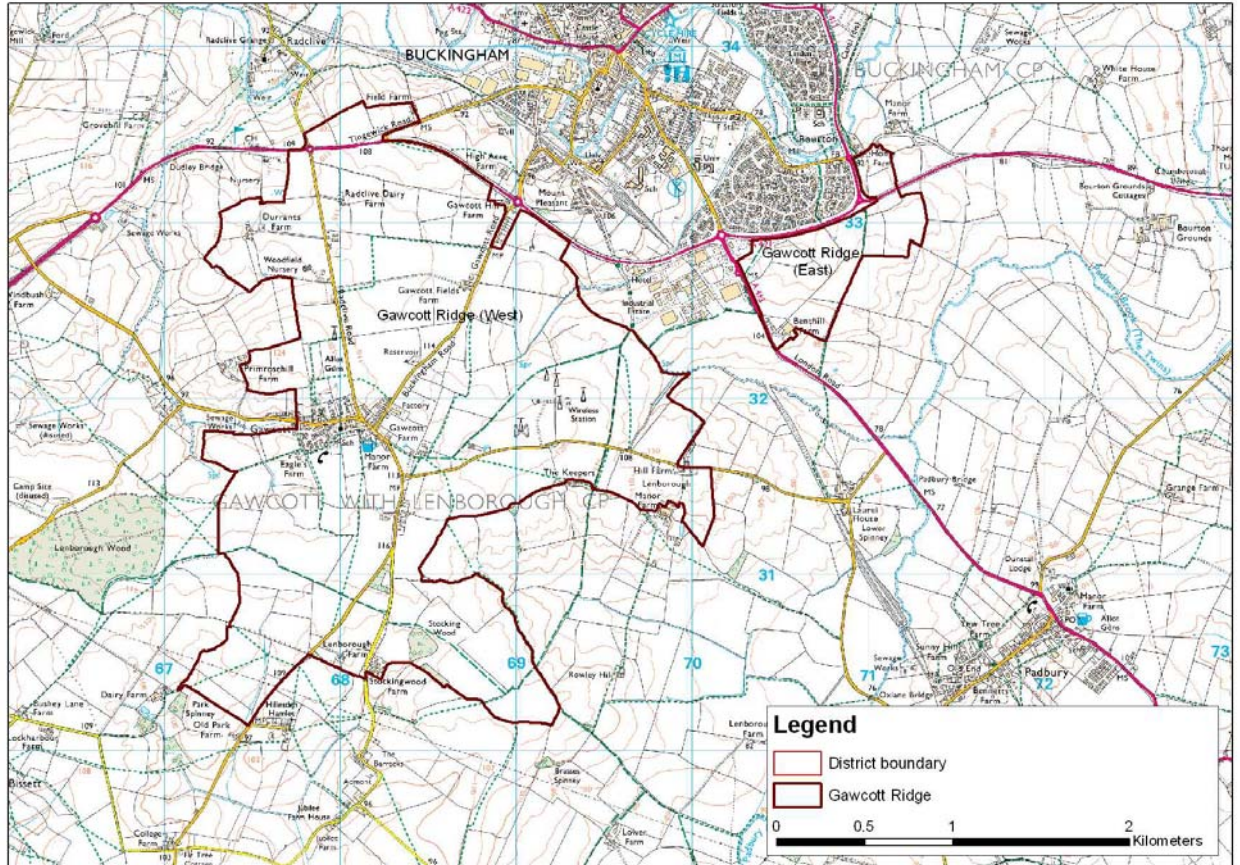
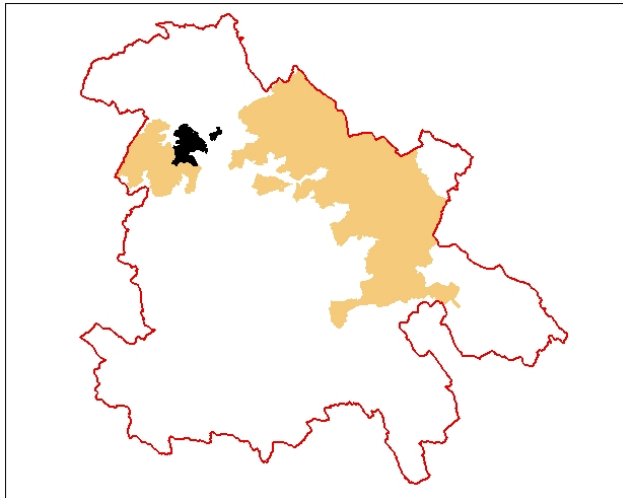


LCA 4.3 Gawcott Ridge

Landscape Character Type: LCT 4 Undulating Clay Plateau



LCA 4.3 Gawcott Ridge (LCT 4)

Key Characteristics

- A ridge of generally flat and open higher ground
- Mixed farming with pony paddocks
- Smaller fields of pasture, allotments and recreational use around the edges of Gawcott
- Strong hedgerows with continuous trees especially adjacent to roads
- Open views across area and down into the Padbury valley
- Mixture of parliamentary and pre 18th century enclosure fields

Distinctive Features

- Gawcott with stone and brick houses
- Brick cottages along lanes
- Recent tree and shrub planting adjacent to the A421 and close to the urban edge

Intrusive Elements

- Recent light industrial/commercial buildings in the north of the area
- Pylon line with localised impact

Location Higher ground extending out from the south western edge of Buckingham. The A421 lies close to the northern boundary. The area is subdivided by existing development in Buckingham into two sections to the southwest and southeast of the settlement.

Landscape character A ridge of higher ground which often appears flat and open but includes some tall hedgerows with continuous lines of trees forming a distinctive feature of the area. The landscape character is rural, however north of Gawcott views tend to include recent small industrial/commercial buildings, fencing and lighting columns along the A421 which have started to erode the character. The area sometimes feels enclosed with views out from roads locally limited by the high hedgerows and occasional copses but there is no wild or remote character.

Geology The geology of the southern part is Lower Oxford Clay (Peterborough Formation) whilst to the north lie the Kellaways Formation of sandstones and mudstones and finally the Cornbrash limestone. Till and bands of glaciofluvial deposits overlie the whole area.

Topography The landform is a gently sloping ridge. The highest ground lies to the east and west of Gawcott at a height of about 120m AOD falling to around 110m AOD at the edges of the area. The landform at a similar height continues beyond this area in another LCA where land use and character differ.

Hydrology The area is notably free from watercourses; there is one spring and a stream, which run from the northern side of the area down through Buckingham to join the Great Ouse within the town. There are several ponds around Gawcott.

Land use and settlement Land use is predominantly mixed farming with some notable areas of arable in medium and large regular fields. Some pasture is being used for pony paddocks and there is a riding stable in the north. Other uses include a small nursery, and several small industrial/commercial units adjacent to the roads. Field boundaries are marked by hedgerows but some are divided by post and wire or post and rail fencing.

The area includes part of Gawcott. Smaller fields, often with strong hedgerows, surround the village; these are used for pasture, recreation and allotments. The village consists predominantly of historic buildings of stone or brick. Farms are spaced quite closely along the roads where brick cottages on the roadsides are a feature.

Tree cover Woodland is not a feature of this area being restricted to a couple of very small woodlands on the southern edge. Although the tree cover overall is low a number of tall high hedgerows with almost continuous lines of trees bound several roads and also occur elsewhere forming a significant element in the landscape character of the area. The tree cover in other hedgerows is very variable and with a general absence of young trees. Locally elm is present within clipped hedgerows or is dying back at about 5-8m.

LCA 4.3 Gawcott Ridge (LCT 4)

The streamline running out of the area to the north has good tree and shrub cover in parts. Recent tree planting along the A421 and close to the industrial estate on the southern edge of Buckingham will improve the transition between the urban edge and the countryside.

Biodiversity The Gawcott Ridge has limited biodiversity interest due to the mix of unevenly distributed arable and grassland habitat, the latter being almost exclusively improved.

There are some small areas of broadleaved woodland in the western section and a few small areas of standing water are scattered in the eastern section, however connectivity between habitats is interrupted. There are no biodiversity designations.

Historic environment This area lay at the northern extremity of Bernwood in the late 12th and early 13th centuries but was then disafforested. There are few recorded archaeological sites, the main ones being an undated cropmark enclosure east of the village and a few fields of ridge and furrow. The southern portion of the area south of Gawcott village is mainly pre 18th century irregular enclosure including the eastern portion on the ridge southeast of Buckingham. The western portion of the LCA immediately to the north of Gawcott and parts of the area to the south of the settlement are 18th-19th century parliamentary enclosure. Fragments of 20th century prairie fields and a plant nursery area are located on the fringe of Buckingham. Historic buildings of the 18th and 19th centuries are concentrated in the nucleated village of Gawcott.

Designations

Conservation Areas at Gawcott
Archaeological Notification Areas – 2 No.

LCA 4.3 Gawcott Ridge (LCT 4)



Open landscape with little visual interest, looking northwest towards the wireless station east of Gawcott.



View to the south of Gawcott showing strong hedgerow with mature trees.

LCA 4.3 Gawcott Ridge (LCT 4)

Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

Condition	Weak
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Visual detractors:	Some
Visual unity:	Coherent
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 **Restore and Enhance**

Condition

The overall condition of this landscape is considered to be poor. The pattern of elements is coherent but strongest to the south of Gawcott. The impact of detracting features is greatest close to the edge of Buckingham, but there is also a pylon line to the south of Gawcott. The cultural integrity is variable with built heritage concentrated in Gawcott, limited archaeological interest but extensive historic field patterns, albeit some hedgerow loss and some hedgerows in poor condition whilst others are strong and high. Ecological integrity is weak due to suboptimal connectivity and relatively low areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance. The functional integrity of the area is weak.

Sensitivity

The landscape is considered to be moderately sensitive having a distinct character and a sense of historic continuity, whilst under some pressure from recent development. The generally flat or gently sloping upper landforms is typically very open, but in some areas strong high hedgerows create low visibility or focus views in one direction. The visibility across the area is therefore considered to be moderate.



Views in the open flat landscape are often limited by high hedgerows.

LCA 4.3 Gawcott Ridge (LCT 4)

Landscape Guidelines Restore and Enhance

The landscape guidelines for the Gawcott Ridge are as follows:

- Conserve and promote the management of the characteristic tall hedgerows
- Encourage new tree and woodland planting adjacent to recent development to improve the transition between the countryside and rural areas
- Encourage the restoration of the historic hedgerow pattern where it has been lost. To enhance the landscape character and strengthen habitat connectivity. Where necessary use historic maps to identify where hedgerows have been lost.
- Maintain and improve the condition of existing hedgerows through traditional cutting regimes.
- Encourage the establishment of new hedgerow trees.
- Promote the retention of the character of minor roads by the management of hedgerows and verges and limiting urbanising elements such as signage and kerbing.
- Identify key views from publicly accessible locations and ensure these views are retained and enhanced.
- Promote connectivity of habitats