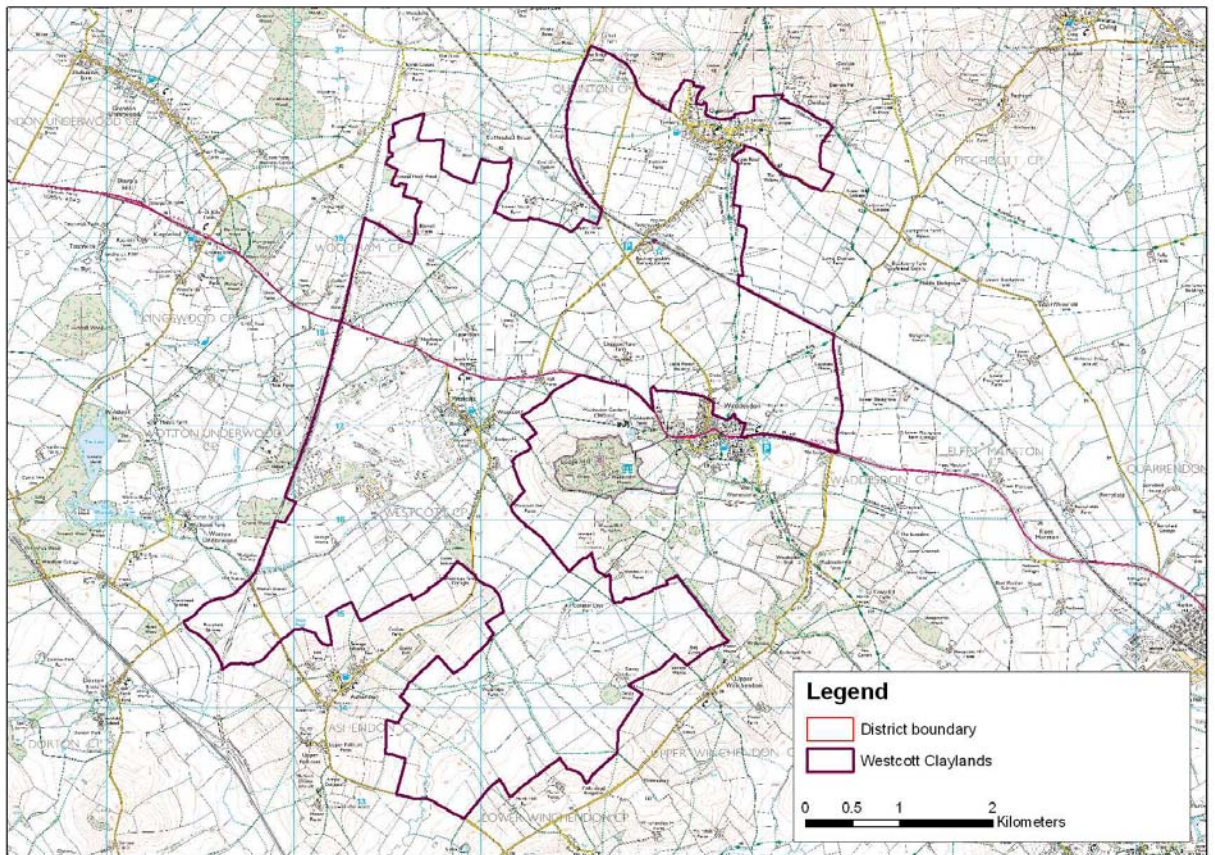
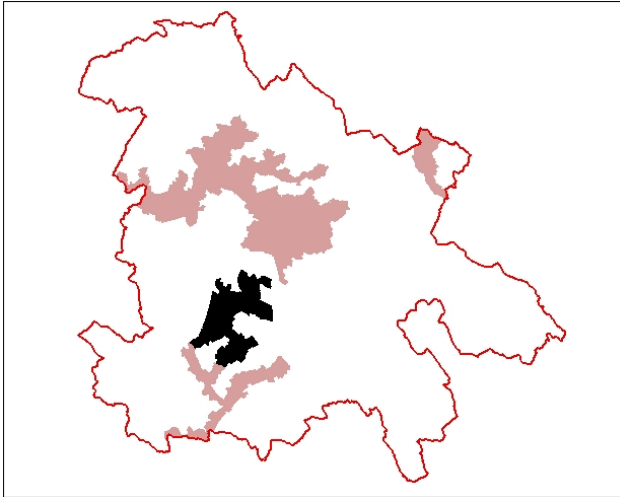


LCA 5.9 Westcott Claylands

Landscape Character Type: LCT 5 Shallow Valleys



LCA 5.9 Westcott Claylands (LCT 5)

Key Characteristics

- Three shallow valleys
- Gently sloping ground
- Predominantly pastoral
- Low density of woodland cover
- Low settlement density
- Pattern of hedgerows is primarily from 18th and 19th century enclosure
- Westcott Rocket Research Establishment

Distinctive Features

- Quainton windmill
- Buckinghamshire Railway Centre
- Railway lines and bridges over railway
- Ridge & furrow at Quainton
- Willow and poplar along streams and hedgerows
- Neutral, calcareous and unimproved grassland
- Ponds throughout

Intrusive Elements

- Traffic on A41
- Development along A41
- Westcott airfield and associated industry and fencing

Location This is a large LCA to the north west of Aylesbury. The A41 crosses the area from east to west. There are two larger settlements on the boundaries of the area and adjacent higher ground; these are Quainton which is within the LCA and Waddesdon village, which is just over the boundary.

Landscape character A large area of gently sloping low ground in predominantly pastoral use. It is united by a good hedgerow pattern around small or medium fields. The condition of hedgerows is very variable with noticeable areas where the hedgerows are very gappy and fragmented. There is little woodland.

The village of Quainton with its landmark windmill lies on the area's northern edge. Quainton and Waddesdon just over the LCA boundary are larger villages than found in most of the surrounding countryside. Views from the area tend to focus on Quainton Hill or Waddesdon Manor estate.

The area comprises three small stream valleys; each has a slightly different character. In the southern part of the area where the stream feeds into the Chearsley Narrow Valley LCA 5.10, there is a remote and tranquil character and it is not accessible by roads. In the central section there is some visual intrusion associated with the A41 and adjacent development. Westcott airfield is extensive and includes an industrial area. The sheds, runway and chain link fencing are visually intrusive in a small area close to the A41. In the north the area is predominantly agricultural with the hills to the north being the focus of views. The area generally has an open agricultural character, which is in places disrupted by land uses other than agriculture.

Geology Predominantly an area of calcareous mudstone. West Walton formation with a large exposure of Weymouth mudstone to the northwest. Narrow belt of Kimmeridge clay follows the southeast boundary. Alluvium deposits occur in the valley bottom.

Topography The topography of this area is indistinct and gentle and formed by three small valleys. In many areas it is difficult to identify the fall of the ground. The elevation range is from 110m - 70m AOD, but by far the majority of the ground lies between 85m - 75m AOD. The higher ground forms small areas at the edge of the LCA and surrounding higher ground.

Hydrology There are no major watercourses. Three small, meandering streams in shallow valleys drain either to the river Ray or the river Thames.

Land use and settlement Predominantly an area of pastoral farming with about one fifth of the area arable. It has significantly more land in uses other than agriculture than most of the surrounding countryside. This primarily relates to Westcott airfield and the development around it but also development along the A41 and the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre and railway lines.

There is little settlement; Quainton is a large village on the northern side of the area and Westcott a smaller village to the west of the Waddesdon (which is just over the LCA boundary.) The only other settlement is made up of a scattering of farms and some linear development along the road to the south of Quainton. To the south east of the Waddesdon Estate the area is notable for being inaccessible by road and having a far more contained and remote character. It also has a decoy pond and wood.

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Tree cover Scattering of small woodlands, but the woodland cover is low and not a visually significant landscape feature. There is scrub woodland associated with the railway line. The tree cover within hedgerows is generally a light scattering of trees. There is generally better tree cover adjacent to streamlines and ditches.

Biodiversity The dominant habitat within Westcott Claylands is grassland nevertheless large areas of arable land are also present, mainly in the north. Although improved grassland is the most common pasture type, relatively high amounts of neutral, unimproved and calcareous grassland can also be found particularly in the northern half. There are several areas of unimproved grassland designated as CWS for their high floristic interest, including county uncommon species. Two of these sites are associated with the rocket research establishment and include an unimproved ridge and furrow hay meadow.

Broadleaved woodland is present as small to moderate sized parcels distributed throughout the LCA. The streams and a number of ponds provide aquatic habitat. Hedgerows of variable quality add to the biodiversity potential and provide connectivity.

Historic environment The landscape of this area is a mixed one, comprising several different field types. The most abundant type is parliamentary enclosure which covers nearly two thirds of the landscape. The other field types are pre 18th century enclosures found to the west of the LCA and meadowland along the stream to the south. Other distinctive landscape features include a decoy pond south of Waddesdon. A key characteristic of the landscape south is the disused Second World War airfield of Westcott. This was opened in 1942 as a training airfield for pilots, while after the war it was converted into a research establishment for ballistics and rocket propulsion.

The historic settlement pattern of this area contains two different types, the 'nucleated' village of Quainton which epitomises the form of most vale settlements and the more polyfocal settlement of Westcott. There are also a number of historic farmsteads which date to the 18th and 19th centuries. The village of Quainton is a picturesque village centred around a green and has conservation area status. The village contains several listed buildings of grade II* including the 14th century grade 1 parish church of Holy Cross and the iconic 19th century tower mill. In addition, at the Westcott airfield there are a number of unique structures which are associated with research into the rocket propulsion from the late 1940s until the end of the Cold War.

In terms of archaeology, the most apparent monument is the earthworks of open field ridge and furrow, which are located to the south of Quainton village. There are also settlement earthworks at the village of Westcott. Other notable heritage monuments are associated with communication. The Roman road of Akeman Street runs through the area with prehistoric and Roman finds nearby. The industrial period saw the construction of a railway junction which connects the Brill Tramway to the now disused Aylesbury to Buckingham railway.

Although railways are no longer commercially used, the junction at Quainton has been adapted for tourism and now operates as the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre. The landscape also has a number of promoted routes including the Bernwood Jubilee Way.

LCA 5.9 Westcott Claylands (LCT 5)

Designations

Conservation Area at Quainton
EHRHP&G at Waddesdon Manor
Archaeological Notification Areas – 30 No.
CWS – 5 No.
BNS – 7 No.

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The lower ground is part of the southern most part of the area, which is inaccessible by road and has a slightly remote character. The best tree cover can be seen adjacent to the streamline.



View over Westcott from the Ashendon Ridge LCA 9.6.

LCA 5.9 Westcott Claylands (LCT 5)

Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

Condition	Very good
Pattern of elements:	Unified
Visual detractors:	Few
Visual unity:	Strongly unified
Cultural integrity:	Good
Ecological integrity:	StrongVery strong
Functional integrity:	

Sensitivity	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

Guidelines **Conserve and Reinforce**

Condition

The landscape is considered to be in very good condition. It is unified by the historic hedgerow pattern and low level of settlement and access. There are few visual detractors and those that there are generally concentrated along the A41 corridor. This gives the area a strong sense of visual unity. Despite the loss of field boundaries in some places the cultural integrity is considered to be good, the landscape contains well preserved ridge and furrow, and notable historic buildings including Cold War structures at Westcott airfield. Ecological integrity is strong due to good connectivity and the areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance compared to the rest of the District. The area has a very strong functional integrity.

Sensitivity

The area is considered to have a distinct landscape character and a good sense of historic continuity in most of the area. This gives the area a moderate strength of character. The landform is apparent and the tree cover intermittent being generally strongest adjacent to the meandering streams. This gives a moderate level of visibility. The moderate sense of place and moderate visibility make the sensitivity of the area as a whole moderate.



View looking south from Quinton over the lower ground between the village and the higher ground to the south. The woodlands of the Waddesdon Estate can be seen on the horizon.

LCA 5.9 Westcott Claylands (LCT 5)

Landscape Guidelines Conserve and Reinforce

The landscape guidelines for the Westcott Claylands are as follows:

- Encourage the retention and strengthening of the historic hedgerow pattern by infilling gaps and establishing new hedgerow trees. Oak and ash trees are a feature of hedgerows in this area.
- Maintain and improve condition of existing hedgerows through traditional cutting regimes.
- Promote the management and conservation of vegetation adjacent to the meandering watercourses including the pollarding of willow.
- Encourage the management of existing woodland and promote the establishment of new woodland particularly where it will reduce the visual impact of Westcott airfield the A41 and associated development.
- Maintain the extent and condition of neutral, calcareous unimproved and semi-improved grassland wherever possible. Encourage good management practices.
- Maintain connectivity of habitats.
- Close to watercourses promote the use of permanent pasture, with low stocking density and flooding regimes to promote biodiversity and landscape enhancement.
- Promote the conservation and interpretation of rich historic environment, including the nationally important Cold War structures at Westcott.
- Identify key views to surrounding higher ground; particularly to the Waddesdon estate and Quainton Windmill from publicly accessible land and promote the preservation and enhancement of these views.
- Encourage the preservation of historic earthworks and ridge and furrow by maintaining a continuous grass sward.
- Preserve the views that surround the historic parks and gardens of Waddesdon.



Buckinghamshire Railway Centre is a popular visitor attraction located to the south of Quainton.