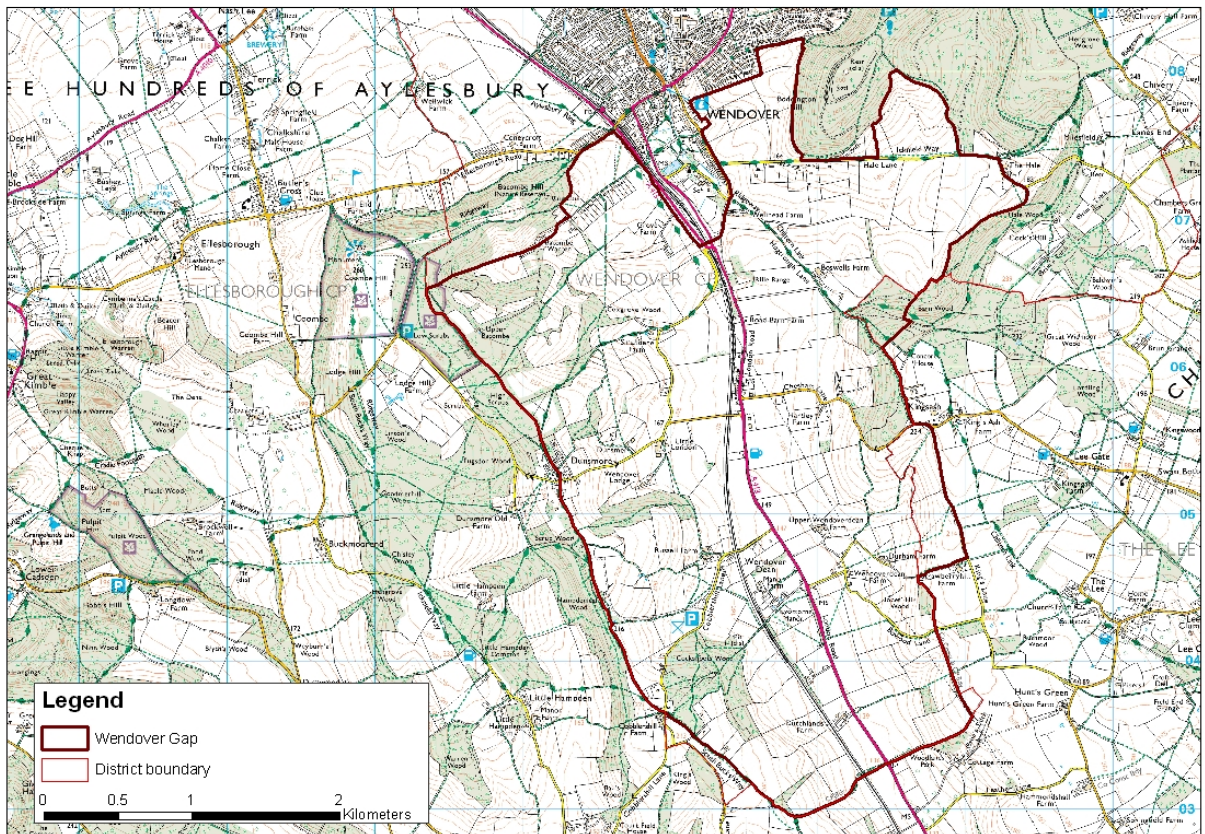
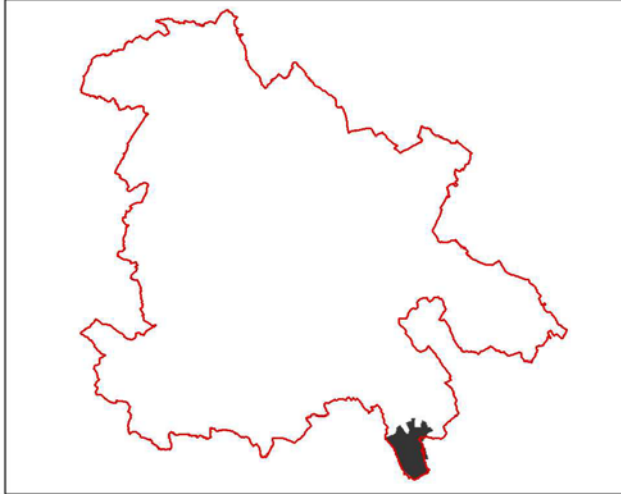


LCA 13.1 Wendover Gap

Landscape Character Type: LCT 13 Chalk Valleys



LCA 13.1 Wendover Gap (LCT 13)

Key Characteristics

- Flat valley bottom with steep sides
- Dry valley
- Extensive woodland cover on valley sides
- Large arable fields in valley bottom
- Irregular shaped fields on valley slopes

Distinctive Features

- Beech hangers on steeper slopes
- Smaller irregular shaped fields enclosed by woodland
- Winding sunken lanes climbing up valley side
- Calcareous grassland

Intrusive Elements

- Traffic on A413
- Railway on embankment and associated noise
- Pylon line
- Ribbon development (commercial units)

Location The Wendover Gap lies to the south of Wendover and extends southwards beyond the District boundary. The eastern and western boundaries of the Wendover Gap conform broadly with the boundary of the District.

Landscape character The area contains a well defined steep sided and open valley cutting through the chalk scarp and emphasised by woodland cover on the upper valley slopes.

Large arable fields enclosed by clipped hedges dominate on the lower valley slopes within a more open landscape. On the upper slopes the field pattern becomes irregular both in terms of scale and pattern.

Geology The valley is cut into the middle chalk and above it the upper chalk is capped with clay-with-flints. In the valley bottom the chalk is overlain by gravel deposits.

Topography The valley drains from north to south, from circa 140m AOD at Wendover falling gradually to 135m AOD at the district boundary. The valley sides slope more steeply in the north where the scarp is highest being at a level of approximately 250m AOD. To the south the steepness of the valley sides diminishes and the valley slopes merge into the gentler more rolling landform of the Chilterns 'dip slope'. Dunsmore on the western valley flank is at a level of approximately 230m AOD whilst Kingsash on the eastern valley side is at the slightly lower level of 225m AOD.

Hydrology The valley is characteristically a dry valley. Occasional ponds are to be found at farmsteads.

Land use and settlement The land use is principally arable production on the lower slopes with smaller paddocks on the steeper upper slopes interspersed with belts of tree cover. The upper slopes also have a high proportion of woodland managed for game cover.

The valley is an important communication corridor connecting the settlements of the Aylesbury Vale with the south of the county. The Aylesbury to London Railway and the A413 London Road follow the valley floor. The valley also contains a high voltage pylon line in the valley bottom to the north but on the east valley side further south.

The area is sparsely settled. There is some ribbon development, both domestic and commercial, along the valley bottom adjacent to the A413. Dispersed farmsteads occur over both valley sides. A number of narrow, winding lanes some of which are sunken climb up the valley sides.

Tree cover Woodland is predominantly deciduous but with occasional stands of conifer or mixed woodland. Stands of beech referred to as 'hangers' occur on the steepest slopes. Around Bacombe Warren there are distinctive narrow belts of mature woodland dropping down the valley side in a free flowing organic pattern. A number of woodlands are ancient, eg Coxgrove Wood, Mings Wood, Sermons Wood and Cockshoots Wood; they are all located on the west slopes and are relatively small but the latter is the largest.

Biodiversity The habitat mix of the area comprises grassland, arable and broadleaved woodland, although the woodland which mainly falls into the broad habitat type broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland, is more dominant

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in the west. Within the Cockshoots Wood CWS the priority habitat types of lowland mixed deciduous woodland and wet woodland occur in close proximity.

The grassland is mostly improved, although some calcareous pasture a further broad habitat type is present in the north whilst some unimproved grassland is located centrally. Aquatic habitats are limited to small areas of standing water.

The area adjoins LCAs having a high biodiversity interest. Habitat connectivity is good both within the LCA and with these adjoining areas, notably the woodland to the west.

Historic environment The valley can be broadly divided between its eastern and western flanks. To the west there are a number of parcels of ancient semi-natural woodland, between these are numerous parcels of pre 18th century irregular enclosure often characterised by the way that they run down the slopes of the valley. There is also a significant concentration of irregular enclosures at the head of the smaller side valley that connects Wendover to the Hale. At the southern end is a large area of Assarts and the small parkland at Mayortorne Manor.

There are no historic buildings of note in this area, and archaeologically there are few monuments, the exception being the discovery of Roman finds to the north east. Views from Boddington Hillfort over this area are important to the monument's setting.

The valley is an important communications corridor and the valley bottom is occupied by the Aylesbury to London Railway which was opened in 1862 and the A413 London Road which was formerly a turnpike road established in 1751. The road is an important boundary feature as most of the lower slopes of the valley to the east of the road are 18-19th century parliamentary enclosures. There are also many small parcels of 18-19th century woodland dispersed over the whole area.

Designations

Chilterns AONB
Archaeological Notification Areas – 2 No.
CWS – 1 No.
BNS – 9 No.

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Gently rolling landform on the western valley edge.



Footpath from Bacombe Lane rising up the valley side to the wooded slopes following the valley crest.

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Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

Condition	Good
Pattern of elements:	Unified
Visual detractors:	Some
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Coherent

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

Guidelines	Conserve
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Condition

The condition of the landscape is considered to be good. The pattern of field parcels and woodland cover on the upper slopes is a distinctive feature of the area. The pattern dissipates along the valley bottom where the fields are large and follow a more regular rectangular pattern. The general pattern of elements is assessed as being unified but with some detracting features such as the traffic on the A413 corridor, the railway on embankment and the line of pylons. The cultural integrity is variable over the area as a whole. Ecological integrity is moderate due to strong connectivity and the areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance compared to other parts of the District. Overall the functional integrity is coherent.

Sensitivity

The area overall has a moderate sense of place. The distinctiveness of the upper slopes is somewhat diluted by the openness of the valley bottom. There are longer views across the valley from the higher slopes sometimes framed by woodland cover. The overall degree of sensitivity is high but this is lower in the valley bottom where there is notably less tree cover and the landform becomes a less dominant feature.



Wooded western valley slopes seen from the east side of the valley.

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Landscape Guidelines Conserve

Guidelines for the Wendover Gap are as follows:

- Conserve the balance between existing agricultural use and woodland cover.
- Encourage management of existing woodland cover to conserve the pattern and quality of existing woodland.
- Preserve the distinctive character of sunken winding lanes.
- Encourage the replanting of native hedgerows to fill gaps and replace losses.
- Preserve the low density of dispersed settlement over the upper valley slopes.
- Conserve the distinctive character of individual buildings.
- Maintain the condition and extent of calcareous, unimproved and semi-improved grassland. Encourage good management practices.
- Identify key viewpoints from publicly accessible locations and promote the management and enhancement of these viewpoints.



Looking south - the pylons follow the valley bottom.