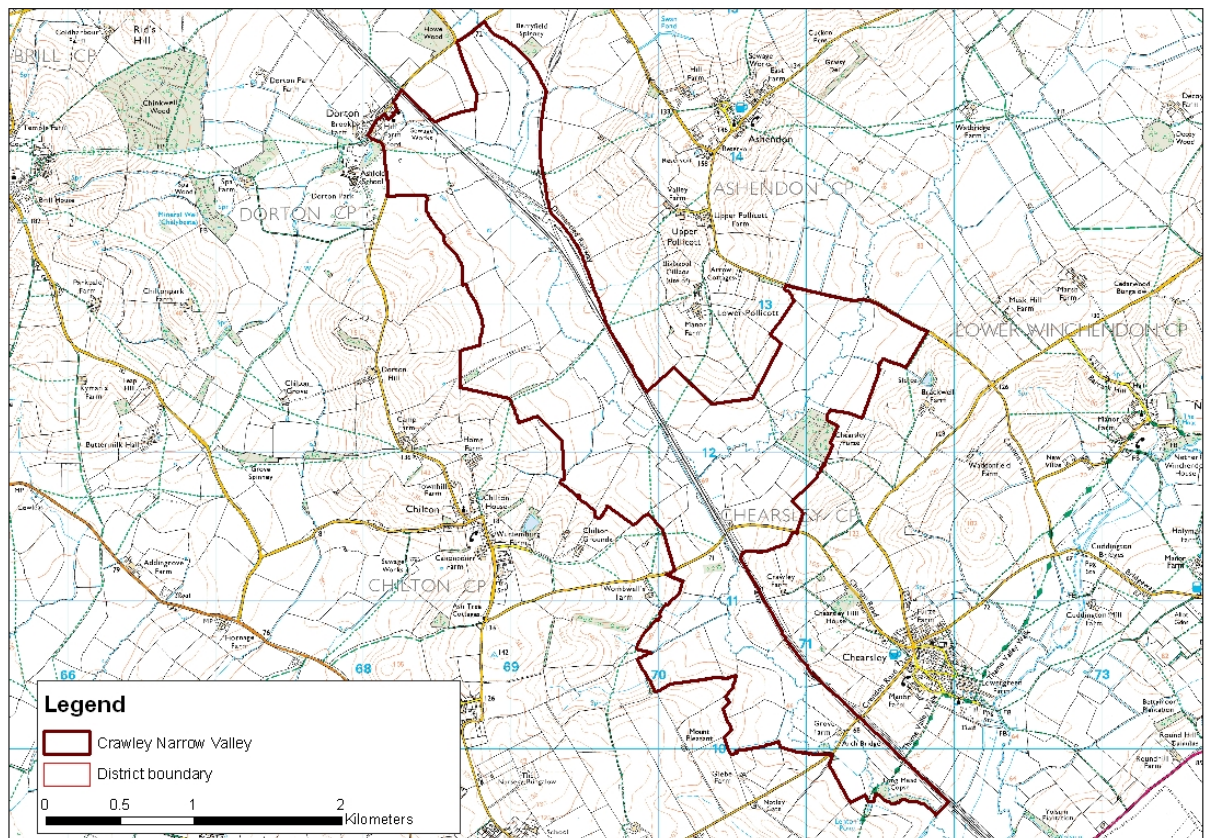
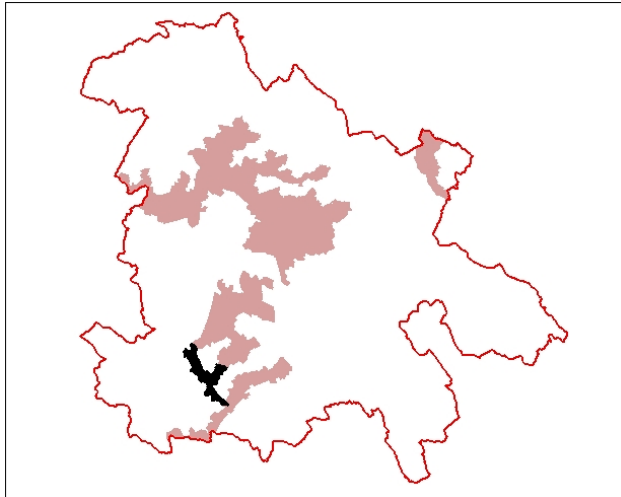


LCA 5.10 Crawley Narrow Valley

Landscape Character Type: LCT 5 Shallow Valleys



## LCA 5.10 Crawley Narrow Valley (LCT 5)

### Key Characteristics

- Divided small valley
- Gently sloping ground
- Meandering streams
- Mixed agricultural landscape with a predominance towards pastoral farming
- Pre 18<sup>th</sup> century hedgerow pattern
- Enclosed character
- Meadow land

### Distinctive Features

- Views up to adjacent ridges
- New planting of energy coppice
- Pond close to Notley Abbey
- Trees along meandering streams
- Pollarded willows
- Small farm buildings in fields
- Oak in hedgerows
- Ridge and furrow
- Dorton Fields
- Neutral and calcareous grassland

### Intrusive Elements

- Railway line

**Location** This divided valley is located in the west of the district north of the Thame Valley and south of the A41.

**Landscape character** A divided small valley, which is fairly inaccessible by road. The ground slopes gently towards the streams but is surrounded by the steeper ground of the adjacent ridges. It is a mixed agricultural landscape of predominantly pastoral farming. The only settlement in the area comprises a few widely scattered farms. Farms tend to be on the higher ground of the adjacent ridges. This is a small, enclosed landscape, which has retained an historic landscape pattern particularly close to the river. The cohesion of the area is disrupted by railway and the road between Long Crendon and Chearsley. Landscape quality has been reduced where hedgerows have been lost or are low and discontinuous. Views are predominantly up to the adjacent ridges or along the valley itself.

**Geology** Narrow valley containing alluvium. Exposures of West Walton calcareous mudstones and Oakley limestone and marl beds in the north. Transition to Kimmeridge clay where the valley narrows in the south.

**Topography** This area represents part of a divided, narrow valley tributary of the river Thame. The area is surrounded by three distinct ridges. The valleys are Y shaped and drain from north to south. The elevation ranges from about 100m to 65m AOD. The land falls gently to the meandering streams.

**Hydrology** The stream tributaries that run through this area have a distinct very meandering course. They fall towards the river Thame to the south of the area.

**Land use and settlement** This is a predominantly a pastoral landscape, mostly in small or medium sized irregular fields. Although in the majority of the area the hedgerow pattern remains it is notably often low cut and gappy.

The valley has very limited public access with roads and footpaths crossing the valley but not running along it. However, a railway line runs through the eastern side of the valley running north-south. The valley has a very low level of settlement with only a few fairly widely spaced farms.

**Tree cover** There are small-scattered woodlands, and one larger woodland Chearsley Furze that contains conifers. There is scrub woodland along the railway line. Tree cover within hedgerows is variable but generally strongest close the lower valley floor. The banks of the streams tend to be tree lined, particularly in the east and south of the area.

**Biodiversity** There is a mix of arable and grassland habitat with a small scattering of woodland, most of which is coniferous. Aquatic habitats are restricted to the tributaries of the river Thame that run through the area.

Much of the grassland is improved however there is a large area of neutral grassland (Dorton Fields BNS) and some calcareous grassland in the north. Both habitats are broad habitat types. They occur adjacent to neutral grassland in adjoining areas LCA 7.5 and LCA 9.6 together forming a large concentration of these habitats linked by the stream.

The scrub habitat along the railway, the hedgerow pattern and the streams combine to create good connectivity between habitats.

## LCA 5.10 Crawley Narrow Valley (LCT 5)

**Historic environment** Over half this area retains the landscape pattern of early pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosure. A feature of particular note is the large areas of meadows adjacent to the meandering streams. The more recent enclosure and prairie farming tends to be on the higher valley sides. There are no settlements or historic buildings of note in this area. The archaeological record is also sparse, although there is some good surviving ridge and furrow in the area. The other distinctive feature is the railway line built in 1906.

**Designations**

Archaeological Notification Areas – 6 No.  
BNS – 2 No

## LCA 5.10 Crawley Narrow Valley (LCT 5)



This is a predominantly pastoral landscape with small areas of wet woodland close to the stream.



Views up to the adjacent ridges with LCT 9 Low Hills and Ridges are a key feature of the area.

## LCA 5.10 Crawley Narrow Valley (LCT 5)

Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis		Condition
<b>Condition</b>	<b>Good</b>	<p>The condition of the landscape is good and the pattern of elements is coherent although in some places the hedgerows are weak. There are few visual detractors; the railway line is screened from most views. The combination of a coherent pattern of elements and few visual detractors mean the area is visually unified. The cultural integrity is considered to be variable being strongest close to the meandering streamline where there are ancient meadows and wet woodland and weaker in areas of hedgerow loss. Ecological integrity is moderate due to good connectivity and the areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance. The area has a coherent functional integrity.</p>
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	
Visual detractors:	Few	
Visual unity:	Unified	
Cultural integrity:	Variable	
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	
Functional integrity:	Coherent	
<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	
Distinctiveness:	Distinct	
Continuity:	Historic	
Sense of place:	Moderate	
Landform:	Apparent	
Tree cover:	Intermittent	
Visibility:	Moderate	
<b>Guidelines</b>	<b>Conserve and Reinforce</b>	

### Sensitivity

This is a distinctive landscape with a good sense of historic continuity. The sense of place as a whole is assessed as moderate. The landform is apparent and the tree cover is intermittent being generally strongest close to the streams and weakest where the hedgerows are poor. This gives the area a moderate level of visibility. Overall the combination of the moderate sense of place and the moderate visibility combine to give the area a moderate sensitivity.

## LCA 5.10 Crawley Narrow Valley (LCT 5)

### Landscape Guidelines Conserve and Reinforce

The landscape guidelines for the Crawley Narrow Valley are as follows:

- Encourage the retention and strengthening of the existing historic hedgerow pattern by infilling gaps and establishing new hedgerow trees.
- Maintain and improve condition of existing hedgerows through traditional cutting regimes.
- Promote the management and conservation of vegetation adjacent to the meandering watercourses including the pollarding of willows.
- Maintain the condition and extent of woodland using traditional techniques to create and manage a wide diversity of habitats.
- Maintain the condition and extent of neutral, calcareous, unimproved and semi-improved grassland wherever possible. Encourage good management practices.
- Maintain and enhance connectivity of habitats, particularly of neutral grassland to other similar habitats in adjoining LCAs. Maintain the existing extent and condition of neutral and calcareous grassland.
- Improve the management of historic meadows and pastures.
- Close to watercourses promote the use of permanent pasture, with low stocking density and flooding regimes to promote biodiversity and landscape enhancement.
- Promote the retention of the character of minor roads by the management of hedgerows and verges and limiting urbanising elements such as signage and kerbing.
- Identify key views to surrounding ridges from publicly accessible land and promote the preservation and enhancement of these views.
- Ensure the preservation of archaeological earthworks by maintaining grassland.



Mature trees in agricultural land close to the railway embankment where scrub habitat adds to local biodiversity. The hedgerow in the background is variable and joins with vegetation including willows alongside a small stream.