

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Upland chalk plateau overlain with clay and flints cut by dry chalk valleys (associated with the Upper Misbourne and High Wycombe Valleys) which create a rolling topography.
- Arable fields dominating the slopes and floor of incised dry valleys. Fields are medium sized and irregular in shape, often bounded by sinuous woodland edges and straight hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees.
- Woodland (deciduous and mixed with some coniferous plantation) is prominent across the area occurring particularly on higher ground in the north east and south west. Large areas of ancient replanted and ancient & semi-natural occur e.g. at Hampden Coppice and Hamdenleaf Wood.
- Woodland includes lowland mixed deciduous woodland and lowland beech and yew woodland BAP priority habitats.
- Sparsely settled with the small villages of Great Hampden and Little Hampden, scattered farms and individual properties. Brick and flint is a common building material and there are some timber framed and thatched cottages. Generally little modern development.
- Fields are a mixture of pre 18th century regular and irregular enclosure with some pre 18th century coaxial and modern fields.
- Historic houses and parkland landscapes are 'hidden' in the landscape at Chequers and Hampden House.
- Archaeological features include the prehistoric earthworks of Grim's Ditch into the area and Medieval and Post medieval buildings in Little Hampden.
- Wide, winding rural lanes cut north-west to south-east across the area with large areas accessible only by foot.
- Accessible areas of wooded common occur at Low Scrub (owned by The National Trust), Little Hampden Common and Great Hampden Common. These provide evidence of historic land management.
- Crossed by The Chiltern Way, The Icknield Way and South Bucks Way Long Distance Paths and The Ridgeway. A dense network of local footpaths and tracks occur through woodland and across wooded commons.
- Enclosed by woodland which forms a backdrop to views. However there is also a sense of openness with views across open arable fields and rolling landform to wooded horizons. Views are glimpsed over the escarpment to the Vale, to the Wendover Gap and Hughenden Valley.
- A rural, peaceful and relatively remote area due to the high proportion of woodland and lack of settlement.

DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: Great Hampden Wooded Plateau lies within Wycombe District and Chiltern District. It forms the higher undulating land backing the escarpment and is elevated above the Wendover Gap and Misbourne Valley to the east and the Hughenden Valley to the south. The area is distinguished from the plateau areas to the south and west by the lack of settlement and greater proportion of woodland cover.

Landscape Character: A large scale undulating chalk plateau landscape dominated by large swathes of deciduous and mixed woodland and arable fields. The area is sparsely settled and crossed by only a few winding rural roads with large areas accessible only by foot. Parkland (at Chequers and Hampden House) and wooded commons (at Low Scrub, Little Hampden Common and Great Hampden Common) are features within this landscape. Woodland is the principal habitat with large area of ancient replanted and ancient & semi-natural woodland occurring. Grim's Ditch crosses the area and there are medieval buildings within Little Hampden. The area is within the Chilterns AONB and crossed by a number of long distance routes as well as a network of local footpaths notably through woodland and across commons. This is a rural, peaceful and relatively remote landscape, enclosed by woodland with some open views across rolling arable fields to wooded horizons.

Geology: The geology of the area is upland chalk overlain with clay and flints cut by dry valleys of upper and middle chalk and some head at Hampden Bottom. These small valleys are tributaries associated with the Upper Misbourne and Hughenden Valleys. On higher ground soils are slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage. Freely draining slightly acid but base-rich soils occur on dry valley sides and in the valley bottom.

Topography/ Landform: Plateau landform forming the back of the escarpment and cut by the dry valleys associated with the Upper Misbourne and Hughenden Valleys which create a rolling topography.

Hydrology: There are no discernable watercourses. There are however ponds scattered across the area occurring within woods and associated with farms.

Land Use and Settlement: Woodland (deciduous and mixed) is prominent across the area occurring particularly on higher ground in the north east and south west with arable fields dominating the slopes and bottoms of incised dry valleys. Fields are medium sized and irregular in shape, often bounded by sinuous woodland edges and straight hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees. Areas of wooded common occur at Low Scrub (which has areas of ancient coppice and is owned by The National Trust) and Little Hampden Common. Great Hampden Common is a long thin area of common land with open grassland flanked by large swathes of woodland.

Settlement is infrequent with the very small scale villages of Great Hampden and

LCA 14.1 GREAT HAMPDEN WOODED PLATEAU

Little Hampden. Farmsteads and individual properties are also dispersed across the area. Brick and flint is notable in buildings and some thatched cottages with little modern development. Chequers, the country residence of the Prime Minister and Hampden House are located in this area, both set within parkland.

Hedged rural roads cross north-west to south east across the area with sunken lanes occurring towards the escarpment and valley.

Tree Cover: Woodland is prominent throughout the area occurring particularly on higher ground. Ancient replanted and ancient & semi-natural woodland occurs across the area with large pockets occurring at Hampden Coppice (Monkton Wood), Barnes Grove Wood, Sergeants/Giles Woods, Hamdenleaf Wood and Chisley/Fugsdon woods. There are some small areas of coniferous plantation within woodland and amongst arable fields. Beech and oak are common species.

Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape: Woodland encloses the landscape and provides a backdrop to views. There is also a sense of openness with some views across open arable fields and rolling landform to wooded horizons. Views out are glimpsed over the escarpment to the Vale, to the Wendover Gap and Hughenden Valley. Views out to the south west are prevented by dense woodland cover.

The repetition of large areas of woodland and medium sized arable fields across a gently undulating landform creates a large scale and uncomplex landscape. Wide rural roads cross north west to south east with large areas of land in between accessible only by foot. Some roads are open either side into woodland. There is little settlement with dispersed farmsteads and occasional small villages adding to the rural character. This is a rural, peaceful and tranquil area due to the high proportion of woodland and lack of human intrusion.

This landscape is within the Chilterns AONB. It is crossed by The Chiltern Way, The Icknield Way and South Bucks Way Long Distance Paths and The Ridgeway. National Trust land occurs at Low Scrubs with car parking and picnic areas. There are numerous local footpaths and tracks through woodland and across wooded commons.

Biodiversity: Woodland is the principal habitat with broadleaved, mixed, and yew woodland and lowland mixed deciduous woodland dominating the area. There are smaller blocks of lowland beech and yew woodland and coniferous plantation. Local wildlife sites in this area are all woodlands (Chisley & Ashmore Woods, Giles & Ninn Woods, Hampden Woods Northern Complex, Hampdenleaf Wood Hengrove Wood & Coach Hedgerow, Hillock Wood, Keepershill & Monkton Woods, Lodge Wood, Piggott's Wood and Warren Wood). BAP priority habitats are lowland mixed deciduous woodland and lowland beech and yew woodland. Brush Hill and Whiteleaf Hill Local Nature Reserves lie partly in this area but predominantly on adjacent the escarpment.

Historic Environment: This area has evidence of human occupation since prehistoric times, with of mesolithic/Neolithic flint works. The most notable prehistoric monument is Grim's Ditch, a linear bank and ditch system which bisects

LCA 14.1 GREAT HAMPDEN WOODED PLATEAU

part of the area; the earthwork is believed to date from the Iron Age and may have been a territorial boundary. A number of medieval buildings occur in Little Hampden.

Fields are a mixture of pre 18th century regular and irregular enclosure with some pre 18th century coaxial and modern fields. Wooded commons occur, in medieval times these played an important part in the rural economy. They were managed as wood pasture to provide firewood and building material as well as grazing rights and pannage for stock.

The most prominent aspect of the historic landscape are the historic parks of Hampden House (a Grade I listed house dating from the 14th century) and Chequers, (an 18th-19th century landscape park and woodland and 16th century Grade I listed red brick mansion). Chequers is more widely known for its history in the 20th century as the country retreat for Prime Ministers.

Designations:

- Chilterns AONB
- Registered Parks and Gardens: Chequers, Grade II
- Scheduled Monuments: Grim's Ditch between Lily Bottom Lane and Redland End, from Redland End to Hampden Park, south east of Hampden House and in Oaken Grove; Danes Camp
- Archaeological Notification Sites: 16 No.
- Conservation Areas: Hampden House, Great Hampden (2)
- Priority BAP Habitats: 3 types.
- Biological Notification Sites: 24 No.
- Local Nature Reserves: 1 No.
- Local Geological Sites: 3 No.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 12 No.
- SAC: Chilterns Beechwood.

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are:

- Extensive woodland cover which provides enclosure and a backdrop to views as well as biodiversity and recreational value.
- The hedgerow network which links to woodland, providing wildlife corridors.
- Open views across rolling arable farmland to wooded horizons and occasional glimpsed views out to adjacent landscapes (over the escarpment to the Vale, to Hughenden Valley and Aylesbury Vale).
- The lack of settlement with only a few rural roads crossing the area with large areas accessible only by foot.
- Wooded and open grassland commons which provide biodiversity value, accessible recreational areas and historic reference.
- Historic country houses and their parkland which are impressive features in the landscape.
- Pre 18th century regular, irregular and co-axial enclosures and archaeological features which provide evidence of historic land use and time depth.
- The transition to the escarpment and Wendover Gap along rural sunken lanes.
- The remote and peaceful character which is due to the high proportion of woodland and lack of settlement and roads.
- The intactness of the landscape and lack of intrusive features.

Strength of Character/Intactness: The strength of character and intactness of the *Great Hampden Wooded Plateau* is **strong**. Key characteristics are prominent within the landscape and the lack of intrusive features makes this a physically and visually intact landscape.

Strategy/ Vision: Conserve and enhance the remote, rural and peaceful character of *Great Hampden Wooded Plateau* formed by the high proportion of woodland, open farmland, wooded commons and lack of settlement.

Landscape Guidelines

- Conserve and appropriately manage the mixed and deciduous woodland (much of which is ancient). Restrict increases in coniferous plantation.
- Conserve and appropriately manage hedgerows to reinforce character and to provide a wildlife habitat and ecological connectivity.
- Maintain access to woodland and the footpath network which is an important means of experiencing this landscape.

LCA 14.1 GREAT HAMPDEN WOODED PLATEAU

- Conserve open views across arable farmland to wooded horizons and out to adjacent landscapes.
- Resist modern development and avoid road improvements which would alter the character of rural roads.
- Conserve and appropriately manage wooded commons and open grassland commons and access across them. Encourage traditional woodland management including wood pasture and prevent scrub encroachment.
- Conserve and manage historic parklands and their settings.
- Conserve, maintain and restore early field systems and archaeological features.
- Maintain sunken lanes which mark the transition to adjacent areas.
- Conserve the intact, remote and peaceful character which is formed by the woodland cover, lack of modern development and lack of busy main roads.

LCA 14.1 GREAT HAMPDEN WOODED PLATEAU



Mixed woodland blocks, creates a rich variety of colours and textures.



Winding rural lanes enclosed by woodland.



Large scale undulating landform near Chequers.