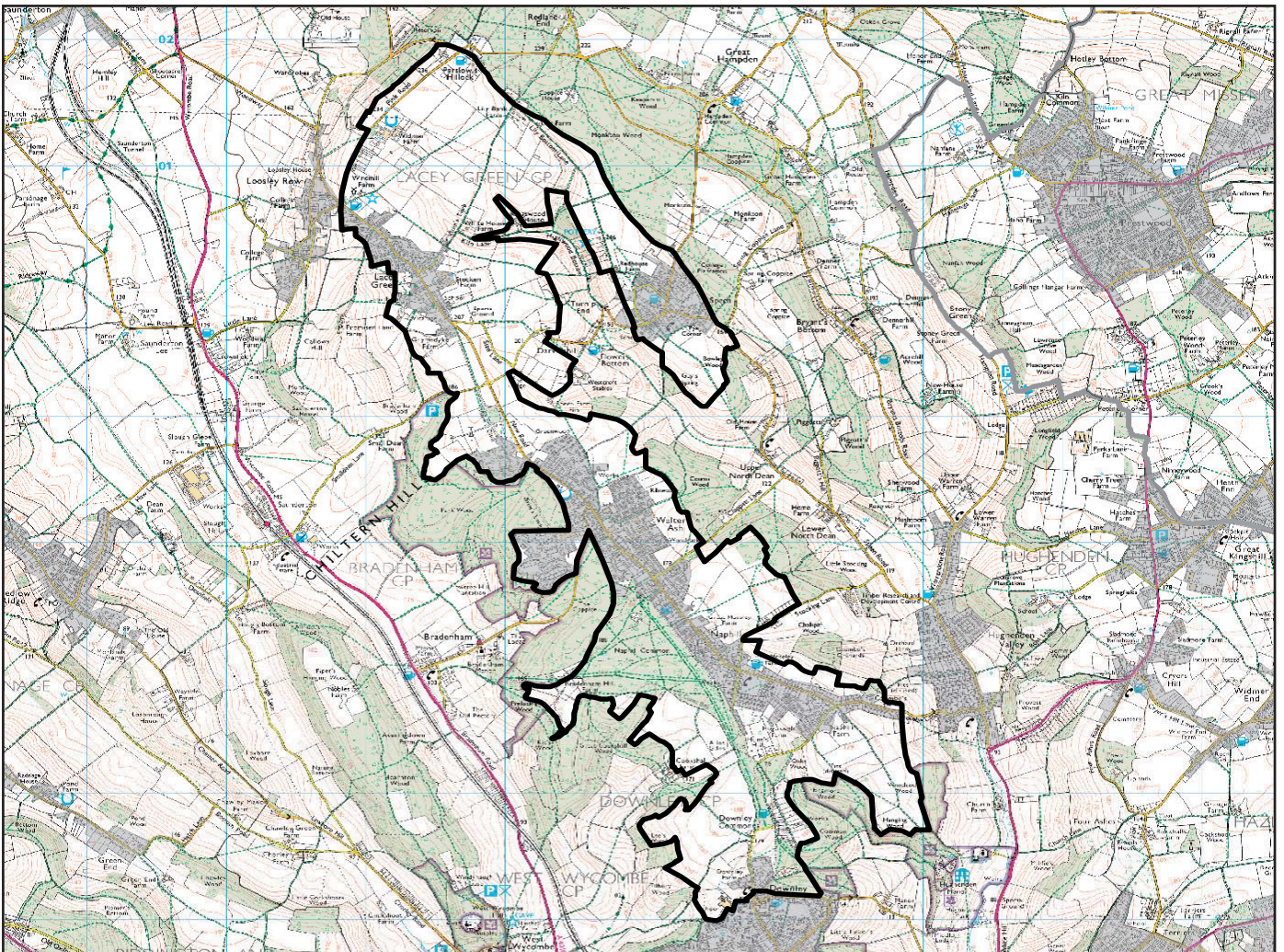
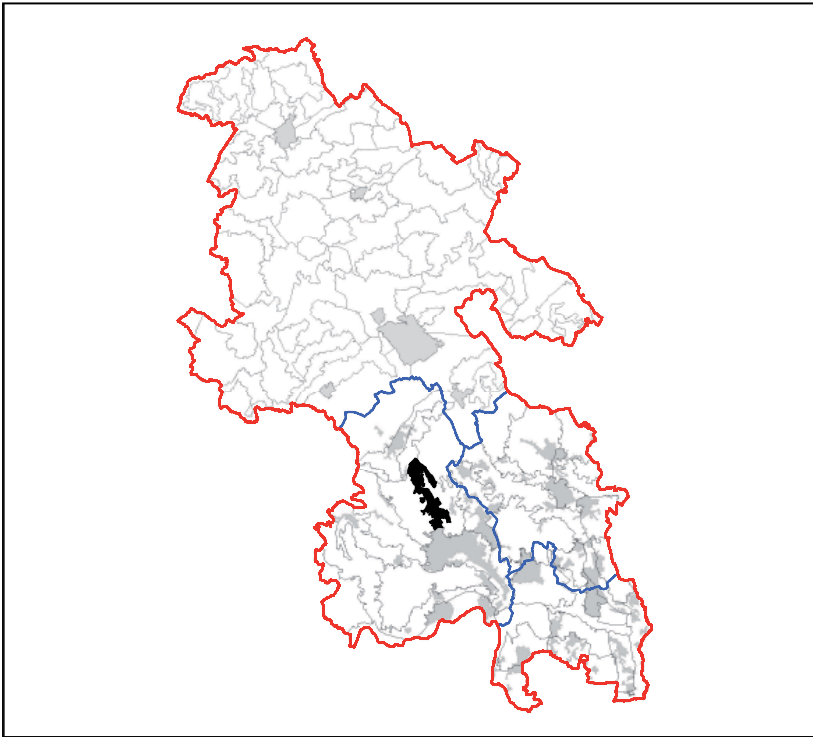


# LCA 16.2 WALTER'S ASH AND NAPHILL SETTLED PLATEAU



## LCA 16.2 WALTER'S ASH AND NAPHILL SETTLED PLATEAU

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Elevated, gently undulating plateau, of chalk overlain by clay with flints, which gives rise to loamy/clayey soils with impeded drainage.
- A mosaic of arable fields, rough grazing and paddocks are defined by hedgerows and rural fencing, and interlocked with areas of woodland which create a landscape of both openness and enclosure.
- Pockets of woodland along plateau edge, transitional with the steeper valley slopes, which cut through the area. Woodland extends along the boundary, within adjacent character areas, providing a strong visual containment. Areas of ancient woodland occur at Walter's Ash and Naphill.
- Relatively densely settled, with residential development spread linearly along New Road, which runs through the area. The rural villages of Walter's Ash and Naphill are prominent, and Lacey Green lies in the north.
- 20<sup>th</sup> century residential development dominates, with occasional vernacular brick and flint buildings.
- Areas of common land occur at Naphill Common and Downley Common, in the south, close to settlement. The beech woodland at Naphill Common is recognised as an SSSI.
- Extensive areas of early, assart enclosure found along the plateau edge, continuous with adjacent valleys. A large area of parliamentary field enclosure located immediately north of Lacey Green. Elsewhere, a mix of 20<sup>th</sup> century field systems and pre 18<sup>th</sup> century irregular enclosures.
- Grim's Ditch, a linear Iron Age bank and ditch system runs through the area in the north and north west.
- The three sites of RAF High Wycombe are situated in the north of Walter's Ash, with associated buildings and signage, influencing the character of the locality.
- Small rural roads cut through the landscape, and form the structure of linear settlements. Roads radiate into adjacent valleys. A good rights of way network, with numerous tracks through woodland areas.
- Long views across open fields to a wooded or open skyline, with some important views across the Wye Valley, Hughenden Valley and towards the Wain Hill Escarpment.
- A simple and legible landscape, with a tranquil character away from settlement areas.

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### DESCRIPTION

**Location and Boundaries:** *Walters Ash and Naphill Settled Plateau*, is located entirely within the Wycombe District. It is bound largely by character areas with a significantly different topography, defining its periphery. The plateau sits above three valleys, the Wye Valley, to the south west and the Hughenden Valley to the north east. The area from the high land behind the escarpment is to the north of the character area. The north east boundary is defined largely by the extensively wooded landscape, which creates a distinct physical and visual definition.

**Landscape Character:** A gently undulating plateau, elevated above surrounding areas, and predominantly overlain with clay and flints. A mosaic of mixed farmland and woodland areas, which create a landscape of varying enclosure. Woodland is spread along the edges of the area, forming the crests of adjacent valleys, and creating a strong sense of containment. Settlement is spread linearly through the landscape, with prominent villages, such as Walter's Ash and Naphill. Field boundaries consist of wooden fencing and a good network of hedgerows, which link woodland and agricultural areas. Large pockets of early assart enclosures occupy areas along the edges of the landscape. A simple and tranquil landscape, away from busy areas, with long views over adjacent valleys and toward Wain Hill escarpment in the east. RAF High Wycombe, located immediately north of Walter's Ash has a distinctive influence on the character of settlement, imparting a more modern character.

**Geology:** A capping of Clay with Flint covers this character area, with small sections of the underlying Upper Chalk exposed along the steeper valley tops. Soils are consequently slightly acidic loamy and clayey, with impeded drainage.

**Topography/Landform:** An elevated, slightly undulating plateau landscape forming the highest part of the dip slope backing the escarpment and gently sloping from between 210m and 175m from north to south.

**Hydrology:** Relatively few notable hydrological features. Occasional small ponds, located close to woodland areas.

**Land use and Settlement:** A mosaic of mixed farmland, consisting of arable cultivation, rough grazing and paddocks are interlocked with woodland. A combination of hedgerows, with some trees, rural wooden post and wire fencing, and some metal estate rail define field boundaries. Settlement is spread linearly and relatively densely through the area, with prominent residential development at Naphill and Walter's Ash, and at Lacey Green in the north. A mix of modern (20<sup>th</sup> century) and historic settlement occurs, with more modern development dominating. Historic built materials include brick and flint. The three sites of RAF High Wycombe are situated in the north of Walter's Ash, with associated buildings and signage influencing the character of the locality. New Road (B road) runs through the length of the character area, passing through settlement, with small rural

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roads radiating off this central corridor into adjacent valleys.

**Tree Cover:** Fields are often interspersed with blocks of woodland, particularly along the edges of the character area, consistent with the upper valley sides, and along the western area of Walter's Ash and Naphill. Woodland comprises mixed deciduous, beech and yew, broadleaved and some small pockets of coniferous, much of which is ancient woodland. A significant wooded area is found at Naphill Common, a lowland mixed deciduous semi natural woodland, with high structural diversity. A well established scrub layer exists underneath. Some trees are scattered within hedgerows, along roads and field boundaries.

**Perceptual/Experiential Landscape:** A landscape of open farmland which contrasts with more intimate and enclosing blocks of woodland. Within open areas and towards the edges of the plateau, long views are possible over the Wye Valley and Hughenden Valley, and east towards Wain Hill Escarpment.

Despite the extensive linear settlement which is dispersed through the area, a tranquil landscape exists. Repetition of woodland and farmland helps to create unity across the character area and results in a simple and legible landscape.

A good public rights of way network passes through the area, particularly within common land and woodland. Naphill Common and Downley Common are popular local spaces and provide opportunities for recreation.

**Biodiversity:** Scattered blocks of woodland provide valuable ecological integrity throughout this area. The Chiltern beechwoods at Naphill Common, to the west of Naphill and Walter's Ash, are of particular importance, and designated as SSSI and Special Areas of Conservation. Hedgerows provide important wildlife habitats, linking agricultural areas with woodland. The western and eastern edges of the area form part of the South East Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (Radnage Valley and Upper Hughenden Valley, respectively).

**Historic Environment:** Archaeologically this area contains some important sites and monuments, including the prehistoric earthworks of Grim's Ditch which traverses the area in the north and north west. There is also the Medieval Deer Park and Park Boundary, and a number of earthworks within Naphill Common.

The historic landscape is mainly composed of fields, settlement and common land. There are significant blocks of early, assarted fields around Naphill Common and south of Lacey Green, this field type occurs along the edges of the character area, often continuous with the adjacent valleys, and interlocked with blocks of ancient woodland. Later enclosure is located mainly to the north of the area including a large proportion of parliamentary field enclosures at Lacey Green, while modern 20<sup>th</sup> century enclosures are intermittently distributed usually adjacent to villages and farms.

The commons of Naphill and Downley are distinctive features of this area. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century they formed one large continuous common, although during the 20<sup>th</sup>

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century a combination of woodland regeneration and suburban development changed the character of Naphill common. These changes have had an impact on historic settlement character of Naphill and Downley which are historically common edge settlements. The establishment of RAF Bomber Command during the Second World War created a new base and village at Walter's Ash.

Other notable historic settlements in the area are the villages of Speen and Lacey Green; these places possess a dispersed settlement pattern which has been altered by the growth and development of new housing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Designations:**

- Chilterns AONB
- English Heritage Scheduled Monuments: Grim's Ditch – 660m to west of Walter's Ash; Grim's Ditch from Grymsdyke Manor to RAF High Wycombe; Grim's Ditch from west of White House Farm to Lily Bank Farm; Grim's Ditch south west of White House Farm.
- Archaeological Notification Areas: 7 No.
- Conservation Areas: Downley Common, Lacey Green and Speen
- Local Wildlife Sites: 5 No.
- Biological Notification Sites: 29 No.
- Priority BAP Habitats: 3 types
- SSSI: 2 No. Bradenham Woods, Park and the Coppice; Naphill Common.
- Special Area of Conservation: 1 No. Chiltern's Beechwood

### EVALUATION

#### Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are as follows:

- Woodland areas (particularly ancient woodland) which provides enclosure and biodiversity value.
- The open character contrasted with enclosed and intimate areas (particularly woodland).
- The early assart enclosures on the valley crests.
- The wooded commons at Naphill Common and Downley Common.
- Elements of tranquillity and 'rural' character which could be affected by further development.
- Inter visibility – Long views out across the Wye Valley, Hughenden Valley and Wain Hill Escarpment.
- Network of hedgerows which create enclosure and visual unity, as well as providing an ecological benefit.
- The rural character of the roads and lanes, which cross the area.

**Strength of Character/Intactness:** The strength of character and intactness of the *Walter's Ash and Naphill Settled Plateau* is **moderate**. Prominent settlement, particularly Walter's Ash and Naphill interrupt the landscape and reduces the distinctiveness of character.

**Strategy/Vision:** To conserve and enhance the mosaic of farmland and woodland, and to maintain the rural character and areas of tranquillity.

#### Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve areas of woodland, which provide enclosure and contribute to landscape pattern and provide a biodiversity resource.
- Promote appropriate management of arable farmland and rough grazing, to help generate a wildlife rich habitat, and visually attractive landscape.
- Safeguard early enclosures, which are remnants of assart field systems.
- Recognise the sensitivity of the valley crests with their woodlands, assart enclosures and views out across valleys.
- Conserve views across the landscape and towards the adjacent valleys and escarpment.
- Conserve and manage the network of hedgerows which characterise the landscape, infilling of gaps and appropriate pruning and cutting regimes.

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- Encourage the protection and management of archaeological monuments.
- Conserve historic commons, and ensure appropriate management of woodland.
- Maintain existing green space between settlements and prevent coalescence
- Maintain the rural character of roads, avoiding road improvements (e.g. widening) which would alter their character.

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Rough grazing and pasture farmland with wooden fencing and scattered trees.



Elevated, open views towards the Wain Hill escarpment. Pockets of woodland along plateau edge, transitional with the steeper valley slopes.



Slightly undulating topography, with small winding rural roads.



Common land at Downley Common.