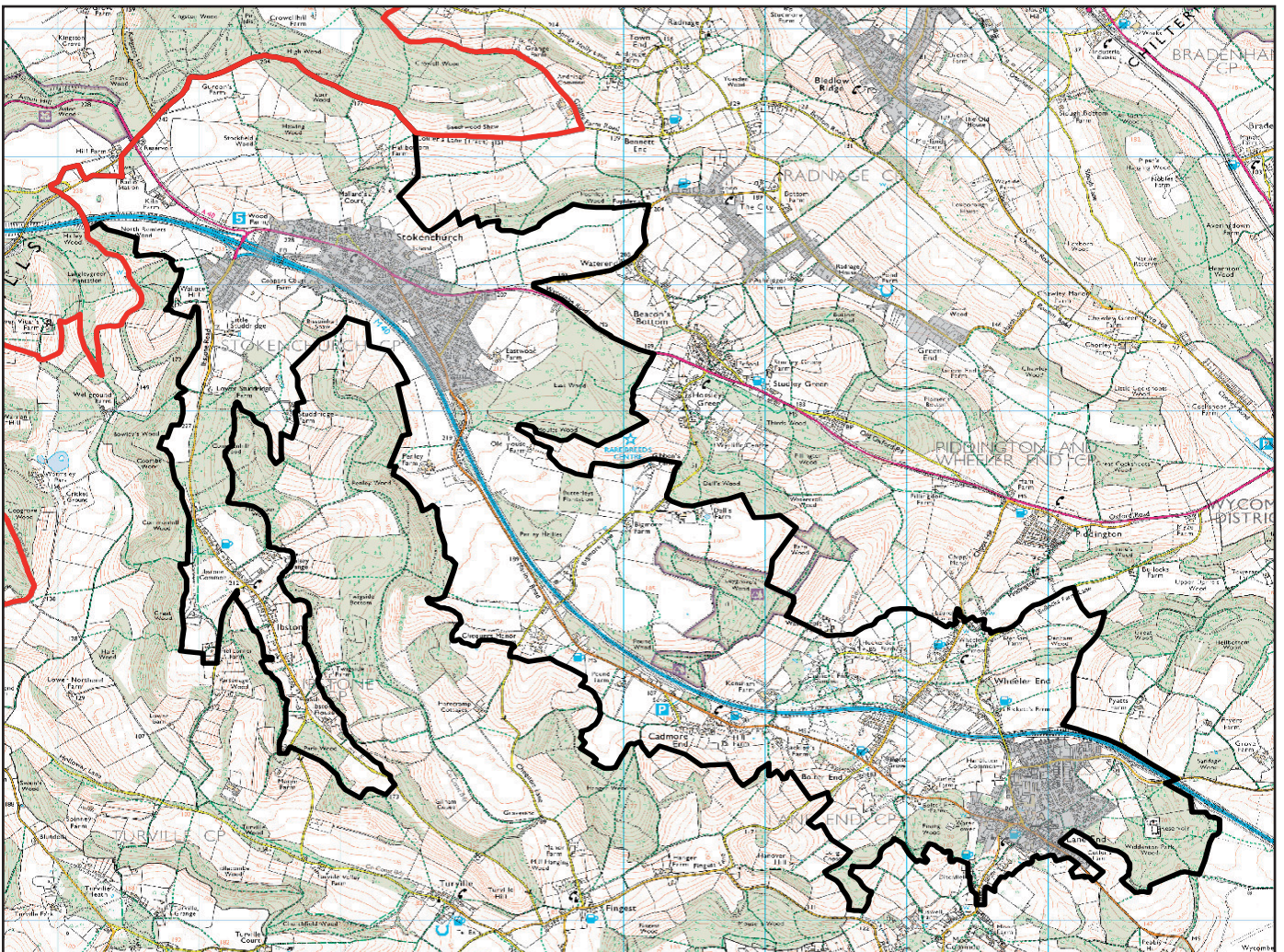
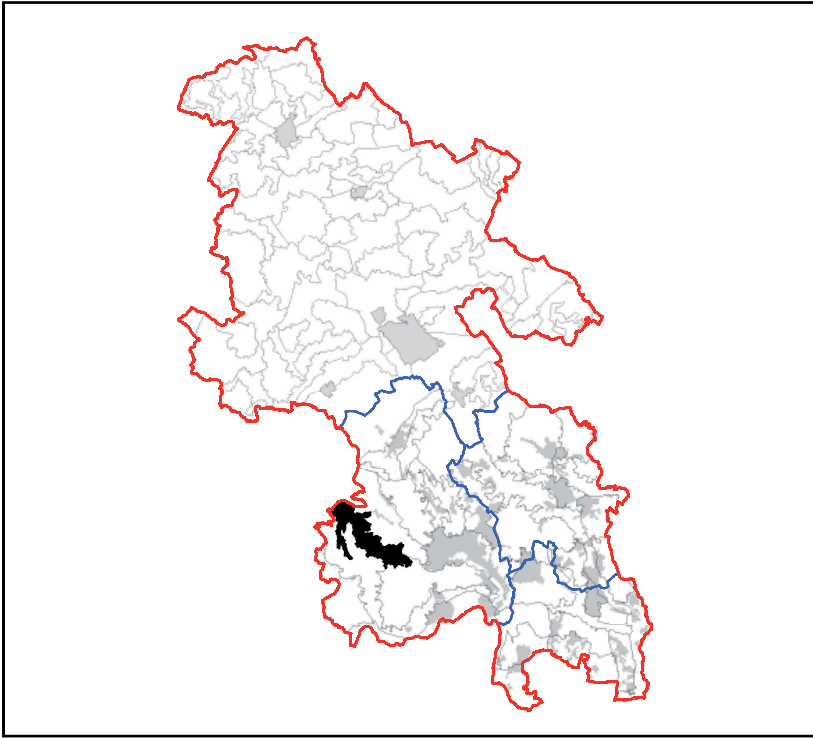


LCA 16.1 STOKENCHURCH SETTLED PLATEAU



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KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Elevated, undulating plateau, overlain by clay with flints, which gives rise to loamy/clayey soils with impeded drainage. The south west comprises a mix of chalk, clay, sand and gravels, and Lambeth Group, which generates more freely draining soils.
- A mosaic of arable fields, rough grazing, paddock and pasture are defined by hedgerows and wooden fencing, and interlocked with areas of woodland which create a landscape of both openness and enclosure. Smaller fields of paddock are often closely associated with settlement edge.
- Relatively large woodland blocks are dispersed throughout the area. There are a combination of broadleaved, mixed, beech and yew, with some coniferous woodland. Large areas of ancient woodland include, East Wood, Leygrove's Wood, Pound Wood and Hartmoor Wood. Woodland extends along the boundary, within adjacent character areas, providing a strong visual containment.
- Settlement is concentrated in the north and south of the area, at Stokenchurch and Lane End, respectively. Modern development dominates these villages. Smaller rural villages, and isolated properties /farmsteads, with a strong historical character, are dispersed along roads.
- Areas of common land occur at Wheeler End, Handleton Common and Cadmore End Common, in the south, and at Ibstone Common in the west, often associated with small villages, and provide important recreational opportunities and ecological importance.
- Pre 18th century irregular field enclosures and 20th century enclosures dominate, with areas of 19th century enclosure and extended fields. Extensive boundary loss is often closely associated with development.
- Limited rights of way network, few roads away from the main transport corridors. Small rural roads and lanes are often lined and enclosed by hedgerows. The M40 cuts through the landscape, creating a noticeable audible and visual impact.
- Views are often confined by woodland, with some long views across open fields to a wooded or open skyline. Important views across the Hambleden Valley,
- A simple and legible landscape, with a tranquil character away from settlement areas and transport corridors.

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DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: *Stokenchurch Settled Plateau* lies entirely within the Wycombe District. It is dictated largely by the topography and the density of settlement. The area is an elevated plateau raised above the Hambleton Valley, which lies to the south west. It is distinguished from the large scale rolling landscape to the north east and south.

Landscape Character: An elevated, undulating plateau, overlain largely by clay with flints, which gives rise to loamy/clayey soils with impeded drainage. The south west has a varied geology, which generates more freely draining soils, and gives rise to a more undulating topography. Mixed farmland, consisting of arable, rough grazing, pasture and paddock, is interspersed with large blocks of woodland, which results in varying degrees of enclosure across the landscape. Woodland and hedgerows provide a sense of seclusion and generate a rich texture, which contrasts with the open fields. Views vary between large vistas from the edge of the area, such as across Hambleton, to enclosed views within woodland and along hedged lanes. Settlement is concentrated in the north and south, at Stokenchurch, and Lane End, respectively, with small rural hamlets, and isolated properties /farmsteads spread along roads. Common land is located at Wheeler End, Handleton Common, Cadmore End Common, and Ibstone Common, often with a strong vernacular character. The M40 and A40 cross the area, creating a local audible and visual impact, however away from these busy areas, a tranquil landscape prevails.

Geology: The north is underlain largely by clay with flints, with Upper Chalk along the edges of the area. In the south a mix of geology exists, with the addition of sand and gravels and Lambeth Group. Slightly acidic, loamy and clayey soils predominate, often with impeded drainage. Upper Chalk is typically overlain by freely draining, shallow, lime rich soils. The south comprises a mix of loamy and clayey soils, with a combination of both impeded drainage and freely draining qualities.

Topography/Landform: Elevated undulating plateau landscape, noticeably more undulating in the south of the area, as a result of the varied geology. The plateau gradually rises towards the north, reaching approximately 230m at its highest point, close to Stokenchurch.

Hydrology: Small ponds are scattered across the plateau, often in close proximity to woodland areas. Elsewhere, relatively few notable hydrological features are evident.

Land use and Settlement: A mosaic of mixed farmland, consisting of arable cultivation, rough grazing, pasture and paddocks, and interlocked with large blocks of woodland. Hedgerows with trees, and rural wooden post and wire fencing define field boundaries. Smaller fields, comprising paddocks are often associated with

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settlement.

Settlement is concentrated at both the north, namely Stokenchurch, and south, Lane End, which comprise compact, dense residential areas. In between these two villages, settlement is often spread linearly along roads, comprising small rural hamlets, and isolated properties /farmsteads. Settlement associated with commons is located at Wheeler End, Handleton Common, Cadmore End Common, and Ibstone Common, and presents a strong historic character, with red brick and brick and flint buildings.

The M40 borders Stokenchurch and Lane End, and the A40 passes through the north of the area. Away from these busy corridors, a small number of rural roads and lanes exist. There is a limited rights of way network.

Tree Cover: There are a significant number of relatively large woodland blocks. Woodland extends along the boundary, within adjacent character areas, providing containment and a strong visual boundary. Large areas of broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland are often located along the edges of the character area, transitional with the higher ridge lines. These include, East Wood, Hanger Wood, Commonhill Wood and Hartmoor Wood. Two significant National Trust mixed woodlands are located close to Cadmore End in the south of the area. Additionally, areas of coniferous, scrub woodland and beech and yew woodlands are dispersed throughout. Trees are often scattered along hedgerow field boundaries and road sides.

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape: The mix of farmland and woodland, results in varying degrees of enclosure across this landscape. Dense woodlands and hedgerows provide a sense of seclusion and generate a rich texture and colour, contrasting with the open, smooth fields. The repetition of farmland and woodland creates a simple and legible landscape.

Views are often changing between large vistas from the edge of the area, and across open fields, to enclosed views within woodland and along hedged lanes. Extensive views are possible south west across Hambleton Valley.

The M40 dissects the area, running through its length, and the A40, cuts through the north, both creating a noticeable audible and visual impact of the landscape. Away from these busy roads and larger settlement areas of Stokenchurch and Lane End, a tranquil landscape prevails, due largely to the extent of woodland. Public rights of way through the area are relatively limited.

Biodiversity: Large blocks of woodland provide an important biodiversity resource, with a wide mix of woodland types. Many of which are Biological Notification Sites or Local Wildlife Sites, predominately broadleaved and mixed woodland. Aston Rowant Wood, in the north, is a lowland beech and yew woodland, which is part of the Chiltern's Beechwood special area of conservation and also recognised as an SSSI, dominated by beech and oak, with sycamore, larch and spruce as understorey. Another SSSI lowland beech and yew woodland is found in the south, Widdenton Park Wood, with a rich mix of species and ages. Areas of bracken are often associated with scrub woodland. Woodland is interspersed largely

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by agricultural land, and hedgerows provide an important link between these features, creating wildlife corridors and habitats.

Historic Environment: Large areas of pre 18th century irregular field enclosures dominate, with frequent smaller areas of 20th century field systems, interspersed. Some 19th century field systems are located throughout, and extended fields, with extensive field boundary loss are sometimes located close to more recent development, such as roads and urban areas.

Common land at Wheeler End, Handleton Common and Cadmore End Common, in the south, and at Ibstone Common in the west, is often associated with small ridge top villages and hamlets, and provides an important recreational opportunities, and ecological benefits. Wheeler End Common, an open common is surrounded by a loose grouping of historic settlement, and at Cadmore End Common, isolated or small groupings of settlement are scattered adjacent to it. Common edge settlement is dispersed across the character area, often with a strong historic character. Stokenchurch and Lane End, have a combination of historic buildings and more modern development.

There are some scattered archaeological remains within the area, which include prehistoric features, post medieval brick and tile works, and Mesolithic flint.

Designations:

- The Chilterns AONB
- Archaeological Notification Areas: 9 No.
- Conservation Areas: Cadmore End, Cadmore End Common, Lane End, Stokenchurch, Wheeler End Common
- Priority BAP Habitats: 3 types.
- Biological Notification Sites: 30 No.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 12 No.
- Special Area of Conservation: 2 No. Aston Rowant; Chilterns Beechwood.
- SSSI: 5 No. Aston Rowant; Aston Rowant Woods; Bolter End Sand Pit; Widdenton Park Wood; Wormsley Chalk Banks.

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are as follows:

- Woodland areas (particularly ancient woodland) which provides landscape structure and biodiversity value.
- The open character contrasted with enclosed and intimate areas (particularly woodland)
- Common land at Wheeler End, Handleton Common, Cadmore End Common, and Ibstone Common.
- Elements of tranquillity and 'rural' qualities, which could be affected by further development.
- Inter visibility – Long panoramas, particularly towards Hambleden Valley.
- Network of hedgerows which create enclosure and visual unity, as well as providing an ecological benefit, and could be lost by poor management.
- The small number rural roads and lanes, which may be under pressure to expand and be widened.
- The undeveloped green space in between settlement, which are vulnerable to settlement expansion.

Strength of Character/Intactness: The strength of character and intactness of the *Stokenchurch Settled Plateau* is **moderate**. Prominent development, at Stokenchurch, and the busy M40 and A40, interrupt the landscape and reduces the distinctiveness of character.

Strategy/Vision: To conserve and enhance the mosaic of farmland and woodland, and areas of common land, and to maintain the pockets of tranquillity away from overt human influence, and the rural character of areas in between settlement.

Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve areas of woodland, which provide enclosure in the landscape and form an important landscape pattern and feature, and invaluable biodiversity benefit.
- Promote appropriate management of arable farmland, rough grazing, pasture and paddock, to help generate a wildlife rich habitat, and visually attractive landscape.
- Conserve views across the landscape and towards the Hambleden Valley, in relation to any new development.
- Conserve and manage the network of hedgerows which characterise the landscape, infilling of gaps and appropriate pruning and cutting regimes.
- Conserve common land and common edge settlement, and ensure proper management of these spaces. Conserve the loose settlement character

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preventing infilling and nucleation.

- Maintain existing green space between settlements to prevent coalescence.
- Maintain the rural character of roads, avoiding road improvements (e.g. widening) which would alter their character.

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Flat plateau landscape, open views across fields, with woodland backdrop.



Smaller fields, delineated by wooden post and rail fencing.



Large blocks of woodland, with tall beech trees, create a strong sense of enclosure



Long views across the Hambleden Valley.