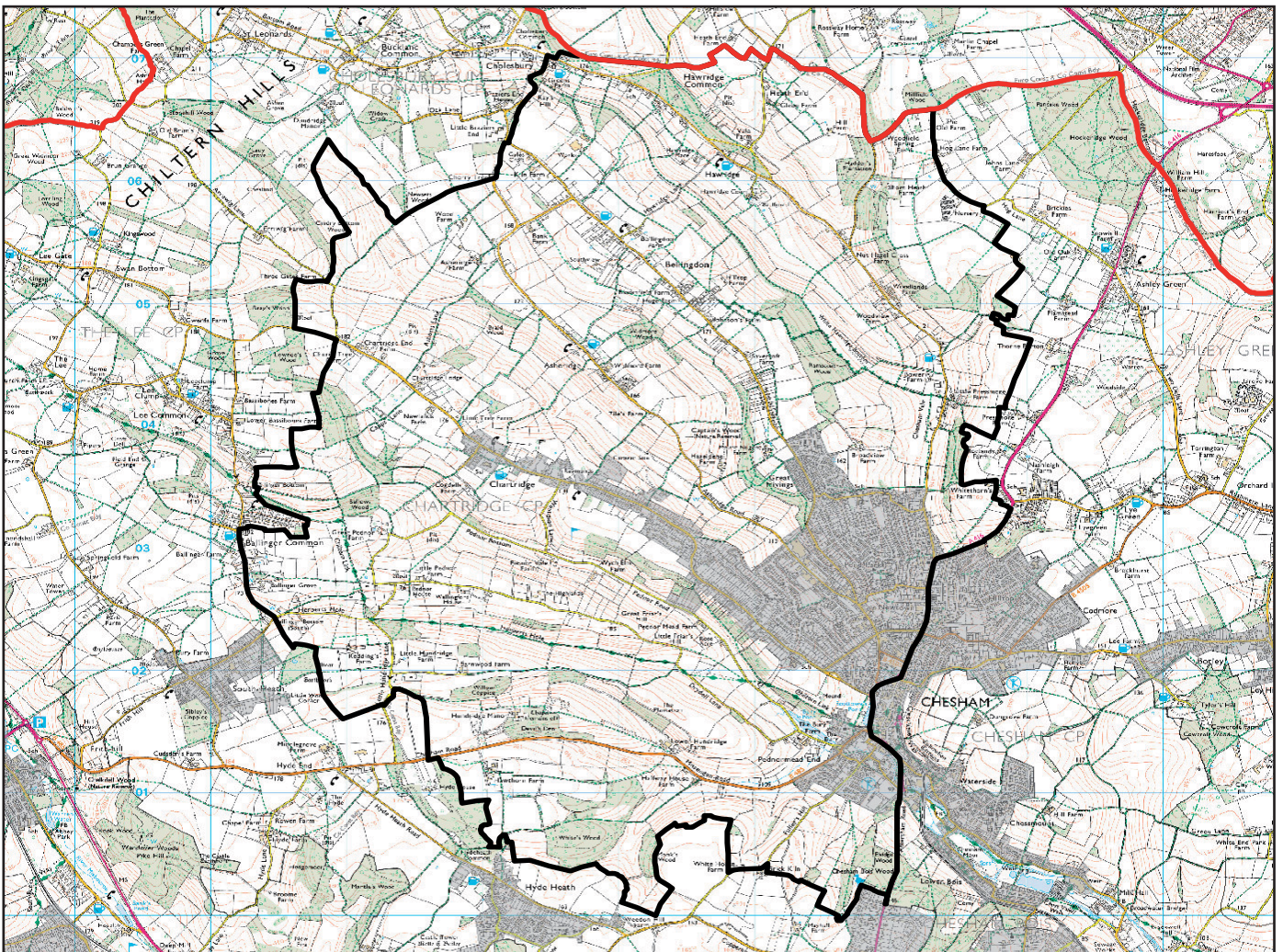
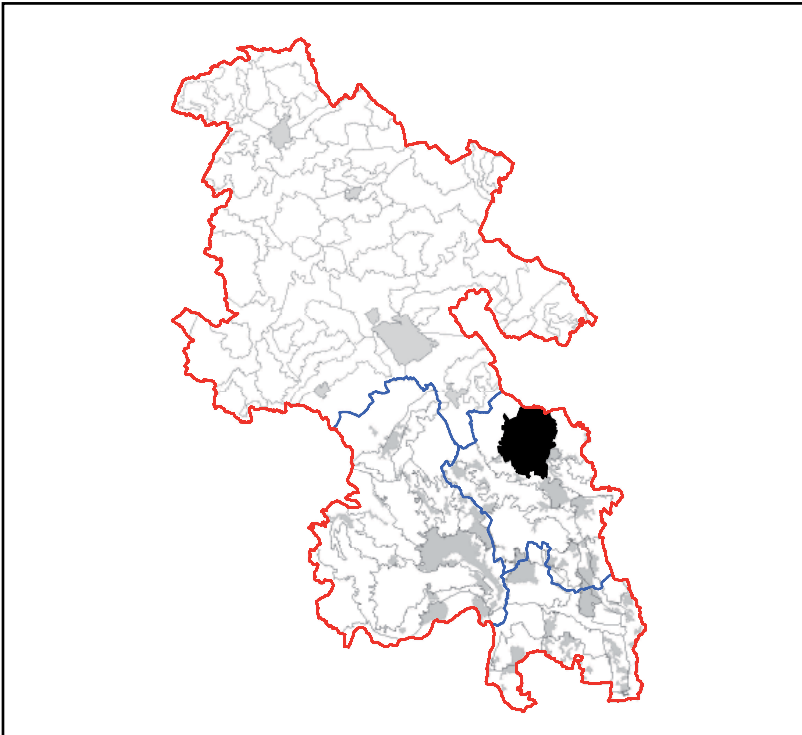


LCA 17.2 BELLINGDON DIPSLOPE WITH DRY VALLEYS



LCA 17.2 BELLINGDON DIPSLOPE WITH DRY VALLEYS

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A large scale landscape comprising alternating dry valley and ridge topography, which radiate out from the village of Chesham, along a north west to south east axis.
- Dry valleys have cut down into landscape, exposing the chalk, whilst elevated ridges remain covered by clay with flints.
- A rolling and undulating topography, with steep slopes contrasting with flatter valley ridges. A smooth and sweeping landform.
- Agricultural land use dominates, with a mix of rough grazing, paddock, pasture and arable farmland. Low hedgerows and wooden post fencing defines boundaries. White tape field divisions are common along paddock field divisions.
- Blocks of woodland and 'hanging' woodland, particularly along the upper slopes of valleys and along ridgelines, many of which are ancient. Typically broadleaved woodland, with some clumps of coniferous woodland. Beech is common.
- A low density of settlement linearly dispersed along roads, and corresponding predominately to ridgelines and to a lesser degree along the valley floor, comprising small hamlets and individual farmsteads. Some area of common edge settlement at Hawridge Common.
- Dominated by pre 18th century co-axial field enclosure, which cover an extensive area, and often more linear in form along valley sides.
- Archaeological features are concentrated in the south, close to Chesham. These include Codmore Medieval farm building, cultivation terrace, and Kiln, Neolithic flint, and a post Medieval Mill.
- A dense network of footpaths and bridleways, including the Chiltern Link long distance footpath. Roads are small and quiet, with little traffic, and follow linearly along the valley and ridge landform.
- A concentration of 'ancient' sunken lanes such as Arrewig Lane, characteristic for this part of the Chilterns.
- Extensive views up and down valleys and from the higher aspect of the ridges, contrasting with areas of woodland, with an intimate and secluded character.
- The repetitive topography and extensive farmland land cover, contributes to a uniform and simple landscape pattern.
- A remote, tranquil and rural character.

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DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: The *Bellingdon Dipslope with Dry Valleys* lies entirely within Chiltern District. It occupies the higher ground to the north east above the Chess River valley. Topographic change largely influences the boundaries of this character area, with plateau landform elevated above the character area in the east, south and west, creating both a physically and visually distinct boundary.

Landscape Character: A large scale rolling and undulating landscape comprising alternating dry valley and ridge topography, which radiate out from the village of Chesham, along a north west to south east axis. Dry valleys have cut down into the landscape exposing chalk, whilst, clay with flints cover the ridgelines. A mix of farmland, comprising rough grazing, paddock, pasture and arable farmland is enclosed by pre 18th century co-axial field enclosures, and defined by low hedgerows and wooden post fencing. Areas of woodland and 'hanging' woodland are located along the upper slopes of valleys and along ridgelines. Typically broadleaved woodland, and often dominated by beech. There is a low density of settlement, linearly dispersed along roads, which run along the ridges and valleys, plus areas of common edge settlement at Hawridge Common. Long views are afforded across this landscape, particularly from ridge tops, which contrast with enclosed, intimate woodland areas. A repetitive landform, with a sweeping character, contributing to a uniform and simple landscape pattern. It is a tranquil and rural landscape, with a strong sense.

Geology: The dry valleys have cut down into the underlying Upper Chalk and Middle Chalk, exposing chalk along the valleys. Head deposits accommodate the valley floors. Higher ridges where the chalk remains are covered by clay with flints. The majority of the character area is overlain with slightly acidic, loamy and clayey soils, with impeded drainage. Freely draining, more base rich soils are located in the west, along valley floors.

Topography/Landform: Topography is reflective of the geology. A highly repetitive landform, with alternating ridges (Hawridge, Bellingdon, Asheridge and Chartridge) and narrow valley formations, which run along a north west to south east axis. Rolling and undulating topography, with steep slopes contrast with flatter valley ridges, creating a smooth and sweeping landform.

Hydrology: The dry valleys contain no permanent water courses, although there are occasional ephemeral winterbournes. Hydrological features are sparse throughout the landscape, however, some small ponds are scattered along ridges, where soil porosity is low and underlying clay geology prevails.

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Land Use and Settlement: Agricultural land use dominates, with a mix of rough grazing, paddock, pasture and arable. Field enclosures are predominately large to medium, often with low, hedgerows or wooden post fencing. A distinctive feature is the use of white tape field divisions within many paddock areas.

Settlement density is low and linearly dispersed along roads, which correspond to ridges and valleys. Smaller hamlets and individual farmsteads are spread along these roads, and the large village of Chesham encroaches slightly in the west. Roads are small and quiet, with little traffic. A dense network of footpaths and bridleways pass through the character area, including the Chiltern Link long distance footpath. Rural roads follow linearly along the ridge and valley formation, with few roads running across the landscape.

Tree Cover: There are numerous blocks of wood and 'hanging' woodland, particularly along the upper slopes of valleys and along ridges. Often woodland is linear and spread along the ridges and valleys. Linear woodland marks Parish boundaries, such as Cholesbury and Bellingdon. Broadleaved woodland prevails, with some clumps of coniferous woodland interspersed across the area. Beech is common within this landscape, with ash and oak also typical. Numerous pockets of ancient woodland are also scattered throughout.

Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape: A large scale, smooth and rolling landscape, as a result of the open farmland and low field boundaries. A unified and balanced landscape composed of few elements, with limited, small scale settlement and little traffic along rural roads. The repetitive topography and field patterns contribute to a uniform and simple landscape. This area is highly accessible through its dense network of public rights of way, however it retains a remote and tranquil character due to its large scale, and absence of development, other than the small settlement. It is an exposed landscape, with extensive views up and down valleys and from the higher aspect of the ridges, which contrast with the small pockets of woodland, which have a more secluded character.

Biodiversity: Dominated by agricultural grassland, mostly improved, which holds limited biodiversity value. Woodland and hedgerows provide a valuable wildlife benefits, connecting fragmented habitats. Pre 18th century hedgerows are a valuable biodiversity and historical feature. Several broadleaved woodlands are recognised as Biological Notification Sites and Captains Wood; lowland mixed woodland, in west of the area and registered as a local nature reserve. BAP priority habitats include lowland beech and yew woodland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland and lowland meadow. Many types of woodland are ancient or semi natural, and often dominated by beech. The valleys areas have been designated as a South East Biodiversity Opportunity Area.

Historic Environment: The character area is dominated by pre 18th century co-axial field enclosure, which covers an extensive proportion of the landscape. Often, these enclosures are linear in form along valley landform. Some areas of pre 18th century

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irregular and regular enclosure are interspersed, as well as extended fields, as a result of extensive boundary loss. The ridge tops and valley sides are extensively wooded as evidenced by the concentration of small ancient woodlands. Common land is found at Hawridge Common, which is now heavily wooded, but previously acid grassland/heathland.

The historic settlement pattern of this area is dispersed, typically comprised of 'interrupted rows' of farmsteads/houses strung along the axial roads and ridge tops from Chesham. Examples of these settlements are Asheridge, Bellingdon and Chartridge. There is also Common edge settlement type found at Hawridge Common,

There are several archaeological monuments of national importance in this area including the medieval moated sites at Pednor Farm and Hawridge Court. Apart from these sites there are few archaeological sites recorded in this area.

Designations:

- The Chilterns AONB
- Scheduled Monuments: Bowl barrow in Lowndes Park; Hawridge Court ringwork; Moated site north west of Little Pednor Farm.
- Archaeological Notification Sites: 9 No.
- Conservation Areas: Cholesbury and Hawridge
- Priority BAP Habitats: 5 types
- Biological Notification Sites: 31 No.
- Local Nature Reserves: 1 No.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 12 No.

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are:

- Areas of woodland, particularly ancient and semi-natural woodland, with strong ecological and visual significance providing areas of enclosure within this landscape.
- The hedgerow network which links to woodland, providing wildlife corridors, especially pre 18th century hedgerows, which hold important biodiversity and historical value.
- Pre 18th century co axial and irregular and regular enclosures, which provide evidence of historic land use.
- Open and uninterrupted panoramic views, particularly from ridge tops, across the character area.
- The remote and peaceful character which is due to the large scale character and lack of settlement and roads.
- The intactness of the landscape and lack of intrusive features.
- The low density of settlement and areas of common land and common edge and interrupted row settlements.
- Local rights of way network, including the Chiltern Link, which provides easy access to this landscape.
- The remote and peaceful roads and sunken lanes intermittently used by motorised traffic
- Archaeological monuments, which provide time depth and a visible reminder of past use of the landscape.
- The visual unity of the landscape, and organised, well balanced character.

Strength of Character/Intactness: The strength of character and intactness of the *Bellingdon Dipslope with Dry Valleys* 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 *Bellingdon Dipslope with Dry Valleys* as a peaceful landscape of mixed farmland and woodland areas. Maintain the quiet and rural character, the visual unity of the landscape and the open panoramic views.

Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve the small areas of woodland which provide enclosure in the landscape and form an important landscape pattern and feature, and invaluable biodiversity benefit.

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- Conserve and manage the network of dense hedgerows, and hedgerow trees. Consider replanting hedgerows which have been lost.
- Promote appropriate management of farmland, to help generate a wildlife rich habitat, and visually attractive landscape.
- Maintain open views across the landscape, and avoid introducing large scale elements (such as pylons and masts) which would disrupt views and the legible landscape character.
- Ensure that new buildings and development is sensitively integrated into the landscape through careful siting.
- Conserve the historic field patterns (pre 18th co-axial and century irregular/regular enclosures) and avoid further divisions or expansions.
- Maintain the rural character of roads and lanes, avoid road improvements which would alter their character.
- Maintain small scale character of settlement and areas of common edge and interrupted row settlements, avoiding development which would alter the character of these areas.

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Rolling topography, dominated by farmland.



Sweeping valley landform. Contrasting open fields and woodland blocks.



Flat ridges, contrast with rolling valley sides. Extensive open views.



Traditional buildings, with distinctive brick and flint.