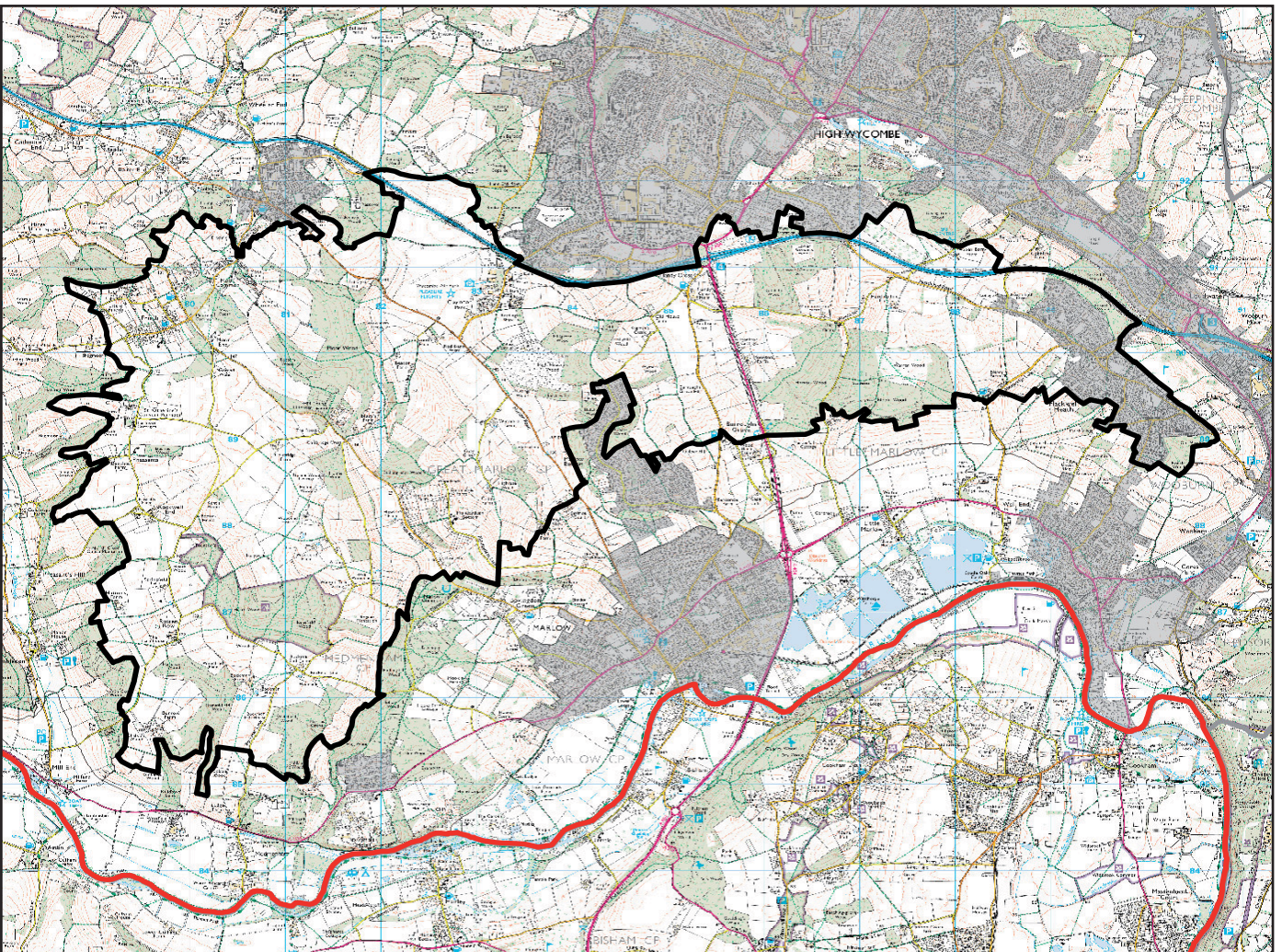
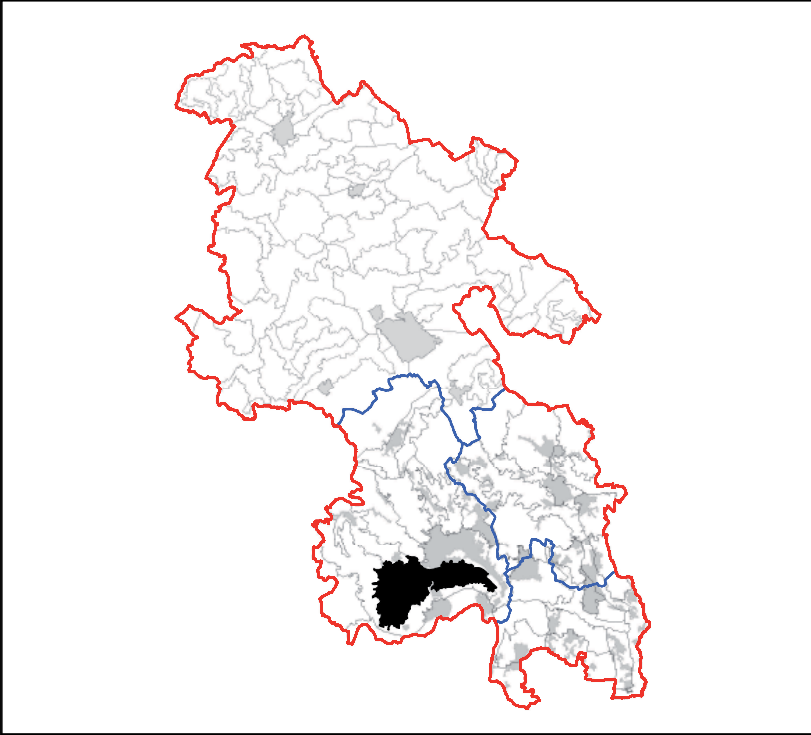


LCA 18.1 GREAT MARLOW ROLLING FARMLAND



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KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A large scale landscape with rolling topography informed by a varied geology including Upper Chalk exposed on steep slopes with Clay and Flint capping on higher ground.
- Predominantly arable farmland with some pasture and rough grazing on steeper chalk slopes. Hedgerows and woodland often delineate field boundaries.
- A dense and mature woodland character with large blocks of woodland, comprising broadleaved, mixed and coniferous. A significant amount of ancient woodland.
- Important acid, calcareous and neutral grasslands habitats at Moorend Common, Holmefield Wood and Frieth Meadows SSSIs,
- Low density, dispersed settlement comprising small hamlets, such as Frieth, common edge settlement at Moor Common and individual farmsteads. Distinctive materials including, red brick, brick and flint, and black washed wooden cladding. Modern development occurs in proximity to the M40.
- Varying field enclosures, with a significant amount of early enclosure, pre 18th century co-axial and irregular systems, interspersed with 20th century enclosure and extended areas, with extensive field boundary loss.
- Archaeological features are dispersed across the landscape including chalk quarries, a deer park pale, cropmarks, pillow mounds and Bronze Age urns.
- The M40 and A404 cut through the east and north east contrasting with the quiet, winding rural roads and lanes often enclosed by hedgerows.
- Long views across sweeping farmland and south, towards the Thames Valley and Marlow, contrast with the enclosed and intimate character of woodland areas.
- The topography, mixed farmland and woodland cover contributes to a well-balanced and legible landscape. A smooth landscape with a sweeping character.
- Away from busy roads, the landscape has a rural and peaceful character.

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DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: *Great Marlow Rolling Farmland* lies wholly within Wycombe District. This area forms the higher rolling ground elevated above the Hambleden Valley, Wye Valley and the landscape to the south which slopes down to the floodplain on the River Thames. The boundaries are therefore largely based on topography and geology with the increase in settlement to the north also influencing boundaries.

Landscape Character: A large scale landscape with a varied geology, giving rise to a rolling landform. Dominated by large arable fields, with pasture on steeper chalk slopes and woodland, much of which is ancient, interspersed throughout. Woodland includes broadleaved, mixed, and coniferous with small areas of acid, marshy and calcareous grassland designated as SSSIs or local wildlife sites. There is a low density of settlement which is well dispersed, comprising small hamlets, such as Frieth, and individual farmsteads with common edge settlement at Moorend Common. Distinctive building materials include red brick, and brick and flint which contribute to the historic character of Frieth, contrasting with the appearance of modern properties in Handy Cross, and Clay Park close to the M40. Small winding and enclosed rural roads connect areas of settlement, with the exception of the busy A404 and M40. Long views are obtained across sweeping farmland including towards Marlow and the Thames Valley with woodland providing enclosure and forming a backdrop to views. A variety of historical and archaeological features reveal the varying layers of history within this landscape, including co-axial field enclosures, chalk quarries and a deer park pale. Away from the M40 corridor, the sweeping landform, prominence of woodland cover and limited settlement, creates a tranquil landscape, with a uniform and balanced character.

Geology: A varied geology with bands of exposed Upper Chalk bedrock on steep slopes alternating with Clay and Flint capping on higher ground. To the south, on lowest ground, Ancestral Thames River Terrace Deposits signify the influence of the River Thames. An area of Lambeth Group with varying gravels, sands, silts and clay deposits and some London Clay occurs in the north of the area extending onto the adjacent plateau. Sand and gravel also occurs in this location in small isolated pockets across exposed chalk and Clay and Flint capping. The geology gives rise to varied soils with shallow lime-rich soils over exposed chalk and slightly acid loamy soils (freely draining and also more clayey with impeded drainage in the east) corresponding to the Clay and Flint capping. Slowly permeable seasonally wet acid loamy and clayey soils lie over Lambeth Group.

Topography/Landform: Higher ground is incised by dry tributary chalk valleys which run north to south across the area, perpendicular to the Thames. This creates a large scale undulating landform with some steep slopes, with heights frequently varying between 75m and 140m.

Hydrology: There are no discernable watercourses. There are however occasional ponds scattered across the area, often associated with farms.

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Land Use and Settlement: Predominantly arable farmland broadly corresponding to underlying Clay with Flint capping on higher ground, with pasture and rough grazing more common on steep exposed chalk slopes. Woodland is interspersed throughout with some large areas of broadleaved, mixed, and yew woodland, coniferous, and beech and yew woodland. As well as woodland edges, a network of hedgerows, delineate field boundaries. Bracken and areas of heathy scrub also occur in relation to the more acidic soils.

The busy M40 and A404 cut through the east and north east contrasting with the small winding rural roads and lanes which cross the area. Rural roads and lanes are often enclosed by tall hedgerows and have a quiet character.

Wycombe Air Park, adjacent to Clay Hill in the north, is used by light aircraft, helicopters, gliders and includes hangars and associated businesses. Associated air traffic visually and audibly impacts on the local landscape and the general level of activity on and above the site brings an urbanising influence to the otherwise rural landscape.

There is a low density of settlement which is well dispersed, comprising small hamlets, such as Frieth, and individual farmsteads. Common edge settlement occurs at Moor Common. Frieth has a strong historic character, with distinctive materials including, red brick, brick and flint and black washed wooden cladding. In contrast Handy Cross, and Clay Park close to the M40 and ribbon development along Frieth Road, north of Bovingdon Green comprise modern properties.

A network of footpaths and several bridleways, cross through farmland and woodland.

Tree Cover: Woodland is prominent throughout the area, often occurring in large dense blocks notably broadleaved, mixed, and yew woodland at Moor Wood, coniferous at Heath Wood and beech and yew woodland at Horton Wood. Broadleaved, mixed, and yew woodland occurs in small blocks throughout the area. Ancient replanted and ancient & semi-natural woodland is frequent (e.g Hornton Wood, Moor Wood, Dameskfield Wood). The mix of woodland types creates rich texture and provides seasonal interest. Hedgerow trees occur occasionally.

Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape: A large scale landscape, with rolling topography contributing to a well balanced and uniform character. Varying levels of enclosure are experienced. Long, views are afforded across sweeping farmland with expansive views from higher ground towards Marlow and the Thames Valley. Woodland provides enclosure and forms a backdrop to views across farmland.

The busy A404 and M40 cut through the east and along the northern edge of the area and have a localised visual and audible impact. However, away from these routes, roads are quiet often enclosed by high hedgerows. The extent of woodland cover and limited settlement density creates a peaceful and rural landscape.

Biodiversity: Woodland provides a valuable habitat throughout this area, including local wildlife sites at Moor Wood, Shillingridge Wood, Munces Wood, Horton

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Wood and Warren and Bloom Wood. The network of hedgerows also provides important corridors for wildlife, connecting agricultural land with areas of woodland. SSSIs occur at Moorend Common, Holmefield Wood and Frieth Meadows. Moorend Common is a mosaic of ancient woodland and open areas. The woodlands include areas of beech high forest in Moor Copse, oak-birch woodland and a small area of conifer plantation. The open areas, which used to be more extensive, include areas of acid and marshy grassland, heather and bracken. Some of the plants which are found in these areas are now rare in Buckinghamshire. Holmefield Wood is a small area of mixed woodland and chalk grassland supporting a population of Military orchid found in both habitats. Frieth Meadows comprises a series of unimproved pastures on neutral to acid soils, sheltered by tall species-rich hedges. Traditionally managed grasslands of this type are both rare and declining in Britain following widespread agricultural improvement and intensification, and their rich flora includes species which are now locally and nationally rare.

Lowland calcareous grassland occurs in small isolated areas including at Strawberry Bank (Beacon Farm Field) and Lord's Wood Valley (recognised as local wildlife sites).

BAP priority habitats include lowland beech and yew woodland, lowland mixed woodland, lowland calcareous grassland, lowland dry acid grassland and lowland meadows.

Historic Environment: Varying field enclosures, with a significant amount of, pre 18th century irregular and co-axial systems. These early field systems are interspersed with 20th century enclosure and extended areas, with extensive field boundary loss.

Some 700 metres south east of Daws Hill House (which lies within *LCA 19.1 High Wycombe settled River valley*) a mature double avenue of lime trees flanked by large roundels of mature trees stands in parkland, extending for another 750 metres south east before terminating in the M40 motorway. The avenue lies outside the area covered by the Register of Parks and Gardens (Wycombe Abbey) but was originally connected to the landscape immediately surrounding the house by a drive through woodland and parkland that extended down the centre of the avenue. The area is now (2011) cut off from the house by the former USAAF Air Base, but was planted in the early 20th century around the time that Daws Hill House superseded the Abbey as the Carrington's main residence on the estate.

Archaeological sites and monuments are dispersed throughout, including chalk quarries at Moorend Common, a deer park pale running either side of the M40 at Widdenton Park and the site of Ackhampstead Chapel. Cropmarks, pillow mounds, Bronze Age urns occur and Little Parmoor Farmhouse and Monkton Farm Medieval building are also of historic interest.

Designations:

- Chilterns AONB
- Archaeological Notification Sites: 16No.

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- Priority Bap Habitats: 5 types
- Biological Notification Sites: 49 No.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 17 No.
- SSSI: 4 No. Frieth Meadows, Homefield Wood, Moorend Common, Widdenton Park Wood.

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are:

- The woodland cover which includes large areas of ancient woodland and provides enclosure, a backdrop to views as well as biodiversity and recreational value.
- The hedgerow network which provides visual unity and ecological connectivity.
- Diversity of grassland habitats including acid, marshy and calcareous which support locally and nationally rare species.
- Open views across rolling arable farmland to woodland and longer views southwards out to Marlow and the Thames Valley.
- Low density of dispersed settlement, historic character and traditional building materials which create a sense of place.
- A rural and peaceful character away from the busy roads and air park, which is due to the mosaic of woodland and farmland, and lack of settlement.
- A network of public rights of way that provide access to woodland, and the associated recreational opportunities.
- Quiet winding rural roads, often enclosed by hedgerows.
- The variety of archaeological artefacts, which reveal the different phases of history within the character area.
- Pre 18th century co-axial and irregular field system which provide evidence of historic land use.

Strength of Character/Intactness: The strength of character and intactness of the *Great Marlow Rolling Farmland* is **moderate**. Key characteristics are strongly conveyed but evidence of human impact including, and alongside, the M40 corridor, A404 and the Air Park reduces the distinctiveness of character.

Strategy/ Vision: To conserve and enhance the mosaic of woodland, farmland and important grassland habitats which contribute to the rural, peaceful character of *Great Marlow Rolling Farmland*.

Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve and appropriately manage areas of woodland for biodiversity and recreational benefits.
- Conserve and manage the network of hedgerows, gap up hedgerows where necessary and seek to maintain connectivity.

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- Conserve and appropriately manage the diversity of grasslands. Support and promote expansion and connection of fragmented grassland areas.
- Conserve open views across arable farmland to woodland and longer views out to adjacent landscapes.
- Ensure that new buildings and development are sensitively integrated into the landscape through careful siting and design.
- Conserve the character of rural roads.
- Promote appropriate management of farmland, to help generate a wildlife rich habitat, and visually attractive landscape.
- Conserve historic elements, such as archaeological features and early field enclosures, which provide evidence of past use of the land.
- Consider opportunities for better integration of development and buffering of roads through woodland planting.

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Gently rolling landform, with open fields interspersed with blocks of woodland.



Beech woodland., creates a strong sense of enclosure.



Hedgerows line rural winding roads.