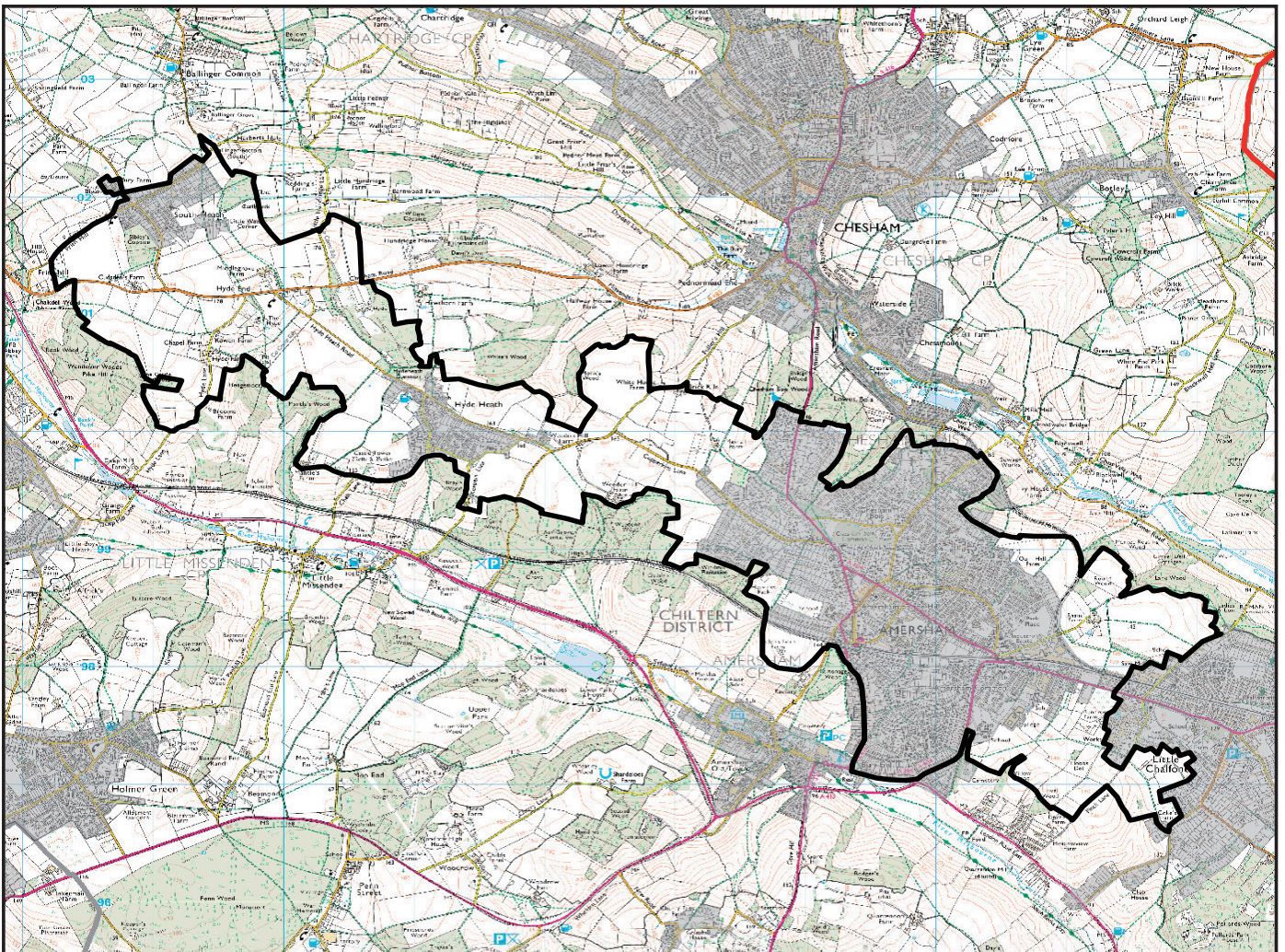
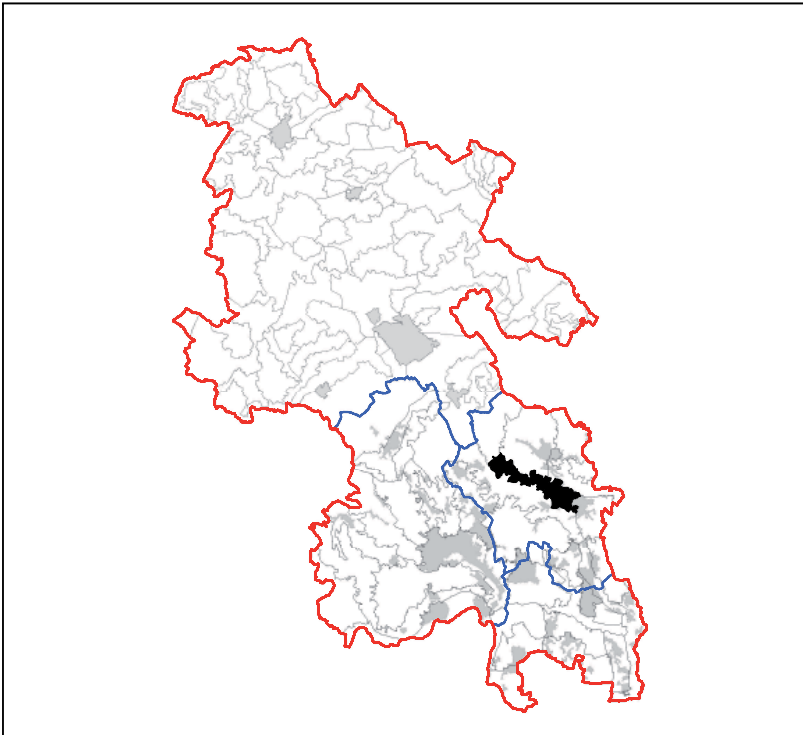


# LCA 16.4 HYDE HEATH SETTLED PLATEAU



## LCA 16.4 HYDE HEATH SETTLED PLATEAU

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Elevated, flat plateau, of chalk overlain by clay with flints, which gives rise to loamy/clayey soils with impeded drainage.
- Large arable fields dominate, with rough pasture and grazing interspersed. An obvious geometric field pattern, delineated by a strong network of hedgerows and occasional wooden fencing.
- Small areas of woodland are spread linearly along plateau edge, within the steeper valley slopes of adjacent valleys, including occasional areas of ancient woodland. These wooded areas provide a strong visual boundary and often provide the backdrop to views.
- Nucleated settlements of Hyde Heath and South Heath have a distinctive historic core, commonly red brick buildings, with modern development edge. Individual properties/farmsteads or small groups of properties are dispersed throughout the area.
- Many fields have been extended with extensive boundary loss. There is also a mix of pre 18 century irregular, 19<sup>th</sup> century and parliamentary enclosures. A significant area of pre 18<sup>th</sup> century co-axial enclosures are located immediately south of Amersham.
- Archaeological remnants are dispersed across the area, including two ancient scheduled monuments, Castle Tower Motte and Bailey and a Moated site at Redding Wick.
- Small rural roads cut through the landscape, connecting settlement. Roads radiate into the adjacent Misbourne Valley. The B485 cuts through the north of the area, and is traversed by a high voltage pylon line, creating a localised visible feature in the open landscape.
- Extensive views across open, flat fields to a wooded or open skyline. Occasional views towards the Upper Misbourne Valley and Chess Valley; however views are often limited by wooded edges.
- A simple and legible landscape, with a tranquil character away from settlement. An open landscape, largely as a result of the limited tree cover.

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### DESCRIPTION

**Location and Boundaries:** *Hyde Heath Settled Plateau* is located entirely within the Chiltern District. It sits above the Misbourne Valley to the south west and the Chess Valley to the north east. The flat plateau landscape distinguishes this from the large scale undulating farmland to the north west and south east.

**Landscape Character:** A flat plateau landscape, with a strong sense of openness. Large arable fields dominate, and demonstrate a clear geometric form, delineated by a good network of hedgerows, which create visual unity. Small areas of woodland are interspersed, largely concentrated along the edges of the character area, and consistent with the high slopes of adjacent valleys. Elsewhere tree cover is relatively sparse. Prominent settlement areas are located at Amersham, Hyde Heath and South Heath, displaying a distinctive historic core, with more modern development edge. Small clusters of buildings and individual farmsteads are dispersed throughout. Rural roads wind through the landscape, with the exception of the B485, which cuts through the north of the area, and is traversed by a high voltage pylon line, creating a localised highly visible vertical feature in this open landscape. Away from the road a strong sense of tranquillity prevails. This is a highly legible landscape, with long views across fields, and occasional glimpses out across adjacent valleys.

**Geology:** The chalk is capped with deposits of Clay with Flint, giving rise to slightly acidic loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage.

**Topography/Landform:** A flat plateau, with the exception of the south east, which demonstrates a slightly undulating landform. Here, heights fluctuate between 130 m and 145m. The plateau steadily rises towards the north west, up to a height of 190m.

**Hydrology:** Relatively few notable hydrological features. Occasional small ponds are dispersed throughout the area.

**Land use and Settlement:** An agricultural landscape, dominated by arable cultivation, with rough pasture and grazing interspersed. Field sizes are generally large, with a strong geometric form, and delineated by a good network of hedgerows and occasional wooden fencing subdivides.

Settlement is nucleated and concentrated at Hyde Heath and South Heath, both maintaining a small distinctive historic core, with further modern development edge. Vernacular buildings are often red brick, with some brick and flint. The town of Amersham separates the lower south east section, from the majority of this character area. Individual farmsteads/properties and small clusters of settlement are dispersed across the landscape.

The B485 cuts through the north of the area, and is traversed by a high voltage pylon



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line, creating a localised visible feature in the open landscape. Small rural roads pass across the landscape, connecting individual settlement, and carrying little traffic. Roads radiate from settlement areas into the adjacent Misbourne Valley.

The area has good public rights of way connections, including within the settlements of Amersham and Chesham Bois, but has no promoted routes. There are many open access areas to be enjoyed, including Chesham Bois Common, Weedonhill Green, a small patch of Hyde Heath Common, Hundridge Wood and other small patches of common land.

**Tree Cover:** Small areas of woodland are spread linearly along plateau edge, transitional with the steeper valley slopes of the Misbourne Valley, comprising coniferous, mixed and broadleaved pockets of woodland, and including occasional areas of ancient woodland. These areas of woodland extend along the boundary, within adjacent character areas, and provide a strong visual containment. Some small blocks of woodland are located on the edges of settlement. Elsewhere, tree cover is relatively sparse, with occasional clumps of trees, and scattered along field boundaries.

**Perceptual/Experiential Landscape:** An open landscape, with flat extensive fields, and limited tree and woodland cover. There are long views across fields to an open or wooded skyline with occasional important views across adjacent valleys. Away from the busy B485 the character area has a strong sense of rural tranquillity and calm. A simple landscape comprised of few elements, resulting in a unified and legible character.

**Biodiversity:** A dominance of arable and grassland throughout this area, with occasional woodland areas providing biodiversity value. These are distributed largely along the southern edge of the area, transitional with the adjacent valley. Sibley's Coppice Ancient Woodland and Local Wildlife Sites, is located adjacent to South Heath, and dominated by acid oak and beech. The extensive network of hedgerows provides important habitats and biodiversity value, within an agriculturally dominant landscape.

**Historic Environment:** Large areas of extended fields dominate the area, with extensive field boundary loss. There is also a mix of pre 18<sup>th</sup> century irregular, 19<sup>th</sup> century and parliamentary enclosures. An area of pre 18<sup>th</sup> century co-axial fields are located between Amersham and Little Chalfont. Historically heathland and common land, remnant area of heath are still found here, particularly along road sides

Archaeological remnants include, medieval pottery, scatters of worked flint indicative of prehistoric settlement, and remnant medieval settlement. Scheduled monuments are Medieval Castle Tower, Motte and Bailey and a Moated Site at Redding Wick.

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### Designations:

- Chilterns AONB
- English Heritage Scheduled Monuments: Castle Tower, Motte and Bailey; Moated site at Redding Wick.
- Archaeological Notification Areas: 18 No.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 7 No.
- Biological Notification Sites: 15 No.
- Priority BAP Habitats: 3 types.

### EVALUATION

#### Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are as follows:

- The occasional woodland areas (particularly ancient woodland) which provide enclosure and biodiversity value and mark the transition to the valleys.
- The strong sense of openness, which results from the relatively flat topography and limited tree cover and means that any change or vertical features has the potential to be very prominent.
- Elements of tranquillity and 'rural' qualities, which could be affected by further development.
- Inter visibility – Long views across fields and occasional views towards the Misbourne Valley and Chess Valley.
- Network of hedgerows which create enclosure and visual unity, as well as providing an ecological benefit, and could be lost by poor management.
- The rural roads and lanes, which may be under pressure to expand and be widened.
- The undeveloped green space in between settlement, which are vulnerable to settlement expansion.

**Strength of Character/Intactness:** The strength of character and intactness of the *Hyde Heath Settled Plateau* is **moderate**. Settlement development, particularly at Hyde Heath and South Heath interrupt the landscape and reduces the distinctiveness of character.

**Strategy/Vision:** To conserve and enhance the open mosaic of farmland and small pockets of woodland, and to maintain the sense of tranquillity and calm away from development, and the rural character of areas in between settlement.

#### Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve and manage areas of woodland, which provide enclosure in the landscape and provide biodiversity benefit.
- Promote appropriate management of farmland, to help generate a wildlife rich habitat, and diverse landscape structure
- Conserve views across the open landscape and out towards the adjacent valleys.
- Conserve and manage the network of hedgerows which characterise the landscape, infilling of gaps and appropriate pruning and cutting regimes.
- Encourage the preservation of archaeological monuments.
- Maintain existing open countryside between settlements of Hyde Heath and South Heath, and Hyde Heath and Amersham, to conserve their individual identity and prevent coalescence.

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- Maintain the rural character of roads, avoiding road improvements (e.g. widening) which would alter their character.
- Consider the impact of vertical features in this visually open landscape.
- Seek to enhance the modern edges of settlements at Hyde Heath and South Heath and reintegrate with the landscape setting, potentially through new structural tree planting.

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Flat plateau landscape, long open views across fields.



Open green common at Hyde Heath with woodland backdrop.



Lane with traditional vernacular buildings.



Paddock on edge of South Heath.