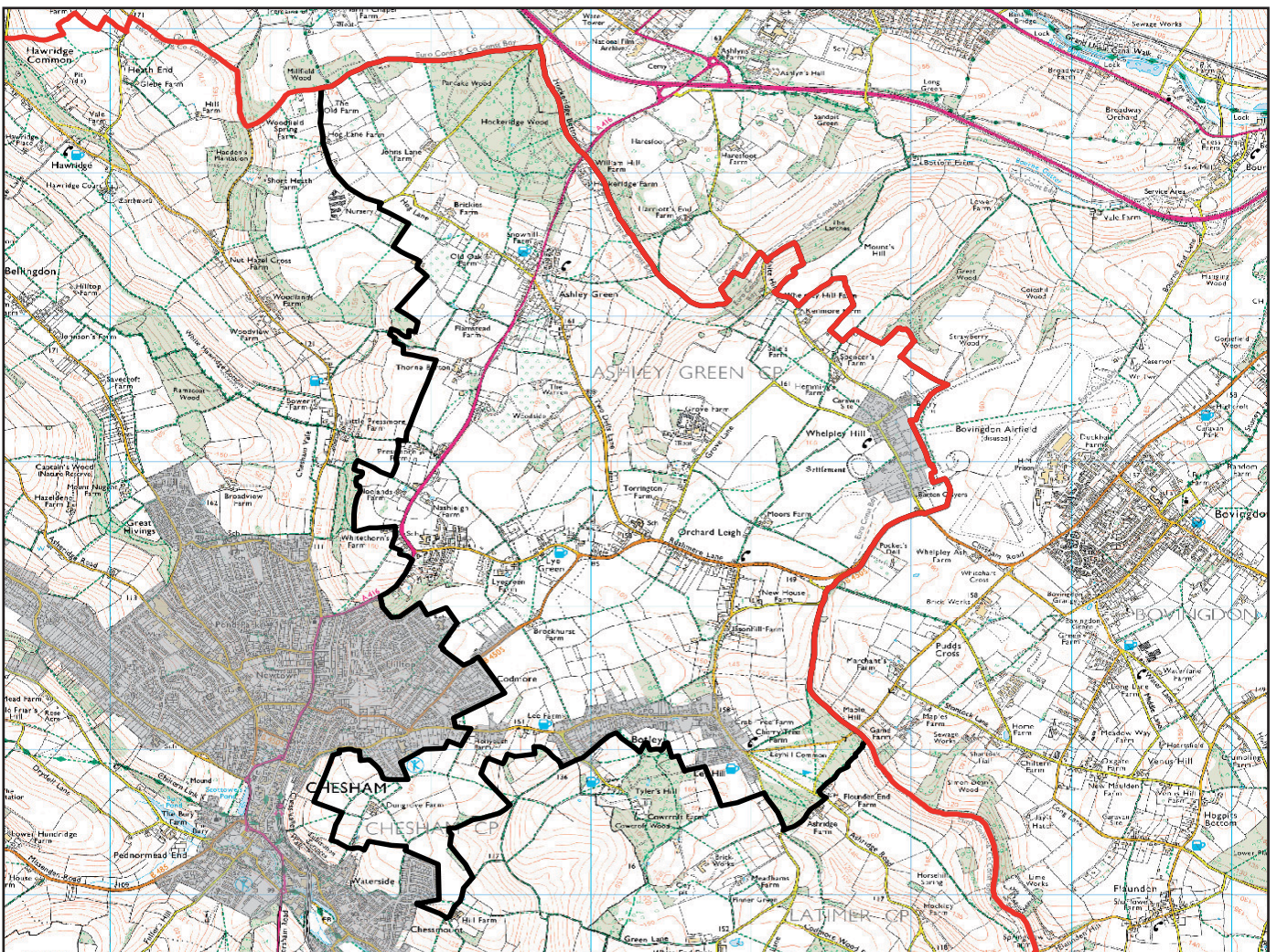
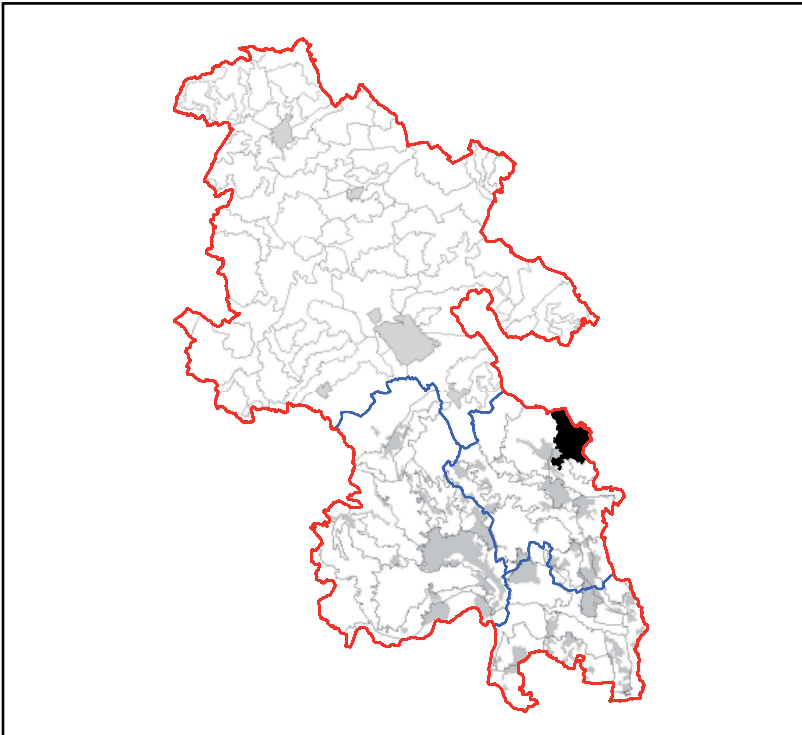


LCA 16.5 ASHLEY GREEN SETTLED PLATEAU



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KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Elevated, undulating plateau, of chalk overlain by clay with flints, which gives rise to loamy/clayey soils with impeded drainage.
- Relatively large fields of arable cultivation, interspersed with smaller fields of rough grazing, pasture and paddock on village edges. Defined by hedgerows with trees and occasional fenced or open boundaries.
- Small pockets of woodland scattered across the plateau, with a significant area of ancient broadleaved woodland located at Hockeridge Wood in the north and orchards south of Ashley Green.
- Villages are spread linearly along roads, often joining one another e.g. Botley and Ley Hill and Lye Green and Orchard Leigh. A mix of modern and historically vernacular buildings.
- Leyhill Common is a distinctive area of neutral grassland amongst broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland crossed by straight rural roads. It has been a golf course since 1900.
- Extended fields with extensive boundary loss and 20th century enclosure dominate the area. Pre 18th century enclosures occur in proximity to settlements.
- A medieval barn and moated site at Grove Farm and Whelpley Hill camp, a prehistoric or medieval fortification are scheduled monuments. Other archaeological features relate to the clay and flint geology e.g. Medieval pottery and Neolithic flints.
- Local footpaths occur frequently, crossing farmland and woodland and linking villages.
- The A416 and B405 cut through the landscape, and form the structure of linear settlements.
- Views often across fields to a wooded or open skyline, with some to Chesham and the adjacent ridge and valley landscape.
- A uniform land cover and land use creates a simple landscape, with a rural and peaceful character.

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DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: *Ashley Green Settled Plateau* is located entirely within Chiltern District. It forms the higher ground to the north of the Chess Valley, east of Chesham. Its elevated undulating plateau landform distinguishes it from the pronounced ridge and valley landscape to the east. Its settled nature distinguishes it from the landscape to the south. The district and county boundary form the northern and eastern boundaries of the area and the landscape continues into Dacorum District in Hertfordshire.

Landscape Character: An elevated clay and flint plateau with localised undulations relating to the heads of chalk tributary valleys. The landscape is simple and uniform, predominantly arable farmland with fields of pasture, rough grazing and paddock on village edges. Villages are spread linearly along roads, sometimes joining one another (e.g. Lye Hill and Botley) and comprise a mixture of historic and modern buildings. The common at Lye Hill is a distinctive feature, crossed by straight roads and has been a golf course since 1900. Pre 18th century enclosures occur in proximity to settlements, field boundaries are commonly hedged with some fenced and some open reflecting boundary loss. Small blocks of woodland are scattered amongst farmland with a significant area of ancient woodland at Hockeridge Wood. Views are often across fields to wooded or open horizons with some longer views to the east and to Chesham. Archaeological finds relate to clay and flint geology and Whepley Hill Camp and a Barn & moated site at Grove Farm are scheduled monuments. Away from the busier roads the area has a rural and peaceful character.

Geology: The chalk is capped with deposits of Clay with Flint, giving rise to slightly acidic loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage. An area of exposed Upper Chalk associated with a tributary of the River Bourne (which flows in the adjacent borough of Dacorum) gives rise to freely draining slightly acid but base-rich soils.

Topography/Landform: An elevated plateau landform (160-165m AOD) with localised undulations where tributaries associated with the River Bourne (in the adjacent Borough) and River Chess occur.

Hydrology: There are no notable hydrological features.

Land use and Settlement: Relatively large sized arable fields with smaller fields of pasture, rough grazing and paddock on village edges. Field boundaries are sometimes open but predominantly bound by hedgerows with hedgerow trees. Some post and wire and wooden post and rail fencing occurs. A large block of mixed woodland occurs in the north at Hokeridge Wood and broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland occurs with neutral grassland at Leyhil Common. Otherwise woodland is sparse with small scattered blocks often associated with steeper slopes. An area of orchard occurs to the south of Ashley Green.

Villages extend linearly along roads often joining one another e.g. Botley and Ley Hill

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and Lye Green and Orchard Leigh. Farmsteads and individual properties are also scattered through the area. A mix of modern and traditional building with brick and brick and flint commonly used. There is a large village Green at Ashley Green and Leyhill village has a large common, crossed by distinctively straight rural roads, which is used by Chesham and Ley Hill Golf Club. Golf has been played on the Common since about 1900.

Pylons cross the area, radiating from an electricity station at Lye Green. The A416 and B4505 cross the area passing through Ashley Green and Lye Green/ Orchard Leigh respectively. Other roads are more rural in character without white line markings.

Local footpaths are frequent crossing farmland and woodland and linking villages.

Tree Cover: Woodland cover is sparse across the area with notable areas of woodland at Hokeridge Wood and Leyhill Common. Otherwise small woods occur scattered amongst farmland. Trees in hedgerows contribute to tree cover.

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape: A simple, relatively open farmland landscape comprised of few elements, resulting in a unified and legible character. Views are often across fields to an open or wooded skyline. There are some views afforded to Chesham and the adjacent ridge and valley landscape north of Chesham. Away from the busier roads the area has a rural and peaceful character. However in places where pylons cut the farmland plateau the character can be bleak.

Biodiversity: A dominance of arable farmland and improved grassland throughout this area. The network of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and small farm woods provide important habitats and ecological connectivity in this agriculturally dominant landscape. In the north Hokeridge Wood is a large area of ancient woodland incorporating coniferous blocks and areas of broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland. Leyhill Common is a local wildlife site comprised of areas of neutral grassland amongst broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland.

Historic Environment: Extended fields with extensive boundary loss and 20th century enclosure dominate the area. Fields of pre 18th century irregular and regular enclosure are occasionally interspersed and occur particularly around Ashley Green. Pre 18th century co-axial fields are also scattered and notably concentrated adjacent to Hokeridge Wood and Botley.

This area contains two archaeological sites of national importance Whepley Hill Camp, possibly a prehistoric or medieval fortification, and a Barn & moated site at Grove Farm. Other notable archaeological sites and monuments are concentrated in the south and relate to the clay and flint geology. They include Medieval pottery, Neolithic flints and Leyhill Historic Core with medieval/ post medieval pottery, kiln, brick & tile works.

In the 1900s, with permission from the owner Lord Chesham, Leyhill Common was

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converted from heath land into a golf course.

Designations:

- Chilterns AONB
- Scheduled Monuments: Barn & moated site at Grove Farm and Whelpley Hill camp
- Archaeological Notification Areas: 7No.
- Priority BAP Habitats: 1 type
- Local Wildlife Sites: 5 No.
- Biological Notification Sites: 8 No.

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EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are as follows:

- The small scattered pockets of woodland and larger areas of ancient woodland which provide a visual backdrop, enclosure and biodiversity value.
- The network of hedgerows which create enclosure and visual unity, as well as providing an ecological benefit, and could be lost by poor management.
- The limited tree cover and relative openness, which means that any change or vertical features has the potential to be very prominent.
- Peacefulness and 'rural' qualities, which could be affected by further development.
- 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.
- Remaining areas of orchard which have otherwise largely been replaced by farming.
- Leyhill Common which has recreational, ecological and historic value.
- Pre 18th century field enclosures which provide evidence of past land use amongst extended fields.
- Archaeology including scheduled monuments and finds relating to the geology the area.

Strength of Character/Intactness: The strength of character and intactness of the *Ashley Green Settled Plateau* is **moderate**. Key characteristics are strongly conveyed but loss of field boundaries, modern extensions to villages and pylons distinctiveness of character.

Strategy/Vision: To conserve and enhance the mosaic of farmland with hedgerow boundaries and small pockets of woodland, and to maintain the peacefulness and rural character away from busier roads.

Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve and appropriately manage woodland, including smaller woodlands.
- Conserve and manage the network of hedgerows, infilling of gaps and establishing appropriate cutting regimes.

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- Promote appropriate management of farmland, to help generate a wildlife rich habitat, and diverse landscape structure.
- Conserve views across the open farmed landscape. Consider the impact of vertical features in open views.
- Maintain the rural character of roads, avoiding road improvements and widening which would alter their character.
- Maintain green space between settlements (e.g. Leigh Hill and Orchard Leigh) to conserve their individual identity and prevent coalescence.
- Conserve and enhance orchard areas which have largely been replaced by intensive farming.
- Conserve and appropriately manage the landscape of Leyhill common to achieve a balance between recreational use and historic and biodiversity value.
- Conserve and restore pre 18th century field enclosures.
- Encourage the preservation of archaeological monuments and their setting.

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The Green at Ashley Green.

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Enclosed rural character of lanes, with a typical Buckinghamshire junction post.

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View across open field.

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Traditional materials include stone, flint and brick.

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