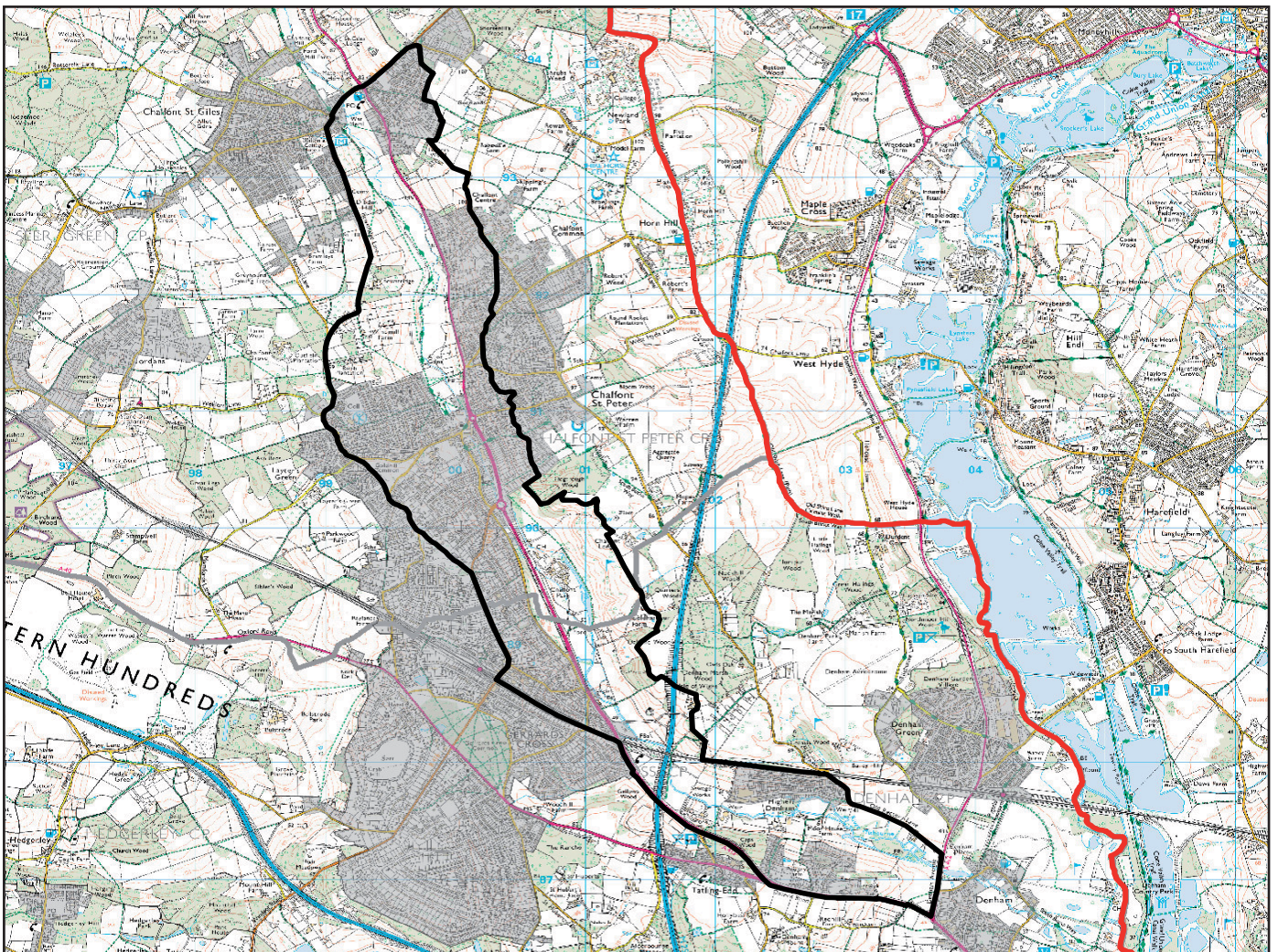
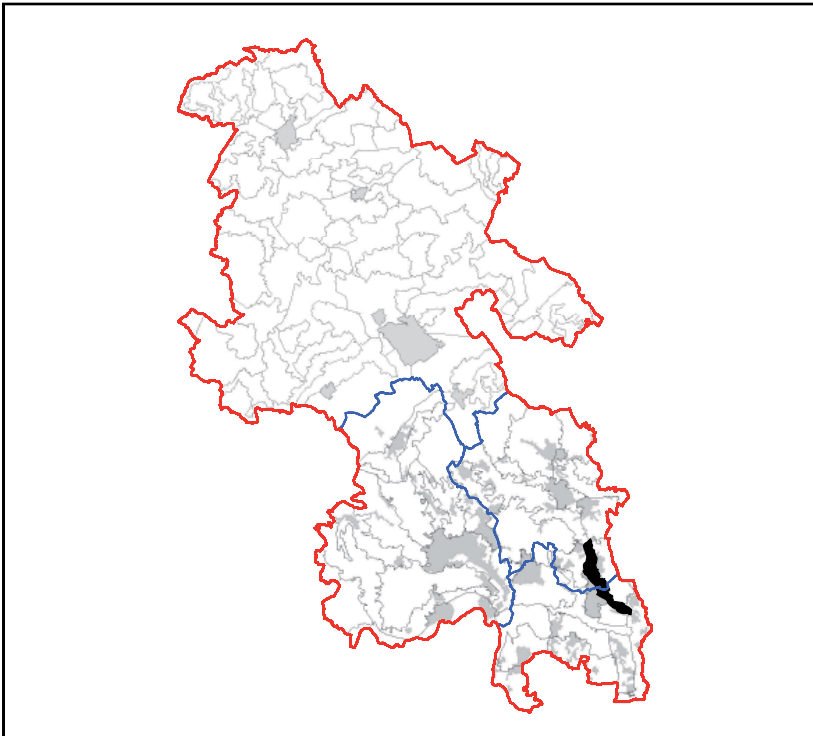


LCA 19.2 LOWER MISBOURNE SETTLED RIVER VALLEY



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KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Narrow and shallow valley with low valley sides. The valley topography is not prominent and the flat floodplain dominates the character area.
- The valley cuts into the Upper Chalk formation and this forms the edges of the character area, with Alluvium comprising the central floodplain zone, gradually widening towards the south.
- The River Misbourne is largely hidden and inconspicuous, emerging and becoming more visible within settlement. The river becomes more prominent towards the south, with associated wetland meadows along its course.
- A largely settled and developed landscape, with some pockets of rough grazing and pasture and paddocks interspersed, often close to settlement edge.
- Limited woodland, with tree cover predominantly associated with transport corridors, acting as screening for roads. Areas of broadleaved woodland located in the south of the area, for example at the Old Rectory Meadows SSSI.
- Dense settlement is linearly dispersed along the valley and road corridors. Higher settlement densities and more recent modern origin found in the town edge at Gerrards Cross.
- Smaller, yet still relatively densely settled villages of Chalfont St Peter and Chalfont St Giles lie in the north of the character area, and these possess a stronger historic character, with distinctive historical architecture of flint and stone churches and timber framed buildings.
- Some early field enclosures remain, including pre 18th century co-axial and irregular enclosures. Archeologically elements include, distinctive churches, such as St Giles Church, in Chalfont St Giles and St Peter's Church, in Chalfont St Peter. Areas of Iron Age, Bronze Age and Neolithic settlement are located close to present settlement areas.
- Parkland at Chalfont Park and House, designed by Capability Brown, and today a golf course and cricket ground.
- The A413 which runs along the valley floor. The southern part of the character area is dissected by the M25, railway and electricity pylons. Some arable fields remain in between these developments.
- Views are typically contained by settlement within the valley and linearly along the road corridors.
- High levels of activity and movement and a lack of unity due to the extent of development. Very low levels of tranquillity.

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DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: The *Misbourne Lower Settled River Valley* is predominately within Chiltern District, with the south of the area located within South Bucks District. It cuts into the lower section of the chalk dip slope. It is defined as a separate character to the Upper Misbourne River valley, with boundaries dictated by the lower valley and floodplain topography, and the surrounding settlements. The western boundary is largely construed by the suburban edge of Gerrards Cross.

Landscape Character: The *Misbourne Lower Settled River Valley* is a heavily developed landscape, characterised by the A413 which runs along the valley floor. The valley topography is relatively indistinct, partly due to settlement density, with the floodplain dominating the landscape. The character area is flanked by the suburban edges of large villages. The landscape is enclosed and highly contained, with views channelled linearly along roads. This is a compact landscape, dominated by the built form. Some small strips of trees and woodland blocks are interspersed within development, with areas of broadleaved woodland located in the south. The Old Rectory Meadows SSSI, with a mix of broadleaved woodland, lowland meadows and purple moor grass and rush pastures, is situated in the south, and occasional wetland meadows are associated with the river. The river itself, becoming more prominent towards the south of the area, with associated wetland meadows and providing small areas of tranquillity.

Geology: The valley cuts into the Upper Chalk formation, and this underlies the edges of the character area, with Alluvium comprising the central floodplain zone, and gradually widening downstream to the south.

Topography/Landform: The character area comprises the lower section of the Misbourne river valley. The valley here is very narrow and shallow, with low valley sides. The valley topography is not prominent, and the flat floodplain dominates the character area, with topographic change ranging slightly between 40 and 70 m.

Hydrology: The River Misbourne flows through the valley and widens downstream. The river is largely hidden and inconspicuous, emerging and becoming more visible within settlement. This river is classified as Environment Agency Flood Zones 2 and 3. Areas of wetland meadow are dispersed along its course, and are more frequent to the south.

Land use and Settlement: Land use is highly mixed, and largely dominated by the built form. The valley is an important transport and communication corridor, with the A413 running along the valley floor. The M25, railway line and pylons cross the character area in the far south.

The edges of the area are heavily settled, with higher settlement densities and more

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recent modern origin found in the town edge at Gerrards Cross. Smaller, yet still relatively densely settled village of Chalfont St Peter and Chalfont St Giles lie in the north of the character area, and these possess a stronger historic character, with distinctive historical churches and black and white Tudor houses. Settlement is dispersed linearly, following the roads and valley topography. Some small farmsteads are scattered along the edge of these villages, as well as small scale fields, of paddock and rough grazing/pasture. These are divided up by post and rail fencing, and small hedgerows. Allotment areas are also located along the edge of villages.

Some footpaths cut through the character area, including the long distance footpath, the South Bucks Way. A golf and cricket ground is situated centrally.

Tree Cover: There is relatively sparse tree coverage within this character area. Tree cover is predominantly associated with transport corridors, acting as screening for busy roads. For example, trees line the backs of houses which run along the road corridor on the eastern edge of Gerrards Cross. Small areas of broadleaved woodland are located in the south of the area. Some scattered trees are evident throughout the landscape.

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape: The visual and audible influence of development impacts on the overall character of the area. Views of movement and activity of settlement areas and busy road networks are visible throughout the landscape. This is a varied landscape, lacking unity, largely due to dissection of the landscape by roads, railway, settlement areas and field systems. Due to the extent of built infrastructure and the valley topography, the character area is quite enclosed and feels small in scale. Tranquillity is diminished throughout the character area by high levels of movement and noise, largely associated with the major roads which transect the landscape. There is some tree cover along roads and within built development, and areas of wetland associated with the river, provide small pockets of tranquillity.

Biodiversity: Biodiversity and ecological value restricted to residential gardens within built areas, and tree corridors lining roads. Areas of broadleaved woodland are found predominately in the south of the area, with a relatively large linear stretch at Gerrards Cross. Ancient woodland is located at Caps Wood. The predominant habitat cover is improved grassland, with some arable cultivation in the southern part of the character area. BAP Priority areas are chalk rivers, lowland meadow and purple moor grass with rush pastures. The Old Rectory Meadows SSSI is situated in the south, comprising these BAP Priority habitats and broadleaved woodland. A large proportion of the landscape is recognised as the Central Chiltern Chalk Rivers Biodiversity Opportunity Area. The river becomes more prominent in the south of the area, with wet meadow habitats dispersed along its corridor.

Historic Environment: Historically the Misbourne valley is an important communications corridor through the Chilterns, the A413 follows former historic routes established from the 18th century turnpike. The historic landscape is both urban and rural in its composition; the latter is made up of historic meadows adjacent to the river Misbourne, as well as pre 18th century irregular enclosures and

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isolated farmsteads. The historic parkland of Chalfont Park is also a prominent feature in the landscape; the parkland was initially designed in the 18th century by Capability Brown, but now contains a golf course and cricket ground.

Settlement in this area is dominated by the suburban character of Gerrards Cross and Chalfont St Peter, although modern has some historical value as a 'metroland' town, this is reflected in the designation of conservation areas at Gold Hill Common and North Park.

The landscape along the Misbourne is archaeologically sensitive containing evidence for occupation dating to the Mesolithic, Iron Age, Bronze Age and Neolithic periods.

Designations:

- Chilterns AONB
- Conservation Areas: Chalfont St Giles, Gold Hill Common and North Park and Kingsway
- Archaeological Notification Sites: 10 No.
- BAP Priority Habitats: 3 types.
- Biological Notification Sites: 5 No.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 1 No.
- SSSI: 1 No. Old Rectory Meadows.

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are as follows:

- Small patches or rough grazing, paddock and arable cultivation.
- The Misbourne River, and associated water meadows, which provide valuable habitats, and areas of tranquillity.
- Hedgerow field boundaries, which create visual unity and importance wildlife habitats.
- Areas of woodland, particularly, the broadleaved woodland and the area of ancient woodland in the south, which provides important biodiversity value.
- Local rights of way network, including South Bucks Way, which link the urban and rural landscapes.
- Archaeological sites, monuments and early field enclosures, which provide time depth and a visible reminder of past use of the landscape.

Strength of Character/Intactness: Strength of character and intactness of the *Misbourne Lower Settled River Valley* is **low**. There is an overt human impact on the landscape, dissected by main roads, pylons and dense settlement.

Strategy/Vision: Conserve remaining undeveloped elements of the lower chalk valley landscape and enhance the setting for built development. Seek to enhance the river and its setting and conserve, enhance and restore and link water meadows along the valley

Landscape Guidelines:

- Manage and maintain rough pasture/grazing and paddocks, to help generate a wildlife rich habitat, and visually attractive landscape.
- Conserve and protect wetland meadows, which provide important wildlife value – create and link new meadows.
- Conserve and enhance hedgerows, to provide visual intactness and increase biodiversity.
- Conserve and enhance historic parkland of Chalfont Park
- Consider opportunities for woodland and tree planting to reduce visual and audible impact of the built developments and roads.
- Monitor the expansion of urban edges and road widening, to ensure that remaining pockets of the chalk valley landscape are not lost, and seek appropriate enhancement and mitigation.
- Maintain the rights of way network, particularly the South Bucks Way.

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River Misbourne flowing through wetland meadows.



South Bucks Way looking towards to Chalfont St Giles Church.

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Chalfont Park golf course.

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