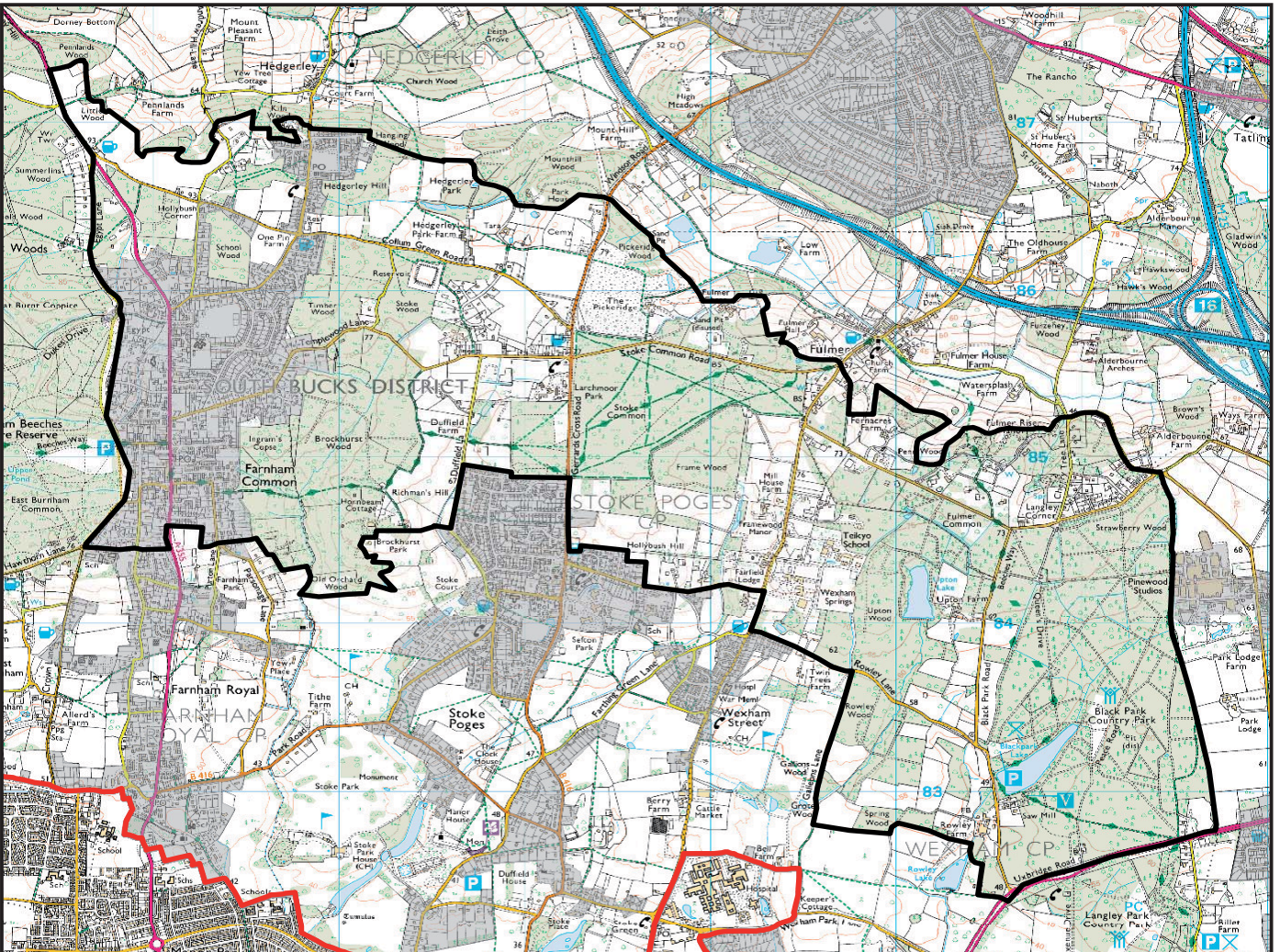
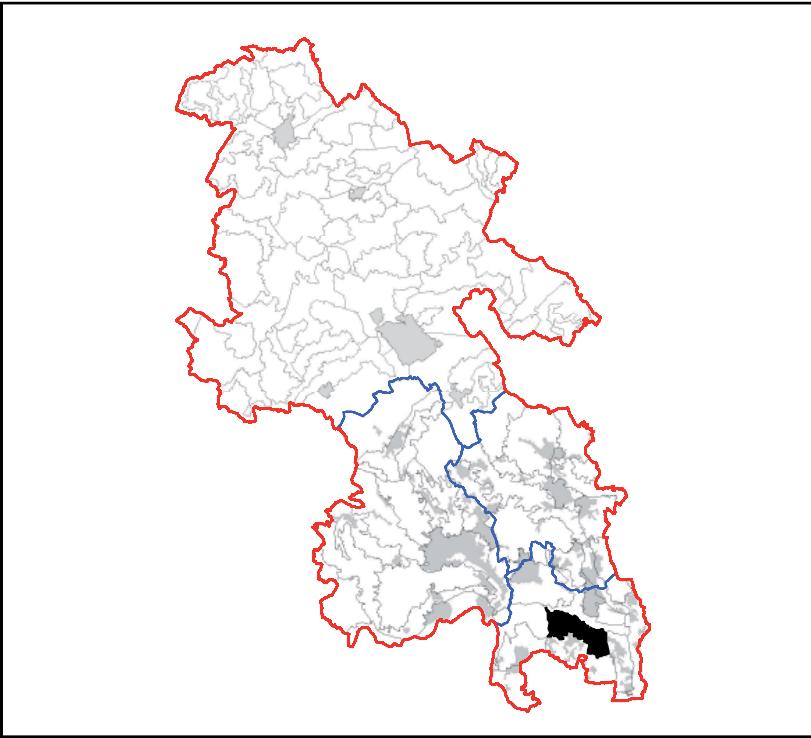


# LCA 24.2 FARNHAM AND STOKE COMMON WOODED TERRACE





## LCA 24.2 FARNHAM & STOKE COMMON WOODED TERRACE

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A slightly undulating terrace landform, formed on river terrace deposits, and occupying higher ground between the surrounding landscape types. It lies above the Alder Bourne Valley to the north and the lowland fringe of the Thames to the south.
- Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged loamy/clayey soils support small scale mixed farmland (rough grazing, pasture and paddock), large tracts of woodland and wooded commons, dominated by beech and birch, and significant areas of historical vegetation coverage, such as heathland.
- Strong ecological importance, with extensive woodland cover and heathland, semi-natural grassland and a network of hedgerows and scrubby field boundaries. Several nationally recognised areas of ecological importance (e.g. Stoke Common SSSI).
- There is a dispersed settlement pattern across the landscape, ranging from the village of Farnham Common, smaller nucleated settlements and isolated farmsteads. Settlement character is largely modern.
- An accessible and relatively permeable landscape, with comprehensive road and footpath network, allowing access to much of the landscape.
- Views often restricted by woodland and settlement, despite the relatively flat landform which prevails.
- Busy roads and modern settlement create local noise and visual intrusion. However away from this, extensive woodland, wooded commons and heathland, provide high levels of rural naturalness and a strong sense of tranquillity.
- A diverse landscape, which provides varying, levels of enclosure and openness.
- The mosaic of land cover and land use creates a visually busy landscape, which is exaggerated around settlement areas. However, repetition of woodland helps to integrate and unify disparate elements, creating a more legible landscape.
- Recreational opportunities, include, a network of footpaths and bridleways, woodland areas and Country Parks, such as Black Park.



### DESCRIPTION

**Location and Boundaries:** *Farnham & Stoke Common Wooded Terrace* is situated entirely within the South Bucks District. The character area occupies the higher ground above the Alder Bourne River valley. The character area is elevated and distinguished from the distinctly less wooded surrounding landscape. The village of Farnham Common occupies the western boundary.

**Landscape Character:** The landscape is a mosaic of woodland, wooded commons, large areas of historic heathland, and small, intimate fields of paddock, pasture and rough grazing. Settlement is dispersed and ranges from village edge, with a strong modern character, nucleated hamlets and isolated farmsteads. Busy roads cut through the landscape, creating local noise and visual intrusion, diminishing the sense of tranquillity. The variety of land cover and land use creates a visually busy landscape and varying levels of enclosure and openness. However, the extent of woodland cover and pockets of heathland helps to integrate and unify disparate elements, and craft a more legible landscape, generating areas of high tranquillity and rural naturalness. This is an accessible and relatively permeable landscape, with comprehensive road and footpath network, promoting access and offering a variety of recreation opportunities.

**Geology:** Underlying geology is dominated by Thames River Terrace Deposits, with occasional patches of London Clay Formation in the west of the character area. Slowly permeable, seasonally wet, acid loamy and clayey soils prevail across the landscape.

**Topography/Landform:** This terrace landscape occupies the higher ground above the Alder Bourne Valley, which lies in the north, and the Lowland Fringe directly to the south. The topography rises gently from the south to the north, from a height of 50m to 60m. It is a largely flat landscape, with occasional undulating landform.

**Hydrology:** Seasonal ponds and waterlogging are frequent within wooded areas, which are associated with the impeded drainage of the area, resulting from the prevailing soil types. Two large lakes are located in Black Park Country Park and Upton Wood in the south east.

**Land Use and Settlement:** Large areas of woodland and wooded commons cover a significant proportion of the area, having a dominant influence on the character of the area. Settlement and farmland is interspersed within the woodland. Small scale, irregular fields primarily occupy land in-between woodland cover and settlement. Land use of these fields is a mix of paddocks, rough grazing and pasture with a combination of hedgerow and wooden post and wire fencing field boundaries. Hedgerows and trees often line roads, restricting views across the landscape. Relatively busy roads connect settlements, and cut across the character area, linking



## LCA 24.2 FARNHAM & STOKE COMMON WOODED TERRACE

the A4 in the south and the M40 further north. The A355 runs down the western edge of the character area. Smaller rural roads bisect the landscape, interconnecting these busier roads and settlements. The relatively large settlement of Farnham Common is nucleated around the A355, and sandwiched between large woodland blocks. Smaller settlements are dispersed across the character area, and often linearly clustered along roads, and on the edge of woodland and wooded commons. Some individual farmsteads are scattered within the character area. Settlement character overall is relatively modern, frequently brick and render. New development is prominent in the landscape. This character area has a stronger urban presence than the adjacent *Burnham Beeches Wooded Terrace* character area, with roads of urban appearance, larger and denser settlement areas, and a busier and less tranquil character.

A number of public footpaths and bridleways cut through the character area, including the, long distance footpath, the Beeches Way. Woodland areas provide a valuable recreational opportunity, with numerous woodland tracks and picnic areas. A 'Go Ape' adventure area is located in Black Park Country Park.

**Tree Cover:** This is a tree rich landscape, with large woodland blocks and wooded commons covering a considerable proportion of the landscape, and smaller isolated woods situated in between. Much of the woodland, notably that on common land is secondary and has established during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Woodland is frequently broadleaved or mixed, with some coniferous plantation in the east. Beech and birch species are common. Woodland cover in this character area is overall less dense and smaller than in *Burnham Beeches Wooded Terrace* character area. The woodland cover, nevertheless, generates an enclosed character and invokes a sense of tranquillity. Some Ancient Woodland is still evident within this landscape; the most significant area being Brockhurst Wood in the south west. Roads are commonly lined by trees, with woodland edge occasionally running adjacent to road sides. As a result, views are often limited and determined by tree cover.

**Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape:** The mosaic landscape provides varying levels of enclosure and openness, from open small fields to extensive dense woodland tracts. The woodland variation, of mixed deciduous, coniferous plantation and broadleaved woodland, and the heathland of bracken and gorse, provide rich seasonal changing texture and colour. The variety of land cover and land use creates a visually busy landscape, which is intensified around settlement areas, with modern development rarely well integrated within in the landscape. However, repetition of woodland helps to integrate and unify disparate elements, and create a more legible landscape. Views are often restricted by woodland and settlement, despite the relatively flat nature of the landform.

The busy B416, A355, and other roads which bisect the landscape, create local noise and visual intrusion, reducing the levels of tranquillity and rural character of the area. However, away from the roads, the woodland mosaic and heathland provides high levels of rural naturalness and a strong sense of tranquillity, often providing a degree of screening and containment.

## LCA 24.2 FARNHAM & STOKE COMMON WOODED TERRACE

This is an accessible and relatively permeable landscape, due to its comprehensive road and footpath network, and a number of car parks ensure good access to much of the woodland and wooded commons. Numerous woodland tracks provide good access and recreational opportunities to these areas.

**Biodiversity:** The area contains extensive area of heathland and woodland habitats, including nationally important sites, such as Stoke Common SSSI, which is one of the largest tracts of remaining heathland in Buckinghamshire. A diverse mix of woodland types, much of which is secondary and has established within the 20th century, as well as areas of Ancient Woodland, and a good network of hedgerows, adds to the ecological value of the character area. A number of significant veteran trees are located within heathland habitats, which survive well within the open character of this habitat type. Several Priority BAP habitats and biological notification sites are found in the character area, largely associated with woodland cover. Rough improved grassland habitats are scattered in between woodland areas, often with scrubby field boundaries, providing additional ecological habitats.

**Historic Environment:** Fields are a mix of irregular and regular field patterns, sometimes delineated by woodland edge, and as such possible indicating early assart enclosure, formed by woodland clearance. Some areas of modern parliamentary enclosure also exist. Many field boundaries appear to have been lost, possibly as a result of urban development. Wooded commons are a significant feature of the landscape, including Stoke Common, a large open space of heathland, with woodland. Historically the landscape was more open and heathland/acid grassland was present in greater quantity. There are some archaeological sites, including the post medieval parks, of Wexham Springs and Fulmer Grange.

### **Designations:**

- Archaeological Notification Site: 5 No.
- Conservation Areas: Fulmer.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 7 No.
- Local Nature Reserves 1 No.
- Priority BAP Habitats: 7 types.
- Biological Notification Site: 6 No.
- Special Area of Conservation: Burnham Beeches
- SSSI: Black Park; Burnham Beeches; Stoke Common.

## EVALUATION

### Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are:

- Woodlands and hedgerows, which creates a lush wooded character and sense of enclosure.
- Areas of open Heathland, such as Stoke Common, which provide important ecological benefit, as well as representing strong cultural and social history connections.
- Veteran trees which are a product of open heathland character.
- Large areas of wooded common land, and their visual, ecological, historical and recreational value.
- The high degree of tranquillity that persists on those parts of the area, away from busy roads and settlement development.
- Rich biodiversity, provided by the mosaic of woodland, heathland and grassland.
- Small, intimate fields of farmland (rough grazing, pasture and paddock).
- Several individual blocks of ancient woodland scattered across the landscape.
- Network of public rights of way that provide ease of access to heathland and woodland, and the associated recreational opportunities.

**Strength of Character/Intactness:** The strength of character and intactness of *Farnham and Stoke Common Wooded Terrace* is **moderate**. Key characteristics are distinctive in some areas, but becoming weaker due to development such as settlement and roads.

**Strategy/ Vision:** To protect, conserve and enhance the diverse mosaic of woodland, heathland and grassland land cover and habitats; to conserve and protect the open character and historical and biodiversity significance of heathland; to protect the strong and rich wooded character; and to seek to better integrate existing modern development into the landscape.

### Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve and enhance woodland, heathland and grassland habitats to achieve a landscape scale mosaic of habitats and associated features.
- Conserve and protect the open character and habitats of remaining heathland, and associated veteran trees which are a product of this open character.
- Manage wooded commons and encourage traditional woodland management and prevent scrub encroachment, including gaps for heathland regeneration where appropriate and maintaining the relicts of these open habitats.
- Conserve the rural setting of settlements and control development along roads, ensuring that new buildings and development are sensitively integrated into the landscape.



## **LCA 24.2 FARNHAM & STOKE COMMON WOODED TERRACE**

- Ensure recreational facilities are sympathetic to the rural character of the landscape.
- Conserve and manage ancient woodland and plan for long term woodland regeneration. Monitoring the spread of invasive species.
- Conserve and manage the network of dense hedgerows, and hedgerow trees. Consider replanting hedgerows which have been lost.
- Seek to reduce road traffic pressures which could alter the tranquil, rural character of the landscape.



## LCA 24.2 FARNHAM & STOKE COMMON WOODED TERRACE



Paddock and rough grazing delineated by woodland, with wooden post & wire field boundaries. Rich Autumn colour.



Wooded Stoke Common. Tall trees, with a strong vertical accent, and heathy bracken understory.



Strong presence of urban elements, interspersed between woodland.



Plantation woodlands and heathland at Stoke Common, creates an enclosed and tranquil character.