



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Undulating, transitional lowland topography gently rising between the Thames floodplain in the south and the higher wooded terrace to the north.
- The area is predominately open arable cultivation in the north and rough grazing and paddocks in the south. Field sizes vary, and are generally larger where arable land use prevails. Several golf courses intersperse field systems (e.g. at Pumpkin Hill).
- A strong network of hedgerows with trees delineates field boundaries and roadside edges often providing dense and irregular wooded backdrops. Oak trees are characteristic of the area.
- Settlement is relatively sparse comprising linearly spread settlement along roads (e.g. Green Lane) and individual scattered farmsteads and isolated properties dispersed throughout. The village of Burnham is situated in the south of the area with a stronger modern character.
- Fields are a mix of pre 18th century co-axial enclosure, pre 18th 18th century irregular enclosure and some 20th 21st century enclosure.
- Important archaeological features include Palaeolithic deposits, several crop mark enclosures, a long barrow, and Iron Age settlements.
- Registered parkland occurs at Dropmore Park; Hitcham Manor; Grenville Court and contributes to the character of the area.
- An intimate and calm landscape with little movement, despite the close proximity to Slough. Overall a strong rural character.
- Varying degrees of enclosure contrasting between enclosed rural roads, dense
 woodland edges and open, expansive fields. Extensive long views are afforded
 towards the south from higher ground.
- The regular rolling landscape, extensive hedgerows and wooded field boundaries creates an organised and rhythmic landscape.

DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: Burnham Undulating Farmland lies entirely within South Bucks District. It forms the transitional landscape, between the town of Slough on the low lying floodplain landform which occupies the landscape to the south and the higher, heavily wooded landscape to the north, which provides a strong visual boundary.

Landscape Character: Undulating lowland, forming the transitional landscape between the floodplain and wooded terrace, and gradually inclining towards the north. A strong network of hedgerows with trees, delineates field boundaries, and generates varying degrees of enclosure. Views are contained along roads, and woodland clumps often form strong backdrops, contrasting with long, extensive views south, across open fields from higher ground. Agricultural land dominates, with arable cultivation noticeably in the north, and smaller fields of rough grazing and paddocks largely occupying land in the south. Large areas given over for golf courses are interspersed throughout the landscape. Settlement is relatively sparse and with the exception of the village of Burnham in the south, which maintains a mix of modern and traditional character. Limited and consistent land cover and land use, gives rise to a well balanced and organised landscape, and generates a tranquil and calm character.

Geology: The area is largely based on Ancestral Thames River Terrace Deposits, with Boyn Hill Gravel Formation geology in the east and small occasional swathes of Upper Chalk arising in the south. Freely draining loamy soils overlay the central portion of the character area, with patches of slowly permeable, seasonably wet, more clay based soils in the north, south and east.

Topography/Landform: Transitional, undulating, lowland topography, gently rising from the floodplain in the south, to the higher terrace area in the north. Topographic variation ranges from approximately 25m to 75m.

Hydrology: Hydrological features are relatively sparse and inconspicuous, with some scattered ponds located in the north, east and south, where slowly permeable, clay based soils prevail.

Land Use and Settlement: Agricultural land is dominated by arable cultivation in the north, occupying medium sized fields. Smaller fields of rough grazing and paddocks occupy land in the south, closely located to settlement. Noticeable land use features of this character area are golf courses, with three separate facilities covering large tracts of land.

Settlement is relatively limited and includes some linearly spread settlement dispersed along roads and individual scattered farmsteads and isolated properties located

throughout. Settlement often has a strong historic character, such as the village of Taplow which contains many attractive vernacular buildings built in local building materials including commonly red brick. The exception is the suburban edge of Burnham in the south of the area, which has a stronger modern character.

Tree Cover: Tree cover is mainly found along field boundaries and road side edges, often providing a strong backdrop. Deciduous trees predominate, and scattered oak trees provide a distinctive feature within the landscape. Small broadleaved and mixed woodland clumps are occasionally located along field boundaries, particularly in the east of the character area. *Burnham Beeches Wooded Terrace* provides a strong wooded backdrop to the north of the character area.

Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape: The undulating topography, hedgerows with hedgerow trees and woodland clumps, all contribute to an intimate and secluded character. The degree of enclosure varies throughout the area, with views frequently changing from panoramic vistas across fields, to enclosed views along hedged lanes. Extensive views exist south across the landscape, over lowland areas and Slough. A strong sense of rural tranquillity results from the absence of overt human impact and low density of settlement. The relatively limited land cover and land use generates an organised and balanced landscape, which is enhanced by extensive hedgerows and network of hedgerow trees.

Biodiversity: Improved grassland dominates (grazing and golf course). Some large tracts of arable cultivation occupy land in the north and south east. The network of hedgerows and scattered trees create an important ecological resource. These provide connectivity within the character area and beyond to neighbouring areas, in particular to the north where they have affinities with Burnham Beeches, Dropmore and Littleworth Common. Small broadleaved and mixed woodland clumps area scattered throughout the area, particularly in the east.

Historic Environment: Two large areas of Palaeolithic deposits, several crop mark enclosures, a long barrow, and some Iron Age settlements are evidence of early settlement and land use within the area. Fields are a mix of Pre 18th century co-axial enclosure (often defined by wooded edges), pre 18th century irregular enclosure, and 20th century enclosure. Several important archaeological and historic remains are dispersed across the area, including Dropmore House (Grade I listed) and Dropmore Park (Grade II listed), which is now partly occupied by a golf course, however still recognised as English Heritage Parks and Gardens of historic interest. Burnham was divided into a number of medieval manors, with the late 17th Century Hitcham Manor found within this character area. The building is no longer present, but the grounds are surrounded by the original brick walling and include Medieval fishponds. Grenville Court, previously known as Britwell House, is set within large grounds to the east of Burnham village, since the 14th Century, although the oldest remains date back to the 16th century. The northern part of this area has a close affinity with Burnham Beeches to

the north, and other large areas of woodland. Historically, these landscapes were associated with wood pasture and grazed common land.

Designations:

- Registered Parks & Gardens; Dropmore; Berry Hill, Taplow;
- Archaeological Notification Sites: 21 No.
- Conservation Areas: Burnham, Taplow
- Priority BAP Habitats: 2 types
- Biodiversity Opportunity Areas: I No.
- Biological Notification Sites: 5 No.
- Special Area of Conservation / SSSI: Burnham Beeches

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are:

- The strong hedgerow and tree network, which provides visual unity and an important wildlife corridor. Specifically oak trees.
- Wooded field boundaries and small pockets of woodland, which provide enclosure and ecological interest.
- The peaceful and tranquil nature and sense of rural naturalness, despite the close proximity to Slough.
- Open and uninterrupted long views over fields, specifically towards the south.
- The relatively small scale, low density of settlement, which would be vulnerable to further expansion and over development.
- The visual unity of the landscape, and organised, well balanced nature.
- The parkland estates and manors such as, Dropmore Park Estate, Hitcham Manor and Grenville Court.
- The remaining pre 18th century co-axial fields and irregular enclosures, which provide a visible reminder of the historic use of land.

Strength of Character/Intactness: The strength of character and intactness of *Burnham Undulating Farmland* is **strong**. Key characteristics are distinctive, and the physical and visual intactness is strong, despite the human presence of golf courses in this character area.

Strategy/ Vision: Conserve and manage *Burnham Undulating Lowland* as the peaceful landscape of mixed farmland and wooded field boundaries. Maintain the intimate rural and enclosed character.

Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve and manage the network of dense hedgerows, hedgerow trees and infield trees. Consider replanting hedgerows which have been lost.
- Conserve the small areas of woodland which provide enclosure in the landscape and form an important landscape pattern and feature, and invaluable biodiversity benefit.
- Promote appropriate management of arable farmland and rough grazing, to help generate a wildlife rich habitat, and visually attractive landscape.
- Maintain the essentially undeveloped character, with limited settlement development and road widening.
- Maintain open views across fields, and avoid introducing large scale elements (such as pylons and masts) which would disrupt important views and the legible landscape character.

- Ensure that new buildings and development is sensitively integrated into the landscape through careful siting.
- Conserve historic parkland and estates such as Dropmore Park Estate, Hitcham Manor and Grenville Court.
- Conserve the historic field patterns (pre 18th century irregular and co-axial enclosures) and avoid further divisions or expansions.
- Ensure that recreational facilities, such as golf courses, do not erode the landscape character.



Extensive views south from higher ground.



Views to woodland which creates a strong and definitive backdrop to the character area.



Open fields, with scattered trees and wooded horizons.



Undulating topography and mixed field boundaries.



Enclosed rural lanes



Clusters of vernacular buildings, including red brick buildings.