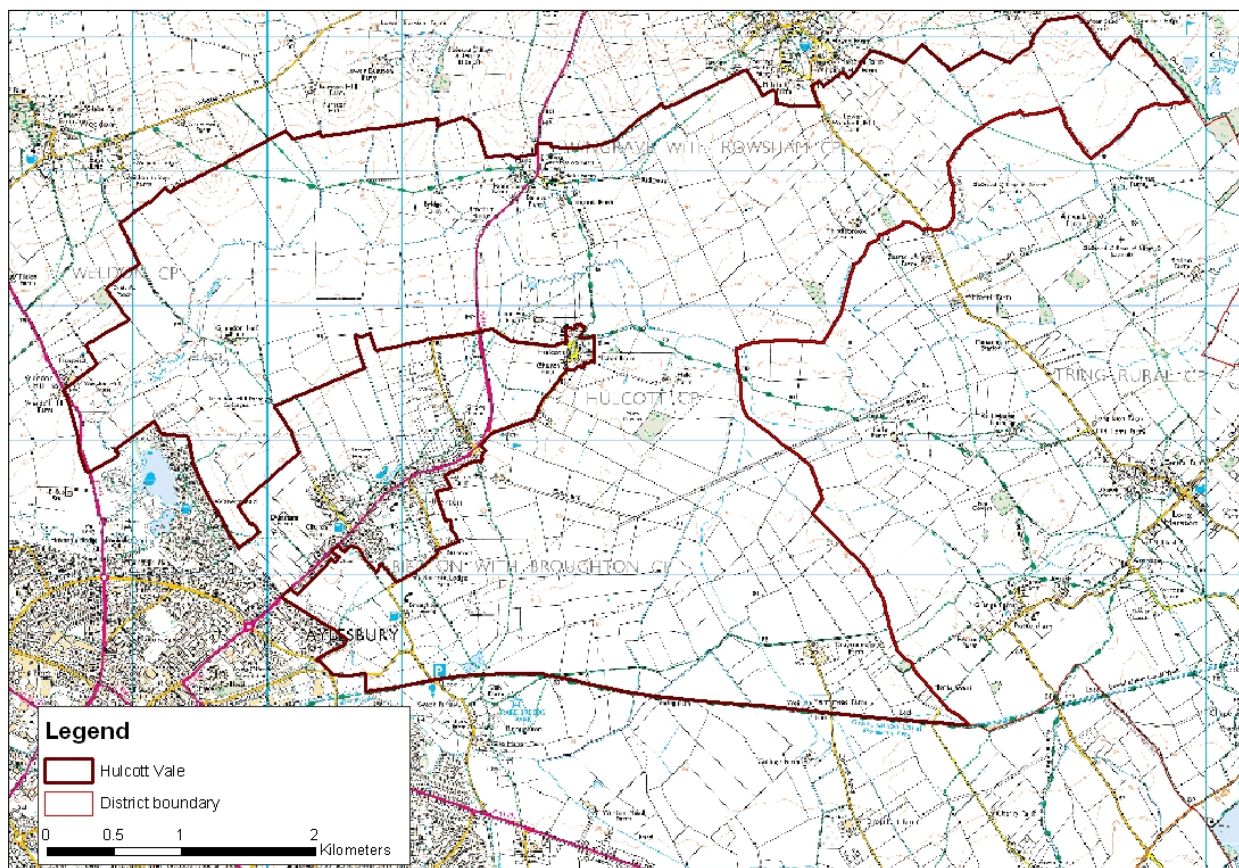
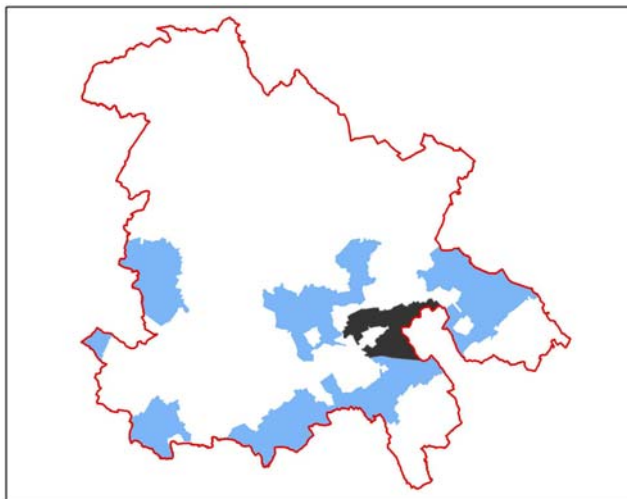


LCA 8.6 Hulcott Vale

Landscape Character Type: LCT 8 Vale



LCA 8.6 Hulcott Vale (LCT 8)

Key Characteristics

- Low lying vale landscape
- Meandering course of the River Thames and feeder streams
- Parliamentary enclosure fields
- Predominantly in pastoral use with smaller pockets of arable fields
- Dispersed farmsteads
- Low level of woodland cover
- Black poplars along watercourses and in hedgerows
- Tranquillity (eastern parts)

Distinctive Features

- Aylesbury Arm of Grand Union Canal
- 'Hump back' brick road bridge over canal
- Historic meadows
- Hulcott Fields (neutral grassland) noted for bird interest
- Numerous ponds

Intrusive Elements

- Suburban edge to Aylesbury/Bierton
- Extensive network of pylons crossing the area
- Electricity sub station south of Burcott
- Driving range at Bierton Golf Course
- Traffic on A413

Location The area lies north east of Aylesbury. It covers the Thames valley east of the A413 Buckingham Road and the low lying area drained by a network of streams that feed into the river from the higher ground to the north and the Chilterns scarp to the south east. The north eastern boundary is defined by the parkland at Mentmore. The county boundary lies approximately 1km east of Hulcott. The character area extends beyond this boundary into Hertfordshire¹. This description refers only to the area within Buckinghamshire.

Landscape character An extensive area of low lying vale landscape predominantly in pastoral use and notable for its range of aquatic habitats located to the north, east and south of the Bierton Ridge. With the exception of the A413 the area is devoid of infrastructure and access by Rights of Way is extremely limited, conveying a very remote character in the eastern parts best experienced from the towpath of the Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union Canal.

The river Thames runs across the Vale, between the Weedon Ridge to the north and the Bierton Ridge to the south. This part of the LCA has a more remote character and a greater sense of visual containment. It is linked to the rest of the vale landscape by the river corridor and the predominant characteristics of large open arable fields and clipped hedgerows. The area is overlooked in long distance views from the surrounding areas.

Geology Upper Greensand and Gault clay, to the east of Bierton and the Hulcott. The Thames valley north of Bierton is Portland Beds with alluvium.

Topography Low lying vale between the higher ground to the north and the Bierton Ridge, and then to the east of Hulcott opening out and wrapping around the southern side of the Bierton Ridge and extending southwards to the Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union Canal. The level of the river Thames is approximately 75m AOD where it passes under the A413. In the north the area extends to the lower slopes of the Quainton - Wing Hills. The undulating ground lies at a level approximately 100m AOD. The level at the canal boundary to the south varies little between 80-85m AOD.

Hydrology The hydrology of the area comprises the river Thames and tributaries, Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union Canal, ponds and the fishing lakes immediately to the north of the canal.

Land use and settlement The area is predominantly given over to pastoral use with local groups of fields used for arable production. There are groups of arable fields north of Bierton and randomly dispersed to the east of the area. Bierton Golf Course lies to northeast of Bierton, an artificial landscape of more recent vintage sitting within the existing field pattern. On the edge of Aylesbury at Burcott the character area funnels into a narrow neck of land currently in pastoral use. This area also supports a number of ponds and small lakes.

Although bounded to the west by Aylesbury, the village of Rowsham is the only settlement within the area, which is otherwise sparsely populated with occasional farmsteads. Rowsham is a cluster of farmsteads located above the flood plain and with access to the A418. A small residential development on the east side of the A418 has been incorporated into the village.

¹ See 'Boarscroft Vale' in the 'Dacorum Landscape Character Assessment' available at www.hertsdirect.org/infobase/docs/pdfstore/Area112.pdf

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The line of a disused railway (Aylesbury to west coast main line at Cheddington) can be seen south of Burcott. Evidence of the line has been removed but is identifiable where overgrown with scrub and other vegetation. A number of pylon lines cross the area congregating at a sub-station south east of Burcott Lodge Farm.

Tree cover There are very few blocks of woodland other than the covert south east of Hulcott and some scrubby parcels adjacent to the county boundary (west of the Wingrave to Long Marston road). Oak and ash predominate in hedgerows on drier ground with black poplar and some pollarded willow adjacent to streams and wet ditches.

Biodiversity The LCA contains a large area of BNSs and broad habitat types compared with much of the District.

Habitat is dominated by grassland a high proportion of which is neutral grassland, a broad habitat type. A substantial block of this grassland forms a large BNS known as Hulcott Fields - a low lying area of open landscape with often defunct hedges, which is noted for its bird interest. Neutral grassland is also present on the urban edge of Aylesbury to the north and south of Berton.

Arable is also present but other habitat includes further broad habitat types; small fragments of broadleaved woodland, many ponds, the river Thame and other watercourses and the small lakes and the Grand Union Canal on the southern boundary.

The Three Ponds Meadow CWS adjoining the urban edge of Aylesbury has range of terrestrial and aquatic habitats in a small area and corresponding floristic interest – hedgerow including black poplar, wet neutral grassland in the furrows, neutral grassland on the ridges, and marshy grassland around a pond. The site is known to be used by amphibians.

Historic environment Hulcott Vale has practically no pre 18th century landscape enclosure other than a collection of fields in the northeast which lie between the county boundary and the area to the west of Mentmore. There is a solitary area of fossilised strips north of Hulcott and well preserved flood meadows associated with the course of the River Thame. The majority of the area is designated as 18-19th century Parliamentary enclosure land. The golf course at Berton represents the single largest 20th century feature in this landscape.

The only settlement of significance is the village of Rowsham, which contains a handful of listed buildings. This area contains only a few archaeological sites that are known, apart from some isolated patches of ridge and furrow and Roman finds, the most significant is the site of the shrunken village of Broughton. The landscape also contains two features from the industrial age, the Aylesbury - Cheddington railway, opened in 1839 and dismantled in 1953, bisects the landscape. The southern boundary of the area is demarcated by the Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union canal. The latter has been restored to some degree and provides access and recreation of the area.

Designations

Archaeological Notification Areas – 10 No.

CWS – 1 No.

BNS – 8 No.

LCA 8.6 Hulcott Vale (LCT 8)



Remote low lying vale landscape in pastoral use north of College Road and extending beyond the district boundary.



The Vale seen from the Bierton Ridge above Grendon Hill Farm. The flatter vale lies between the Bierton Ridge and the Weedon Ridge to the north.

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Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis	
Condition	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Visual Detractors:	Some
Visual unity:	Coherent
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Coherent
Sensitivity	Low
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Insignificant
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Low
Guidelines	Enhance and Reinforce

Condition

Generally the landscape is in moderate condition. The pattern of hedgerows remains mainly intact, however, there are areas of arable intensification where hedges are gappy or removed. There is a distinctive low level of woodland cover. The pattern of elements remains coherent whilst there are some notable detracting features such as the concentration of pylons and overhead power lines. The cultural integrity is classified as variable; the landscape has good surviving parliamentary enclosure fields and meadows modified where traditional grazing is in decline in favour of increased cultivation. The landscape has a dearth of archaeological monuments and historic settlements. Ecological integrity is moderate due to strong connectivity and the areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance. The functional integrity of the

landscape is considered to be coherent.

Sensitivity

The landscape is distinctive in character and the historic associations are reasonably well expressed in the field patterns and drainage networks. Overall the sense of place is moderate. The topography is insignificant due to the flat character of the Vale which, combined with the intermittent nature of the tree cover and concentration of hedgerows gives a low degree of visibility. Overall the sensitivity of the landscape is low.



The Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union Canal forms the southern boundary of the LCA. The canal towpath is one of the few public viewpoints to the Hulcott Fields LCA seen here to the right.

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Landscape Guidelines Enhance and Reinforce

Guidelines for the Hulcott Vale are as follows:

- Enhance the original field pattern by supporting initiatives for management and re-planting of hedgerows and infilling gaps.
- Encourage replacement planting of hedgerow trees.
- Create new blocks of woodland to enhance the landscape structure and screen suburban edges and road corridors.
- Maintain and improve the condition of existing hedgerows through traditional cutting regimes.
- Maintain the existing extent of Hulcott Fields and connectivity to other fragments of neutral grassland.
- Encourage the development of native vegetation including black poplar, along streams and other watercourses.
- Encourage the management of the area's rich variety of different aquatic habitats and seek opportunities to extend and interconnect these habitats.
- Encourage the conservation and interpretation of the areas rich historic environment including that of the canal.
- Promote the canal as a route for non car-based recreation from Aylesbury. The aim should be to make it accessible to the less mobile.
- Promote the retention of the remote quality of parts of the area.
- Ensure that views across the area to surrounding higher ground are retained.



Hump back brick bridges and canal features are characteristic of the southern boundary of the LCA.