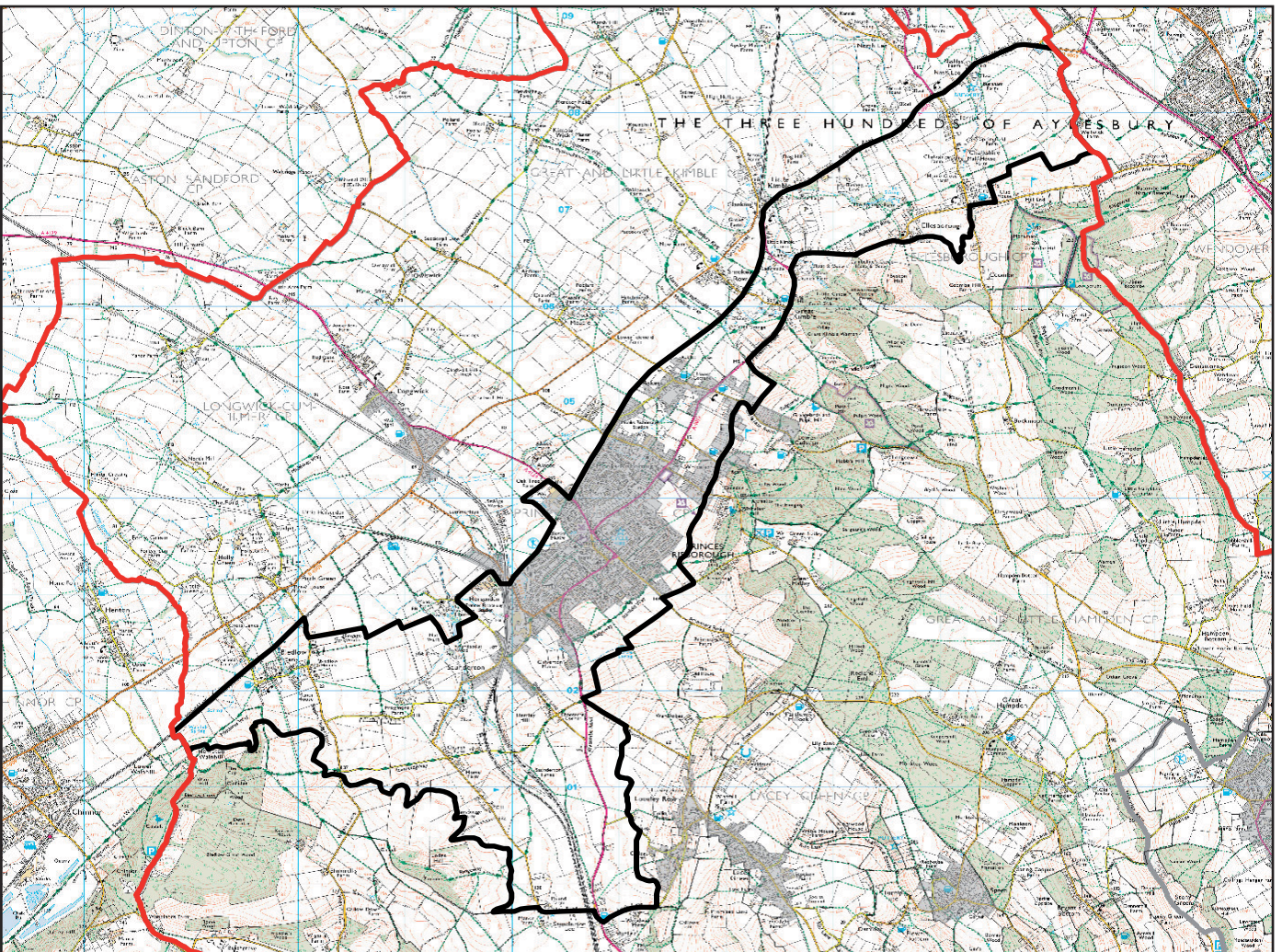
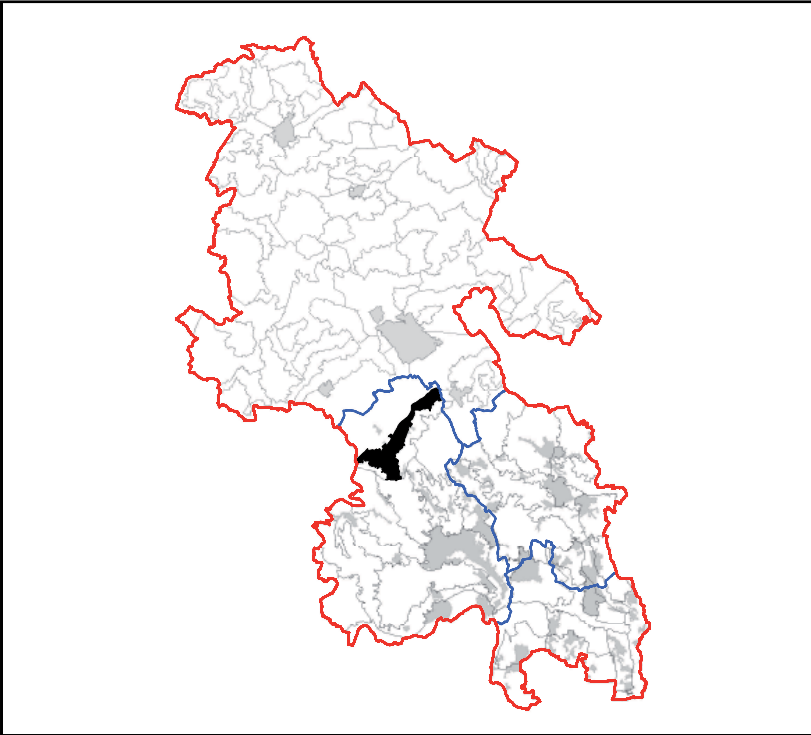


LCA 10.6 RISBOROUGH CHALK FOOTHILLS



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KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- The foothills of the scarp which form a band along the foot of the chalk escarpment, gradually rising up from the Vale. Formed predominantly from West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation, with pockets of head, alluvium, sand and gravel, and Gault Formation, which generate a slightly undulating landform.
- Arable farmland dominates this landscape, within large open parliamentary field enclosures.
- Smaller fields closer to settlement (particularly Princes Risborough and Monks Risborough), are commonly used for rough grazing, pasture and paddocks. Typically within 19th, 20th and pre 18th century irregular enclosures.
- A network of hedgerows with scattered trees defines fields, with wooden post and wire fencing typically subdividing smaller enclosures. Elsewhere tree cover is limited.
- The settlements of Princes Risborough and Monks Risborough are prominent within the landscape, nestled at the foot of the scarp, with a historic character, and modern infilling. Elsewhere, small linearly dispersed settlement areas, are spread along roads, and often centred around distinctive churches, with a strong historical character, such as in Bledlow and Great Kimble.
- A significant number of archaeological sites and monuments across the landscape. This includes prehistoric ring ditches, barrows, settlement, Roman villa and cemeteries from various ages, and medieval moated sites.
- Several busy roads run parallel to the scarp, such as the A4129 and the A4010, with a railway line passing through the south of the area. Elsewhere, there is a network of rural roads connecting settlement.
- Several long distance footpaths pass through this landscape, namely Ridgeway, Midshires Way, Aylesbury Ring, North Buckinghamshire Way and Icknield Way.
- Open fields and sloping landform allows for long views to and from the foothills across the lower lying vale. Contrasting with the prominent scarp, which creates a sense of enclosure in this landscape.
- Roads and settlement creates local audible and visual impact, however, away from these features pockets of tranquillity exist and a rural character prevails.

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DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: *Risborough Chalk Foothills* are situated entirely within Wycombe District. The foothills form a transitional band running along the foot of the escarpment. They are defined by the south and east largely by the steep escarpment, and the lower lying flat landscape to the north west. *Risborough Chalk Foothills* is a continuation of the Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Area 10.4 Wendover Foothills (west).

Landscape Character: A transitional landscape between the low lying flat vale and the Chiltern scarp, form a gently sloping band which runs along the foot of the escarpment. The area widens as it connects with the Wye Valley and forms a communication gap between the escarpment. Slightly undulating landform, predominated by arable farmland, which often occupy large open parliamentary fields. Smaller fields of grazing, pasture and some paddocks are located closer to settlement. Small winding streams fed by springs are common. The small market town of Princes Risborough and the village of Monks Risborough are located centrally, with a dominant presence in the landscape and a strong historic character. Linear settlement predominates elsewhere, with small hamlets and villages, often centred around distinctive churches. Busy roads run parallel to the scarp, namely, the A4129 and the A4010, with smaller rural roads connecting settlement, often radiating at right angles from these busy roads. A variety of archaeological remnants are distributed across the landscape, including numerous English Heritage scheduled monuments. Varying sense of enclosure, open sloping landform and sparse tree cover allows for long views across the lower lying vale. The prominence of the scarp creates a strong sense of enclosure in places, enveloping the landscape. Settlement and roads disrupt the continuity of the foothills. However overall a rural character prevails with and areas of tranquillity.

Geology: Formed predominately from West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation, with pockets of head, alluvium, sand and gravel, and some areas of Gault Formation in the north west, as the area merges with the vale landscape. Largely overlain by freely draining, lime-rich loamy soils.

Topography/Landform: Gently rising transitional landform, between the vale and the escarpment, slightly undulating and varying between 110m and 140m.

Hydrology: A number of small streams meander through the landscape, which originate from numerous springs which are dispersed across the area. Ponds are scattered across the foothills, and a small lake is located in the grounds of Horsenden House.

Land Use and Settlement: Agricultural land use is dominated by arable farmland, often within large open parliamentary fields. Areas for grazing, pasture and some paddocks, tend to occur within smaller fields closer to settlement and along

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transport corridors (often 19th and 20th century, or earlier pre 18th century irregular enclosures).

A good network of hedgerows defines fields, with wooden post and wire fencing typically subdividing smaller enclosures. Scattered trees are common along hedgerow boundaries. A strong geometric form prevails.

The small market town of Princes Risborough and the village of Monks Risborough are located centrally, at the base of the escarpment, and prominent features within this landscape. Princes Risborough has retained a medieval core, with a wide High Street leading towards a market square, with numerous traditional buildings. There are many red brick houses with tile or slate roofs, and some evidence of early timber framed buildings. Outside of the medieval core, a mix of vernacular and modern infilling is evident. Monks Risborough is a smaller village which continues on from Princes Risborough to the north. A number of 18th and 19th century historic buildings line Aylesbury Vale Road, with a variety of form and materials, and the medieval core has a rich variety of vernacular thatched cottages, and timber-framed buildings. The church is 13th century flint and stone building and The Old Rectory in the north was built in 1670. Elsewhere within the character area, small linearly dispersed settlements are often spread along roads, such as Askett, Bledlow and Ellesborough, with strong historic and vernacular buildings, with modern 20th century infilling. Many villages are centred around distinctive churches.

Several busy roads run parallel to the scarp, such as the A4129 and the A4010, with smaller rural roads connecting settlement, often radiating at right angles from these busy roads. A railway line passes through the south of the area. Several long distance footpaths pass through this landscape, namely Ridgeway, Midshires Way, Aylesbury Ring, North Buckinghamshire Way and Icknield Way.

Tree Cover: Tree cover is relatively sparse, however they are typically scattered along field boundary hedgerows and beside rural lanes. Small, occasional pockets of broadleaved, mixed, yew woodland and scrub woodland, are dispersed across the area.

Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape: A varying sense of enclosure within this landscape. Limited trees and the open sloping landform allows for long views across the lower lying vale. However, the prominence of the scarp creates a strong sense of enclosure in places; for example, protruding spurs at Beacon Hill and Coombe Hill dominate and envelop the landscape. This landscape can also be seen from the lower lying Aylesbury Vale where views to the foothills are obtained. The busy A4129 and the A4010 cross the area and the villages of Princes Risborough and Monks Risborough contribute a suburban character, and features such as the golf course in the north and railway line in the south disrupt the continuity of the foothills. However small lanes retain a rural character and areas of tranquillity exist, particularly in the south west, where settlement density is lower.

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Biodiversity: Hedgerows with scattered trees provides valuable biodiversity and a wildlife corridor in an agriculturally dominant landscape, connecting fragmented habitats. Additional habitat diversity is provided by small scattered areas, of purple moor grass and rush pastures, calcareous grassland, lowland fens, wet woodland, and neutral grassland, all of which are priority BAP species. Several areas of basic grassland, biological notification sites, are also scattered throughout. A relatively large local wildlife site runs along Saunderton Railway in the south of the area.

Historic Environment: This area contains a concentration of nationally important archaeological sites and monuments which are distributed across the landscape. Evidence of occupation is apparent from prehistoric times; this is evidenced by the ring ditches and barrows. There is also Roman villa, Anglo Saxon cemetery and several medieval moated sites.

There are a number of historic settlements within the area, which vary in size from the market town of Princes Risborough, home of Edward the Black Prince (1330-1376) to smaller, villages and hamlets such as Bledlow and Ellesborough. The historic core of these settlements contain a concentration of historic buildings many of them listed, including the grade I listed building Holy Trinity Church, Bledlow.

The historic landscape is mainly composed of field enclosures, of varying types with a significant amount of pre 18th century irregular enclosures, together with more modern parliamentary enclosures and extended areas, with extensive field boundary loss. These are interspersed with 19th and 20th enclosures and some early pre 18th century regular enclosures.

There are two ancient trackways which cross the landscape, the Ridgeway Path and the Icknield Way. The Ridgeway Path is the believed to be one of the oldest tracks in Britain and thought to have been used since prehistoric times. The Icknield Way is a complex route made up of two parallel routes, the Upper and Lower Icknield Way.

Designations:

- Chilterns AONB
- Scheduled Monuments: Anglo-Saxon Cemetery, Hemley Hill; Dial Hill Barrow; Moated site and earthworks, SW of Manor Farm; Moated Site and Medieval remains N of Church Farm; Motte and Bailey Castle, moated site and Roman Villa, east of All Saint's Church; Roman Villa; Roundabout wood moated site; The Mount.
- Archaeological Notification Sites: 34 No.
- Conservation Areas: Askett, Bledlow, Ellesborough, Monks Risborough, Princes Risborough and Whiteleaf
- Priority BAP Habitats: 5 types
- Biological Notification Sites: 18 No.
- Local Wildlife sites: 5 No

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are:

- The hedgerow network with scattered trees, which links fragmented habitats, providing wildlife corridors, and holds important biodiversity value.
- Small isolated grassland habitats, including pockets of calcareous grassland.
- The open views from sloping ground across the vale landscape.
- Views from the vale up towards the farmed slopes.
- Small streams and springs, and the associated habitat and wildlife value.
- The network of public rights of way that provide access across farmland and through woodland.
- The rural and peaceful character away from busy roads and settlement.
- The variety of archaeological sites and monuments which reveal the different phases of history within the character area,
- The setting and the rural and historic character of villages.
- Early pre 18th century regular and irregular field system which provide evidence of historic land use.

Strength of Character/Intactness: The strength of character and intactness of the *Risborough Chalk Foothills* is **moderate**. Key characteristics are strongly conveyed but the suburban edges of settlement and road infrastructure, as well as gappy hedgerows in places, reduces the continuity and distinctiveness of character

Strategy/ Vision: Conserve and enhance *Risborough Chalk Foothills* as the distinctive transitional landscape between the scarp and the vale, and the mosaic of farmland, historic and archaeological features and quiet lanes which contribute to the rural character of the *Risborough Chalk Foothills* which is retained away from suburban settlement edges and busy roads.

Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve and enhance the network of hedgerows, infilling of hedgerows where necessary and seek to maintain connectivity.
- Promote appropriate management of farmland, to help generate a wildlife rich habitat, and visually attractive landscape.
- Conserve and appropriately manage isolated area of grasslands. Support and promote expansion and connection grassland areas.

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- Manage small streams and springs, seeking to reduce run off and water pollution from surrounding farmland and roads, and conserve as important ecological features.
- Conserve open, expansive views from higher ground across lower lying vale landscape, and from the vale towards the foothills.
- Ensure that new buildings and development is sensitively integrated into the landscape through careful siting.
- Restrict development and avoid road improvements which would alter the character of rural roads.
- Seek to improve integration of existing suburban edges of settlements through appropriate tree planting.
- Conserve historic elements, archaeological features, early field enclosures and historic character of villages, which provide evidence of past use of the land.

LCA 10.6 RISBOROUGH SCARP FOOTHILLS



Gently rising transitional landform, between the vale and the escarpment, slightly undulating.



Vernacular red brick and brick and flint buildings.



Distinctive churches, with a strong historical character, often a features, for example at Bledlow.



The foothills of the scarp which form a band along the foot of the chalk escarpment, gradually rising. Open fields and sloping landform allows for long views.



Smaller fields closer to settlement commonly used for rough grazing and pasture. Hedgerows with scattered trees.