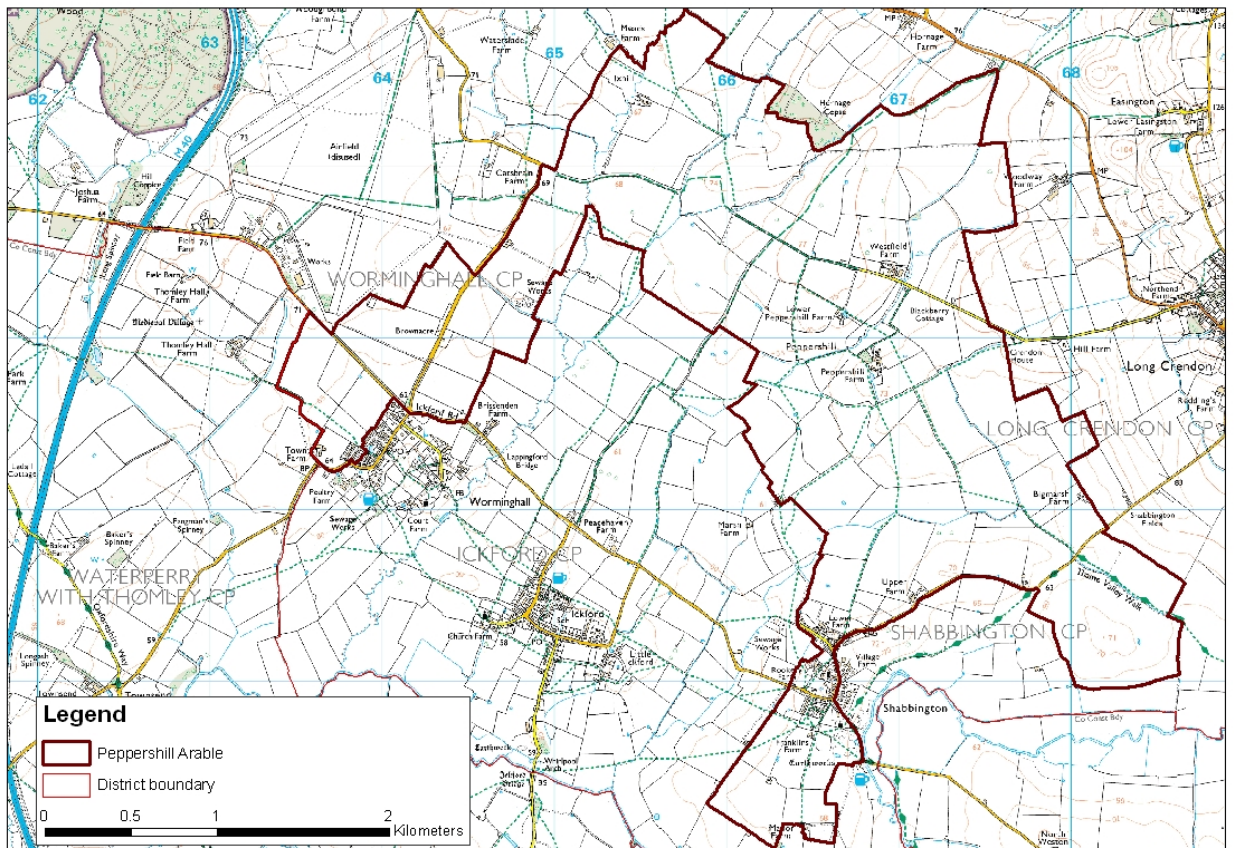
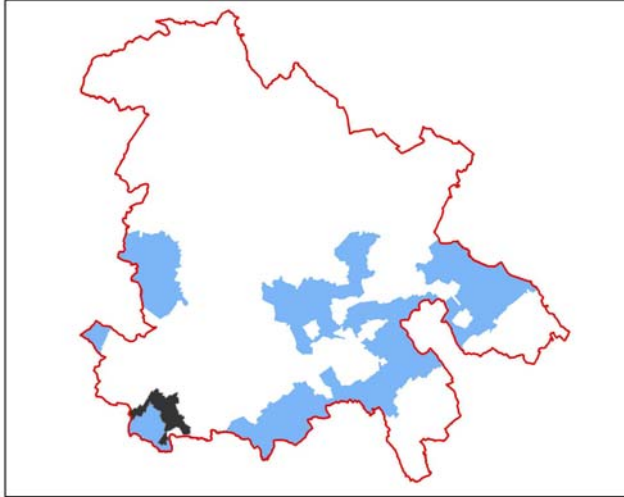


LCA 8.11 Peppershill Arable

Landscape Character Type: LCT 8 Vale



LCA 8.11 Peppershill Arable (LCT 8)

Key Characteristics

- Gently sloping landform
- Good hedgerow pattern
- Predominantly arable
- Low density of woodland cover
- Low settlement density
Predominantly pre 18th century enclosure

Distinctive Features

- Small arable fields with strong hedges
- Ponds in fields with some trees
- Historic settlement
- Bridleways with high hedges either side
- Hedgerow trees
- Remote character in centre of area

Intrusive Elements

- Prairie farming

Location Close to the District's western boundary to the west of Long Crendon.

Landscape character An area of gently sloping ground, which is notable for being about three quarters arable, a much higher proportion than in the surrounding areas. The historic predominantly pre 18th century field pattern remains and the hedgerows are generally strong. There are some notable small fields of arable with strong hedgerows close to Peppershill Farm in the centre of the area. There is very limited road access with a large part of the centre having no through road access, this has led to a remote and hidden quality to the centre. This is strengthened by the generally strong hedgerow pattern. The area has a good network of bridleways and footpaths. Hedgerows often limit views; there are some good short distance views along tree-lined bridleways. An area of variable landscape quality which is highest where there are small fields with good hedgerows and becomes open and bland where there are large arable fields or prairie farming.

Geology A complex area which can be broadly divided into three sections. limestone marl in the west, Kimmeridge clays in the east and calcareous mudstones over the central section. The whole area is eroded by streams draining towards the Thames and which have left deposits of alluvium in the valley bottoms.

Topography A gently sloping landform above the river Thames the land tends to be highest in the centre and the north and slopes down towards the Thames in the south. The elevation ranges between about 60m - 75m AOD.

Hydrology Several streams running off the slightly higher ground towards the river Thames that, drains the area. The streams or ditches are generally fairly straight and follow field boundaries. Ponds are a frequent feature in many of the fields.

Land use and settlement Approximately three quarters of this area is arable with the majority of the rest of the area being grassland. The majority of the arable farming is with a good hedgerow pattern although there are areas of prairie farming. There is a cluster of farms at Peppershill but no village except in the far south western corner where Shabbington is quite busy with traffic but retains its historic layout and numerous vernacular buildings. The church is located on the edge of the village above the meandering River Thames.

Tree cover The area has a low level of woodland cover. The tree cover in hedgerows is very variable with some notably strong tree lines particularly around Peppershill and Westfield Farm.

Biodiversity As its name suggests, the area is dominated by arable habitat. However, blocks of grassland are present, mainly in the south and north. Some of the grassland in the south is neutral - a broad habitat type, and subject of a BNS, but most is improved. Ponds are scattered throughout.

Connectivity is provided by the hedgerow network which is often enhanced by the adjacent streams and ditches.

The only CWS is at Hornage Copse and Meadow south-west of Chilton and in part within LCA 7.5 Bernwood Forest. The copse, the two adjacent

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meadows by a parish boundary and an adjacent stream form an interesting habitat assemblage. The westerly field supports a varied damp sedge and rush flora, the other is a mix of typical neutral meadow flora. The copse contains oak with a mix of beech and ash, and some conifer.

Historic environment The area 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. The landscape that survives today is made up of different field patterns including contains small linear fields adjacent to a stream that are thought to be meadows of pre 18th century origin. Although the field pattern is primarily that of the pre 18th century landscape with some Parliamentary enclosure. About a tenth of the area is later enclosure and some prairie farming.

There is only one notable settlement that of the village of Shabbington, although there are a number of isolated farmsteads found throughout the area. There are few archaeological sites in the landscape but there are isolated examples of ridge and furrow earthworks with more concentrated areas around the village of Shabbington which contains the earthworks of a shrunken village. There some evidence of Iron Age/ Roman activity south of Upper Peppershill farm while it is believed that a Dorchester on Thames - Fleet Marston Roman road runs past the south eastern end of the area.

The landscape has a good amenity value, with several routes promoted in the Bernwood Jubilee Way guides.

Designations

Archaeological Notification Areas –10 No.

CWS – 1 No.

BNS – 3 No.

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The landscape character of this area is variable and often enclosed by high hedgerows - this more open view looks out towards Brill Hill.



Close to Peppershill Farm there are some notable small fields of arable with strong hedgerows.

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Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis	
Condition	Good
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Visual detractors:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Coherent
Sensitivity	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate
Guidelines	Conserve and Reinforce

Condition

This landscape is generally considered to be in good condition. Although the majority of the land use is arable historic hedgerow pattern is retained in most of the area but where hedgerows have been lost it does dramatically change its landscape character. It has little in the way of visual detractors, the lack of roads being a feature of much of the area. The combination of a coherent pattern of elements and no visual detractors combine to produce a generally unified landscape. The cultural integrity of the area is variable largely relating to the historic field pattern and the bridleways with strong hedgerows on either side. The condition of hedgerows is generally good but weaker close to areas of prairie farming. Ecological integrity is moderate, because although connectivity is good the areas of designated sites and habitats of District

significance are low compared to other areas. The functional integrity is therefore considered to be coherent.

Sensitivity

The landscape has a distinct character and good sense of historic continuity from the historic hedgerow pattern and bridleways. Overall the area is considered to have a moderate sense of place. The landform is apparent but not a dominant part of the landscape character. The tree cover is considered to be intermittent reflecting the low level of woodland cover but some areas with good hedgerow trees. This gives a moderate level of visibility. Overall the sensitivity of the landscape is considered to be moderate.



The area is crossed by a good network of footpaths and bridleways. These are often bounded by high hedgerows

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Landscape Guidelines Conserve and Reinforce

The landscape guidelines for Peppershill Arable are as follows:

- Maintain the condition and extent of existing hedgerows through traditional cutting regimes.
- Promote the conservation and management of the hedgerows made up of strong lines of trees, and promote additional hedgerow tree planting where there are fewer trees.
- Close to watercourses promote the use of permanent pasture, with low stocking density and flooding regimes to encourage biodiversity and landscape enhancement.
- Maintain the condition and extent of unimproved and semi-improved grassland. Encourage good management practices.
- Maintain connectivity of habitats.
- Encourage the conservation and management of small traditional agricultural buildings.
- Encourage the restoration of ponds and the area around them aiming to establish a good diversity of habitats from open water to mature trees.
- Encourage the establishment of new ponds and associated planting to promote biodiversity.
- Encourage the creation of buffer zones of semi-natural vegetation around ponds in arable fields and where possible create grassland links between ponds and surrounding hedgerows to reduce fragmentation and encourage biodiversity.
- Encourage the preservation of the remote character of the centre of the area.