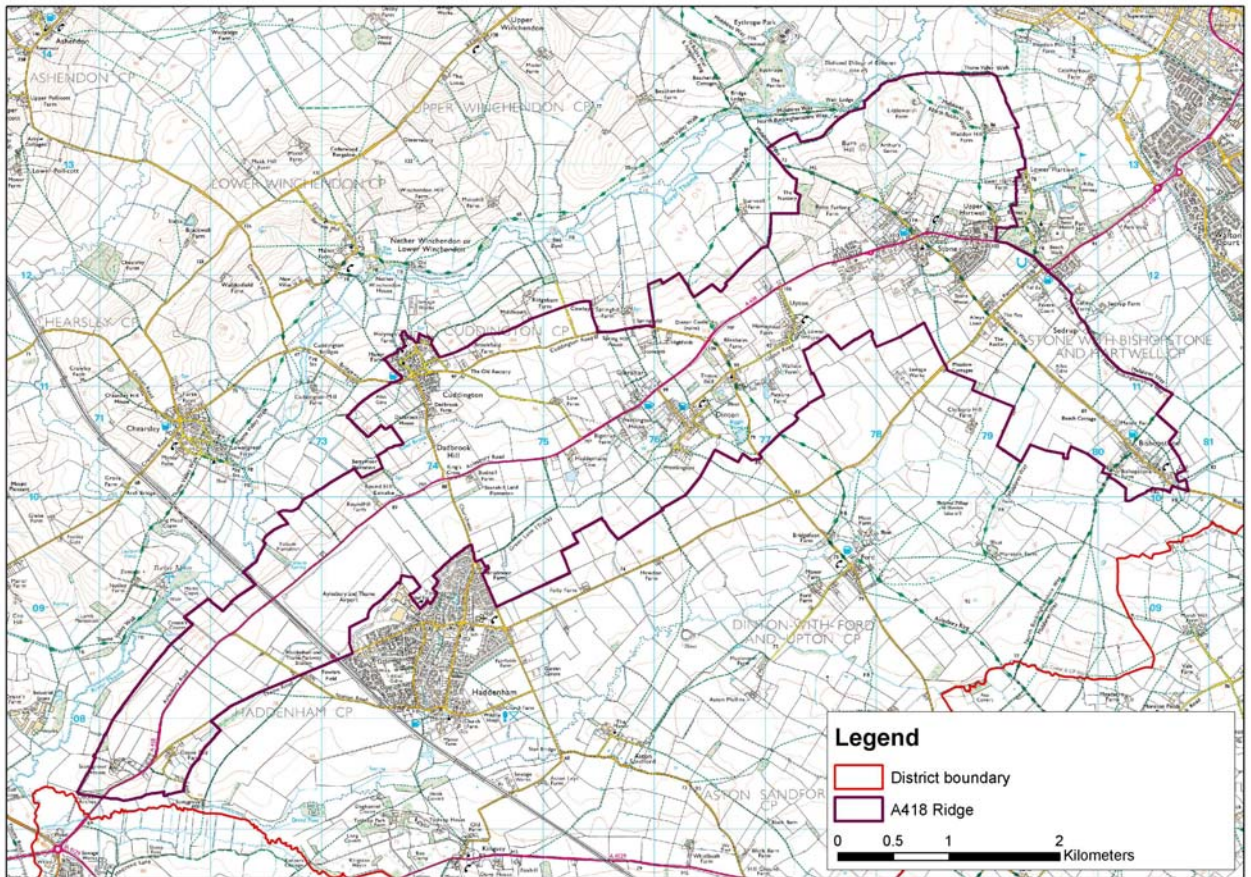
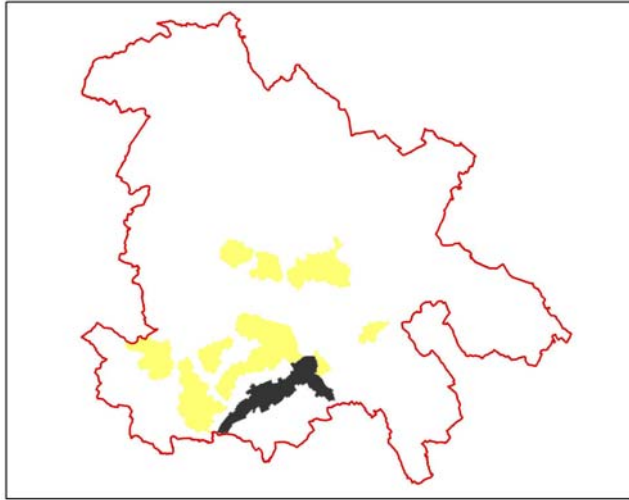


LCA 9.9 A418 Ridge

Landscape Character Type: LCT9 Low Hills and Ridges



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Key Characteristics

- Shallow asymmetric ridge
- Settlement dispersed along ridge often on southern face
- A418 follows top of ridge
- Predominantly arable fields but with smaller paddocks around settlements
- Long distance views to north and south

Distinctive Features

- Parkland features at eastern end
- Western end merges into the Scotsgrove estate lands
- Burn Hill
- Folly at Dinton Castle
- Dinton Hall
- Vernacular buildings in stone and Wichert
- Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon archaeology

Intrusive Elements

- Extensive industrial estate on eastern boundary of Haddenham Airfield
- Suburban fringe to Haddenham

Location The area lies to the southwest of Aylesbury extending along a low ridge from the Hartwell estate west of Aylesbury to Scotsgrove, a small private estate north of Thame and including a shorter ridge of land extending towards Bishopstone. The northern boundary of the ridge is the valley of the river Thame whilst to the south the ridge gradually merges with the flat Vale landscape. The A418 road between Aylesbury and Thame follows the top of the ridge.

Landscape character Locally prominent low ridge with contrasting sides in terms of settlement, tree cover and topography. The A418 ridge is overlooked by the ridge on the north side of the Thame valley. There is a distinctive transition from a more mature, wooded landscape with settlement in the east towards an open intensively arable landscape with well trimmed hedges in the west. This is exaggerated by the openness of the landscape around Haddenham airfield. This also applies to the ridge where it extends towards Bishopstone. The northern face of the ridge generally has steeper slopes with grassland areas and narrow fields and paddocks running down the valley sides particularly noted at Gibraltar and also around the settlement of Dinton. There are also narrow shelter belts that run down the valley sides in harmony with the field pattern. In contrast the shorter Bishopstone ridge is predominantly arable land however, the pattern is interrupted around the settlement where there is a greater concentration of smaller fields in pastoral land use.

Geology Portland and Purbeck sands and limestones.

Topography In the east the village of Stone lies at an elevation of approximately 110m AOD. The level of the ridge falls very gradually westwards to a level of approximately 90m AOD north of Haddenham. Further west at Scotsgrove the ridge drops into the valley of the Thame at a level between 75 – 80m AOD. There is a distinctive asymmetrical profile to the ridge with a steep northern face to the valley of the Thame and a less distinct gentler merging of falls into the Vale landscape to the south. Locally the top of the ridge is very narrow.

Hydrology Several ponds around Dinton otherwise restricted to infrequent minor ditches draining off the ridge.

Land use and settlement There is a high proportion of arable land use particularly to the west contrasting with a more variable mixed land use to the east where the ridge is contained within the Hartwell estate lands typified by an irregular sized field pattern and high proportion of woodland cover. The central part particularly around the settlements of Gibraltar - Dinton includes a high proportion of grazing land enclosed by mature hedges. Towards the west, especially to the north and west of Haddenham, large scale arable predominates, changing suddenly where the ridge merges into the Scotsgrove estate. At Gibraltar there are a number of small holdings with narrow strip fields extending down the valley side.

Settlement is dispersed along the ridge but predominantly on the warmer southern slopes. There are larger clusters of housing at Stone, Upton and Dinton and at Bishopstone. Between Haddenham and the A418 lies the former WWII airfield, which is bounded by an industrial estate clearly visible from the A418.

Tree cover A number of distinctive woodlands, predominantly oak/ash with a conifer nurse crop, characterise the Hartwell estate. Burn Hill, a distinctive outcrop to the north of Stone, supports a copse of lime. There are also

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dispersed linear plantations and shelter belts often associated with smaller settlements and farmsteads. The A418 corridor includes distinctive groups of mature trees including pine notably adjacent to Dinton Castle. Black poplar occurs occasionally on the lower slopes especially adjacent to wet ditches.

Biodiversity The principal habitats comprise a mix of grassland and arable habitat found throughout the area mostly divided by hedgerows. Within this pattern habitat diversity is provided by; the scattered small fragments of broadleaved woodland; the limited areas of standing water, although some ponds are large; and the few wet ditches.

The majority of the grassland is improved, with the occasional small isolated field of neutral or unimproved grassland.

Historic environment The historic landscape is a mixture, of different field types. It can be divided into two areas north and south of the A418. To the north of the road the landscape is composed primarily of pre 18th century enclosure fields concentrated around the settlements of Cuddington and Dinton. To the south by contrast the landscape is largely parliamentary enclosure fields created for the parish of Haddenham in 1830. Much of the fields in these areas have been altered in the 20th century with the sub-division of fields into smaller enclosures or paddocks, this occurs particularly around settlements, especially Dinton. Conversely there has also been the loss of field boundaries leading to the creation of prairie fields; these are especially prevalent around the settlement of Haddenham. One notable modern landscape feature is Haddenham airfield; this was established before the Second World War and was known as Aylesbury and Thame Airport. By 1941 it was known as RAF Thame, and during war time was a centre for glider training. Much of the military infrastructure of the airfield is now gone and its extent is much reduced, it now functions as a modest commercial airfield.

The most notable landscape feature is the present A418 that runs along the ridge, although a former turnpike, this road has much earlier origins.

With the exception of the village of Cuddington, the historic settlement pattern in this area are dispersed in character, there are linear interrupted rows, represented by villages of Dinton, Bishopstone and Stone together with small farms clusters and hamlets exemplified by the settlements of Gibraltar and Scotsgrove. The villages of Bishopstone, Cuddington and Dinton have gained conservation area status and have a number of notable listed buildings at Dinton Hall a 16th century Grade II* listed country house, the seat of the VanHattens. Associated with the hall are a number of other buildings including dovecotes, and a hermitage, but the most visible is that of the so called Dinton Castle, adjacent to the A413. This is a folly, built in the 18th century by the hall's owners as an 'eye catcher' and to display their collection of ammonites. Other notable buildings in the area are the listed buildings of St Nicholas Church, Cuddington, and St John the Baptist, Stone.

The archaeology of this area indicates significant occupation from prehistory to modern times, Prehistoric and Roman sites are indicated by cropmark sites and finds whilst several pagan Saxon cemeteries have been found, including a rich example excavated near Dinton Castle. Medieval remains are found to the east of Dinton where there are the earthworks of a moated site and deserted settlement, which is classified as a scheduled ancient monument. Another scheduled site is the prehistoric round barrow to the north of the A418.

The area has a good amenity value, having several promoted Rights of Way running north-south through the area; these include the Bernwood Jubilee Way and the Aylesbury Ring footpath.

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Designations

Conservation Areas at Gibraltar, Cuddington, Hartwell (2), Bishopstone (2),
Dinton & Westlington

Scheduled Ancient Monuments: Round Hill Bowl Barrow, Moated Site East of
Pasture Farm

Archaeological Notification Areas – 35 No.

CWS – 1 No.

BNS – 5 No.

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The unsettled north face of the ridge between Stone and Upton seen from the Thame Valley. An HGV on the A418 can be seen on the horizon.



The settled south face of the ridge seen from the Haddenham Vale (LCA 8.9).

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Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

Condition	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Visual detractors:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Functional integrity:	Weak
Sensitivity	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate
Guidelines	Conserve and Enhance

Condition

Generally the landscape is in moderate condition. The hedgerow pattern is variable being locally strong and distinctive but there are areas of arable intensification where hedges are well trimmed, gappy or removed. Woodland cover is comparatively high in the east and the western extremities but sparse over the core area although tree cover is locally good. The pattern of elements remains coherent and there are few detracting features, other than the industrial development to the east of Haddenham Airfield. The cultural integrity is considered variable, as the field pattern becomes diluted where hedges are poorly managed or removed. Ecological integrity is weak due to the limited areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance and the connectivity of these features. The functional integrity of the landscape is also considered to be weak.

Sensitivity

The landscape is distinctive in character and there are historic associations reasonably well expressed in the field patterns to the east and west. Overall the sense of place is considered to be moderate. The landform is apparent in particular the relationship to the valley network to the north and Vale to the south. Tree cover is variable changing in intensity between the eastern and western ends of the ridge and the open core area. Visibility is variable depending on location and is rated as moderate. Overall the moderate sense of place combined with the moderate visibility gives the landscape a moderate sensitivity.



Looking eastwards along the north face of the ridge near to Haddenham Airfield. The hedgerow on the right marks the boundary of the A418.

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Landscape Guidelines Conserve and Enhance

Landscape guidelines for the A418 Ridge are as follows:

- Conserve the pattern of smaller fields and woodland parcels by encouraging local woodland management schemes and the planting of small copses.
- Conserve the overall balance of irregular shaped field parcels and mature hedges over the rolling landform at the eastern end.
- Reinforce the existing field pattern where arable intensification has eroded hedgerows.
- Encourage replacement planting of hedgerow trees within the core of the area.
- Maintain the condition and extent of improved and semi-improved grassland wherever possible.
- Maintain and improve the connectivity of habitats, particularly woodland fragments and neutral and unimproved grassland.
- Conserve and enhance the distinctive character of settlements and individual buildings.
- Identify key views from publicly accessible locations and promote the management and enhancement of these viewpoints.
- Ensure the preservation of archaeological earthworks by maintaining grassland.
- Encourage arable reversion or minimum cultivation to protect buried archaeological remains.



The Folly at Dinton Castle is cloaked by a distinctive group of mature trees.