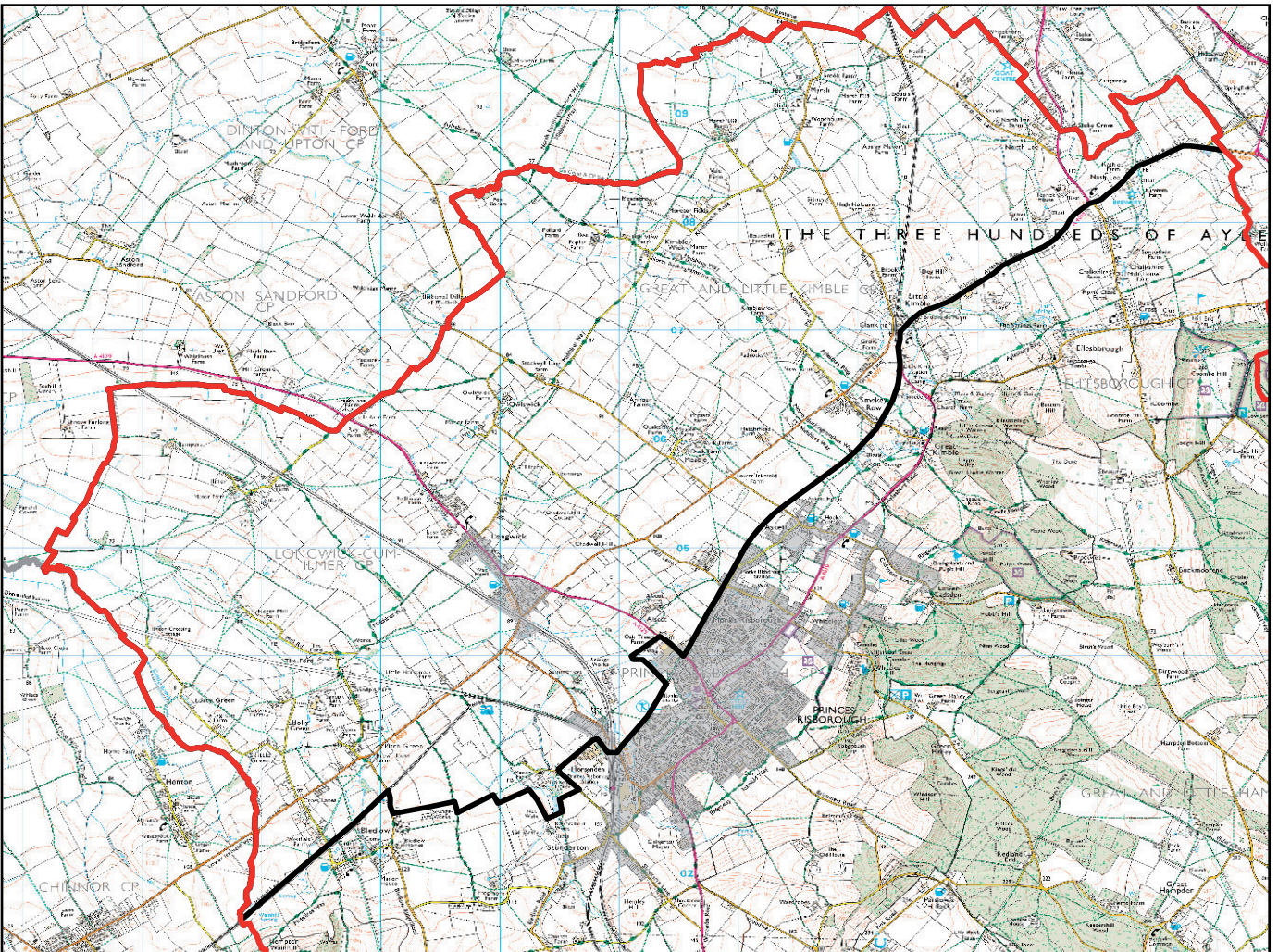
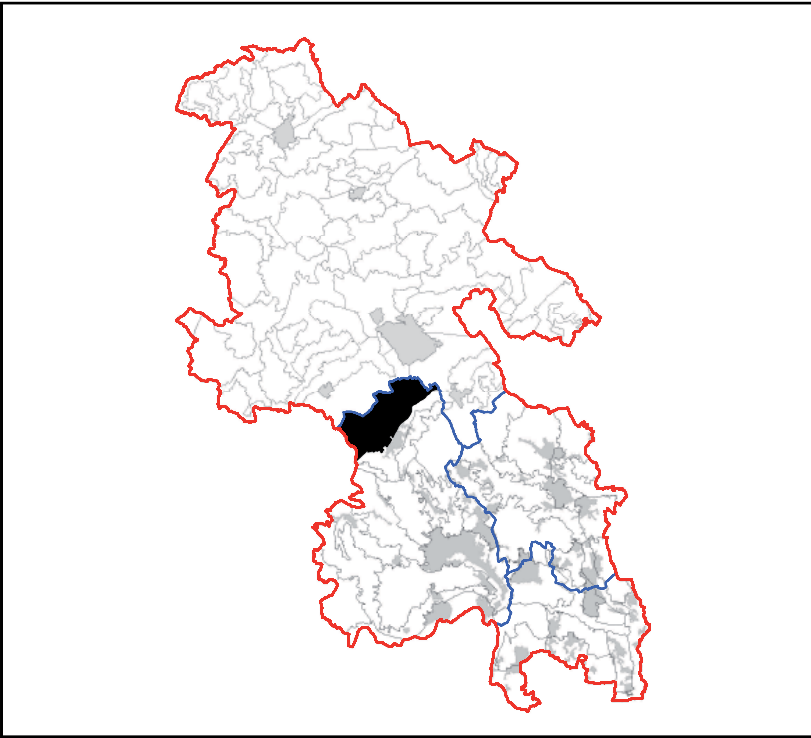


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KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Largely covered by the Gault Clay Formation, which extends into Aylesbury Vale to the North and West, with linear pockets of alluvium and river terrace deposits associated with the small network of rivers and streams.
- Gently undulating low lying topography. Easily viewed from adjacent landscapes, particularly from the elevated chalk escarpment to the east.
- Large to medium scale open and expansive arable fields, with a mosaic of smaller scale paddock and pasture fields associated with farmsteads.
- A low density of dispersed settlement pattern characterised by occasional scattered farmsteads and small hamlets, often situated at the end of small narrow rural lanes, or nucleated around crossroads.
- Parliamentary field enclosures, generating a strong geometric landscape pattern. A strongly uniform and simple landscape character.
- A strong network of dense hedgerows and scattered deciduous trees enclose the larger arable fields, with wooden post and wire fencing dividing up pasture and paddocks.
- Relatively straight rural roads and smaller winding lanes, bordered by rough grass verges and tall hedgerows. Road side ditches form a distinctive feature of these landscapes, with occasional flowing water.
- Two railway lines cut transversely across the area in the south, one in use and one dismantled, with occasional viaducts forming distinctive features in the landscape.
- A good network of public footpaths and bridleways. Long distance footpaths cross the area, including the North Buckinghamshire Way and the Midshires Way.
- Long views across open fields to a wooded or open skyline, with important views stretching out across into the Aylesbury Vale to the north west, and east towards the Chiltern escarpment, including important landmarks of Whiteleaf Cross and Coombe Hill Monument. In more enclosed areas, views are short and contained by high hedgerows and trees.
- Sense of tranquillity and calm, despite accessibility of public roads (A4129) and railway. A still and calm environment.
- Linear belts of poplar trees act as shelter belts and are frequently found close to farmsteads.
- A dispersed medieval settlement pattern represented by moated sites and shrunken hamlets.

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DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: *Longwick Vale* lies entirely within the Wycombe District. The area lies on the north western edge of the study area, extending into the Aylesbury Vale, and covering a broad linear belt of lowland adjacent to the Chiltern chalk escarpment. A large proportion of the area is therefore dictated by the study boundary itself. The north eastern boundary runs largely along the A4010, broadening out slightly in the south and adjoining the suburban edge of Princes Risborough. The foothills of the escarpment run continuously along this boundary.

Landscape Character: A largely low lying, gently undulating area, which extends out from the foothills of the Chiltern escarpment, providing a distinctive contrast to the elevated chalk hills. This landscape is dominated by agriculture, with large open arable fields and smaller, more intimately divided pockets of pasture and paddocks within. A distinctive characteristic of the Vale is the regular, geometric field pattern, formed as a result of the Parliamentary field enclosure (18th and 19th centuries). High hedges, rural roads, and the sparse density of settlement, create a quiet and calm character, despite the prevalence of public rights of way and dominance of human influence. Extensive views exist across the fields and the backdrop of the escarpment is a prominent and important vista.

Geology: The Gault Clay formation predominantly underlies this area, with some head deposits positioned centrally, and linear bands of alluvium and river terrace deposits associated with the river channel floodplains, which flow in from the north west.

The underlying geology gives rise to predominately permeable and free draining loamy and slightly acid loamy/clayey soils across the vale, which has ultimately given rise to the predominance of agricultural development within this area.

Topography/Landform: A low lying flat vale area, with slightly undulating topography relating to the small shallow river valleys and geological formation. The level of land varies very little, approximately 80 to 95m, with a slight dip in the land level centrally and more noticeably rising along the south eastern boundary through the transitional zone and into the chalk escarpment foothills. The topography of this area provides a marked physical and visual contrast to the chalk escarpment.

Hydrology: Numerous small and narrow meandering rivers and streams flow into the area, from the surrounding Aylesbury Vale and from the escarpment and neighbouring foothills of the escarpment, which arise from the chalk aquifer. These streams are often hidden, gently flowing along road side verges. Some of these rivers are classified as Environment Agency Flood Zones 2 and 3.

Land Use and Settlement: The area is predominately agricultural land, with a

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mix of large open arable use and smaller pastoral land and paddocks, associated with individual farmsteads.

Settlement is generally low and dispersed, comprising of small hamlets and farmsteads scattered along roads, or nucleated around junctions and the ends of small winding rural roads. The exception is Longwick, which is relatively large in comparison, and linearly spread along the A4129. Most of the settlements are comprised of a mix of historic and modern buildings, often black timber clad barns, flint and brick cottages and red brick houses.

There is a good network of public rights of way throughout the area. Several long distance routes pass through this area, including the Swans Way, Midshires Way, North Buckinghamshire Way and Aylesbury Ring. There are a small number of bridleways and local footpaths which form important connections between each settlement.

Tree Cover: Hedgerow trees are scattered or clumped along field boundaries and follow streams and road side verges. Isolated trees and small pockets of trees are dispersed around the area, but overall woodland cover is sparse. Linear Poplar shelter belts are often situated close to farmsteads and settlement.

Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape: This landscape has a large scale, open character as a result of the dominance of large arable fields. The repetition of the geometric field enclosures and the low lying topography of this area, contribute to an organised and rhythmic landscape pattern, which is accentuated by the straight hedgerows. Occasional long vistas across the character area and views east towards the chalk escarpment emphasise the large scale nature of the landscape. Important views to key landmarks of Whiteleaf Cross and Coombe Hill Monument, on the chalk escarpment. In contrast, high hedgerows and winding rural lanes, particularly around small hamlets and settlements, create a sense of enclosure and intimacy. Small discrete feature such as gentle streams running along road verges, add to the tranquillity. Despite the extent of human influence within this character area, specifically the dominance of agriculture, and the development of communication corridors, such as roads and railways, the landscape is calm and has retained a rural character, with relatively low noise levels. Overall the landscape has a coherent and balanced composition, and is visually uniform.

Biodiversity: This character area is dominated by arable land, and some improved pasture. The landscape is poorly wooded, with some scattered trees occurring along field boundaries and around settlement, including poplar shelterbelts.

A well developed hedgerow network exists, along field boundaries and roadside verges, as well as small stream corridors, which all contribute to the Vale's biodiversity.

Some small Local Wildlife Sites can be found in the area, namely, Longwick Bog, Longwick Green Lane, Lydebrook Mill Meadows, and Meadows, north of Armour Farm, but these are few and dispersed. BAP Priority Habitats in this area are,

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lowland meadows, purple moor grass and rush pastures, and chalk headwaters. Several small Biological Notification Sites are spread across the area, predominately pockets of Neutral Grassland.

Historic Environment: This landscape is predominately as a result of recent planned Parliamentary enclosure of 18th – 19th Century date, with subsequent divisions of these occurring particularly on the southern half of character area. There is also some evidence of earlier enclosed fields (pre 18th Century), principally surrounding settlement areas and farmsteads, such as Holly Green and Forty Green in south of the Vale, and Meadle, Smokey Row and Marsh, further north. There is also a dispersed distribution of large modern arable fields, possibly reflective of the relatively fertile soils in this area.

The historic settlement pattern of this area is dispersed, characterised by a mixture of isolated farmsteads, farm clusters and interrupted row settlements. Interrupted rows are a very subtle settlement type and are usually made up of a number of farmsteads or houses interspersed along a road such as Owlswick, Kimble Wick and Forty Green. However dispersed settlements such as interrupted rows are vulnerable to change – an example being Longwick, where housing development in the 20th century has coalesced the hamlet into a more nucleated form. There is a scatter of Roman settlements across the area, including at least one villa.

The southern part of the character area is traversed by Bicester to Risborough railway, which is still in use, and a dismantled railway further south. Several viaducts as a result of these have become distinctive features in the landscape.

The Vale has a number of Public Rights of Way, with two long distance footpaths; the Midshires Way and the North Buckinghamshire Way, which pass through some of the small hamlets and archaeological remains.

Designations:

- Chilterns AONB
- Scheduled Monuments: Moated site north of Elmbrook Farm; Moated site at Apoley Manor Farm; Moated site at Grove Farm; Moated site west of Terrick House.
- Archaeological Notification Sites: 25 No.
- Conservation Areas: Ilmer, Horsenden Meadle, and Owlswick.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 4 No.
- Priority BAP Habitats: 3 types.
- Biological Notification Sites: 14 No.

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are:

- The undeveloped skyline, especially towards the North West.
- Inter visibility – Long views out across the landscape and especially to and from the chalk escarpment
- The open and large scale character, contrasted with smaller enclosed and intimate pockets.
- The rural, mixed farmland landscape, which is dominated by arable agriculture, but also interspersed with pasture and paddocks.
- Strong geometric and linear landscape pattern, largely as a result of Parliamentary field enclosures.
- 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 scale and ‘rural’ identity of settlements, which could be vulnerable to development.
- The rural roads and lanes, which may be under pressure to expand and be widened.
- Elements of tranquillity and ‘rural’ qualities, which could be affected by development within and beyond the character area.
- The absence of woodland and the open views, contribute to the visual sensitivity of the landscape.
- Road side ditches and verges, sometime with gently flowing streams, provide a distinct characteristic of this area as well as an ecological gain.

Strength of Character/Intactness: The strength of character and intactness of *Longwick Vale* is **Moderate**. Encroaching modern development, such as the A4129, pylons and paddocks reduces the intactness of the character area.

Strategy/ Vision: The overall management strategy and vision is to conserve the mixed farming character, protecting the rural setting for the hamlets and farmsteads and to maintain the openness of the landscape

Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve and maintain mixed agricultural character of the landscape, ensuring good management of field and boundaries, and avoiding over development of buildings.

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- Conserve and manage the network of hedgerows which characterise the landscape, through re-planting those that have been lost, infilling of gaps and appropriate pruning and cutting regimes.
- Conserve the Parliamentary field patterns associated with the area, and the strong linear and geometric form of the landscape.
- Safeguard early enclosures, which are remnants of pre 19th century landscape
- Conserve views across the landscape and towards the escarpment, by avoiding the introduction of large scale and vertical elements.
- Conserve the small scale and dispersed settlement pattern of the hamlets and farmsteads.
- Conserve road side verges and ditches, which provide an interesting feature of the landscape and act as a buffer between roads and fields.
- Conserve the sense of tranquillity and rural character that is particularly associated with the hamlets and farmstead.
- Conserve the intimate character of small stream corridors, in particular those running along road side verges.
- Maintain the rural character of the roads and avoid excessive lighting.
- Encourage the preservation of any archaeological monuments.
- Promote and enhance connectivity of habitats and biodiversity, especially along hedgerows, through the diversification of species.

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Large scale arable fields with long uninterrupted views.



Long, linear hedgerows and grass ditches, running alongside rural roads. Easily viewed from adjacent landscapes, particularly the elevated chalk escarpment to the east



Paddocks interspersed within arable fields.



Small, hidden gently flowing streams.