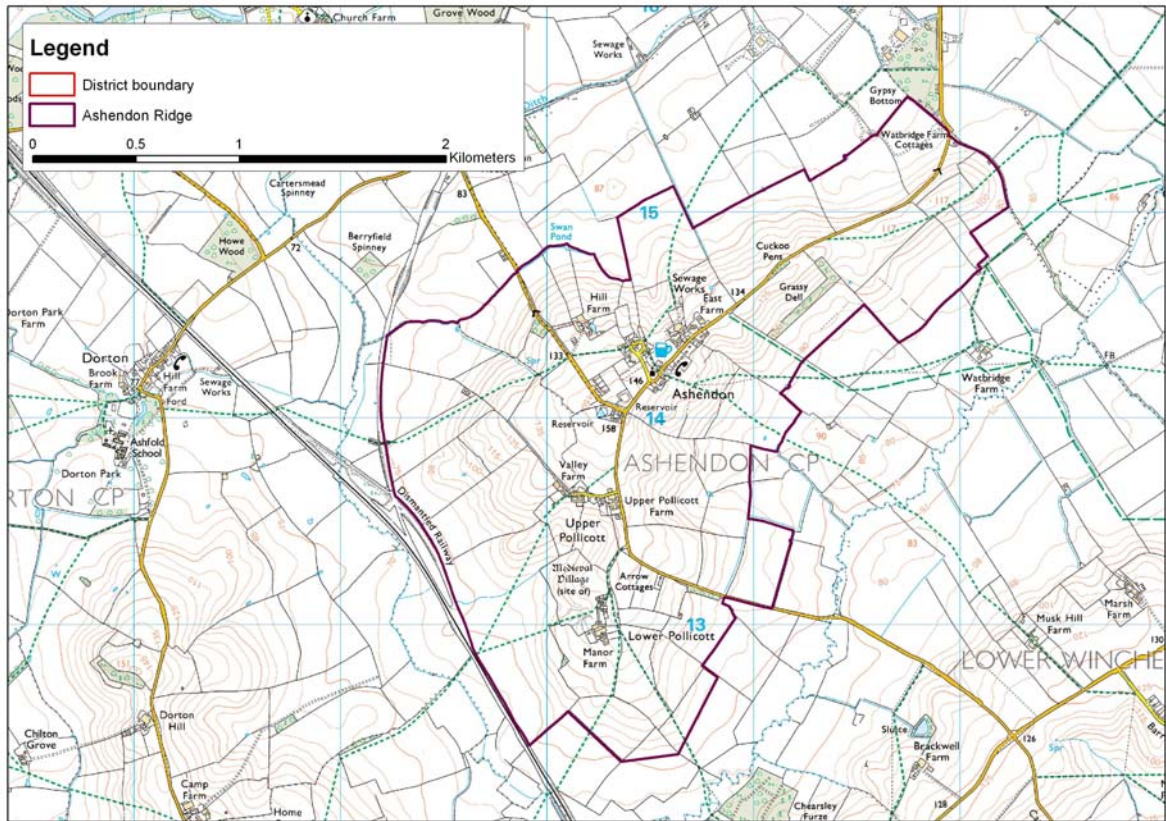
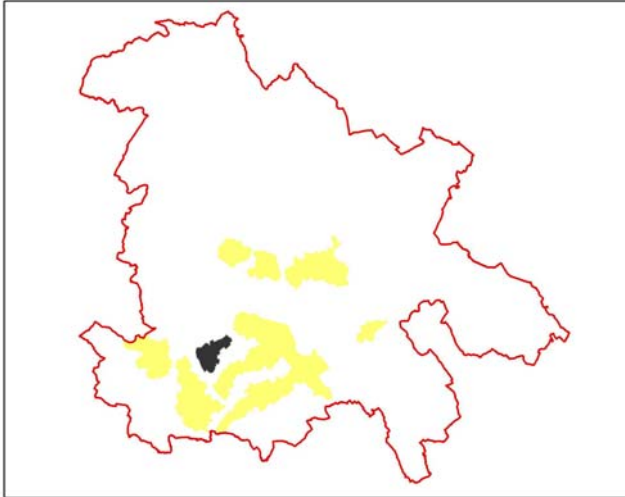


LCA 9.6 Ashendon Ridge

Landscape Character Type: LCT 9 Low Hills and Ridges



## LCA 9.6 Ashendon Ridge (LCT 9)

### Key Characteristics

- Small well defined ridge
- Narrow ridge top
- Predominantly pastoral
- Very little woodland cover
- Historic settlement on ridge top
- Early enclosure pattern remains
- Good views in all direction
- Open character
- Ridge and Furrow

### Distinctive Features

- Grazing on steep slopes
- Narrow road over ridge top
- Small shelterbelts
- Pond with trees on sloping ground
- Vernacular buildings
- Church on top of ridge
- Poor gappy hedges
- Limestone walls and buildings
- Settlement earthworks at Lower Pollicott

### Intrusive Elements

- Small concrete reservoirs on ridge top

**Location** Ashendon ridge is located to the west of Aylesbury north of the River Thames and to the south of the A41.

**Landscape character** A small and distinct ridge landform with road and settlement along its ridgeline. It is generally an open pastoral landscape with low hedges and dramatic views out in all directions. The historic settlements of Ashendon and Upper and Lower Pollicott add visual interest to the top of the ridge. The buildings are predominantly brick or limestone. Although the historic landscape pattern remains largely intact the condition of many of the hedgerows is poor, with post and wire fencing filling gaps.

**Geology** The Ashendon Ridge is made up of Kimmeridge Clay overlain by layers of Portland and Purbeck limestones capped by Whitchurch sand.

**Topography** Small ridge with steep sides and a narrow undulating top. The ridge runs roughly from northeast to south in direction. The lowest ground is around 90m and the highest 160m AOD.

**Hydrology** The ridge has little in the way of watercourses although the heads of two streams cut into the western side. There is a spring at the head of one of the streams. There is also a pond in a field or pasture close to the ridge top on the eastern side.

**Land use and settlement** This is a predominantly grassland landscape with cows and sheep grazing the steep ridge sides being a prominent feature of the area. The hedgerow pattern remains largely intact but in places the hedgerows are low and fragmented. The settlements of Ashendon and Upper and Lower Pollicott occupy the narrow ridge top. The settlements retain a strong historic character and have little new development. The houses are generally either brick or limestone.

**Tree cover** The level of tree cover is very low with a few small woodland blocks or shelterbelts. Tree cover within hedgerows is very variable and generally strongest close to the village and on the western end. There is a notable lack of trees within hedgerows on the northern edge of the ridge although there are more trees in the hedgerows adjacent to the road.

**Biodiversity** The area is dominated by grassland; although mostly improved there are two blocks of unimproved pasture present, one in the north and one in the west, and there is an area of neutral grassland in the southwest. This is the main area of broad habitat type but there is also a scattering of small broadleaved woodland parcels. Some arable habitat is found in the west and there are a few ponds providing very localised aquatic habitat. Connectivity between habitats is locally variable due to the condition of the hedgerows and the lack of streamlines.

**Historic environment** The landscape was part of Bernwood Forest when was at its largest extent under the reign of Henry II. Although today forests are synonymous with woodland, this part of Bernwood has historically been an open landscape of arable or pasture. The historic landscape interest includes small areas of fossilised strips, pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosure and parliamentary enclosure with good surviving hedgerow pattern along the ridge. However, elsewhere many of these hedgerows are in poor condition. There are very small areas of recent woodland, settlement and enclosure.

The settlement pattern of the area is dispersed with the focus upon the village of Ashendon, which contains a number of fine listed buildings

## LCA 9.6 Ashendon Ridge (LCT 9)

including St Mary's church, parts of which date to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The built heritage of Ashendon has afforded its designated as a conservation area. The area also contains the two hamlets of Upper and Lower Pollicott, the settlement of Lower Pollicott was once a more substantial village with its own separate manor before it was abandoned in the medieval period.

This reduction in the village of Pollicott is reflected in the survival of archaeological earthworks; the remains, house platforms, hollow-ways can be seen around Pollicott Farm, an earlier version of which was probably the manor house. The most prominent archaeological feature in the landscape is the presence of ridge and furrow earthworks, are found to the south and east of the area but are among the finest surviving examples of their type in England. The landscape is also bordered on the western side by the Grendon Underwood Ashendon railway, built as a branch from the Great Central Railway in the early 20th century but now mostly dismantled.

### ***Designations***

Conservation Areas at Ashendon (2)

Archaeological Notification Areas – 8 No.

BNS – 2 No.

## LCA 9.6 Ashendon Ridge (LCT 9)



Pasture and open views are key characteristics of this area. The wooded hills in the background are part of the Waddesdon Estate.



View from the top of the hill to the south of Ashendon village. The small pond within a field of pasture is used by grazing animals.

## LCA 9.6 Ashendon Ridge (LCT 9)

### Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Good</b>
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Visual detractors:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Good
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Functional integrity:	Coherent

<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>High</b>
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

<b>Guidelines</b>	<b>Conserve</b>
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### Condition

Generally the condition of the landscape is considered to be good. There is a coherent hedgerow pattern, which is largely intact and very little in the way of visual detractors. The cultural integrity is considered to be good although some hedgerows appear to be in fairly poor condition, the landscape contains a strong archaeological presence in the form of ridge and furrow and the earthworks of the former village of Pollicott. Ecological integrity is weak due as the areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance are limited. Overall the functional integrity is considered to be coherent.

### Sensitivity

The area has a distinct character with strong historic associations based largely on the historic field pattern and the settlements along the top of the ridge. This gives the area a moderate sense of place overall. The landform is a dominant element in the landscape character of the area. The tree cover is intermittent as there is little in the way of woodland and trees within hedgerows are generally fairly widely spaced. This combination of a dominant landform and intermittent tree cover combine to produce a landscape of high visibility. Overall the moderate strength of character and the high level of visibility combine to create a landscape of high sensitivity.



The village of Ashendon follows the flatter ground along the top of the ridge.

## LCA 9.6 Ashendon Ridge (LCT 9)

### Landscape Guidelines Conserve

The landscape guidelines for Ashendon Ridge are as follows:

- Maintain and improve the condition of existing hedgerows through traditional cutting regimes and the promotion of restoring gaps with indigenous species protected from grazing.
- Promote the establishment of new hedgerow trees to improve the age diversity.
- Maintain and improve connectivity of these grasslands to similar habitats.
- Maintain the condition and extent of neutral, unimproved and semi-improved grassland and encourage good management practices.
- Conserve and enhance the distinctive character of settlements along the ridge top.
- Encourage all new housing and alterations to existing housing to be consistent in the use of locally traditional materials and design to reflect the traditional character of the area.
- Retain strong rural character of minor roads by minimising signage and kerbing.
- Encourage the management and restoration of ponds and associated vegetation on banks to increase the diversity of habitats.
- Identify key viewpoints from publicly accessible locations and promote the management and enhancement of these views.
- Encourage the preservation of historic earthworks and ridge and furrow by maintaining a continuous grass sward.



Ashendon church is on the highest ground on top of the ridge the light limestone is a characteristic feature of the area.