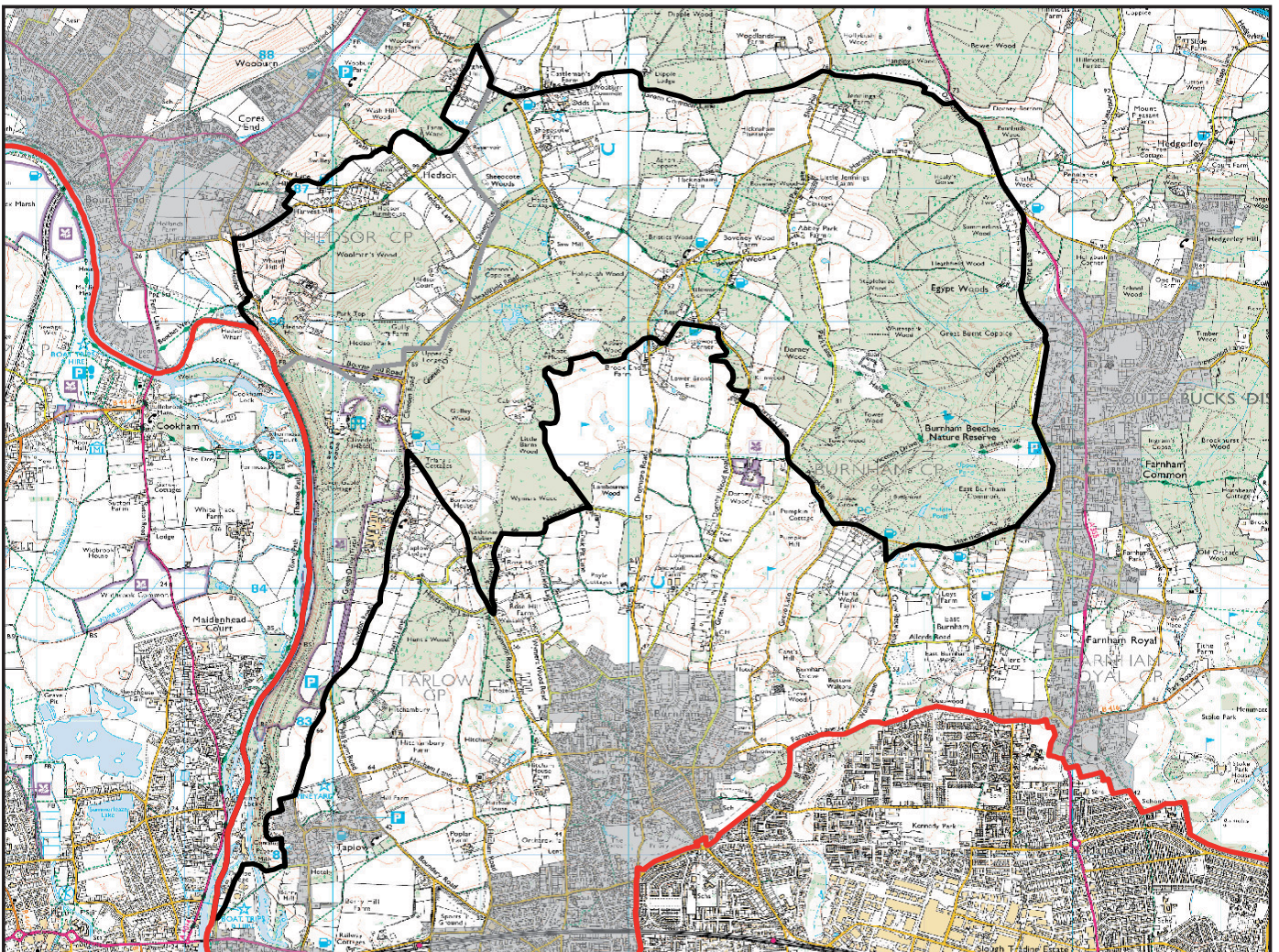
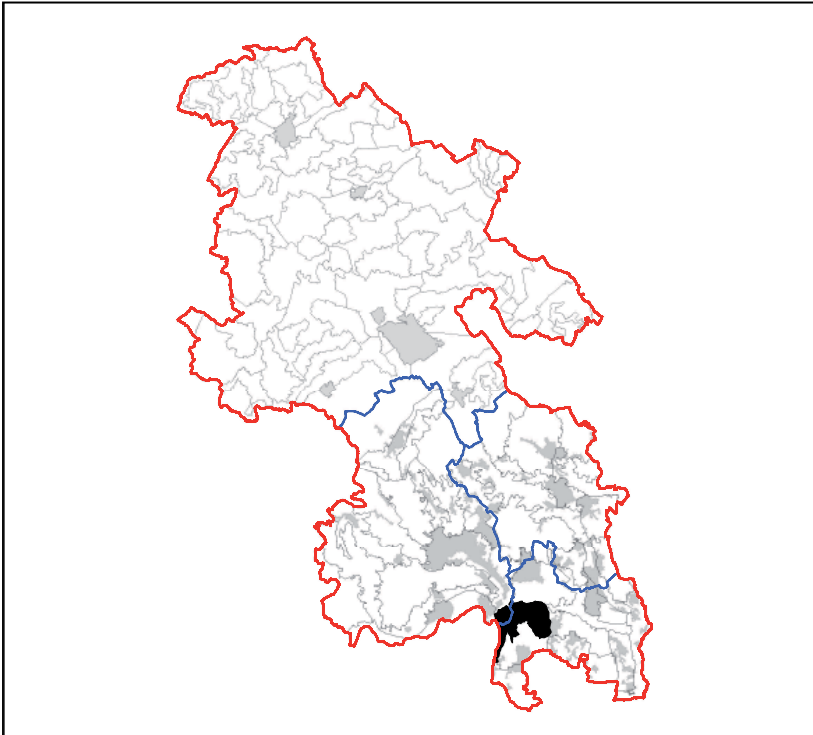


LCA 24.1 BURNHAM BEECHES WOODED TERRACE



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KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- An undulating terrace landform, formed on river terrace deposits, and gently rising from the south to the north, forming the higher ground in between the surrounding landscape types.
- Small to medium fields dominated by paddocks, often irregular in shape, as result of early woodland clearance, with smaller more recent, geometric field subdivisions.
- Dominated by woodland cover, with significant blocks of ancient woodland scattered throughout. Burnham Beeches, providing a significant, ecological, historical, cultural and recreational area. Much of the woodland has developed on former common land and thus has established more recently within the 20th century.
- Fields confined by a tall, dense network of hedgerows and trees, and often bounded by woodland blocks. Wooden post and wire fencing used to partition fields further.
- Settlement is low density and highly dispersed, typically individual large properties or small hamlets located in the south, and isolated farmsteads scattered throughout then north. Settlement sits nestled within the landscape, often surrounded by woodland.
- High ecological importance, with extensive woodland cover, heathland, wood-pasture and veteran trees, a rich network of hedgerows and scrubby road side verges. Numerous nationally recognised areas of ecological importance.
- Registered parks and gardens, particularly in the south west, add to the character of the area, and demonstrate important social and cultural significance. Namely, Cliveden, Dropmore Park and Hedsor House and Park.
- Limited views as a result of dense woodland cover, and restricted by winding rural roads, which create a sense of interest and intrigue. Views largely contained within character area, and limited inter-visibility with adjacent landscapes. The exception is long views west across the River Thames and the Wye Valley from the high cliffs at Cliveden Park.
- A tranquil landscape, with a strong sense of enclosure and intimacy. Well balanced and harmonised by woodland cover.
- Recreational opportunities, including a network of footpaths and bridleways, nature reserves (e.g. Burnham Beeches), and historic parks and gardens.

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DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: *Burnham Beeches Wooded Terrace* is situated largely within South Bucks District, with the north western corner located within the Wycombe District. The character area, occupies the higher ground, above the Wye Valley and the Alder Bourne Valley to the north west and east, respectively. The River Thames runs along the western boundary, which also corresponds to the district administrative boundary. The character area is distinguished from the distinctly less wooded landscape to the north and south. The village of Farnham Common defines the eastern border.

Landscape Character: The landscape is a mosaic of small to medium fields, dominated by paddocks, and woodland. Some arable cultivation occupies land to the north. Irregular field patterns are largely dictated by early woodland clearance, and woodland often delineates field boundaries forming a backdrop to most views. Post and wire fencing is frequently used to sub divide fields further. This is an enclosed landscape, with tall hedgerows and trees containing rural winding roads. The dense woodland and few settlements create an intimate and tranquil landscape, with contained views. The area supports important ecological and historical elements, with large areas of historically recognised parkland in the west of the character area, demonstrating important cultural and social significance.

Geology: Underlying geology is dominated by Thames River Terrace Deposits, with occasional small linear swathes of London Clay Formation, associated with areas of lower topography. A narrow strip of Upper Chalk runs along the western boundary of the character area. Acid loamy soils overlay the area. These are predominately free-draining across the west and north of the character area, with more clayey/loamy soils exist in the south east, which results in lower permeability and seasonally wet conditions. These soils often underlay larger blocks of continuous woodland cover.

Topography/Landform: Transitional terrace area, comprising the higher ground above the High Wycombe/Wye Valley and Alder Bourne Valley to the north west and north, respectively. The topography here provides a marked physical contrast with the valley landform. Along the western edge within Clivenden Park, steep high cliffs run along this edge, standing high above the River Thames. From the south, the topography rises steadily, gradually inclining from approximately 40m to 100m, in the north. The topography across the character area is undulating, generating an irregular and varied landform.

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Hydrology: A series of scattered ponds, mires and seasonal waterlogging is evident, commonly located within woodland areas and also associated with farmland. These features are particularly concentrated in the south east of the character area, within Burnham Beeches and Dropmore Park, where soils are typically loamy and clayey, and permeability is low.

Land Use and Settlement: The land use is principally paddocks, with some arable cultivation in the north, and frequently surrounded by woodland. Irregular field patterns are largely dictated by woodland edges. Fields are often further divided geometrically by wooden post and wire fencing. Field sizes are varied and generally range from small to medium. Large woodland blocks are interspersed throughout the entire character area, and are more extensive in the south. Several Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, namely Cliveden, Dropmore Park, and Hedsor House and Park, are concentrated in the west of the character area, and represent the important social and historic history of the area. These are often bounded by remnant brick walls.

Several minor B roads run through the area, connecting the A4 in the south to the M40 in the north. A number of smaller winding tracks and rural lanes, some of which are sunken lanes cross the landscape. Road side ditches and scrubby verges are a common feature (often including bracken), and roads are frequently enclosed by tall hedgerows or lined with trees. There is a good network of footpaths and bridleways, including the long distance footpath Beeches Way, and numerous smaller tracks wind through woodland areas.

Settlement is sparse and highly dispersed, mainly comprised of individual properties, or small hamlets. Settlement is well integrated within the landscape, often nestled within woodland. Individual farmsteads are more common in the north of the character area. The village of Farnham Common is located in the east, which demonstrates dispersed 'common edge' settlement.

Tree Cover: Tree cover is extensive, with large blocks of dense, tall and mature woodland covering a significant proportion of the landscape, and having considerable influence on the character of the area. Much of the woodland is located on former common land, and has therefore established within the 20th century. Burnham Beeches and Dropmore Park are the largest broadleaved woodland areas, and are located in the south and south east. Burnham Beeches is comprised of beech and yew woodland and mixed deciduous woodland. A mosaic of Beech and Yew woodland, mixed deciduous woodland and broadleaved woodland, as well as some coniferous plantation, prevails throughout the character area. There are some areas of Ancient Woodland, and some ancient replanted woodland within this character area. Field boundaries are often dictated by woodland, limiting views across the character area, and providing a backdrop. Roads are commonly lined by trees, with woodland edge often abutting road

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sides. Tree cover is generally more extensive in the south, decreasing northwards and becoming less enclosed.

Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape: This is a simple landscape, with relatively few elements, settlements are few and small in scale and there is little traffic on the rural roads. The relatively small fields, high proportion of dense, mature, woodland cover, and high hedgerows, all contribute to the sense of intimacy and enclosure. A strong sense of tranquillity results from the absence of overt human impact and the dominance of woodland. The area is however served by a good network of footpaths and bridleways, with areas, such as Burnham Beeches, being easily accessible to the public and promoted as recreational opportunities. A dominance of paddocks also demonstrates the human influence on the landscape, however, these are enclosed by woodland. The landscape retains a high level of rural naturalness and a strong sense of tranquillity. Woodland and tree cover creates a strong vertical element, as well as a variety of texture and colour. Views are limited and confined by woodland and dense understory, and winding rural roads restrict views and generate a sense of intrigue. The exception is views from Cliveden Park, over the High Wycombe Valley from the western edge of the character area, and long views out across to the River Thames.

Biodiversity: The area supports extensive tracts of woodland habitat, including Burnham Beeches, a landscape recognised as being of international importance with its designation as a Special Area of Conservation including an exceptional collection of ancient beech pollards. There are also nationally important sites, such as Littleworth Common and South Lodge Pit. Numerous areas of Ancient Woodland are dispersed across the character area, and an extensive network of hedgerows adds to the ecological value of the character area. The heathland provides invaluable biodiversity benefits. Numerous Priority BAP habitats are found in the character area, largely associated with Burnham Beeches, including lowland wood-pasture and parkland, lowland beech and yew, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, acid grassland, wet heaths and valley mire. Rough grassland habitats are largely in association with paddocks, often with scrubby field boundaries.

Historic Environment: This part of Buckinghamshire has been the focus of human activity from prehistoric to the post medieval period as evidenced by a number of archaeological sites across the area. The earliest sites are the Palaeolithic deposits at Littleworth Common and Burnham Beeches. There are a couple of sites dating to the Iron Age, the most prominent being the scheduled monument of Seven Ways Plain Hillfort. Perhaps the most significant site is Saxon Barrow discovered at Taplow Court, this was considered the most important Anglo Saxon site in Britain until the discovery of Sutton Hoo ship burial in the 1930s, including scheduled monument; Hartley Court moated site.

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This landscape shows evidence of early enclosure, with assarted fields - formed by the process of woodland clearance in medieval and post-medieval times. The proximity to ancient woodland strengthens this likelihood. The straight edges to some of these fields indicate the later modification, of 19th century origin. Many of these fields have more recently been further subdivided into smaller, modern paddock development, with a strong geometric form. The dominance of Beech woodland in Burnham Beeches and mixture of ancient woodland signifies the possible conversion of ancient wood pasture into Beech woodland in the 18th/19th century.

Perhaps the most notable characteristic of the historic landscape are the concentration of historic parks and gardens located in the south west of the character area, which contribute to the landscape character and demonstrate important social and cultural significance; namely Cliveden, Dropmore Park, Hedsor House and Park and Nashdom Abbey. These have been recognised on the English Heritage Register, and are often owned by public organisations such as the National Trust, making them accessible to the public and providing recreational opportunities.

Designations:

- Scheduled Monuments: Hartley Court moated site; Hillfort at Seven Ways Plain; Saxon Barrow, south west of Taplow Court.
- Registered Parks and Gardens: Dropmore, Grade II; Cliveden, Grade I; Hedsor House, Grade II; Taplow Court; Berry Hill, Grade II, Taplow; Nashdom Abbey, Grade II.
- Archaeological Notification Sites: 20 No.
- Biodiversity Opportunity Areas: 1 No.
- Biological Notification Sites: 13 No.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 2 No.
- Special Area of Conservation: Burnham Beeches
- SSSI: Burnham Beeches; Littleworth Common; South Lodge Pit.
- Priority BAP Habitats: 9 types.

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EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are:

- Assart field pattern, which is important in providing time depth and contributing to the small and intimate scale of the landscape.
- Remnants of wood-pasture and heathland, which provide biodiversity value, and provide historical and cultural connections.
- Veteran trees / ancient pollards
- Dense, mature woodland, and its visual, ecological and amenity value, for example Burnham Beeches. Woodlands of ancient origin are particularly important habitats.
- The strong sense of tranquillity and intimacy, associated with low settlement and quiet roads.
- Registered parks and gardens, including Dropmore Park Estate, Cliveden and Hedsor House and Park.
- Sense of enclosure resulting from the dense woodland and undulating landform.
- Dominance of woodland and paddocks, and their recreational and ecological uses.
- Low level of dispersed settlement, vulnerable to infill.

Strength of Character/Intactness: The strength of character and intactness of *Burnham Beeches Wooded Terrace* is **strong**. Key characteristics are distinctive, and the physical and visual intactness is strong, despite the prevalence of paddocks in this character area.

Strategy/ Vision: Conserve and manage *Burnham Beeches Wooded Terrace* as a peaceful, natural landscape mosaic of wood-pasture, heathland, woodland, paddocks and historic parkland. Maintain the intimate and enclosed character.

Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve and enhance the wood-pasture and heathland resource to achieve a landscape scale mosaic of habitats and associated features.
- Conserve and manage ancient woodland parcels and plan for long term woodland management, including gaps for heathland regeneration where appropriate.
- Conserve and manage the network of dense hedgerows, and hedgerow trees. Consider replanting hedgerows which have been lost.

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- Manage field boundaries and encourage sympathetic integration of paddocks and avoiding overgrazing and overuse of bridleways.
- Safeguard early enclosures (assart patterns), which are remnants of earlier landscapes. Conserve field and woodland patterns associated with assarts.
- Maintain the essentially undeveloped character, with limited settlement development and quiet rural lanes. Avoid infilling between settlement, particularly around Farnham Common.
- Avoid introducing large scale elements (such as pylons and masts) which are highly visible and would disrupt the simple and legible landscape character.
- Seek to reduce road traffic pressures which could alter the tranquil, rural character of the landscape.
- Ensure that new buildings and development is sensitively integrated into the landscape through careful siting.
- Conserve the character and setting of historical parks and gardens, such as Dropmore Park Estate, Cliveden Country Estate and Hedsor House and Park.
- Promote the conservation and interpretation of rich historic environment.

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Paddocks confined by woodland, which acts as a backdrop to views. Wooden post and wire fence field boundaries.



Rural roads enclosed by tall mature woodland.



Extensive hedgerows and trees line roads, as well as grassed road side ditches.



Isolated ponds, visual and biodiversity value.



Burnham Beeches - SSSI and recreational woodland area.