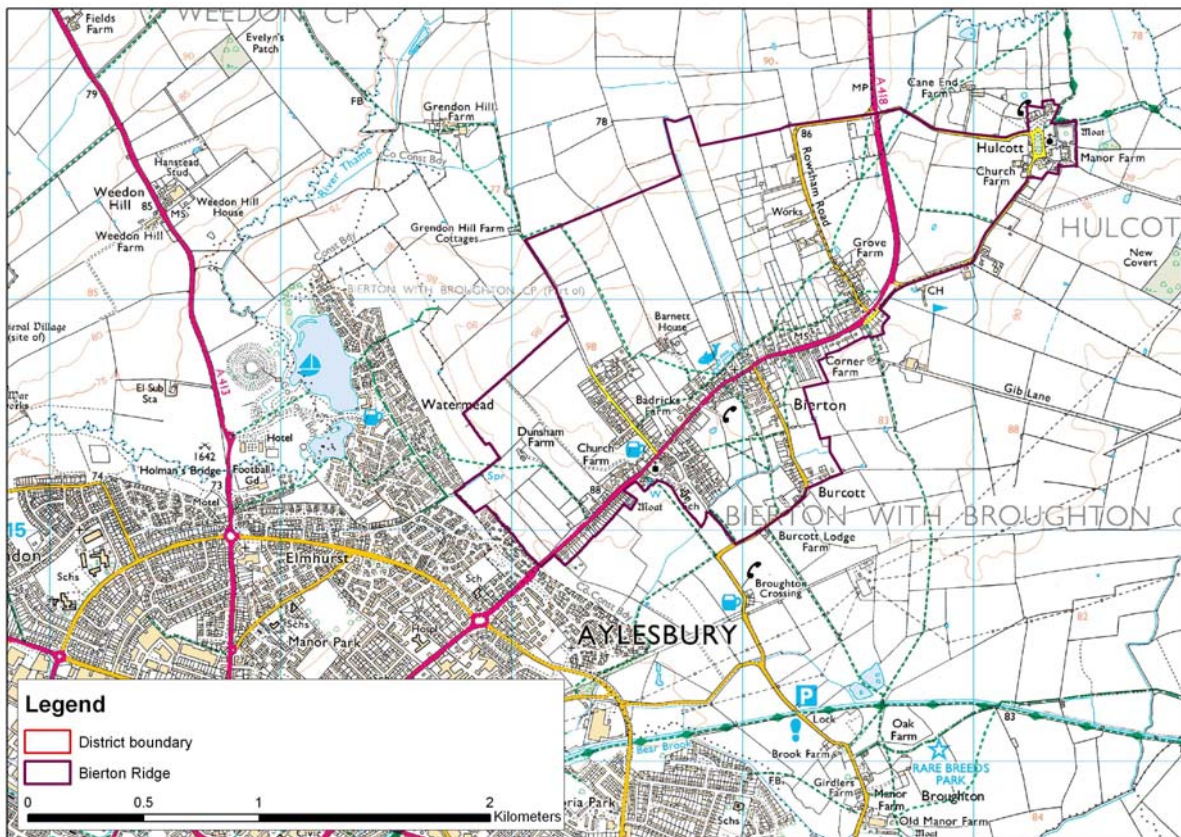
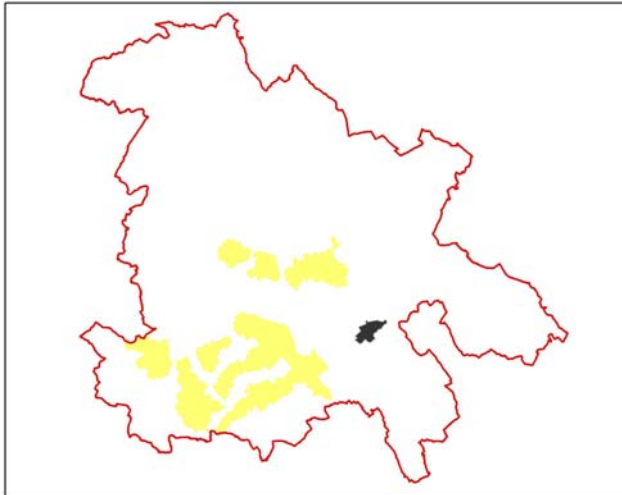


LCA 9.11 Berton Ridge

Landscape Character Type: LCT9 Low Hills and Ridges



## LCA 9.11 Berton Ridge (LCT 9)

### Key Characteristics

- Narrow strip fields
- Ribbon development along A418 corridor
- Predominant use of land for grazing

### Distinctive Features

- Ponds and woodland at Brick Kiln Lane, Hulcott
- Moat at Hulcott
- All Saints Church and village green at Hulcott
- Ridge and Furrow

### Intrusive Elements

- Traffic on the A418
- Industrial development on Rowsham Road

**Location** The area lies to the northeast of Aylesbury and incorporates the settlements of Berton and Hulcott.

**Landscape character** Small area comprising a single low ridge rising above the Vale landscape and dominated by the large village of Berton strung out along the A418. The settlement lies mainly on the southern flank of the ridge. The village is surrounded by a distinct historic pattern of small fields or closes defined by hedges. In contrast Hulcott is small and nucleated, concentrated around the village green. Berton experiences heavy traffic flows through the village which affect the quality of life whilst Hulcott has a quiet ambiance which compliments its tranquil nature and historic core.

**Geology** Portland Beds limestones running east-west bearing the village with Kimmeridge clays on the lower slopes.

**Topography** An asymmetrical ridge which carries the highway from Aylesbury to the northeast. The ridge falls to the northwest down to the Thames valley. The maximum difference in level between the ridge alignment and the bottom of the valley is approximately 20m AOD. To the south the ridge grades out very gently into the Hulcott Vale LCA and the difference in level is approximately 10m AOD.

**Hydrology** Limited to occasional ditch and a number of ponds.

**Land use and settlement** Predominantly agricultural land use around Berton on the ridge slopes with settlement along the ridge top. Strong pattern of narrow strip fields perpendicular to the line of the A418 most strongly developed to the north of the settlement. Residential areas consist of a number of older settlement clusters with more recent infill. This is also reflected in the fragmented nature of the conservation area.

The strip fields at the rear of properties are predominantly used as gardens, allotments and paddocks. Lower down the valley to the north these are amalgamated into larger grazing fields, but maintain the overall field pattern. Fields are enclosed by well managed hedgerows with some post and wire fences closer to the settlement.

The sparsely settled village of Hulcott lies at the eastern end of the ridge to the east of the A418. At the core of the village stands All Saints Church, adjacent to the village green. Residential properties are clustered around the green. The remnants of a substantial moat occupy the north western corner of the settlement.

**Tree cover** No distinctive blocks of woodland however, there are sections of hedge with groups of mature trees. Oak and ash species on drier slopes with black poplar in wetter areas. Mature trees surround the village green at Hulcott.

**Biodiversity** The majority of the Berton Ridge is grassland which is almost entirely improved however a small amount of the broad habitat type of neutral pasture is also present in the northeast. Some of this grassland has good continuity with a much larger block of neutral grassland in the adjoining LCA 8.6 Hulcott Vale.

Hedgerows contribute to habitat connectivity over most of the LCA and are a strong biodiversity factor close to the village where the tree and shrub

## LCA 9.11 Bierton Ridge (LCT 9)

habitats of the urban and rural areas come together in a tight matrix. Just north of the A418 at Bierton and immediately adjoining the settlement there are several large ponds at the Bierton Clay Pit SSSI (designated for geological interest) in close association with woodland and grassland habitats that are managed for wildlife.

The dominance of grassland is interrupted by two blocks of arable land near the northern boundary, and the small fragments of broadleaved woodland and ponds that are scattered around the LCA.

Fields to the east of the A418 are included in the more extensive Hulcott Fields BNS designated for its bird interest, the bulk of which is also in LCA 8.6 Hulcott Vale.

### ***Historic environment***

The historic landscape of this area is characterised by a mixture of field types. The bulk of the landscape is defined by well-preserved parliamentary enclosure fields dating to 1780; the field boundaries have endured because they are predominantly grassland for livestock farming. By contrast the fields to the west around the village of Hulcott are well preserved pre 18<sup>th</sup> century irregular enclosures. Perhaps the most interesting fields are those found directly north of Bierton, where there are a number of long rectilinear fields. These closes were formed from the strips of open field farming but have subsequently provided convenient land allotment as crofts for the adjacent properties. These enclosures make a contribution to the setting of Bierton.

Historic settlement is dominated by the linear settlement of Bierton and the hamlet of Hulcott, both of which are designated as conservation areas. The two settlements are unusual for Aylesbury Vale as they are more dispersed in pattern, Bierton was an interrupted row of farmsteads which has subsequently been infilled with housing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while Hulcott has its focus is around a green. Within each village there are a number of listed buildings; Bierton contains 17, the most notable of these is the Grade I restored 14<sup>th</sup> century church of St James. Hulcott has eight churches. The most distinctive and important is the 14<sup>th</sup> century Grade II\* building of All Saint's church. The village also has the hallmarks of the Rothschild's architect George Devey, who in the 19<sup>th</sup> century designed many of the buildings at Hulcott in his characteristic rustic style; they include the manor house, school and several cottages around the green.

In terms of the archaeological dimension, the most apparent feature is the intermittent distribution of ridge and furrow earthworks, with notable areas to the west of Hulcott. The other notable monuments are the earthwork remains of a moat and fish ponds at Hulcott and moat near Bierton church; both are scheduled ancient monuments. Although not visible, the area around the settlement of Bierton is particularly significant for its prehistoric, Roman and Saxon archaeology. Excavations around the village have shown that the landscape has been occupied since the Bronze Age.

The area has amenity value being promoted by the District for its Rights of Way, in particular the Bierton circular walk and round Aylesbury walk.

### ***Designations***

Conservation Areas at Bierton (4) and Hulcott  
Scheduled Ancient Monuments: Moated Site East of All Saints Church  
Archaeological Notification Areas – 12 No.  
BNS – 2 No.

## LCA 9.11 Bierton Ridge (LCT 9)



Above and below - Two of many narrow closes immediately to the north of Bierton and perpendicular to the settlement. The closes are bounded by hedgerows of differing quality and character. Typically the next close can be seen through gaps or beneath the hedgerows.



**LCA 9.11 Bierton Ridge (LCT 9)**

<b>Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis</b>	
<b>Condition</b>	<b>Good</b>
Pattern of elements:	Unified
Visual Detractors:	Some
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>

**Condition**

Generally the landscape is in good condition. The pattern of strip fields is a distinguishing feature of this landscape. There is no discernible woodland cover but the distinctive hedgerow pattern has been assessed as being unified - an important constituent of the visual unity of the area. There are few detracting features however; the western end of the character area abuts the sub-urban fringe of Aylesbury. The cultural integrity is assessed as being variable, although the landscape has been modified by the loss of some field boundaries; the area contains some interesting strip enclosures and is archaeologically sensitive. Ecological integrity is moderate due to small areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance and good connectivity. Overall the functional integrity is assessed as coherent.

**Sensitivity**

The landscape is distinctive with historic continuity evident in the field pattern and more specifically at the core of the historic settlement of Hulcott. Overall the sense of place has been assessed as being moderate. Although the topography is fundamental to understanding the importance of the ridge as a transport corridor it is not a dominant physical characteristic. Visibility overall is moderate, however, this is a combination of the contained views at top of the ridge and the long distance views over the Thame valley from lower down the northern face of the ridge. Overall the moderate sense of place combined with the moderate visibility give a landscape of moderate sensitivity.



View towards Aylesbury from the northern most extent of Bierton and close to the ridge top.

## LCA 9.11 Berton Ridge (LCT 9)

### Landscape Guidelines Conserve and Reinforce

Guidelines for the Berton Ridge are as follows:

- Conserve the historic field pattern and reinforce the traditional management of hedgerows including laying of hedges to maintain stock proof quality.
- Reinforce the field pattern by planting new hedgerow trees.
- Create new woodland copses to encourage ecological diversity, habitat creation and to generate visual interest by introducing local landmark features.
- Conserve the historic qualities of the two settlements to maintain the character of the landscape setting.
- Maintain the condition and extent of neutral, unimproved and semi-improved grassland. Encourage good management practices.
- Maintain connectivity of neutral grassland to that in Hulcott Vale.
- Encourage the preservation of ridge and furrow by maintaining a continuous grass sward.



The village of Hulcott is clustered around the village green which is surrounded by tall mature trees.