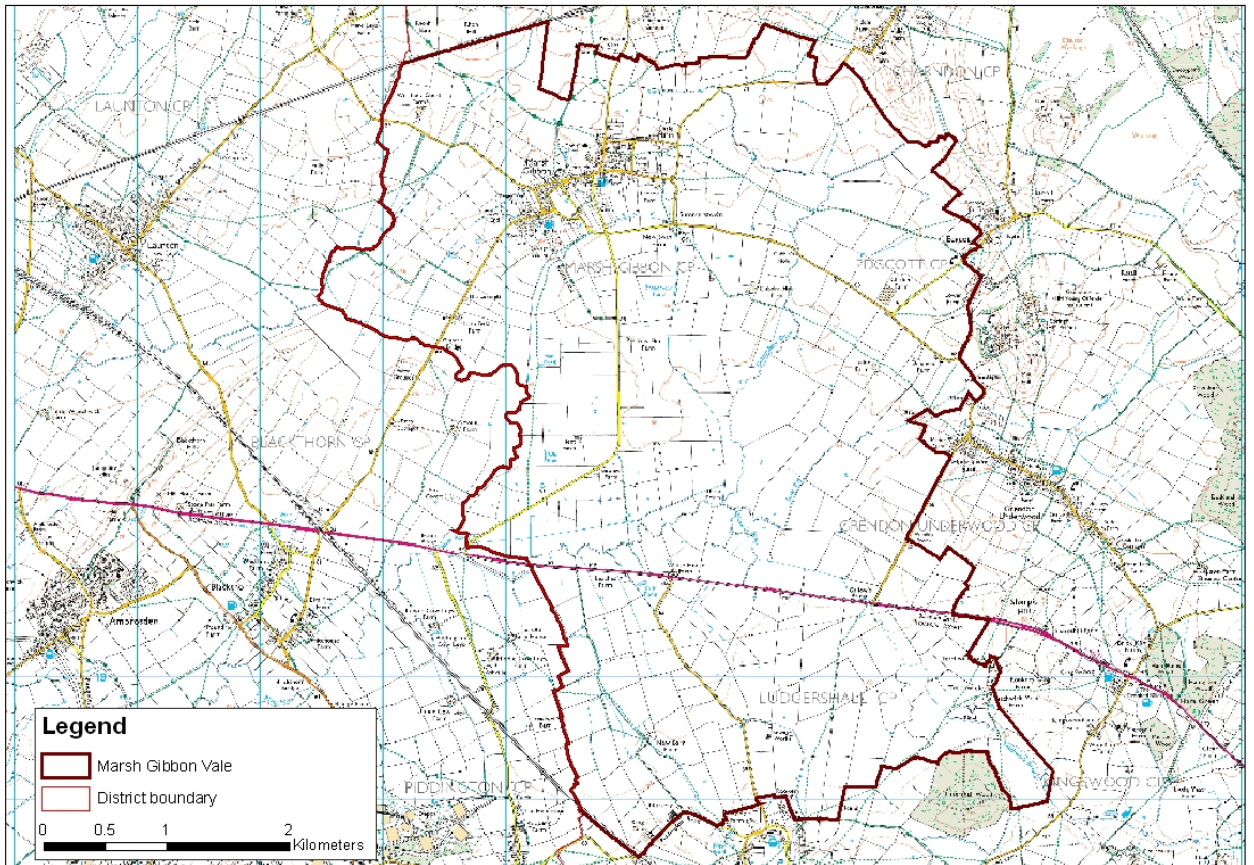
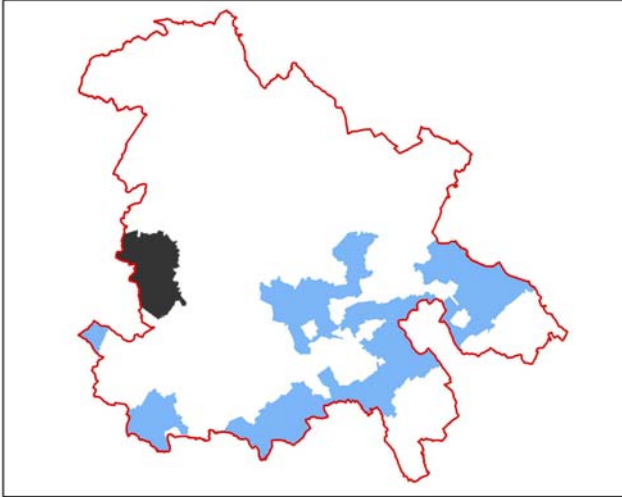


LCA 8.1 Marsh Gibbon Vale

Landscape Character Type: LCT 8 Vale



LCA 8.1 Marsh Gibbon Vale (LCT 8)

Key Characteristics

- Flat or gently sloping landform
- Meandering brooks streams and ditches
- Predominantly pastoral
- Very low density of woodland cover
- Low density of settlement
- Predominantly Parliamentary enclosure
- Tranquil character away from A41
- Extensive ridge and furrow

Distinctive Features

- Ponds
- Emergent vegetation on the banks of rivers and ditches
- Views to settlements on higher ground
- Views to higher ground to the north, east and south of the area
- Villages of Marsh Gibbon and Ludgershall
- Roman road
- High proportion of grassland
- River Ray

Intrusive Elements

- Traffic on A41
- Pylon line

Location On the district's western boundary to the northwest of Aylesbury. The A41 passes from west to east through the south of this area.

Landscape character This vale landscape is unified by its landform and strong hedgerow pattern. It remains predominantly pastoral with significant areas of archaeological and biological interest. Fields are generally medium sized and regular in shape. The wetland nature of the area is evident in the frequent tree-lined meandering watercourses. Views are generally medium distance and focus on the higher ground on the edge of the area or the settlement of Marsh Gibbon. There is also often great visual interest along the watercourses themselves with a variety of bank side vegetation from large trees to reeds and rushes. The area is generally sparsely settled with farms on the higher ground at the edges of the area. The village of Marsh Gibbon in the north of the area is quite large and has many interesting vernacular buildings. Traffic on the A41 and the nearby pylon line are visually intrusive but away from this there is a tranquil and sometimes remote character to the area.

Geology Marsh Gibbon Vale is divided between the Peterborough bituminous mudstones in the north and the Stewartby calcaerous stones in the south. The extensive low-lying Vale between the two is infilled with alluvium deposits. In the north around the settlement of Marsh Gibbon is an outcrop of Kellaway beds.

Topography Flat or gently undulating vale landscape, which has slightly higher ground on northern, eastern and southern boundaries and drains towards the River Ray in the centre of the area. Ponds are a feature of the area. The elevation ranges from 60-80m AOD.

Hydrology Numerous streams and ditches drain this vale landscape from the higher ground in the north-east and west towards the River Ray which drains out of the area just to the north of the A41. The Gubbinshole ditch, Tetchwick Brook and River Ray are notable for their very meandering courses through the area. The far eastern section of the river Ray is much straighter suggesting that it may have been straightened. Ponds are a feature of the area particularly in the lowest central part.

Land use and settlement The majority of this area is grassland with over half being unimproved or neutral grassland. The area is sparsely settled with the one main settlement of Marsh Gibbon on slightly higher ground in the north. The busy A41 cuts through the lower half of the area in an east west direction. It runs along the course of Akeman Street a Roman road. Other roads in the area tend to be straight, narrow and bounded by strong hedges. There are no farms in the lowest central area apart from to along the A41. Farms tend to be located at the transition between this area and adjacent higher ground. Several villages are also clustered round the slightly higher ground just over the boundary of the area. The small farmstead of Tetchwick with Tetchwick Moat Farm is located in the southeast corner. There are limestone walls and houses within the village of Marsh Gibbon as well as white cottages with thatched roof.

Tree cover The area has very little woodland, only small fragments and areas of scrub, mostly along the railway lines on the northern and southern boundaries. The hedgerow tree cover is variable with the greatest concentration generally adjacent to the meandering river, brook, ditches and roads. There are also some over grazed thin or gappy hedgerows.

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Biodiversity The biodiversity interest is concentrated in the southern half of the LCA evidenced by the concentration of priority and broad habitat types and of biodiversity designations. Numerous watercourses and channels thread their way across the LCA, which in conjunction with the strong hedgerow network provide good connectivity between these habitats both within Marsh Gibbon Vale and with habitat within adjoining LCAs and Oxfordshire.

Around two thirds of the area comprises grassland habitats, the rest is arable land. Although improved grassland is dominant, unimproved grassland can be found throughout. Relatively large areas of the broad habitat type neutral pasture are present in the southern half as are parcels of priority habitat type grassland found either side of the A41 and also on the western boundary of the vale. A small SSSI is also present at Long Herdon Meadow. These areas are often adjacent and together include a very wide range of unimproved meadow flora and associated fauna.

Woodland is restricted to very small stands of the broad habitat type of broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland. Nevertheless this is supplemented by strong tree lines along watercourses, predominantly of willow, and the hedgerows are mainly in good condition.

In terms of aquatic habitats, in addition to the rivers and streams there are also numerous ponds.

Historic environment

This landscape was part of Bernwood Forest in the early 13th century. Bernwood had been a hunting ground from the time of Edward the Confessor. Although today forests are synonymous with woodland, this part of Bernwood has historically been an open landscape of arable or pasture. With the exception of a few early enclosed strip fields and irregular enclosures, the landscape is predominantly characterised by the straight field boundaries and roads of parliamentary enclosure, associated with the survey of the parishes of Marsh Gibbon and Ludgershall in 1856 and 1777. The field pattern is well preserved making this area among the best examples of parliamentary enclosed landscapes in the county. The landscape has an earlier historical dimension, underlying the 18th & 19th century field boundaries are the surviving remnants of the medieval open field system. These ridge and furrow earthworks are extensive, well preserved and collectively are recognised as being of national importance. The historic settlement pattern is dominated by the historic villages of Marsh Gibbon and Ludgershall, these appear to conform to the 'nucleated' patterns of settlement found within the planned landscape of the vale but the settlement of Ludgershall is distinctive, as it's focus is around a green, typical of dispersed patterns found in ancient countryside. Both villages have conservation areas containing concentrations of vernacular buildings. Abutting the west side of Ludgershall village are some distinctive "fossilised strips" where hedgerows follow the layout of medieval open field furlongs. Other settlement is limited to thinly scattered farms on higher ground.

There are a number of archaeological monuments, the most notable is the Roman road of Akeman Street which crosses the area east-west on slightly higher, perhaps made up ground. There are also archaeological earthworks such as the moated and manorial site at Tetchwick Farm and shrunken village remains and a scheduled moat at Ludgershall, which lies in a characteristic location opposite the church.

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Designations

Conservation Areas at Marsh Gibbon (3) and Ludgershall

Scheduled Ancient Monuments: Ludgershall moat

Archaeological Notification Areas – 45 No.

SSSI: Long Herdon Meadow

CWS – 10 No.

BNS – 10 No.

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Most of the area is nearly flat making the hedgerow pattern and higher ground on the edges of the area visually very significant.



Hedgerow trees are variable but an important feature in a landscape with minimal woodland.

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Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

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

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

Guidelines **Conserve and Reinforce**

Condition

Generally the landscape is considered to be in a very good condition with a unified pattern of elements primarily relating to the hedgerow and drainage pattern. There are few visual detractors. The impact of the A41 is very localised in this area but the pylon lines do have an impact on most of the southern side of the vale. The area is considered to be strongly unified. The cultural integrity of the area is good with a well preserved landscape of parliamentary enclosures, nationally important ridge and furrow and the distinctive village of Ludgershall. Ecological integrity is moderate due to strong connectivity and reasonably large areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance. The functional integrity of the landscape as a whole is considered to be very strong.

Sensitivity

This is a distinctive landscape with a good sense of historic continuity. The distinct landscape and sense of historic continuity combine to give a moderate sense of place. The landform is apparent by its almost flat nature, which is a key characteristic of the landscape. The tree cover is considered to be intermittent as there is very little woodland. The tree cover in hedgerows is variable but there are often good lines of trees adjacent to meandering watercourses. Visibility is generally variable and is considered to be moderate. Overall the moderate sense of place combined with the moderate visibility gives the landscape a moderate degree of sensitivity.



The characteristically long and straight parliamentary enclosure roads are a local feature to the south of Marsh Gibbon.

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Landscape Guidelines Conserve and Reinforce

The landscape guidelines for Marsh Gibbon Vale are as follows:

- Maintain the historically open landscape by discouraging the planting of new woodlands and sub-division of fields.
- Conserve the distinctive historic character and form of the villages and their settings, especially the greens and fossilised strips associated with Ludgershall.
- Maintain and improve the condition of existing hedgerows through traditional cutting regimes.
- Maintain the condition and extent of unimproved and semi-improved grassland. Encourage good management practices.
- Maintain extent and connectivity of calcareous grassland.
- Encourage the establishment of new hedgerow trees to improve the age structure and reduce visual impact of pylon lines.
- Encourage the management and retention of the open ditches as a landscape feature and wildlife resource.
- Close to watercourses promote the use of permanent pasture, with low stocking density and flooding regimes to encourage biodiversity and landscape enhancement.
- New housing and alterations to existing housing should be designed to reflect the traditional character of the area and use locally traditional materials.
- Promote conservation and interpretation of rich historic environment.
- Promote the retention of the character of minor roads by the management of hedgerows, ditches and verges and limiting urbanising elements such as signage and kerbing.
- Encourage the preservation of historic earthworks and ridge and furrow by maintaining a continuous grass sward.



The Greyhound Inn at Marsh Gibbon – one of many buildings in the village built with local stone.