASSESSMENT

- 2.16 An overview of each landscape type is provided, with more detailed information provided for each landscape character area within the type.

Landscape Types

- 2.17 Each section is initiated by a summary map illustrating the location of the landscape type in relation to the District as a whole, and identifying constituent character areas. An integrated summary of key characteristics of the landscape type and a general description is provided.

Landscape Character Areas

- 2.18 The majority of information is provided at the detailed character area level. Each character area has a summary map illustrating its location in relation to the District as a whole and a more detailed map (not to scale) of the character area. A sheet of illustrative photographs is also provided. Information is presented as follows (note headings and content are consistent with the Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment produced in May 2008):

Key Characteristics: an integrated bullet point summary of key characteristics of the character area.

Description

Location and Boundaries: a brief description of where the area lies within the District. It includes information about how the boundaries of the area were defined and its relationship with adjacent areas.

Landscape Character: a broad summary drawing together the character that defines the area as set out in the following more detailed descriptions.

Geology, topography/landform and hydrology: background information on the geology landform and hydrological features which contribute to character is provided. Refer to Figures a, b and c in **Appendix I**.

Land Use and Settlement: the pattern of land use, settlement and building materials as well as the road and footpath network is described. The information has been obtained from 1:25,000 OS map, the Integrated Habitat Survey (IHS) (refer to Figure i in **Appendix I**) and field observations.

Tree Cover: the extent, location and type of tree and woodland cover is described. The information has been obtained from IHS and field observations.

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape: This section covers perceptual characteristics, tranquillity (refer to Figure j in **Appendix I**), countryside access, and artistic and literary perceptions as follows:

Perceptual characteristics include those defined in the landscape character assessment guidance i.e. scale, enclosure, diversity texture, form, line colour, balance, movement, pattern, etc. focussing on how specific elements contribute to the aesthetic characteristics.

Tranquillity is defined by analysis of noise levels, perceived naturalness, visible overt human impact and density of settlement/ diffusion of people. These criteria have been drawn from the University of Northumbria's method for defining tranquillity¹.

Literary perceptions and cultural associations are drawn from existing published AONB assessment. Perceptions recorded through descriptive writings, visual arts and music can indicate how the landscape has changed over time, and communicate the special perceptual qualities of the landscape.

Biodiversity: a summary of the key biodiversity features using information from IHS, distribution of designated sites, and information contained in the designated site citations. Refer to Figure g, h and i in **Appendix I**.

Historic Environment: a summary of the key historic processes and features and their contribution to character using information from the historic landscape classification, and distribution of designated sites. Refer to Figure d and e in **Appendix I**

Designations: a list of designations specific to each character area is provided.

Evaluation

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities: These are the key positive landscape and visual attributes that, if lost or altered, would change the character of the landscape.

Strength of Character/ Intactness: Relates to the condition of the landscape and how strongly key characteristics are conveyed.

Landscape Strategy: Drawing on the information on landscape character and an understanding of the key sensitivities an overall strategy for the landscape is developed. Within the high quality landscape of the District the main strategy is for conservation of existing character with some enhancement.

Landscape Guidelines: For each character area a set of guidelines has been developed, covering landscape management considerations and development considerations. The guidelines indicate the actions required, with reference to the overall landscape strategy in order to ensure that distinctive character is maintained.

¹ Mapping Tranquillity: Defining and Assessing a Valuable Resource', co-commissioned by the Campaign to Protect Rural England and the Countryside Agency.

3 The Character of the Chiltern District Landscape

- 3.1 The landscape character of Chiltern District has been created by a combination of physical, historic, natural, social and economic processes. The diversity is recognised in the identification **10 landscape types**. Each of these landscape types has a distinct and relatively homogenous character with similar physical and cultural attributes, including geology, landform, land cover and historic evolution. The landscape types are further subdivided into component **landscape character areas**. The character areas are discrete geographic areas that possess the common characteristics described for the landscape type. Each character area has a distinct and recognisable local identity.
- 3.1 The landscape classification for Buckinghamshire is set out in **Appendix 5** and illustrated on **Figure 3.1**.
- 3.3 The landscape types and character areas which lie within Chiltern District are set out in **Table 3** and illustrated on **Figure 3.2**. The classification and boundary mapping has been undertaken using GIS, with mapping at a scale of 1:25,000.

Table 3: The Chiltern District Landscape Classification

Landscape Character Type (LCT)		Landscape Character Area (LCA)	
13	Chalk River Valley	13.3	Hughenden
		13.5	Misbourne Upper
		13.6	Chess
14	Wooded Plateau	14.1	Great Hampden
15	Undulating Plateau	15.1	Lee and Buckland Common
16	Settled Plateau	16.3	Great Kingshill
		16.4	Hyde Heath
		16.5	Ashley Green
17	Dipslope with Dry Valleys	17.2	Bellingdon
18	Rolling Farmland	18.2	Penn
		18.3	Little Chalfont
		18.4	Codmore
19	Settled River Valley	19.1	High Wycombe
		19.2	Lower Misbourne
20	Undulating Farmland	20.1	St Giles
22	Mixed Use Terrace	22.1	Beaconsfield
		22.2	Chalfont St Peter
23	River Valley	23.1	Alder Bourne

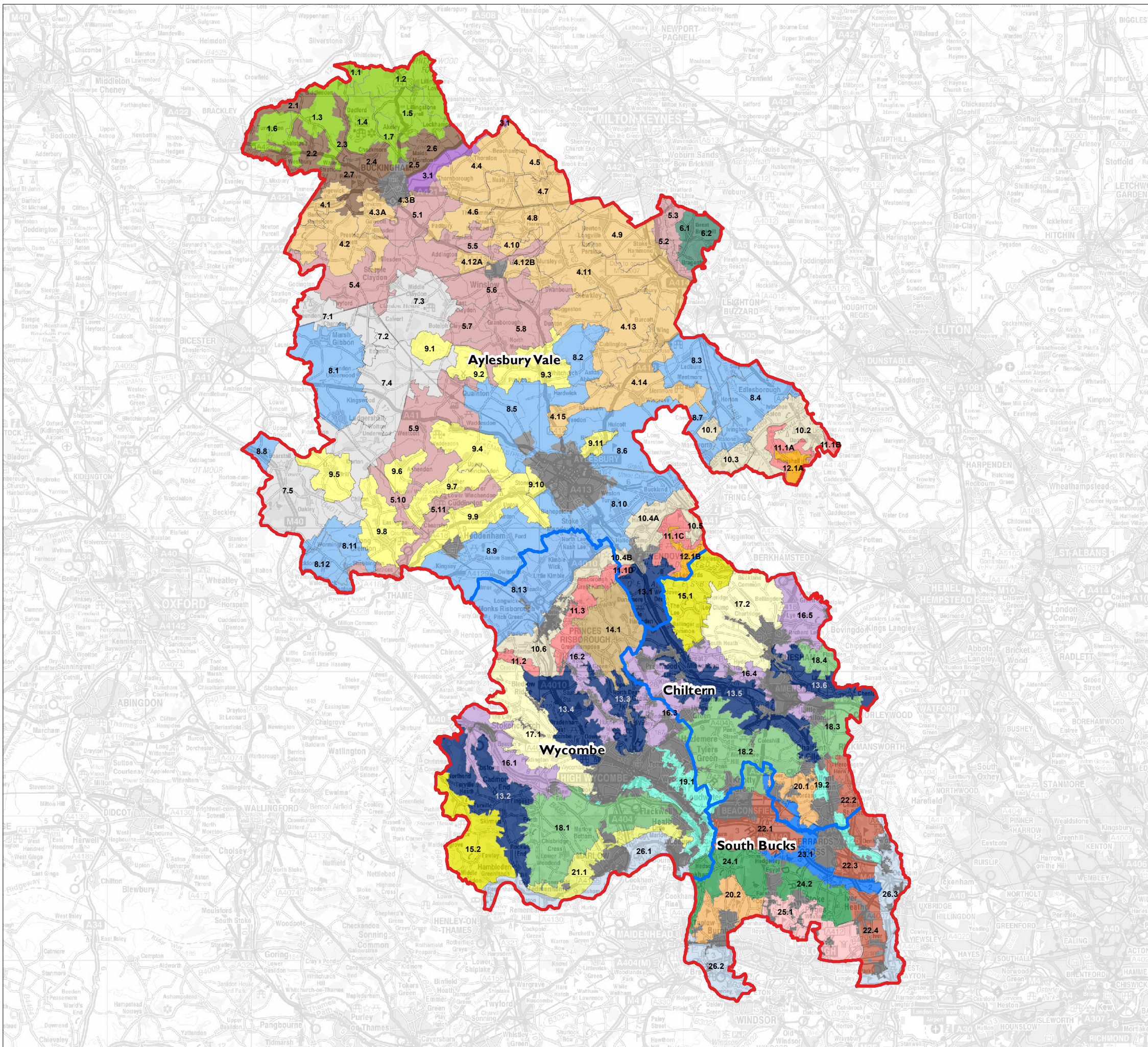


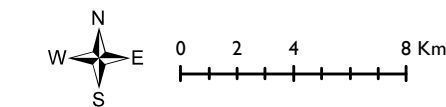
Figure 3.1: Buckinghamshire Classification

Key

- Buckinghamshire County boundary
- District boundaries
- Settlements

Buckinghamshire Landscape Character Assessment

- 1:Wooded Ridge
- 2: Incised Valleys
- 3:Valley Bottom
- 4: Undulating Clay Plateau
- 5: Shallow Valleys
- 6: Greensand Ridge
- 7:Wooded Rolling Lowlands
- 8:Vale
- 9: Low Hills and Ridges
- 10: Chalk Foothills
- 11: Chalk Escarpment
- 12: Chalk Dip Slope
- 13: Chalk River Valleys
- 14:Wooded Plateau
- 15: Undulating Plateau
- 16: Settled Plateau
- 17: Dipslope with Dry Valleys
- 18: Rolling Farmland
- 19: Settled River Valley
- 20: Undulating Farmland
- 21:Valley Slope
- 22: Mixed Use Terrace
- 23: River Valley
- 24:Wooded Terrace
- 25: Lowland Fringe
- 26: Floodplain



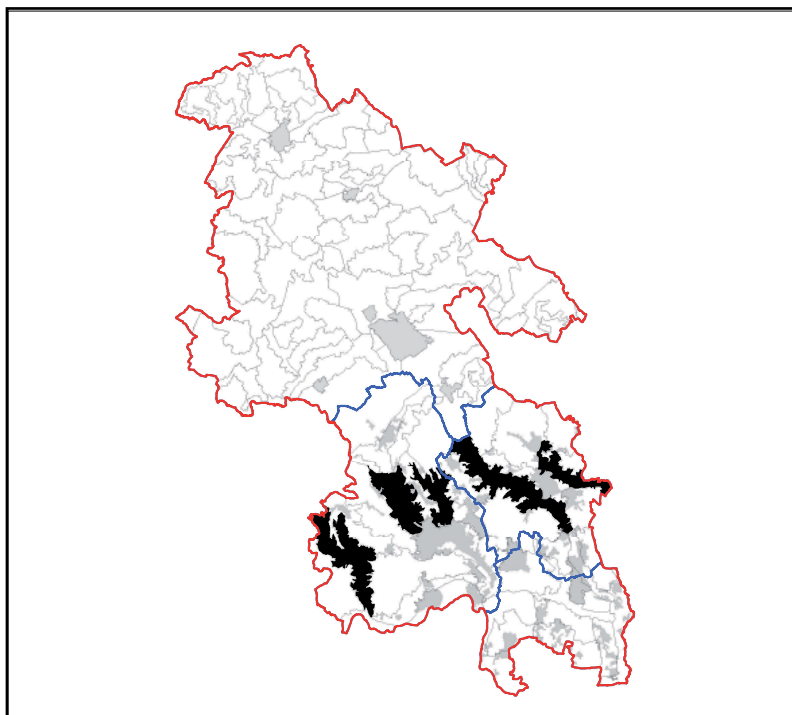
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LCT 13 CHALK RIVER VALLEY

Constituent LCAs

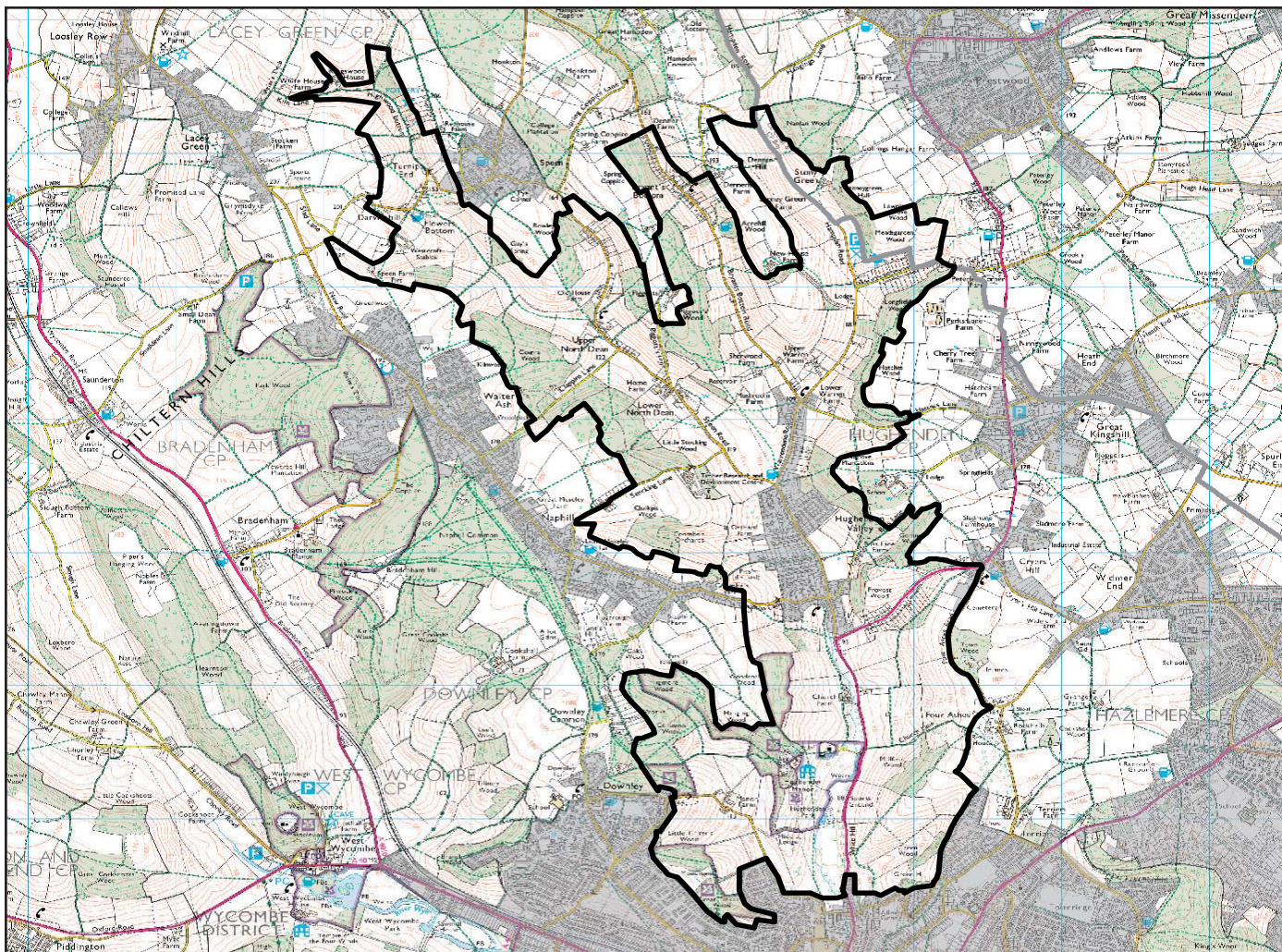
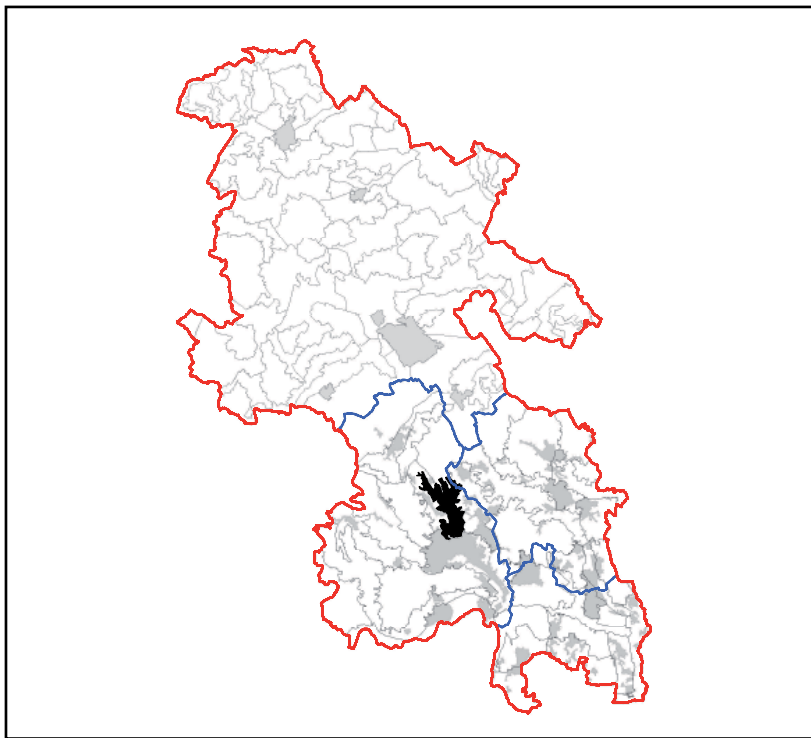
LCA 13.2	Hambleden
LCA 13.3	Hughenden
LCA 13.4	Wye
LCA 13.5	Misbourne Upper
LCA 13.6	Chess



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Broad valleys incising the chalk dipslope with gently sloping lower valley slopes, becoming steeper towards the valley tops.
- Chalk rivers and streams meander gently through the valleys, sometimes flowing inconspicuously, many of which have 'winterbourne' sections, particularly in upper reaches.
- Smooth, rolling valley sides are incised by small tributary valleys. Underlying chalk, and free draining lime-rich soils on the valley sides are predominately arable cultivation and pasture.
- Upper slopes and valley tops are wooded, with occasional pockets of calcareous grassland.
- Ancient and semi-natural woodland associated with higher slopes and dry valleys, include mixed, broadleaved and provide a habitat for wildlife.
- Valley floors are characterised by rough grassland, pasture and paddocks, typically divided into smaller scale fields, by low hedges and wooden post and wire fencing.
- Varying patterns of field enclosure, with a mix of regular and irregular field boundaries. Larger scale fields often dominate the valley sides, with smaller scale field divisions along the valley floor.
- Valleys commonly act as transport corridors, with roads and rail routes following the valley floor and sides. Smaller rural roads and sunken lanes cut across the valleys, connecting rural villages and farmsteads, and climbing the valley sides.
- Settlement is largely confined to the valley floor, comprising historic villages, hamlets, and scattered farmsteads, with some more modern ribbon development along roads.
- Occasional large historic houses and associated parkland, occur on the valley sides, overlooking the valley.
- Remnant archaeological and historical features are scattered throughout the valley and within areas of settlement, including early coaxial and assart field enclosures.
- Valley landform and wooded valley tops generate a sense of containment. Varying levels of enclosure with open valley sides, contrasting with dense wooded tops. Views are largely contained along the valley and up the valley slopes with some extensive views from upper slopes.
- Simple, uniform and legible landscapes, which retain a strong sense of tranquillity and rural character, despite occasional busy roads.

LCA 13.3 HUGHENDEN CHALK RIVER VALLEY



LCA 13.3 HUGHENDEN CHALK RIVER VALLEY

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- The Hughenden stream flows through the broad, lower chalk valley. Three tributaries feed into the valley from the north, with narrower and steeper valley topography.
- The chalk stream rises at Hughenden Valley, flowing southwards through Hughenden Manor and into High Wycombe. It is spring fed with intermittent flow in summer months.
- Pastoral farmland occurs on the slopes of the steeper tributary valleys and is interspersed with arable farmland on the gentler slopes either side of the Hughenden Stream.
- Field boundaries defined by hedgerows and hedgerow tree lines with woodland boundaries on upper slopes providing more sinuous field boundaries.
- Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland occupies the valley tops and upper slopes creating a physical and visual boundary. Much of the woodland is ancient semi natural or replanted; its ecological value recognised by local wildlife site designations.
- Small areas of chalk grassland persist on upper valley slopes (e.g. Little Stocking Meadow).
- Hughenden Valley village is the dominant settlement with small linear villages (e.g. Lower and Upper North Dean) dispersed along the valley tributaries, Building materials are a mix of modern and traditional, with some brick and flint.
- Assart field systems, often interlocked with blocks of ancient woodland occur throughout. Pre 18th century regular and irregular enclosure and some 20th century enclosure are interspersed between.
- Hughenden Park is a Registered Historic Park, in the lower section of the valley. The open parkland with scattered trees allows views over the surrounding valley and back towards High Wycombe town, and contributes to the character of this area.
- The A4128 runs along the southern part of the valley into High Wycombe, Quieter local roads and lanes pass through the upper tributaries and up valley sides.
- Local footpaths run along the valley floor along and up valley slopes.
- Views are largely contained within the valley, by woodland, wooded field boundaries and topography. Occasional long views from the valley sides.
- Varying levels of enclosure with open valley sides, contrasting with dense wooded tops. The broad valley landform in the south of the area creates a more open landscape contrasting with the narrower, enclosed northern tributaries.
- A tranquil landscape with a rural character, away from busier roads.

LCA 13.3 HUGHENDEN CHALK RIVER VALLEY

DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: The *Hughenden Chalk River Valley* lies within Wycombe District with a small area in Chiltern District. It cuts north to south through the chalk dip slope. The southern boundary is defined by the edge of High Wycombe. The boundaries of the character area are formed largely by the valley topography with the woodland on the valley tops creating a visual boundary when viewed from the valley floor.

Landscape Character: The *Hughenden Chalk River Valley* comprises the broad, gently sloping chalk valley through which the Hughenden Stream flows and its narrower more steeply sloping dry tributary valleys. Pasture dominates the valley floor and slopes particularly the steeper sides of the tributary valleys with arable farmland more common in the broader valley of the Hughenden Stream. Some chalk grassland persists on steeper valley sides. Field boundaries are defined by hedgerows and hedgerow tree lines or, on the upper slopes, defined by woodland which gives a more sinuous edge. Ancient woodland on the valley tops and pockets of chalk grassland on upper valley slopes contribute to biodiversity value. The parkland of Hughenden Manor is prominent on the western side of the Hughenden Stream extending southwards to the edge of High Wycombe and contributing to historic character. Assarted fields also add time depth. Settlement is dispersed along the valley floor with Hughenden Valley village (a modern village in a rural landscape) central in the area and smaller linear villages along the tributary valleys. The landscape to the south is more open contrasting with the steeper more enclosed tributary valleys. Despite proximity to the edge of High Wycombe this is a tranquil landscape with a rural character.

Geology: Upper Chalk on higher valley slopes with Middle Chalk the lower slopes. Alluvium marks the course of the Hughenden Stream between Hughenden Valley Village and High Wycombe with Head (Undifferentiated) continuing along the dry valley floors from Hughenden Valley Village northwards to Lower Warren Farm.

The chalk valley sides give rise to shallow lime-rich soils. Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage occur on the valley tops marking the transition to the clay with flints geology of the adjacent plateau landscapes. Along the course of the Hughenden Stream floodplain soils are loamy and clayey with naturally high groundwater.

Topography/Landform: The southern part of valley is relatively broad, with gently sloping valley sides, through which the Hughenden Stream flows. In contrast the dry tributary valleys are much narrower with more steeply sloping sides. Valley sides are incised in places creating a gently rolling as well as sloping topography.

Hydrology: The Hughenden Stream emerges south of Hughenden Valley Village and flows southwards through Hughenden Park to High Wycombe where it joins the River Wye. Springs feed the chalk stream with groundwater levels in the chalk

LCA 13.3 HUGHENDEN CHALK RIVER VALLEY

aquifer varying according to rainfall and season. This accounts for the intermittent flow of the Hughenden stream which can be dry in its upper reaches in the summer. Weirs and a small lake are located along the stream course where it flows alongside the eastern edge of Hughenden Park. The Hughenden Stream is not a prominent feature meandering along the valley bottom.

Land use and Settlement: Improved pasture dominates the valley bottom and sides particularly the steeper sides of the tributary valleys. Arable farmland is common either side of the Hughenden Stream interspersed with pasture in the south of the area. Fields are medium sized, predominantly with boundaries defined by hedgerows or on the upper slopes by woodland which gives a more sinuous edge. Hedgerow trees are characteristic along field boundaries particularly in the southern part of the valley. Broadleaved, mixed, beech and yew woodland occurs along the valley tops. Isolated pockets of lowland calcareous grassland and unimproved grassland are found on steeper valley slopes.

Hughenden Manor, a Grade II Registered Park and Garden is prominent on the western side of the Hughenden Stream, extending from Frogmore Wood on the valley top, along the valley side and bottom to the edge of High Wycombe. The distinctive parkland landscape is a dominant influence on the character of this area. The seasonal Hughenden Stream winds through the park at the bottom of the valley and is dammed in several places to widen it out and includes a small lake with an island.

Settlement is dispersed along the valley bottom. Hughenden Valley Village is the dominant settlement with small villages (e.g. Lower North Dean, Upper North Dean and Bryant's Bottom) occurring linearly along roads. Individual farmsteads occur along the valley floor and on the valley slopes. Hughenden Valley Village is a nucleated settlement comprising modern development, with brick and render building materials common. The smaller hamlets/villages in the north of the area have a more rural character with some use of traditional building materials (brick and flint).

The A4128 runs along the valley bottom, alongside the Hughenden Stream and into High Wycombe. Rural roads run along the bottom of the tributary valleys and occasionally up the valley slopes, connecting to settlements on the adjacent higher plateau land (e.g. Naphill and Great Kingshill). Local footpaths run along the valley floor (e.g. along the Hughenden Stream between Hughenden Manor and Hughenden Valley Village), along and up valley slopes.

Tree Cover: Woodland is located along valley tops and upper slopes. Much of the woodland is ancient semi natural or replanted woodland (e.g. Millfield Wood, Woodcock Wood and Longfield Wood). Broadleaved, mixed, and yew woodland is dominant with some lowland beech and yew woodland. Small areas of beech and scrub woodland also occur on the uncultivated steeper tributary valley sides. Trees also occur in hedgerows noticeably on the eastern side of the Hughenden stream valley where they appear in layers up the valley slope. Parkland trees are prominent features in the landscape of Hughenden Manor. Some of the woodland is 'hanging'.

LCA 13.3 HUGHENDEN CHALK RIVER VALLEY

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape: The southern part of the area through which the Hughenden Stream flows is a broad valley with a more open character than the steeper, narrower dry tributary valleys which are more enclosed by their topography. Open views are afforded from the Hughenden Valley sides down to the valley bottom and opposite valley side. View out are restricted by the wooded valley tops. The built townscape of High Wycombe is not prominent in views from this area, and is integrated into the lowerlying land with tree cover.

The A4128, Valley Road is a busy road into High Wycombe which cuts along the valley bottom in the southern part of the area. However it is contained within the lowest part of the landscape by hedgerows and trees which help screen it in views e.g. from Hughenden Manor. Roads which run along the tributary valley bottoms are less busy. Although in close proximity to High Wycombe this landscape retains a rural character with the historic parkland of Hughenden Manor adding time depth to the more open southern part of the area. The narrower tributary valleys contributing a more enclosed and secluded character.

Biodiversity: Much of the biodiversity interest lies within the woodlands represented by their designation as local wildlife sites. Millfield Wood is a SSSI designated for its lowland broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland and lowland calcareous grassland. Small areas of chalk grassland local wildlife sites occur on upper valley slopes including at Little Stocking Meadow, Orchard Farm. Prestwood Picnic Site Local Nature Reserve is an area of accessible chalk grassland. BAP priority habitats in this area are lowland beech and yew woodland, lowland calcareous grassland, grassland probably improved, improved grassland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, chalk headwaters, broadleaved, mixed, and yew woodland, calcareous grassland and chalk rivers.

Historic Environment: The medieval park at Hughenden Manor is most notable in terms of archaeology. Other areas of interest include a medieval settlement, a deserted medieval settlement and field systems. Hughenden Manor is a grade II registered park and garden. It is a 19th century landscape park which was the country home for the Victorian Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli. The house is mock Jacobean brickwork contained by woodland. The brick and flint entrance lodge and the church of St Michaels and All Angels are more visible from the wider landscape.

Assarted fields are characteristic in the north and south of this area lying close to ancient woodland, irregular in shape some with curving woodland boundaries. 20th century enclosure and extended fields with extensive boundary loss are notable to the north and south of Hughenden Valley Village. Pre 18th century irregular and regular fields are also present.

Designations:

- Chilterns AONB
- Archaeological Notification Sites: 7No.

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- Conservation Areas; Hughenden, Upper North Dean.
- Priority BAP Habitats: 9 types
- Biological Notification Sites: 37No.
- Local Nature Reserves: 1No.
- Local Geological Sites: 1No.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 18No.
- English Heritage Registered Parks and Gardens: Hughenden Manor, Grade II
- SSSI: 1No. Millfield Wood

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are as follows:

- The valley landform with broader, gently rolling slopes in the south of the area and narrower steeper slopes in the north.
- Views contained within the character area, to and from the valley sides and along the valley floor. A rural character with the townscape of High Wycombe not prominent in views.
- Areas of pasture, which characterise the valley floor and sides.
- Pockets of chalk grassland on upper valley slopes (including Millfield Wood SSSI and Little Stocking Meadow LWS).
- The narrow course of the Hughenden Stream River with its intermittent flow dependent on heavy rainfall to replenish the aquifer.
- The variety of historic and archaeological features, which reveal the different phases of history within the character area including assarts and pre 18th century irregular fields.
- The ancient and semi-natural woodland, with their strong ecological and visual significance.
- The linear settlement pattern within the northern tributary valleys that have a more rural character with some use of traditional building materials (brick and flint).
- The registered (Grade II) parkland of Hughenden Manor on the edge of High Wycombe which contributes to the historic and tranquil character of the area.
- Tranquil and rural landscape in proximity to High Wycombe.

Strength of Character/Intactness: The strength of character and intactness of the *Hughenden Chalk River Valley* is **strong**. The key characteristics of the Chalk River Valleys are strongly conveyed.

Strategy/Vision: The overall strategy for the Hughenden Valley is to conserve and enhance the character as a chalk valley with its chalk stream, interconnected chalk grassland along steeper valley slopes, historic parkland and areas of interlocked woodland along ridge tops.

LCA 13.3 HUGHENDEN CHALK RIVER VALLEY

Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve the mosaic of land use and land cover within the valley. Maintain the contrast between the smooth valley side and wooded slopes/tops. Promote appropriate management of farmland, to encourage and create more biodiverse habitats, as well as agriculturally productive landscapes.
- Maintain views to and from valleys sides. Ensure the built townscape of High Wycombe continues to be integrated by managing tree cover.
- Appropriately manage pockets of chalk grassland on upper valley slopes to encourage chalk grassland species and prevent unwanted scrub encroachment. Seek to expand and connect areas of chalk grassland where possible.
- Conserve and seek to enhance flow of the gently meandering Hughenden Stream
- Conserve historic elements, such as archaeological features and field systems which provide evidence of past use of the land.
- Manage and gap up hedgerow boundaries to provide visual unity and biodiversity value. Coaxial fields, assarts and pre 18th century irregular enclosure are a priority for conservation, restoration and enhancement.
- Conserve and manage tree and woodland cover to ensure a diversity of species and maintain visual containment. Protect and manage ancient woodland.
- Conserve and enhance important ecological habitats notably chalk grassland and other Priority BAP habitats in the valley.
- Conserve the character, fabric and appearance of historic buildings, in villages and hamlets and individual farmsteads. Limit expansion of settlement into the rural landscape and maintain open green space along roads preventing coalescence of linear settlements.
- Seek to maintain the quiet rural character of the roads which cut through the valley, avoiding urbanisation and widening.
- Conserve the historic parkland and landscape setting of Hughenden Manor.

LCA 13.3 HUGHENDEN CHALK RIVER VALLEY



Hughenden Valley village is nestled within the valley floor.



Arable and pastoral fields dominate valley sides, with long views up and down the valley sides.



The Hughenden Stream meanders through the broad, lower chalk valley, flowing through Hughenden Park.



Historic parkland, with scattered trees at Hughenden Manor.

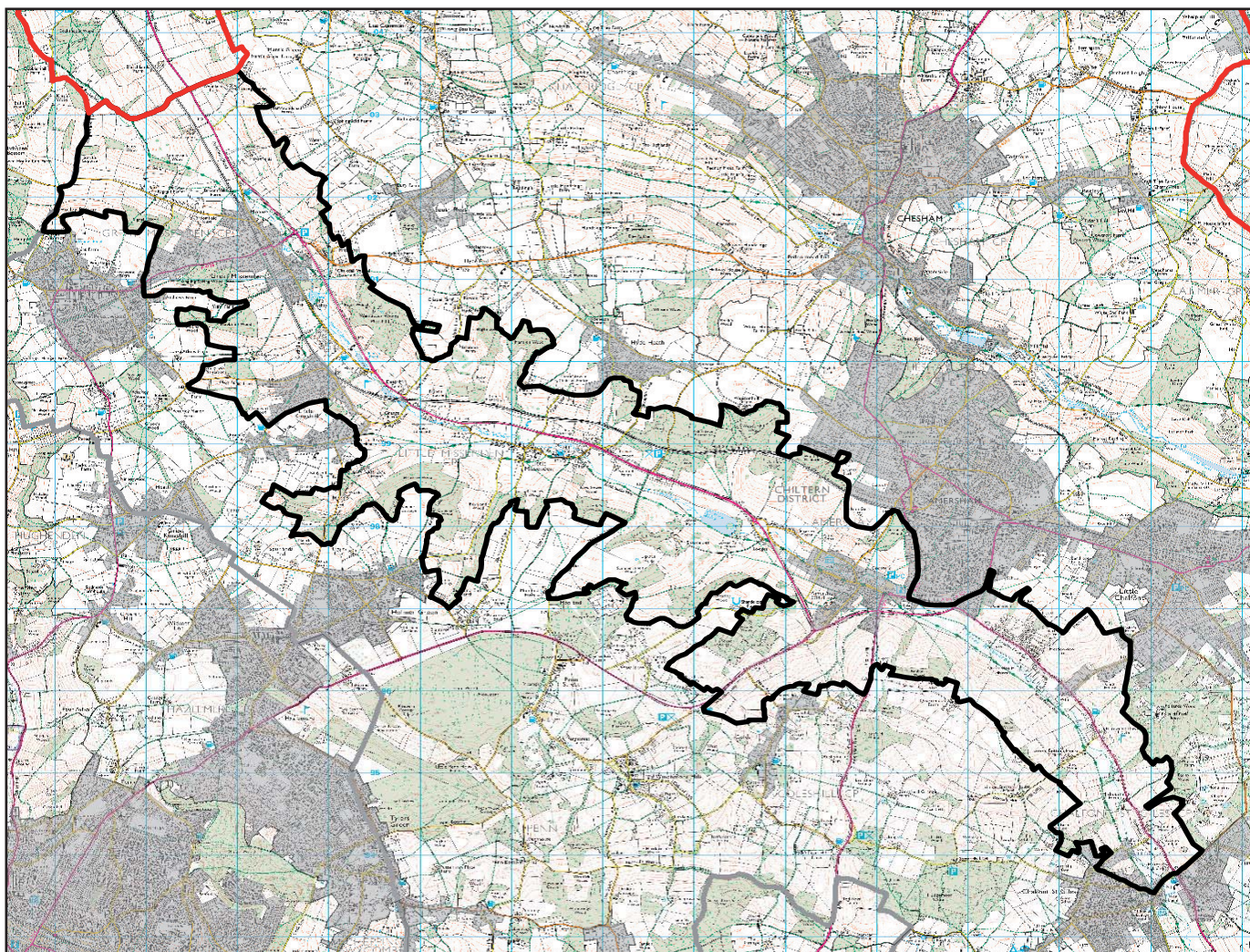
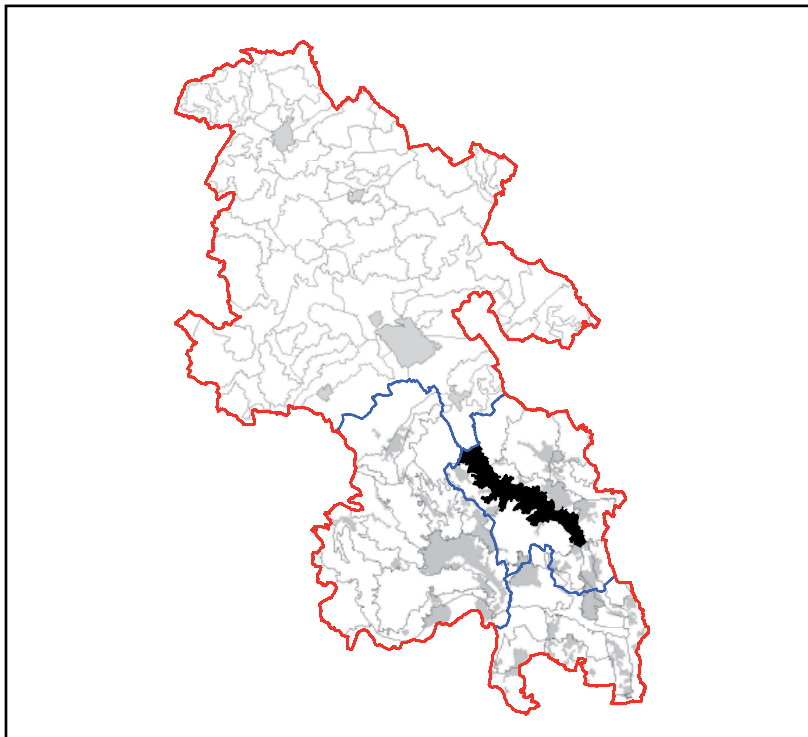


Quiet rural roads wind up the valley sides, often contained or partly enclosed by woodland.



Traditional materials include brick, flint and red slate, such as at St Michael and All Angels Church at Hughenden Manor.

LCA 13.5 MISBOURNE UPPER CHALK RIVER VALLEY



LCA 13.5 MISBOURNE UPPER CHALK RIVER VALLEY

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Shallow chalk valley, gently sloping and indented by smaller dry valleys to produce smoothly rolling valley sides, with a relatively wide, flat bottomed floodplain. Valley sides steepening in the upper reaches.
- On the valley sides the underlying chalk, and free draining lime-rich soils predominately support arable cultivation, with some calcareous grassland and woodland on higher slopes.
- Ancient and semi-natural woodland associated with higher slopes and dry valleys, creating a visual boundary of the area, including mixed, broadleaved and coniferous woodland, which possess significant biodiversity and ecological value.
- The valley floor is characterised by rough grassland, permanent pasture and paddocks, and divided into smaller scale fields, by low hedges and wooden post and wire fencing.
- The narrow and gently flowing Misbourne River, meanders down the valley, with occasional ponds often located near farmsteads or small villages. The river often runs unnoticeably through this lower landscape.
- A string of hamlets and farmsteads exist along the valley floor, with nucleated rows of larger settlements focused along roads. The larger village of Great Missenden is situated in the northern part of the area. Distinctive churches are often a feature of villages.
- Post medieval parkland at Shardeloes and Missenden Abbey. Shardeloes House is a visually prominent feature on the valley side.
- Varying patterns of field enclosure, with a mix of regular and irregular field boundaries. Large scale fields dominate the valley sides, with smaller scale field divisions along the valley floor.
- Archaeological and historical features are scattered along the valley and within small villages, including Roman villas, earthworks, such as Grims Ditch and flint scatter.
- The valley acts as a transport corridor, with the A413 following the valley floor. This is visible from many parts of the landscape. Smaller rural roads cut across the valley, connecting rural villages and farmsteads. A railway line also runs along the valley length.
- Views are largely contained along the valley, often broken up or fragmented by field boundaries, hedgerows and trees. There are some extensive views from upper slopes across the character area.
- The valley retains a tranquil, unspoilt and 'rural' character, despite accessibility of public roads (A413) and railway. A still and calm environment.
- A good rights of way network, including the South Bucks Way, which passes through numerous villages throughout the valley.

LCA 13.5 MISBOURNE UPPER CHALK RIVER VALLEY

DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: The *Misbourne Upper Chalk River Valley* lies entirely within the Chiltern District. It cuts through the chalk dip slope, and runs north west to south east. The boundaries of the character area are formed largely by the valley topography and the wooded valley ridge line. The woodland running along the valley ridge acts as a visual boundary, when viewed from the valley floor.

Landscape Character: The *Misbourne Upper Chalk River Valley* is a wide, shallow valley, characterised by gentle rolling valley sides, which predominately support arable cultivation and are often bounded by ancient woodland along the upper slopes. The valley floor is largely comprised of rough grassland, pasture and paddocks, which has been divided into smaller scale field systems, and is dissected by the River Misbourne, which winds through the landscape. Settlement is distributed along the valley floor, including from individual farmsteads and larger villages, and frequently displaying a strong historical form and fabric. The valley acts as a communication corridor, dominated by the A413, which follows the valley floor. This is a varied landscape, with a mix of land uses and land cover. There is a marked contrast between the higher levels of movement and noise associated with the road and other forms of human activity, and the sense of tranquillity which still exists throughout the valley floor and valley sides. A number of important registered parks and gardens, and archaeological remnants are present, such as Roman Villas, earthworks and flint scatter, displaying the historical context of the river valley.

Geology: In the north of the character area, the valley is cut into the Middle Chalk, with Upper Chalk underlying the higher slopes. Upper Chalk predominates throughout the rest of the area, with alluvium following the valley floor and floodplain. The chalk geology gives rise to free draining lime-rich, loamy soils, with more base-rich loamy soils furthest north. Along the floodplain, loamy and clayey soils prevail, with a naturally high groundwater level.

Topography/Landform: The valley is relatively shallow, with gentle inclining lower slopes, gradually becoming steeper along the upper valley sides. Smaller, dry tributary valleys feed into the Misbourne Valley, which have indented the landscape to generate smooth, rolling valley sides. The valley drains from north west to south east. The valley bottom is relatively broad and flat, with villages tending to settle where the valley widens.

Hydrology: The valley is typically characterised by low flow, however characteristically of chalk landscapes, the groundwater level is high. Some localised water logging is evident at low points. The narrow Misbourne River slowly meanders down the valley, flowing gently through the landscape, with intermittent small ponds scattered along its course. It is a characteristically clear and gentle chalk valley river. However, the River Misbourne is winterbourne, and therefore flows vary throughout the year. At times of high rainfall localised flooding occurs whereby

LCA 13.5 MISBOURNE UPPER CHALK RIVER VALLEY

lakes and ponds are also recharged e.g. Missenden Abbey Parkland. When these events occur the river becomes considerably more apparent in the landscape.

A large lake located centrally within the character area, is associated with Shardeloes Park. Water mills are also a feature associated with the River Misbourne, with several disused water mills along its course, such as Chalfont Mill, Chalfont St Giles.

Land use and Settlement: The land is principally arable production on the valley slopes, with some calcareous grassland on the higher slopes, interspersed with woodland belts. The valley floor is predominately managed grassland, for both agricultural and recreational use, with a mix of improved pastures, rough grazing and paddocks.

The valley is an important communication corridor connecting the surrounding region and London. The A413 London Road and railway line follow the valley floor, and are visually and audibly noticeable in the landscape. A high voltage pylon line also transects the landscape centrally. Smaller enclosed rural roads pass up and down the valley sides, connecting settlements.

Small hamlets and farmsteads are dotted along the valley floor, following road networks and the Misbourne River. Larger villages are nucleated in rows along roads, and some have become important tourist attractions, such as Great Missenden, which is situated in the north of the area, and Amersham Old Town in the south. The settlements possess a strong rural and picturesque character, with important historical buildings and churches, which have become distinctive features, such as the Church of St Peter and Paul, Great Missenden, and Church of St John the Baptist, Little Missenden. More modern settlement edges from larger towns, such as Amersham on the Hill, also spread into the character area.

A high density of public rights of way through this character area, climbing the valley sides, and following the valley floor. The South Bucks Way passes through the entire length of the area, largely following the line of the River Misbourne and crosses many settlements.

Tree Cover: Woodland is predominately located along upper valley slopes, and within tributary valleys, and it is a mix of broadleaved, coniferous woodland and mixed woodland. Broadleaved woodland contributes to the seasonal variations in colour, evident in this landscape, and coniferous woodland provides a contrast. A large number of the woodlands in this character area are ancient and semi-natural, or are re-planted ancient woodland. Some Yew woodland is found in the north of the area, as a result of the base-rich soils. Concentrations of parklands trees are associated with Missenden Abbey and Shardeloes.

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape: The valley has both an enclosed and an open character, with views contained to the valley character area. Along the valley floor, views are fragmented by field enclosures and settlements, however valley sides allow for extensive vistas. Views to wooded skylines along valley ridgelines.

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The landscape is diverse and textured; resulting from the mixed land uses and land cover, which vary across the character area, in particular, between the valley floor and valley sides. A variety of woodland types, field enclosures and settlements create a mosaic landscape, which is at times fragmented and discontinuous.

The busy and noisy A413 passes through the landscape, however, away from this tranquil and serene character prevails along the valley floor, within villages and hamlets, and on the valley sides.

Biodiversity: The habitat mix of the area comprises predominantly improved grasslands along the valley floor and floodplain, and often surrounding villages. Further north and south the grassland habitat extends, widening out across the valley. Elsewhere, valley sides are largely covered by arable and horticulture cultivation, with some calcareous grassland on higher slopes, and woodland belts extending along the valley ridges. Woodlands are broadleaved, mixed and coniferous, with yew woodland in the north, and many of these woodlands are ancient and semi-natural, or re-planted ancient woodland.

During the last decade increased flows on the River Misbourne have restored a variety of habitat features including open pools and clean gravel runs. This has aided recovery of the river's biological interest, bringing benefits for wetland birds, invertebrates and aquatic plants, notably the re-appearance of characteristic floating rafts of vegetation along some sections of the watercourse.

BAP Priority Habitats in this area are improved grassland; lowland mixed deciduous woodland and chalk rivers. The Chiltern chalk rivers are also recognised as a South East Biodiversity Opportunity Area. Local Wildlife Sites include: Shardeloes Lake; Beamond Wood; Angling Spring Wood and Langley's Wood.

Historic Environment: The historic landscape character of this area has remained largely unchanged since the 19th century, a landscape containing ancient woodland on the tops and upper sides of the valley with enclosures found on the valley side and bottoms. There are a variety of different field types, which include historic river meadows found along the Misbourne, these are well preserved south of Amersham and Chalfont St Giles. There are also dispersed areas of pre 18th century irregular enclosure, such as south of Coleman's Farm which could have originated as medieval assarts. However in the last 50 years the landscape is changing to accommodate an increasing number of smaller pony paddocks.

Another dominant landscape are the parklands of Shardeloes and Great Missenden Abbey. Shardeloes, was laid out in the late 18th century by Humphrey Repton, and is a remarkably well preserved parkland landscape which remains a prominent landscape feature, visible on the valley side. The park and gardens at Missenden Abbey are built upon the former site of a 12th century medieval monastery. Much of this landscape dates to the early 19th century when the owner, John Ayton, redesigned the house and grounds. The building of the A413 bypass has bisected the park. Missenden Abbey has been recently been restored, and is currently used as an

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education and conference centre. The historical and cultural significance of both Great Missenden Abbey Park and Shardeloes Park is reflected in English Heritage's designation as Registered Parks and Gardens and both parklands are also designated as conservation areas.

There are several significant historic settlements including the market town of Amersham and the villages of Great and Little Missenden. The historic cores of these settlements are designated as conservation areas, containing a high concentration of listed buildings, many constructed in a vernacular tradition of timber framing, handmade brick and roof tile. Among the more significant buildings are the Grade I churches of St Mary's Amersham, St Peter & St Paul, at Great Missenden and St John the Baptist, Little Missenden.

In terms of the archaeological interest the area has a number of sites, most notably, the prehistoric earthworks of Grims Ditch, Roman settlements alongside the Misbourne (including at least one villa at Amersham), and the medieval moated sites at Chalkdell Wood and The Castle. The towns and villages are themselves also of archaeological interest.

Designations:

- Chilterns AONB
- English Heritage Scheduled Monuments: Moated sites in Chalkdell Wood, The Castle, and a section of Grim's Ditch 350m NE from Cottage Farm.
- English Heritage Registered Parks and Gardens: Shardeloes Park, Grade II*; Missenden Abbey, Grade II.
- Conservation Areas: Amersham, Great Missenden, Great Missenden Abbey Park Little Missenden and Shardeloes Park
- Listed Buildings: 319 (5 Grade I, and 11 Grade II*)
- Archaeological Notification Sites: 29 No.
- Biological Notification Sites: 25 No.
- Priority Bap Habitats: 5 types.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 20 No.

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are as follows:

- The valley landform and the gently rolling form of the valley sides. Steeper upper valley sides.
- Contained views within the valley and along valley sides and panoramic views from the surrounding valley slopes across the character area.
- Areas of rough grassland, permanent pasture, which characterise the valley floor.
- The openness and views from and to the valley sides
- The narrow course of the Misbourne River, and the characteristic clear and gentle chalk valley nature.
- The variety of archaeological features, such as Grims Ditch, Roman settlements alongside the Misbourne, and medieval moated sites, which reveal the different phases of history within the character area.
- The ancient and semi-natural woodland, with their strong ecological and visual significance, in particular on the upper valley sides.
- The historical settlement pattern and surviving historic buildings in villages and hamlets.
- The registered historic parks and gardens, such as Shardeloes Park and estate land, which have become distinctive elements in the landscape.
- Areas of tranquillity and limited overt human impact, away from busy roads

Strength of Character/Intactness: The strength of character and intactness of the *Misbourne Upper Chalk River Valley* is **moderate**. Despite the strong sense of key characteristics, the presence of the busy and noisy A413 reduces the intactness of the landscape character.

Strategy/Vision: The overall management for the Upper Misbourne Valley is to conserve and enhance the mosaic of land use and land cover, of mixed farmland, settlement and ancient woodland, which are reflective of the valley nature and respond to the topography and geology of the character area. To protect the historical identity of the landscape, the villages, hamlets and individual farmsteads, as well as important archaeological and ecologically recognised features within the landscape.

Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve the mosaic of land use and land cover within the valley. Maintain the contrast between the valley floor and the valley sides.
- Conserve and enhance the distinctive linear rural river valley character

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- Conserve the character, fabric, appearance and setting of historic buildings, in villages and hamlets and individual farmsteads.
- Conserve and manage tree and woodland cover, particularly along the valley ridge, to ensure a diverse species. Protect ancient woodland cover.
- Promote appropriate management of farmland, to encourage and create more biodiverse habitats, as well as agriculturally productive landscapes.
- Maintain the rural character of the roads which cut through the valley, avoiding over use and widening, in particular sunken lanes and their associated banks and vegetation.
- Conserve and enhance the small, gentle nature of the Misbourne River and the associated wildlife habitats.
- Conserve historic elements, such as churches and archaeological features, which provide evidence of past use of the land.
- Conserve and maintain opportunities for panoramic views across the valley and the rural quality of these views. Maintain wooded skylines.
- Consider opportunities to reduce the impacts of traffic along the A413.
- Conserve and enhance important ecological habitats, particularly Priority BAP habitats in the valley.
- Conserve any historical or conservational parks, such as Shardeloes, and Missenden Abbey Park, their settings and historic landscape features.
- Avoid further deterioration in levels of tranquillity and seek opportunities to mitigate existing noise and visual intrusion
- Avoid large scale development which is out of keeping with the existing scale of built form

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Rough grazing, pasture and paddocks on the valley floor, with arable fields dominating the smoothly rolling valley sides. Woodland blocks situated on higher ground.



Strong settlement character, with some traditional and historic buildings, such as brick and flint, black wooded cladding and black and white Tudor.



Shardeloes Park and Manor, set amongst park estate land and woodland. A visually prominent landmark on the valley side.



Narrow, gently flowing Misbourne River runs along the valley bottom.

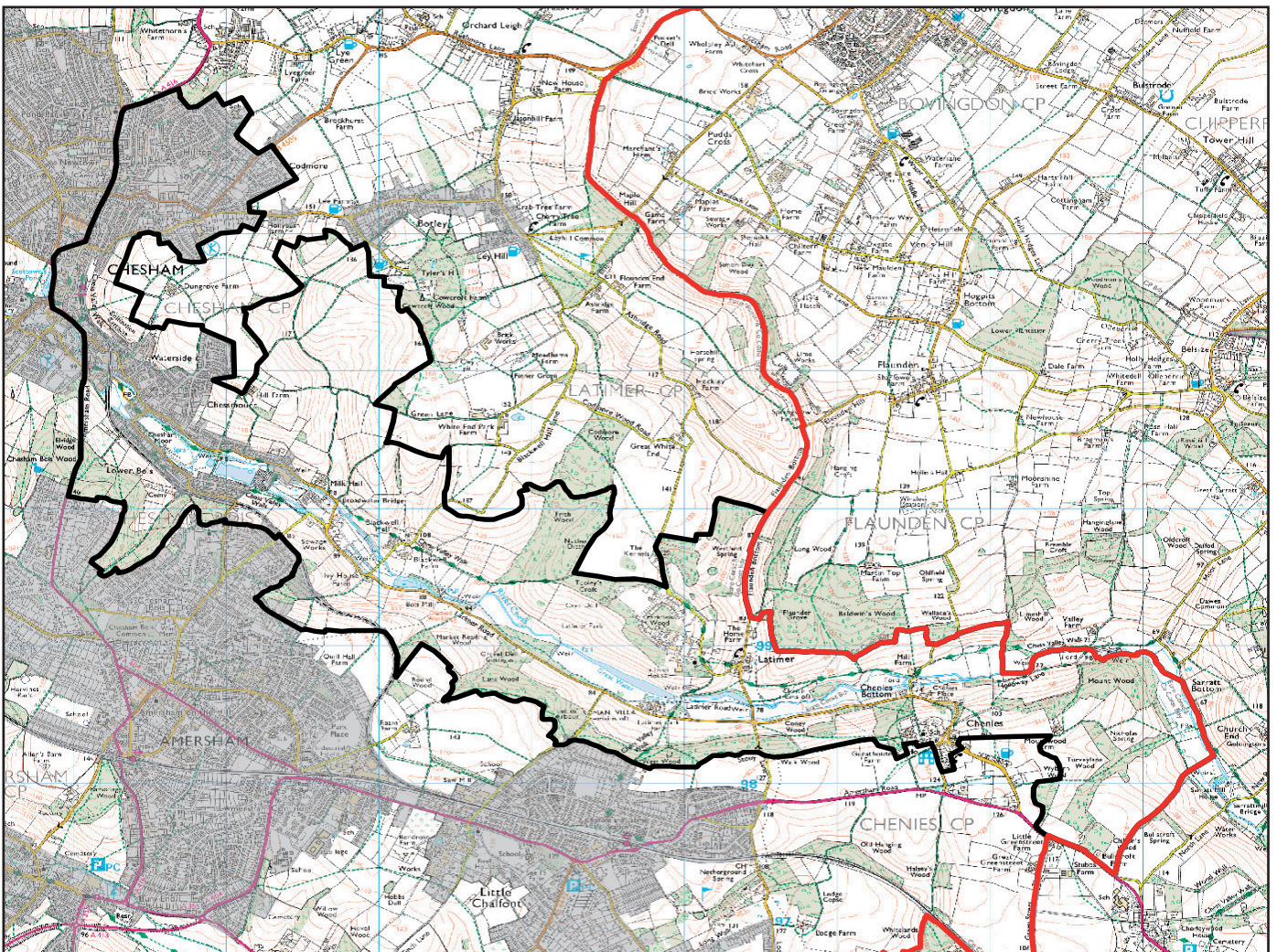
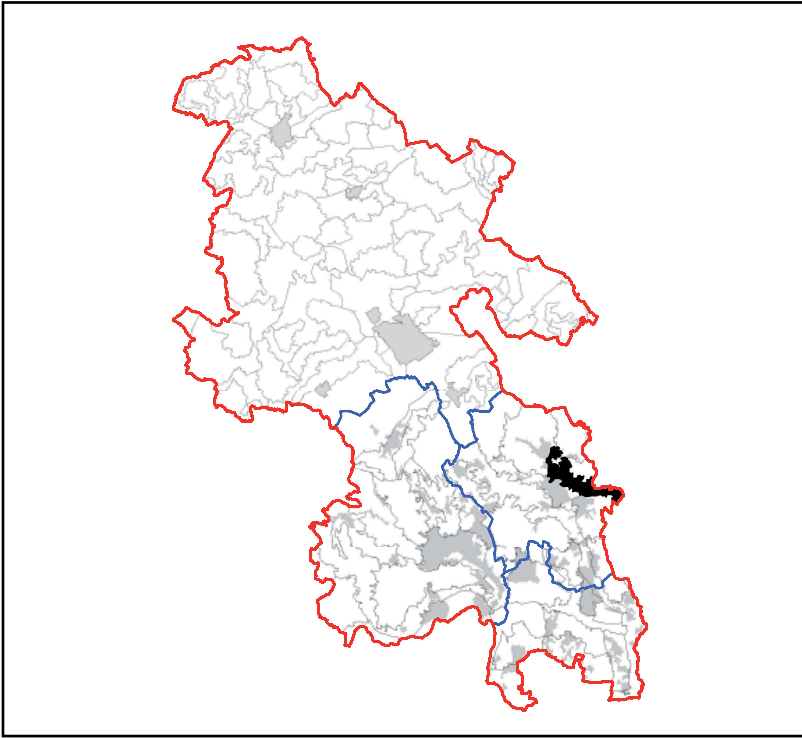


Heavily wooded valley tops contrasting with open fields.



Extensive views from valley sides.

LCA 13.6 CHESS CHALK RIVER VALLEY



LCA 13.6 CHESS CHALK RIVER VALLEY

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A broad chalk valley with a wide, flat bottomed floodplain. Rolling valley sides to the north of the river with sides rising more steeply to the south.
- The River Chess is a relatively wide chalk stream which meanders gently through the valley forming the main focus of the landscape. The river is dammed at Great Water to form a lake within the parkland of Latimer House. The line of river picked out by occasional alders and other trees.
- On the valley sides the underlying chalk, and free draining lime-rich soils support arable cultivation and pasture. Woodland is present on the valley tops and in places reaches down the valley slopes.
- The valley floor is characterised by pasture with some rough grassland and scrub woodland. Field boundaries are defined by low hedges, tree lines and estate rail associated with Latimer Park.
- The valley is not a main transport corridor or through valley. The Latimer Road, a local road, runs parallel to the River course.
- The historic picturesque villages of Chenies and Latimer nestle on the valley slopes. These settlements are characterised by the vernacular buildings constructed of handmade brick, flint, with some timber framing and render. Individual farmsteads are located along the valley floor and on the lower valley slopes.
- Views are largely contained along the valley and up the valley slopes. There are some extensive views from upper slopes across the character area.
- Woodland is located along upper valley slopes but extends down to the valley floor in places (e.g. Coney Wood). Ancient and semi-natural woodland occurs particularly on the southern valley side (e.g. Chesham Bois Wood). Woodland creates a visual boundary to the area and contributes biodiversity and ecological value.
- The river itself is an important habitat with biodiversity interest also in SSSI wetland habitats along the valley floor including water meadows at Frogmore Meadows and water cress beds at Sarratt Bottom.
- Registered parkland occurs at Latimer Park which lies centrally within the landscape, straddling the River Chess and contributing to the character of the area. Chenies Place is also a registered landscape lying to the east.
- Archaeological features are concentrated in the east of the area including medieval flooded water meadows and an Iron Age/ Roman settlement at Frogmore and Latimer Villa.
- A comprehensive rights of way network, including the Chess Valley Way which allows distinctive elements of the landscape to be experienced by foot.
- A contained and hidden landscape with a historic, rural and peaceful character.

LCA 13.6 CHESS CHALK RIVER VALLEY

DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: The *Chess Chalk River Valley* lies entirely within Chiltern District. It cuts through the chalk dip slope, and runs north west to south east. The boundaries of the character area are formed largely by the valley topography and the wooded valley ridge line. The woodland running along the valley ridge acts as a visual boundary when viewed from the valley floor. Chesham reaches into the River Valley on its northern boundary and Amersham lies on the flatter, high ground to the south of the River Valley.

Landscape Character: The *Chess Chalk River Valley* has a wide, flat valley floor with valley sides rising steeply to the south and more rolling to the north. The River is a large chalk stream (in the context of the Chilterns) and a visible feature within the landscape. While the valley floor is dominated by pasture, rough grazing and some scrub woodland, the valley sides are smoother fields of pasture and arable crops. Woodland, some ancient, crowns the valley tops and in places reaches down the valley sides. The registered parkland at Latimer Park lies centrally within the area and has a strong influence on the character. Chenies Place (also registered parkland) and the picturesque villages of Latimer and Chenies add time depth and historic character. The valley is contained by its landform with no main transport routes and is a sheltered and hidden landscape with a rural, peaceful and historic character. Water meadows and water cress beds are features which relate to the chalk river. The Chess Valley Walk runs along the river course allowing many elements of the landscape to be experienced on foot.

Geology: The valley bottom and floodplain is alluvium. The lower slopes of the river valley are underlain with Middle Chalk with a transition to Upper Chalk which underlies the higher slopes. The chalk geology of the valley slopes gives rise to freely draining lime-rich loamy soils with areas of slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage on the highest slopes where the geology chalk geology abuts clay with flints. Loamy and clayey floodplain soils with naturally high groundwater level dominate the floodplain.

Topography/Landform: The valley is broad with a wide and flat floodplain. The valley sides to the south of the river rise quite steeply. To the north the valley sides are more rolling due to the presence of spurs and coombes.

Hydrology: The River Chess emerges at Chesham (from a deep chalk aquifer) and flows north-west to south-east down to The River Colne near Rickmansworth. Regular winter rainfall is needed to refill the aquifer and maintain the River's flow. The River Chess is of sufficient size to be a feature within the landscape. There are a number of weirs along its meandering course and the river widens at Great Water where it has been dammed to form a lake and provide a feature in Latimer Park. On the edge of Chesham is an island known as 'The Moor' which was created in the 10th century when the Chess was diverted and a mill built.

LCA 13.6 CHESS CHALK RIVER VALLEY

Land use and Settlement: The River Chess is the main focus of the valley with water often visible or the course of the river defined by occasional alders and other trees. The valley floor and lower valley slopes are improved grassland. There are some areas of unimproved and neutral grassland on the valley floor and some small pockets of scrub woodland. Pasture and rough grazing area the principal land uses here. Field boundaries are defined by low hedges, tree lines and estate rail associated with Latimer Park.

Arable fields are more dominant on the upper valley slopes as well as some pasture grassland and woodland on the valley tops (mixed woodland with some small pockets of coniferous).

The Latimer Road follows the course of the River to the south linking Chesham with the village of Chenies. The historic nucleated villages of Chenies and Latimer lie on the valley slopes to the north and south of the river respectively and are both associated with historic landscapes (Chenies Place and Latimer Park). The picturesque village of Latimer lies adjacent to the registered park set around a village green and pump. Building materials in both the villages are notably brick and brick and flint with some white plaster and timber framing. A number of farmsteads occur on the valley bottom and lower valley slopes (e.g. Ivy House Farm, Blackwell Farm and Latimer Park Farm)

Chesham lies at the northern end of the valley where the River Chess rises and the edge of Amersham lies on the valley top to the south. The Chess Valley Walk passes through this area and there are a number of footpaths notably crossing through wooded areas (e.g. West Wood and Coney Wood).

Tree Cover: Woodland is predominately located along upper valley slopes but in places extends down to the valley floor (e.g. Lane Wood, Coney Wood and Mount Wood). The southern valley sides are more wooded with broadleaved, mixed, and yew woodland and lowland beech and yew woodland with some small blocks of coniferous woodland. The woodland on the northern valley side is mixed woodland associated with Latimer House and mixed woodland with areas of coniferous at the adjacent Frith Wood. Ancient woodland including Chesham Bois Wood, Lane Wood, Ladies Arbour, West Wood and Mount Wood occurs on the southern valley sides. Small patches of scrub woodland and broadleaved, mixed, and yew woodland occur along the valley floor.

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape: The Chess valley is contained by its landform and wooded edges. Views are up and down the valley floor and across the valley (notably between Latimer House and Chenies). Some views into the valley are afforded from the higher ground of the chalk dip slope to the north (where woodland permits). The river is prominent through the area; the rough grazing, grassland and scrub woodland on the valley floor provide a rougher texture which contrast with the smoother pastoral and arable valley sides. Woodland crowns the valley tops extending down the sides in places.

LCA 13.6 CHESS CHALK RIVER VALLEY

Although the Latimer Road is relatively busy it is a local road and does not dominate the landscape as the main roads in other river valleys do. The absence of railways and major road, the prominence of Latimer park and the villages of Latimer and Chenies contribute to a rural, peaceful and historic character.

Biodiversity: The river itself is an important habitat. Biodiversity interest also occurs in wetland habitats along the valley floor and in woodlands on the valley sides. Frogmore Meadows is designated as a SSSI; it is a rare unimproved water meadow supporting plants such as ragged robin and meadowsweet. Part of Sarratt Bottom supporting neutral grassland is SSSI with active watercressbeds found in this location. Marshy grassland at Blackwell Farm, meadow adjacent to Lower Water at Latimer and woodland on the southern valley slopes are local wildlife sites. BAP priority habitats are chalk rivers, fens, lowland beech and yew woodland and lowland mixed deciduous woodland.

Historic Environment: The historic landscape is a mixture of fields, parkland and woodland. There are number of different types of fields including, historic meadows and watermeadows along the river Chess. Pre 18th century irregular enclosures occur along the valley sides; while on the valley sides to the south of the river pre 18th century co-axial fields are present. The 20th century has seen the subdivision of these older fields into pony paddocks enclosure.

Historic parklands are prominent in this area. The landscape contains Latimer Park, an 18th century grade II landscape and house, while to the south of the Chess is Chenies Place, a grade II* landscape and Chenies Manor, a 15/16th century manor house with 19th century gardens. Latimer Park is particularly visible in the centre of the character area straddling the River Chess and occupying 213ha of the valley floor and sides. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown reputedly advised on the landscape design of Latimer Park, while Chenies Place was designed by Edward Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll.

The archaeological record shows that the river Chess has been a focus for activity and settlement since the prehistoric times. Of particular note are the number of Iron Age/Roman settlements, including a site at Frogmore and a Roman villa excavated at Latimer. Another important monument is the earthworks of the deserted hamlet of Flaunden, which was believed to have been abandoned in the 19th century.

Designations:

- Chilterns AONB
- Registered Parks and Gardens: Chenies Park (Grade II*) and Latimer Park (Grade II).
- Scheduled Monuments: St. Mary Magdalen's Church; Medieval undercroft.
- Conservation Area: Chenies.
- Archaeological Notification Sites: 16 No.

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- Priority Bap Habitats: 4 types.
- Biological Notification Sites: 11 No.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 13 No.
- SSSI: 2 No. Frogmore Meadows, Sarratt Bottom.

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are as follows:

- The flowing chalk stream of the River Chess which is large by Chiltern standards.
- Areas of rough grassland, pasture and scrub woodland which characterise the valley floor. The smoother pastoral and arable valley sides and wooded tops.
- Views along the valley floor and up the valley slopes and panoramic views from the valley slopes across the character area.
- The variety of ecological and historical features some of which are connected to the river environment and its management (water meadow SSSI and watercress beds).
- A concentration of archaeological sites along the river valley, particular relating to the prehistoric and Roman periods.
- Pre 18th century irregular and co axial enclosures which provide evidence of historic land use.
- Ancient and semi-natural woodland, with strong ecological and visual significance providing containment of this landscape.
- The historic villages of Latimer and Chenies located on the valley slopes with traditional building materials of brick and white plaster and timber frame.
- Registered parks and gardens of Latimer Park and Chenies Place and their setting in the River Valley, which contribute to strength of character and time depth.

Strength of Character/Intactness: The strength of character and intactness of the *Chess Chalk River Valley* is **strong**. The key characteristics of the Chalk River Valley landscape types are strongly conveyed.

Strategy/Vision: The overall strategy for the *Chess Chalk River Valley* is to conserve and enhance the character as a chalk valley with its chalk stream, watercress beds and water meadows, intact historic villages, parkland and areas of interlocked woodland along ridge tops.

Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve and maintain the water flow and quality of the River Chess which is a principle focus in the landscape.
- Conserve the mosaic of land use and land cover within the valley. Maintain the contrast between the rougher texture of the valley floor and the smoother valley

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sides.

- Promote appropriate management of farmland, to encourage and create more biodiverse habitats, as well as agriculturally productive landscapes. Prevent run-off from agricultural land. Maintain hedgerows for biodiversity and ecological connectivity.
- Conserve and maintain opportunities for panoramic views across the valley.
- Conserve historic elements and archaeological features, including pre 18th century irregular and co axial field enclosures.
- Encourage the restoration of the historic hedgerow pattern where it has been lost. To enhance the landscape character and strengthen the ecological diversity. Where necessary use historic maps to identify where hedgerows have been lost.
- Conserve and enhance important ecological habitats, particularly Priority BAP habitats in the valley, the chalk stream habitat and associated wetland habitats.
- Conserve and manage tree and woodland cover, particularly along the valley ridge, to ensure a diverse species and provide visual containment. Protect ancient woodland cover.
- Conserve and management of historic meadows and pastures.
- Conserve the character, fabric and appearance of historic buildings, in villages.
- Maintain the rural character of the roads which cut through the valley, avoiding over use and widening.
- Conserve the landscape setting of the registered parks and gardens. Latimer Park and its setting are key to the character of the area.

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A broad chalk valley with a wide, flat bottomed floodplain. The River Chess meanders gently and forms the main focus of the landscape.



Estate rail sometimes defines field boundaries (associated with Latimer historic parkland).



Woodland is located along upper valley slopes extending down to the valley floor in places. Woodland creates a visual boundary to the area.



The historic village of Latimer. Brick and white render and timber are characteristic building materials



Rough grazing, pasture and rough grassland on the valley floor. Smoother fields on the valley sides and wooded tops. Field boundaries are often defined by low hedges

