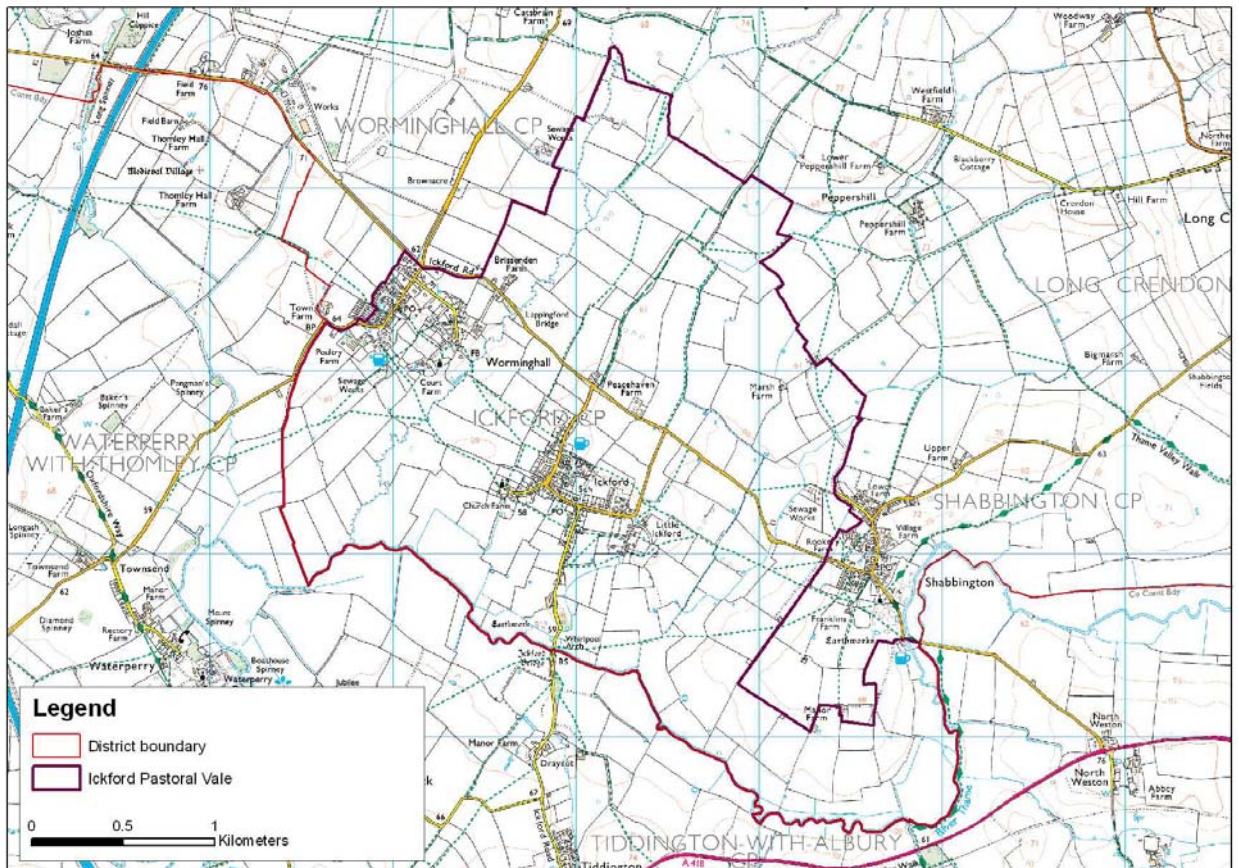
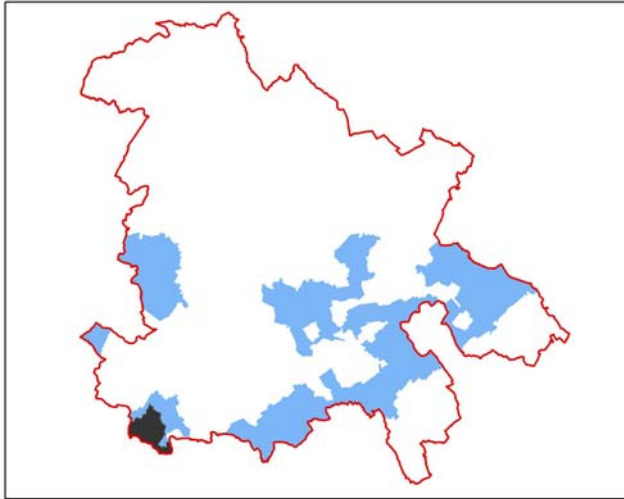


LCA 8.12 Ickford Pastoral Vale

Landscape Character Type: LCT 8 Vale



LCA 8.12 Ickford Pastoral Vale (LCT 8)

Key Characteristics

- Low level landscape
- Small streams and ditches
- Predominantly flat
- Predominantly pastoral
- No woodland
- Moderate density of settlement
- Ridge and furrow
- Meadows along the River Thames

Distinctive Features

- Meandering streams
- River Thames
- Stone bridges
- Willow trees pollarded and collapsed
- Views between villages
- Archaeological earthworks at Ickford and Worminghall
- Large area of neutral grassland in west

Location On the District's south western boundary with Oxfordshire, west of the town of Thame. The boundary is created by the meandering course of the river Thames.

Landscape character Flat or gently sloping, vale landscape. It is predominantly pastoral with small fields and good hedgerows. There is little woodland and the tree cover is variable being strongest close to settlements and watercourses. The villages of Ickford and Worminghall have retained a strong historic character. Several footpaths link them. The villages' small churches are at their edges and the focal point of views between villages. The vernacular buildings in both villages are a feature of the area, as are the small stone bridges across the Thames on the southern boundary. The small fields of pasture with good hedgerows across the gently sloping landform unify the area. The hedgerows are generally in good condition although there are small areas of poor or absent hedgerows. The greatest visual interest tends to exist close to the settlement or watercourses.

Geology Narrow bands of limestone marls in the west and Kimmeridge clay in the southeast. The wide open valley between these two bands of higher ground is in-filled with deposits of alluvium and river terrace materials.

Topography Gently sloping vale landscape, which has slightly higher ground on northern, eastern and southern boundaries and drains towards the River Thames on the south western side. There is a low flat central area. The slightly higher land between the meandering watercourses tends to be where the settlement is. The elevation ranges from around 60 to 70m AOD.

Hydrology Several tributary streams feed into the Thames as it meanders along the southern boundary. The majority of the watercourses meander significantly, but some smaller tributaries seem to have been straightened to ditches beside hedges. Ponds are a feature of the area.

Land use and settlement This is a predominantly pastoral landscape. With small or medium sized fields with good hedgerows. However on the northern edge of the area there are several arable fields and others on slightly more sloping ground to the south of Shabbington. There are also small areas of horticulture. In some places the hedgerows are gappy or have been replaced by post and wire fencing. The area feels quite well settled with two villages and narrow but sometimes busy lanes. The villages have large numbers of vernacular building, thatched cottages and streams running beside narrow lanes.

Tree cover The area has a very low level of woodland in a few small-scattered blocks some of which are coniferous. The tree cover in hedgerows is variable being strongest close to the villages and watercourses. There are a number of large willows along the watercourses some of been pollarded several have collapsed.

Biodiversity The habitat of this area is dominated by grassland throughout, although a lot of arable land is also present. Most of the grassland is improved; however a large area of neutral grassland - a broad habitat type is present in the west and subject to BNS designation.

Habitat diversity is provided by the hedgerows and a few small fragments of broad habitat types; very small areas of woodland predominantly in the far north and far south; standing water in ponds fairly evenly distributed; and the

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running water of the tributaries of the river Thames.

Historic environment This area was once within the core area of the medieval hunting forest of Bernwood. The landscape features of historic interest include fields that appear to retain the shape of pre 18th century meadow adjacent to the River Thames and the historic settlements and bridges. The majority of the area retains in the hedgerow pattern the layout of pre 18th century enclosure most of which is regular. There are small areas of later enclosure and new development adjacent to the historic settlements.

The dominant settlements in this area are the villages of Ickford and Worminghall, they are both examples of polyfocal settlements, (having more than one centre). Ickford has a Conservation Area.

The dominant archaeological characteristic is the preservation of ridge and furrow, which covers 70% of the landscape. The area has some other notable archaeological sites, at Worminghall surrounding the church and court farm is a large complex of earthworks representing house platforms and hollow ways, most of which are quite pronounced. There is also deserted settlement to the south of Ickford village but not discernable as an earthwork. Also of note to the south east of Ickford near Whirlpool Farm are what is thought to be the remains of Civil War earthworks.

Ickford Bridge is 16th century both listed (grade II) and a scheduled ancient monument There has been a bridge at this location since 1237 when Walter de Burgh was ordered to provide a keeper of Ickford Bridge with an oak from the royal forest for repairs.

Designations

Conservation Areas at Ickford (4)

Scheduled ancient Monument – Ickford Bridge

Archaeological Notification Areas – 23 No.

BNS – 1 No.

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The long south-western boundary of the area formed by the meandering route of the river Thames that is also the county boundary. Pollarded willows are a feature of the riverbank.



The pastoral fields between Ickford and Worminghall have a good network of footpaths and strong historic associations with views to the churches and ridge and furrow in the fields, which retain a good hedgerow pattern.

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Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis		Condition
Condition	Very good	Generally the landscape is in very good condition. The small fields of pasture with good hedgerows across the gently sloping landform unify the area. There are no visual detractors of any significance. The unified landscape with little visual intrusion combines to give a strongly unified landscape. The cultural integrity is considered to be good based on the historic villages, good field pattern, extensive survival of open field ridge and furrow. There are also features such as stone bridges and narrow lanes this integrity is weaker where hedgerows are poor or lost. 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. Overall the area is assessed to have a strong functional integrity.
Pattern of elements:	Unified	
Visual detractors:	Few	
Visual unity:	Strongly unified	
Cultural integrity:	Good	
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	
Functional integrity:	Strong	
Sensitivity	Moderate	
Distinctiveness:	Distinct	
Continuity:	Historic	
Sense of place:	Moderate	
Landform:	Apparent	
Tree cover:	Intermittent	
Visibility:	Moderate	
Guidelines	Conserve and Reinforce	

Sensitivity

This area is considered to have a distinctive landscape character and a historic sense of continuity. This combines to give the area a moderate sense of place. The gently sloping landform is considered to be apparent in that the very gently sloping character of the landform is a distinctive feature of the area the tree cover is considered to be intermittent as there is a very low level of woodland cover and tree cover along hedgerows is variable giving a moderate level of visibility. The combination of a moderate landscape character and a moderate level of visibility combine to produce an area with a moderate level of sensitivity.



The narrow lanes and stone bridges in the Thame floodplain give a good sense of historic continuity

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Landscape Guidelines Conserve and Reinforce

The landscape guidelines for Ickford Pastoral Vale are as follows:

- Maintain and improve the condition of existing hedgerows through traditional cutting regimes.
- Encourage the establishment of new hedgerow trees to improve the age structure.
- 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.
- Maintain the condition and extent of neutral, unimproved and semi-improved grassland. Encourage good management practices.
- 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.
- Identify key vies from publicly accessible locations and promote their conservation and enhancement.
- Encourage the preservation of historic earthworks and ridge and furrow by maintaining a continuous grass sward.



Both Ickford Church and Worminghall church are key features in views between the two villages.