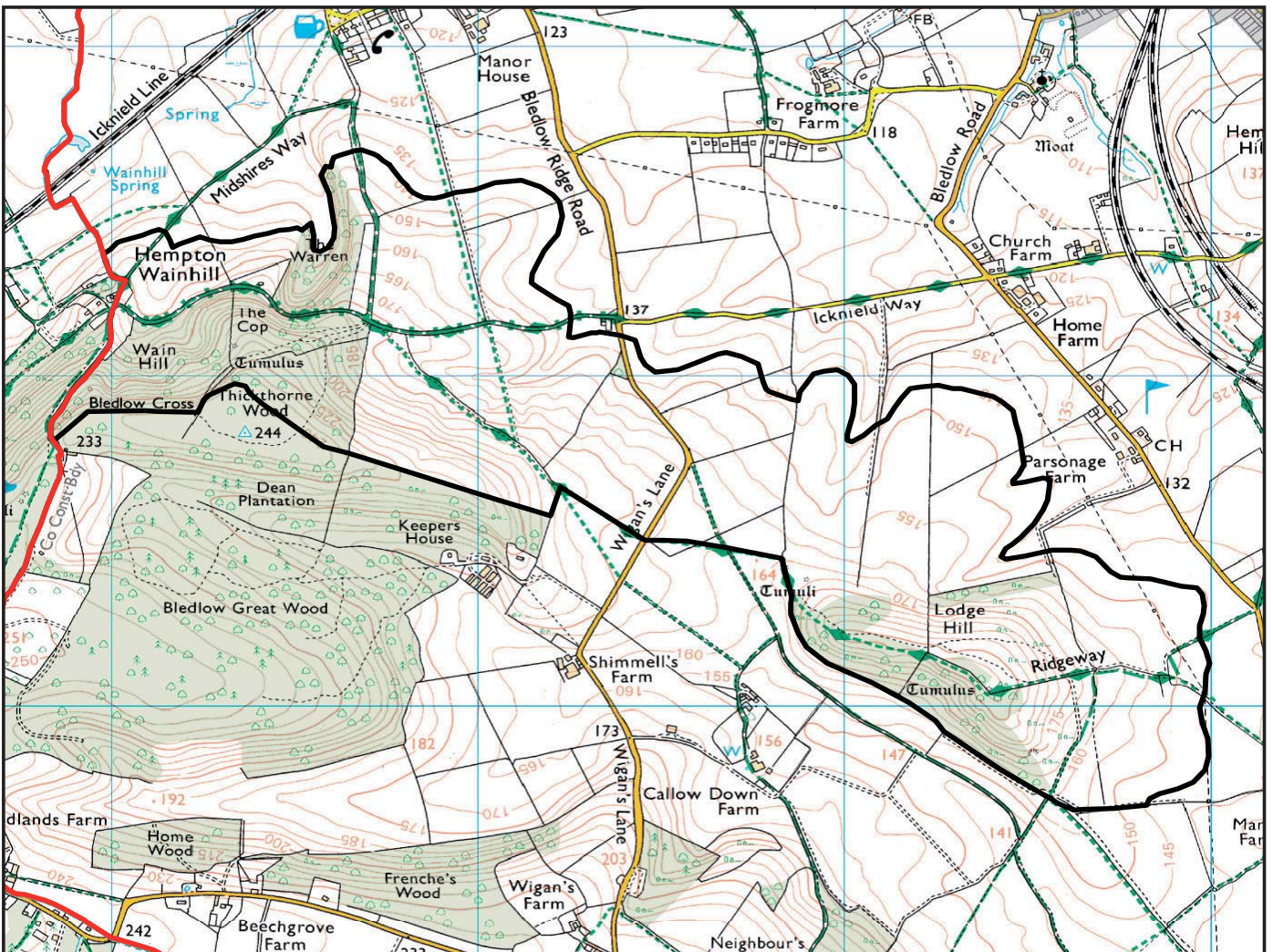
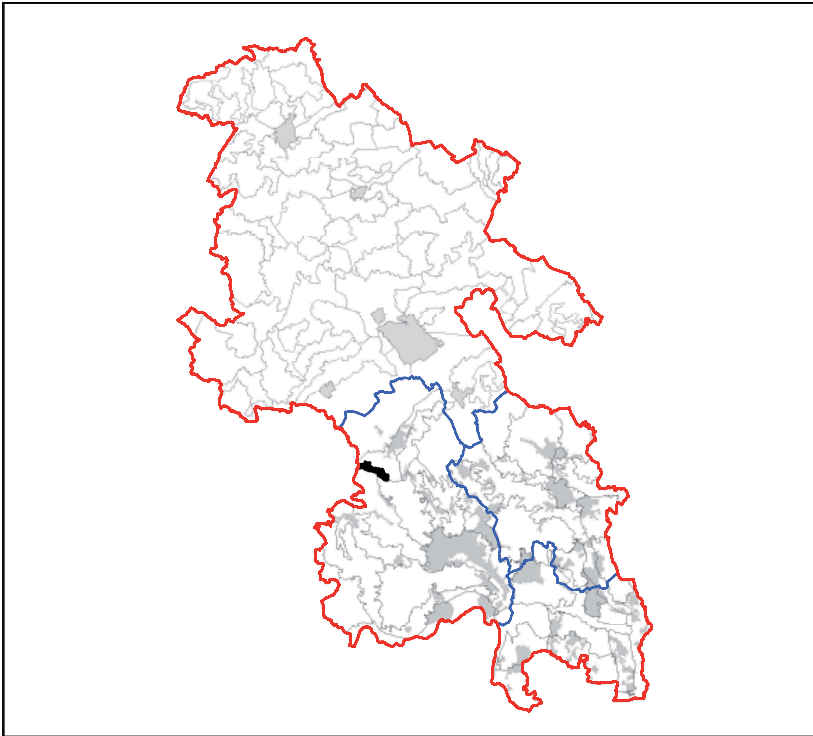


LCA 11.2 WAIN HILL CHALK ESCARPMENT



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KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Steep, north east facing chalk escarpment, rising to create two separate summits, highly undulating and overlain with free draining loamy soils. A visible feature over long distances from lower lying areas.
- Lower slopes are undulating, with arable cultivation, and contrasting with the wooded scarp tops. Field systems often have a strong geometric character, and are largely parliamentary enclosure.
- Densely wooded upper slopes, with a mix of broadleaved, mixed, yew and scrub woodland. Interspersed with open patches of calcareous grassland.
- A notable absence of buildings within this landscape.
- Lodge Hill (comprising calcareous grassland and scrub woodland) is a large area of ecological importance and classed as an SSSI.
- A good network of well managed hedgerows with trees delineates field systems.
- A significant number of archaeological remnants, including several scheduled monuments, namely, Bledlow Cross; an Iron Age village site, bowl barrow and bell barrow on Lodge Hill; Bronze Age bowl barrow on The Cop.
- Three long distance footpaths pass through this landscape, namely Ridgeway, Swan Way and Icknield Way.
- Varying degrees of enclosure, contrasting between enclosed, woodland blocks, and open, rolling fields. Extensive long views, towards the north over the Vale of Aylesbury and south over rolling farmland and the Wye Valley.
- An intimate and calm landscape, with little movement and overt human influence, which generates high levels of tranquillity.

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DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: *Wain Hill Chalk Escarpment* lies entirely within Wycombe District, and follows the steeply sloping Chiltern chalk escarpment. The area is visually distinct, steeply rising and enclosed by the more gently foothills to the north and east. To the south, the area is defined by large scale undulating landform, and the western edge is bounded by the administrative boundary, however, the escarpment continues beyond this.

Landscape Character: Steep, north east facing chalk escarpment forming a highly visible feature over long distances from the Aylesbury vale. Undulating lower slopes are dominated by open farmland and contrast with the densely wooded scarp tops. Areas of broadleaved, mixed, yew woodland and scrub woodland are interspersed with pockets of calcareous grassland. Long views are afforded, particularly across the lower lying Aylesbury Vale to the north and across rolling farmland and the Wye Valley to the south. An intimate and quiet landscape, largely as a result of limited traffic and absence of settlement. A rich variety of archaeological artefacts and landmarks, including Bledlow Cross. A network of long distance footpaths, often connecting wooded areas, provides good access to the landscape.

Geology: A varied geology, although predominately underlain with Middle Chalk. Melbourn Rock, Zig Zig Chalk and Princes Risborough sand and gravel running along the lower slopes on the northern edge. Upper chalk is exposed on the two higher summits, and linear swathes of Head deposits underlay small valleys which cut in the scarp on the northern edge. Freely draining, lime-rich, loamy soils predominately overlay the character area, with an area of more clayey soils with impeded drainage in the south east.

Topography/Landform: A north east facing chalk escarpment, with highly undulating lower slopes, becoming steeper in the upper reaches and rounder on top to create two separate summits (Wain Hill and Lodge Hill). The escarpment reaches a maximum height of 240m on Wain Hill and 205m on Lodge Hill. The escarpment is a distinctive landform, raised above the Vale of Aylesbury.

Hydrology: The escarpment is dry, with no prominent hydrological features.

Land Use and Settlement: Lower slopes are predominately used for arable farmland. Field systems are often relatively large, open and geometric in form, due to the predominance of parliamentary field enclosures. A strong network of well managed hedgerows with trees delineates these field systems. Densely wooded scarp tops

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provide a contrast to the open farmland. Three long distance footpaths pass through this landscape, namely Ridgeway, Swan Way and Icknield Way, offering access to woodland areas. A notable absence of buildings within this area, and only one small, narrow rural lane passing through the area, carrying little traffic.

Tree Cover: Densely wooded upper slopes, with broadleaved, mixed, yew woodland, often dominated with beech, located on Wain Hill, and scrub woodland dominating Lodge Hill. A relatively small area of ancient woodland at Thickthorne Wood. Trees are densely dispersed along hedgerows.

Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape: Varying degrees of enclosure, with dense woodland blocks, contrasting to open, undulating farmland on the lower slopes and open areas of calcareous grassland. Extensive panoramic views, particularly across the low lying Aylesbury Vale, and south over the Wye Valley and rolling farmland. Higher limits are often heavily wooded, which occasionally constrain these views. The scarp is a feature in the landscape, and easily viewed from long distances across lower lying areas, such as Aylesbury Vale. An absence of settlement and limited traffic generates an intimate, calm and often secluded landscape, with high levels of tranquillity.

Biodiversity: The variety of broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland, and scrub woodland, provides valuable ecological benefits. Significant areas of calcareous grassland are located on the scarp slopes of Lodge Hill, interspersed between woodland. This area of chalk grasslands and scrub communities is recognised as an SSSI, with important rare species include frog orchid, wild candytuft and meadow saxifrage. Hedgerows also provide an important wildlife corridor within this landscape, especially across farmland, connecting fragmented habitats. Areas of lowland calcareous grassland are recognised as priority BAP habitats, and a relatively large area of broadleaved woodland is designated as a biological notification site

Historic Environment: Parliamentary field enclosures dominate this area, however, two significant areas of early, pre 18th century irregular enclosure are located on the scarp. A significant number of archaeological remnants include a Saxon cemetery, Neolithic flint scatter, Wigans Lane Iron Age occupation and a large barrow and Iron Age settlement on Lodge Hill. Several scheduled monuments are also located within this area, namely, Bledlow Cross on Wain Hill, a large chalk cross, thought to mark the start of the Icknield Way; Bronze Age bowl barrow on The Cop; an Iron Age village site, and a bowl barrow and bell barrow on Lodge Hill.

There are two ancient trackways which cross the landscape, the Ridgeway Path and the Icknield Way. The Ridgeway Path is believed to be one of the oldest tracks in Britain and thought to have been used since prehistoric times. The Icknield Way is a complex route made up of two parallel routes, the Upper and Lower Icknield Way.

Designations:

- Chilterns AONB

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- Scheduled Monuments: Bell barrows at Lodge Hill; Bledlow Cross; Bowl barrow on Lodge Hill; Bowl barrow on The Cop; Village site on Lodge Hill.
- Archaeological Notification Sites: 8 No.
- Priority BAP Habitats: 1 type.
- Biological Notification Sites: 1 No.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 2 No.
- SSSI: 2 No. Chinner Hill; Lodge Hill.

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are:

- Woodland cover, which provides enclosure as well as valuable biodiversity interest.
- Pockets of calcareous grassland, which provide a distinctive landscape and ecological feature.
- The hedgerow network which links to woodland, providing wildlife corridors, and holds important biodiversity value.
- The intimate scale and enclosed character of the area, particularly as a result of the woodland cover and absence of settlement.
- Open and uninterrupted panoramic views, often from escarpment tops, and particularly across Aylesbury Vale. The role of the escarpment as the uninterrupted and wooded skyline, and backdrop to Aylesbury Vale
- The rich variety of archaeological features and historic landmarks, such as Bledlow Cross on Wain Hill, which add time depth and historic interest.
- Ecological features, such as the SSSI, which provides biodiversity value and important wildlife habitats.
- The small areas of early field enclosures which provide evidence of historic land use.
- Local rights of way network, which provides easy access to this landscape.
- The visual unity of the landscape, and organised, well balanced character.
- The intactness of the landscape and lack of intrusive features.

Strength of Character/Intactness: The strength of character and intactness of the *Wain Hill Chalk Escarpment* is **strong**. Key characteristics are prominent within the landscape and the lack of intrusive features makes this a physically and visually intact landscape.

Strategy/ Vision: Conserve and manage *Wain Hill Chalk Escarpment* as the distinctive scarp landscape forming a backdrop to Aylesbury Vale, with a mosaic of woodland, farmland and calcareous grassland. Maintain the peaceful and natural landscape, the intimate rural character and visual unity of the landscape.

Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve and appropriately manage the woodland (including ancient woodland) and linking hedgerow network and woodland areas, which provide enclosure in the landscape and form a strong landscape pattern and important wildlife corridor.

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- Conserve areas of calcareous grassland which are an important landscape and ecological feature on the scarp slopes.
- Ensure views to and from the escarpment are considered in relation to new development in this landscape and adjacent landscapes.
- Conserve historic elements and archaeological features, which provide evidence of past use of the land and are important landmarks within this landscape.
- Conserve early field enclosures, which provide past evidence of the use of the landscape.
- Conserve and enhance important ecological habitats, particularly SSSI habitats on the escarpment, the woodland and calcareous grasslands. Manage scrub encroachment within Lodge Hill SSSI.
- Conserve the uninterrupted, rural and wooded skyline as a backdrop to views from lower ground (such as Aylesbury Vale).

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Steep escarpment, with lower undulating, slopes, of arable cultivation, contrasting with the wooded scarp tops.



View from *Coombe Hill & Whiteleaf Escarpment*. North east facing chalk escarpment, rising to create two separate summits.



View from the Ridgeway Path.

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