



## LCA 18.2 PENN ROLLING FARMLAND

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A large scale landscape with a varied geology, which gives rise to a rolling topography. The oldest chalk bedrock is exposed centrally, and is capped with Clay with Flint in the north west. To the south east chalk has been eroded by the Thames river, and this lower lying area is overlain by Thames river deposits. Small pockets of Lambeth Group are interspersed.
- Large arable fields delineated by an intact network of hedgerows. There are smaller fields of rough grazing, pasture, paddock, pig farms located closer to settlement. Woodland often provides a backdrop to open fields.
- Large blocks of woodland, are dispersed throughout, interlinked with farmland. The wide variety of woodland types create a rich texture and colour. A significant amount of ancient woodland, such as Penn Wood, The Larches and Common Wood in the north west.
- A low density of well dispersed settlement, largely comprising individual farmsteads/properties and occasional small villages, namely Winchmore Hill and Coleshill. Larger settlement of Beaconsfield, Penn, Tyler's Green, Holmer Green and Chalfont St Giles forms the boundary of the character area.
- Large areas of early assart enclosure often interlocked with ancient woodland. Interspersed with smaller areas of pre 18<sup>th</sup> century irregular and regular enclosure, some 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century systems, and extended fields, with extensive boundary loss.
- Archaeological interest includes several manor houses, earthworks, including a pale park boundary at Seagrave's Farm, numerous kiln artefacts.
- Small winding rural roads and lanes with little traffic and an intimate character. The busy A404 and A355 cut through the north and east, respectively, with a strong local audible and visual impact. A dense network of public rights of way with a number of woodland trails.
- Varying levels of enclosure, with open fields contrasting with dense woodland cover. Views are often confined by woodland, which often forms the backdrop to many vistas. Some long views across open farmland.
- The sweeping topography and farmland land cover with limited settlement contributes to a well balanced and uniform landscape.
- Away from the busy roads a remote and tranquil character prevails, with a strong sense of rural character.



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### DESCRIPTION

**Location and Boundaries:** *Penn Rolling Farmland* lies mainly within the Chiltern District, with a small area in South Bucks District and two small areas within Wycombe District. This area forms the higher undulating ground elevated above the Misbourne Valley, in the north and north east, and the Wye Valley in the south west. The boundaries are largely based on topography, geology and land use.

**Landscape Character:** A large scale landscape with a varied geology, giving rise to a rolling landform. A mosaic of farmland and woodland, dominated by large arable fields, and substantial amounts of ancient woodland. A landscape with contrasting degrees of enclosure, with open fields and dense intimate woodland area. The variety of woodland creates a highly textured character and a rich seasonal interest, providing important ecological and recreational resources. Settlement density is low, comprising highly dispersed isolated farmsteads, and two small villages, namely Winchmore Hill and Coleshill. Small winding and enclosed rural roads connect areas of settlement, with the exception of the busy A404 and A355. A variety of historical and archaeological remnants reveal the varying layers of history within this landscape, including large areas of assart field enclosures, several earthworks, kilns and medieval manor house. The sweeping landform, prominence of woodland cover and limited settlement, creates a tranquil landscape, with a uniform and balanced character.

**Geology:** A varied geology, with chalk bedrock exposed centrally, and is capped with Clay with Flint in the north west. To the south east area, chalk has been eroded by the Thames River, and this lower lying area is overlain by Thames river deposits. Small pockets of Lambeth Group are interspersed within the central chalk area. The geology gives rise to varied soils with slightly acidic loamy soils, with impeded drainage, largely corresponding to clay with flints, and freely draining soils overlaying chalk and river terrace deposits. Occasional pockets of slowly permeable loamy and clayey soils often coincide with underlying Lambeth Group.

**Topography/Landform:** A large scale undulating and rolling landscape. A tributary valley head, which feeds into the Alder Bourne Valley, winds through the area from north west to south east, creating a distinctively undulating landform. Steep slopes are contrasted to large rolling hills, with heights frequently varying between 95m and 165m.

**Hydrology:** There are no discernable watercourses. There are however frequent ponds scattered across the area, often occurring within woods and associated with farms and settlement areas.

**Land Use and Settlement:** A mosaic of mixed farmland and woodland. Arable cultivation dominates, often occurring in large fields. Smaller fields of rough grazing, pasture, paddock and some pig farms are interspersed, often situated close to settlement areas. Field boundaries are commonly defined by a dense network of

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hedgerows with wooden post fencing subdividing smaller fields, typically paddocks. Blocks of woodland intersperse farmland, often providing a backdrop to fields.

Settlement density is low, with two small villages of Winchmore Hill and Coleshill, both on higher ground in the north, and having a distinctive historic character. Elsewhere, settlement is highly dispersed and comprised of individual farmsteads. Areas of commons exist in the north around Winchmore Hill and Coleshill, namely Coleshill Common, Winchmore Common, Penn Street Common and Larkins Green. Larger villages, with more modern development edge, form the boundaries of the character area, with Penn, Tyler's Green and Hazelmere in the west, Holmer Green to the north, Beaconsfield to the south and Chalfont St Giles to the east. The historic core of Penn, filters in to the area, in the south west.

Small winding rural roads and lanes connect settlement, often enclosed by high hedgerows. The exception is the busy A404 and A355 which cut through the north and east of the character area, respectively. Several pylon lines also pass through this area, creating prominent features in the landscape. A dense network of footpaths and several bridleways, cover the area, with numerous woodland tracks.

**Tree Cover:** Woodland is prominent throughout the area, often occurring in large dense blocks. Ancient replanted and ancient & semi-natural woodland is frequent across the area with large pockets occurring at Penn Wood, Common Wood, Great Beard's Wood, and Brown's Wood. The significant amount of ancient woodland, gives rise to a dense and mature wooded character throughout. Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland predominate with smaller areas of lowland beech and yew woodland and coniferous plantation dispersed throughout. A large area of lowland mixed woodland is located at Hodgemoor Wood. The mix of woodland types creates rich textured and colourful landscape. Beech, oak, ash, silver birch and conifers are common species. Trees are also scattered along field boundary hedgerows and road side edges, across the landscape.

**Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape:** A large scale landscape, with sweeping rolling landform, demonstrating a well balanced and uniform character. The high woodland cover and limited settlement density, contributes to a sense of intimacy and enclosure. The diversity of woodland provides a variety of texture and colour, with a rich seasonal interest. Varying levels of enclosure are experienced, with open large scale fields, contrasted with enclosed rural lanes and dense woodland areas. Views are often confined by woodland, which often forms the backdrop to many vistas. Some long views are afforded across open fields, to higher points or distinctive features, such as Coleshill wind mill. Occasional views out north across the Misbourne Valley and south west towards High Wycombe Valley. The busy A404 and A355, which cut through the north and east, respectively, act as important transport routes, and have a localised visual and audible impact on the perceived naturalness of the area. However, away from these routes, roads are quiet and tranquil, often enclosed by high hedgerows. A tranquil and peaceful landscape, with a strong rural character.

**Biodiversity:** Woodland provides a valuable habitat throughout this area, with broadleaved, mixed, and yew woodland dominating, and smaller areas of lowland

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beech and yew woodland and coniferous plantation interspersed. Local wildlife sites in this area are all broadleaved, mixed, and yew woodlands, with significant areas at Penn Wood and Common Wood. Hodgemoor Wood, large lowland mixed deciduous woodland is an SSSI in the east, dominated by beech, oak and ash species, and a nesting site for violet birds. Orchids and cow wheat are also present. BAP priority habitats are lowland mixed deciduous woodland and lowland beech and yew woodland. A dense network of hedgerows also provides important corridors for wildlife, connecting agricultural land with areas of woodland.

**Historic Environment:** Field systems are dominated by early assart enclosure, which is often integrated with areas of ancient woodland. Elsewhere a mix of pre 18th century irregular enclosure, 20th century enclosure and extended field systems (which have been extended through extensive boundary loss), predominate. Smaller areas of parliamentary enclosure, 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosure, and pre 18<sup>th</sup> century regular enclosure are interspersed.

There are a few manor houses within the Penn area dating back to the medieval period, including Penn Manor, at Seagrave Farm, which from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. Puttenham Manor is 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century and Puttenham Place Farm is 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century. A windmill mound is located within the grounds of Penn House, which has been dated back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. There are several medieval earthworks within this area, often located within woodland. A pale park still remains at Seagrave's Farm. Several kilns are also located within or close to Winchmore Hill and Coleshill.

The historic core of Penn spreads into the character area, with more suburban modern development to the west. The historic core is linearly dispersed, with several small historic lanes running through and a strong vernacular character.

### **Designations:**

- Chilterns AONB
- Archaeological Notification Sites: 22No.
- Priority Bap Habitats: 2 types
- Biological Notification Sites: 17 No.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 15 No.
- SSSI: 2 No. Froghill Brickworks; Hodgemoor Wood.

### EVALUATION

#### Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are:

- The extensive woodland cover which includes large areas of ancient woodland and provides enclosure and a backdrop to views as well as biodiversity value.
- The open views across rolling arable farmland to wooded horizons and occasional glimpsed views out to adjacent landscapes, such as the Misbourne Valley to the north and High Wycombe Valley in the south west.
- The low density of dispersed settlement and their accompanying historic buildings.
- The remote and peaceful character which is due to the high proportion of woodland and lack of settlement and roads.
- Network of public rights of way that provide access to woodland, and the associated recreational opportunities.
- The visual unity of the landscape, and organised, well balanced nature.
- The variety of archaeological sites and monuments, which reveal the different phases of history within the character area.
- The large areas of early assart enclosures south and east of Coleshill, and close to Penn.

**Strength of Character/Intactness:** The strength of character and intactness of the *Penn Rolling Farmland* 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:** To conserve the mosaic of woodland, and farmland, to protect the strong and rich wooded character, and to conserve the rural peaceful character of *Penn Rolling Farmland*.

#### Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve the areas of woodland which provide enclosure and form an important character of the area, and provide invaluable biodiversity benefit and recreational resource.
- Conserve open views across arable farmland to wooded horizons.
- Restrict development and avoid road improvements which would alter the character of rural roads.
- Conserve the intact, remote and peaceful character which is formed by the woodland cover, absence of modern development and roads.
- Conserve and manage the network of dense hedgerows, and hedgerow trees. Consider replanting hedgerows which have been lost.

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- Seek to reduce road traffic pressures which could alter the tranquil, rural character of the landscape.
- Promote appropriate management of farmland, to help generate a wildlife rich habitat, and visually attractive landscape.
- Ensure that new buildings and development is sensitively integrated into the landscape through careful siting.
- Conserve historic elements, such as archaeological monuments and their setting; conserve early field enclosures, which provide evidence of past use of the land.

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Gently rolling landform, with open fields interspersed with blocks of woodland, and defined by a network of hedgerows.



Woodland often forms the backdrop to fields, with a rich texture, created by the mix of deciduous and coniferous trees.



Dense, mature block of woodland, used for recreation.



Occasional long views across open fields..



View across arable farmland to windmill, a distinctive feature in the landscape.



Open fields.