

Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment

Final Report



**Prepared for
Berkshire Joint Strategic Planning Unit**

**by
Land Use Consultants**



October 2003

**BERKSHIRE LANDSCAPE
CHARACTER ASSESSMENT**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The landscape character assessment of Berkshire has been prepared by Land Use Consultants (LUC) for the Berkshire Joint Strategic Planning Unit (JSPU). Information on the historic environment was contributed by Wessex Archaeology. We are grateful for the advice and guidance provided by the JSPU steering group.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Berkshire Landscape

- 1.1. Berkshire, covering an area of 125,879ha and with a population of 788,000 is a county of great landscape diversity including many nationally important areas of scenic, historic, archaeological and ecological value. The location and context of the study area are shown on **Figure 1**.
- 1.2. The joint Character of England Map indicates that there are five national Character Areas in Berkshire: Areas 115 Thames Valley; 116 Berkshire and Marlborough Downs; 129 Thames Basin Heaths; 110 Chilterns and 130 Hampshire Downs (see **Figure 2**). Such variety is reflected by landscapes ranging from sparsely settled downland to densely populated urban areas, open arable farmland to quiet pastoral valleys and ancient forest landscapes to modern coniferous plantations and heaths.
- 1.3. The geological diversity of the landscape is a fundamental factor of its variety and significance. The high and open pastoral or wooded chalk downlands of the west of the county are of recognised national scenic importance, reflected by their inclusion within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). In contrast the mixed clay, gravel and alluvial deposits in the central and eastern part of the county have given rise to a working agricultural landscape of mixed character, which includes arable and pastoral farmland, farm woodlands, ancient woodlands and parklands. Where sandy deposits are present the landscape assumes a more heathy and coniferous character, including the large plantation woodlands of the south east of the county. The rivers – Thames, Kennet, Loddon, Pang, Enborne, Lambourn and Blackwater - are distinctive landscapes threading through the county.

The Purpose of the Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment

- 1.4. Both PPG7 and the Rural White Paper - 'Our Countryside: The Future' acknowledge the continuing pressures faced within the countryside to accommodate new development. These documents call for a greater understanding of the distinctive features found within the countryside to ensure that any new development is sensitive to its surroundings. Landscape Character Assessments are the tool advocated within these documents for achieving this understanding and ensuring that non-renewable and natural resources within the countryside are afforded protection.
- 1.5. Landscape character assessment is a technique that has been developed to facilitate systematic analysis, description and classification of the landscape. It involves identification of those features or combinations of elements that contribute to the character of the landscape, thereby enabling the special character and qualities of an area to be understood. This information allows reasoned consideration of those issues affecting the landscape in order to develop appropriate recommendations for its future conservation and management.
- 1.6. This character assessment has been undertaken specifically to broaden the understanding of the Berkshire landscape to aid the Berkshire Joint Strategic Planning

Unit in formulating development plan policy and targeting future management initiatives. In particular, the purpose of the assessment is to inform the Berkshire Structure Plan 2001-2016 Deposit Draft incorporating changes (March 2003).

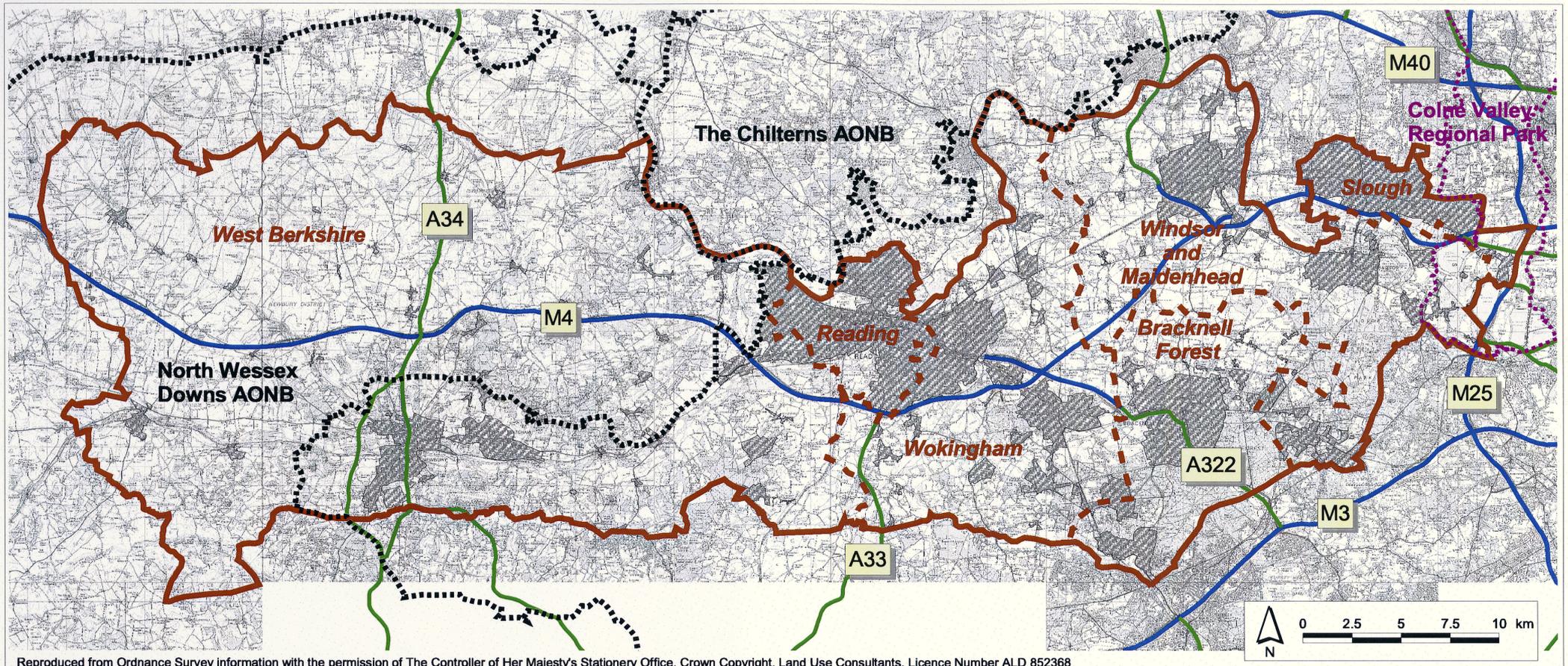
- I.7. Policy EN1 of the Berkshire Structure Plan 2001 – 2016 Deposit Draft incorporating changes (March 2003) states:

“The distinctiveness of county - and district - level Landscape Character Types and Areas will be maintained in line with the strategy option for each area.”
- I.8. The Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment identifies these Landscape Character Types and Areas at a County level. It also identifies strategic strategy options for each Character Type.
- I.9. As a strategic county-wide study undertaken at 1:50,000 scale, the Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment provides a context for the development, where required, of more detailed district-level assessments by the six unitary authorities within Berkshire: West Berkshire Council, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham District Council, Reading Borough Council, Slough Borough Council and Bracknell Forest Borough Council.
- I.10. The district-level assessments will identify the landscape character in more detail (detail which is often inevitably absent at a strategic scale) and allow the Unitary Authorities to further develop more detailed management strategies that best suit the condition and quality of each area. These studies will act as a guide to local plans and development control by indicating the particular local character of the landscape which development proposals should respect.
- I.11. Any new development needs to be accommodated in ways that not only protects sensitive locations but also strengthens local character and enhances the condition of the areas in which development is to take place. The Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment will ensure that, at a strategic level, necessary developments in rural areas are sensitively designed and located to reflect local character and that decisions will be informed by an understanding of the character of the rural landscapes. Paragraph 5.05 of the Berkshire Structure Plan 2001-2016 Deposit Draft incorporating changes (March 2003) states that:

“Development proposals should be informed by and fully justified in terms of the Landscape Character Assessment.”

Assessment Methodology

- I.12. The method for undertaking the landscape character assessment follows the accepted method promoted by the Countryside Agency at the time of the survey as set out in the document, *Interim Landscape Character Assessment Guidance (1999)*. It also accords with the more recently published *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002)* published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.
- I.13. The county-wide assessment has been prepared within the framework set by the Agency's Countryside Character Initiative as shown on the Character of England Map and it also fits within the context provided by the Agency's emerging National Landscape Typology. The assessment also builds upon the existing Local Authority



Berkshire - Landscape Character Assessment

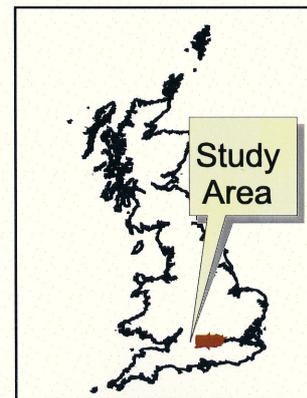
Figure 1:

Location and Context

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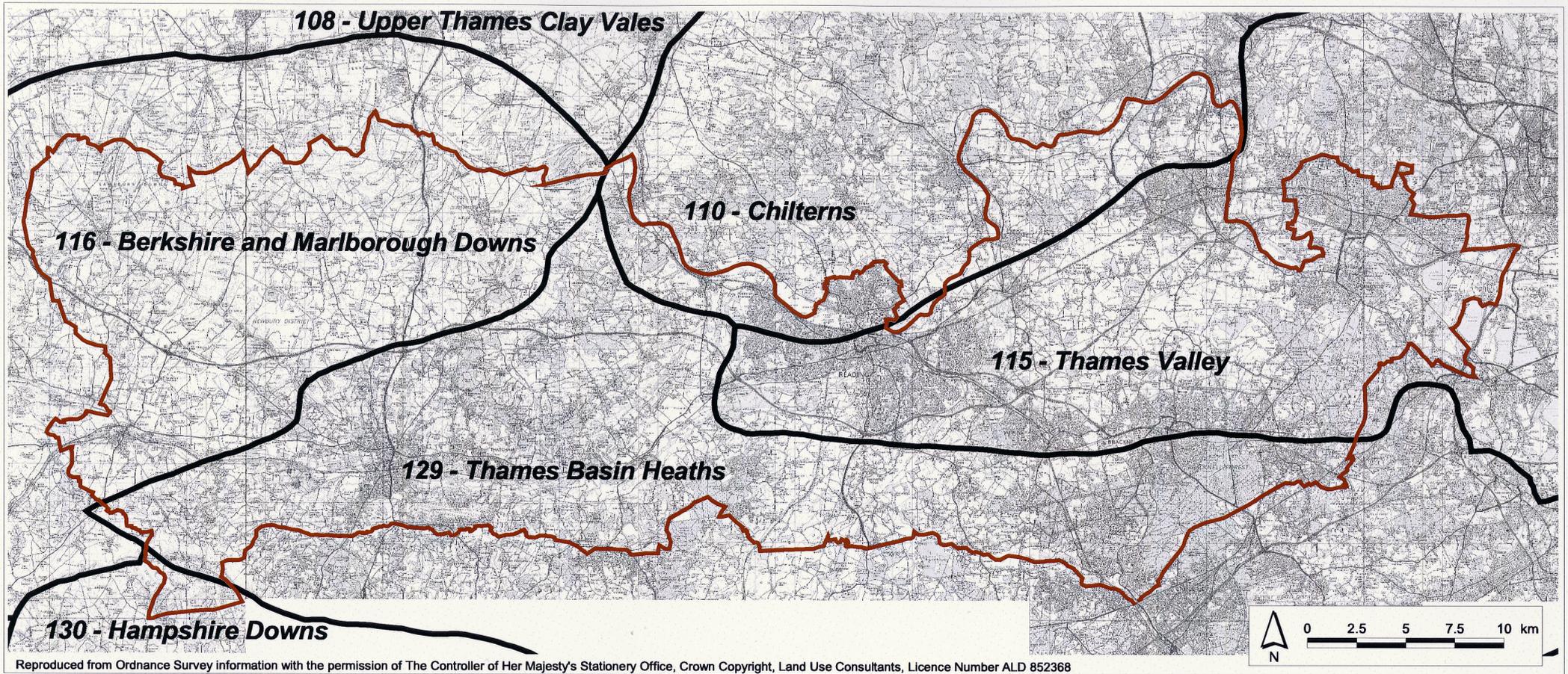
Key

-  Berkshire / Study Area Boundary
-  Local Authority Boundary
-  Motorway
-  Primary Route
-  Settlements
-  AONB Boundary
-  Colne Valley Regional Park



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Berkshire - Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 2:

National Character Area Context

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Key

 Berkshire / Study Area Boundary

 National Character Area Context
(with Joint Character Area number and name)

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scale assessments and the North Wessex Downs AONB character assessment to develop a comprehensive and consistent characterisation for the county.

I.14. The process for undertaking the study involved five main stages, described below, namely:

- Data Collation
- Characterisation
- Field survey
- Evaluation
- Consultation

I.15. GIS was used throughout the study as the tool for collating, manipulating and presenting data.

Data Collation

I.16. **Baseline Data:** This stage involved the collation and mapping of a wide range of existing information on the characteristics of Berkshire from sources including baseline maps of geology, topography, soils and hydrology; schedules of designated and protected areas and features; and review of literature including Local Environment Agency Plans, Natural Area Profiles etc.

I.17. **Scoping Inquiry:** A scoping inquiry to key communities of interest was made requesting information relevant to the study.

I.18. **National Context:** The context provided by the framework of five joint Character Areas and the national Landscape Typology was reviewed and boundaries mapped to place the county in the context of the national hierarchy.

I.19. **District Context:** The existing local character assessments - Wokingham Historic Landscape Survey, North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment, Bracknell Forest Borough Landscape Character Assessment (unpublished) and Newbury District-Wide Landscape Assessment - were reviewed and their boundaries mapped.

Characterisation

I.20. The process of characterisation drew together all the information outlined above, to develop a draft classification. The approach follows best practice as promoted by the Countryside Agency in the *Interim Landscape Character Assessment Guidance (1999)* and subsequent *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002)* in maintaining a clear distinction between landscape types and character areas, and developing a hierarchical approach as follows:

- **Landscape Types** - which are generic and share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation and human influences, e.g. Wooded Downland or Lower Valley Floor;

- **Character Areas** - which are single and unique, discrete geographical areas of the landscape type, e.g. Lambourn Wooded Downland or Kennet Lower Valley Floor.
- I.21. For the purposes of this county-wide assessment emphasis has been placed upon the definition and subdivision of the landscape at the Landscape Type level i.e. the identification of the variety of landscapes within Berkshire. Indicative character areas have also been determined. These will be verified and accurately defined by future detailed district-level studies (e.g. at 1:25,000 scale). The study specifically excluded an analysis of the areas within development limits. Therefore, although the smaller villages were considered as a vital part of the wider landscape context and character, no specific townscape or urban character assessments were undertaken of the more built-up areas such as Reading, Newbury, Wokingham, Bracknell, Maidenhead and Slough.
- I.22. The classification was informed by specialist studies, including an appraisal of the historic character of the landscape by Wessex Archaeology and ecological studies. The emphasis has been on the integration of this information within the landscape character assessment.
- I.23. The draft characterisation of Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment was presented and discussed at a steering group meeting. This highlighted issues that required further refinement and appraisal during the field survey.

Survey

- I.24. A field survey was undertaken to appraise the draft characterisation. This specifically focussed on:
- verification and fine-tuning of the classification of the landscape types (and areas) identified;
 - refining type (and area) boundaries;
 - recording landscape character, assessing condition, key trends and forces for change.
- I.25. A systematic and rigorous approach was adopted for the survey, with information recorded on 1:25,000 scale maps and a Field Record Sheet: see **Appendix I**. A comprehensive photo record was also produced. The final classification encompasses fourteen landscape types, each with a set of indicative character area subdivisions.

Evaluation

- I.26. The evaluation was based upon the strength of the landscape character (assessed as weak, moderate or strong) and an appraisal of the condition of the landscape (poor, declining or good). This evaluation was used as a basis for determining an appropriate landscape strategy for each type:

CONDITION	good	Strengthen	Conserve and Strengthen	Conserve
	declining	Strengthen and Enhance	Conserve and Enhance	Conserve and Restore
	poor	Creation	Restore and Enhance	Restore
		weak	moderate	strong

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

- I.27. Based upon the evaluation and the identified forces for change landscape management guidelines and key features to consider in any future change were produced for each landscape type.

Consultation

- I.28. The study involved extensive consultation to test and verify the results. The consultation exercise was undertaken in two main stages. A first stage draft report was sent to **Communities of Interest** i.e. those groups that have an interest in the landscape including government departments, government agencies, local authorities, non-governmental organisations, notably environmental groups and landowner or farming organisations. Following this, a second stage consultation report, incorporating first stage comments was sent to **Communities of Place**. Communities of Place are groups or individuals who live or work in a particular area or visit it. They are predominantly local residents and do not have a 'professional' interest in the landscape but are able to contribute considerable local detail and nuance. Further information on each stage is set out below.

Stage I Consultation: Communities of Interest

- I.29. The first stage of this process was production of a consultation draft which was distributed to a range of local communities of interest. These included both government and non-governmental organisations with an interest in the Berkshire landscape, including adjoining local authorities, statutory agencies, interest groups, those representing general community interests and economic interests (including landowners, farming and tourism organisations). A full first-stage list of consultees is provided in **Appendix 2a**. In total forty-two individuals representing 40 organisations were consulted. A response was received from 67% of these. The comments were collated for consideration by the Steering Group (*Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment Report of Consultations* (March 2002)). Where appropriate modifications and additions suggested by the consultation exercise with communities of interest were incorporated into the report.

Stage 2 Consultation: Communities of Place

- I.30. The Second Stage Consultation was directly overseen and administrated by the Joint Strategic Planning Unit. The consultation consisted of sending consultees relevant sections of the report. A full version was available on the Internet or via CD on request. Accompanying the extracts/CD was a targeted questionnaire requesting a response to the following points for each landscape type/area relevant to each consultee.

<p>Landscape Type Description:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Do you agree with our description of the 'Landscape Character Type'?2. Are there any significant factors contributing to the character of the landscape that you feel are missing? <p>Landscape Type Evaluation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Do you agree with our 'Features of Key Significance'?4. Are there any 'Key Issues' which you think we have not identified?5. Do you agree with our overall 'Landscape Strategy'?6. Do you agree with our Guidelines for 'Landscape Management' and 'Managing Future Change'? <p>Character Area Description</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Do you agree with our description of this Landscape Character Area – e.g. have we missed anything? <p>Character Area Evaluation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">8. Do you agree with our Character Area Evaluation? <p>General Comments</p>
--

- I.31. The Consultation Draft was sent to a total of 202 individuals representing 186 different organisations and interests. These groups included Parish Councils, residents groups, local environmental groups, landowners and commercial interests.
- I.32. The Draft was sent on 23rd December 2003 with requests for responses by Friday 7th February. In the event the consultation period was extended, at the request of a number of stakeholders, to Friday 28th February 2003. Consultees were requested to respond in writing (by post or email).
- I.33. Of the 202 prospective consultees 50 responses were received – a response rate of 25%. Of these, 6 consultees made no comments and one response was made on behalf of 6 separate organisations. A list of those organisations and individuals responding to the second stage consultation is provided in **Appendix 2b**. A separate report of consultation was prepared by LUC for the JSPU. This document noted comments made and a recommended response on incorporation into the final document. It was reported to the Joint Committee on the 8th July 2003 when final changes to the report were ratified. These were subsequently incorporated into the document by LUC.

- I.34. The final Berkshire landscape character assessment report therefore includes changes, additions and amendment suggested through the first and second stage consultations. It is considered that these changes strengthen the report and contribute considerable local knowledge and detail.

Structure of this Document

- I.35. This report presents the findings of the landscape character assessment. The report is structured as follows:

- Part 1: **Overview:**** Establishes the factors that have influenced the character of the County as a whole, including physical, cultural and ecological characteristics.
- Part 2: **The Character of the Berkshire Landscape:**** This is the main body of the report and contains the detailed landscape type assessments as well as an indication of the character area subdivisions. It also presents the findings of the evaluation exercise including landscape strategy, management guidelines and key considerations in managing future change.

PART I: OVERVIEW

2. EVOLUTION OF THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE

Introduction

- 2.1. The Berkshire landscape has evolved as a result of the various influences that have, over vastly different time-scales, acted upon it. The character of the landscape has evolved in response to the basic underlying geological characteristics of the land upon which natural processes and human activities have operated, influencing patterns of land use and ecological character.

Physical Influences

- 2.2. The physical components of the landscape are the most tangible and fundamental influences upon its character, being the most permanent and least changeable aspect of its appearance. The underlying geology creates the 'backbone' of the landscape. The actions of weathering, erosion and deposition alter the landform, consequently influencing hydrological patterns and affecting the nature of soil conditions. This affects how humans have used and continue to exploit the landscape for agriculture, settlement and industry and, consequently, influences the nature of the vegetation and fauna that the landscape can support.

Geology and Landform

See **Figure 3: Simplified Geology** and **Figure 4: Simplified Topography** and geological table (below) for comparative purposes.

Cretaceous

- 2.3. The solid or 'bedrock' geology of Berkshire is dominated by the Chalk Group strata of the Cretaceous system (146 million years BP (Before Present)) from the Mesozoic era and Cainozoic formations of the Tertiary (Palaeogene) system (65 million years BP). In much of the county, however, these rocks are concealed by the drift deposits of the Quaternary period (formed 1.64 million years BP).
- 2.4. The greatest Cretaceous influences are in the west and, to a lesser extent, north of the county, where the chalk strata (predominantly Upper Chalk but with some Middle Chalk) have a profound influence on the character of the landscape. These hard white chalk strata were formed from the deposition of pure calcareous deposits within a sea created by rising water levels during the Late Cretaceous period.

Tertiary (Palaeogene)

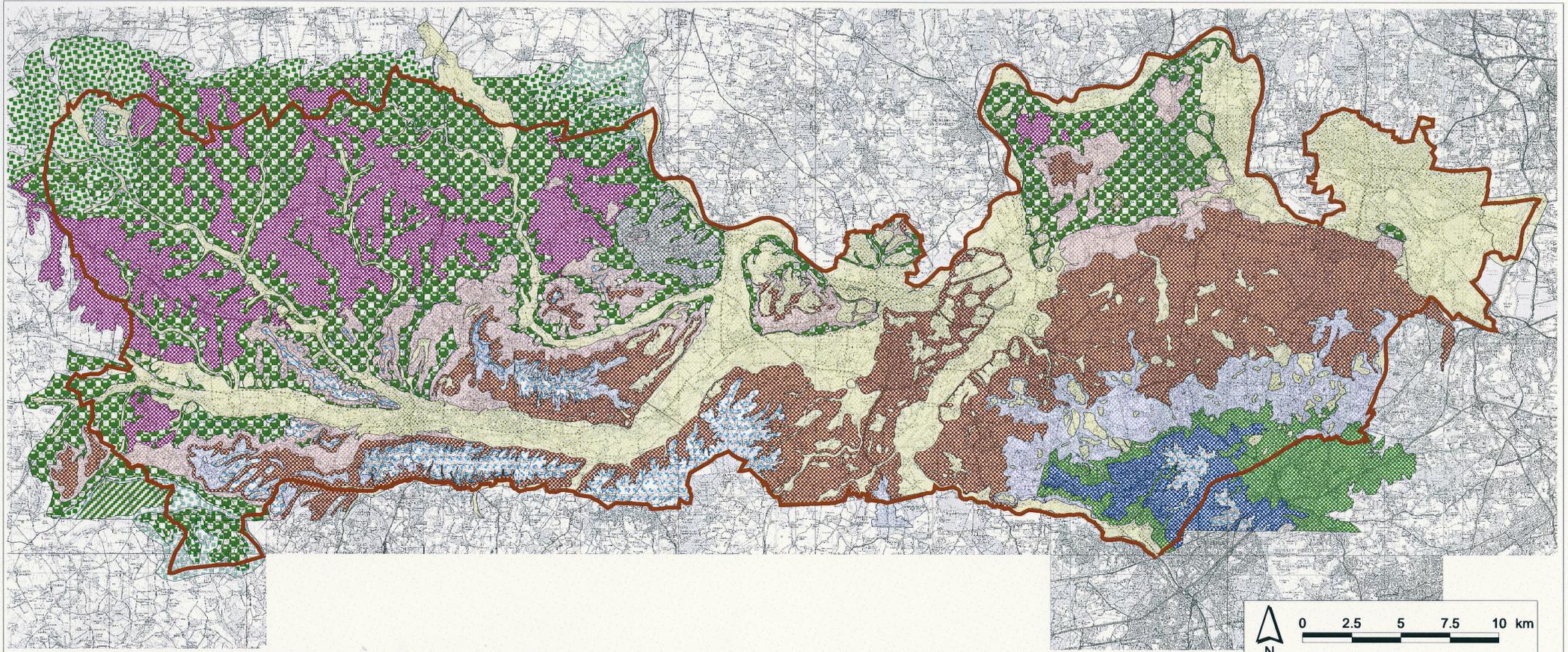
- 2.5. During the Alpine tectonic phase of the early Tertiary (when the Alps were created in mainland Europe) the chalk strata were raised and the area was folded into the asymmetrical syncline of the London Basin. This resulted in the formation of the extensive chalk outcrop which today forms the characteristic landscapes of the Berkshire Downs (part of the North Wessex AONB) as well as the steep dip slope of the Chiltern Hills which, whilst not actually within the Berkshire landscape, contributes much to the character of the Thames valley along the northern boundary

of the county. Minor folds and faults within the chalk around this time also have localised effects on modern day character, for example the pericline within a chalk outcrop at Windsor that forms the small prominent hill and setting of Windsor Castle.

- 2.6. The eastern area of Berkshire falls within the central part of the London Basin syncline and is dominated by the sand and mudstone deposits formed in this period. A variety of sediments were deposited including the strata known as the Lambeth Group, which comprises medium-grained sands and sandy-clays and the mottled clays of the Reading Formation. The subsequent re-establishment of sea levels in the east of the region resulted in the formation of the Thames Group, the most significant member of which is the extensive band of London Clay, a dark blue to brownish-grey clay with variable silt and sand content, which sweeps from the west to the centre east of the county. The clay has given rise to a flat agricultural landscape and has also been an important source of London brick for construction. The London Clay is overlain in the south east of the county by the Bagshot Formation (including the Bagshot Beds, Camberley and Windlesham Formations), which is dominated by a thin pale grey clay and fine grained sand that supports areas of heath.
- 2.7. At this time, on the Berkshire Downs, the large fine grained silica- cemented quartz sandstone blocks known as sarsens were formed. These are commonly found with clay-with-flints. Also during this time the normally pervious and free-draining chalk landscapes were subjected to permafrost resulting in the formation of dry valleys or combes.

Quaternary

- 2.8. The Quaternary Period was a period of great change in the Berkshire landscape with the glaciers to the north of the county leading to deposition of materials by glacial and fluvial processes. This period was a great river building phase shifting the courses of rivers formed in earlier uplifts to their modern locations.
- 2.9. Pleistocene deposits are commonly gravel and sand river terrace deposits that represent the original ancient floodplain levels. These represent a gradual and periodic down-cutting of the river relating to the cycle of glacial episodes. Such deposition is particularly evident associated with the valley of the Kennet in the south of the county, which is thought to have been the main headwater of the ancient Thames. Also at this time the 'clay-with-flints' groups, common on the Berkshire Downs and often concurrent with sarsen stones, were formed. These are the weathered remains of the chalk into which Tertiary sediments have been mixed.
- 2.10. The youngest of the Quaternary deposits are the alluvial deposits formed on the river floodplains during the Holocene epoch of the last 10,000 years. The alluvium principally comprises silt and clay with seams of sand and gravel that give rise to extraction industries (gravel workings) in the river valleys. Human activity in the form of clearance of woodland and cultivation of the uplands during the Neolithic period in the Iron Age and Roman period led to increased sedimentation in the river valleys.



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Figure 3:

Simplified Geology

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Key

 Berkshire / Study Area Boundary

Quaternary (Drift)

-  Drift - alluvial dominantly
-  River Terrace
-  Clay with flints over Upper Chalk
-  Gravel over Upper Chalk

Palaeogene (Generally clays +/- sand, +/- pebbles, +/- silt)

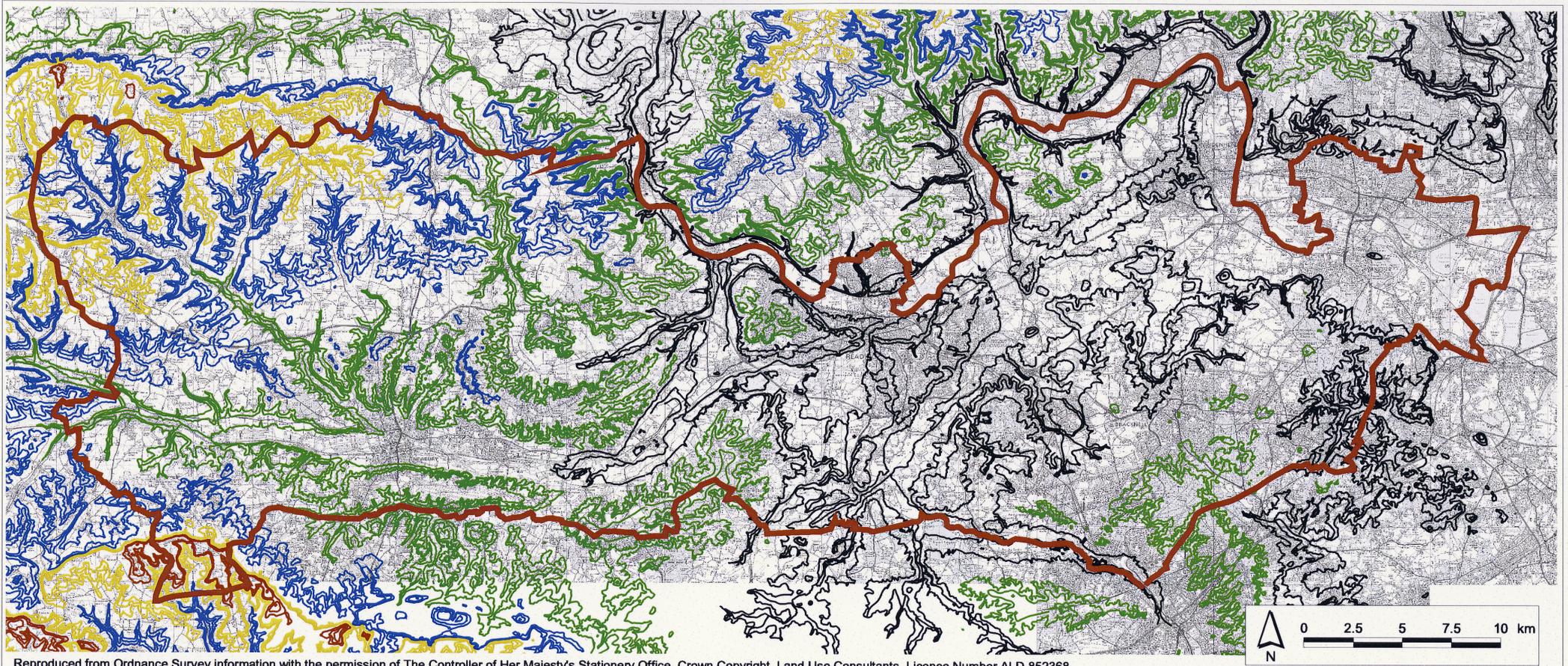
-  Camberley Sand Formation
-  Windlesham Formation
-  Bagshot Beds
-  London Clay
-  Lambeth Group

Cretaceous

-  Upper Chalk
-  Middle Chalk
-  Lower Chalk
-  Upper Greensand

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Key

 Berkshire / Study Area Boundary

Contour Ranges

-  40 - 60 m
-  90 - 110 m
-  140 - 160 m
-  190 - 210 m
-  240 - 260 m
-  > 300 m

Figure 4:

Simplified Topography

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Aspects of the Local Vernacular Typical Characteristics of the Rural Landscape



Sarsen Stone



Brick and knapped Flint



Staddle Stones or 'Staddles'



Brick Banding with Burnt header courses and Barge Boards



Timber Frame and Thatch



Timber Frame with Weather Boards

- 2.11. Many of the formations present in Berkshire have yielded and, in some cases continue to yield, materials suitable for the construction of buildings. In particular there is a strong relationship in vernacular buildings between materials and the geological context (see figure of **Aspects of the Local Vernacular**). For example the use of sarsen stone, flint from 'clay-with-flints' deposits, and brick formed from London Clay occurring around Bracknell and Reading (although this was later imported from purer deposits elsewhere).

Main stratal divisions and rock types represented in the Berkshire Landscape

CHRONOSTRATIGRAPHY			AGE (MILLION YEARS BP)	PRINCIPAL DEPOSITS
ERATHEM	SYSTEM	SERIES		
CAINOZOIC	QUATERNARY	HOLOCENE	0.01	Alluvium, hillwash, tufa, Peat, coastal and estuarine sand and mud
		PLEISTOCENE	1.64	River terrace sand and gravel; glacial till, sand and gravel; slope deposits, clay-with-flints, loess
	NEOGENE	23	RED CRAG and NORWICH CRAG: shallow marine sand	
	TERTIARY (PALAEOGENE)	65	BAGSHOT FORMATION, BARTON BEDS and BRACKLESHAM BEDS: mainly marine sand. THAMES GROUP (including LONDON CLAY): marine mudstone LAMBETH GROUP: shallow marine sand; fluvial and estuarine mud and sand	
MESOZOIC	CRETACEOUS	UPPER	97	CHALK GROUP: marine, coccolith-rich limestone (chalk)
		LOWER	146	GAULT and UPPER GREENSAND FORMATIONS: marine mudstone, siltstone and sandstone; LOWER GREENSAND GROUP: shallow-marine sand and sandstone; WEALDEN GROUP: fluvial and non-marine sandstone, siltstone and mudstone
	JURASSIC	UPPER	157	PORTLAND and PURBECK FORMATIONS: marine and lagoonal limestone and sand; CORALLIAN GROUP: marine limestone and sandstone; ANCHOLME GROUP: marine mudstone
		MIDDLE	178	INFERIOR and GREAT OOLITE GROUPS: marine limestone with some mudstone and sandstone; non-marine facies in east
		LOWER	208	LIAS GROUP: marine mudstone with sandstone and ironstone
	TRIASSIC		245	PENEARTH GROUP: marine mudstone, limestone and sandstone MERCIA MUDSTONE GROUP: wind-blown and lacustrine mudstone and siltstone with some fluvial sandstone SHERWOOD SANDSTONE GROUP: fluvial sandstone

Hydrology

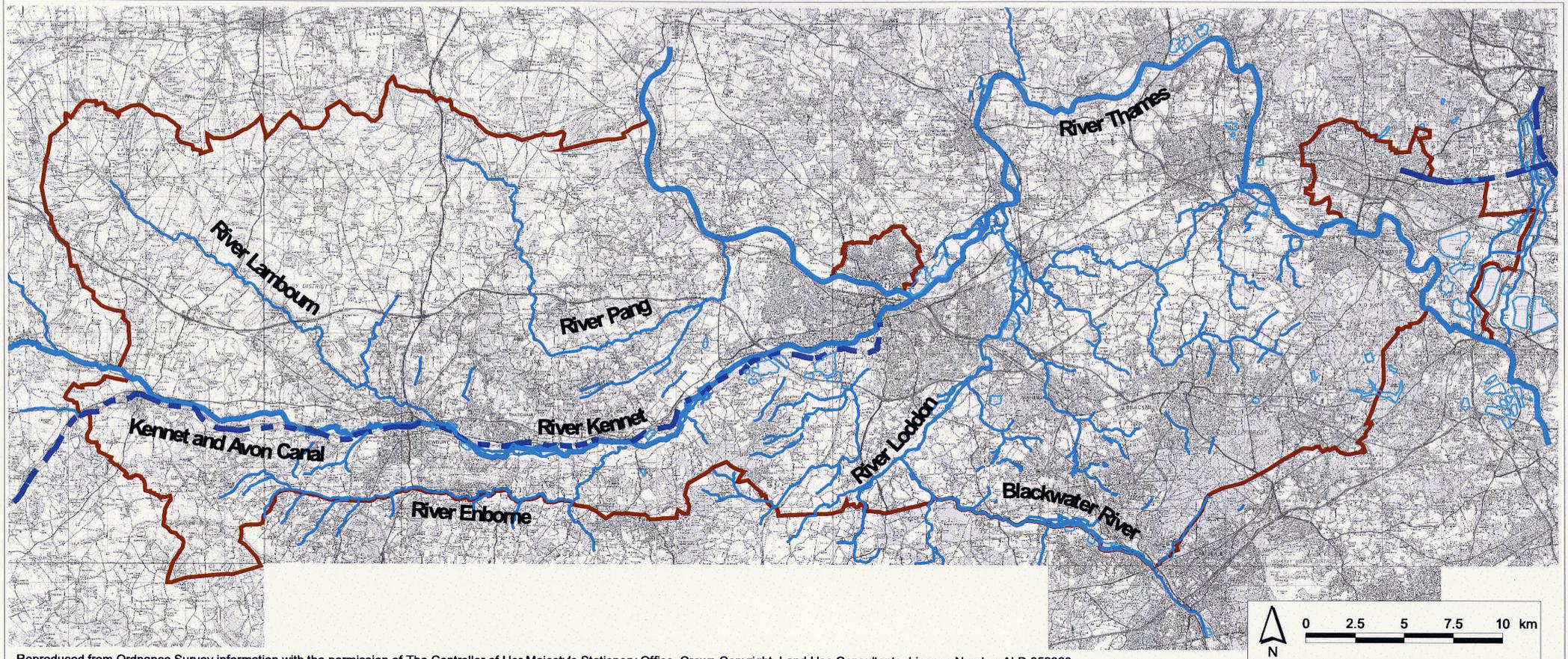
See **Figure 5: Simplified Hydrology**

- 2.12. The current river systems were established around 300,000 years ago. Within Berkshire the general drainage pattern is from west to east and the main river is the Thames, defined to the north by the step scarp of The Chilterns, which creates a distinctive river corridor that forms the northern boundary of the county. The tributaries of the Thames are significant rivers in their own right. Of these the principal channels are the River Loddon (with the adjoining Blackwater River) and the River Kennet (with its tributaries the Dun, Lambourn and Enborne) and it is also joined by the smaller River Pang.
- 2.13. The underlying geology has a considerable influence on (and has been influenced by) the hydrology. The chalklands of the west of the county have created deeply incised valley landscapes with fast-flowing rivers. In some places the downland is also incised by dry valleys or combes that support seasonal streams or 'bournes', such as the Winterbourne. Similarly, where the chalk overlies more impervious strata, spring lines sometimes occur. In contrast, in the centre of the county, the landscape is dominated by the alluvial deposits of the Rivers Loddon and Kennet which, together with the adjoining clay and sandy formations, create a wide, flat and more poorly-defined floodplain.

Soils and Agricultural Capability

See **Figure 6a: Simplified Soils** and **Figure 6b: Agricultural Land Classification**

- 2.14. The nature and quality of the soils is strongly correlated with the underlying geology and the influences of hydrology, such as seasonal waterlogging. This in turn affects the 'natural' or semi-natural vegetation and intensity of subsequent land use.
- 2.15. There are strong variations in the soils of Berkshire. These can be divided between the chalk landscape of the downlands, the clay and alluvial deposits of the central and eastern parts of the county, the variable terrace and Lambeth Group deposits of the southwest and the sandy influences of the Bagshot Formation in the southeast.
- 2.16. The upland chalk downlands are characterised by thin calcareous and nutrient-locked soils that support pastoral grassland and extensive areas of arable landscape (particularly used cereal growing). Where they have an overburden of deeper deposits of clay-with-flints the proportion of arable land increases and also creates conditions able to support significant woodlands which are less common on the thinner soil of the downs. These tend to have an agricultural grade of 3, although there are localised patches of grade 2 corresponding to the higher areas of downland and within the dry valleys. In contrast, the nutrient poor acidic soils of the Bagshot Formation support woodlands and heathlands and are, today, in extensive use for coniferous plantations being of grade 3 and 4. Where both these calcareous and acidic conditions are present, a diverse and rich mosaic of patches of woodland, arable land, pasture and heaths has arisen e.g. in the *Farmed Chalk Mosaic* landscape type.



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Berkshire - Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 5:

Simplified Hydrology

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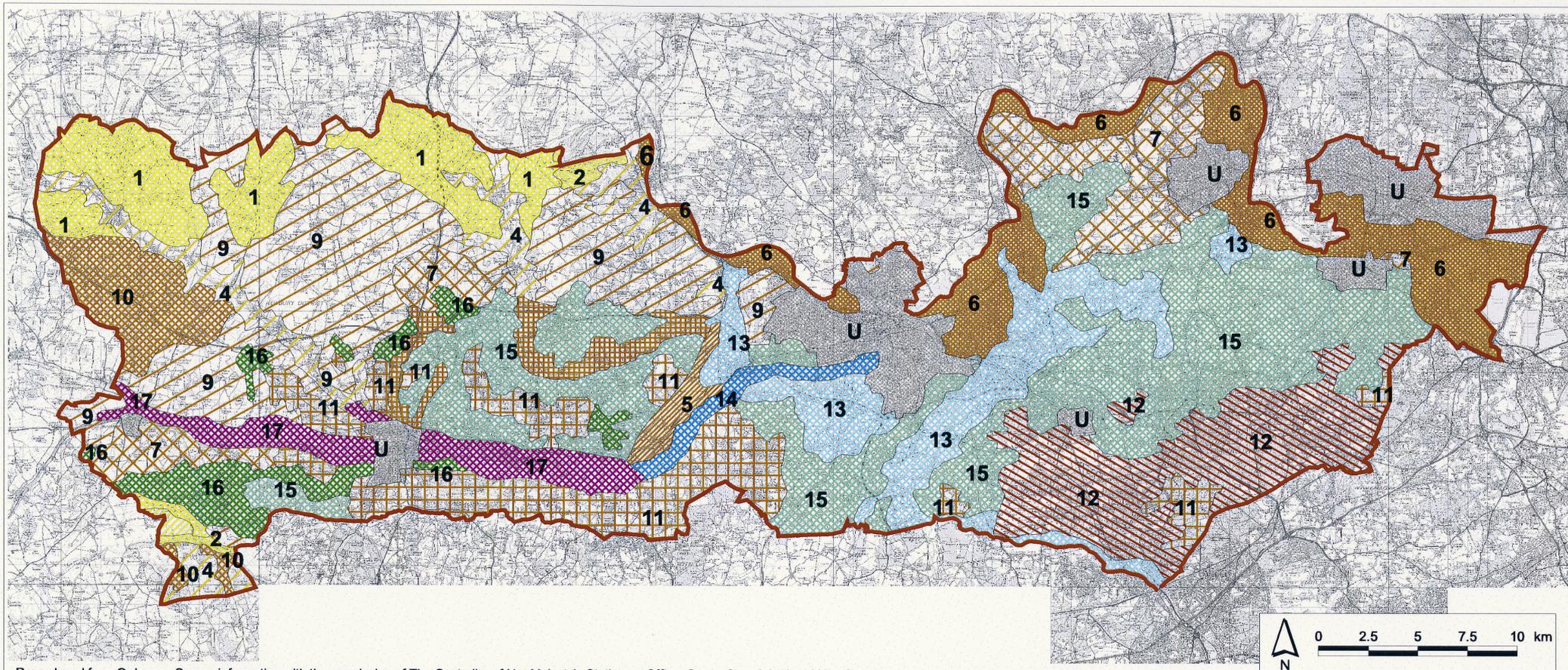
Key

-  Berkshire / Study Area Boundary
-  Main River
-  Secondary River / Stream
-  Canal
-  Waterbody

Note:
Where the Berkshire / study area boundary is not illustrated, the boundary is defined by the river

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Berkshire - Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 6A:

Simplified Soils

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Key

— Study and local authority boundaries

Map Unit and Dominant Soil Group

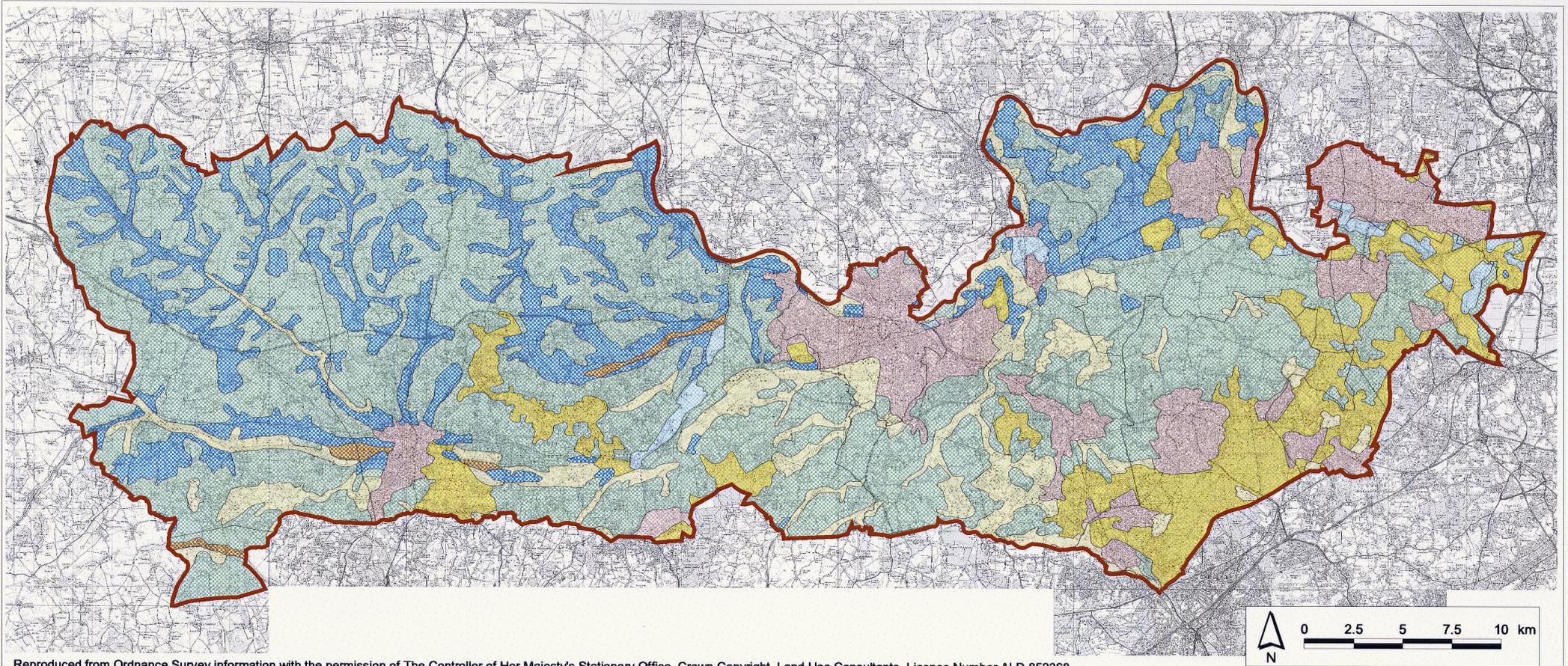
- 1 - Rendzinas
- 2 - Rendzinas
- 3 - Rendzinas
- 4 - Brown calcareous earths
- 5 - Argillic brown earths
- 6 - Argillic brown earths
- 7 - Argillic brown earths
- 8 - Argillic brown earths

- 9 - Paleo-argillic brown earths
- 10 - Paleo-argillic brown earths
- 11 - Podzols / Brown sands
- 12 - Gley-podzols
- 13 - Argillic gley soils
- 14 - Alluvial gley soils
- 15 - Stagnogley soils
- 16 - Stagnogley soils
- 17 - Humic-alluvial gley soils
- U - Unsurveyed areas (including urban areas)

Source:
'Soils of Berkshire'
Soil Survey of England and Wales
1975

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Berkshire - Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 6B:

Agricultural Land Classification

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Key

— Study and local authority boundaries

Land classification

-  Grade 1 - Land with very minor or no physical limitations to agricultural use
-  Grade 2 - Land with some minor limitations which exclude it from Grade 1
-  Grade 3 - Land with moderate limitations due to soil, relief or climate, or some combination of these factors which restricts the choice of crops, timing of cultivations, or level of yield
-  Grade 4 - Land with severe limitations due to adverse soil, relief or climate or a combination of these
-  Grade 5 - Land with very severe limitations due to adverse soil, relief or climate, or a combination of these
-  Non Agricultural
-  Urban

Source:
ALC, DEFRA, 1975

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- 2.17. The alluvial soils and clay soils are, generally, more fertile, although they are difficult to work and suffer from waterlogging. The clays give rise to predominantly grade 3 soils, which, on account of their flatness, are used for arable farming and are sometimes drained by extensive networks of ditches. However, in the valleys there is a wide variety of agricultural land classifications ranging from Grade 1 (in the lower Kennet and in some areas along the Thames) to Grade 5 (in the Pang and other areas of the Kennet valley). Consequently these support a diverse patchwork of both arable and pastoral fields.

Ecological Overview

Natural Areas are illustrated in **Figure 7a**. **Figure 7b** provides the location of **International and National Nature Conservation Designations** and **Figure 7c Ancient Woodlands within the County**.

Context

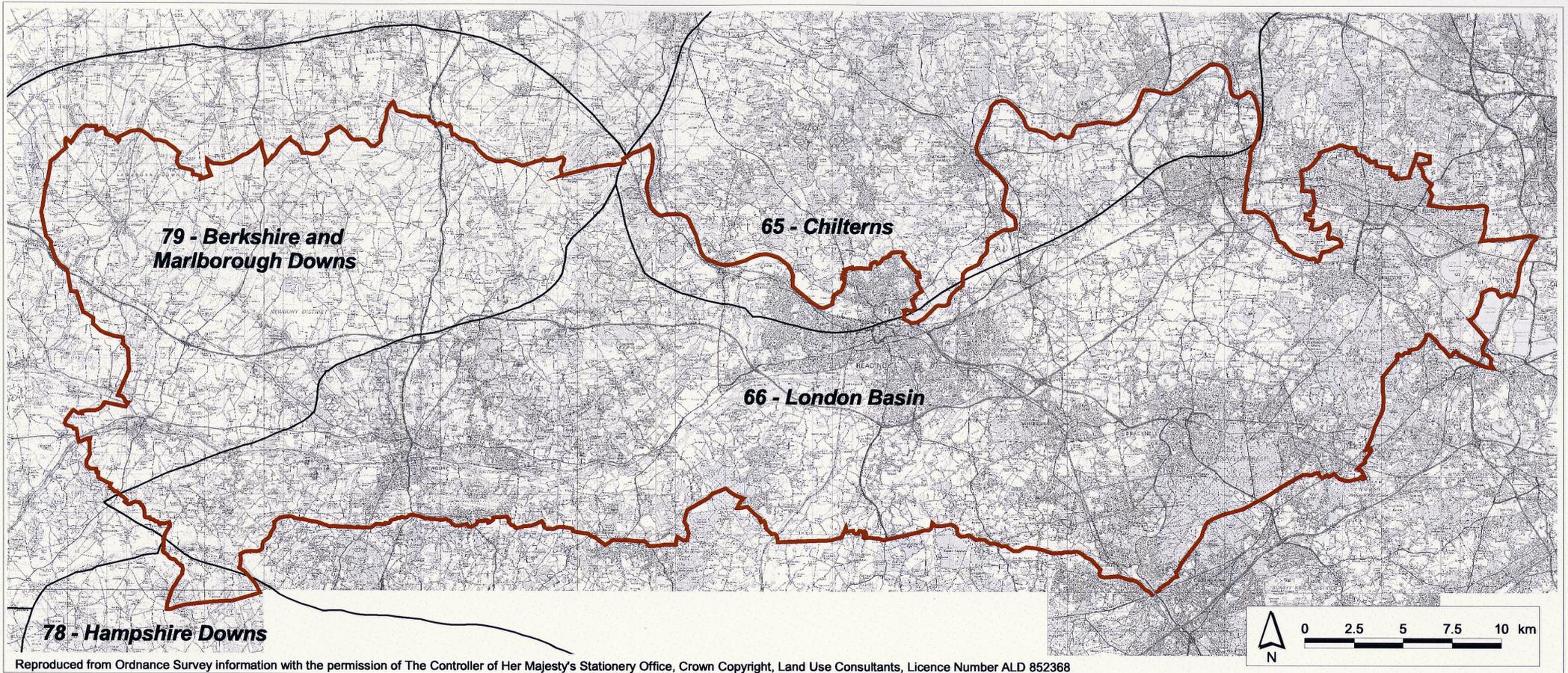
- 2.18. Natural Areas (NAs) are sub-divisions of England identified by English Nature as being unique on the basis of their physical, wildlife, land use and cultural attributes. The purpose of this approach is to provide a wider context to nature conservation action, and to give a framework for setting objectives, defining national priorities and setting local targets. There are four NAs within Berkshire highlighting the varied and in some instances, ecologically rich landscape that occurs within the country.
- 2.19. To the west, the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs NA and the Hampshire Downs NA encompasses the downland and agricultural landscapes around Lambourn and Hungerford. Key habitats here include chalk grassland, broadleaved woodland and grazing marsh.
- 2.20. To the north, a narrow section of the Chilterns NA includes land located in close proximity to the River Thames, notably within the parishes Pangbourne, Sonning, Wargrave, Hurley and Cookham. On the banks of the Thames, between Henley and Marlow there are surviving wet meadows and fens (e.g. Temple Island Meadows and Cock Marsh SSSI) and small riverside woods that often have large populations of the nationally rare Loddon lilly (*Leucojum aestivum*). The rare Loddon pondweed (*Potamogeton nodosus*) also occurs in this part of the river but is thought to be declining and extinct at many former sites.
- 2.21. The London Basin NA covers the majority of Berkshire and encompasses the urban centres of Newbury, Wokingham, Reading, Windsor, Maidenhead and Slough. In addition this NA supports a variety of agricultural and forestry land uses. Lowland heath is also a well-represented habitat in this area, having formed over sandy deposits such as the Bagshot sands. The largest heathland in the county is Greenham Common (SSSI) which is recorded in the Berkshire Heathland BAP as covering 60ha and supporting a good variety of heathland species. It is thought that an additional 100ha of heathland has been created following publication of the BAP. Greenham and Crookham Commons, are noted for their specialist butterfly in addition to their breeding bird and reptile populations. Small ancient woodlands are widely scattered in this NA but are important natural elements within the agriculturally dominated landscape.

Wildlife Attributes

- 2.22. Assessment of local and national Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and statutory and non-statutory wildlife site data for Berkshire indicate that a wide range of habitats and associated animal species occur within the county. Berkshire's most valuable habitats are summarised below as:
- Unimproved grasslands;
 - Broad-leaved woodlands;
 - Heathland;
 - Rivers and wetlands.
- 2.23. All of these habitats have seen significant declines throughout the county over the last 50 years as a result of changing land use patterns, notably as a result of agricultural intensification and urban development. In total some 14% of Berkshire is covered by woodland.

Unimproved Grassland:

- 2.24. The most valuable grassland habitats within the county are grasslands that are managed by traditional agricultural methods. Such grassland habitats are a scarce resource as the majority have been lost over the last 50 years to arable agriculture or 'improved' by the application of fertiliser.
- 2.25. **Chalk grassland** habitats are most prevalent in the west of the county and are associated with the sloping downland landscapes. Traditionally managed chalk grassland is a scarce and fragmented habitat - the single largest traditionally managed chalk downland area in the county (Inkpen and Walbury Hills SSSI) being only 92.4 ha in area. Despite its small size the mosaic of grassland, hedgerows and scrub present, attract large flocks of birds in the winter months including yellow hammer, chaffinch and Brambling.
- 2.26. Other important (SSSI) chalk grassland sites include Hogs Hole, Holies Down, Streatley Warren, Croker's Hole and Cleeve Hill. Croker's Hole is thought to be the last remaining location in Berkshire for the nationally scarce plant bastard toadflax (*Thesium humifusum*), while Cleeve Hill supports populations of the nationally scarce Chiltern gentian (*Gentianella germanica*) and great butterfly orchid (*Platanthera chlorantha*).
- 2.27. **Neutral unimproved grassland** meadows with a long history of traditional management are also limited in their distribution, size and number. Avery's Pightle, a species-rich unimproved meadow consisting of 24 grass species and 113 herb species, is one of only three meadows of its type in Berkshire designated as a SSSI.
- 2.28. **Acid unimproved grasslands** are mainly distributed in the south east of the county where they are found in association with heathland habitats on the acid free draining soils of the Bagshot beds.



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Berkshire - Landscape Character Assessment

Key

- Berkshire / Study Area Boundary
- Natural Area Boundary

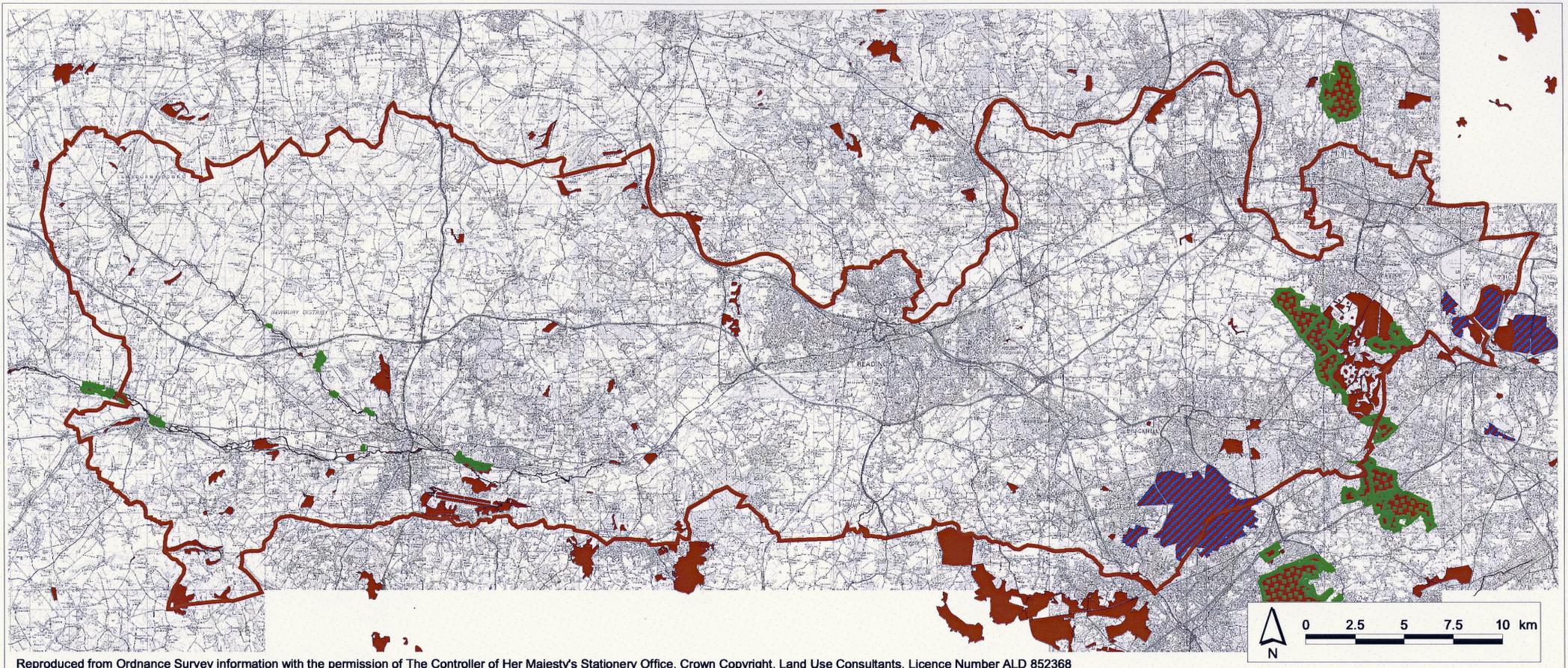
Figure 7a:

Natural Areas

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Berkshire - Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 7b:

International and National Nature Conservation Designations

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Key

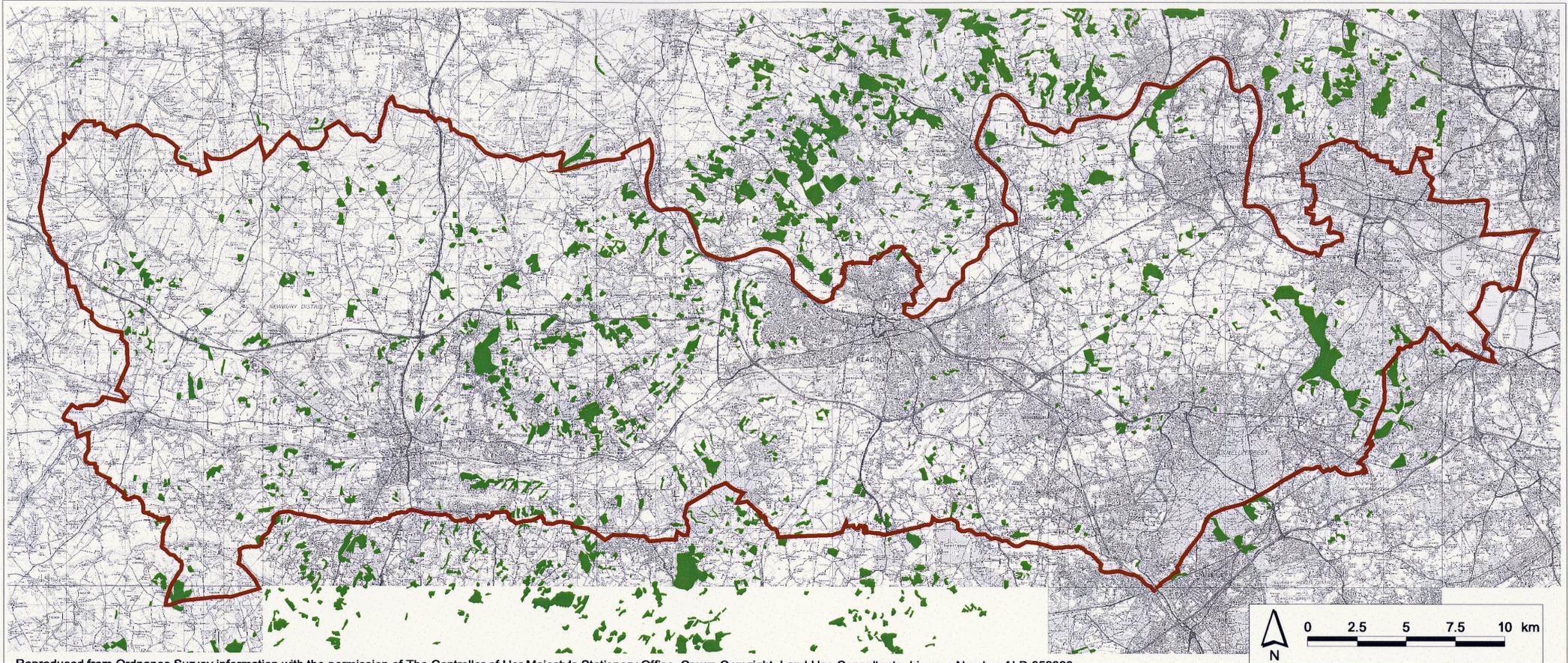
-  Berkshire / Study Area Boundary
-  pSPA/SPA (Proposed Special Protection Area and Special Protection Area)
-  cSAC (Candidate Special Area of Conservation)
-  SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest)

Source:
English Nature Website

Refer to Appendix 3 - Ramsar Site, Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Berkshire

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Berkshire - Landscape Character Assessment

Key

 Berkshire / Study Area Boundary

 Ancient Woodlands

Source:
English Nature Website

Figure 7c:

Ancient Woodlands

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- 2.29. **Damp unimproved grassland** habitats are found in association with many of the river floodplain habitats within the county, notably the river Blackwater, Lambourn, Kennet, Pang and Thames. Most of these habitats possess distinct assemblages of wetland faunal species. For example within the Blackwater Valley, a mosaic of seasonally waterlogged habitats occur and support a rich wetland invertebrate fauna. Similarly the Chilton Foliat Meadows provide an extensive system of wet neutral unimproved grassland interspersed with tall fen vegetation and scrub and make the site one of the best areas in the Kennet valley for wading birds such as snipe, redshank and lapwing.

Broad-leaved Woodland

- 2.30. **Broad-leaved woodland** is widely distributed throughout Berkshire and includes a variety of woodland types from high forest beech woodland to mixed broadleaf and coniferous woodland interspersed with heathland.
- 2.31. **Ancient broad-leaved woodlands** are also widely distributed with some of the most densely distributed being located on the valley sides of the river Pang and around Windsor to the east. Combe Wood SSSI near Frilsham (Newbury) is a good example of an ancient broad-leaf woodland possessing a variety of woodland stand types featuring oak, hazel and ash with rich ground floras including bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), dog's mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) and greater wood rush (*Luzula sylvatica*).
- 2.32. **Ancient Royal hunting forest and parkland** is also represented in the county by Windsor Forest - the largest continuous tract of woodland in Berkshire. The area supports a range of woodland habitats from coniferous and mixed plantations through to mature and ultra mature broad-leaved woodland to open parkland, with surviving remnants of the primary forest still present as ancient oak pollards that support an important range of invertebrate fauna. The nature conservation importance of Windsor Forest and parkland is reflected by its international conservation designation as a candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC).
- 2.33. **Wet woodlands** are also represented in Berkshire, and the best examples, namely the wet alder woodland habitats within the floodplain of the river Kennet are recognised as being of international nature conservation value through their designation as a cSAC.

Heathland Habitats

- 2.34. Heathland habitat is, in general, restricted in distribution to the acid free draining soils and gravels located in the south east of the county. Heathland has undergone significant historic decline in Berkshire and only small and fragmented areas still occur, often in association with golf course roughs as at Ascot Heath.
- 2.35. In addition to the heathland at Greenham Common, described above there is a particularly important area of heathland found around Sandhurst located over the Bagshot Formations. Dominated by cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*) and purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*) these wet and dry heath habitats support a diverse

assemblage of specialist invertebrate and bird species in addition to a variety of reptile species.

- 2.36. Other important heathland areas in Berkshire include Chobham Common, noted for its good range of breeding heathland birds and its specialist spider fauna and connecting into Surrey, emphasising the importance of cross-authority boundary co-operation when pursuing ecological objectives.

Rivers and Wetland Habitats

- 2.37. The main **river catchments** that occur in Berkshire are the Thames, Kennet (which includes the river Lambourn), Pang, Loddon and upper tributaries of the Colne. All of these rivers are important wildlife habitats for a diverse range of aquatic and wetland flora and fauna.
- 2.38. The Kennet and Lambourn support nationally important chalk river plant and animal assemblages and are representative of some of the most valuable spring-fed chalk rivers in the UK. Stretches of these rivers are also of international conservation importance, and form a cSAC on the basis of the nationally rare and declining Desmoulin's whorl snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*) a species that has a major stronghold in the floodplain fen habitats within these catchments.
- 2.39. Other notable riverine wildlife that can be found in Berkshire include a variety of nationally rare aquatic invertebrate and plant species including the caddis fly (*Ylode conspersus*), native crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) and Loddon pondweed (*Potamogeton nodosus*). A number of the county's rivers also support self-sustaining populations of brown trout and nationally declining mammal species, notably the water vole.
- 2.40. **Standing water and wetland habitats** within Berkshire are characterised by the flooded gravel pit complexes concentrated in the Kennet, Loddon, Blackwater and Lower Colne valleys. Typically these habitats support significant numbers of breeding and over-wintering waterfowl including pochard, goldeneye, wigeon, tufted duck, gadwall, smew and goosander, the latter four species often occurring in nationally important numbers.
- 2.41. **Reedbeds** are another conspicuous wetland habitat type in Berkshire, with Thatcham reedbeds, an extensive area of reed (*Phragmites australis*) located in the floodplain of the Kennet, representing one of the largest inland reed bed complexes in southern England. The site has an exceptional bird interest and supports specialist species including breeding reed and sedge warbler, and water rail. Uncommon visiting bird species include bittern and bearded tit.

Summary

- 2.42. Berkshire possesses an important range of grassland, woodland, heathland, aquatic and wetland habitats that support distinct assemblages of plant and animal species, many of which have high individual nature conservation value. Berkshire's flagship habitats by virtue of their national and international nature conservation value are the ancient woodland and parkland habitats of Windsor Forest, and the chalk river and wet woodland floodplain habitats of the rivers Kennet and Lambourn.

- 2.43. The importance of Berkshire's biodiversity resource is reflected in the designation of some 72 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). However, overall the ecological value of Berkshire is likely to depend heavily upon the varied rural landscape, in particular the mosaics of arable and pasture fields, hedgerows, ditches and wooded areas together with grassland verges and other localised features. Together these habitats provide refuges for wildlife that was once likely to have been more widespread and abundant throughout the county. It is important to consider that all land has a value for wildlife habitat, including intensive arable farmland. Sensitive holistic management of such areas will be essential to safeguard the biodiversity of the Berkshire landscape.
- 2.44. The best examples of Berkshire's wildlife habitats are protected by either statutory or non-statutory wildlife designations. However, sustainable protection and enhancement of these habitats will only be achieved in the long-term through landscape scale habitat creation and enhancement strategies and appropriate management of development in rural areas. Future changes in rural land use associated with changing agricultural and forestry practice in relation to economic factors must ensure consideration is given to the restoration, creation and management of habitats for the benefit of wildlife and the enjoyment of recreational users. To this end, Berkshire's Heathland Project (now no longer in operation) was a positive step in the direction of restoring the quality and distribution of a habitat which is important at a county, national and European level.

3. THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

- 3.1. Berkshire today has a diverse landscape, a reflection of its varied geology and topography and a product of its use through history. This chapter considers how humans have shaped and changed landscape character (and therefore excludes specific consideration of buried or invisible features). Since prehistoric communities first cleared the native woodland to grow their crops, each generation has inherited from its forebears an historic landscape and has, in turn, transformed it, in some cases subtly, in others more drastically. The character of today's landscape displays the indelible, if not always easily legible, imprint of past use. This overview considers the development of the landscape in terms of four thematic influences - settlement; land ownership and division; landuse; and industry, trade and communication.
- 3.2. The survival of different patterns of past human use, varies across the landscape with the higher downland areas to the west showing stronger connections to the prehistoric, with the lowland areas to the east being overlain by more recent land uses. More detailed studies including preparation of a county-wide historic landscape assessment in the future would be helpful in understanding these relationships further.
- 3.3. The following description is divided into three broad periods:
 - Prehistoric and Roman (c. 500,000 BC – AD 410)
 - Medieval (AD 410 – 1500)
 - Post Medieval and Modern (1500 – present)

The main designated sites are illustrated on **Figure 8: Scheduled Ancient Monuments** and **Figure 9: English Heritage Registered Historic Parks and Gardens**. The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for the county is a source of information at a more local level.

Prehistoric and Roman Berkshire (c. 500,000 BC – AD 410)

Settlement

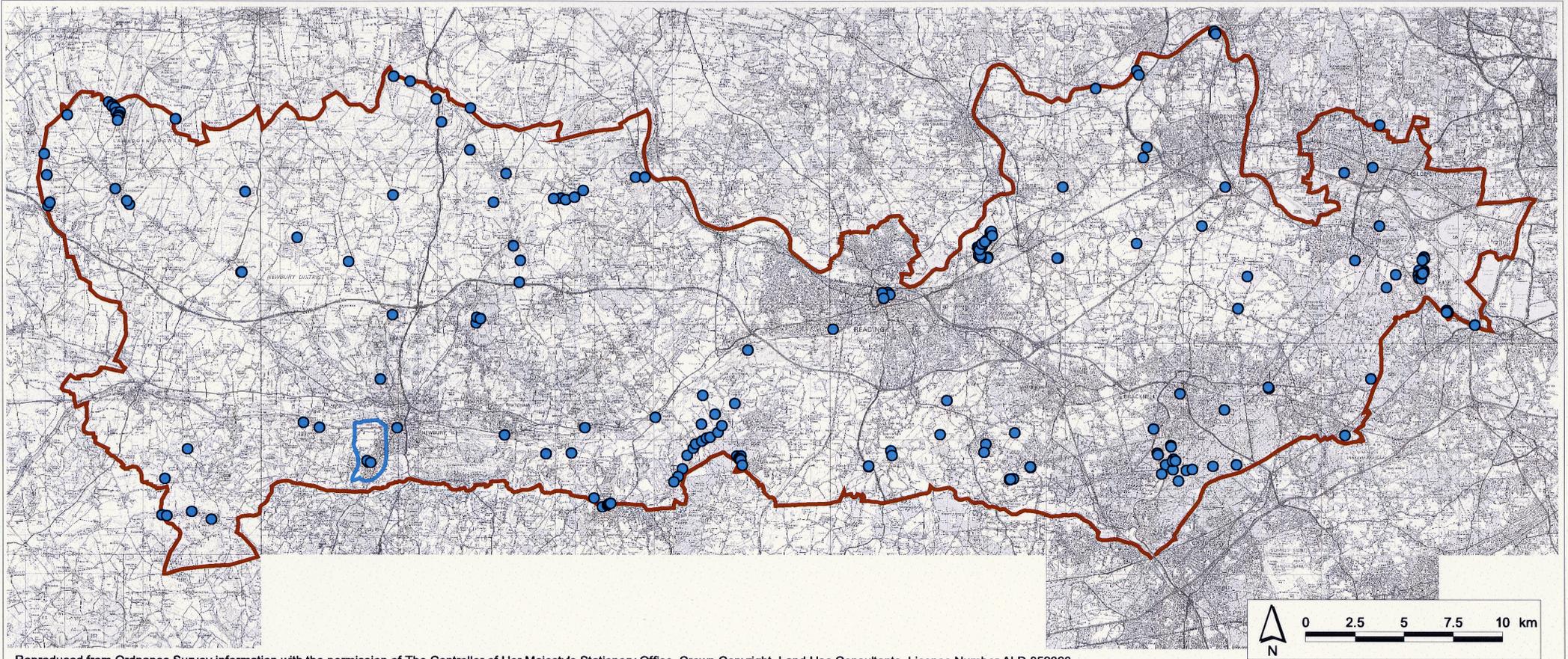
- 3.4. The present landscape is the result of almost continuous activity since the end of the last ice age (c. 10,000 BC), although there is little in the way of upstanding prehistoric or Roman settlement in Berkshire. Much of the evidence for Lower and Middle Palaeolithic activity (c. 500,000 – 30,000 BC) consists of handaxes and other flint tools redeposited on the gravel terraces of the Thames valley. Upper Palaeolithic (c. 30,000 – 8500 BC) and Mesolithic finds (c. 8500 – 4000 BC) are concentrated along the River Kennet. These late- and post-glacial hunter-gatherer populations are likely to have occupied the river valleys on a seasonal basis, building temporary structures.
- 3.5. The introduction of farming during the Neolithic (c. 4000 BC) resulted in more permanent settlement. By the Middle Bronze Age (c. 1500 BC) there were

identifiable settlements, as at Bray on the Thames, where a round house and other post-built structures were located within field and enclosure boundaries, possibly representing a family farmstead. Such settlements increased during the Late Bronze Age. A settlement at Knight's Farm, Burghfield, which covered an area of over 2 hectares, was closer to a small village.

- 3.6. Towards the end of the Bronze Age there was a shift in the focus of settlement away from the river valleys towards the higher ground. A number of large defended sites, or hillforts, were built, most of them in prominent positions on the chalk in the west of the county. Walbury Camp, for example, on the county's southern border, occupies the highest outcrop of chalk in the country, with massive ramparts enclosing some 33 hectares. Only three enclosed settlements, including the Caesar's Camp hillfort, on the heathland south of Bracknell, are known in the east of the county.
- 3.7. The development of villa estates during the Roman period may reflect the adoption of Roman forms by wealthy elements of the native population. Roman towns were located at Staines, Dorchester-on-Thames, Mildenhall and Calleva (Silchester) all beyond the present county boundaries. There was also a roadside settlement at Thatcham and a Roman posting station at Spinae (Speen), but neither would be considered as a town as these terms are generally used.

Land ownership and division

- 3.8. Although hunter-gatherers groups may have revisited sites as part of seasonal subsistence strategies, it was only with the advent of farming that social groups would have had an interest in claiming permanent territorial rights. The construction of long barrows containing human remains to symbolise ancestral ties with the land, was one way for a local community to legitimise its territorial claims. Today, these monuments are clearly visible in the landscape, and are sometimes fenced off to protect them from plough damage. The characteristic round barrows of the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age (c. 2600 – 1500 BC), clustered on the Lambourn downs, may also have had a territorial function in that they symbolically connected people and groups with the landscape they occupied.
- 3.9. From the Late Bronze Age, explicit control and ownership of land is evident in the increase in formal land boundaries, the delineation of wider territories and the construction of defended sites. The "Celtic" field systems, fragments of which are visible on the downs today as lynchets, display different levels of planning, with smaller irregular groupings indicating a more piecemeal development than the more organised and cohesive arrangements. In addition, although their dating is problematic, there are some 48 kilometres of linear earthworks, such as Grim's Ditch, dividing up larger blocks of downland, and indicating a higher level of landscape organisation and control.
- 3.10. The increasing pressure on land suggested by these features is reflected in the construction of defended sites and hillforts. Tribal power became increasingly centralised until the start of the Roman period, when the Iron Age oppidum at Silchester was replaced by the Roman town of Calleva, the *civitas* capital of the Calleva Atrebatum. The new Roman centre governed most of the county, its administrators collecting taxes and dues. However, within the rural settlements



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Berkshire - Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 8:

Scheduled Ancient Monuments of Berkshire

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Key

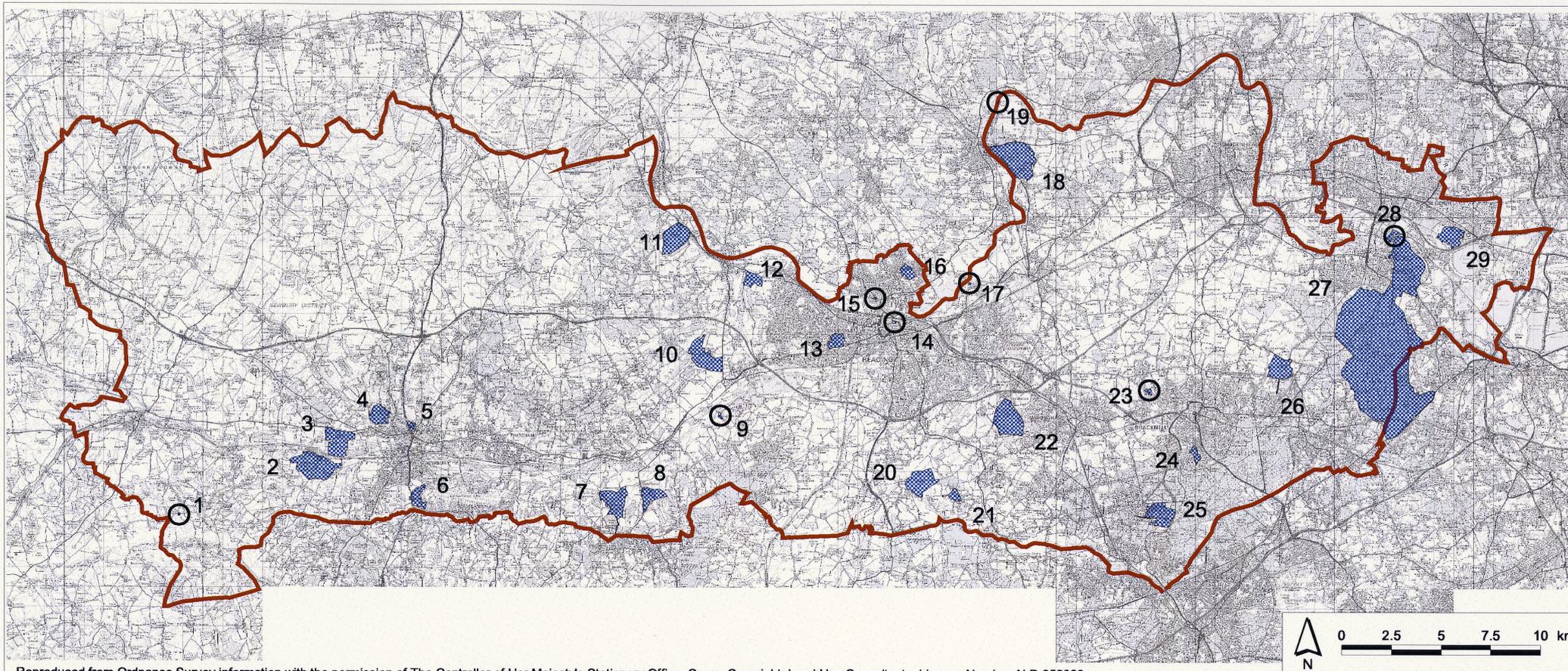
- Berkshire / Study Area Boundary
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- English Heritage Register of Battlefields

Source:
English Heritage

Note: The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for the County is a source of information at a local level

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Berkshire - Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 9:

English Heritage Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

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Key

 Berkshire / Study Area Boundary

 1 Inkpen House	 10 Englefield House	 19 Temple Island	 28 Eton College - Luxmore
 2 Hampstead Marshall	 11 Basildon Park	 20 Swallowfield Park	 29 Ditton Park
 3 Benham House	 12 Purley Hall	 21 Farley Hall	
 4 Donnington Grove	 13 Prospect Park	 22 Bearwood College	
 5 Shaw House	 14 The Forbury Garden	 23 Moor Close	
 6 Sandford Priory	 15 Caversham Park	 24 South Hill Park	
 7 Wasing Park	 16 Caversham Court	 25 Broadmoor Hospital	
 8 Aldermaston Court	 17 The Deanery	 26 Ascot Place	
 9 Folly Farm	 18 Park Place and Temple Garden	 27 Windsor Great Park	

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there seems to have been a high degree of continuity in land ownership, even on the new villa estates.

Land use

- 3.11. Mesolithic groups may have modified their landscape to attract game and stimulate the growth of plant foods. Significant woodland clearance, however, began in the Neolithic, and patterns of land use involving combinations of arable cultivation, animal husbandry and woodland management were established which continued through the prehistoric and historic periods.
- 3.12. Early farmers (like their medieval descendants) would have continued to exploit the woodland for hunting and foraging, as well as for pannage and browse, and for timber. Initially small areas would have been cleared for the cultivation of wheat and barley. Once cleared, however, the soils in the different geological zones would not all have been able to sustain cultivation to the same extent. The Lambourn long barrow was built of turf, suggesting that cultivated land on the downs had turned into rough grazing by the late Neolithic. Similarly, the land-surface buried beneath a Bronze Age round barrow at Ascot showed signs of soil degradation leading to the formation of heathland. Early clearance and cultivation, therefore, could have had significant and possibly irreversible impacts on the landscape. The location of the Ascot barrow may indicate that such monuments were sited on already marginal land, and there is evidence that some areas may have been reserved for such non-productive uses.
- 3.13. Fields, indicating intensive use of the downland, were created by repeated ploughing of clearly bounded parcels of land, but cultivation could only have been sustained by manuring or by the folding of animals. By the Iron Age, sheep had become the dominant farm animal, but new crops, including beans and oats were also grown, as well as new strains of wheat. Hillforts may have played a role in the storage and redistribution of agricultural surpluses. Intensification of agricultural production continued in the Roman period, the surpluses from the villa estates going to the developing urban centres and to the Roman army.

Industry, trade and communication

- 3.14. The recovery, from a Mesolithic site in the Kennet valley, of slate artefacts originating in Devon or Cornwall indicates that “exotic” materials were exchanged between hunter-gatherer groups. The river valleys would have provided the main communication routes between the different landscape zones they exploited. From the start of the Neolithic, the opening of the woodland landscape and greater social cohesion may have stimulated long distance exchange mechanisms, for instance in polished stone and flint axes. From the Late Neolithic, access to a wider range of exclusive materials and objects, including metalwork, was used as a sign of social status, leading to the importation, and eventually the local production, of bronze objects. The Thames valley was an important centre of production of both bronzes and pottery from the Middle Bronze Age, as well as providing a route for the movement of materials to Wessex in the west.

- 3.15. During the Iron Age and through the Roman period, in parallel with the agricultural intensification, the production of pottery, metalwork, and other materials on an “industrial” scale commenced. It may be from this period that the Ridgeway ancient track dates, facilitating the development of “trade” in place of exchange. Some authorities suggest that it has earlier origins but there is no archaeological evidence of an earlier date. The route, now a popular walking path, runs east-west across the Berkshire Downs crossing the Thames at Goring and continuing in a similar setting on the Chilterns, and possibly linking Wessex and East Anglia.
- 3.16. The Ridgeway would have cut across the network of local tracks that had evolved from the Neolithic, and it was, in turn, overlain by the Roman roads radiating out from Calleva. In Berkshire these ran east to London, west to Bath (dividing at Speen with another branch going to Cirencester), north to Dorchester-on-Thames, and possibly north-east to St. Albans. These Roman roads, the alignments of some of which are superimposed by modern roads, were determined primarily by political and military necessities, but would also have facilitated the distribution of agricultural surpluses to the urban and military centres.

Medieval Berkshire (AD 410 – 1500)

Settlement

- 3.17. The end of Roman administration coincided with an increase in Saxon settlement along the Upper Thames, and eventually into Berkshire. There is little direct evidence of early Saxon settlement, but place names containing “topographical” components are among the earliest names used by the settlers, “-ey” (island) and “-ford”, for instance, indicating settlement near water and “-dun” indicating hill tops. Concentrations in Berkshire of place names containing “-leah” (a woodland clearing) indicate settlement in a forest environment. A few place names containing “habitative” components like “-ham” (village) may also be early, indicating pre-existing settlements.
- 3.18. Most of the county’s settlements, including the main urban centres, began to take shape in the Saxon period, their concentration being higher in the west of the county than the east. The development of planned towns, however, did not start until the Norman period, those located along the major rivers and communication routes, such as Newbury, Reading and Maidenhead, growing at the expense of those with less favourable locations for trade. The exception was Wokingham, located at the centre of the wide area of poorer agricultural land and heath in the southeast of the county.

Land ownership and division

- 3.19. Following the withdrawal of the Roman administration and army, territorial rights would have been increasing difficult to uphold. Grim’s Bank (as distinct from Grim’s Ditch on the downs), a 5 kilometre linear earthwork of uncertain date, straddling the northern approaches to Silchester, may have been an attempt to maintain control of territory in the face of Saxon settlement along the Thames. The Norman Conquest, in turn, led to the replacement of Saxon landowners by a foreign, military organised aristocracy. Motte and bailey castles, as at Hamstead Marshall west of Newbury, or

at Windsor, were visible expressions of the need for continuing military control of the landscape. Later, stone castles were built at Windsor and Donnington.

- 3.20. Saxon land charters (the known examples being concentrated in the west of the county) may have formalised earlier land divisions, although the incorporation of prehistoric monuments and linear ditches need not imply continuity with prehistoric boundaries. There may also have been continuity between the boundaries of Saxon estates, the Norman manors and the ecclesiastical parishes of modern times.
- 3.21. The Domesday Book, established to record Norman land ownership, shows that in 1086 the King was the largest landholder in the county, owning the substantial estates previously held by Edward the Confessor, Queen Edith and her brother Harold II. William, therefore, possessed about two-fifths of the county's revenue and about a third of its arable land (a higher proportion than in any other county). The Church was the second largest landowner, followed by 49 lay landholders, one holding 22 manors.
- 3.22. In 1086 the Domesday Book records the population of the county as 6,160. At this time the peasant population farmed the land in communal open fields and as common pasture. However, the recession in the 14th century, and the Black Death, led to major changes in land holding. Shortage of labour led to estate lands increasingly being leased, either in their entirety as large farms, or divided into smaller units, and many labour services were commuted to money payments, a process offering some former manorial tenants a route to wealth and gentry status.
- 3.23. Overlying the manorial landholdings was the Forest system, the Forest of Windsor being mentioned in the Domesday Book. This developed in the 12th century, and by 1221 the county consisted of Windsor Forest in the east, part of Savernake Forest in the west, the rest of the county being known as the Forest of Berkshire. Forests, which included woodland, heathland, arable and pasture, and settlements, did not necessarily belong to the King, but Forest Law gave the Crown rights to exploit woodland resources, in particular to keep deer and have them hunted. The King also appointed officials (their posts often being hereditary) to administer the Law in Forest courts. There was widespread disafforestation after 1227 leaving only a reduced Windsor Forest in the east.

Land use

- 3.24. Patterns of land use established in the Saxon period continued into the Medieval period. Many Saxon land units were roughly rectilinear, spanning a diversity of resources between the valley floor and adjacent higher ground. On the downs, the distribution of "-leah" names in areas of clay-with-flint avoided by earlier farmers suggests the cultivation of previously marginal areas, while a concentration of "-feld" names ("open land") on the western edge of Windsor Forest may indicate the cultivation of former pasture.
- 3.25. Open field arable farming appears to have developed in Berkshire, the Saxon charters indicating that it was well established by the middle of the 10th century. Most of the villages in the valleys had two-field systems, with half the arable left untilled each year to be grazed by cattle and recover its fertility. The Domesday Book shows that

arable cultivation was more extensive in the west of the county, reflecting soil differences, with areas of meadow along the Thames and Kennet, and heath and woodland in the south-east.

- 3.26. Away from the downs, much of the county remained wooded in the early medieval period, and the creation of Forests is an indication of the value of woodland to all sections of the population. Forests provided deer and revenue (in the form of fines) for the King, but also timber for construction, wood for fuel, grazing for animals, and other resources for the local communities. Following the widespread disafforestation in 1227, a number of parks were created across the county, consisting of areas of inclosed manorial woodland or unimproved land, stocked with deer and used for hunting.
- 3.27. Disease, the exhaustion of marginal land and harvest failure led to agricultural recession in the 14th century, and there was a decline in arable production even before the Black Death in 1348-9, with land reverting to grass pasture.

Industry, trade and communication

- 3.28. The end of Roman administration, and the economic system it supported, led to a break in industrial production and a return to local self-sufficiency and barter. The Roman road network would have continued to be used, but new routes of communication evolved across the county, as new centres of power were established. In the medieval period road conditions, the responsibility of local lords and townships, were generally poor, and bridges often in a poor state of repair. Five new bridges were built across the Thames in Berkshire in the 13th century.
- 3.29. Much of the road traffic was generated by local markets and fairs, distributing the county's wealth of agricultural produce. Cookham was the only market (in modern Berkshire) recorded in the Domesday Book, but charters for markets increased to around twenty during the medieval period, most in the rich agricultural land in the west, and a few in the forest and heathland areas in the east of the county.
- 3.30. Berkshire's main rural industries, other than agriculture, were cloth making and timber. The principal towns in the county, including Windsor and Reading, developed due to their location exploiting trade along the Thames, with rivers providing an easier route for communication and trade than the roads. A further major stimulus to Reading's growth was the founding of Reading Abbey in 1121, which became one of the wealthiest monasteries in England, and its accumulation of holy relics made it an important centre of medieval pilgrimage. The waterways also provided power for the mills. An excavated Saxon mill of 11th century date at Old Windsor had three wheels turned by water brought along a massive channel running nearly a mile across a bend in the Thames. By 1086 the modern area of the county had some 80 mills, and the construction of weirs often led to conflict with boatmen. In 1274, Edward I ordered the Thames to be widened to aid navigation.

Post-Medieval and Modern Berkshire (1500 – Present)

Settlement

- 3.31. Urban development in the post-medieval period was focussed on those towns whose locations connected them to the wider networks of trade and communication extending beyond the county. Reading was the tenth richest town in the country, having an estimated population of 3,300 by the early 16th century, followed by Newbury with 2,500. Despite the recurrence during the 16th century of bubonic plague, a predominantly urban disease that spread along these communication routes, these numbers increased through the 17th century as people migrated to the major urban centres from the countryside and the less prosperous towns.
- 3.32. This uneven growth continued through the 18th century, the downland villages and countryside in the west becoming increasingly thinly populated, while the urban centres of the Thames and Kennet valleys continued to attract newcomers. This process accelerated during the 19th century with the combined impact of an agricultural depression and a transport revolution.
- 3.33. It was the proximity to London, however, which influenced the settlement pattern of the areas of poorer agricultural land in the south-east, the area around Ascot with its racecourse, for instance, becoming a popular place to live among the wealthy middle classes. Here, too, the railways stimulated urban development, with Bracknell growing from a village into a small town, Wokingham becoming the county's fifth largest town by 1930, and new villages being created.
- 3.34. The county's population doubled between 1931 and 1971. The post-World War II expansion of residential development, a response in part to the loss of housing in the London blitz, has, in much of the eastern part of the county, created a new urban landscape. It has also had an impact on the more rural areas to the west, now within easy reach of the expanding business landscape along the M4 corridor, particularly around Newbury and Reading. It has led to increased property values, bringing new wealth to rural settlements, but making many of them dormitory settlements for the larger towns, with a consequent loss of their former village community facilities, and the frequent conversion of farmhouses and other farm buildings into residential properties.

Land ownership and division

- 3.35. Social mobility in the post-medieval period led to changes in land ownership. In 1642 only eight of the 38 gentry families owning landed estates in the county had been rural landholders before 1500, and only one was descended directly from nobility. Many had their acquired wealth through business, professional or political activity in London, and were concerned as much with the conspicuous display of status, in the construction of their mansions and landscaping of their parks, as with agricultural production.
- 3.36. On the downs manorial control remained strong, and there was little inclosure of land until the 18th century. Elsewhere there was a gradual increase in inclosure, the common rights of manorial tenants' being extinguished in favour of private lease or ownership. In 1517 it was claimed that 1.5% of the county had been inclosed, while

an inventory of church lands showed that, by 1634, 10% of Berkshire parishes were fully inclosed. Inclosure by agreement between the landowners continued during the 17th and 18th centuries, but from 1723, when the first Berkshire Inclosure Act was passed, Parliamentary inclosure came to dominate the process, and by 1830 nearly 80% of Parliamentary inclosures in the county had been completed. This was possibly the largest single aggregate landscape change, with geometric, grid-like field shapes replacing open and informally inclosed land – a readily identifiable pattern which still dominates the character of today’s landscape.

- 3.37. There was poverty and unrest among farm labourers in the 19th century, and following the agricultural depression starting in the 1870s which saw many tenant farmers unable to pay their rent, land ownership became increasingly concentrated in the hands of the very wealthy. By 1883 just ten landowners owned some 30% of the land. In 1913, two thirds of the county’s farm holdings were less than 50 acres and accounted for less than 10% of the farmed land, and only 17% were owner occupied. This varied across the county, the small farms being mainly in the valleys and around the towns. Downland farms were larger, averaging over 750 acres, many Parliamentary inclosure boundaries being removed to create very large fields. The development of “agribusiness” in the post-war period, have led to the further concentration of agricultural land ownership, with increasing investment from outside the traditional farming sector.
- 3.38. Since World War II, few of the country houses have remained in private hands. Many have seen their estate lands being sold for housing, and the houses themselves being occupied by institutional, educational and business concerns, such as a teacher training college at Easthampstead Park, the Central Council for Physical Recreation at Bisham Abbey (now the National Sports Centre), and the police training college at Sulhamstead House.
- 3.39. During World War II, some substantial areas of land, frequently former heathland, came into government hands for military and defence purposes. In 1939 the Aldermaston estate, including the Victorian mansion, Aldermaston village, farms, and a large park was put up for sale, then requisitioned by the government, the site later being taken over by the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment. Greenham Common and other airfields were also taken over by the military during, although the ending of the Cold War has seen Greenham Common returned to civilian – recreational and business – uses.

Land use

- 3.40. In the 16th and 17th centuries, while woodland and heath still dominated the east of the county, a system of sheep and corn farming prevailed on the downlands in the west. The fertility of the open fields, producing crops of wheat and barley, was maintained by the folding of sheep in large flocks. Long sheep runs were created between existing roads, tracks and paths, often several kilometres long. This episode is reflected in the present-day field pattern where former sheep runs (shown on the OS 1st edition map) have been integrated into block fields, referred to here as “ladder-type” fields. Elsewhere, there was a variety of land uses, with common fields using two- and three-field (or more complex) rotation systems, ancient small

inclosures and more recent large inclosed fields, parkland, common pasture, subdivided meadows and open downland.

- 3.41. The 17th century saw the beginnings of agricultural innovation, Jethro Tull, an early moderniser, doing most of his work at Prosperous Farm near Shalbourn. Later, “Farmer George” (George III) experimented on his model farms in Windsor Great Park. New breeds of cattle were kept, and new crops were grown for food, fodder and industry. Water meadows were created, particularly along the Kennet between Hungerford and Reading, the remnants of which survive today, but they were not widely adopted elsewhere. It was the possibility of increasing production that accelerated the process of inclosure, with large arable fields replacing open grassland on the downs in the west, and the new regular layout of fields, roads and hedgerows transforming the visual appearance of the landscape.
- 3.42. In 1808 only 6.5% of the county was woodland, much having been cleared for cultivation with the timber frequently incorporated into local buildings (see **Aspects of the Local Vernacular**) although there were still significant areas of “waste”, corresponding to poor soils, including a large part of Windsor Forest. New plantations of Scots fir and larch were frequently created on the poorer lands and remain a feature of the sands and gravels today. Although the Kennet valley had many coppices producing barrel hoops, broom handles, sheep hurdles and other woodland products, Berkshire’s underwood industries declined in the late 19th century, as did the osier and withy beds, for basket-making, along the county’s rivers.
- 3.43. During this period many of the landed gentry were spending lavishly on their estates, transforming areas of farmland into formal gardens and landscaped parkland, often with extensive tree-planting. They also enjoyed horse racing, which started on Ascot Common in 1711 and spread through the county during the 18th century, with courses at Datchet, Maidenhead, Bulmershe Heath, Lambourn, Wash Common and Enborne Heath. Race-horse breeding and training developed in parallel, with stables in Lambourn, East Ilsley and other villages, and characteristic gallops on the downland turf.
- 3.44. The agricultural depression in the late 1870s saw a contraction of arable farming on the county’s lightest and heaviest soils, and an increase in plantation and scrub, but there was an agricultural revival by the end of the century, particularly in dairy farming. By the 1930s, the agricultural landscape was still largely influenced by soil types with arable cultivation on the downs, maintained by artificial fertilisers, with sheep, and smaller numbers of dairy cattle retained on the alluvial grassland of the Kennet valley. The clay vales to the east were characterised by small mixed farms, while the good loams on the chalk plateau to the north were ideal for nurseries and market gardening. The poorer soils along the county’s southern border were characterised by woodland and heath.
- 3.45. World War II saw a revival of agriculture for strategic purposes, after which the need to maximise production resulted in state guaranteed prices and assured markets for major agricultural products. Renewed confidence led to increased capital and technological investment, particularly in arable farming, resulting in further increases in production and the maximisation of yields, a process which continued from the 1970s following Britain’s joining the European Community. Throughout the post-war

period, however, the pressure on land has seen major changes in landuse in the east of the county, with a marked loss of farmland both to residential and commercial development, and to mineral extraction on the gravel terraces, particularly along the Thames and Kennet valleys. There has been a parallel increase in recreational and amenity facilities exploiting the county's waterways and water-bodies.

Industry, trade and communication

- 3.46. By the 17th century the road to Bristol, the main port for the United States, was one of six main post roads radiating from London. It stimulated trade around the towns along its route, the economies of Reading and Newbury being dominated by the woollen-cloth industry and, after its decline around 1650, by the malting of barley for local and London brewers. With the ever-growing traffic to the spa at Bath in the 18th century to serve, it was the first to charge a toll along its whole length to help pay for its maintenance. Another 26 Turnpike Acts were passed for Berkshire roads during the 18th century. By the late 19th century, there was an increase in the building of new roads, and upgrading of existing minor roads, particularly in the more populous east of the county.
- 3.47. The 18th century roads were ill-suited for the transportation of the bulk products of the agricultural and industrial revolutions. Navigation on the Thames was improved, and the River Kennet made navigable between Reading and Newbury by 1729. In 1794, Parliament authorised the continuation of the canal to Bristol, the work being completed in 1810. The canal was soon eclipsed by the expanding railway network in the early 19th century, dominated by the Great Western Railway from London to Bristol. Today, the railway infrastructure of main and branch lines, bridges, stations, embankments and cuttings remain significant landscape features, even though, following line closures in the 1960s, the present network is a shadow of its former self. In 1990, the canal, after years of restoration was reopened primarily as a recreational waterway.
- 3.48. With the extinction of the cloth industry, there was little local manufacture other than the woodland industries and rural servicing trades. An exception in the 19th century, however, was the flourishing of the brick industry, often close to the railway lines, particularly on the clay soils around Reading, Bracknell and Wokingham, adjacent areas of heathland providing ready sources of fuel.
- 3.49. Although renewed road congestion in the early 20th century, resulting from the advent of the motorcar, led to a proposal for a bypass around Maidenhead as early as 1927, the county's road network remained largely unchanged, with the Bath Road (A4) and the Oxford to Southampton road (A34) continuing to carry much of the county's through-traffic into the post-war period. The M4 was built outside the county by 1967, but not completed through it until 1971, and a bypass on the A34, to relieve congestion in and around Newbury, was only opened in 1998. These routes, however, have had a profound impact on the post-war industrial landscape, particularly within the eastern part of the M4 corridor, which has seen rapid expansion of business and commercial development. Landscape change has also been evident in the loss of heathland at Greenham Common and conversion to concrete military base and, more recently, restoration back to heathland with concrete being recycled to the bypass.

The Future

- 3.50. This section has illustrated that the Berkshire landscape has evolved over time in response to prevailing economic and social conditions. The landscape is not static and will continue to evolve in the future – although it is difficult to be precise about the effect of change. An understanding and recognition of intrinsic landscape character and qualities, articulated through this assessment, should help ensure that local distinctiveness is conserved and enhanced/restored and, where appropriate, encourage creation of new valued landscapes, in association with any future change.
- 3.51. This final section summarises three of the key current driving forces for change: agriculture/forestry, recreation and development. It is acknowledged that these forces cover a great variety of potential landscape change; a strategic overview is provided.

Agriculture and Forestry

- 3.52. The effects on the Berkshire landscape of post war intensification of agriculture have been described above. UK farming is currently in serious recession and this is similarly having a number of landscape and environmental consequences. It is anticipated that restructuring of the agricultural economy will see an increasing polarity in farming with, on the one extreme, large farm units seeking to increase production through achieving economies of scale and, at the other extreme, land coming out of production. In the case of the latter, it is likely that the attractive landscape combined with proximity and accessibility to urban/employment centres will see the emergence of an increased number of ‘lifestyle’ or ‘hobby’ farms, including an increase in the number of horse paddocks. On the other hand, land may be ‘set aside’ from productive agricultural management. However, with the availability of grants, services and encouragement for diversification to supplement farming income there is also likely to be the development of specialist producers to produce niche products for new markets, responding to consumer demands (such as organic produce). The challenge will be to ensure that changes in the agricultural economy secure positive management of valued landscape features and attributes, as identified by this assessment.
- 3.53. Similarly there has been a decline in the management of woods, especially those of ancient origin managed under traditional regimes, such as coppice. The main reason to this deterioration is a loss of markets for the produce from these woods originating in the replacement of wood as a fuel at the start of the Industrial Revolution. A suitable market for the lower grade material is hence crucial and opportunities to reinstate such management need to be sought in the context of finding new uses e.g. as a renewable source of energy.
- 3.54. The England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) presents significant opportunities for future management of the rural landscape. The ERDP puts in place measures of the European Commission’s Agenda 2000 and specifically those offered by the Rural Development Regulation – the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy. The objectives are to assist the adaptation and development of rural areas, economies and communities and the conservation and improvement of the rural environment. Measures supported through the ERDP include:

- **Agri-environment schemes** – including the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, which offers annual payments in support of landscape conservation. In Berkshire the introduction of new measures for the stewardship of arable land may be a particular benefit as will measures for the management and restoration of key landscapes such as waterside pastures, chalk grassland and features including pollards and hedgerows.
- **Woodland** – the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (FWPS) and Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) offer incentives for woodland creation and management and may assist in measures to increase woodland cover within the Berkshire. The landscape character assessment should help guide and prioritise areas for new woodland creation.
- **Energy Crops** – the scheme encourages farmers to plant energy crops such as miscanthus (elephant grass) and short rotation coppice. As with new woodland, such crops have the potential to create a major landscape change, and the landscape character assessment should provide a basis for making judgement on the appropriateness of different areas for this land use.
- **Rural Enterprise Scheme (RES)** – this scheme provides targeted assistance to projects that support the development of more sustainable, diversified and enterprising rural economies and communities and help protect the rural environment.

Development

- 3.55. Development is a powerful force for change in Berkshire. Pressures arise, in particular, from the expanding business economies of major urban centres such as Reading, Bracknell and Newbury. The need to accommodate new housing is one of the most pressing issues. The Berkshire Structure Plan 2001-2016 Deposit Draft incorporating changes (March 2003) states in policy H1 that provision will be made for the development of about 40,000 dwellings in accordance with Regional Planning Guidance. PPG 3 sets out national policy in relation to housing and notes the need to maintain a housing supply. It states that previously developed sites should be developed before greenfield sites. However in an area such as Berkshire there will inevitably be a demand for housing in rural areas, which can be a very visible force for change. Recognising differences in landscape character at a range of scales is essential to ensure that land management changes and decisions about new development proposals take every practical opportunity to respect and enhance the sense of place of different areas. The promotion of good design and sense of place can help ensure that any change is positive and does not result in an alteration of rural settlement character and identity due to the gradual erosion of local distinctiveness as traditional features are replaced by with standard building materials and design. There are a number of established tools such as countryside design summaries (CDS), and village design statements (VDS) that can help promote good design and have some weight in the planning process if they are adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).
- 3.56. Alongside the demand for housing is the infrastructure required to support an increased population and expanding businesses. The development of new transport infrastructure and road upgrading to accommodate increased traffic has a major

impact on the rural environment, particularly on perceptions of remoteness and tranquillity. Such routes also bring pressures for associated commercial ribbon development. Similarly energy needs in the form of new infrastructure may also have a significant landscape impact. Climate change and the Government's commitment to renewable energy under the Renewables Obligation may lead to increased demand for new forms of infrastructure, notably wind turbines, particularly on the higher, more exposed landscapes of west Berkshire or energy crops (discussed above). There is also a high demand for telecommunications infrastructure – further tall structures that similarly have the potential to be very visually intrusive. Mineral extraction, primarily sand and gravel, along the lower river valleys is a further significant force for change, although it should be noted that sympathetic restoration of these areas has resulted in the creation of important new wetland landscapes and habitats.

Tourism and Recreation

- 3.57. Tourism and recreation are potentially significant forces for change in the Berkshire landscape. The area attracts many home and overseas visitors – in particular to the recreation ‘honeypots’ of the Thames (including the Henley Regatta), the racecourse at Ascot and, not least, the Windsor and Eton Area including Windsor Castle and Great Park. The Lambourn stables and race horse training establishments are also of international renown. Visitors are also attracted to less gregarious pursuits in the West of Berkshire on the downs including the long-distance recreational footpaths such as the Ridgeway and to game fishery in the attractive river environments. However, despite this the majority of leisure users will be local residents, and, as such there will be considerable pressure on the open spaces and rural facilities located close to areas of high urban density as shown on Figure 1, including the more urbanised centres of Reading, Windsor, Maidenhead, Slough, Wokingham and Newbury. These areas are most likely to be affected by people using the landscape for recreational use. Good recreation management will be critical to maintaining a high quality landscape

Summary

- 3.58. This chapter has illustrated that Berkshire landscape has evolved and developed over time. The landscape will continue to change in the future – although landscape impacts cannot always be predicted. To a large extent the effect of change will depend on the implementation of appropriate planning and management mechanisms. A number of significant recent developments provide a strong policy framework to help manage the future direction of change. The Rural White Paper published in 2000 sets out a vision for a living, working, protected and vibrant countryside. In addition, rural development policy established by Agenda 2000 is being taken forward through the England Rural Development Plan.
- 3.59. Within this context, the Berkshire Structure Plan 2001 – 2016 Deposit Draft incorporating changes (March 2003) is currently being reviewed. The landscape character assessment will inform the new plan and provide the basis for the preparation of new policies and proposals addressing many of the above changes.

The assessment will also be used to inform the preparation of more detailed district-wide local plans, as well as the Berkshire Waste and Minerals plans.

- 3.60. The landscape character assessment and its recommendations should guide and assist the implementation of policy in Berkshire to ensure that its distinctive character, valued features and attributes are conserved for future generations.

4. BERKSHIRE LANDSCAPE TYPES AND AREAS

- 4.1. This section of the report presents the results of the landscape character assessment, drawing together information gathered from the desk study review, initial scoping consultation and the field survey.
- 4.2. Fourteen landscape types have been identified which are described in the following section the locations of which are shown on **Figure 10: Landscape Types**. These are further subdivided into a total of fifty-five potential character areas, shown on **Figure 11: Indicative Landscape Character Areas**:

Type A: Upper Valley Floor

- A1: Upper Kennet
- A2: Lambourn
- A3: Pang
- A4: Enborne

Type B: Lower River Valley

- B1: Lower Kennet
- B2: Pangbourne Thames
- B3: Reading Thames
- B4: Hurley Thames
- B5: Eton Thames
- B6: Lower Loddon
- B7: Blackwater

Type C: Lower River with Open Water

- C1: Kennet
- C2: Loddon
- C3: Maidenhead Thames
- C4: Wraybury Thames

Type D: Chalk Scarp

- D1: Walbury Hill

Type E: Open Downlands

- E1: Near Down
- E2: Upper Lambourn
- E3: Eastbury Down
- E4: Farnborough
- E5: Aldworth

Type F: Wooded Downland

- F1: Shefford
- F2: Peasemore

Type G: Farmed Chalk Mosaic

- G1: Hungerford
- G2: Froxfield
- G3: Elcot
- G4: Boxford
- G5: Winterbourne
- G6: Yattendon

Type H: Woodland and Heathland Mosaic

- H1: Inkpen
- H2: Greenham
- H3: Wickham
- H4: Cold Ash
- H5: Burghfield

Type I: Forested Sands

- I1: Crowthorne
- I2: Bracknell Forest
- I3: Sunninghill

Type J: Royal Forest

- J1: Windsor Great Park

Type K: Settled Farmlands

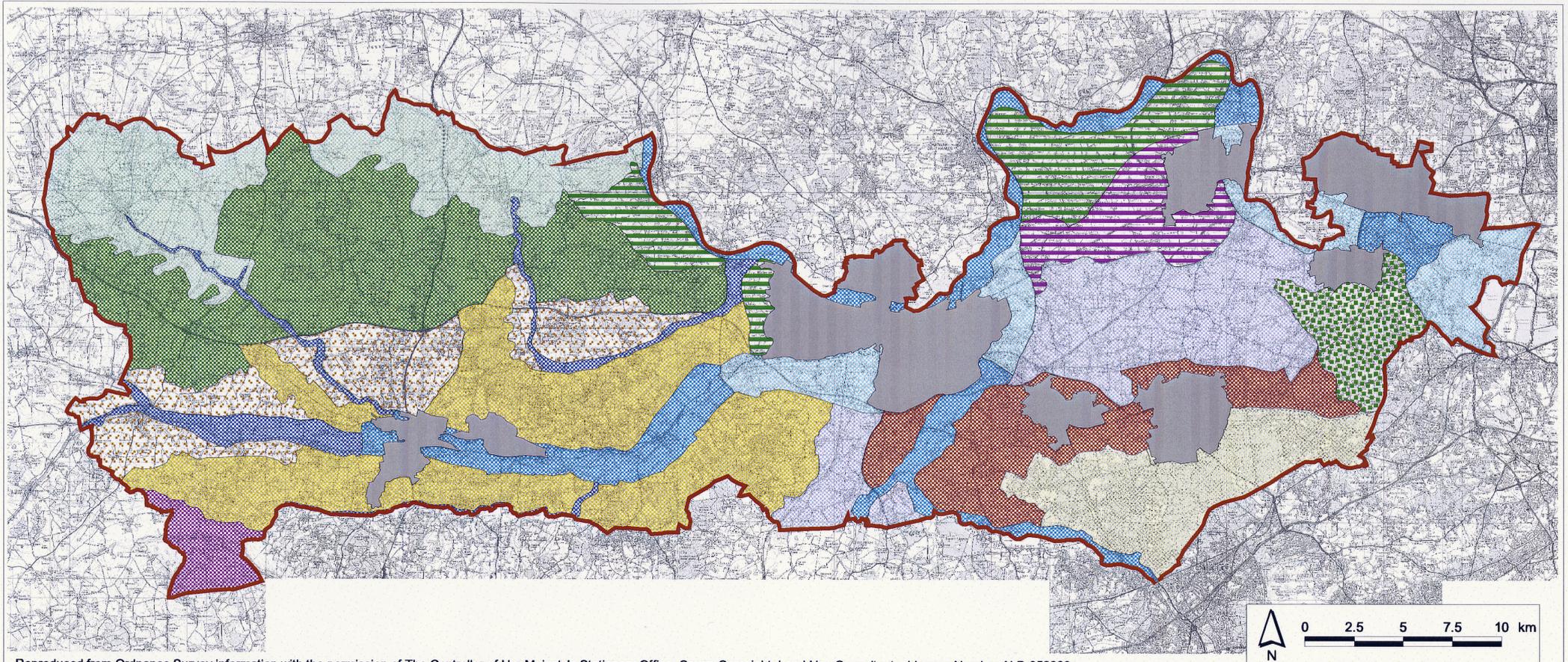
- K1: Spencers Wood
- K2: Arborfield
- K3: Wokingham
- K4: Bracknell
- K5: Ascot

Type L: Open Clay Lowlands

- L1: Shurlock Row
- L2: Bray
- L3: Maidens Green
- L4: Grazeley
- L5: Riseley

Type M: Open Chalk Lowland

- M1: Waltham



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Berkshire - Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 10:

Landscape Types

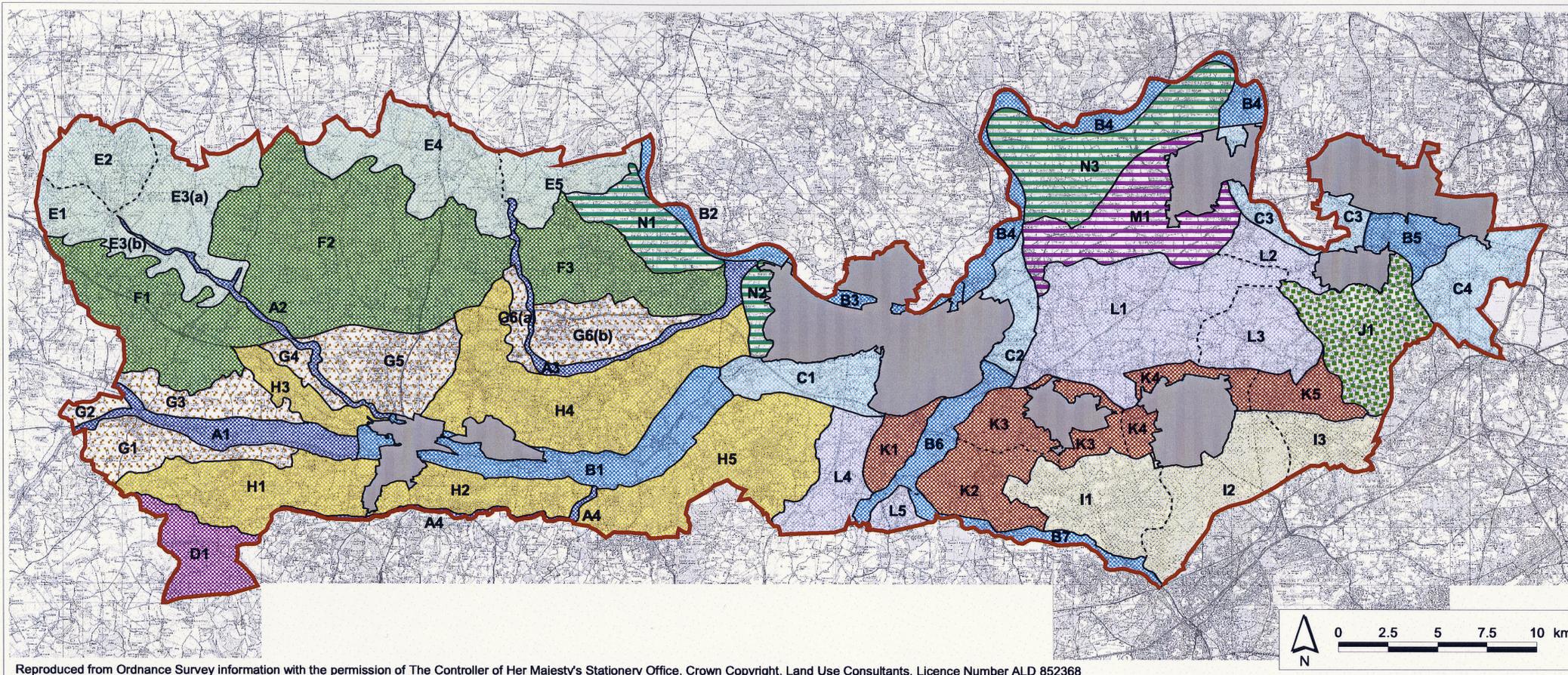
Oct 2003

Key

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
|  | Berkshire / Study Area Boundary |  | H: Woodland and Heathland Mosaic |
|  | A: Upper Valley Floor |  | I: Forested Sands |
|  | B: Lower Valley Floor |  | J: Royal Forest |
|  | C: Lower River with Open Water |  | K: Settled Farmlands |
|  | D: Chalk Scarp |  | L: Open Clay Lowlands |
|  | E: Open Downlands |  | M: Open Chalk Lowland |
|  | F: Wooded Downland |  | N: Elevated Wooded Chalk Slopes |
|  | G: Farmed Chalk Mosaic |  | Urban Areas (not assessed) |

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Berkshire - Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 11:

Indicative Landscape Character Areas

Oct 2003

<p>Key</p> <p>— Berkshire / Study Area Boundary</p> <p>- - - Indicative Character Area Boundary</p> <p>Urban Areas (not assessed)</p> <p>A: Upper Valley Floor</p> <p>A1 - Upper Kennet</p> <p>A2 - Lambourn</p> <p>A3 - Pang</p> <p>A4 - Enborne</p> <p>B: Lower Valley Floor</p> <p>B1 - Lower Kennet</p> <p>B2 - Pangbourne Thames</p> <p>B3 - Reading Thames</p> <p>B4 - Hurley Thames</p> <p>B5 - Eton Thames</p> <p>B6 - Lower Loddon</p> <p>B7 - Blackwater</p>	<p>C: Lower River with Open Water</p> <p>C1 - Kennet</p> <p>C2 - Loddon</p> <p>C3 - Maidenhead Thames</p> <p>C4 - Wraybury Thames</p> <p>D: Chalk Scarp</p> <p>D1 - Walbury Hill</p> <p>E: Open Downlands</p> <p>E1 - Near Down</p> <p>E2 - Upper Lambourn</p> <p>E3 - Eastbury Down</p> <p>E4 - Farnborough</p> <p>E5 - Aldworth</p>	<p>F: Wooded Downland</p> <p>F1 - Shefford</p> <p>F2 - Peasemore</p> <p>F3 - Ashampstead</p> <p>G: Farmed Chalk Mosaic</p> <p>G1 - Hungerford</p> <p>G2 - Froxfield</p> <p>G3 - Elcot</p> <p>G4 - Boxford</p> <p>G5 - Winterbourne</p> <p>G6 - Yattendon</p> <p>H: Woodland and Heathland Mosaic</p> <p>H1 - Inkpen</p> <p>H2 - Greenham</p> <p>H3 - Wickham</p>	<p>H continued</p> <p>H4 - Cold Ash</p> <p>H5 - Burghfield</p> <p>I: Forested Sands</p> <p>I1 - Crowthorne</p> <p>I2 - Bracknell Forest</p> <p>I3 - Sunninghill</p> <p>J: Royal Forest</p> <p>J1 - Windsor Great Park</p> <p>K: Settled Farmlands</p> <p>K1 - Spencers Wood</p> <p>K2 - Arborfield</p> <p>K3 - Wokingham</p> <p>K4 - Bracknell</p> <p>K5 - Ascot</p>	<p>L: Open Clay Lowlands</p> <p>L1 - Shurlock Row</p> <p>L2 - Bray</p> <p>L3 - Maidens Green</p> <p>L4 - Grazeley</p> <p>L5 - Riseley</p> <p>M: Open Chalk Lowland</p> <p>M1 - Waltham</p> <p>N: Elevated Wooded Chalk Slopes</p> <p>N1 - Basildon</p> <p>N2 - Sulham</p> <p>N3 - Cookham Dean</p>
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Type N: Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes

- N1: Basildon
- N2: Sulham
- N3: Cookham Dean

- 4.3. Each landscape type contains a description of the landscape including the variation between individual character areas, an evaluation of the character and condition of the landscape and presents a strategy to guide future change in the landscape including management guidelines and key considerations for appraising change.
- 4.4. The final section outlines potential mechanisms through which the landscape character assessment guidance could be taken forward and highlights organisations that may play a key role in its implementation.

Boundary and Area Definition

The Status, Meaning and Limitations of Boundary Lines

- 4.5. The precision of boundaries drawn around landscape character areas and types varies with the scale and level of detail of the assessment. This assessment has been mapped at a scale of 1:50,000 which means that it is suitable for use at this scale. The strategic nature of this study will need to be taken into account whenever the assessment is used to ensure that the level of detail is compatible with the intended application. Where available, district level assessments (undertaken at 1:25,000) should also be considered where more detailed information is required.
- 4.6. In reality landscape character does not change abruptly and the boundaries indicated in the Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment therefore often represent transitions rather than marked changes on the ground. For example the boundary between *Eastbury Down (Area E3)* and *Peasemore Wooded Downland (Area F2)* is a gradual change on the ground and the boundary on the character map suggests a more obvious change than is apparent on the ground. However, there are exceptions, for example where an obvious change in topography marks the division between the *Lambourn Upper Valley Floor (A2)* and the adjacent *Shefford Wooded Downland (Area F1)* or the *Hurley Thames Lower Valley Floor (B4)* and the *Cookham Dean Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes (N3)*.

Landscape Types and Character Areas

- 4.7. Landscape types have been identified that have broadly similar patterns of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field pattern in each area in which they occur. This does not mean that they will be identical, but that they have a common pattern of elements.
- 4.8. Each landscape type is subdivided into a number of geographically specific character areas. They share generic characteristics with other areas of the same type, but have their own particular identity or 'sense of place'. If landscape assessments were to deal only with landscape character areas the written descriptions would become very repetitive since characteristics shared by each area of the same type would be

described every time. Assessments therefore identify both types and areas. The Berkshire Landscape Assessment is focused at the landscape type level and therefore the descriptions for the character areas are short and the areas defined are indicative. A more detailed assessment, such as at the district scale may amend the boundaries of the indicative areas or even subdivide types further, for example a series of landscapes comprising chalk slopes, woodlands, plateau and pastures may be identified at the county scale as one landscape type. At the district scale the slopes may be separated from the intervening plateau area appearing as a 'type' in its own right. For the purposes of evaluation it is therefore apparent that there will be variation in the strength of character and condition between each character area of a particular type but that appraisal of the type as a whole can reveal the general trends, issues, and management considerations useful for the intended applications of a county scale assessment. More detailed assessment of character areas at the district level would yield results more suited to the finer grain of application here.

Terminology Used in the Following Descriptions

Landscape Characteristics:

- 4.9. 'Landscape Characteristics' are those combinations of elements that contribute to the character of an area. These may be both positive or negative and usually encompass both physical and human influences. The box presents bullet points summarising the fundamental characteristics, other features are picked up in the general text.

Features of Key Significance:

- 4.10. The box of 'Features of Key Significance' are those positive features that are essential to the character of an area. If these were to be changed or lost there would be significant negative consequences for the current character of the landscape.

Landscape Condition:

- 4.11. The physical state of repair of elements in the landscape and its visual or ecological integrity. Landscape condition affects landscape quality.

Strength of Character:

- 4.12. The degree to which a particular area demonstrates the defining characteristics of the landscape type to which it belongs. It is connected to distinctiveness and landscape integrity.

Landscape Strategy

- 4.13. As described in the Introduction the evaluation is based upon the quality of the landscape character (assessed as weak, moderate or strong) and an appraisal of the condition of the landscape (poor, declining or good). This evaluation was used as a basis for determining an appropriate landscape strategy for each type:

CONDITION	good	Strengthen	Conserve and Strengthen	Conserve
	declining	Strengthen and Enhance	Conserve and Enhance	Conserve and Restore
	poor	Creation	Restore and Enhance	Restore
		weak	moderate	strong
		CHARACTER		

- 4.14. This strategy approach could be considered quite prescriptive and it should be noted that the identification of a particular strategy option does not preclude the use of other strategy options - it merely indicates the dominant strategy approach that may be most suitable for the landscape in question. For example, if the dominant strategy approach is defined as to 'enhance' this does not mean that individual elements do not need to be conserved or restored. In particular, all features or areas of archaeological, ecological or historical significance should be preserved/conserved as appropriate and according to policies in the appropriate area development plans.
- 4.15. It should be noted that none of these strategies imply the need to 'freeze' the landscape, simply to guide the direction of any change or evolution and indicate sensitivities that should be considered in any change of management in order to direct it to the locations where it will have the least negative impact and provide the most positive opportunities for change. Furthermore the descriptions and evaluation are intended to provide a baseline for the development of strategies and guidance on new features or land uses (such as energy crops, windfarms and telecommunications towers).

Restore:

- 4.16. A strategy that should focus on restoration or renewal of features or characteristics that have already been lost. This strategy option is likely to apply to a landscape in poor condition, but with an existing strength of character. It is recognised that developing new or reviving old markets for products is often pivotal to reinstating management techniques that may have declined in the past and it may not be desirable or practical in all cases to reinstate techniques for their own sake.

Conserve:

- 4.17. A strategy that should focus on conserving the existing combinations of elements that make the landscape character distinctive. This strategy option is likely to apply to a landscape that is in good condition and has a strong character.

Enhance:

- 4.18. A strategy that should focus on improving the condition of key features or strengthening the defining characteristics of the landscape type to which it belongs.

Strengthen:

- 4.19. A strategy that should focus on strengthening the defining characteristics of the landscape type to which it belongs. This strategy option is likely to apply to a landscape that is in quite good condition, but lacks strength of character.

Create:

- 4.20. A strategy that provides the opportunity to create new character where it has been lost. This strategy is likely to apply to a landscape that has a weak character and is in poor condition.

Indicators:

- 4.21. It is possible to develop indicators to monitor the success of strategies and assess the impacts of landscape change. This has not been done for this assessment. It is considered that these are more usefully developed at the more-detailed district level.

Relationship of the Berkshire LCA to Published Landscape Assessments

National Level

The Countryside Character Initiative

- 4.22. The Countryside Agency has mapped the whole country into 159 separate, distinctive character areas. The features that define the landscape of each area are recorded in individual descriptions which explain what makes one area different from another and shows how that character has arisen and how it is changing. Five different Countryside Character Areas (see **Figure 2**) cover Berkshire:

- Area 110: Chilterns;
- Area 115: Thames Valley;
- Area 116: Berkshire and Marlborough Downs;
- Area 129: Thames Basin Heaths; and
- Area 130: Hampshire Downs.

4.23. The Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment reflects the broad divisions set out by the Countryside Agency. These can be loosely (non-exclusively) defined as

Countryside Agency Area and Key Characteristics	Principal Berkshire Landscape Types contributing to CA Area
<p>Area 110 Chilterns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chalk hills and plateau. • Enclosed valley landscapes. 	<p><i>Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes (N)</i></p> <p><i>Lower Valley Floor (Thames) (B).</i></p>
<p>Area 115: Thames Valley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide and flat hydrological floodplain of the river Thames. • Formal historic landscapes such as Windsor Park. • Urban influences. • Large areas of fragmented poor agricultural land. 	<p><i>Open Chalk Lowland (M);</i></p> <p><i>Lower River with Open Water (C);</i></p> <p><i>Open Clay Lowlands (L);</i></p> <p><i>Royal Forest (J);</i></p> <p><i>Settled Farmlands (K).</i></p>
<p>Area 116: Berkshire and Marlborough Downs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High, large-scale rolling chalk landscape with intensive arable farming and sites of archaeological significance. • Wooded dip slope with mixed farming. • Small hamlets clustered along fast chalk streams. • Dry valleys with combes and chalk grassland. 	<p><i>Open Downland (E);</i></p> <p><i>Upper Valley Floor (A);</i></p> <p><i>Wooded Downland (F).</i></p>
<p>Area 129: Thames Basin Heaths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse landscape • Large areas of coniferous forestry and heathland. • Heavily populated with large towns and transport corridors. 	<p><i>Farmed Chalk Mosaic (G),</i></p> <p><i>Woodland and Heathland Mosaic (H),</i></p> <p><i>Forested Sands (I),</i></p> <p><i>Settled Farmlands (K)</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well wooded with grazed pasture in parts. • Floodplain with lush wetland vegetation associated with Kennet. • Cultivated farmland and pasture with small irregular fields. 	<p><i>Lower Valley Floor (Kennet) (B).</i></p>
<p>Area 130: Hampshire Downs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly rolling landscape with scarps, hilltops and valleys with open and exposed character. • Prominent Iron Age hillforts. • Arable fields, ley pasture small woodlands including coppice. • Drove roads and trackways. 	<p><i>Chalk Scarp (D).</i></p>

County Level

Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.24. At the County level the national classification is being refined to inform landscape planning decisions at a county scale. This is the Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment. This assessment in turn provides forms a framework into which the district landscape character assessments fit.

North Wessex Downs AONB (2002)

- 4.25. The North Wessex Downs AONB Assessment was carried out (by LUC) at a similar scale of assessment to the Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment to inform management decisions within the AONB. The area within Berkshire covered by the North Wessex Downs AONB is shown on Figure 1 and can be seen to cover a wide area of the west Berkshire landscape stretching from the west of Reading to north and west of Newbury. Given the similarity in scales and methodology there is a good fit between the two assessments. However, inevitably, given the different natures of the total areas assessed (for example there being significantly more development within east Berkshire compared to the remoteness of the North Wessex Downs outside of Berkshire) there are some subtle variations in the way in which the landscape is described (for example areas described as well-settled within North Wessex Downs are considered less-densely settled within Berkshire in comparison to the urbanised areas found in the east of the county). Similarly there have been some subdivisions within the AONB landscape types at the county level to assess distinctions drawn out here.
- 4.26. Given the need for a ‘transitional’ interpretation of most boundaries (described above) some boundaries do not exactly concur with those of the AONB Assessment. In general these variations are minor. Where more significant variations are present

the reasons for this variation are described within the text of the relevant landscape types.

- 4.27. The table below indicates the relationship between the AONB areas and those presented in this assessment:

North Wessex Downs AONB LCA landscape type	Equivalent Berkshire LCA landscape type(s)
(1) Open Downland	(E) Open Downlands (N) Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes
(2) Downland with Woodland	(F) Wooded Downland (D) Chalk Scarp (N) Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes
(6) Vales	(B) Lower Valley Floor (D) Chalk Scarp
(7) River Valleys	(A) Upper Valley Floor
(8) Lowland Mosaic	(G) Farmed Chalk Mosaic (H) Woodland and Heathland Mosaic

- 4.28. The key differences are:

Landscape type 8 *Lowland Mosaic* has been subdivided at the Berkshire scale into the chalk based landscapes of the *Farmed Chalk Mosaic (G)* and the more acidic ridges of the *Woodland and Heathland Mosaic (H)*.

Landscape type 2: *Downland with Woodland* has been subdivided at the Berkshire scale into its constituent elements of *Wooded Downland (F)*, *Chalk Scarp (D)* and *Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes (N)* in order to distinguish the more rolling landscapes of the general wooded downland area from that of the dramatic scarp at Walbury Hill and the distinctive slopes overlooking the River Thames near the Goring Gap, which continue in the east of Berkshire (outside of the AONB Boundary).

There is a boundary difference between North Wessex Downs landscape types 1/2 and Berkshire types E/F in the area of South Fawley (E3/F2). This represents the transitional nature of the change from open to wooded downland where in this assessment in relation to the surrounding downlands this landscape is considered to be more 'wooded' than 'open' whereas in the North Wessex Downs assessment the reverse was true. Since the issues and considerations for development in these landscape types are similar it is not thought that this will present problems for the use of the assessment.

District Level

- 4.29. The county level assessment is capable of more detailed refinement in order to appreciate the nuances between areas of a particular landscape type:

Newbury District Landscape Character Assessment (1993)

- 4.30. A district level assessment of the former Newbury District (now West Berkshire) was published in 1993. Inevitably it is more detailed than the county level assessment and, for example, further divides the area of the Woodland and Heathland Mosaic and Farmed Chalk Mosaic landscape types into a wider range of constituent landscape types including: Plateau Edge Transitional Matrix; Wooded Lowland Farming; and Lowland Chalk with Tertiary or Gravel Deposits. This level of detail would be difficult to apply at the county scale but since these develop the types presented in this assessment further and do not contradict there is broad synergy between the two assessments.

Bracknell Forest District Landscape Character Assessment (unpublished)

- 4.31. Bracknell Forest District has undertaken but not published their Landscape Character Assessment. A draft character area map was reviewed but accompanying descriptions were not available. Again this is a more detailed assessment and the work to date does not appear to conflict with the current assessment.

Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment (ongoing)

- 4.32. Wokingham District has undertaken a district-wide assessment within the context provided by this study. A consultation draft has been published (June 2003). This is a more detailed study and (as for Newbury) divides county-level types further and refines character area boundaries.

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (ongoing)

- 4.33. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) have recently commissioned a district-wide assessment within the context of the Berkshire study. A draft was not available within the timescale of the present study. The brief from RBWM indicated that the district study should 'nest' within the strategic county study.

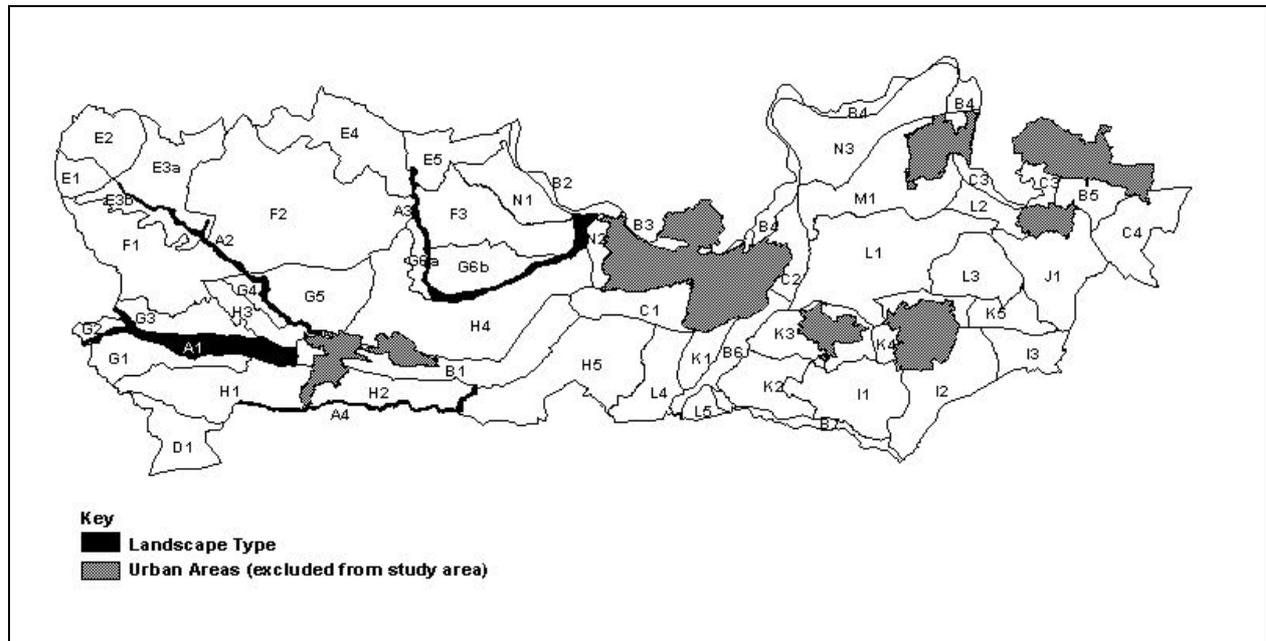
Surrounding Districts and Counties

- 4.34. Administrative boundaries seldom reflect changes in landscape character (an exception may be when a county boundary has been defined by a specific landscape feature such as a scarp slope) and therefore it is expected that landscape types would follow seamlessly into adjoining areas. A number of Landscape Character Assessments at both county and district level have been prepared that abut the boundaries of Berkshire. These include *The Landscape Plan for Buckinghamshire* (2001), and landscape character assessments undertaken by Hampshire County Council (1993) Surrey County Council (date), Hart District (1997), Borough of Basingstoke and Dean (2000) and the Vale of the White Horse (1995).

- 4.35. These district and county assessments (where published) have been considered and consultation has occurred. These do not all follow the most recent Landscape Character Assessment Guidelines published by the Countryside Agency (since most studies predate them) and have all been undertaken at various scales and are at varying stages of detail. It is impractical to describe these in any detail here.
- 4.36. Given these circumstances a direct match with adjoining character assessments is improbable and the key consideration is ensuring that there is a broad continuity of description and approach. It is not thought that there are any meaningful differences between the descriptions/boundaries of neighbouring assessments except as is necessary to describe any change in landscape character between the areas. For example the landscape types presented in Hart's landscape assessment are at a detailed scale, however, the aggregated character areas are at a similar scale to the county-level landscape types and there is a reasonable level of cross-border continuity of boundaries and descriptions between them.

PART 2:
CHARACTER OF THE BERKSHIRE LANDSCAPE

5. TYPE A: UPPER VALLEY FLOOR



Type A: Upper Valley Floor

- A1: Upper Kennet
- A2: Lambourn
- A3: Pang
- A4: Enborne

Location and Boundaries

The *Upper Valley Floor* landscape type is found in the west of Berkshire, almost entirely within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It occupies a number of narrow defined corridors, comprising the valley floors of the Rivers Lambourn, Pang, Dun, Enborne and (upper) Kennet, which incise the higher chalk downland. Together with the *Lower Valley Floor (B)* and the *Lower River with Open Water (C)* these form a branching network of river landscapes which dissect the Berkshire landscape. The boundaries of this landscape type are delineated by the extent of the valley floor as defined by the base of the valley sides. However, in practice, roads are frequently used as boundaries since these often follow the upper flooding level consequently resulting in differential land use upon the floodplain and valley sides.

TYPE A - Upper Valley Floor

Typical Characteristics of the Rural Landscape



DESCRIPTION

Landscape Character

- 5.1. The *Upper Valley Floor* is a peaceful, rural and intimate landscape typified by a well-defined lush and verdant pastoral valley floor, occasionally intermixed with arable fields. The river valleys are enclosed within predominantly arable valley sides that are incised into the surrounding landscapes of the *Open Downlands (E)*, *Wooded Downlands (F)*, *Woodland and Heathland Mosaic (H)* and *Farmed Chalk Mosaic (G)*. The clear and fast-flowing chalk rivers that meander across the valley floor are, despite being only intermittently visible, the heart of this landscape type. The rivers have a high water quality and support a diverse aquatic and marginal flora. They are frequently bordered by characteristic riparian woodland of ash, willow and alder, punctuated by planted mature avenues of poplar. In places there are also remnants of abandoned watercress beds. The pastureland adjoining the river includes areas of unimproved traditionally managed meadow and rough and hummocky permanent pasture. Remnant mature willow pollards introduce sculptural elements into the pastoral landscape and provide gathering points for cattle. The valley-floor fields are often small and enclosed by post and wire fences or gappy hedgerows. There are few roadside hedgerows remaining. The framing valley sides are defined by larger arable fields, which sometimes extend onto the valley floor.
- 5.2. Small rural roads have been constructed following the valley above the upper level of winter flooding. Numerous villages and hamlets (and the larger market town of Hungerford), have developed in the river valleys and these exhibit a variety of forms including settlements nucleated around the river crossing, linear development parallel to the river and linear villages following the roads that run perpendicularly up the valley sides. These settlements retain a strong vernacular character, with many buildings constructed of traditional building materials such as thatch, brick, sarsen stone and flint. Recreational uses, such as sports fields, are sometimes found on the valley floor associated with these areas. Within the broader valley landscape of the (upper) Kennet the Berkshire and Hampshire railway and the Kennet and Avon Canal have also been constructed.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Narrow and flat valley floodplain incised into the surrounding downland landscape.**
- **Meandering, clear and fast flowing chalk rivers** comprising the Rivers Lambourn, Pang, Enborne, (upper) Kennet and Dun.
- **Pastoral valley floor** of small fields, sometimes interspersed with larger-scale arable fields.
- **Arable valley sides** with larger fields of, predominantly, cereal crops.
- **Diverse and attractive wetland vegetation.**
- **Mosaic of water meadows** and other ecologically valuable grassland habitats.

- **Riparian wet woodland, distinctive willow pollards and poplars.**
- **Attractive, traditional vernacular settlements nestled into the valley** assuming a variety of settlement forms and materials including brick, timber frame, flint, thatch, dark weatherboarding and pantiles.
- **Parklands** extending down onto the valley floor from the adjacent landscape.

Factors Contributing to Landscape Character

Physical Influences

- 5.3. The *Upper Valley Floor* occupies a base of upper chalk, overlain by alluvial deposits that often mask the influences of the underlying chalk strata. The river channels of the Rivers Kennet, Dun, Lambourn and Pang, have cut down into the chalk, producing a gravely riverbed and exposing the distinct underlying alkaline conditions. Consequently, there is a diverse range of soils within this landscape type, which range from brown calcareous earths and argillic brown earths that are flinty and well drained to humic-alluvial gleys that are poorly drained. There are no ponds present, due to the permeability of the chalk base, although in some areas the construction of drainage ditches has extended the wetland influence away from the river channel.
- 5.4. The rivers rise at a relatively high elevation of up to around 130m AOD and flow gently downwards in a general eastward direction to around 50m AOD, where they form part of the *Lower Valley Floor (B)*. The river channel often becomes braided at lower elevation. The valley floor landform is predominantly flat to very gently shelving. However, the surrounding relatively low and steep valley sides have a strong influence on the character of the landscape and create a sense of enclosure.

Historic Environment

Historic Land Use

- 5.5. The deposition of alluvium on the valley floodplains began in the Neolithic, caused by hillwash induced by cultivation on areas of cleared downland. It continued into the medieval period, when the floodplains, subject to seasonal flooding, would have provided valuable common pasture land. This was an important component of the manorial estates' mixed farming economy, which exploited the varied landscapes of the valley floors, sides and surrounding 'uplands'.
- 5.6. Following the extensive disafforestation of the Forest of Berkshire (and that part of Savernake Forest west of Hungerford) in 1227, the crown lost its rights over hunting, timber and other resources in the area. Deer were enclosed within a number of smaller parks and these remain a feature of the upper river valleys today. Hungerford Park, for example, was created in 1246 on the edge of the Kennet valley at Hungerford. This was still in existence in 1574, covering 300 acres, but by the mid 18th century, it had become an ornamental park, one of a number of country estates with landscaped parks extending onto the valley floor, such as Barton Court, Denford Park and Benham Park on the Kennet, and Donnington Grove and Welford Park on the Lambourn.

- 5.7. In the post-medieval period water meadows were created on the Lambourn below East Garston, along the whole length of the wider upper Kennet valley and, to a lesser extent, on the Pang. These probably date from the late 17th century, but their effectiveness and quality were hampered where there was underlying peat. By the late 19th century, the water meadows had largely gone out of use and much of the floodplain was inclosed by large rectangular fields typical of Parliamentary inclosure as evidenced today, particularly along the Kennet. By the 1930s the Kennet valley was used mainly for dairy cattle, although intensive drainage methods in some parts permitted more mixed farming. The large wooded areas on the floodplains, such as along the Kennet are attributable to plantations on some of the large estates flanking the valleys.
- 5.8. The Kennet valley had been part of the main communication route between London and the west from Roman times and the Roman road to Bath via Mildenhall branched off the Silchester (Calleva)-Cirencester road at Speen. This route continued to be used in the medieval period, being part of the main London to Bristol road, the Newbury to Hungerford section becoming a Turnpike in 1726. In 1794, Parliament authorised the building of the Kennet and Avon Canal from Newbury, the work being completed in 1810 (restored and reopened in 1990). Many railways were constructed along the valleys. However, only the Berkshire and Hampshire Railway through the Kennet valley remains. The Didcot to Newbury line, along the upper Pang valley, and the branch railway line from Newbury to Lambourn have both been dismantled. During World War II, a line of defensive structures including tank obstacles, roadblocks, air raid shelters, emergency water supply tanks and concrete gun emplacements (pillboxes) was built in the Kennet valley, many of which remain. These formed part of a 'stop line' of defences intended to protect London and the country's industrial heartland of the Midlands in the event of an invasion.

Settlement Evolution

- 5.9. The early Saxon settlement of west Berkshire involved incursions from the Thames valley along the rivers Kennet, Pang and Lambourn, with the main settlements being established on or at the edge of the floodplain. The Saxon minster churches at Bradfield, Bucklebury and Compton on the Pang, and at Lambourn, are sited on the valley floor. The many Domesday settlements closely spaced along the valleys (with the exception of the Enborne valley) are in similar locations. A number of settlements, such as Bockhampton on the Lambourn, were deserted in the medieval period, surviving only as visible earthworks, but most continued as small rural settlements, interspersed with valley floor farmsteads.
- 5.10. Of the valley floor towns, Hungerford developed in the 12th century, arranged around a wide market street, its location taking advantage of ford across the Kennet, while Lambourn's continuing urban status depended on its central position within the agriculturally rich downland. Medieval fairs and markets developed at settlements along the Kennet and Lambourn, indicative of these valleys' importance as communication and trade routes, and the rivers powered many watermills.

Historic Designations

Designation	Summary
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	
Lambourn Cross (WB SAM no. 75)	Stone market cross
Bockhampton (WB SAM no. 164)	Deserted medieval village
Deserted medieval settlement (WB SAM no. 197)	Deserted medieval village (W of Compton church)
Hug Ditch Court (WB SAM no. 12029)	Moated site
Motte and bailey castles, (WB SAM no. 19010)	With fishponds and deserted medieval village
Motte in Hamstead Marshall park, (WB SAM no. 19011)	Motte, 340m NE of the dower house
English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens	
Donnington Grove (Grade II)	Mid C18th Strawberry Hill Gothic country house by John Chute surrounded by mid to late C18th pleasure grounds and landscape park.
Benham Park. (Grade II)	C18th country house with pleasure grounds and formal C19th garden terraces (possibly by William Andrews Nesfield) surrounded by a landscape park laid out by Lancelot Brown in the 1770s.

Current Rural Land Use

- 5.11. The valley landscapes are predominantly in agricultural use - principally for the grazing of cattle including some areas of traditionally managed pasture. There are also some arable fields, particularly on the wider valley floor of the River Kennet, where there are also blocks of woodland.
- 5.12. Recreation activities are evident, especially along the River Kennet and the River Dun. The Kennet and Avon Canal, in particular, is now an important recreational waterway and boat trip destination and is adjoined by towpaths used by walkers and cyclists. A recreation trail also follows the valley of the River Lambourn.
- 5.13. The valleys provide important communication routes. The A4 runs along the Kennet valley. A road running along the valley floor links the villages along the River Lambourn and is an important routeway connecting with the downland. In contrast, the road along the Pang mainly serves the dispersed farmsteads, the main communication routes in this area now taking more direct lines over higher ground. There is no road along the River Enborne.

Settlement and Building Character

- 5.14. The distinctive, regularly spaced settlements along the upper parts of the valleys are an important component of local character. The most settled valley is the Kennet, containing the largest settlement of Hungerford (part in *G1*), a market town focussed on the distinctive brick town hall. Also in the Kennet valley is Kintbury, which is distinguished by the prevalence of brick buildings with bargeboards and burnt header course detailing. Of the more rural villages, Lambourn is the largest settlement and is notable for its nucleated form around the stone church and market cross and the presence of local sarsen stones within buildings and as boundary markers. Other settlements within this landscape type tend to be smaller, characterised by concentrations of houses on the south-facing slopes and scattered linear

development on the north facing sides. A wealth of vernacular architecture within the valleys reflects the continuity of settlement and includes attractive brick, timber-framed, white painted, flint, thatched, dark weather-boarded and pantiled dwellings. The thatched cottages of the Lambourn valley are particularly picturesque. In contrast, settlement within the Enborne valley has commenced more recently and, consequently, has a more modern character.

- 5.15. Within all the valleys, the attractive environmental context and architectural quality has led to a substantial increase of population and many are now predominantly 'commuter villages'.

Nature Conservation

- 5.16. The chalk geology is a particularly important influence on the ecological character and has given rise to alkaline conditions that support diverse and uncommon assemblages of flora and fauna, as reflected by the high numbers of SSSI. The Kennet and Lambourn valleys support important wetland, woodland and grassland habitats. The chalk rivers are exceptionally rich - the River Kennet boasts the highest number of species per survey site of any 'lowland' river in Britain. There are numerous ancient woodlands within the *Upper Valley Floor*, which are also important havens for wildlife.

Nature Conservation Designations

Designation	Summary
Sites of Special Scientific Interest which are also candidate Special Areas of Conservation	
Kennet & Lambourn Floodplain 0.27ha (A1 and A2)	Floodplain, marsh and fen. Major stronghold for nationally rare Desmoulin's whorl snail. Includes areas of unimproved pasture and marsh.
Kennet Valley Alder woods (46.43 ha.) (A1)	Largest remaining fragments of damp ash-alder woodland in the Kennet floodplain.
Site of Special Scientific Interest	
River Kennet (4.70ha) (A1)	Chalk river flowing through undisturbed areas of marshy grassland, wet woodland and reed beds with highest average number of flora species per survey site of any British lowland river. Abundant aquatic invertebrates, mixed fishery and birds.
Freeman's Marsh 27.7ha (A1).	Unimproved meadow, marsh and reedbed on the River Dun with many rare plants. Important for breeding and over-wintering birds.
River Lambourn (0.74ha) (A2)	Lowland chalk river flowing through agriculturally improved pasture and arable fields, disused water meadow systems, wet pastures and woodlands.
Boxford Water Meadows (0.52ha) (A2)	Series of flood pastures and disused water meadows along the River Lambourn supporting several plant species associated with ancient meadows.
Easton Farm Meadow 1.76ha. (A2)	Neutral grassland located beside the River Lambourn. Good example of flood pasture and water meadow plant community including several species indicative of ancient meadows.
Sulham and Tidmarsh Woods & Meadows 73.8 ha (A3).	A mosaic of wet valley alderwoods (coppiced) and seasonally flooded meadows.
Boxford Chalk Pit (0.43ha) (A1)	Noted for evidence of late Cretaceous sedimentation and tectonic activity.

Character Area Descriptions

- 5.17. There are four potential subdivisions within the *Upper Valley Floor* landscape type. These character areas retain the general characteristics of the generic landscape type but vary in character locally. The following descriptions highlight these distinctions in landscape character.

A1: Upper Kennet

- 5.18. The River Kennet (and its tributary the River Dun) is the largest of all the ‘upper’ rivers with a relatively broad, flat valley floor. However, it retains an intimate character being enclosed by comparatively steep arable sides. The valley floor has a significant amount of arable farmland in addition to grazed pastures, including areas of traditionally managed meadow. The valley also has a strong wooded context, including large woodland blocks that frequently prevent views of the river, and poplars. Areas of parkland, such as at Benham, also extend onto the valley floor.
- 5.19. The Kennet valley is highly valued for its nature conservation interest and of particular importance are the Kennet Valley Alder Woods, an SSSI and cSAC, which demonstrates a full transition from dry woodland to open water. The River Kennet itself is also an important chalk river habitat – the most ecologically rich lowland chalk river in Britain.
- 5.20. The upper part of the Kennet valley is relatively sparsely settled, mainly comprising farmsteads located close to the river. However, two of the larger settlements - Hungerford and Kintbury - have developed around the River Kennet and the important town of Newbury is located within the adjoining *B1* character area. Transportation is an important feature of the *Kennet Upper Valley Floor* and the *A4* defines (and intrudes upon) the northern perimeter of this character area. The Kennet and Avon Canal is a particularly important feature and the series of locks and bridges along its length and the vibrant recreational canal boat traffic introduces colour into the landscape. Other unusual features distinct to this character area are the pillboxes and other artefacts associated with the WW2 “stop line”.

A2: Lambourn

- 5.21. The *Lambourn Upper Valley Floodplain* has a particularly rural and ‘remote’ character. The River Lambourn flows within a narrow and sharply incised valley that bisects the *Wooded Downland (F)* and *Open Downland (E)*. The landscape is predominantly in pasture and includes paddocks and other evidence of the horse racing industry, particularly near Lambourn in the north of the character area. Race horses and large horse trailers feature prominently on the local road network. The river, often hidden behind riparian woodland, is an important chalk river designated as an SSSI and floodplain cSAC. There are also important adjoining areas of watercress beds and former ‘floated’ water meadows such as those at Boxford. Overall the landscape has a strong textural quality. Although the river is too shallow for waterborne recreation the landscape is traversed by an important recreational trail known as the Lambourn Valley Way, which adopts, in parts, the line of a dismantled branch railway.
- 5.22. The settlements are a very characteristic feature of the area. They comprise small hamlets/villages of Saxon and medieval origin, regularly spaced (at approximately 2km

intervals) along the whole of the valley and include the linear and nucleated rural villages of Lambourn, Easton, East Garston, Welford, Boxford and Great Shefford, which are connected by small rural roads running parallel to the river corridor. These settlements have a very strong vernacular character with a great diversity of building materials including roofs of thatch, slate, red clay, plain and pantile and walls of timber frame with brick infill, white painted, tile hung, brick and/or sarsen stone.

A3: Pang

- 5.23. The River Pang flows through a narrow channel to join the River Thames at Pangbourne. The valley form of the Pang is less defined than that of the Lambourn or Kennet with gentle shallow valley sides and it is therefore a less conspicuous element of the wider landscape. The river itself is small and relatively invisible except at crossing points. The more gentle topographical transition to the surrounding valley sides has resulted in less differentiation of valley floor/side land use creating a relatively mixed mosaic of arable and pastoral uses. There are also areas of abandoned watercress beds. The Blue Pool, a local spring, is also an important local feature. Some areas are traditionally managed and riverside pastures are present containing remnant willow pollards and poplars. Elsewhere there are arable fields, which are divided by gappy hawthorn hedgerows and pasture and paddocks with post and wire fencing. Pig farming has recently commenced in the valley and is characterised by muddy fields enclosed within fences and with metal pighouses dotted across the landscape.
- 5.24. There are numerous small red brick farmsteads scattered throughout the Pang valley. The settlements are generally very attractive and tend to be located at the crossing of or following the river channel. The settlements include the villages of Stanford Dingley, which has many quaint brick and timber framed houses; Hampstead Norreys, which is noted for its beautiful mellow brick and tiled dwellings; and Bradfield, which has a distinctive college 'campus' (much designed by Oldrid Scott) with red brick buildings constructed using a chequered detail. Other buildings of architectural and landscape interest are the numerous large barns along the valley, several of which were powered by water for milling. The largest settlement, Pangbourne, at the confluence with the Thames is a village with an urban Victorian character. Some areas of settlement in the *Pang Upper Valley Floor* have a high proportion of more modern housing mixed within and extending around the core of older residences. There are no continuous rural road corridors along the Pang. However, the M4 crosses the Pang valley in two locations where it disturbs the landscape.

A4: Enborne

- 5.25. The Enborne defines part of the southern borders of Berkshire and is the only valley of this type that does not occur within the North Wessex Downs AONB. In contrast to other valleys of this landscape type, the geological context of the *Enborne Upper Valley Floor* comprises London Clay and river terraces, the characteristic chalk habitats are therefore absent. The river channel occupies a narrow corridor and the valley floor is not as clearly differentiated from the valley sides. However, deciduous woodlands, some of which are classified as ancient, fringe the valley enclosing the landscape and creating an intimate, even 'secretive', ambience.

- 5.26. The landscape is predominantly used for agriculture, which largely comprises small, sheep-grazed pastures surrounded by post and wire fencing. There are also pockets of arable farmland including areas that are used for the cultivation of vegetable crops (such as runner beans).
- 5.27. This landscape type was late to be settled and remains very sparsely inhabited with only a few clusters of buildings present. These include some fairly modern buildings including a number of large brick detached residences that front directly onto the river.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of Landscape Type

FEATURES OF KEY SIGNIFICANCE

- **Clear and fast flowing chalk rivers** with a natural profile.
- **Enclosing valley sides.**
- **Pastoral floodplain** with small fields and traditional features such as **willow pollards and poplars.**
- **Mosaic of ecologically important** habitats including water meadows, watercress beds and riparian woodland.
- **Attractive settlements with strong vernacular** and diversity of building materials including thatch, brick, timber frame, white painted, flint, dark weatherboard and pantiles.
- **Kennet and Avon Canal** (in the Kennet Valley).
- **Historic Parklands.**

Strength of Landscape Character

- 5.28. The landscape of the *Upper Valley Floor* has a strong and very distinctive rural character with many attractive and valuable features that are not found elsewhere in Berkshire. This includes the ecologically rich chalk rivers, pastoral valley floor, woodlands and distinct form and pattern of settlement. The landscape type contributes greatly to the diversity of the Berkshire landscape and to the North Wessex Downs AONB.

Landscape Condition

- 5.29. The condition of the *Upper Valley Floor* is generally good. However, there are signs of declining condition including, for example, the proliferation of post and wire fences around the pastoral fields, loss/over-maturity of landscape features such as the poplar avenues and pollarded willows and decline in water quality associated with siltation from soil erosion. The landscape is also dependant on sustaining grazing management within the valleys.

Key Issues

- Changing agricultural practice and mechanisation due to reduction in demand for certain products of the traditional landscape (particularly declining viability of livestock grazing) leading to habitat fragmentation and degradation of features including coppiced woodland, hedgerows, pollarded willows, poplars, water meadows and watercress beds, and increasing valley floor arable landscape decreasing variety intimacy and intactness of the landscape.
- Problems of extreme water level ranges – i.e. low flows caused by over-abstraction and (recent) flooding due to extreme weather conditions leading to pressures for unsympathetic flood alleviation schemes and riverbank engineering
- Decline in water quality and as a result of nutrient enrichment from agricultural, urban and road run-off causing damage to the aquatic and riparian habitat (in some areas high water quality has been restored).
- Demand for development, particularly for new commuter dwellings, potentially leading to encroachment onto the floodplain, changes to the traditional settlement form, dilution of vernacular character, and ‘suburbanising’ of existing rural settlements e.g. garden and driveway ‘improvements’.
- Demand for large ‘industrial’ agricultural buildings on the valley sides that affect views within the valley.
- Potential pressure for masts, poles, pylons, or other intrusive features that would lead to a decline in the rural character of the landscape.
- Pressure of additional traffic on the road network leading to loss of the peaceful rural quality and demands for unsympathetic road improvement.
- Recreational pressure, potentially leading to demand for additional facilities with associated impacts upon tranquillity and rural character.
- Potential loss of features within historic parklands due to unsympathetic management and visitor pressure.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The strategy for the *Upper Valley Floor* landscape type is to **conserve and restore** the peaceful and intimate rural character of the valley landscape with its distinctive mosaic of ecological habitats, traditional landscape features and characteristic settlement pattern. This necessitates resisting changes that would adversely affect the distinctive character and qualities and active restoration of those key features that are currently declining.

Guidelines

- 5.30. The key objectives to realise the aims of the strategy include:

Landscape Management

- Maintain the contrast between the verdant pastoral valley floor and the arable landscape of the valley sides.
- Promote active management of remaining traditional features of the agricultural landscape and continue to promote agri-environmental management, under schemes such as Countryside Stewardship, to facilitate reinstatement of lost or declining features such as poplars, pollarded willows, ditches and hedgerows.
- Consider opportunities to selectively screen existing obtrusive features (e.g. large agricultural buildings) by sympathetic tree and woodland planting.
- Conserve and manage the river landscape and seek to retain a soft and un-engineered edge.
- Conserve all important wetland habitats along the river floodplain, including meadows, wet woodland, marsh and pasture. In particular secure appropriate habitat management (e.g. coppicing, grazing etc.) and seek to extend habitats such as wet woodland and permanent pasture to reconnect small and fragmented reserves.
- Ensure appropriate management/restoration of historic landscape features, including historic parklands.
- Maintain recreational infrastructure and manage recreational pressure in order to retain the peaceful and rural quality of the valley landscape.

Managing Future Change

5.31. With regard to any future change the aim should be to maintain the characteristic settlement pattern and its relationship to the surrounding landscape. In addition to the features of key significance outlined earlier, main attributes to be considered with regard to any future change are:

- The perception of the valleys as 'remote' and rural landscapes.
- Filtered views to the rivers across open countryside.
- A natural river profile, largely free from river engineering works.
- The distinct character and identity of the settlements and their clear relationship to the surrounding landscape.
- The traditional vernacular form and design of building (scale and materials).
- The intimate character of the valleys and open cross-valley views.
- Views to open, undeveloped valley sides and crest.
- The rural character of the road and lane network.

Character Area Evaluation

A1: Upper Kennet

- 5.32. The *Kennet Upper Valley Floor* has a strong character and is in good condition. Therefore a strategy of conservation should be pursued. This should focus on the protection, management and potential restoration of the key features of the valley particularly the valuable ecological habitats, historic parkland, Kennet and Avon Canal, WW2 pillboxes, remnant hedgerows and poplar avenues. Within this context opportunities to mitigate the impact of the road network. e.g. through woodland creation should be explored.

A2: Lambourn

- 5.33. The *Lambourn Upper Valley Floor* has a very strong character and is generally in good condition although some aspects appear to be declining. Therefore, in common with the landscape type there is a need to conserve and restore the existing landscape. The main requirements are to maintain and, where possible, restore the permanent pasture, wet meadow, woodland and features of former historic land use such as watercress beds. There is also a particular need to conserve the built character and distinctive form of villages and hamlets. The adverse visual impact of paddocks should also be addressed, through sympathetic management.

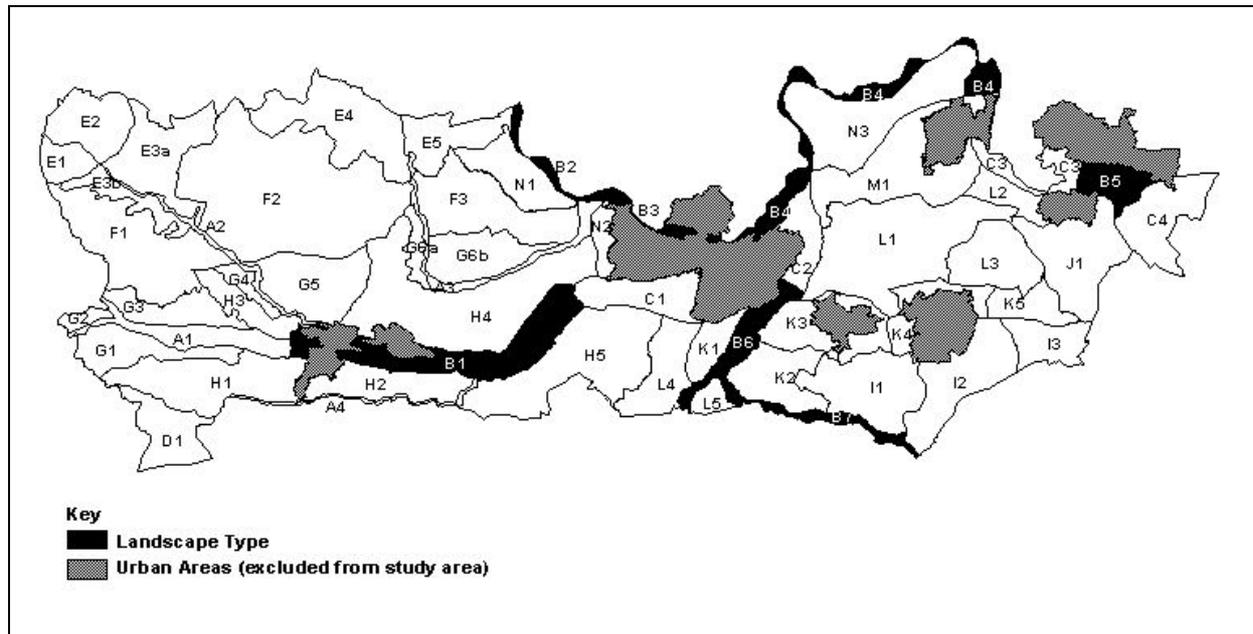
A3: Pang

- 5.34. The *Pang Upper Valley Floodplain* has a moderately strong character, although landscape condition is considered to be declining. Management is needed to ensure the survival of important landscape features and to enhance those aspects that are currently being weakened. In particular new development within the landscape should be carefully designed to avoid any potential adverse effects upon the character of the settlements. Housing pressure is a particular concern and has had adverse effects on the character of the rural roads. Restoration of the watercress beds and management of hedgerows and other traditional features is a priority. Where possible, treatments should be undertaken to reduce the impact of recent intrusive elements such as the M4 and the pig farms.

A4: Enborne

- 5.35. The *Enborne Upper Valley Floor* lacks many of the typical agricultural or ecological landscape features of this landscape type and does not have a distinctive settlement character. It is therefore considered to be of moderate to weak character. The condition of the landscape is declining due to agricultural intensification and the growth of new settlement, which follows a 'modern' style. Consequently, there is a need to strengthen and enhance the character of this landscape character area, to protect the natural quality of the floodplain and restore landscape elements and features, such as the hedgerow network.

6. TYPE B: LOWER VALLEY FLOOR



Type B: Lower Valley Floor

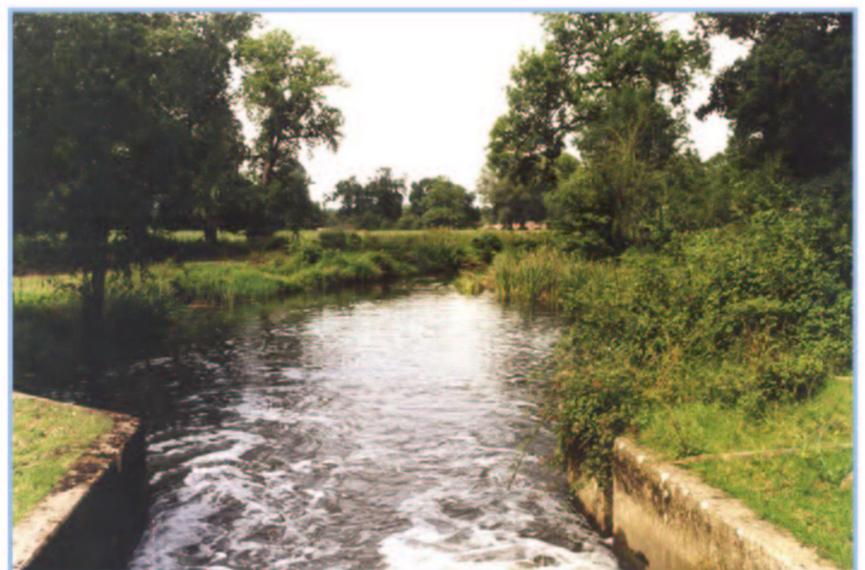
- B1: Lower Kennet
- B2: Pangbourne Thames
- B3: Reading Thames
- B4: Hurley Thames
- B5: Eton Thames
- B6: Lower Loddon
- B7: Blackwater

Location and Boundaries

The *Lower Valley Floor* landscape type occupies defined and frequently interlinked corridors of land, encompassing the valley landscapes of the Rivers Thames, Kennet, Loddon and Blackwater. The *Lower Valley Floor* shares similarities with the *Upper Valley Floor (A)* and *Lower River with Open Water (C)*, which together form a network of river landscapes within Berkshire. The landscape of the *Lower Valley Floor* is important in defining Berkshire's northern boundary. The boundary of this landscape type is defined by the perceived limit of the river floodplain as evidenced by topography and land use. Transportation corridors have characteristically been built at or near the flooding limit, resulting in differential land use on either side. These roads and rail lines have frequently been used to define boundaries.

TYPE B - Lower Valley Floor

Typical Characteristics of the Rural Landscape



DESCRIPTION

Landscape Character

- 6.1. The Rivers Thames, Loddon, Kennet, Pang and Blackwater cut through Berkshire within broad corridors of a distinctive flat and open lowland landscape. The valley floor comprises a periodically waterlogged alluvial floodplain, which supports a verdant mosaic of pastoral farmland, principally used for cattle grazing. Larger arable fields are located away from the immediate river corridor. The fields are frequently divided by gappy hedgerows and post-and-wire fences, although some areas still exhibit historic hedgerows patterns and there are remnant areas of traditionally managed unimproved pastureland that retain pollarded willows at the waterside. Many attractive wetland habitats are found within the *Lower Valley Floor* including wet meadow, reed bed and flooded gravel workings. These introduce a varied texture within the floodplain landscape and are of particular ecological importance, supporting nationally rare assemblages of flora and important wildfowl breeding sites. These include rare flora species such as Loddon Pondweed and Loddon Lilly.
- 6.2. Most rural sections of the valleys have a subtly wooded context, created by a dispersed patchwork of small deciduous farm woodlands, copses, and bankside trees on the valley floor. This quality is enhanced by the presence of woodland on the steep valley sides, from which the floodplain is clearly differentiated, and which create a sense of enclosure. Along the Thames valley at the northern boundary of the county, these valley sides comprise the dramatic chalk landscape of the Chilterns AONB, which has a strong influence on the character of this floodplain.
- 6.3. The rivers are the focus of the landscape and are wide and deep with pronounced large-scale meanders. These rivers are mostly navigable and some have adjoining navigation channels and infrastructure, including the Kennet and Avon Canal, and the locks and weirs of the River Thames, which include features of industrial archaeological interest. The rivers are extensively used for waterborne recreation and colourful boats and river barges are an important feature.
- 6.4. Most roads are located above the floodable level and there are railway lines in some valleys, such as the Thames and Kennet. There are numerous large settlements located in or around the river valleys including the urban centres of Newbury and Reading (not assessed). Within these urban areas the rivers have been engineered with characteristic hard banks and bridges. Elsewhere there is a more rural character with settlement limited to small villages and towns and generously spaced corridors of detached linear residential development. The riverside development, particularly adjacent to the Thames, includes numerous large exclusive detached residences, such as at Cookham. In addition, numerous parklands associated with valley side manors have extended down onto the valley floor.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Flat and open broad lowland floodplain** enclosed within steep valley sides.
- **Wide, deep, meandering natural river corridors** of the Kennet, Thames, Enborne and Loddon.

- **Presence of navigation channels and associated infrastructure** including the Kennet and Avon Canal.
- **Pastoral farmland** including areas of unimproved permanent pasture along the river corridor.
- **Large regular arable fields** particularly away from the immediate river channel.
- **Deciduous wooded context** created by a variety of woodlands including small farm woodlands, copses, and riverbank trees.
- **Important wetland habitats** including wet meadows, reed-beds and flooded gravel workings.
- **Important transportation networks** often parallel to the river corridor.
- **Variety of settlement forms** including **urban towns** at important river confluences, small traditional towns and villages at fording points and large prestigious detached dwellings along the river corridor.
- Presence of **historic valley edge parks** that extend onto the valley floor.

Factors Contributing to Landscape Character

Physical Influences

- 6.5. The areas of *Lower Valley Floor* occupy broad valley landscapes, the floodplains of which are defined by extensive alluvial deposits that mask the influence of the underlying, predominantly chalk, strata. The alluvial deposits are not homogeneous and the soils within the valleys therefore range from those with clayey and peaty deposits displaying gley characteristics, such as within the Kennet and Loddon valleys, to the more freely-draining brown earths of the Thames valley. All of these soil types are affected by high groundwater levels and have a propensity for short-term waterlogging which restricts their agricultural use and has resulted in a predominantly pastoral landscape.
- 6.6. The landform of the *Lower Valley Floor* is predominantly flat or gently sloping and occurs at a low elevation relative to the surrounding landform (up to 70m AOD and as low as 20m AOD). It is defined by the surrounding valley sides which impart borrowed character upon the landscape - these vary from the gently rolling sides of the lowland clay landscape to the steeper and occasionally very dramatic valley sides of the chalk scarps, such as the Chilterns in the north of the county. The principal hydrological corridor is the River Thames, which flows in an easterly direction. The Thames is joined by the River Kennet in Earley and by the River Loddon near Wargrave, and these water courses follow a northeasterly and northerly course respectively. The rivers are fairly wide and deep and meander gently. They are fairly clear but more turbid than the rivers found within the *Upper Valley Floor (A)*. The Kennet valley also has a canal – the Kennet and Avon Canal – constructed in 1727 and opened in 1729. This follows a similar course to the River Kennet, although is straighter cutting across rather than following meanders in the river. Navigation of the canals and rivers has resulted in the presence of numerous locks, weirs and sizable bridges, which are distinctive features within the landscape.

Historic Environment

Historic Land Use

- 6.7. The *Lower Valley Floor* has a long history of human use and occupation. Important Mesolithic sites are known, although these have had no impact on the development of the present landscape. The river gravels of the Thames and Kennet were largely cleared of woodland by the Late Bronze Age, and their intensive use during the Iron Age and Roman period is indicated by field systems and trackways visible as cropmarks. Formalised land division may date from the Iron Age and Roman period and it is possible that Roman land units were preserved in Saxon estates, which became the basis of medieval manors and parishes. The Rivers Thames and Blackwater formed parts of the boundaries of the Saxon shire, part of the Kingdom of Wessex. The Domesday Book records numerous mills associated with settlements along the Kennet and Thames and there were later mills on the Loddon. The rivers provided both clean water for processing the raw materials and fast flowing streams, which powered the mills. Many of the valleys were originally part of the Royal Forest of Windsor and, following disafforestation, medieval deer parks were created, particularly in the Kennet and Thames valleys.
- 6.8. In the medieval period the landscape was characterised by open fields along the river gravels and common meadow on the alluvial floodplain, although drainage may have allowed some mixed farming on the floodplain. Extensive water meadows were created along the Kennet in the post-medieval period and remnants of these remain a distinctive feature of the landscape. These were subject to spring flooding regimes, which have influenced the modern ecology. Other traditional land uses include the coppicing of willow and hazel, with both withy and osier beds noted in some valleys. In the 19th century Parliamentary inclosure of the floodplain of the Thames, Kennet and Loddon rivers led to the creation of a regular grid-like pattern of large rectangular fields. The less regular field arrangements in the Blackwater valley suggest earlier enclosure. In places such as Streatley and Remenham, boundary removal in the 20th century has subsequently created very large and open fields.
- 6.9. Additionally, the floodplains provided early channels of transportation and communication, for example a road to Bristol (now followed by the route of the A4) ran along the Kennet valley as early as 1360. The rivers, too, have been a route of trade and communication since prehistory a function continuing with the opening of the Kennet and Avon Canal in 1729 and the Berkshire and Hampshire Railway in 1847. Later noteworthy uses of the land include for military operations, as evidenced by the numerous pillboxes and other WW2 artefacts within the Kennet, Loddon, Blackwater and Thames.

Settlement Evolution

- 6.10. Settlement in the river valleys became established during the 6th and 7th centuries and, by the 10th century, urban centres were developing at Cookham (which is recorded as having a market) on the Thames, and Thatcham and Aldermaston on the Kennet. The Domesday Book in 1086 records many other settlements on the valley floor of both rivers, Newbury being created around that date, and Wargrave by the early 13th century. Newbury expanded at the expense of Thatcham and Aldermaston due to the wool and cloth trades in the medieval and post-medieval periods. Similarly Cookham and Wargrave declined as Reading developed. There

were fewer settlements along the Blackwater valley and these did not develop into towns and the valley consequently retains a more remote character. Settlements, such as Earley and Woodley also grew up on the River Loddon, with the historic crossing point of the Loddon Bridge within the town of Earley. In the medieval period rural settlement, outside the urban centres, appears to have moved away from the valley floor onto higher ground.

- 6.11. Most of the larger urban settlements in Berkshire have their origins in the lower river valleys, although have expanded out subsequently or their character has changed as a result of more recent developments. These include Reading, which developed due to the increasing trade along the Kennet valley and the influences of Reading Abbey, and the Domesday settlement of Ellintone located at the main bridging point of the Thames between London/Bristol, which developed into the modern town of Maidenhead (classified as C3 due to subsequent land use influences).

Historic Designations

Designation	Summary
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	
Cock Marsh (SM 12072)	Group of at least 4 barrows and a possible ring ditch.
Bisham Abbey (SAM 19021) (Grade I)	The Knights Templars built a preceptory here during the reign of Stephen (1135-54) it was occupied until the dissolution of the order in 1307. An Augustinian priory was founded in 1337 (on the site of the Knights Templars preceptory) and was occupied until the dissolution of 1536.
Hurley Priory (SAM 19020 (PREV SAM 63))	A Benedictine monastery was founded here in 1086 as a cell of Westminster. It remained in Benedictine hands until 1535 when it passed into secular hands.
Beaumi's Castle (SM 12018.)	Beaumi's manor held by Despenser family from c13. Licence for crenellation of house granted in 1339. Manor dismembered 1420. Water-filled moat encloses wooded area. No surface indication of manor house.
St Bartholomew's Church (SAM 154.)	Ruined church, Arborfield. Possibly dating from 13th century. Has a 19th century brick addition. Was superseded by the present church in 1863.
Moat-Sheepbridge Court (SM 12020)	Moat, utilising diverted river water to form a strong defensive site.
Sonning Cursus (SAM 178)	Two widely-spaced parallel linears visible as positive cropmarks.
(SAM 182)	Regularly formed enclosure with centrally placed simple gap entrance on NE side. Linear feature cutting across NE quarter of enclosure, Linear feature running roughly parallel to NE edge of enclosure
Litten chapel (SAM 68)	
St John the Baptist church (SAM 186)	Remains of St John the Baptist church at Ufton Green Farm
Medieval field system (SAM 190)	Medieval field system W of Woolhampton
Aldermaston lock, (SAM 192)	Aldermaston lock, Kennet and Avon Canal
Monkey Marsh Lock, Avon (SAM 193)	Monkey Marsh Lock, Kennet and Avon Canal
Cropmarks-Charfield with trackway and Ring Ditch, Starveacre Field (SAM 176).	Linear and curvilinear features forming irregular enclosures, also ring features, and dotted areas; Irregular/rectilinear enclosure, double ditched linear of irregular appearance and flat bottomed ditch (field 22) of bell barrow or urn field. Evidence for later periods of activity

Cropmarks-Straighthanger Fd (SAM 178)	Complex comprising of 2 annular features, three rectangular/square features, a trackway and a setting of parallel lines.
Cropmarks W of Milestone Av (SAM 179)	Complex of two enclosures and associated linear features.
English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens	
The Deanery, Sonning (Grade II*) (B4)	An early C20 house by Edwin Lutyens surrounded by a contemporary formal and informal garden by Lutyens with planting plans by Gertrude Jekyll.
Eton College – Provost’s, Fellows’ And Luxmoore’s Gardens (Grade II)	C15 and later school courts, gardens and park incorporating playing fields.
Swallowfield*(Grade II)	C17 and later country house with gardens and pleasure grounds, surrounded by a landscape park laid out in the C18
Park Place and Temple Combe (Grade II*)	C19 house surrounded by C18 and C19 gardens and pleasure grounds and landscape park with work in the mid to late C19 by Robert Marnock. Temple Combe developed during the late C18 lies enclosed within the Park Place Estate.
English Heritage Register of Battlefields	
Newbury Battlefield (predominantly in Character Area H1)	Large battlefield associated with first Civil War Battle of Newbury 1643.

*Also falls within Landscape Type L

Current Rural Land Use

- 6.12. Today the floodplain is dominated by a predominantly pastoral landscape of grazed fields and meadows divided by post and wire fences with some areas of more traditional enclosure provided by pollarded willows or hedgerows. Away from the immediate river corridor, there are also some large, flat, regular arable fields used for cereal production. In some areas hobby farming occurs which has led to fragmentation of the landscape. Woodland is a further important land use, although there is evidence that woodland management is declining. In some areas roadside poplar avenues punctuate the landscape. Mineral extraction has occurred in some parts of this landscape type, but to a lesser extent than landscape type C. This remains a rural landscape providing the context for areas of settlement.
- 6.13. The high quality ‘natural’ landscape of the *Lower River Valley* type, and its proximity and accessibility to the urban centres means that it is consequently valued for recreation as indicated by the presence of a significant number of caravan and camping sites. Horse racing is a significant land use in this area (e.g. Windsor race course). There are also numerous paddocks. Many river corridors (particularly associated with the canals) include towpaths, which provide access for cyclists and pedestrians and the Thames Path National Trail runs alongside the Thames. Where the river is sufficiently large and well-defined, such as on the north border along the Thames, it is used for watersports including sailing and canoeing and the Thames is famed for the Henley Regatta. The Kennet and Avon Canal is also popular for canal boating.

Settlement and Building Character

- 6.14. In the rural areas settlement has continued to consist mainly of dispersed farmsteads located on the edges of the valleys. The river corridors continue to be a focus for settlement with large centres of population at Newbury at the confluence of the upper River Kennet and River Lambourn; Reading, where the Rivers Thames and

Kennet converge; and Maidenhead and Windsor on the Thames. Smaller nucleated towns and villages are located at regular intervals along the valleys, many of which retain elements of a traditional vernacular character including Cookham and Sonning. Overall, however, there is a considerable diversity of building styles and ages within this landscape type, ranging from large 17th century and Victorian residences to twentieth century housing, including a large number of 1930's developments (mock Tudor) and more recent residential estates. Consequently, there is no sense of an overriding local vernacular. There are also concentrations of industrial areas within the valley floodplain adjacent to the urban settlements.

- 6.15. Reading (excluded from the study) is the largest settlement in the area and has expanded away from the confluence of the Rivers Thames and Kennet and now straddles the Thames river valley, localised areas of chalk and a more lowland clay landscape. It is dominated by residential estates and large commercial buildings connected by a dense urban road network. However, there are areas of more open and natural landscape retained at the fringe of the settled area and within the urban fabric as parkland (sometimes originating in historic parkland) including the grounds of large institutions such as The University of Reading. Outside of the urban areas fringe land uses dominate including golf courses. However, there are a few woodland areas retained in the landscape and these are important in providing a more natural setting and wooded context for the town.

Nature Conservation

- 6.16. The *Lower Valley Floor* includes many important natural habitats, reflected in the high number of designated nature conservation sites. Of particular importance to the character of the landscape are the wetland vegetation communities along the riparian corridors and the adjacent floodplain - including wet meadows and reed beds. These habitats support nationally rare species such as Loddon Lilly and the snakeshead fritillary. The wetlands are also important for wildfowl - breeding habitats include the large inland reedbeds, such as those found at Thatcham, and waterbodies created by human activity, such as flooded gravel workings. In addition, there are also important woodland habitats including numerous ancient woodlands. The woodland is found in small copses and blocks as well as lines of willow and alder scrub fringing the immediate river corridor. Together, these tree and woodland features impart a pleasant wooded context for the more open floodplain.

Nature Conservation Designations

Designation	Summary
Sites of Special Scientific Interest which are also candidate Special Areas of Conservation	
Thatcham Reed Bed (B1)	One of the largest inland reed bed complexes in southern England supporting important breeding warbler populations
Kennet & Lambourn Floodplain 0.27ha (A1, A2 and B1)	Floodplain, marsh and fen. Major stronghold for nationally rare Desmoulin's whorl snail. Includes areas of unimproved pasture and marsh.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	
Aldermaston Gravel Pits (23.41 ha.) (B1)	Mature flooded gravel workings surrounded by dense fringing vegetation, trees and scrub supporting important breeding bird communities.

River Kennet (B1)	Important lowland river demonstrating transition from chalk to clay river. Species-rich (most diverse lowland river in the country).
Woolhampton Reed Bed (B1)	Dense reed bed with tall fen vegetation and carr woodland notable for nesting passerine bird populations and diversity/rarity of insects.
Cock Marsh (B4 and N3)	Small area of wet alluvial grassland transitioning to calcareous grassland and clays in N3
Stanford End Mill and River Loddon (B6)	Traditionally managed waterlogged hay meadows and river important for fritillary and Loddon pondweed of which Loddon is the national stronghold. Also fishery and Desmoulin's whorl snail.
Blackwater Valley (B7)	Unimproved alluvial meadows, swamp and wet valley alderwood supporting rich plant communities including ancient grassland species.

Character Area Descriptions

- 6.17. There are seven potential subdivisions within the *Lower Valley Floor* landscape type. These character areas retain the general characteristics of the generic landscape type but vary in character locally. The following descriptions highlight these distinctions in landscape character.

B1. Lower Kennet

- 6.18. The *Kennet Lower Valley Floor* is centred on the wide valley floodplain of the River Kennet stretching from Newbury in the west to near Theale in the east, beyond which intrusive industrial activity has permanently and irreversibly changed the character of the landscape. The Kennet valley is principally an agricultural valley with wide pastoral fields flanking the immediate riverbanks, plus large open arable fields of Parliamentary origin supporting cereal crops. Newbury racecourse, located on a flat area of river floodplain, east of Newbury, is also a feature of this area. In addition there are extensive natural areas forming important wetland habitats, frequently designated as SSSIs. Many of these have their origins in the extensive commonly-owned water meadows which existed along the Kennet floodplain in the post-medieval period and adjoining areas managed for the coppicing of willow, such as the withy and osier beds at Woolhampton. Other important wildlife sites include flooded gravel extraction pits such as the SSSI at Aldermaston Gravel Pits, which is a haven for wildfowl. Mineral extraction is also taking place elsewhere, at a smaller scale than in Type C.
- 6.19. The Kennet is an important transportation corridor, being a route of communication and trade from prehistory. The opening of the Kennet and Avon Canal in 1729 halved the distance for traffic between Reading and Newbury elevating the importance of this route. Later in 1847, the Berkshire and Hampshire Railway was opened, roughly following the alignment of the river. There was a road to Bristol running along the Kennet valley as early as 1360, later called the Kings Road, the Reading to Newbury section being made a turnpike in 1728. This route is now followed by the A4 and, in part, defines the northern boundary of this area. Characteristic but over-mature poplar avenues – associated with a Roads Beautifying Association scheme of the 1930's - line the road in parts. Despite the concentration of routeways settlement is surprisingly sparse. Newbury-Thatcham (excluded from the study) is an important centre where traditional and more modern urban

development and industrial areas extend into the area and influence the character in parts. Elsewhere, settlements are limited to nucleated clusters around former mills and small edge-of-floodplain settlements such as Aldermaston and Woolhampton.

B2. Pangbourne Thames

- 6.20. The Pangbourne reach of the River Thames is located between Streatley and Pangbourne to the west of Reading and this character area extends beyond the Berkshire border into Oxfordshire. Here, the broad floodplain has a more remote and rural character compared to other areas of this landscape type. It also feels more enclosed due to 'borrowed' character from the adjoining steep enclosing bluffs of the Chilterns to the north/east and the wooded dipslope and chalk downland to the south/west, which together form the dramatic geological feature known as the Goring Gap. The floodplain is dominated by permanent pasture, although there are some areas of more open character such as around Streatley. There are also some intact meadowland – including Pangbourne Meadow – part of which is owned by the National Trust. Some positive river restoration measures have been undertaken by the Environment Agency in the area. In the east the floodplain is dominated by open water which will increase when current quarrying is completed. Transportation corridors such as a railway are important features and the Thames is popular for boating. Medium sized settlements are located at the important bridging points of Streatley-Goring and Pangbourne-Whitchurch. There is also a scattering of small farmsteads throughout the floodplain.

B3. Reading Thames

- 6.21. The majority of this character area is within the settled areas of Reading and Earley (therefore not assessed in this study). In this area the Thames includes a number of Eyots (Islands) that create a distinctive river character. The landscape in the non-urban area comprises urban fringe uses such as business parks, a sewage farm, a leisure centre and transportation corridors (road and railway). However, there are many public footpaths providing opportunities for access.

B4. Hurley Thames

- 6.22. The Hurley reach of the Thames is a long meandering corridor of land that stretches from near Sonning to Hurley and Cookham, including (on the Buckinghamshire side of the character area) the more well-known towns of Henley-on-Thames and Marlow. The landscape in this area shares many similarities with B2 on account of the enclosing scarp/dipslopes of the valley sides. There is considerable recreational use of the landscape, with numerous recreation nodes including the Thames Path (National Trail), and numerous marinas/locks for example at Hurley and Henley, which provide a base for boating activities (including the famous Henley Regatta). The presence of a large number of prestigious, detached residences, some of high architectural quality, creates a distinct ambience and sense of 'exclusivity'. Of particular note are the impressive mansions directly overlooking the river characterised by long gardens sloping down to the banks where there is often a small dock for harbouring boats. Many of these originate from the 18th century country homes of Londoners, although there are many more modern buildings of varying design.

- 6.23. The landscape is in many places well wooded creating an attractive setting to the river and the associated recreational activities. However, despite this the rural context shows some signs of decline with areas of large arable fields, enclosed by gappy hawthorn monoculture hedgerows or post and wire fences, for example at Remenham. Nevertheless, some important intact wetland habitats remain including Cock Marsh near Cookham Dean, an important chalk wet grassland, owned by the National Trust.

B5. Eton Thames

- 6.24. The Eton reach of the Thames is a short section of floodplain located between the reservoirs at Wrybury and the village of Eton Wick. This part of the Thames river corridor is also sandwiched between the urban areas of Slough and Windsor (excluded from specific consideration in this study). Much of the area is settled and it is the nature of the settlement within and adjoining this character areas that gives the landscape its distinctive character. Eton, with its famous public school, is the principal settlement and the buildings of Eton College dominate the townscape. Additionally, from the town centre there are landmark views to Windsor Castle across the Thames. Around Eton some of the floodplain has been given over to recreational use and, in particular, the green playing fields of Eton School are a feature, as is the Windsor racecourse. Also in this vicinity is the newly-constructed Thames Flood Alleviation Channel. Outside the settled area the landscape shows signs of degradation with intrusive features such as the M4 cutting through the area and adversely affecting the visual quality and rural character. The remaining arable farmland appears to be marginal, with some areas no longer in active management, and decline of associated features such as hedgerows.

B6. Lower Loddon

- 6.25. The Loddon stretches from Stanford End in the south of the county to Winnersh near Reading. It is joined near Sheepbridge by the River Blackwater (Broadwater reach). The floodplain of the Loddon is wide and flat but poorly defined because, unlike most other landscapes of this type, it is surrounded by lowland clay landscapes and consequently lacks the distinctive demarcation offered by, for example, the dramatic chalk scarp around Pangbourne.
- 6.26. The landscape of the Loddon is characteristic of its type with a high proportion of grazed pastoral floodplain, generally within small fields with intact hedgerow boundaries, with numerous small deciduous copses, many of which are of ancient origin. The valley floor is crossed by a network of small drainage channels. The *Loddon Lower Valley Floor* is more intimate and less accessible than other areas of this landscape type, and the linear transportation corridors that are a feature of many valleys are absent. It is, however, locally affected by the presence of the M4 motorway that crosses through the north of the area. Furthermore, the extensive, bridle/footpath network does not follow the river corridor, which enhances the sense of inaccessibility. The west side of the Loddon is considerably settled with the suburban area of Woodley and Earley and Winnersh with its characteristic business park floodplain development. Elsewhere settlement is restricted to nucleated clusters of settlement, including a number of hotels, associated with bridging points. A visually intrusive line of pylons dissects the valley from north to south. There is a also significant area of parkland in the Loddon valley at Swallowfield and there are a

number of high quality conservation habitats including Stanford Mill End wet meadow, an SSSI, which is a traditionally managed wet hay meadow, supporting the snake-head fritillary.

B7. Blackwater

- 6.27. The Blackwater occupies a band of landscape in the south of the county adjoining the county border. It is a quiet and pleasant landscape centred on a medium sized river, forming a somewhat forgotten rural backwater. The landscape includes pastoral fields and has a well-wooded quality comprising small fringing copses of trees, including ancient woodland. The valley is crossed by roads, and includes fording points inaccessible by motor vehicles. There are, in addition small roads running parallel with the watercourse, that define the valley floodplain. It is predominantly open water at the east end and a concentration of recreational uses are associated with a number of restored gravel workings around Trilakes Country Park/Yately Lakes providing for both passive and active pursuits. There are also accessible areas of traditionally managed wet meadowlands containing ancient grassland species, as at Shepherds Meadow within the Blackwater Valley SSSI.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of Landscape Type

Features of Key Significance

- Sense of **openness**.
- Quality of **views** to the river and to the valley sides.
- **Diverse wetland** habitat mosaic.
- **Wooded framework** created by small-scale copses and characteristic bankside trees such as willow and poplar avenues.
- Areas of 'traditional' unimproved **pastoral farmland** with pollarded willow and hedgerows.
- High **architectural quality** and **rural ambience** of the smaller river towns and villages and impact of large urban settlements such as Reading.
- Presence of **historic parkland** landscapes.

Strength of Landscape Character

- 6.28. This landscape type has a strong character with fundamental and easily-recognisable characteristics such as the pastoral floodplain and river corridor which create a strong sense of identity and suffuse the geographically distinct areas of the lowland river floodplain with a sufficient degree of uniformity to ensure each is independently recognisable as being of that particular type. Other factors such as the presence of ecologically-valuable habitats also reinforce the strong sense of character within the valleys although in some limited areas the traditional landscape has been affected by a more urban character. Note that some areas of the river valleys are within the urban areas which have not been assessed. The character of these areas is different to that related to the more rural areas of the valleys.

Landscape Condition

- 6.29. Whilst the strength of character is strong it is apparent that many of the features that contribute to character, particularly at a fine grain, are deteriorating as a result of past and ongoing forces for change in the landscape. Consequently landscape condition is declining. As a result, although many of these features, such as pollarded willows and hedgerows, are still present (to a greater or lesser extent) in some areas, their number and condition is gradually deteriorating - such that without active steps to redress the balance in time they will cease to be characteristic of the landscape and will continue to be replaced by features of arguably inferior quality (visually and ecologically) such as the replacement of hedgerows with post and wire fences.

Key Issues

- Declining viability of livestock grazing and the consequent impact upon the pastoral floodplain landscape.
- Changing agricultural practice, including an increase in hobby farms leading to changing management priorities and corresponding loss of traditional features such as rows of pollards and hedgerows.
- Potential further amalgamation and deterioration in character of arable fields as a result of changes in farming practice, including the visual impact of set aside land.
- In the past a decline in water quality and damage to the aquatic and riparian habitat as a result of nutrient enrichment due to agricultural run-off and leakage from water vessels etc. has been noted. More recently water quality has improved.
- Decline in traditional woodland management.
- Pressure for commuter housing, potentially resulting in the encroachment of suburban estate housing development onto the floodplain, outward urban sprawl from settlements and infill between large detached riverside houses.
- Increased flooding, notable particularly in autumn 2000, in areas where development has occurred on the floodplain. This may result in pressures for further flood control measures – which may be unsympathetic within the landscape.
- Demand for additional masts and poles within the floodplains or on the surrounding valley sides impinging on open ‘natural’ views.
- Potential pressure for additional gravel extraction works extending from landscape type C.
- Proliferation of pony paddocks leading to fragmentation and deterioration in the intactness of the character of the landscape.
- Increasing recreational and visitor pressure including, potentially, demand for more intrusive forms of water recreation.
- Continued management of the historic parkland resource.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall strategy for the *Lower Valley Floor* is to **conserve and restore** landscape character. This entails conservation of the open farmed character of the floodplain and its small woodland copses; seeking to restore and enhance the traditional pattern of the pastoral landscape; actively managing and seeking opportunities for the re-creation and restoration of wetland habitats of ecological importance and conservation and enhancement of the visual and recreational qualities of the river and canal landscape.

Guidelines

6.30. Broad objectives to realise the aims of the strategy include:

Landscape Management

- Conserve and seek to restore and extend the geographical area of important wetland habitats that occur along the floodplain, particularly areas of wet meadow, reed bed and marginal vegetation. The connection of small, fragmented areas of habitat should be a priority.
- Conserve a soft and un-engineered river profile and ensure high quality urban design and detailing of engineered sections within settled areas.
- Encourage conservation and restoration of permanent pasture, particularly along watercourses and encourage ecologically-beneficial management of both pasture and arable land including minimising use of fertilisers, etc.
- Promote active management of remaining features of the agricultural landscape and continue to promote the agri-environment management, under schemes such as Countryside Stewardship and local produce initiatives, to facilitate reinstatement of lost or declining features, such as pollarded willow and hedgerows.
- Manage set-aside land, paddocks and hobby farms to enhance the visual quality of the landscape, for example through restoration of boundary hedgerows to enhance wildlife value.
- Manage recreational pressure to avoid damage to important landscape or ecological characteristics or perceptual qualities.
- Conserve the balance and nature of existing woodlands and consider possibilities for small-scale woodland creation in areas where they could enhance landscape character and quality.
- Carefully consider cumulative effect of aggregate extraction and promote locally appropriate restoration schemes.
- Continue to undertake active management, and where appropriate restoration of the historic parks and gardens.

Managing Future Change

- 6.31. With regard to any future change, the aim should be to maintain the semi-natural character of the landscape and avoid changes that would affect the rural ambience of the floodplain. In addition to the features of key significance outlined earlier, main attributes to be considered with regard to any future change are:
- Characteristic settlement pattern comprising a series of discrete towns and villages plus dispersed detached dwellings along the river corridor.
 - Open and undeveloped context of the floodplain landscape.
 - Views along and from the floodplain, particularly to the adjoining valley sides.
 - Natural river form and un-engineered riverbank profile with adjoining wetland habitats and bankside vegetation.
 - Predominantly rural context of the valleys, in which mineral extraction works, such as those located in the adjoining areas of landscape type C, are largely absent.

Character Area Evaluation

- 6.32. The individual character areas have the following particular requirements:

B1. Lower Kennet

- 6.33. Overall the strength of character of this landscape is good. However, in common with other areas of this type there are threats to the condition of the landscape and the strategy for the landscape is therefore to conserve and restore landscape character of the rural areas. In particular there are opportunities for the repair and restoration of a pastoral character within large arable dominated fields, especially those close to the watercourse, and restoration of poplar avenues along the A4. The importance and sensitivity of nature conservation habitats within the character area, suggest that the restoration, linkage and management of wetland habitats should be a priority.

B2. Pangbourne Thames

- 6.34. This landscape retains a strong sense of character, although it shows evidence of declining condition. The overall strategy should be to conserve and restore the existing character. Key objectives for this landscape are restoration of the traditional small-scale pastoral landscape and ongoing management of the Pangbourne Meadows and adjacent areas. It will also be particularly important to consider and manage the impact of any land use changes affecting the dramatic scarp valley faces of the Chilterns upon this character area, particularly any encroachment by intrusive linear elements such as telecommunications masts. Further important considerations are the general need to conserve the rural even 'remote' quality of the landscape and manage the potential impacts of recreational use.

B3. Reading Thames

- 6.35. The majority of this character area is within the urban area of Reading (therefore not assessed in this study). The area is visually and physically intruded by urban fringe uses, creating a landscape of poor-moderate character and declining condition. This valley landscape is readily accessible to the urban population, and it is suggested that the overall strategy should be to conserve and restore and, where possible, enhance the landscape for the benefit of recreational uses.

B4. Hurley Thames

- 6.36. Overall the strength of character is good and the condition, although showing some decline is generally intact. The strategy should be to conserve the existing character and restore those aspects of landscape that have become weakened or fragmented and to prevent further deterioration. In particular it will be essential to manage visitors to prevent erosion and damage to fragile ecological habitats and to limit further encroachment of buildings along the river corridor, which should retain a predominantly soft and natural riverbank.

B5. Eton Thames

- 6.37. The strength of character is moderate and the condition is in decline suggesting the need to conserve and enhance the landscape structure. In particular, there are enhancement opportunities presented by the Thames flood relief scheme (e.g. for recreation and wetland habitat creation). In addition, the impact of the motorway should be managed, possibly through selective woodland screening. Consideration should also be paid to the potential alternative uses and opportunities presented by marginal agricultural landscapes, for example potential woodland creation. Consideration should be given to achieving positive integration of the adjoining urban landscapes of Windsor and, particularly, Slough into the river corridor landscape.

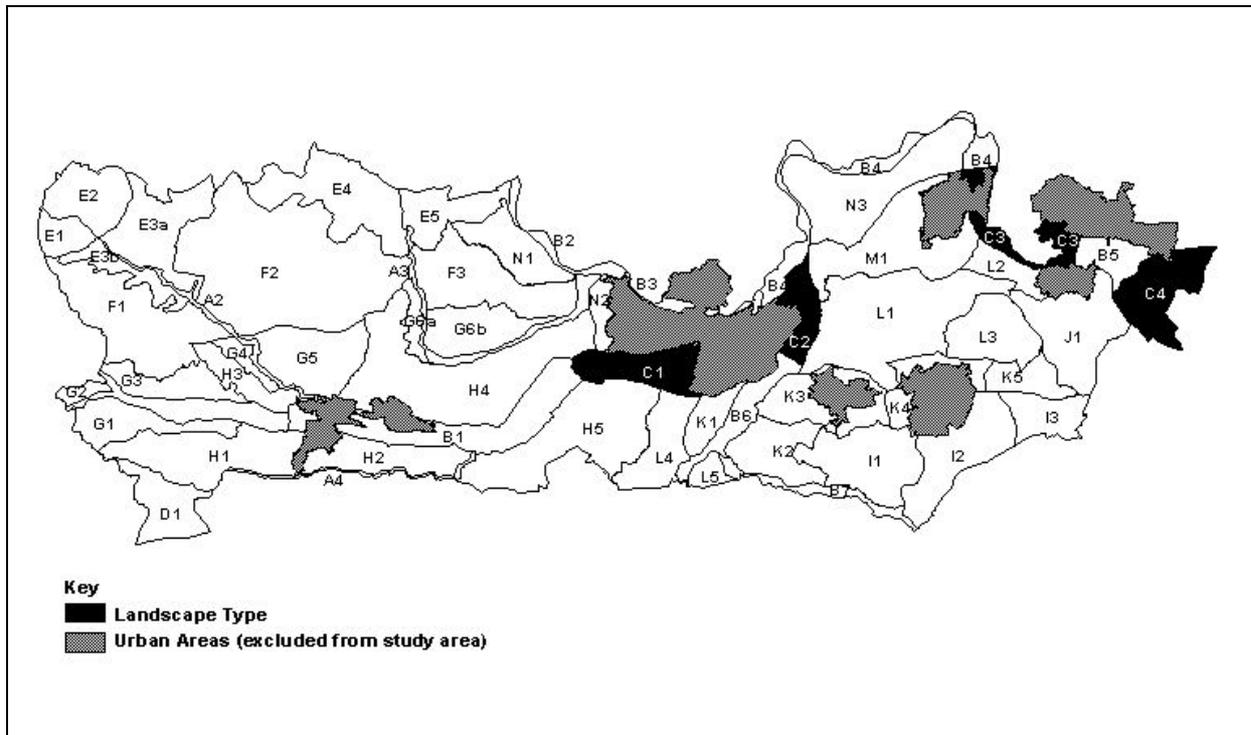
B6. Lower Loddon

- 6.38. Overall, the landscape has a strong character and its condition is good. The strategy is to conserve the Loddon landscape and, in particular, its character as an intact, rural landscape. Where any traditional elements such as pasture and riparian woodlands are under threat they should be restored and managed. There are opportunities to improve the recreational opportunities within this landscape, for example, creation of additional footpaths with access to the river and integration of areas of intrusive development, for example through appropriate woodland planting.

B7. Blackwater

- 6.39. The Blackwater has strong character and is of good condition and therefore the priority is to conserve the existing resource and its particular quality as a quiet rural landscape. This will necessitate careful management of visitor pressure. The maintenance of an open rural floodplain and the absence or screening of development will be important to retain its special perceptual quality of remoteness.

7. TYPE C: LOWER RIVER WITH OPEN WATER



Type C: Lower River with Open Water

- C1: Kennet
- C2: Loddon
- C3: Maidenhead Thames
- C4: Wraybury Thames

Location and Boundaries

The *Lower River with Open Water* Landscape Type is found in four discrete lowland areas within the valleys of the Kennet, Loddon and Thames. This landscape type is to a great extent contiguous with *Lower Valley Floor (B)*, which with the *Upper Valley Floor (A)*, forms part of the network of river landscapes within Berkshire. The landscape type is found in areas of the valley where the geological conditions have influenced human use, specifically gravel working, resulting in considerable modification of the valley character. The boundaries of this landscape type are related to the perceived limit of the river floodplain and generally follow road corridors constructed at the flooding limit to the river.

TYPE C - Lower River with Waterbodies Typical Characteristics of the Rural Landscape



DESCRIPTION

Landscape Character

- 7.1. The landscape of the *Lower River with Open Water* is centred around the valley-floor landscapes of the Rivers Kennet, Loddon and Thames. The river channels are mostly natural in profile, although some reaches within the settled areas have been engineered and urbanised, for example within Maidenhead. The landscape is characterised by a broad-scale mixture of active and restored gravel extraction plants with some water storage reservoirs within a context of marginal farmland. There are also river floodplain industries, sewage treatment works, settled areas and numerous transportation corridors.
- 7.2. The presence of large-scale gravel workings, particularly around the valley of the Kennet, has resulted in extensive degradation of large areas of landscape and consequent loss of agricultural land. Where the workings are still active, are currently being used for landfill or have been abandoned without restoration, the resultant landscape has a strong sense of dereliction due to the presence of areas of bare soil, spoil heaps and visible machinery. This is compounded by fly tipping, the presence of pylons, and road corridors such as the M4 and M25. The active workings also introduce noise into the landscape.
- 7.3. Many of the former gravel workings have been or are in the process of restoration. Some have been filled in, whilst most have been flooded to form a variety of naturalistic lakes. Many of these lakes are visible in the wider landscape, for example from the embanked sections of the motorways. However, many of the older restored gravel working landscapes are now enclosed within a peaceful wooded setting and support attractive ecologically-rich wetland habitats indicating varying stages of succession from open water, marginal vegetation and carr. Some of the restored workings now form the focus of Country Parks, such as Dinton Pastures Country Park, and are accessible for passive recreational enjoyment with public footpaths and recreational trails. Some are also used for active recreational pursuits such as boating, canoeing and jet skiing, which introduce colour, movement and interest into the landscape but also inevitably disturb the sense of tranquillity.
- 7.4. In the east of the county around Colnbrook and Wraysbury the character of the landscape is influenced by the presence of large reservoirs (some outside of Berkshire) although, frequently, the water cannot be seen. The presence of the reservoirs is indicated by steep sheep-grazed grass embankments, which create a highly artificial and angular landform.
- 7.5. There is little agricultural land remaining due to the extent of disturbance from mineral working. This has resulted in the fragmentation of the farmed landscape and the consequent abandonment or poor management of agricultural land. The remaining farmland comprises large-scale fields of arable farmland, which are largely denuded of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Few areas retain vestiges of the historic inclosure pattern. There are some remnant areas of pastoral landscape, with a more intact character, generally confined to the corridor adjacent to the river channel.

Throughout the landscape there is the perception of a wooded horizon due to the presence of distant woodland belts.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Distinct flat and open broad lowland floodplain** semi-enclosed with vegetation or by topographic variation.
- **Presence of large artificial water-bodies** comprising flooded former gravel workings and reservoirs.
- **Wide and deep meandering river channel present** but sometimes screened by bankside vegetation or landuse.
- **Navigation channels and associated infrastructure** including the Kennet and Avon Canal, locks and marinas.
- **'Industrial' landscapes** including extraction industries and sewage treatment works.
- **Areas of degraded landscape** suffering from fly-tipping.
- **Presence of large transportation corridors** cutting through or across the valley landscape.
- **Important wetland habitats** including wet woodlands, reedbeds and meadows, supporting nationally rare species of flora.
- **Active recreational landscape** based upon the rivers, canal and the restored gravel workings including sailing, canoeing, windsurfing, jet skiing and fishing.
- **Marginal agricultural land** of fragmented and degraded arable land and pasture.
- **Varied settlement pattern** with small villages, the large town of Maidenhead plus extensive areas without settlement.

Factors Contributing to Landscape Character

Physical Influences

- 7.6. The *Lower River with Open Water Landscape Type* occupies the broad and predominantly flat floodplain below 50m AOD within the valleys of the Kennet, Loddon and Thames. These 'lower' rivers are fairly wide, deep and meander gently across the floodplain. The Kennet valley has distinct valley sides that define the transition from the floodplain to the adjoining landscape. However, the Loddon and the Thames valleys are less well defined with gentler sides that merge into the surrounding landscape.
- 7.7. The geology of the floodplain comprises surface drift alluvial deposits. Beneath these are found lenses of fluvial sand and gravel deposits, which are dominated by flint clasts, formed from the weathering of the upland chalks in the west of the county. These are of great value to the construction industry and their consequent extraction has resulted in the working landscapes that are present today and the presence of large flooded former gravel workings. On the surface the soils are of variable composition ranging from slowly permeable alluvial gley (Kennet valley) and argillic

gley soils (Loddon valley) to freely draining argillic brown earths (Thames valley). All are found associated with clayey alluvial soils, which are subject to high groundwater levels and short term flooding which restricts their agricultural capabilities.

Historic Environment

Historic Land Use

- 7.8. Early use of this landscape is indicated by a Neolithic causewayed enclosure at Eton Wick which may be interpreted as tribal central place. The river gravels of the Thames and Kennet were largely cleared of woodland by the late Bronze Age, with evidence of formalised division including fields, trackways and enclosures. The later Saxon settlers would therefore have been occupying an intensively exploited landscape and it is possible that Roman land units were preserved in Saxon estates, which were the basis of medieval manors and parishes. These areas were later part of the Royal estates at Windsor and throughout the medieval period were within Windsor Forest and hence subject to Forest Law. A deerpark was created as at La Lee (Hurst) extending onto the Loddon valley floor
- 7.9. In the medieval period there were open fields on the river terraces and common meadow on the floodplain, although drainage may have allowed some mixed farming on the floodplain. However, early inclosure along the Loddon valley floor east of Reading is suggested by the irregular field pattern shown on the first edition OS maps. In contrast, along the Kennet west of Reading and the Thames (C1, C3 and C4), the valley floor was divided into fields with straight boundaries typical of 19th century Parliamentary inclosure. By the 1930s, the river valleys were dominated by dairy farming, although this has now been largely replaced by arable land and gravel working.
- 7.10. The rivers had been routes of communication and trade from prehistory, and continued as such in the medieval period, carrying agricultural products, such as wool and malt, from Reading to London. This trend continued with the opening of the River Kennet navigation in 1729; The Berkshire and Hampshire Railway in 1847, and the Waterloo to Windsor line the following year. However, in contrast to other river landscapes, due to the meandering course of the Thames between Windsor and Reading, the main roads did not follow the line of the river and apart from those roads cutting across the valley, most roads are rural routes connecting villages and smaller hamlets. The greatest influence on the modern landscape has been the large-scale gravel extraction which began in the 1930s, and has resulted in the creation of large flooded gravel pits.

Settlement Evolution

- 7.11. The Saxon settlement of Berkshire appears to have involved incursions along the Thames into the Kennet valley during the 6th and 7th centuries, with early settlements at Wraysbury and Old Windsor.
- 7.12. By the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042-66) Windsor had become a Royal residence, and the reference in the Domesday Book to 25 hage (urban plots) may refer to the settlement that serviced the Royal manor. From 1110, when Henry I

transferred the residence to Windsor Castle, the focus of settlement moved to New Windsor which achieved borough status in 1155. There were a number of other Domesday settlements such as Bray and Ellintone on the Thames, the latter developing into the town of Maidenhead in the 13th century at the main bridging point of the Thames on the main London to Bristol road.

- 7.13. The focus of rural medieval settlement, away from the urban centres, appears to have moved off the valley floor onto higher ground particularly along the Kennet and Loddon, and settlement on lower ground continued to consist mainly of dispersed farmsteads sited on the edges of the floodplain. On the Thames near Windsor, in contrast, there is a greater concentration of settlement on the valley floor, with villages such as Colnbrook, on the London to Bristol road.

Historic Designations

Designation	Summary
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	
Ankerwycke Priory (SAM 190220 (PREV SAM 191).	Founded by Gilbert de Muntfichet c1160, dedicated to St Mary Magdalene. Dissolved 1536. Grade II. A 13th cent building with 15th cent additions, apparently of two storeys now ruined & in poor condition. A shallow depression running N-S. Probably part of a moat.
Runnymede Bridge, Egham, Surrey (SAM 200)	Evidence for a considerable mid Neolithic occupation site and LBA settlement with metal, bone & antler industry + a piled timber river frontage.
Old Windsor (SAM 79)	A water mill with three vertical wheels served by a massive mill leat. Pits or tree root holes scattered over this area; an irregular oval or 'D' shaped enclosure; a double concentric circle cut by parallel lines and a linear ditch running NE-SW; a short length of parallel ditches, a suggested trackway. The area also has a possible square enclosure; cropmarks suggest an enclosure in this area; small complete ring feature.
Edward The Confessor's Palace (SAM 79)	Excavations index records an excavation by Vaughan-Williams in 1919, in the "palace courtyard" "early medieval settlement, followed by a medieval palace". Abandoned 1100-1
Cropmarks NE of Model Farm (SAM 177)	Group of at least 5 ring ditches, strung along w side of right angled linear with right angled linear feature, possibly enclosing a group of ring ditches.
SAM 180	Regularly formed feature, on line of and possibly contemporary with linear feature.
Ring Ditch- Charvil (SAM 181)	Falls partially within scheduled area/s. Interrupted at contemporary enclosure.
Cropmarks N of Charvil (SAM 182)	Enclosure with two associated linear features.
Sheffield Lock (SAM 195)	
English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens	
None	

Current Rural Land Use

- 7.14. The landscape continues to be used for gravel extraction and the pits and associated infrastructure are prominent within the landscape. Areas of restored gravel pits are widely used for recreation, particularly water sports, as well as some areas of more passive recreation pursuits. The restored pits are important wildlife habitats, as are the areas of large water-storage reservoirs found to the east of the county. There

are extensive settled areas, however these tend to be located principally within the Thames valley. Large industrial buildings and estates located on the valley floor are also a feature of this landscape and there are a number of 'fringe' uses evident such as sewage treatment works. Most areas of this landscape type lack a strong agricultural character with remnant farmland comprising large arable fields and, where the landscape is more intact, small riverside pastures. Because agricultural land holdings are highly fragmented much of the land is unmanaged or abandoned.

Building and Settlement Character

- 7.15. Although this landscape type is not characterised by dense settlement there is a strong urban influence on these areas from adjoining settlements including Reading, Woodley, Earley, Slough, Egham and Maidenhead. The outer edges of these urban areas occur along the floodplain boundary and the urban fringe buildings are often visible from within the landscape. These include the large modern glass and steel buildings associated with the technology industry as well as a high proportion of large 'industrial estate' type buildings. Some of the areas of industrial estate extend onto the floodplain and are found particularly associated with transportation corridors, such as the motorways and railways e.g. the Winnersh Triangle business park, Manor Farm trading estate and Danehill industrial area.
- 7.16. Maidenhead is the largest settlement and has a mix of historic and modern riverside apartment buildings that cluster along the edge of the river Thames. Other settlements comprise smaller nucleated villages and market towns such as Theale and Wraysbury centred around traditional high streets with a predominantly brick (including tile hung buildings) and mock Tudor vernacular. Similarly sized settlements occur at Eton Wick and Poyle. Generally, the valley of the Thames, being much closer to London, is more settled than the Kennet or the Loddon, where development tends to be restricted to isolated remnant farmsteads or modern freestanding buildings such as hotels.

Nature Conservation

- 7.17. This landscape type contains a range of habitats of variable ecological value. The disturbance of these landscapes by the extraction industry has, in part, led to a loss of natural river habitat and a consequent reduction of biodiversity. However, conversely, the restoration of former gravel workings and construction of reservoirs has led to the creation of large areas of wetland habitat, some areas of which are now of national importance for the diversity and scarcity of the flora and fauna they support.
- 7.18. The largest area of important wetland habitat is the Wraysbury and Hythe End Gravel Pits SSSI, which is an important wildfowl habitat. This area is part of the South-West London Water Bodies Special Protection Area (SPA) and a Ramsar site. The Bray Pennyroyal field is also formed on a former gravel working. There are also surviving areas of traditional habitat in less disturbed areas including the wet meadows adjacent to the Thames at Bray, which support a diverse assemblage of rare flora, and an area of wet woodland and small area of ancient woodland in the valley of the Loddon.

Nature Conservation Designations

Designation	Summary
Sites of Special Scientific Interest and SPA/Ramsar site	
Wraysbury & Hythe End Gravel Pits (116.65ha.) (C4)	Four former gravel pits supporting nationally important wild fowl species; important assemblage of breeding birds; two red data book invertebrates (riffle beetle and caddis fly); and locally uncommon plant species. Together with Wraysbury Reservoir and other water bodies to the east form the South West London Water Bodies Special Protection Area.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	
Bray Pennyroyal Field (3.44ha) (C3)	A single field over an infilled gravel pit with a series of shallow seasonally inundated depressions containing the only Berkshire colonies of the red data book species pennyroyal.
Bray Meadows (6.53ha) (C3)	Series of agriculturally unimproved meadows which supports a very uncommon grassland with a flora distinctive of calcareous alluvium of Lower Thames.
Lodge Wood & Sandford Mill (1.01ha) (C2)	Small wet woodlands notable for large populations of the rare Loddon Lilly (estimated 10% of the total English population).

Character Area Description

- 7.19. The following are potential subdivisions within the *Lower River with Open Water* landscape type. These four areas retain the general characteristics of the generic landscape type but vary in character locally and the following descriptions highlight some of these distinctions in landscape character.

CI. Kennet

- 7.20. The *Kennet Lower River with Open Water* character area is the most westerly area of this landscape type, occurring in the valley of the River Kennet south of Reading and close to the confluence of the Kennet with the River Thames. This area comprises a wide floodplain around the River Kennet, the Foudry Brook and Holy Brook and has gently defined valley sides. Transportation corridors are a strong element of landscape character and include the Kennet and Avon Canal, the railway and the M4. The motorway passes through the heart of this area, often on embankments, which are visible from and provide views to the floodplain landscape.
- 7.21. Of all of the areas of this landscape type, this character area is perhaps the most obviously affected by the gravel extraction industry. Gravel extraction pits are present at varying stages in their operational life and there are good examples of well-restored lakes as well as large expanses of highly degraded and inaccessible landscape that have a bleak and derelict quality. Some mature woodlands are associated with the river landscape and the bankside of the restored gravel workings, but elsewhere the landscape has a very open character. Recreation is an important use and there are water sports facilities as well as go-karting and a golf course. There are few vestiges of the former agricultural landscape with highly fragmented land holdings which are degraded and largely unmanaged.
- 7.22. There is little settlement within this character area although Reading defines and has a strong influence upon the northern edge of the floodplain, resulting in agricultural severance. The most important settlement within the character area is the large and attractive village of Theale. Elsewhere buildings are predominantly hotel and motel buildings, club houses of recreational users, large industrial buildings such as the

Brewery, or small plant buildings associated with sewage and water works. There are no areas of national ecological importance.

C2. Loddon

- 7.23. The *Loddon Lower River with Open Water* is the most intimate, inaccessible and naturalistic area of this landscape type. It is located in the Loddon valley to the east of Woodley (south of Earley) and occupies a floodplain defined to the east by Lodge Road and to the west by the urban edge. The landscape is centred upon the landscape of the Loddon and the Old River close to the confluence with the River Thames east of Reading. The area has strong historic connections with an Iron Age settlement believed to be located in the Lea Farm/Sandford area. There are also remnants of buildings dating from Tudor estates. The valley landscape is crossed but not followed by significant transportation corridors, such as the A329(M) with its adjoining business park, the A4, and railway line. There are few rural roads within the area.
- 7.24. This landscape was one of the earliest landscapes to be exploited for mineral extraction and has been largely restored with the creation of Black Swan and Stanford Lakes which are now the focus for the Dinton Pastures Country Park. Consequently, this is an important recreational landscape crossed by footpaths and bridleways. The landscape has a wooded character, such as at Highwood, which includes areas of heathland. Important areas of ancient woodland are present with species such as the rare Loddon Lilly and Tower Mustard.

C3. Maidenhead Thames

- 7.25. The *Maidenhead Thames Lower River with Open Water* is the most urban area of this landscape type being centred between and with views of the large urban settlements of Maidenhead and Slough (excluded from specific consideration within this survey) and including other smaller nucleated settlements at Bray, Bray Wick and Eton Wick. The River Thames defines the eastern boundary of this area and there is also a navigation channel, The Cut, that branches from the Thames through the town. Operational gravel workings have a dominant visual and audible influence. There are also numerous restored gravel pits that are currently in use for water sports including sailing and boating. The importance of the water resource for recreation is evidenced by the presence of numerous marinas, which are a particularly distinctive feature of this character area.
- 7.26. This landscape continues to be used for agriculture. Agricultural use is characterised by large, open fields that emphasise the wide and flat qualities of the floodplain landscape. In the east of the character area the open character of the resulting landscapes includes a number of important views across the Thames valley to Windsor Castle (in character area J1)

C4. Wraybury Thames

- 7.27. The Wraybury Thames character area is located in the far east of the County and comprise a distinctive area with features not found elsewhere in the Berkshire but which continue into the neighbouring Surrey and Buckinghamshire landscapes. This

wide and flat landscape is strongly affected by the presence of water, the wide and open quality of the arable landscape and the variety of settlements. Much of this area is greenbelt land and falls within the Colne Valley Regional Park which extends north up to the area's boundary with the large urban settlement of Slough (excluded from specific consideration in this study).

- 7.28. There are numerous water corridors including the River Thames (with the adjoining Thames National Trail), sometimes diverging into the New Cut, the Colne Brook and some unnamed tributaries. Lakes of varying sizes, originating from former gravel workings are a particular feature. These waterbodies are often well wooded (providing a wooded horizon throughout the area) and have a strong and attractive natural character with positive views. Many have developed or are in the process of developing valuable wildlife communities and the former gravel works at Hythe End are now classified as an SSSI due to their important wildfowl populations. Many lakes are also used for recreation, including boating. Some of these are visible from the M4.
- 7.29. Unique to the area is the presence of reservoirs to supply London's water needs, both in Berkshire and extending into the adjoining district of Spelthorne. In particular, the Queen Mother Reservoir is a distinctive feature and forms a 'landmark' at the gateway to the county on the M4. Both this reservoir and the neighbouring Wraysbury Reservoir have a strong influence on the character of the area due to their angular grazed grass banks and associated concrete structures, which provide a hard edge, truncating views and intruding upon this flat landscape. Planting (currently immature) has been undertaken at the base of some of these reservoirs to soften their appearance. The water of the reservoirs is generally not visible; although where boats are present their rigs may be seen protruding above the grassy banks.
- 7.30. This area is much affected by transportation corridors which fragment the landscape. These corridors include the M4, which defines the area's northern boundary, the M25 along the eastern edge, and a railway line that dissects the area. An extensive 'sprawl' of development includes a large industrial estate and sewage works. In this area, the settlements, including Colnbrook, Wraysbury and Hythe End, are of fairly modern (interwar and post war) character and follow a linear form along the network of smaller roads throughout the area, although have developed around earlier historic cores and include some architecturally distinctive buildings. The remaining farmed landscape is predominantly arable, comprising immense open fields, denuded of field boundaries and trees. There are more intact areas of landscape immediately adjacent to the River Thames including areas of parkland and pastoral landscapes, including that on the banks opposite the National Trust property at Runnymede.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of Landscape Type

FEATURES OF KEY SIGNIFICANCE

- **Areas of well-restored gravel workings** with a peaceful, and intimate quality.

- Important **wetland habitats** of national importance.
- Small remnant areas of more **traditional pastoral landscape** associated with an **intact river landscape**.
- **Wooded framework** created by remnant woodlands and areas of bankside vegetation around restored lakes.
- **Quality of views**, for example to open water and historic landscapes such as Windsor.

Strength of Landscape Character

- 7.31. This landscape type has been considerably affected by the influences of human activities, in particular the mineral extraction industry and transportation corridors, that have led to a considerable degree of fragmentation and disturbance. Such influences have also introduced obvious man-made elements such as the reservoir banks. Consequently, the traditional character of the landscape has been obliterated by a new and, to a significant extent, negative character. Therefore, depending upon the specific local circumstances, the landscape is perceived to have a weak to moderate character.

Landscape Condition

- 7.32. The condition of the landscape is highly variable. Where large scale dereliction has occurred due to sand and gravel extraction the landscape is perceived to have a very poor quality and this is the pervading impression of this landscape type as a whole. However, within this general context there are pockets of landscape where a positive new character has been created by restoration of the gravel workings and where the resulting new landscape appears to be in good condition. However, potential further development of intrusive uses and buildings continue to threaten the condition of the landscape.

Key Issues

- 7.33. Key issues affecting this landscape include:
- Current poor quality of areas of landscape, poor quality perception of floodplain landscape and, potentially, lack of a clear vision leading to it being perceived as a 'soft target' for development.
 - Pressure for new industrial developments, sewage treatment works etc. on or around the fringes of the floodplain.
 - Pressure for further large commercial buildings associated with the transportation corridors.
 - Demand for residential development including commuter homes, associated particularly with Maidenhead and the Thames Valley.
 - Demands for further intrusive or forms of recreation such as 'power' watersports, golf courses, go-karting and quad-biking or recreation uses that introduce artificial landscapes to the floodplain such as golf.

- Further deterioration of the farmed landscape due to increasing fragmentation and intensification and declining viability of livestock grazing on the floodplain.
- Decline in water quality due to agricultural intensification and declining quality of urban runoff from elsewhere.
- Potential pressure for further gravel extraction plants (although most of the commercially available resource has already been extracted).
- Flooding risk on the floodplain and associated engineering works.
- Pressure for upgrade or additional transportation routes.
- Intrusion on the valley floor landscape by additional tall linear features such as pylons and poles.
- Impact of the noise of air traffic from Heathrow Airport on C4 (and the potential impact of Terminal Five) and associated restrictions on woodland creation due to proximity to the airport.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall strategy for the *Lower River with Open Water* is to **strengthen and enhance** those areas with the strongest character and best condition and to **create** new character in those areas currently suffering from dereliction. This necessitates conserving and enhancing the character of those remnant elements of the traditional farmed landscape and the well-restored gravel workings. This new character should be extended into degraded areas.

Guidelines

7.34. Broad objectives to realise the aims of the strategy include:

Landscape Management

- Conserve and manage the Thames corridor river landscape and seek to retain a soft and un-engineered edge.
- Conserve all important wetland habitats along the floodplain, in particular those habitats of national importance supporting rare and endangered species and seek to minimise the adverse influences of pollutants. Promote cross-county cooperation on habitats such as the SPA extending between counties.
- Seek to extend the area of important wetland habitats through appropriate management of the existing wetland resource and creation of new wetland habitat areas in degraded areas affected by gravel extraction.
- Conserve and manage existing woodland habitats in order to promote endangered species such as the Loddon Lilly.

- Consider possibilities for woodland creation where this could be used to refurbish poor quality landscapes or to screen intrusive features (such as the motorways) without leading to a loss of significant views.
- Protect and enhance key views within the landscape, for example to retain views to open water and across the landscape - such as the view to Windsor Castle.
- Promote restoration and reestablishment of the agricultural landscape including management of permanent pasture and targeted repair of agricultural features such as hedgerows and boundary vegetation in key areas.
- Manage recreational use of the landscape and enhance the recreational quality of these areas. Seek sympathetic integration of any new recreation features.
- Undertake landscape treatments, such as screening, to minimise the impact of new and existing roads.
- Undertake sympathetic screening and landscape integration of new or existing unsightly buildings or features such as the reservoirs.
- Any permitted new development including development located in adjacent areas (such as Heathrow Terminal Five) should contribute to the restoration and creation of positive landscape character.

Managing Future Change

7.35. With regard to any future change, the aim should be to strengthen and enhance positive aspects of character whilst promoting new character where the landscape is currently considered to be of poor quality. In addition to the features of key significance outlined earlier, main attributes to be considered with regard to any future change are:

- The role of areas of this landscape type as green corridors, which are currently largely free from development and provide a tangible and well-defined development edge to the existing urban areas, e.g. of Reading and Woodley.
- Open and undeveloped context of the valley floor.
- Sense of distinction and identity of the small riverside towns and villages.
- Flat/open horizontal quality of the landscape.
- Important views within or to adjacent landscapes (such as Windsor Castle).

Character Area Evaluation

CI. Kennet

7.36. Overall, the character of the *Kenner Lower River With Open Water* is very weak in parts and the condition of the landscape is degraded and poor. For this reason it is important to ensure the remaining water meadows are appropriately managed and, where possible to encourage restoration of this habitat. This landscape presents a

considerable challenge and requires a positive vision that predominantly entails creation of a new landscape character (based on restoration of wetland) and management and enhancement of those areas that are less degraded, including recreation of farmland, where appropriate.

C2. Loddon

- 7.37. Overall, the character of the *Loddon Lower River With Open Water* is relatively strong and the condition of the landscape is good. This is exemplified by the habitat it provides for Tower Mustard and the Loddon Lily and areas of woodland/heathland at Highwood. Consequently, there is need for greater emphasis on conservation and restoration as opposed to landscape creation. Management of recreational pressure is a key requirement.

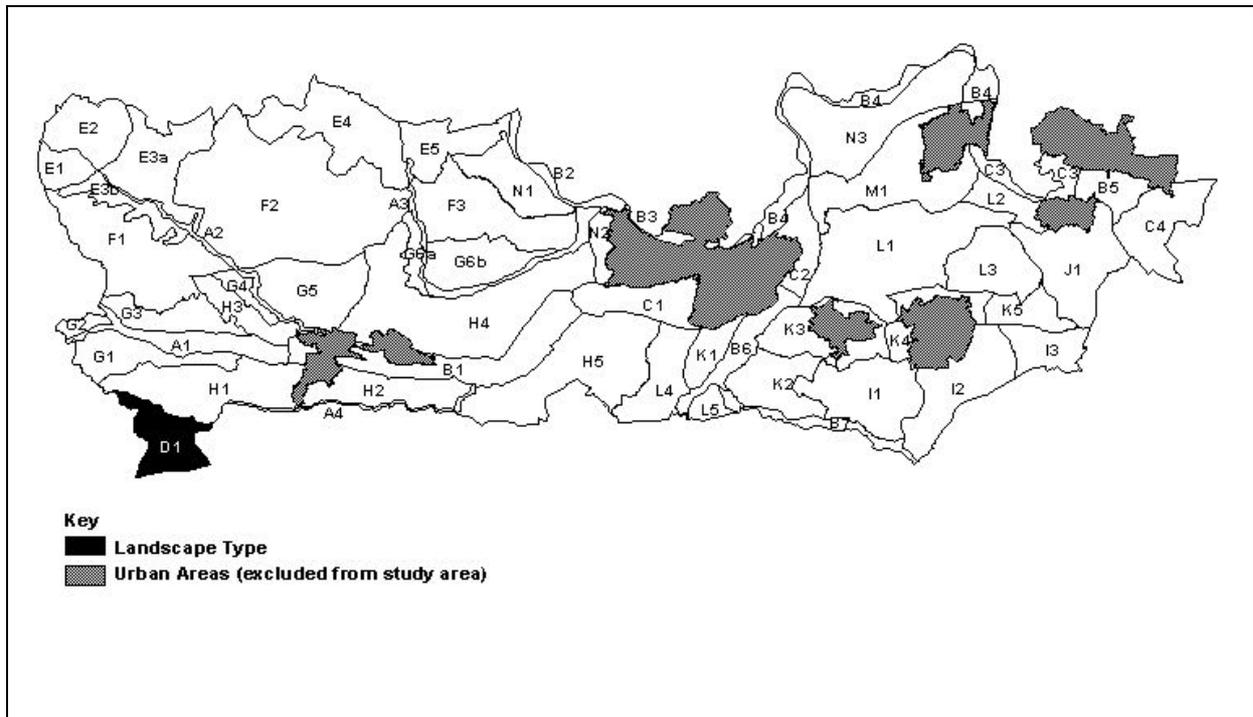
C3. Maidenhead Thames

- 7.38. This landscape has a moderately strong character. Despite extensive restoration of the gravel workings, some of these do not yet possess a strong positive image and, with the denuded open quality of the arable farmland, this leads to a sense of decline in the condition of the landscape. Overall, therefore, management of this character area should entail conservation and enhancement of the existing resource.

C4. Wraybury Thames

- 7.39. There are pockets of high quality landscape within the *Wraybury Thames Lower River with Open Water* character area (particularly within Wraybury Parish) and including restored gravel workings and areas of pastoral riverside. However, overall the landscape of this area has a weak character due to the fragmentation caused by the intrusive and unnatural reservoir banks and the density of transport corridors. The condition of the landscape is also declining due to the fragmentation and marginal nature of the remaining agricultural land. Consequently there is a need to undertake proactive management of this area in order to conserve and enhance those remaining positive aspects of character and to strengthen and create new character where it is currently negatively perceived. In particular the concept and identity of the Colne Valley Regional Park should be promoted and supported. The character of those areas with a positive character should continue to be preserved, particularly the well-restored lakes.

8. TYPE D: CHALK SCARP



Type D: Chalk Scarp

D1: Walbury Hill

Location and Boundaries

The *Chalk Scarp* occupies a very distinctive area of the North Wessex Downs AONB in the extreme south west of Berkshire. This part of the county is dominated by Walbury Hill and views to it. The landscape type is defined to the north by the distinct transition from the chalk geology to the flatter sandy Bagshot Formation. The boundary approximately follows the line of rural roads. On all other sides it is defined by the Berkshire county boundary. This landscape type extends into the adjoining counties.

TYPE D - Chalk Scarp

Typical Characteristics of the Rural Landscape



DESCRIPTION

Landscape Character

- 8.1. The *Chalk Scarp*, and its high points at Walbury Hill and Inkpen Hill, form prominent landmarks, being visible for long distances within the Berkshire landscape. This is a dramatic upland chalk landscape with an impressive rolling and steep landform that creates a wide range of experiences with extensive panoramic views over Berkshire from the ridge line to the more enclosed and intimate landscape of the deeply-incised combe valleys.
- 8.2. The steep scarp slope forming the spine of this landscape type runs east-west and is predominantly sheep pasture with a floristically rich close-grazed chalk grassland. In some parts the grassland, is no longer grazed and scrub has developed, interrupting the smoothness and continuity of the landscape. The scarp top is characterised by numerous archaeological features, which have a strong visual presence. These include Bronze Age barrows, and the dramatic hillfort at Walbury Hill. More sinisterly the scarp was also used as a location for a gibbet (Combe Gibbet) located on the top of a Neolithic long barrow at Gallows Down. These are both prominent features when viewed from the surrounding landscape. The scarp summit is a popular visitor destination with the Wayfarers Walk and Test Way following the ridgeline. Car parks and a panoramic viewpoint are also provided.
- 8.3. Blocks of mixed woodland and scrub cover the lower parts of the scarp at the break of slope, where the landform becomes flatter. They also occupy the very steep slopes that are unsuitable for farmland. The lower areas are mainly in arable use but also contain larger woodland blocks including coniferous plantations. Ancient woodland such as Combe Wood is also present. The arable farmland is dominated by regular chequered fields of Parliamentary inclosure, which have, in localised areas, been amalgamated into vast fields. There are some curved boundary fields of earlier origin that provide attractive links between the upper slopes and combe valleys. Numerous disused chalk pits within the combe valleys are also a feature.
- 8.4. The *Chalk Scarp* is sparsely settled with the notable absence of built development contributing to the strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness. The small dispersed hamlet of Combe nestles in a dry valley on the lower slopes, with remaining settlement limited to a small number of isolated farmsteads.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Dramatic steep chalk scarp landform**, including Walbury Hill - the highest point in Berkshire.
- **Remote and exposed ridgeline** with panoramic views over the surrounding countryside.
- **Prominent local landmark.**
- **Numerous features of historical and archaeological importance.**

- **Distinctive pattern of land use** with sheep-grazed pasture on the scarp slope and steep combe valley sides and arable on the combe valley floors and base of slopes.
- **Varied field pattern** with large-scale Parliamentary fields at base of scarp, in contrast to more irregular-shaped fields on steeper valley sides.
- **Woodland cover** including beech hangars, blocks of oak woodland, combe woodlands and coniferous plantation.
- **Important floristically-rich chalk grassland habitat.**
- **Relatively unsettled** with scattered and isolated farmsteads.
- **Recreational routeways** and visitor facilities located along the ridge-top.

Factors Contributing to Landscape Character

Physical Influences

- 8.5. The *Chalk Scarp* includes the Upper, Middle and Lower Chalk, formations with a small area of Upper Greensand on the lower slopes. The chalk, has been uplifted to form a dramatic scarp slope. The highest point on this scarp – Walbury Hill at 297m AOD – is in fact the highest chalk hill in the whole country. The middle chalk has a high clay content which leads to a mellow buff colour which is sometimes visible where erosion has occurred for example along the sheer cliff face of Inkpen Hill.
- 8.6. Soils are typically rendzinas, which are well-drained and nutrient poor and of low agricultural grade (4 and 5), used for sheep pasture. However, on the lower slopes, particularly to the south, there are brown calcareous earths and paleo-argillic brown earths which are more moisture retentive and produce better (Grade 3) agricultural conditions more amenable to arable production. The porous, freely draining chalk bedrock results in few water features, although to the south of the scarp, run-off has resulted in the formation of incised combe valleys, creating an undulating enclosed landform. Similarly to the north (junction with character *H1: Inkpen*) numerous small streams arise at the base of the slope.

Historic Environment

Historic Land Use

- 8.7. The chalk soils of the shallower slopes below the scarp, and on the adjacent downs, may have been cleared for cultivation during the early prehistoric period. It is possible that the Neolithic long barrow on Gallows Down, and the small group of Bronze Age round barrows on Inkpen Hill had some territorial significance in their locations, but this cannot be proven, particularly since the earlier monument is largely peripheral to the long barrow distribution in southern England.
- 8.8. A length of undated linear earthwork on Olddike Lane, Inkpen, running towards the scarp, may be contemporary with similar Grim's Ditch features of suggested late Bronze Age/Iron Age date on the Berkshire Downs, or alternatively with the post-Roman Grim's Dyke earthworks north of Calleva. Despite its relative isolation, it may have functioned as a territorial boundary. The hillfort on Walbury Hill at the

highest point of the Wessex chalk is a clear expression of political control and would have dominated the surrounding territory.

- 8.9. Like the open areas of the Berkshire Downs to the north the resulting grasslands were dominated by sheep grazing during the medieval period, with some arable cultivation in the shelter of the combes. The large-scale straight-edged fields which dominate the base of the scarp are indicative of eighteenth and nineteenth century Parliamentary inclosure. In contrast, there are smaller more irregular shaped fields, indicative of piecemeal and informal inclosure, on the steeper valley sides where hanger woods are present.
- 8.10. The absence of villages and the steep topography mean that there are only few minor roads crossing the scarp. The wholly agricultural character of the area would have tied it into the wool and corn trade routes through Hungerford, the nearest town.

Settlement Evolution

- 8.11. The Iron Age hillfort on Walbury Hill is a large sub-rectangular, univallate enclosure covering 33 hectares. Despite its size, its exposed position means that it is unlikely to have been a permanent settlement. Instead, it may have been a tribal centre, occupied on a seasonal basis or at times of conflict, and providing a secure compound for cattle as well as a centre for the redistribution of agricultural surpluses. Iron Age and later settlements were probably sited on the chalk slopes below the scarp, or in the shelter of the combes to the south, and this settlement pattern of dispersed farmsteads survives to the present day.

Historic Designations

Designation	Summary
Scheduled Ancient Monuments (WB SAM No)	
Wansdyke (SAM 9)	490m - Old Dyke Lane
Walbury Camp (SAM 17)	
Inkpen/Combe Long Barrow (SAM 12001)	Long Barrow at Combe Gibbet, Gallows Down, Inkpen
Round Barrow (SAM 12230)	Round Barrow S of Rivar Copse: Part of a Barrow Cemetery on Inkpen Hill
Round Barrow Cemetery (SAM 12070)	Round Barrow Cemetery on Inkpen Hill
Round Barrow (SAM 12229)	Round Barrow S of Rivar Copse: Part of a Barrow Cemetery on Inkpen Hill
Bowl Barrow SAM 19026)	Bowl Barrow 30m N of Bitham Lane
English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens	
None listed	

Current Rural Land Use

- 8.12. The *Chalk Scarp* is a mixed agricultural landscape with sheep grazing on the scarp face and steep slopes of the combe valleys and arable farmland at the base of the slope and on the flatter combe valley floors. There is also a high proportion of woodland including coniferous plantations, sometimes in awkward geometric blocks that cut across the sinuous landform, in addition to the combe woodlands and small copses including hangar woods.

8.13. The landscape is popular for recreation and there are two car parks located on prominent scarp-top locations. A modern telecommunications tower has been erected near Combe Hill in the east of the area and is a dominant feature.

Settlement and Building Character

8.14. The landscape is sparsely settled, with buildings restricted to isolated farmhouses scattered thinly across the more sheltered lower parts of the landform. There is one settlement, Combe, a very isolated hamlet south of Walbury Hill which has a church with a distinctive timber bell turret. Other buildings are predominantly of brick and red plain tile.

Nature Conservation

8.15. The chalk bedrock and thin spoils have resulted in the important floristically-rich chalk downland sward, managed by sheep grazing – with large, intact remnants within this area. The ancient and semi-natural woodland, in the combe valleys and on the lower slopes, is also an important habitat.

Nature Conservation Designations

Designation	Summary
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	
Inkpen & Walbury Hills (16.70ha). (DI)	Chalk downland and ancient woodland. Largest area of unimproved chalk downland in Berkshire. Contains best examples of ancient ash-wych elm woods in the county.
West Woodhay Down (0.83ha)	A small relict of unimproved chalk grassland including musk orchid not known anywhere else in Berkshire.
Combe Wood and Linkenholt Hanging Woodland. (87.45ha)	Chalk grassland/woodland is partly ancient and some parts have been managed as wood pasture and other parts consist of ancient coppice. The site incorporates some areas of calcareous grassland which are relicts of open downland and support a rich chalk flora.
Hogs Hole (23.19ha)	One of the largest intact areas of chalk grassland in the North Wessex Downs AONB. The area is traditionally managed and supports a diverse flora and fauna.

Character Area Descriptions

8.16. There is potential for a finer-grained interpretation of the landscape, such as at district-scale, for example dividing the scarp slope from the wooded combe valleys to the south and flatter and more open land to the north. However it is considered that, for the purposes of this strategic assessment the area has a cohesive common character and it is unnecessary to break down this landscape type into constituent character areas.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of Landscape Type

<p>FEATURES OF KEY SIGNIFICANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dramatic land form.

- **Sense of remoteness and exposure.**
- **Open panoramic views.**
- **Features of historical and archaeological importance.**
- **Patchwork of geometric and irregular arable fields on the lower slopes and combe valley floors.**
- **Diversity of woodland particularly** beech hangars, ancient woodland and combe woodlands.
- **Floristically-rich grazed chalk grassland habitat.**
- **Absence of settlement (remote character).**
- **Ridge-top recreational routeways.**

Strength of Landscape Character

- 8.17. This dramatic landscape has a very strong and distinctive character being a unique and important landmark within the Berkshire landscape and contributing to the wider character of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It possesses an extremely valuable habitat and archaeological resource and these elements add to the visual interest and diversity of the landscape type.

Landscape Condition

- 8.18. The condition of the *Chalk Scarp* is generally good, although it is apparent that changes in agricultural management, forestry and modern land uses are leading to a subtle and incremental decline in condition.

Key Issues

- Declining viability of sheep grazing, leading to scrub encroachment and consequent loss of the chalk grassland habitat.
- Agricultural intensification, leading to nutrient enrichment of the chalk downland and consequent species loss, and further loss of hedgerows and creation of large open fields.
- Increasing recreational pressure resulting in damage to archaeological features and visual impacts - prominence of cars located along the ridge top, erosion of 'honeypot' sites and litter problems.
- Demand for telecommunications towers, potentially also for wind turbines and other tall structures requiring an elevated position in the landscape, which would disrupt the skyline.
- Presence of unsympathetic straight-edged woodlands, particularly coniferous woodland.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The landscape strategy for the *Chalk Scarp* is to **conserve and restore** the special qualities of this upland landscape. In particular this will necessitate conservation of the diversity of the landscape with its mosaic of woodland, biodiversity, archaeological interest, clear skyline, panoramic views and special sense of remoteness.

Guidelines

8.19. Broad objectives to realise the aims of the strategy include:

Landscape Management

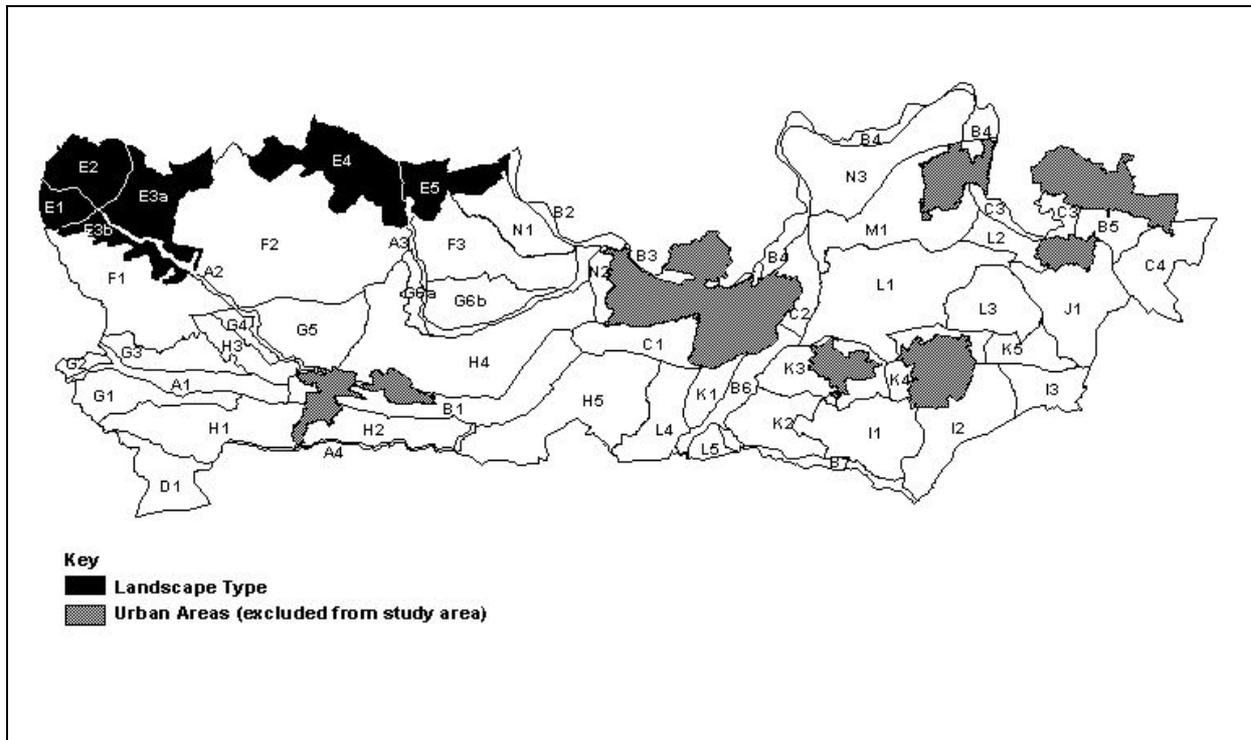
- Conserve the existing chalk grassland and, where appropriate, seek to increase the area of managed grassland in order to extend and connect isolated chalk grassland habitats.
- Conserve the archaeological sites and ensure that these are not damaged by agricultural activities or recreational pressure.
- Seek to maintain the sense of openness, and consider the impact of any development within the view from the scarp (e.g. in the adjacent landscape type).
- Promote active management of remaining traditional features of the agricultural landscape and continue to promote agri-environment management to facilitate targeted reinstatement of key hedgerows. Avoid further field amalgamation, particularly onto the base of the scarp.
- Encourage appropriate woodland creation following the characteristic patterns of the existing native woodland, such as small beech woodland copses and combe woodlands. Phased removal/conversion of the existing coniferous woodland should be considered and irregular edges promoted.
- Encourage restoration of areas eroded by visitor pressure and seek sensitive design solutions to minimise the local impacts of recreation facilities.

Managing Future Change

8.20. With regard to any future change, the key requirement is to conserve the remote character of the Walbury Hill Scarp. In addition to the features of key significance outlined above, main attributes to be considered with regard to any future change are:

- Sense of rural remoteness and tranquillity.
- Open skylines and sensitive ridgelines, which are visible from a wide area.
- Smooth, sinuous and sculptural qualities of the landform.
- Panoramic views from the scarp including views from/to the AONB.

9. TYPE E: OPEN DOWNLANDS



Type E: Open Downlands

- E1: Near Down
- E2: Upper Lambourn
- E3: Eastbury Down*
- E4: Farnborough
- E5: Aldworth

* For clarity the character map shows character area E3 divided into sub-areas E3a and E3b. This is due to the presence of the River Lambourn which geographically subdivides character area E3, although perceptually areas E3a and b have similar characteristics and they are, therefore, treated as a single character area in the description.

Location and Boundaries

The *Open Downlands* landscape type is found in west Berkshire within the North Wessex Downs AONB. The boundaries of this type are defined loosely by topography and the Upper and Middle Chalk geology, wherever possible following roads or trackways.

TYPE E - Open Downlands

Typical Characteristics of the Rural Landscape



DESCRIPTION

Landscape Character

- 9.1. The *Open Downlands* are characterised by their dramatic remote and windswept landscape of rolling arable and pastoral fields. The downland is very open with few vertical elements resulting in a sense of exposure and permitting vast and panoramic views across the landscape. Consequently, the sky and weather conditions have a considerable effect on the perception of the *Open Downland*, which can vary from bleak and exposed under inclement conditions to exhilarating and breathtaking when pleasant conditions prevail. The presence of incised dry 'combe' valleys and close-grazed chalk grassland results in an attractive 'sculptural' quality. The landscape is rich in archaeological features, imparting an ancient and timeless quality, including an Iron Age hill fort, numerous earthworks, barrows and drove roads - many of which are now used as recreational routeways, such as the Ridgeway National Trail.
- 9.2. The farmland is divided into large geometric fields that create a striking patchwork effect across the landscape. The arable cereal fields contrast strongly with the verdant downland pastures. Most fields are bordered by post and wire fences with occasional broken lines of sparse hawthorn trees. These trees have sometimes been neglected and have developed into scrubby standards. The presence of horse gallops, associated with the racing industry and their regular formal white-painted fences are a particularly distinctive feature. Also associated with the horse racing industry are the large buildings of stud farms (sometimes bounded by dense coniferous hedges) and paddocks.
- 9.3. This is a very open landscape - the absence of woodland is a key characteristic and distinguishes this landscape type from the adjoining *Wooded Downlands (F)*. The few trees that exist are restricted to scattered remnant hedgerow trees and hedgebanks, small copses and coverts (mostly of hawthorn scrub and beech). However, in places, blocks of woodland in the adjoining areas are visible on the skyline and these provide occasional wooded horizons that create visual diversity and texture. There are also a number of small recently-planted coniferous blocks.
- 9.4. The landscape is sparsely settled with farmsteads, hamlets, and small/medium sized villages. The villages vary in architectural quality but usually have a historic core and rural 'vernacular' ambience, sometimes including flint and other local building materials. Newer development is found on the outskirts of some villages, particularly Compton. Trees within and around the settlements help integrate these settlements into the downland context. With the exception of a short section of the A34 and A338 there are no significant connecting roads in this area and routeways are predominantly quiet and winding rural lanes with wide verges following the ridge-top or combe floor. Intrusive features include the recently introduced pig farms, and telecommunications towers located along the ridgelines where they impact on the remote qualities of the landscape.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

- Large scale **open and windswept 'upland'** landscape.
- Extensive **panoramic views**.

- **Ancient ambience** due to presence of visible archaeological sites.
- Dramatic **rolling landform**.
- **Dry valleys** with seasonal ‘winterbournes’.
- Agricultural landscape of **geometric arable fields** and **sheep-grazed pastures**.
- Important floristically-diverse **chalk grassland** habitats.
- Remote and **sparsely settled** with hamlets, villages and scattered farmsteads.
- Large scale **modern farm buildings**.
- Evidence of the **racehorse industry** with **gallops, stud farms, bridleways and paddocks**.
- **Absence of woodland** but with occasional wooded horizons and localised woodland copses.
- **Rural roads and lanes with wide verges**.

Factors Contributing to Landscape Character

Physical Influences

- 9.5. The *Open Downlands* are predominantly underlain by the hard, white, calcareous formations of the Upper and Middle Chalk with some areas of Lower Chalk. The upstanding chalk landscapes vary from 110m to 200m AOD and include some of the highest points in the county, providing vantage points with great prospect over Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The chalks have eroded to produce a smooth and rolling landform with convex upper slopes and concave lower slopes. The permeability of the chalk has resulted in a predominantly dry landscape and hydrological features, although the upper reaches of the Pang and the Lambourn cut through the heart of the *Open Downlands*, disappearing into incised dry valleys near their source. There are also numerous distinctive winterbournes or seasonally flowing streams. The chalk springs are seasonal in nature flowing from February to March and historically rising every seven years. Alluvial deposition has occurred throughout these dry valley landscapes.
- 9.6. The chalk strata influences the overlying soils predominantly forming rendzinas – which are well-drained, shallow and flinty soils. In lower areas there are some less well drained paleo-argillic brown earths. The agricultural grade of the land is generally grade 2 or 3 resulting in the adoption of mixed arable and pasture farmland.
- 9.7. In numerous locations the chalk strata have been exposed by quarrying activities. There are a number of areas of noted geological importance, which have been designated as SSSIs including a former quarry site and an area containing the large siliceous boulders known as sarsen stones, which have been used as a local building material.

Historic Environment

Historic Land Use

- 9.8. Early prehistoric monumental architecture is a characteristic feature of the open downland landscape and includes the Neolithic long barrows at Lambourn and Sheep Down, which may have functioned as territorial markers. At this time cultivation may have depleted the thin chalk soils leading to the formation of open grassland. The round barrows of the early Bronze Age may also have had territorial significance, being sited in topographically prominent positions around the 150m contour. There are approximately forty round barrows in the “Seven Barrows group” which appear to have been sited with reference to the Lambourn long barrow.
- 9.9. The later Bronze Age through to the Roman period saw the creation of extensive field systems, visible as lynchets and banks, particularly on the western Open Downland, most of which are laid out on a regular grid indicating central organisation. The division and appropriation of the landscape is further demonstrated by linear earthworks, some running from the downs into the valleys and dividing the landscape into blocks, others like Grim’s Ditch running along the scarp. The Iron Age hillfort at Perborough Castle overlooks the Compton Gap, the main route through the downs west of the Thames, so occupying a comparable location to those along the chalk scarp overlooking the Vale of the White Horse.
- 9.10. The Ridgeway ancient track, which runs along the top of the downs in the east, was probably established in the late Iron Age, and may have continued as an east-west communication route and droveway for the rural downland communities into the medieval period. Unlike the intervening block of *Wooded Downland* landscape (F), there are no Saxon charters. However, Lambourn is believed to have been a Saxon Royal manor, possibly explaining the lack of Domesday settlements on the immediately adjacent downland.
- 9.11. Throughout the medieval period much of the land remained as common open grassland, the economy of the downs dominated by the raising of large flocks of sheep and the production of wool, with arable cultivation on the lower slopes and in the more sheltered valleys. With the decline of the wool trade, areas of downland reverted to scrub, or later were inclosed for arable cultivation as regular fields bounded by hedges. The few irregular copses may be survivors of earlier assarts of surviving woodland, however, the majority of field patterns are of Parliamentary character, represented by medium to large fields. There are also significant areas of “ladder” type fields, as around Lambourn and East Ilsley, also typical of the chalk. Tracks leading out from the villages up to the downland provide the framework for these inclosures which seem likely to have been created to bring either downland or surviving open fields into inclosure.
- 9.12. A marked decline in sheep farming followed the agricultural depression in the late 19th century and led to the creation of some large estates. This resulted in the removal of many Parliamentary field boundaries and cultivation of extensive fields. From the late 19th century large areas of open downland have been used as gallops for the horse racing industry.
- 9.13. In the 18th century north south routes from Abingdon through Fawley to Hungerford and East Ilsley to Newbury, were established as turnpikes. Although there was a

medieval market at Lambourn, trade along the principal communication routes in the 18th Century ultimately favoured the towns along the Kennet valley rather than in the *Open Downland*. East Ilsley's location, however, helped ensure that it remained a major sheep market into the modern period (the sheep fair had been established at Catmore for 200 or 300 years before moving to East Ilsley).

Settlement Evolution

- 9.14. Remains of field systems indicate that the downs were intensively settled from the Late Bronze Age through to the Roman period. The lightly defended Iron Age hillfort at Perborough Castle, however, has revealed little settlement evidence and may have functioned more as a tribal centre than as an enclosed settlement. A possible Roman villa, or other substantial settlement, has been identified among extensive earthworks, including field systems, at Maddie Farm.
- 9.15. The surviving pattern of settlement dates primarily from the medieval period, the Domesday Book recording settlements quite widely dispersed on the open downs at Fawley, Farnborough and East and West Ilsley. These early villages would have been interspersed with smaller hamlets and individual farmsteads, a pattern that has not changed substantially into the modern period.

Historic Designations

Designation	Summary
Scheduled Ancient Monuments (<i>West Berkshire SAM No</i>)	
Hodcott Down Barrow (SAM 82)	Round Barrow N of Ridgeway,
Baydon Hole Farm (SAM 91)	Ditch
Fognam Clump (SAM 99)	Round Barrow
Grims Ditch (SAM 102)	Section W of Chilton Plantation
Grims Ditch (SAM 103)	1600m - Southfield Shaw to Streatley Parish
Grims Ditch (SAM 109)	1100m - Chilton Plantation to Ridge Hill
East Ilsley Downs (SAM 111)	Round Barrows
Perborough Castle (SAM 121)	Castle
Ditch E Of Near Down (SAM 174)	Boundary Ditch E of Near Down
Maddie Farm Roman Settlement (SAM 198)	Roman Settlement
Long barrow on Sheep Down (SAM 12016)	Long Barrow on Sheep Down, 1 km N of East Ilsley
Long Barrow near Seven barrows House (SAM 12025)	Long Barrow 400m NW of Seven barrows House
Bowl Barrow (SAM 12044)	Bowl Barrow 500m W of Churn Park Cottage
Two Bowl Barrows (SAM 12069)	Two Bowl Barrows 500m NE of Stancombe Farm
Round Barrow Cemetery (SAM 12071)	Round Barrow Cemetery at Seven Barrows, Lambourn
Bell Barrow near Postdown Farm (SAM 12236)	Bell Barrow 400m NE of Postdown Farm: Part of Seven Barrows Cemetery
Four Bowl Barrows near Seven barrows House (SAM 12237)	Four Bowl Barrows 400m Se of Seven barrows House
Various barrows (SAM 12238)	A Double Bell Barrow, A Saucer Barrow and Four Bowl Barrows
Bowl Barrow near Seven barrows House (SAM 12239)	Bowl Barrow 240m E of Seven barrows House
Bowl Barrow near Seven barrows House (SAM 12240)	Bowl Barrow 270m NE of Seven barrows House

Bowl Barrow near Seven barrows House (SAM 12241)	Bowl Barrow 390m N of Seven barrows House
Bowl Barrow near Seven barrows House (SAM 12242)	Bowl Barrow 250m N of Seven barrows House
Bowl Barrow near Seven barrows House (SAM 12270)	Two Bowl Barrows 300m NE of Seven Barrows House
Bowl Barrow near Postdown farm House (SAM 12280)	Bowl Barrow 300m NE of Postdown Farm: Part of Seven Barrows Cemetery
Bowl Barrow In The NW Corner Of Town Copse	Bowl Barrow In The NW Corner of Town Copse
Platform Barrow near Greenway Cottage (SAM 19029)	Two Platform Barrows and a Bowl Barrow 440m S Greenway Cottages
Farncombe Down (SAM 30455)	Bowl Barrow 500m SW Of Baydon Hole
Part of Manor Farn (SAM)	
English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens	
None	

Current Rural Land Use

- 9.16. The downlands are predominantly an agricultural landscape. The landscape is dominated by large-scale arable farmland used for growing cereals, in regular geometric fields. There are also large regular fields of grassland supporting extensive sheep grazing and scattered remnant areas of species-rich chalk grassland. Most of the fields are denuded of hedgerows and are bounded by post and wire fences. Pig farming has also been introduced to the downlands and large 'industrial' scale agricultural units occur throughout the landscape. The units are frequently muddy and untidy. However, it should be noted the pigs are an important part of the rotational cycle of the thin downland soils and benefit succeeding crops. The horse racing industry is a principal component of the downland economy and there are numerous stud farms, stables and gallops, particularly around Upper Lambourn.
- 9.17. There are few trees or areas of woodland, although there are some remaining copses and strips of woodland, including beech as well as some newly planted blocks of conifers in sheltered parts of the dry valleys.
- 9.18. The chalk has been extensively quarried in the past and these quarries remain a feature, although are no longer active.

Settlement and Building Character

- 9.19. In stark contrast to the urbanised landscape of east Berkshire the downlands are sparsely settled, the main settlements being located in the adjacent landscapes of the *Upper Valley Floodplains (A)*. The foci of settlement within the downlands are the large villages of Upper Lambourn and Compton, nestled into the dry valleys occurring at the upper reaches of the rivers. These both have a historic core with more modern peripheral development – indicative, perhaps, of an increase of commuters living in these settlements. Elsewhere on the downs there are small nucleated hamlets, located either within the dry valleys that branch from the Lambourn and Pang valleys (e.g. East Ilsley) or on the more exposed ridge-top locations (e.g. Farnborough). These retain a strong rural character, for example East Ilsley with its painted and timber-framed houses. There are also solitary and clustered farmhouses, agricultural buildings, stud farms and stables scattered throughout the area.

Nature Conservation

- 9.20. The most important habitat within the *Open Downland* is chalk grassland and there are a large number of designated areas. There are few other important habitats, for example there are no ancient woodland habitats and only a small area of the River Lambourn (predominantly in type A), which is valued for its wetland habitat. Woodlands with bluebells are a feature and abandoned quarries form important habitats for a diverse range of flora and fauna and are also of geological interest.

Nature Conservation Designations

Designation	Summary
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	
Fognam Chalk Quarry (3.02ha) (E1)	Quarry site. Geological SSSI.
Seven Barrows (13.73ha) (E2)	Rich unploughed chalk grassland site, one of the richest in Berkshire with diverse butterfly community.
Croker's Hole (4.44ha.) (E2)	An area of botanically rich chalk grassland and thought to be the sole remaining Berkshire locality for the nationally scarce bastard toadflax.
River Lambourn (0.89ha). (E2)	Lowland chalk river- see A2 for full details.
Streatley Warren (30.99ha). (E5)	Unimproved flower-rich chalk grassland with important invertebrate and birds.
Parkfarm Down (3.36ha) (E2)	Sarsen Stones- Geological SSSI. Also habitat for rare and local lichens.

Character Area Descriptions

- 9.21. There are five potential subdivisions within the *Open Downlands* landscape type. These areas retain the general characteristics of the generic landscape type but vary in character locally. The following descriptions highlight these distinctions in landscape character.

E1: Near Down

- 9.22. *Near Down Open Downlands* defines that area west of Lambourn which includes the downlands of Near Down, Farncombe Down, Row Down, and Fognam Down. It is notable for its absence of settlement, which is restricted to a small number of farmsteads and infrastructure/buildings related to horseracing that includes an outlying area of Lambourn village with numerous stables and the Equine Hospital.
- 9.23. The landscape has an open and remote character with a landform crossed by numerous byways serving as bridleways. There are distinctive areas of gallops but the dominant landuse is sheep grazing within large fields. There are a number of historic earthworks but few surviving areas chalk grassland. There is one large quarry at Fognam Down which is a visual scar, but is designated as a geological SSSI. The wooded areas are mainly coniferous or mixed conifer/deciduous woodlands.

E2: Upper Lambourn

- 9.24. The *Upper Lambourn Open Downlands* is a large area of open downland occurring in the north west of the county over an area of Middle Chalk. Its component downs include Parkfarm Down, Pit Down, Wellbottom Down, Bockhampton Down, Farringdon Road Down and Crow Down. This landform is steeply sloping, rising to

high areas of up to 220m AOD. This area is relatively well connected with roads, including the B4001, following a dramatic ridge top location.

- 9.25. The landscape has a very open character with a few (deciduous) coverts, some small beech copses and thin wooded strips. There is one relatively large area of woodland, Lynch Wood, within which are the incised seasonally-dry upper reaches of the Lambourn Valley. The settlement of Upper Lambourn is nestled into this valley form and the woodland helps integrate it into the downland landscape. There are numerous very important archaeological and ecological features, including diverse chalk grassland habitats and the Seven Barrows complex. Numerous race horse establishments, training grounds and stables are present, which affect the character of the surrounding downland with associated horse gallops and associated features. There are also a number of isolated farm buildings.

E3: Eastbury Down

- 9.26. The *Eastbury Down Open Downlands* is a large and steeply undulating landscape with wide rolling farmland of open ridges with large geometric arable and pastoral fields. It incorporates the eastern area of the Lambourn Downs, comprising Stancombe Down, Warren Down, Eastbury Down and East Garston Down. The landscape is very remote, being crossed by rural roads that lead only to farmhouses and do not form an interconnected network. There are, however, numerous byways which criss-cross the landscape. The main settlement is the small nucleated village of Fawley, located around a late nineteenth century church. However this area is also dissected by the valley of the Lambourn and there are numerous small hamlet and villages nestled along this corridor. Atypical features include young coniferous woodland and pig farms.

E4: Farnborough

- 9.27. The *Farnborough Open Downlands* is located to the west of the River Pang and is characterised by the presence of villages, including the linear ridge-top settlement of Farnborough, the linear valley floor settlement of West Ilsley and the nucleated valley floor settlements of East Ilsley and Compton. It is also crossed by the A34(T). Farnborough has a fine old flint church and East Ilsley includes timber-framed buildings, and there are also some 16th century thatched cottages in the area, but (despite their medieval origins) the other settlements are of more nineteenth century character. Compton, in particular, has a much more modern feel with new estates and 'business park' type buildings.
- 9.28. This area is a large-scale arable farmed landscape comprising the open downland of Farnborough Furze Down, Old Down, Cow Down, Bury Down, Sheep Down, Hodcott Down Nutfield Down and East Ilsley Down. The intensity of agricultural use has damaged some of the archaeological heritage including the Iron Age hill fort of Perborough Castle and the surrounding Celtic field system in the south of the area. In the north of the area The Ridgeway crosses the landscape following the elevated ridge of the chalk scarp. There are numerous characteristic horse gallops associated with this important recreational routeway. There are extensive views from this area into the adjacent county.

E5: Aldworth

- 9.29. Aldworth Open Downland is found to the east of the Pang and west of the Thames Valley. The landscape comprises very open and rolling downland, becoming more sharply incised and dramatic towards Thurle Down in the east, where some of the downland has been used for a golf course. The Ridgeway crosses along the ridgeline of Thurle Down and provides dramatic views over the Thames valley towards the Goring Gap and the Chilterns AONB.
- 9.30. The landscape is sparsely settled with scattered farmsteads, roadside 'ribbon' development, the hamlets of Aldworth and Parsonage Green, and the dispersed outskirts of Streatley. Significant areas of mixed and deciduous woodland occur to the east, particularly on the steeper areas of land. Towards the east of the area there are numerous geometric blocks and belts of coniferous woodland that cut across the sinuous downland landform.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of Landscape Type

FEATURES OF KEY SIGNIFICANCE

- **Sense of remoteness** with few settlements.
- **Open downland** landscape.
- Extensive **panoramic views**.
- **Archaeological features**.
- **Chalk grassland** habitats.
- **Gallops and infrastructure** associated with the equestrian presence.
- **Rural roads and lanes with wide verges**.

Strength of Landscape Character

- 9.31. The *Open Downlands* have a **strong** character due to their bold and sculptural landform and open and panoramic views that create a sense of remoteness. Furthermore, this type has many unique and unusual features that are not found or rarely found elsewhere in the county, including the important archaeological features and the species-rich chalk grasslands, which are a valuable ecological habitat.

Landscape Condition

- 9.32. The condition of the landscape appears to be **declining** due to the addition of inappropriate or insensitively sited development and the replacement of traditional elements with less attractive forms leading to fragmentation. For example, the regimented lines of conifer plantations, which are out of character with the sinuosity of the landform, and the proliferation of post and barbed wire fences.

Key Issues

- Potential further demand for gallops which are highly visible for long distances.

- Decline in the viability of sheep farming leading to loss and fragmentation of chalk grassland pasture.
- Further arable intensification leading to further loss of field boundaries.
- Increase of pig farms and other new elements that interrupt the sinuosity of the smooth downland landscape.
- Construction of additional 'industrial' large farm barns that disturb the horizon and intrude upon the sense of remoteness.
- Demand for peripheral expansion of the hamlets and ribbon development along the rural lanes.
- Planting of inappropriate woodland such as any coniferous woodland, large deciduous woodlands or woodlands that impinge on the sense of openness, for example by blocking key views.
- Potential future demand for chalk quarrying.
- Demand for additional telecommunications infrastructure (radio masts, pylons or phone masts) or wind turbines that may be intrusive on the sensitive skyline.
- Traffic pressure, due to presence of large farm machinery, race horses and large horse trailers, leading to unsympathetic upgrading of rural roads.
- Damage to archaeological sites.
- Development in adjoining authority areas that may be visible from this area due to the openness of the landscape.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The strategy for the *Open Downlands* is to **conserve** and **restore** the bold and dramatic landscape with its distinctive geometric pattern of arable and pastoral land uses and its important chalk grassland habitats and archaeological features. This necessitates conserving the landscape's sense of openness and remoteness and restoration and management of important features such as the chalk grassland habitats and archaeological sites

Guidelines

9.33. Broad objectives to realise the aims of the strategy include:

Landscape Management

- Conserve the existing chalk grassland and improve management to promote biodiversity. Where appropriate seek to extend the area of managed grassland in order to extend and connect isolated chalk grassland habitats.
- Conserve archaeological sites and ensure that these are not damaged by agricultural activities or recreational pressure.

- Maintain the sense of openness, whilst retaining strategic wooded horizons.
- Seek opportunities to integrate features such as pig farms or large buildings into the downland landscape.
- Promote active management of remaining traditional features of the agricultural landscape and continue to promote agri-environment management and seek opportunities for restoration of key features such as hedgerows, for example along rural lanes.
- Avoid planting large scale blocks of coniferous woodlands and seek to improve the integration of the existing plantations.
- Any new woodland planting should be restricted to restoration of characteristic features using native species, wherever possible, such as small beech woodland copses (reinforced with other broadleaves where necessary for establishment purposes) and should be carefully designed to avoid intruding upon the sense of openness and to respect the sinuosity of the landscape.
- New horse gallops should be carefully sited to avoid unsympathetic lines that cut across the landscape and their impacts minimised through roadside hedgerow restoration and ecological enhancement, such as wildflower seeding.
- Seek to minimise chalk quarrying in prominent areas and fully restore all worked sites.
- Conserve the character of the rural lanes and seek to prevent suburbanising trends.
- Cooperate with adjoining authorities to ensure visual impacts of development on adjoining landscapes are considered.

Managing Future Change

9.34. With regard to any future change, the principal aim should be to conserve the sense of openness and remoteness and sparsely settled character. In addition to the features of key significance outlined above, main attributes to be considered with regard to any future change are:

- Open, undeveloped and highly visible skylines.
- Limited extent of woodland planting.
- Smooth and sculptural qualities of the landform.
- Sense of isolation and remoteness.
- Sparse settlement pattern of distinct the small villages and the dispersed farmsteads.
- The quiet and undeveloped character of the rural lanes.

Character Area Evaluation

- 9.35. The above issues, guidelines and considerations apply throughout the landscape type. However, there are some distinctions to be made within the individual character areas:

E1: Near Down

- 9.36. *Near Down Open Downlands* has a strong character but the condition of the landscape is in decline. Therefore in common with the type there is a need to conserve and restore the character of the landscape. In particular sensitive restoration of the quarry site (noting its importance as a geological SSSI) will be needed. Also important are opportunities to decrease the influence of coniferous plantings within this landscape and replanting with more appropriate native beech or oak.

E2: Upper Lambourn

- 9.37. The *Upper Lambourn Open Downlands* has a strong character and a wealth of important archaeological sites and chalk grassland habitats. The landscape is in need of conservation and restoration and would benefit from continued management of the chalk grassland resource. The influence of the racehorse industry is particularly strong here and it will be important to ensure that any new facilities and gallops within this area are sensitively sited.

E3: Eastbury Down

- 9.38. *Eastbury Down Open Downlands* has a strong character and declining condition and require sensitive conservation and restoration. In particular the impacts of existing coniferous plantations and pig farms should be acknowledged and, where possible, their integration with the downland landscape should be enhanced. The sense of remoteness in this area is a special perceptual quality and further development or intensification of existing settlements would need to maintain this key characteristic.

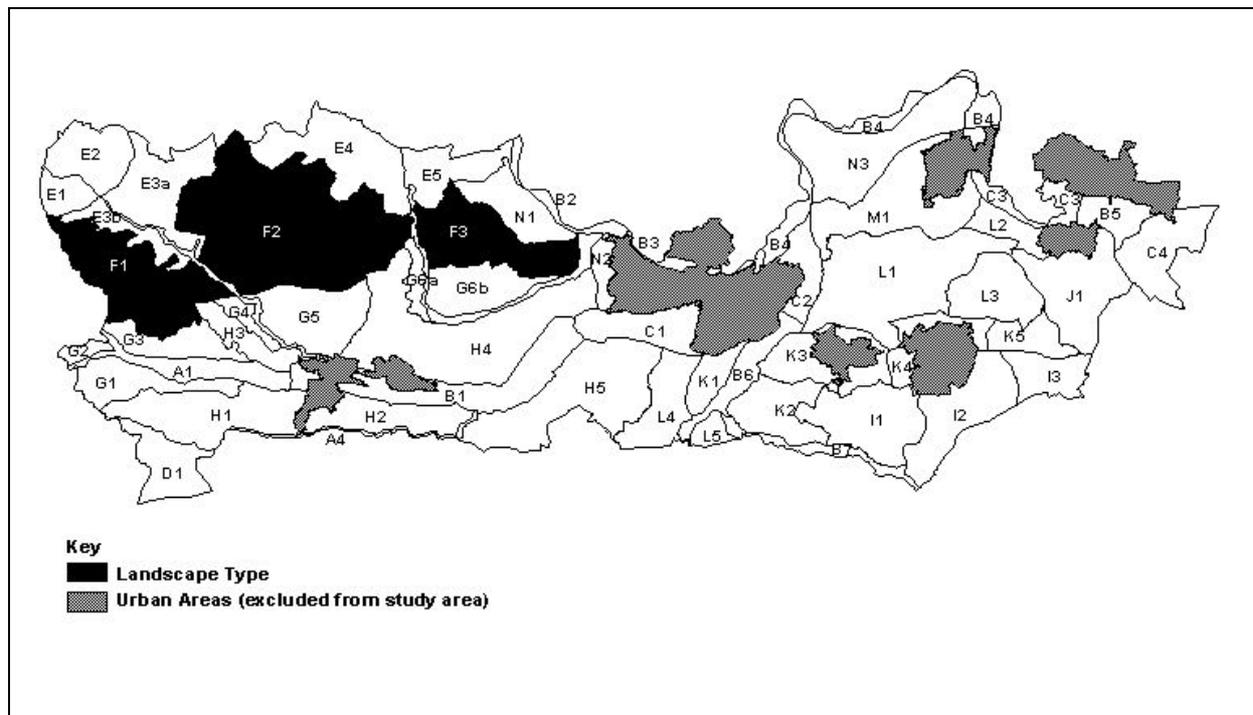
E4: Farnborough

- 9.39. The *Farnborough Open Downland* character area has a generally strong character which in parts becomes moderate due to inappropriate modern development and the introduction of atypical features. The condition of the landscape is declining. Therefore this landscape requires sensitive conservation and enhancement with particular emphasis on preserving the archaeological features of the area, maintaining the quality of the Ridgeway National Trail and its setting and restoring some of the lost traditional hedgerow patterns. It will be important to monitor the impacts of proposed development at the Harwell laboratory site near Compton (outside of Berkshire).

E5: Aldworth

- 9.40. The *Aldworth Open Downland* has a moderate character which is being eroded due to the planting of coniferous woodlands and imposition of new features such as golf courses. The condition of the landscape is considered to be declining. The strategy for this area is to conserve and enhance the character of the landscape. The Ridgeway National Trail (and views to the Goring Gap) could be a particular focus for landscape improvements.

10. TYPE F: WOODED DOWNLAND



Type F: Wooded Downland

- F1: Shefford
- F2: Peasemore
- F3: Ashampstead

Location and Boundaries

The *Wooded Downland* is found in north west Berkshire and forms part of the chalk dip slope of the North Wessex Downs AONB. It encompasses an area of land between the *Open Downland* to the north and the lower *Farmed Chalk Mosaic* and *Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* to the south. The landscape type is principally defined by the presence of deposits of Clay-with-Flint overlying the chalk creating a more wooded downland landscape compared to the open land in the north. To the south, the transition is determined by a combination of land use, topography and geology.

TYPE F - Wooded Downland

Typical Characteristics of the Rural Landscape



DESCRIPTION

Landscape Character

- 10.1. The *Wooded Downland* is an elevated and rolling landscape, distinguished from the adjoining *Open Downlands* by the presence of woodland cover. It is a peaceful and remote area with a varied landform of bold convex curves and gentler slopes incised by small dry valleys. Seasonal winterbournes flow through within the valleys, although there are no areas of permanent water.
- 10.2. The underlying Upper Chalk has been capped by clay-with-flints drift, resulting in the production of deeper, moisture-retentive soils compared to the adjoining shallow and nutrient poor soils of the *Open Downlands*. Land use is varied with arable farmland, supporting barley, wheat, maize and rape seed and sheep pastures including chalk grasslands. The clay-capped areas have retained extensive woodland cover, with numerous deciduous woodland areas in the form of copses, wooded belts and hanging woodlands. Beech, ash and oak are common woodland species. The small wooded areas tend to follow irregular forms and are scattered across the landscape, often located on the crest of slopes, creating a relatively enclosed and intimate character. The wooded quality is often enhanced by the mature and diverse hedgerow boundaries around the arable fields and pasture, which frequently retain large hedgerow trees. Around settlements the fields are often small and geometric becoming larger, more irregular and with boundaries following the contours elsewhere. However, in places the hedgerows have been lost and as such there are areas of more large-scale open downland landscape (in part comparable to landscape type E) within the overall distinctive wooded context.
- 10.3. As in the *Open Downland*, much of the land is given over to racehorse training and infrastructure associated with these is found throughout the landscape, although the area does not have large scale gallops. There are also small areas of parkland, such as at Woolley Park, although none of these are English Heritage registered.
- 10.4. The region is more settled than the *Open Downland*. There are numerous evenly-spaced small and attractive nucleated and linear rural settlements, including Woodlands St Mary, Shefford Woodlands, Chieveley, Brightwalton and Peasemore. The settlements are interconnected by a dense network of winding rural lanes with wide verges, which add to the intimacy and peaceful ambience of the area. In some areas there are very tall roadside hedges, although often these have been lost. The settlements are well-integrated into the downland context, often nestling into the landform and surrounded by boundary trees and hollies to mark boundaries. The villages generally retain a rural character with a focal village church and the use of vernacular materials including brick, flint, clay tile and blue brick, although modern developments have been constructed in and surrounding some villages. There are also numerous dispersed farmsteads throughout the area.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Elevated chalk downland** with a thick mantle of Clay-with-Flint.
- **Bold rolling and undulating landform** incised by dry valleys.

- **Peaceful** and remote rural character.
- Irregular and geometric **arable fields**, often inclosed with **dense and mature hedgerows**.
- **Enclosed wooded character** created by small deciduous farm woodlands, copses, shelterbelts, parkland and mature hedgerow trees.
- **Pastoral fields**, extensively grazed by sheep.
- Important **calcareous grassland** and **ancient woodland** habitats.
- **Small traditional villages and scattered farmsteads and hamlets** well integrated into the surrounding downland context.
- **Local vernacular** of red brick, flint, thatched cottages, dark weatherboard and clay tile.
- **Dense network of rural lanes** with wide verges and tall hedgerows, sometimes overhung with deep enclosing banks.

Factors Contributing to Landscape Character

Physical Influences

- 10.5. The *Wooded Downland* is underlain by Upper and Lower Chalk overlain by a mantle of clay-with-flints in the most elevated areas of downland. This has produced a rolling and undulating topography which varies from 100m to 200m AOD. Incised into the downland there are a number of dry valleys, supporting seasonal winterbournes, which drain into the adjacent Rivers Lambourn and Pang.
- 10.6. The soils are heavily influenced by the underlying strata and the overlying drift and are typically alkaline and moderately well drained paleo-argillic brown earths, supporting arable and grazing land uses. Heavier clay soils have proved more difficult to work and have retained woodland cover.

Historic Environment

Historic Land Use

- 10.7. Unlike the *Open Downland (E)* with its evidence of late prehistoric field systems and linear earthworks the *Wooded Downland* is largely devoid of these features. The earliest evidence of the landscape being formally organised and appropriated dates to the Saxon period when, in contrast to the adjacent landscape zones, many of the parishes have Saxon charters. The clay-with-flints soils, though less easily cultivated, are not as susceptible to erosion and nutrient loss as those on the chalk and are better able to sustain a mixed farming regime, although sheep farming still dominated this area in the medieval period.
- 10.8. The Forest of Berkshire encompassed the whole of the downs until extensive disafforestation in 1227, making this area subject to Forest Law. As early as 1228 a deerpark was created at Leckhampstead and, in 1336, 300 acres were imparked for hunting at Beedon. There are many copses, and hanger woods on the steeper valley sides, these being particularly dense in the east.

- 10.9. There are surviving strip lynchets on the steeper slopes south of Eastbury, and the landscape contains contrasting field types. There are signs of assarting, probably of medieval and post-medieval date, visible in the irregular shapes of the woods and in some of the irregular field boundaries, particularly to the south of the Lambourn valley. Along the sides of the valley, the pattern of parallel tracks and ladder fields running from the river onto higher ground may result from 17th-18th century informal inclosure between existing droveways. Large, regular, straight edged field boundaries, the product of formal Parliamentary inclosure, dominate the area north of the valley. With the agricultural depression in the late 19th century there was a marked decline in sheep farming, and an expansion of arable cultivation with some large estates being created.
- 10.10. The Roman road (Ermine Street) between Speen and North Warnborough (in Hampshire) runs along the ridge south of the Lambourn valley, as reflected in the course of the present-day B4000. The road, however, was not a main communication route in the medieval period. Its line is now flanked by the route of the M4 motorway. This landscape is traversed by the roads running north-south from Abingdon, at the west to Hungerford and at the east, through Beedon to Newbury, both of which are 18th century turnpike roads. On the slopes flanking the Lambourn and the Kennet, the landscape is marked by series of parallel lanes and droveways running from the valley onto the downs. In contrast, in the more settled area to the east, there is a more irregular network of lanes linking the villages and farmsteads.

Settlement Evolution

- 10.11. Prehistoric occupation of these areas is indicated both by a number of single Bronze Age round barrows and by the Iron Age hillfort at Membury, but in general the less easily worked clay-with-flints soils did not attract a high level of early settlement.
- 10.12. Saxon settlement in west Berkshire was established along the river valleys such as the Lambourn, but there appears to have been some expansion into these otherwise unsettled areas. There is a close correspondence, for instance, between names ending in “-leah”, such as Fawley, Chieveley and Woolley, possibly indicating woodland clearing in early Saxon times. Most of these, however, are east of the Lambourn, as are those settlements listed in the Domesday Book. There is a wide band of largely unoccupied valley slope between the villages along the Lambourn and those on the *Wooded Downland*, the latter being quite closely distributed in the undulating downland landscape.

Historic Designations

Designation	Summary
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	
Whatcombe (SAMI63)	Deserted medieval village
Bowl barrow (SAM I2056)	Bowl barrow 700m NW of Nodmoor Copse
Bowl barrow (SAM I2068)	670m E of Rowbury Farm
Bowl barrow (SAM I2080)	Bowl barrow on Barrow Hill
Bowl barrow (SAM I9028)	Bowl barrow on Barrow Hill, Hungerford Newton
English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens	
None	

Current Rural Land Use

- 10.13. The landscape is predominantly in use as farmland – principally as arable land used for the cultivation of cereals such as wheat and barley. The arable fields take a variety of forms creating a broad scale patchwork of fields across the landscape. There are also areas of pasture, including verdant sheep-grazed fields that retain elements of the open downland. However these are much more intimate and enclosed due to their wooded ridges and dividing internal shelterbelts. There are also a few isolated areas of parkland, but no parklands registered by English Heritage.
- 10.14. Woodland is a characteristic feature of this area, its presence emphasised by its location on elevated areas. There are no large plantation conifers: instead there are a variety of mixed and deciduous woodland with beech and oak, in interlinked ridge-top blocks associated with areas of clay-with-flints, small copses and shelterbelts.
- 10.15. The horse racing industry is a feature of the area and there are some small gallops as well as an extensive network of bridleways and recreational trails. There are also scattered pig units.

Settlement and Building Character

- 10.16. This is a comparatively settled landscape with numerous villages, hamlets and scattered isolated farmsteads. The settlements are small and evenly-spaced. The larger villages, including some settlements nucleated around a landmark church, are located in the more elevated areas along the ridges and plateaux where they are connected by fairly straight and wide roads. These have sometimes been mirrored by more modern roads, such as the M4 motorway and the A34(T) which also follow these plateau locations. Elsewhere linear villages occur, which follow the contours around the downland or along the dry valleys, or which extend across the contours down the hillsides. These are connected by a dense interlinked network of winding, and occasionally sunken, rural lanes although some villages do not have a through road.
- 10.17. There is a strong local rural vernacular centred upon the use of mellow red brick and flint. Other common materials include the use of dark wood weatherboarding in rural buildings and clay tile. Some more modern developments have been constructed within and on the periphery of some of the settlements, however these have often used red brick and will age well to harmonise with the local vernacular. There are also numerous dispersed farmsteads throughout the area, some of which include large ‘industrial’ agricultural sheds.

Nature Conservation

- 10.18. The chalk geology and woodland presence are the most important influences on the ecological character of this landscape type. Valuable habitats include the beech hanger woodlands, ancient woodlands and remnant areas of chalk grassland.

Nature Conservation Designations

Designation	Summary
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	
Ashridge Wood (0.63ha)	Ancient coppiced woodland on chalk and clay-with-flint soils. Good example of dry ash-maple woodland in association with southern calcareous hazel-ash woodland.
Westfield Farm (13.94ha)	Chalk grassland bank on the north facing scarp of the Berkshire Downs supporting rich communities of native plants including several scarce species. including Clustered Bellflower, and Greater Butterfly Orchid.
White Shute. (2.21ha)	Steeply sloping chalk downland near the River Lambourn consisting of herb-rich grassland. Important for birds and insects.

Character Area Descriptions:

10.19. There are three potential subdivisions within the *Wooded Downlands* landscape type. These areas retain the general characteristics of the generic landscape type but vary in character locally. The following descriptions highlight these distinctions in landscape character.

FI: Shefford

- 10.20. The *Shefford Wooded Downland* is located in the west of Berkshire between the valley of the *Lambourn Upper Valley Floor (A2)* and the *Eastbury Down Open Downland (E3)* and the *Elcot Farmed Chalk Mosaic (G3)*. It is a strongly rolling well wooded elevated landscape with fairly large deciduous and mixed woodland blocks. These are located along the upper slopes of the elevated 'plateau'. Linear shelterbelts extend from these areas towards the valley of the River Lambourn. In the west there is a greater incidence of coniferous plantation woodland. There are also areas of chalk grassland and pasture and extensive arable areas with a variety of field boundary patterns, enclosed by dense hedgerows and thick shelterbelts.
- 10.21. Transportation networks cross the plateau. These include the B4000, which follows the route of a former Roman road (Ermine Street). Roughly parallel to this is the more recently constructed M4, which bisects the area and introduces considerable noise and movement into the landscape. This also affects the setting of Membury hillfort, located in the far east of the area. Running at right angles to these ridge-top roads, perpendicularly down to the adjoining valley landscapes, are smaller rural lanes that are often deeply sunken with overhanging wooded banks.
- 10.22. The settlement pattern is focussed on the roads following the plateau and valleys. These include the evocatively-named hamlets of Lambourn Woodlands, Woodlands St Mary, and Shefford Woodlands along the Roman road and the nucleated village of Hungerford Newtown in the narrow dry valley to the south of the motorway. Elsewhere within this area, settlement comprises a large number of scattered farmhouses, isolated cottages and stud farms. The race horse industry, focussed on nearby Upper Lambourn, has also resulted in the presence of some gallops and an extensive bridleway network.

F2: Peasemore

- 10.23. The *Peasemore Wooded Downlands* are located north of the M4 between the *Winterbourne Farmed Chalk Mosaic (G5)* and the *Open Downland (E)*. It is a large-scale rolling and gently undulating landscape of mixed arable and pasture land. There is a high proportion of woodland cover, retained in relatively large mixed and deciduous ridge-top blocks including plantation woodlands, copses and shelterbelts, some of ancient origin. These create an enclosed character with wooded horizons and the copses are distinctive sculptural skyline elements.
- 10.24. There are extensive areas of pasture and a patchwork of large arable fields, enclosed within hedgerows, frequently containing mature oak trees. Many of the hedgerows are strong and diverse, although there are areas which are low and mechanically flailed. Many of the rural roads are confined within tall and dense hedges, however, in some places removal of these has produced wide overgrown verges.
- 10.25. The area is relatively densely populated. There are a large number of solitary farmhouses and agricultural buildings, sometimes in large complexes. There are also a number of small and medium sized villages. These settlements tend to be located on the larger roads that follow the dry valleys and the extensive sunken network of rural lanes that cross onto the more elevated downland between. The villages follow a variety of forms and locations including dispersed nucleated villages such as Peasemore and Brightwalton, located on hillside; Chieveley, occupying a ridgetop location; Chaddleworth, nestled in the dry valley and the linear settlement of Leckhampstead following the mid valley sides. The settlements have a strong vernacular character with characteristic landmark brick and flint churches (although other architectural styles are also present) and mellow red brick farmhouses with some localised thatch.

F3: Ashampstead

- 10.26. The *Ashampstead Wooded Downlands* character area is found between the *Yattendon Farmed Chalk Mosaic (G6)* and the *Basildon Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes (N1)* to the west of the confluence of the River Pang with the Thames. It is a very wooded landscape comprising linked irregularly sided deciduous and mixed woodland blocks creating a stronger sense of enclosure than in other areas of this type. The 'wooded' element thus overshadowing the 'downland' theme. Much of this woodland is classified as ancient with important areas of open woodland associated with common land. However there is also a higher incidence of coniferous species within the woodland in this character area than other Wooded Downland. The woodland is interspersed with areas of open arable farmland with pastoral fields. In some parts these arable fields open out and the landscape flattens resulting in a more degraded and fragmented appearance. A very long avenue of lime trees near Ashampstead is a notable roadside feature.
- 10.27. Settlement is small scale with numerous attractive villages such as Ashampstead Green, with its traditional village green and Ashampstead occurs on a gentle spur overlooking a significant dry valley that cuts through the landscape. There are clusters of red brick farmhouses throughout.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of Landscape Type

FEATURES OF KEY SIGNIFICANCE

- **Peaceful** and remote rural character.
- **Hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees** surrounding arable fields.
- **Enclosed wooded character and wooded horizons** created by small farm woodlands, copses, shelterbelts, and hedgerow trees.
- **Pastoral fields**, extensively grazed by sheep.
- **Chalk grassland** and ancient woodland habitats.
- **Small traditional villages and scattered farmsteads.**
- **Local vernacular** of red brick, flint, dark weatherboard and clay tile.
- **Dense network of rural lanes** with wide verges and tall hedgerows, sometimes overhung with deep enclosing banks.

Strength of Landscape Character

- 10.28. This area has a strong character due to its quiet and peaceful ambience, bold landform, attractive woodland context and pleasant well-settled character. It also contains important archaeological features and habitats, which add to its diversity and interest.

Landscape Condition

- 10.29. The condition of the *Wooded Downland* is declining due to the mechanical management and loss of some areas of hedgerows, the encroachment of coniferous plantations into some areas and the construction of larger agricultural buildings.

Key Issues

- Decline in the viability of sheep farming leading to loss and fragmentation of chalk grassland pasture.
- Intensification of arable farming leading to loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Construction of additional 'industrial scale' large farm buildings that disturb the horizon and intrude upon the sense of remoteness.
- Introduction of pig units that disturb the sinuosity of the landscape.
- Creation of gallops that are visually intrusive and cut across the landform.
- Planting of inappropriate woodland such as large geometric coniferous plantations.
- Inappropriate/lack of woodland management, particularly of ancient woodlands, including former coppiced woodland.

- Demand for additional telecommunications infrastructure (radio masts, pylons or phone masts) or wind turbines that may be intrusive on the sensitive skyline.
- Increased traffic on the network of rural lanes and road ‘improvements’ leading to a loss of rural character.
- Demand for development associated with the motorway corridor, for example additional service stations.
- Demand for new housing that may affect the character of the small attractive hamlets and villages.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The strategy for the *Wooded Downland* is to **conserve** and **restore** the peaceful and enclosed rural landscape with its distinctive mixture of arable and pastoral land uses, important chalk habitats and variety of woodlands. This necessitates conservation of the wooded horizons and restoration and management of important features such as the enclosing hedgerow network, rural lanes, attractive settlement character and chalk grassland habitats.

Guidelines

10.30. Broad objectives to realise the aims of the strategy include:

Landscape Management

- Conserve the existing chalk grassland and improve management to promote biodiversity. Where appropriate seek to extend the area of managed grassland in order to extend the area and connect isolated chalk grassland habitats.
- Conserve archaeological sites and ensure that these are not damaged by agricultural activities or recreational pressure.
- Retain the wooded horizons and enclosing woodland areas and seek to strengthen the existing character of wooded summits and ridge-tops, with shelterbelts and hedgerows, with woodland extending down into the dry valleys. Native species, such as beech, oak and ash, should be used and woodlands should be carefully designed to respect the sinuosity of the landscape and link to the underlying geology.
- Avoid creation of large-scale blocks of coniferous woodlands and seek to improve the integration of the existing plantations within the landscape.
- Promote active management of remaining traditional features of the agricultural landscape such as coppice and hedgerows, and continue to promote agri-environment management.
- Consider targeted restoration of key boundary hedgerow elements dividing large arable fields and alongside the rural lanes network.

- Soften the impact of pig units, for example by sympathetic hedgerow boundary planting.
- New horse gallops should be carefully sited to avoid unsympathetic lines that cut across the landscape and opportunities for landscape and ecological enhancement of existing gallops should be implemented where possible.
- Conserve the character and pattern of the isolated farmsteads, small hamlets and villages, integrated into the landform.
- Conserve the character of the rural lanes and seek to avoid urbanising trends.

Managing Future Change

10.31. With regard to any future change the aim should be to maintain the attractive settlements and peaceful rural landscape. In addition to the features of key significance outlined earlier, main attributes to be considered with regard to any future change are:

- Wooded skylines, which are visible over long distances.
- Quiet rural character of the roads and lanes.
- Strong rural vernacular with characteristic materials and styles of buildings.
- The distinctiveness of the settlements and positive integration into the surrounding landscape.

Character Area Evaluation

10.32. The above issues, guidelines and considerations apply throughout the landscape type. However, there are some distinctions to be made within the individual character areas:

F1: Shefford

10.33. The *Shefford Wooded Downland* has a strong character with attractive small villages, a characteristic woodland context, areas of good intact hedgerow pattern and the presence of archaeological features. However, the condition is declining due to the encroachment of coniferous woodland blocks, loss of hedgerows particularly along roadsides and the disruptive influence of the motorway which intrudes upon the sense of peacefulness and tranquillity. The strategy is to conserve and enhance the character of the landscape with particular emphasis placed on maintaining the settlement character and reducing the impact of the motorway, for example through sympathetic woodland planting.

F2: Peasmore

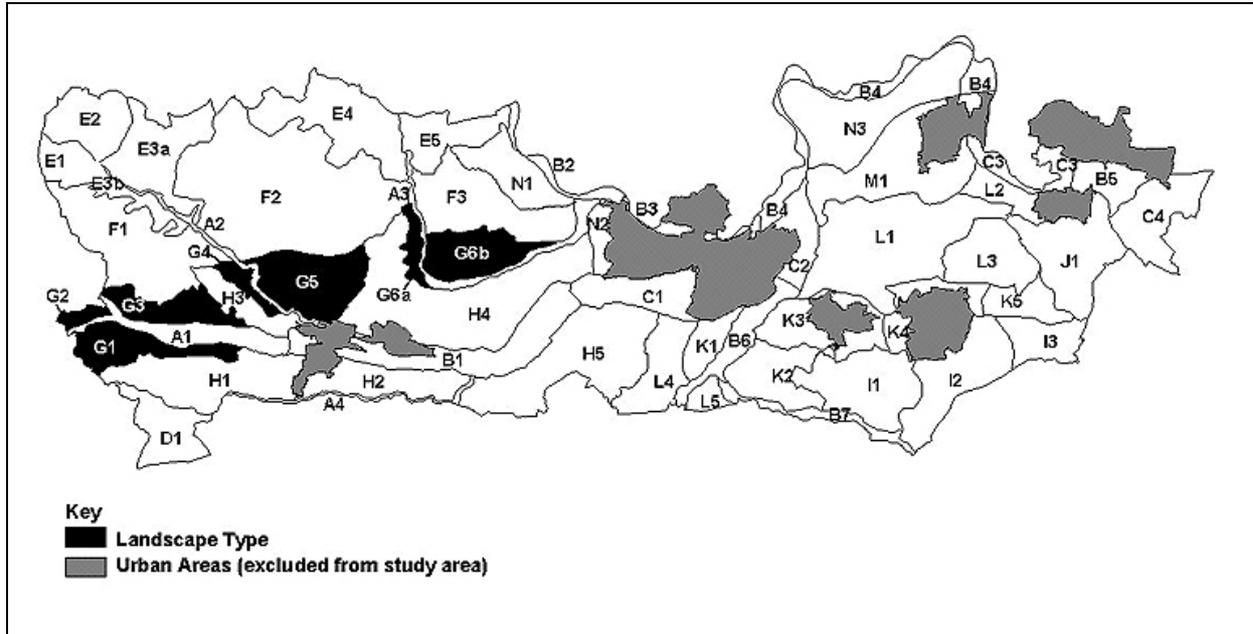
10.34. The *Peasmore Wooded Downland* has a strong character with clear wooded horizons, good chalk grassland habitats and attractive rural settlements. The condition of the landscape is considered to be declining due to the loss of hedgerows, particularly beside the rural lanes and the presence of the motorway that intrudes upon the

sense of peacefulness and tranquillity. The strategy is to conserve and enhance the character of the landscape with particular emphasis placed on reducing the impact of the motorway and continued restoration of key hedgerows.

F3: Ashampstead

- 10.35. The *Ashampstead Wooded Downland* has a strong character, with peaceful and attractive rural villages, a well-wooded context and diversity of land use, although generally lacks the strength of downland character found elsewhere. However the condition is declining with obvious signs of neglected, open and fragmented arable land and a greater proportion of conifers than elsewhere. Therefore the key strategy for this area will be to conserve and restore elements such as the hedgerow boundaries and to seek an appropriate balance between coniferous and deciduous woodlands. The important ancient woodlands associated with the commons are a key feature and require management/conservation.

II. TYPE G: FARMED CHALK MOSAIC



Type G: Farmed Chalk Mosaic

- G1: Hungerford
- G2: Froxfield
- G3: Elcot
- G4: Boxford
- G5: Winterbourne
- G6: Yattendon (divided into G6a and b)

* For clarity the character map shows character area G6 divided into sub-areas G6a and G6b. This is due to the presence of the River Pang which geographically subdivides character area G6, although areas G6a and b have similar characteristics and they are, therefore, treated as a single character area in the description.

Location and Boundaries

The *Farmed Chalk Mosaic* is found in a non-continuous band in the centre west of the Berkshire landscape stretching from near Hungerford in the far west of the county to near Tidmarsh, west of Earley. It is a transitional chalk-based landscape with a strong rural character occurring between the *Upper Valley Floor* (of the Kennet, Lambourn and Pang Valleys) and the elevated chalk landscapes of the *Wooded Downland* and is divided by distinctive intervening ridges of the *Woodland and Heathland Mosaic*. A broad range of factors, including geological transitions, topography and variations in land use, determine the boundaries of the landscape type. Being transitional, wherever possible the boundaries follow pragmatic physical features of the landscape such as roads or, where appropriate, landform or geological boundaries.

TYPE G - Farmed Chalk Mosaic **Typical Characteristics of the Rural Landscape**



DESCRIPTION

Landscape Character

- 11.1. The *Farmed Chalk Mosaic* is a transitional landscape type linking the upland chalk landscapes of the *Wooded Downlands* (Type F) with the gentle valley floors of the *Upper River Valley Floodplains* (Type A) below, which, in turn, provide a transition between the more elevated landscapes of west Berkshire and the lower lying landscapes of east Berkshire. It has a somewhat mixed land use pattern, resulting from the underlying local variations in geological and topographical conditions. It is predominantly a chalk landscape, however this has become capped in places by a variety of alluvial, sandy, clay-with-flints and gravel formations and small areas of London Clay. It is a variably shelving, gently rolling and subtly undulating landform resulting in an attractive setting for the valley landscapes and providing varied enclosure and openness. The lower chalk slopes, where the surface geology is dominated by chalk are incised by a series of shallow dry valleys becoming small surface streams in their lower reaches. In general water is not a feature of this landscape type and the valleys are dry, although winterbournes (seasonal-flowing streams) are occasionally present. However, from some areas there are good views to the adjoining valley landscapes of the Rivers Kennet, Lambourn and Pang.
- 11.2. The landscape is unified by the presence of mixed woodlands, which are commonly located on upper slopes corresponding to the localised presence of the deeper clay-with-flints and river terrace deposits. These include small or medium sized blocks, including linear belts, which are sometimes interconnected and provide pleasant wooded enclosure and create wooded skylines. The woodland emphasises the topographic variation of the landform. Much of the woodland is of classified as ancient and there are also other important habitats including small patches of heathland associated with areas of sandy substrates and chalk grassland.
- 11.3. Within this overall wooded context there are a variety of land uses including arable and pastoral farmland with areas of heathland and chalk grassland. The arable farmland is the dominant agricultural use and tends to be characterised by large-scale regular fields from which the hedgerows have been removed, resulting in the creation of more open landscapes. In spring and summer the sweeping fields of light colour oil seed rape and cereals form a brilliant contrast with the darker wooded horizons. There are also more unusual crops found such as maize. The pastures include (generally small) areas of open sheep grazed grassland, reminiscent of the *Open Downlands*, and numerous areas of paddocks enclosed within timber or post-and-wire fences. Some of the pastoral fields, particularly those associated with settlements or at the edges of woodland, are small-scale and irregular with diverse and overgrown hedgerows which create a more intimate character. There are a number of areas of valley-edge parklands/former parklands (mostly unregistered) within the woodland framework that add to landscape diversity. The landscape is affected in parts by the busy and noisy corridors of the A4, A34 and M4. The network of small quiet and rural lanes are a particular feature and include some attractive 'green' lanes that wind up the slope through dappled woodland blocks.

- 11.4. Settlements within this landscape type include large villages such as Hungerford and Kintbury which have extended out from their valley floor location up onto the valley sides. However generally this area retains a rural feel with sparse settlement generally comprising hamlets and small villages with intervening farmsteads and manors. This settlement pattern includes distinctive traditional nucleated villages such as Yattendon and Frilsham. Generally the character areas of this type located to the west are more sparsely settled and with a more dispersed pattern. Many of the buildings have a traditional character with timber framed buildings and a strong vernacular or market town architecture including red brick and tile hanging. There are also numerous isolated farmsteads including some large modern agricultural buildings. Attractive manor houses are found associated with parkland. Local landmarks include the Donnington Castle ruins and other historical features such as the Bussock Hill hillfort.
- 11.5. This landscape type is related to and shares many characteristics of the *Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes (N)*, however differs in its somewhat less pronounced landform, the greater dominance of arable farmland in this area and the absence of the dramatic views to the Thames and Chilterns which greatly contribute to the character of Type N (through 'borrowed' character).

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Varied geology** dominated by **chalk** but with overlying deposits of sands, gravels and clay.
- **Mosaic** of mixed woodland and farmland, including arable fields, pasture and paddocks.
- **Strong wooded context** created by blocks and linear belts of woodland, often occurring in the most elevated locations and associated with mantling of the chalk.
- Farmland dominated by large open **arable** fields with denuded hedgerows with local enclosed **pastures** and **paddocks**.
- **Dry valleys** with occasional small streams along the lower slopes.
- Important historical and archaeological features including Iron Age **hillforts** and **Donnington Castle**.
- Remaining landscapes of valley-edge **country houses and parks**.
- **Winding rural lanes** with intimate character but affected by the motorway.
- **Rural character** with sparse dispersed settlement pattern, nucleated villages and small riverside towns with a strong **vernacular** character.
- Important ecological habitats including **ancient woodland**, calcareous **grassland** and **heath**.

Factors Contributing to Landscape Character

Physical Influences

- 11.6. The *Farmed Chalk Mosaic* is composed predominantly of Upper Chalk overlain in places by depths of the sandy Lambeth Group and clay-with-flints with local areas with clay. Consequently the soils are varied - ranging from argillic brown earths and paleo-argillic brown earths to limited areas of stagnogleys around the Pang valley. These are mostly well-drained and there are no visible streams, ponds or other hydrological features in the area, although seasonally winterbournes may be present and these landscapes are found associated with the adjoining valleys of the Kennet, Lambourn and Pang.
- 11.7. The landform is topographically varied comprising bands of somewhat rolling land rising from the valleys to with undulating and steep slopes of up to around 160m AOD. Where the slopes are incised with dry valleys the landscape becomes more undulating and creates the impression of subtly interlocking hills in places, emphasised by the woodland cover.

Historic Environment

Historic Land Use

- 11.8. The Iron Age hillfort at Bussock Wood was part of a series of forts flanking the Kennet valley, suggesting competition for territorial control over the western part of this landscape. There are also linear earthworks, known as Black Ditch, on Snelsmore Common. Other possible enclosed and defended settlements, such as Borough Hill overlooking the Lambourn, indicate that by the Iron Age this landscape was widely (though probably not densely) settled, a pattern that continued into the medieval period.
- 11.9. In common with other areas the entirety of this landscape type, spanning Savernake Forest west of Hungerford and the Forest of Berkshire in the other areas, would have been subject to Forest Law. In 1227 extensive disafforestation led to the creation of deerparks across the landscape which retain a predominantly wooded character. This pattern was repeated with the creation of landscaped parkland around country houses in the 18th and 19th centuries.
- 11.10. This landscape type occurs adjacent to the valleys, particularly the valley of the River Kennet, along which the main roads radiated from Reading, so most of the roads are minor roads and country lanes, although the M4 motorway has been more recently developed. Donnington Castle, north of Newbury, owes its fortified character to its strategic position at the intersection of major east-west and north-south routes. It dates to 1386, but was extensively rebuilt with additional defences added during the Civil War.
- 11.11. The landscape contains contrasting field types, with the areas in the east associated with the woodlands and sandy deposits showing significant areas of assarting, probably of medieval and post-medieval date, visible in the irregular shapes of the woods and in some of the irregular field boundaries. However, in the west the fields are predominantly Parliamentary-style with straight boundaries, although 20th

century boundary removal has created some prairie-style fields located on the more elevated areas.

- 11.12. During the Second World War, Snelsmore Common was used as an ammunition dump and some of the infrastructure present on the site today dates from that time. Bucklebury Common was similarly used as vehicle depot.

Settlement Evolution

- 11.13. The general location of this landscape type, at the interface of the chalk and the Kennet, Lambourn and Pang river valleys, is reflected in its settlement pattern, with the larger villages, from the 11th century onwards, such as Hungerford being sited close to the valley floor in positions suitable for exploiting the agricultural potential of both zones. Those settlements at a distance from the main rivers were more dispersed in the landscape, a significant number being deserted in the medieval period, and as a result a dispersed settlement character characterises much of the surrounding area.

Historic Designations

Designation	Summary
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	
Bussock Camp (SAM 106)	Bussock Camp.
Donnington Castle (19013)	A quadrangular castle & 17th cent fieldwork.
English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens	
Donnington Grove* (Grade II) (G5)	A mid C18th Strawberry Hill Gothic country house by John Chute surrounded by mid to late C18th pleasure grounds and landscape park.

Land Use

- 11.14. The *Farmed Chalk Mosaic* is a rural landscape used for a mixture of agricultural and forestry uses being dominated by arable farmland with a high proportion of woodland and smaller areas of pasture and woodland. The mixed farmland comprises large regular straight-edged cereal fields, divided by a mixture of overgrown hedgerows, gappy flailed hedgerows or grass verges from which the hedgerows have been removed. These open fields are lent structure by the woodland context and the topographic variety. Sometimes hedgerows adjacent to the roads have been retained with significant belts of trees creating an enclosed and verdant quality. In locations where woodland is sparse and the landform undistinguished the arable landscape can be quite bland and with a prairie field appearance. There are smaller areas of permanent pasture which vary from areas of sheep-grazing reminiscent of the *Wooded Downland (F)*, to fields and paddocks for cattle and horses with overgrown and rank grass enclosed with post and wire or rustic timber fencing.
- 11.15. The woodland is very important to the character of the landscape. It comprises large irregularly-shaped areas of forestry, predominantly deciduous but including areas of mixed woodland located on the more elevated areas. Elsewhere there are also smaller blocks and copses including distinctive linear belts that follow the roads or cut down or across the valley sides. Many of the woods of this landscape type are of ecological significance being classified as ancient and within the woodland areas there

are small fragments of heath and common and occasional areas of remnant calcareous grassland. Parkland, indicated by mature trees including exotic conifer species, also contributes to the character of the landscape particularly on the edge of the Kennet valley edge.

Settlement and Building Character

- 11.16. Settlement character within this landscape type ranges from sparse and dispersed farmstead settlements to a traditional pattern of nucleated village settlements.
- 11.17. Associated with the valley landscape of the Kennet are a number of large villages/small towns which have extended out from their original loci at the river edge. The most significant of these is Hungerford (also discussed in A1) which has extended out from its Victorian core to include a large number of 1970s style and more modern estates on its outskirts. Due to its location this nucleated town is highly visible across the undulating landscape. Kintbury shares a similar heritage but has retained a stronger rural character and vernacular. A number of manor houses albeit frequently enclosed within their parkland context are also present, exploiting views of the rivers. These have often now been converted to institutional use such as hotels or education establishments.
- 11.18. Away from the valley bottoms there is a dispersed network of distinctive traditional nucleated villages. Some of these villages, such as Yattendon, have a central village square or green, and are often very attractive. The vernacular of this landscape type includes 'Ashlar' dwellings of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian age with red and blue bricks, tile hanging, barge-boarding and some timber-framed dwellings as well as properties of more rustic appearance.

Nature Conservation

- 11.19. The variety of the *Farmed Chalk Mosaic* results in a wide range of habitats of importance for nature conservation including a large extent of ancient woodland, important unimproved grassland chalk habitats and small areas of heath.

Nature Conservation Designations

Designation	Summary
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	
Combe Wood, Frilsham (19.68 ha) (G6)	Ancient woodland supporting a range of semi-natural woodland stand types. The ground flora is diverse and includes many species indicative of ancient woodland cover, some of which have restricted distribution in Berkshire.
Snelmore Common (81.51ha.) (G5)	A variety of woodland and heathland habitats supporting a specialised community of plants and animals. Comprises the largest and richest remaining area of heathland in west Berkshire.
Irish Hill Copse (0.96ha.) (G1).	Ancient coppiced woodland on a range of soils from acid to chalk. Rich ground flora including wild daffodil and bluebell.

Character Area Description

- 11.20. The following are potential subdivisions within the *Farmed Chalk Mosaic* landscape type. These six areas have the general characteristics of the generic landscape type

but vary in character locally and the following descriptions highlight some of these distinctions in landscape character.

G1: Hungerford

- 11.21. The *Hungerford Farmed Chalk Mosaic* is located in west Berkshire south of the Kennet valley. This area is characterised by its pattern of large rolling cereal fields that dip down to the River Kennet. These are divided by overgrown hedgerows or, occasionally, linear coniferous shelterbelts. Isolated trees also remain in some fields. There is a strong 'parkland' feel, particularly around Hungerford Port Down with its long mature avenues of trees, although no registered parklands are present. Small coverts and some larger blocks of mixed woodland create a wooded framework. There are relatively few areas of pasture within this landscape, mostly confined to areas around farmsteads and settlements.
- 11.22. The farmed area is sparsely settled with isolated farmsteads and manor houses such as Standen Manor and Inglewood, connected by small rural lanes bound by overgrown hedgerows. Settlement has been concentrated in the adjacent Kennet valley, with the bridging point and early settlement located near the river and main areas of expansion located on the higher dipslope. The main settlement is the small town of Hungerford, which has a traditional High Street of Georgian houses and shops in red and blue brick and an unusual red brick town hall. The town has expanded out into the surrounding countryside in regular grids of estates surrounded by a ridgeline of mature conifers. The nearby smaller settlement of Kintbury grew up due to the whiting (chalk) industry for paint and has similarly expanded out onto the adjacent higher slopes.

G2: Froxfield

- 11.23. This is a very small area of land located to the north of the A4/Bath Road, between the River Kennet and its tributary the Dun. It is characterised by its steeply sloping topography, which is accentuated by very large arable fields. The absence of hedgerows or fences results in a very open character. The crest of the hill is covered by an extensive area of mixed woodland, creating a strong wooded context. With the exception of agricultural buildings there is no settlement within this area.

G3: Elcot

- 11.24. The *Elcot Farmed Chalk Mosaic* is found to the north of the River Kennet to which this landscape strongly shelves. The area comprises a mixture of small pastoral and larger rolling arable fields divided by straight-edged shelterbelts and overgrown hedgerows, although sometimes the field boundaries have been lost resulting in a more open character. The area has a high proportion of woodland, including numerous irregular valley side woods.
- 11.25. The area is sparsely settled with only scattered farmhouses and the small valley side settlements of Eddington and Halfway. Some of the farm buildings are large industrial sheds. There are, however, numerous grander residences located along gentle 'spurs' exploiting views to the Kennet, such as at Elcot and Denford, which are the focus of valley side parklands with large horse chestnut trees.

G4: Boxford

- 11.26. The *Boxford Farmed Chalk Mosaic* is a small strip of land between the *Wickham Woodland and Heathland Mosaic (H3)* and the *Lambourn Upper Valley Floor (A2)*. Large arable fields, divided by straight-edged field boundaries dominate this area. There are also small irregular areas of pastureland associated with the small farmsteads that are located at the top of the valley side. Pig farming has also been introduced into the area. The landscape includes many small copses and woodland blocks with oak, beech and Scots pine.
- 11.27. This landscape has numerous sunken lanes bordered by wide verges and overgrown diverse hedgerows that run perpendicularly down the valley sides to the Lambourn. The hedgerows include tall mature hedgerow trees. Along the northern boundary the M4 motorway cuts across the area and is both visible and audible throughout much of this character area.

G5: Winterbourne

- 11.28. The *Winterbourne Farmed Chalk Mosaic* is a diverse area with large undulating and rolling cereal fields, some vegetable growing, pastures, paddocks and woodlands. The woodlands are extensive and interconnected and are located on the higher land, creating a well-wooded character throughout the area. Irregular-edged pastures have been assarted from the woodlands. There are some areas with a parkland character, such as around Winterbourne Manor, and there is a Country Park at Snelsmore Common, which includes areas of heathland. The Winterbourne Stream, a seasonal stream, is also a feature of this area.
- 11.29. The M4 defines the northern boundary and the recently constructed A34(T) bisects the area introducing noise and movement, which disturbs the rural tranquillity. Numerous new mixed woodland plantations and shelterbelts have been planted alongside the A34, which will, in time, reduce the visual and aural impact of the road but will also increase the sense of enclosure and decrease views from the road. Settlement in the area is sparse. There are a few villages such as Curridge with a dispersed form due to the presence of numerous outlying modern estates and barracks. There are also more linear settlements such as Winterbourne. Generally, however, settlement is dispersed, comprising red brick farm buildings nestled into the landform. This area is particularly rich in historical and archaeological features including the hillfort of Bussock Camp and Donnington Castle.

G6: Yattendon

- 11.30. The *Yattendon Farmed Chalk Mosaic* is a broad scale upland plateau found flanking the valley of the River Pang at the point at which it diverts from a north south to an east west course. It is a heavily wooded landscape comprising mixed woodland occurring in linked blocks throughout the area, which creates a strong sense of enclosure. There are also deciduous blocks associated with former commons, such as at Ashampstead Common and Frilsham Common dominated by pioneer and succession woodland with birch and willow. In comparison to other chalk areas a high proportion of the woodland is coniferous generally irregularly edged but with some geometric and straight-edged examples. Coniferous plantations also occur along the

M4 motorway that cuts through the heart of this area in an east-west direction. The woodland is interspersed with a mixture of areas of fragmented and open arable farmland and pastoral fields and is bordered for part of its eastern side by a steep sided dry valley. Numerous disused gravel and sand pits are present which sometimes scar the landscape.

- 11.31. Settlement is small scale with numerous attractive villages such as the picturesque old village of Yattendon, with its mellow brick and white-painted Georgian houses that surround a village square. There are clusters of red brick farmhouses throughout. The settlements are connected by a small number of winding rural roads, including one that follows the dry valley.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of Landscape Type

FEATURES OF KEY SIGNIFICANCE

- **Attractive nucleated villages and small riverside towns.**
- **Diverse mosaic** of mixed woodland, arable fields, pasture and paddocks.
- **Wooded context** created by ridge and hill top woodlands and wooded valley sides .
- Small **streams**.
- Important **historical** and **archaeological** features.
- **Country houses** and **parks**.
- **Network of rural lanes**.
- Important habitats – **ancient woodland, chalk grassland** and **heath**.

Strength of Landscape Character

- 11.32. This landscape type is very diverse and, in places, fragmented resulting in an overall moderate landscape character. Of particular importance to the character are the strong mixed wooded horizons, views to the adjoining river valleys, the winding rural lane network connecting dispersed farmsteads and villages and the presence of important remnant calcareous grassland and heathland.

Landscape Condition

- 11.33. The condition of the landscape is generally declining due to the further loss of field boundary elements, which has resulted in the formation of very large and fragmented arable fields and the loss of traditional farmed landscape including features of key significance. Unsympathetic design of rural buildings continue to threaten the integrity of this landscape type although woodland cycles provide opportunities for improvements to the visual quality of the forestry resource.

Key Issues

- Decline in the viability of grazing leading to further conversion of arable farmland and decline of species richness of the chalk grassland habitat.
- Increase of horse paddocks with weak boundary elements and poor quality grassland.
- Inappropriate or lack of woodland and heathland management.
- Creation of coniferous plantation rather than deciduous or mixed woodland.
- Further loss or decline of boundary hedgerows and diversity.
- Potential demands for upgrading of the winding network of rural lanes.
- Potential pressure for new developments around or away from the existing settlements, particularly those located along the linear roads (that may lead to a loss of distinction between settlements) and valley-side settlements (that may be visible from within the valley landscapes).
- Intrusion of the M4 motorway and A roads in localised areas.
- Intrusive developments (such as the construction of large buildings or tall communications towers) on the valley sides that would be visible for long distances.
- Changes to the wooded skyline as a result of development or woodland management cycles.
- Potential for recreational pressure to affect historic landscape features.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The strategy for the *Farmed Chalk Mosaic* is to **strengthen and restore** the landscape of this diverse type. This entails conservation of the mixed woodland horizons and valley woodlands and the traditional settlement pattern and form. It also requires seeking to unify and strengthen the traditional landscape pattern by restoration and management of the hedgerow framework.

Guidelines

11.34. Broad objectives to realise the aims of the strategy include:

Landscape Management

- Conserve and protect pasture and encourage appropriate management by grazing.
- Conserve and restore remnant chalk grassland and heathland habitats to link existing fragmented sites, and seek to prevent further habitat loss.

- Secure appropriate woodland management in particular for deciduous ancient and semi-natural woodland areas.
- Encourage owners to develop future management cycles that consider and conserve the character of the wooded skylines.
- Ensure that new woodland planting follows the existing pattern of wooded ridges, wooded steep slopes and wooded dry valleys.
- Conserve the mixed woodland character in areas by selective reintroduction of deciduous species within coniferous monoculture plantation.
- Ensure that new woodland boundaries are sensitive to landform.
- Conserve and strengthen existing boundary elements, particularly around visually intrusive land uses such as paddocks, and seek to prevent further loss or decline of boundary hedgerows and undertake selective replanting of hedgerows in denuded arable landscapes.
- Undertake sensitive woodland planting to reduce the intrusion of the motorway and other roads where possible or to reduce the visual impact of large buildings.
- Conserve the rural character of the road network.
- Actively conserve and manage pressure around features of historic significance such as the Bussock Wood hillfort and Donnington Castle.

Managing Future Change

11.35. With regard to any future change, the aim should be to maintain the rural landscape context. In addition to the features of key significance outlined earlier, main attributes to be considered with regard to any future change are:

- The winding rural roads and sunken lanes, which are an attractive characteristic of the area.
- Low density and distinctiveness of the settlements.
- The wooded context which helps integrate settlements within the landscape.
- Wooded ridge tops.
- The views to adjoining valley and downland landscapes which are very visible from some areas within the *Farmed Chalk Mosaic*.

Character Area Evaluation

11.36. The above issues, guidelines and considerations apply throughout the landscape type. However, there are some distinctions to be made within the individual character areas:

G1: Hungerford

- 11.37. The *Hungerford Farmed Chalk Mosaic* has a moderate character because there is a relatively low incidence of pastureland and so the landscape has a lower visual diversity, although the strong character of the riverside settlements is very positive. Likewise the landscape condition appears to be moderate or in some cases weak, with some remaining elements typical of the landscape type but general replacement with non-traditional features such as linear coniferous belts and continued decline of diverse hedgerows. Consequently management should seek to enhance the boundary elements and to diversify and strengthen the landscape character through further woodland planting. The architectural character of the settled areas should be conserved.

G2: Froxfield

- 11.38. The small *Froxfield* area has a moderate character and poor condition, largely due to the vast scale of the arable farmland and the influence of the A4. Consideration should be given to extension of the mixed woodland in order to create a more intimate character.

G3: Elcot

- 11.39. The *Elcot Farmed Chalk Mosaic* has a relatively strong character with a diversity of parkland, pasture, arable land and woodland. The condition is declining due to the introduction of large agricultural buildings and loss and poor management of boundary elements. Restoration and management of hedgerows and conservation of the parklands will be a key element of the landscape strategy for this area.

G4:Boxford

- 11.40. The *Boxford Farmed Chalk Mosaic* has a moderate character and the condition is declining. Particular concerns within this area are the intrusive influence of the motorway and the overgrown boundary elements. The strategy for this area will entail conservation and enhancement of boundaries and mitigation of the impact of the motorway, for example, through new woodland creation.

G5: Winterbourne

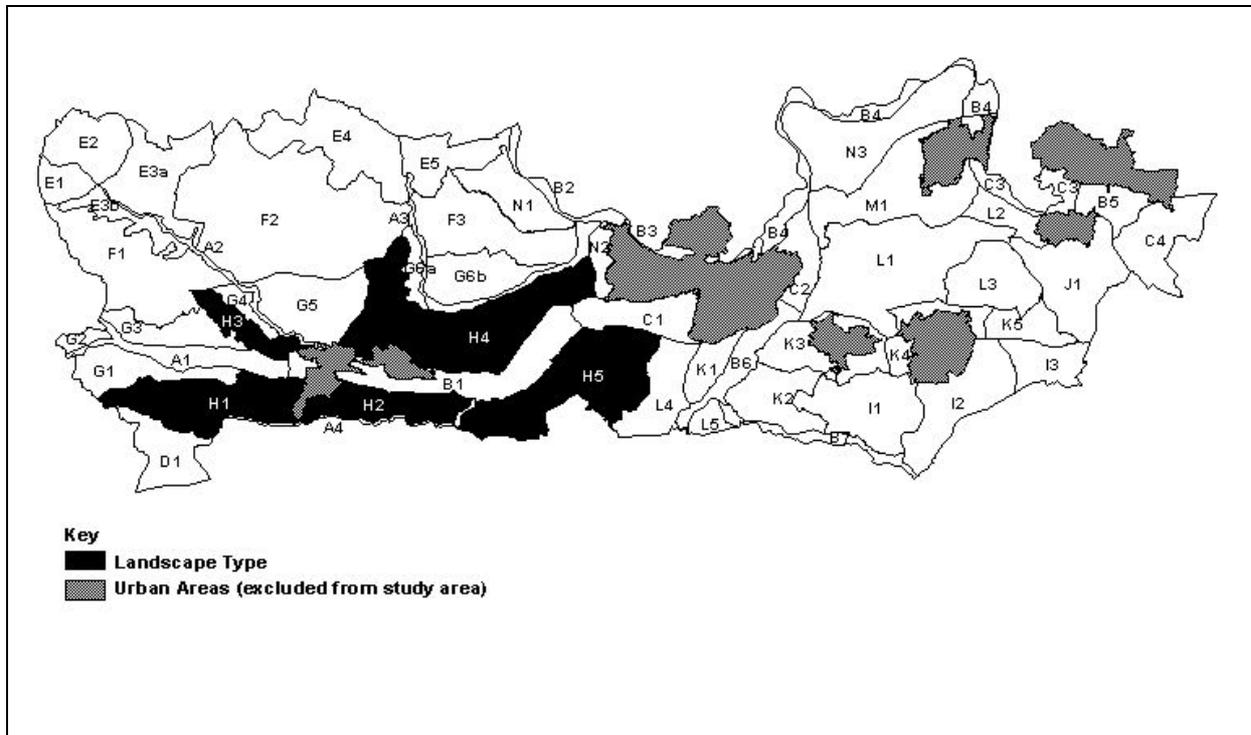
- 11.41. The *Winterbourne Farmed Chalk Mosaic* has a strong character with a diversity of land use retained within a strongly wooded ridgeline and with habitats and historical features of great importance. The condition of the landscape is generally good and therefore emphasis will need to be placed on conservation of the landscape, particularly the small heathland areas, the woodland context, and the dispersed character of the settlements. However, measures to redress the adverse influences of the roads should also be considered.

G6: Yattendon

- 11.42. The *Yattendon Farmed Chalk Mosaic* has a strong character, with peaceful and attractive rural villages, a well-wooded context and diversity of land use. However the condition is declining and therefore the strategy for this area will be to conserve

and restore elements such as the hedgerow boundaries and seek to mitigate the impact of the motorway, for example, through new woodland creation.

12. TYPE H: WOODLAND AND HEATHLAND MOSAIC



Type H: Woodland and Heathland Mosaic

- H1: Inkpen
- H2: Greenham
- H3: Wickham
- H4: Cold Ash
- H5: Burghfield

Location and Boundaries

The *Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* is located in the south west of Berkshire on the lower slopes surrounding the *Kennet Upper and Lower Valley Floors* (A1 and B1). The western and northern parts of this landscape type are within the North Wessex Downs AONB. Areas H2 and H5 lie to the south of the River Kennet. The boundaries are principally determined by geology and relate to the drift deposits of sand and gravel resting on a base of London Clay. To the north the boundary coincides with the rising chalk bedrock of the North Wessex Downs. The county boundary forms the edge to the south and west.

TYPE H - Woodland & Heathland Mosaic Typical Characteristics of the Rural Landscape



DESCRIPTION

Landscape Character

- 12.1. The *Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* is a largely peaceful rural landscape with a diverse and attractive mixture of land use relating to the varied underlying substrate of sands, gravels and clays. It is an undulating lowland landscape of broad mounded ridges, divided by shallow valleys. The clay underlying the freely draining drift deposits has resulted in the formation of an extensive network of small streams and numerous small ponds. The watercourses incise steep narrow valleys, although dense woodland cover often screens the watercourses.
- 12.2. The landscape is characterised by a patchwork of land cover, with the dominant woodland intermixed with smaller areas of remnant heath, balanced with intervening areas of mixed farmland. Large irregular interconnected woodland blocks are located along the ridges, which create a unifying wooded backdrop and skyline. These are predominantly deciduous, including oak, beech, sweet chestnut and lime, although, within this deciduous framework, there are some areas of mixed woodland and coniferous plantation. Woodland is also concentrated around the small valleys, including linear 'ghyll' woodlands within the more steeply enclosed valleys. There are numerous small copses and farm woodlands, some of which are under management as coppice. Much of the woodland is ancient, sometimes former commons, and there are many large mature trees creating a sense of continuity. This strong wooded framework creates an intimate enclosed landscape.
- 12.3. Remnant areas of heathland, located within the woodland matrix, are distinguished by their colourful heather, gorse and bracken and are often fringed by birch. The heathlands correspond to areas of sandy and gravelly deposits that produce acidic soils. Some heath, such as at Greenham Common, covers vast flat areas, but mostly it is confined to relatively small glades within the woodland. Other areas of former heathland commons have been converted to grassland or have developed scrubby pioneer woodland communities.
- 12.4. In contrast to the woodland and heathland, the intervening areas of farmland include pasture, areas of paddocks and more open arable fields. Most of the fields are relatively small and irregularly shaped as a result of their piecemeal inclosure from woodland. The pastures include areas of unimproved, neutral and acidic grassland, supporting a range of important species. Woodland forms the principal boundary element, although there are sometimes fences dividing the pastures and low, gappy, hedgerows dividing the arable land. Parklands, with their origins as medieval deer parks are a further feature of this landscape type, as reflected in the high number of registered parks and gardens.
- 12.5. The rural quality of the landscape is created by the balance between the woodland and heathland and the intervening mixed farmland. It is a settled landscape with a variety of dispersed farms, manors, small hamlets, villages and small towns which have a pleasant unobtrusive character, being well-integrated into the woodland context. A relatively dense rural settlement pattern characterises the area around Tadley and AWE Aldermaston. Some buildings are of vernacular form, with red brick, timber

frame and thatch being traditional building materials, but there are numerous more modern post-war dwellings. Some areas, particularly in the south of the county, have a strong military presence as well as industrial estates. The settled areas are connected by a network of quiet rural lanes many of which run up to spine roads that run along the ridges. Away from the ridge sides, particularly around Inkpen and its neighbouring villages, there is a very irregular and tight pattern of country lanes winding through dappled woodlands. These are very attractive and are sometimes sunken with steep enclosing banks resulting in a strong intimate character. Staddle stones or 'staddles' are sometimes found as property boundary markers along the lanes.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Topographically varied** with undulating hills and small valleys rising to mounded ridges.
- **Intimate lowland rural landscape** with small traditional villages and farmsteads.
- Mixed sand, clay and gravel geological substrate creating a **mosaic of landcover** including arable fields, damp pasture, paddocks, **woodland** and **heathland**.
- **Strong wooded context** taking a variety of woodland forms including large swathes of mixed, coniferous and deciduous woodland along the ridges, small farm woodlands, wooded 'valleys' and copses.
- Arable land and pastures divided by a varied field pattern of **small irregular fields**.
- **Network of hidden streams and ponds**.
- **Winding rural lanes**, including **sunken lanes**, passing through open and wooded landscapes.
- Variety of important **wildlife habitats** including ancient woodland, heathland, meadows and pasture, open water and parkland.
- **Landscape parklands** with their origins in medieval deerparks.
- Relatively **dense pattern of rural settlement** in some areas and some pressure and influence from adjacent urban areas in some parts.
- Numerous **visible historic features** including barrows, hillforts, a Roman road, earthworks, mottes and the Cold War monuments at Greenham Common.

Factors Contributing to Landscape Character

Physical Influences

- 12.6. The landform of the *Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* comprises undulating broad scale gently mounded ridges or inclines at between 50m and 120m AOD forming the transition between the Kennet valley and the surrounding upland chalk landscape. It is further divided and defined by the valleys of the Rivers Pang, Enborne and Lambourn. The area has a distinctive geology, underlain by extensive areas of River Terrace deposits which grade down to the sands and gravels of the Lambeth

Formation (Lambeth Group and Bagshot Beds) and, at the lowest point, to London Clay. This results in an intricate and varied landscape with a variety of nutrient-poor and often acidic soils comprising podsoles/brown sands associated with the river terrace gravels and stagnogley soils associated with areas of London Clay.

- 12.7. A direct consequence of the underlying geological and soil conditions is the presence of surface water due to impeded drainage caused by the subsurface pan of the podsoles and low permeability of the clay. These conditions have resulted in the presence of surface springs and a highly divided network of small streams including The Bourne and Peartree Bottom, tributaries of the Rivers Pang and Kennet respectively. Many of the streams have been dammed to form small ponds which are found scattered throughout the landscape. In some parts of the landscape the streams have resulted in a distinct line of small and incised tributary valleys draining down to the river floodplain. Less visibly, wells have also been sunk throughout this landscape type, exploiting the water table above the London Clay.
- 12.8. Some mineral extraction – of gravels and sands – has occurred within this landscape, and some of these areas have revealed features of geological interest which are now designated as SSSIs (see table below).

Historic Environment

Historic Land Use

- 12.9. The use of these areas of sandy and acid soils contrasts markedly with that of the fertile river gravels and floodplain they flank. Their clearance and cultivation may have led to rapid impoverishment, possibly as early as the Bronze Age, leading to the early establishment of heathland and woodland. The groups of Bronze Age round barrows at Wash Common, Brimpton Common, and Mortimer may point to territorial divisions, while the Iron Age hillforts at Ramsbury and Grimsbury, the latter being the largest and most elaborately defended of a series of forts flanking the Kennet valley, suggests centralised political control covering a wide area.
- 12.10. The line of a Roman road between Calleva (Silchester) and North Warnborough crosses this zone northwest of the Roman town, and again west of Speen, the latter part surviving as a road to the present. Grim's Bank, a 5 kilometre defensive earthwork of uncertain date is also present, sections of which are found on the northern approaches to Calleva (including the Roman road), and to the west on Crookham and Greenham Commons.
- 12.11. The Forest of Berkshire encompassed the areas north of the Enborne and Kennet and the areas to the south were part of Windsor Forest making all this area subject to Forest Law. Even after extensive disafforestation in 1227, these gravel plateau areas retained a predominantly wooded character and their continued value as hunting grounds is evident in the large number of deerparks created in the medieval period. Many survive today as landscaped parks attached to country houses such as at Hamstead Marshall, which was first recorded in 1229, was in use in 1574, and still contained deer in the 20th century. The battlefield of the civil war Battle of Newbury (1643) lies predominantly on the plateau and valley side west of Newbury, although there is no physical evidence of its history.

- 12.12. There is a great diversity of field patterns within this landscape type including an intricate patchwork of small and medium-scale field systems, indicative of assarting, probably of medieval and post-medieval date. Straight-sided field boundaries intermixed within this irregular pattern reflect 19th century rationalisation on earlier inclosures as improvements in agriculture made cultivation more viable. There are a large number of wooded commons.
- 12.13. These areas of relatively unproductive land appear to have had strategic importance at various times of conflict. Grim's Bank had a defensive function. During the Norman period, two motte and bailey castles were built on a low spur with wide views over the Kennet valley at Hamstead Marshall, dating to the period of political instability in the reign of King Stephen (1135-54), and a third mound, 800 metres to the east, is suggested as being a siege work for attacking the mottes. There are further possible mottes at West Woodhay and, north of the Kennet, at Hampstead Norreys and Hermitage. During the Civil War the Battle of Newbury (1643) was fought on the heathland between the Kennet and the Enborne, although there is no visible evidence for this in the landscape. More recent defence sites are the nationally important former Cold War air base on Greenham Common (with monuments awaiting imminent scheduling) and the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston.

Settlement Evolution

- 12.14. In common with the pattern of late prehistoric and Roman settlement on the river gravels, Saxon settlement also started along the river valleys, but then appears to have expanded onto the adjacent plateau areas. However, most of the Domesday settlements in this landscape zone are still located on the valley sides, establishing (or perhaps continuing) a pattern of settlements exploiting resources across a varied topography.
- 12.15. Some villages, like Inkpen, however, are positioned at a greater distance from the Kennet valley, closer to the chalk slopes below the chalk scarp, suggesting the exploitation of regions of previously unoccupied marginal land. Villages are widely dispersed, as is the pattern of rural hamlets and farms.

Historic Designations

Designation	Summary
Scheduled Ancient Monuments (<i>West Berkshire SAM No</i>)	
Grims Bank (SAM 48 – 54)	Bank: 220m - Padworth Gully; 810m - Old Warren; 430m - Little Heath; 820m –New Plantation Ufton; 400m – Old Park and Raven Hill; 510m – Pennsylvania Wood.
Chapel of St Leonard (SAM 65)	Chapel, Manor Farm
Grimsbury Castle (SAM 105)	Grimsbury Castle
Fishponds (SAM 158)	Seven fishponds at Ufton Court
Eling Roman villa (SAM 175)	Roman villa
Moated site (SAM 12013)	Moated site at Balsdon Farm
Moated site/fishponds (SAM 12023)	Moated site and three fishponds at Ufton Nervet
Moated site/fishponds (SAM 12027)	Moated site and two fishponds, Moathouse Cottage
Moated site (SAM 12035)	Moated manorial site 200m NW of east field copse

Round barrow cemetery (SAM 12073)	Round barrow cemetery at Holden's Firs
Round barrow cemetery (SAM 12075)	Round barrow cemetery on Wash Common
Burial mounds (SAM 12075)	Burial mounds (Battle of Newbury site)
Round barrow cemetery (SAM 12074)	Round barrow cemetery at Brimpton Common
Bowl barrow (SAM 12079)	Bowl barrow 300m s of Everington Hill Cottage
Bell barrow (SAM 12117)	Bell barrow 250m NW of Larkwhistle Farm
Bowl barrow (SAM 12231-2)	Bowl barrow: part of a barrow cemetery in Holden's Firs
Bowl barrow (SAM 12233)	Bowl barrow in Stephens Firs: an outlier to a barrow cemetery
Bell barrow (SAM 12234)	Bell barrow: part of the Brimpton common barrow cemetery
Two bowl barrows (SAM 12235)	Two bowl barrows: part of a barrow cemetery on wash common
Motte (SAM 19014)	Motte at Hampstead Norreys, 250m SW of St Mary's Church
English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens	
Hamstead Marshall Park (Grade II) (H1)	C17 garden, medieval deer park with C17 avenues and gardens of Hamstead Lodge.
Inkpen House (Grade II*) (H1)	A late C17th/ early C18th formal garden, probably replanted in the C19th and with restoration work in the late C20th, surrounding a late C17th/ early C18th former rectory.
Sandleford Priory (St. Gabriel's School). (Grade II) (H2)	A mid to late C18th landscape park, surrounding a country house remodelled by James Wyatt in Gothic style in the 1780s, with work to designs of 1781 by Lancelot Brown, and C19th planting.
Donnington Grove* (Grade II) (H3 – principally within G6)	Landscape park associated with Strawberry Hill Gothic country house.
Englefield House (Grade II) (H4)	A country house surrounded by C19th and C20th formal and wooded gardens within an C18th and C19th landscape park.
Aldermaston Court (Grade II) (H5)	Mid and late C19th gardens and park, surrounding a mid C19th country house, with the remains of C17th/ C18th pleasure grounds relating to the former C17th manor house.
Folly Farm (Grade II*) (H5)	A C17th farmhouse substantially extended twice by Sir Edwin Lutyens in the early C20th, surrounded by contemporary formal gardens, also by Lutyens, with planting designs (now simplified) by Gertrude Jekyll. One of the most complex designs produced by the pair, and regarded as one of their best gardens.
Wasing Place (Grade II) (H5)	An C18th country house and landscape park with C19th informal gardens.
English Heritage Register of Battlefields	
Newbury Battlefield	Large battlefield associated with first Civil War Battle of Newbury 1643.

Current Rural Land Use

- 12.16. This landscape is rural and is under mixed use for forestry and farmland with intervening natural areas of heathland and woodland and small settlements.
- 12.17. The farmland predominantly comprises small irregular pastures cut out from the woodland, used for the grazing of cattle and horses. Where boundary elements are present these often comprise rustic post and wire fences. The arable fields, mostly used for the production of cereals, tend to be larger and more regular in appearance. These are sometimes divided by low flailed or overgrown hedgerows.
- 12.18. The main forestry areas are located along the wooded ridges. These include large blocks of coniferous plantation as well as mixed woodland and economically-managed

deciduous woodland. A number of ornamental parklands are also still in existence adding variety to the landscape with their large areas of parkland with mature trees and ornamental species.

- 12.19. The Ministry of Defence is a major institutional user of the landscape and occupies large tracts, particularly in the south of the county.

Settlement and Building Character

- 12.20. The landscape is well-settled and settlements are dispersed throughout this landscape. There are many scattered farmhouses and isolated buildings and a variety of small villages and hamlets. These include long linear settlements that are strung out along the rural roads or small clusters around road intersections. Some larger villages such as Upper Bucklebury and Southend are located along the ridges with smaller settlements away from the ridges. The few larger towns, with their urban influences, such as Thatcham, have grown up into this area from the valley sides. Most of the settlements have a historic ‘established’ quality. Red brick is the most widespread building material although there are also localised areas of timber framing, thatch and more ‘traditional’ style buildings.

Nature Conservation

- 12.21. There are a diverse range of habitats within the *Woodland and Heathland Mosaic*, a large number of which are designated as SSSI. The woodland, much of which is semi-natural and/or ancient, is particularly important, as are the grassland and parkland habitats and the wet and dry heathland. The heathland restoration project at Bucklebury Common (H4) is helping to increase the extent of heathland.

Nature Conservation Designations

Designation	Summary of Importance
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	
Redhill Wood (29.18ha) (H1)	A floristically diverse and insect-rich ancient woodland with many uncommon lower plants. Birch-ash-hazel, pedunculate oak-ash-hazel and valley-alder woodland.
Inkpen Common (1.53ha.) (H1)	Composed of small areas of damp heathland- a remnant of the former Inkpen Great Common. The site supports an interesting flora, including several local or rare species.
Catmore and Winterly Copses (25.08ha.) (H1)	Old coppice-with-standards woodland predominantly of hazel coppice under a canopy of oak standards. Poorly drained site with numerous streams and ponds. One of richest flora of any Berkshire woodland.
Inkpen Crocus Fields (3.14ha) (H1)	Neutral unimproved species-rich grassland. Small spring fed stream dissects the site. More than 10 indicator species of ancient meadows have been recorded, including the red data book plant spring crocus.
Avery’s Pightle (1.3ha) (H1)	Traditionally-managed species-rich unimproved meadow community with many species normally confined to ancient grasslands..
Enborne Copse (11.93ha) (H1).	An ancient woodland of acid pedunculate oak-lime which is a stand-type with a localised distribution nationally.
Brimpton Pit (1.64ha) (H2)	Working gravel pit providing evidence of Ice Age environmental change and development of the Thames.

Bowdown & Chamberhouse Woods (68.24ha.) (H2)	Located on a wooded scarp slope incised with small spring-fed streams and dominated by alder woodland. Higher ground supports heathland, acid grassland and mixed scrub. Exceptionally rich ground flora owing to the variety of habitats.
Cold Ash Quarry (0.43ha) (H4)	Lens with assemblage of fossil plants and insects within the Reading Beds
Briff Lane Meadows (8.70ha) (H4).	Unimproved traditionally managed species-rich neutral to slightly acidic grassland (a nationally rare and declining habitat) with small streams and belts of deciduous woodland at field edges.
King's Copse (13.6ha.) (H4.)	Old coppiced woodland of seven woodland stand types including neutral, wet and acid communities.
Old Copse, Beenham (7.99 ha) (H4)	Species-rich coppice with stands including a few small streams with wet flushes arise in the wood.
Greenham and Cookham Commons (54.66 ha.) (H4)	Heathland and acid grassland forming the single largest tract of these habitats in Berkshire. Site includes one large ancient coppice woodland.
Sulham and Tidmarsh Woods and Meadows (46.39ha) (H4 – also areas in A3).	Wet valley alderwoods (and wet meadows). A mosaic of damp copses and seasonally flooded meadows.
Decoy Pits, pools and woods (17.70ha) (H5)	Mosaic of habitats which supports the greatest known number of breeding dragonfly and damselfly species in Berkshire and includes types which are naturally uncommon and declining. Infilled former gravel pit with heaths, scrub, pools and scrub.
Wasing Wood (12.52ha) (H5)	Ponds, wet ditches and marshy areas partly on former gravel pits including important dragonfly fauna.
West's Meadow, Aldermaston (1.2ha) (H5)	Traditionally grazed neutral to acidic herb-rich pasture comprising well drained and wetter areas of base-poor marsh.

Character Area Descriptions

12.22. There are five potential subdivisions within the *Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* landscape type. These areas retain the general characteristics of the generic landscape type but vary in character locally. The following descriptions highlight these distinctions in landscape character.

HI: Inkpen

12.23. The *Inkpen Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* is located between the Walbury Hill escarpment and the Kennet Valley. It is a transitional lowland landscape with a particularly intimate character and with an extensive network of small streams, springs, wells, and ponds. There are good views to the Walbury escarpment from the edge of this area.

12.24. The area has a strongly wooded character, composed of numerous interlinked woodland blocks, including ancient woodland, that enclose irregular assorted damp pastures and ancient grasslands. In some areas the hedgerows dividing the sheep pastures have been lost resulting in a larger more open landscape. Large scale arable landscapes are a feature of some areas.

12.25. The valley woodlands include wet valley alderwood and the woodland edges frequently have less dense stands of birch and hazel with a bracken understorey. Elsewhere there are coppices within oak woodland. There are also heathland remnants such as at Inkpen Common - a remnant of the former Inkpen Great Common. Areas of parkland remain, for example around Hamstead Marshall.

12.26. This character area is crossed by a tight network of rural lanes often bounded by banks. These form the framework for the settlements, which are predominantly linear villages, such as Lower Green and Inkpen. The A34(T) crosses across the east of the area and Newbury extends down the A343 at the eastern boundary. Despite the 'ancient' quality of the landscape there is much new settlement including bungalow development and newer 'estate' housing. The combination of wooded land cover and gently undulating landform means that buildings are generally well integrated into their landscape context.

H2: Greenham

12.27. The *Greenham Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* is located between the valleys of the Kennet and Enborne, east of Newbury. The landscape comprises a flat-topped ridge upon which Greenham Common is located: a large open expanse of heathland and acid grassland, which was controlled by the Ministry of Defence and was a former air base. The Common is now largely owned and managed by West Berkshire Council. The Common is surrounded by post and wire mesh fences and a ditch and areas of exposed gravels are also visible on the Common. Surrounding Greenham Common are areas of more typical *Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* with large, predominantly deciduous woodlands which form a regular pattern of linear ghyll woodlands in undulating wet gullies leading down to the Kennet Valley. Between these woods there is a mosaic of arable and pastoral land use. Sandleford Priory is an area of eighteenth century parkland. From this area there are important open views southwards towards Penwood and Newtown.

12.28. The landscape is connected with small rural roads, although these have been 'urbanised' in some areas. Settlement includes the large nucleated villages of Brimpton as well as the suburban outskirts of Newbury. The greatest built influences are the military buildings around and within the Common and the warehouse type buildings at New Greenham Park.

H3: Wickham

12.29. The *Wickham Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* occupies a small flat-topped gravel ridge between the valleys of the Lambourn and Kennet. It is characterised by its extensive dense woodland, which includes deciduous oak and sweet chestnut woodland as well as a particularly high amount of coniferous woodland. There are a number of ancient woodlands along the ridge and small patches of heathland within the woodland matrix, which add to the interest of the landscape. Pastoral fields have been assarted at the woodland edge, but elsewhere the fields tend to be larger and more regular with relatively intact hawthorn hedgerows.

12.30. The B4000 follows the ridgeline, along which are located the settlements of Stockcross, Wickham Heath, and Wickham. Small roadside hamlets are also present. Buildings are mostly of red brick but flint is also used, for example in the construction of the church at Wickham. The A34 cuts across the ridge at the eastern end of the area.

H4: Cold Ash

- 12.31. This character area covers a large extent of land located between the valleys of the River Pang and Kennet. The landscape is topographically varied with both steep and gentle undulating slopes rising to a gentle central ridge that is very well wooded creating a unified wooded horizon throughout the area. The east-west scarp through Bradfield Southend, Bucklebury, Cold Ash and Ashmore Green is a visually defining feature of the landscape whose influence extends beyond the immediate H4 area. There are also some fine views across the North Wessex Down AONB. Interlinked linear woodland extends down the slopes from the ridge towards the valley landscape, including thin wooded valleys centred on minor tributary streams such as The Bourne. These damp and spring flushed woodlands are a very valuable habitat. There are also new areas of coniferous plantation as well as older and established woodlands including large blocks of ancient woodland. Numerous former commons, such as Bucklebury Common are also now wooded (although c 20 hectares have been restored to heathland) and the remaining heathy areas have a high proportion of gorse and pioneer birch woodland.
- 12.32. On the steeper slopes there are many small assorted pastures, some of which are traditionally managed and species rich. On the lower and gentler slopes there are more regular arable fields, generally cereals, which are occasionally interspersed with small fields of vegetable crops such as sweetcorn. The field boundaries include dense and intact hedgerows with hedgerow trees. Mature oak trees also extend along the road, often set within roadside belts, which often include overgrown holly, elder, dogrose, hawthorn and occasional pine trees. There is one area of parkland landscape, a former deer park associated with Englefield House. Other notable features are the medieval fish ponds on Bucklebury Common, The Avenue, Bucklebury (a double avenue of mature oaks reputedly planted to commemorate a visit by Elizabeth I), and Iron Age hillforts and numerous earthworks along the ridgelines.
- 12.33. The M4 disturbs a small section of the landscape along the northern boundary. Elsewhere there is a pattern of quiet rural roads that follow the ridges and wind down and across the topographically-varied landscape to connect with the valley-edge roads. Consequently, this area is particularly densely settled with numerous larger nucleated settlements along the ridge, including Southend, Upper Bucklebury, Cold Ash, and Hermitage, whilst extending from the Kennet valley are Woolhampton, Thatcham and Newbury (north). There are also smaller settlements located on the mid slopes and linear hamlets associated with the rural roads. Many detached brick buildings are visible within the woodland and, similarly, there are some large institutional buildings such as the remarkable ecclesiastical building of Douai Abbey.

H5: Burghfield

- 12.34. The *Burghfield Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* is an undulating landscape located to the south of the Kennet Valley. It has a much larger-scale pattern compared to other areas of this landscape type, being characterised by the presence of large interlinked woodland blocks and dominated by a high proportion of mixed and coniferous plantation woodlands with pockets of heathland. The new plantation woodlands

frequently have formal geometric boundaries. The woodlands include important habitats, particularly ancient woodland and wet woodland. In contrast to the wooded areas are large scale pastoral and arable fields divided by post and wire fences and many rough paddocks. The streams – Burghfield Brook and Lockram Brook – flow through these more open landscapes.

- 12.35. The settlement comprises two large areas – Burghfield Common, which extends towards the adjoining settlement of Burghfield, and Mortimer, located along the southern (county) boundary. The settlement of Tadley straddles the southern boundary of the County and this character area. There are few traditional villages and hamlets, one exception being the village of Aldermaston which contains some attractive timber framed houses. The remaining population is concentrated in small and isolated farmsteads or linear development along the roads. A significant element of this landscape are the large areas of Ministry of Defence controlled land, some of which are closely guarded and enclosed within security fences. However the landscape has a historic ambience, partly due to the presence of parklands in the west – Aldermaston Park and Wasing Park with attractive avenues and veteran trees. There are also numerous prehistoric features, such as numerous barrows and the Grim’s Ditch earthwork.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of Landscape Type

FEATURES OF KEY SIGNIFICANCE

- **Varied landcover mosaic.**
- **Deciduous woodland context** with a variety of woodland forms including valley woodlands and wooded ridgelines.
- **Varied field pattern of small irregular and assarted fields.**
- **Presence of streams and ponds.**
- **Winding rural and sunken lanes.**
- **Important heathland, ancient woodland and grassland habitats.**
- **Landscape parklands.**
- **Features of archaeological importance.**

Strength of Landscape Character

- 12.36. The landscape has a strong and intimate rural character with a diverse, yet unified mosaic of land use, although some land at the edge of the settled area has urban fringe characteristics. The framework of woodland enclosing areas of heathland, pasture and more open arable land create a balanced rural landscape. The landscape type also has an exceptionally high number of important sites valued for their archaeological and nature conservation interest.

Landscape Condition

12.37. The condition of the landscape is generally very good although there is evidence that the condition of some of the farmed and woodland landscapes is currently declining. This is particularly as a result of loss of field boundary elements and unsympathetic design and integration of coniferous plantations.

Key Issues

- Decline in the viability of grazing leading to scrubbing up of pasture and conversion to arable farmland.
- Increase of horse paddocks with weak boundary elements and poor quality grassland.
- Invasion of heathland with scrub leading to loss and fragmentation of the heathland habitat.
- Decline of woodland management leading to loss of coppice with standards woodland and other decline in species-richness.
- Conversion of deciduous woodland to mixed or coniferous monoculture plantation, particularly unsympathetic plantations that replace the irregular field pattern with more geometric forms.
- Further loss or decline of boundary hedgerows and diversity.
- Potential demand for upgrading of the winding network of rural lanes.
- Potential pressure for new developments around or away from the existing settlements, particularly those located along the linear roads that may lead to a loss of distinction between settlements.
- Intrusion of the motorway and A roads in localised areas.
- Cycle of growth affecting parkland landscapes and need to conserve the features of historic interest.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The strategy for the *Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* Landscape Type is to **conserve** and, where necessary, **restore** the distinctive intimate and peaceful wooded landscape with its small-scale mosaic of pasture, arable farmland, woodland and parkland. In particular the heathland characteristics require conservation and there are opportunities for restoration of habitats and reinstatement of features that have been lost.

Guidelines

12.38. Broad objectives to realise the aims of the strategy include:

Landscape Management

- Seek to conserve and restore areas of pastureland and encourage appropriate management by grazing.
- Conserve remnant and restore former heathland habitats. This landscape type represents a major opportunity for heathland restoration to link existing small, fragmented sites. Areas of recently wooded heath are a key target for restoration.
- Promote appropriate woodland management including coppicing and pollarding, in particular for ancient and semi-natural woodland areas.
- Ensure that new woodland planting follows the existing pattern of wooded ridges and interconnected valleys. The aim should be to create a more mixed woodland character in areas which have been converted to coniferous monoculture plantation and ensure that woodland boundaries are sensitive to landform.
- Conserve and strengthen existing boundary elements, including the characteristic wooded boundaries and seek to prevent further loss or decline in the quality of boundary hedgerows.
- Restore or reinstate boundary hedgerows around horse paddocks.
- Seek to conserve the rural character of the network of lanes and roads.
- Consider opportunities for sensitive new planting to reduce the intrusion of the motorway and other roads where possible.
- Preserve features of archaeological or historic significance including active management of important parklands.

Managing Future Change

12.39. With regard to any future change, the aim should be to maintain the intimate woodland and heathland landscape context and conserve the dispersed settlement character. In addition to the features of key significance outlined above, the main landscape attributes to be considered with regard to any future change are:

- The attractive rural winding roads and sunken lane network, which are largely free from development and intrusive infrastructure.
- Wooded context of the settlements, which helps integrate the built form into the landscape.
- Distinctiveness and distribution pattern of the settlements.
- Prominent and visually sensitive wooded ridge tops.

Character Area Evaluation

- 12.40. The guidance outlined above applies throughout the landscape type. Distinctions and variations between the individual character areas are noted below:

H1: Inkpen

- 12.41. The *Inkpen Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* has a strong intact character as a result of its remoteness, strong woodland framework, presence of important areas of heathland and the spectacular views to Walbury Hill. There are also some large scale open arable landscapes. The condition of the landscape is also good, although there are considerable opportunities to increase the strength of the heathland presence. Consequently there is a need to conserve the character of this landscape, through appropriate management initiatives.

H2: Greenham

- 12.42. The *Greenham Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* has a moderate character with a strong presence of heathland and woodland, however is affected by the large and non-traditional buildings of the military installations and the new industrial estates. The condition of the landscape could also be improved as this is currently challenged by poor boundary elements and areas of fragmented land. Therefore there is a need to conserve and restore the landscape in order to create a more intimate and intact character whilst acknowledging that some of the non-traditional buildings are of historic importance. Restoration of heathland and wooded boundaries is a priority in this area. The retention and enhancement of positive open views to the south should be considered in all land management.

H3: Wickham

- 12.43. The *Wickham Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* is a small area and has a moderate character with all of the component elements of this landscape type, although the heathland areas are very fragmented and small. However, the extensive conifer forests, including straight-edged plantation woodlands creates a new and visually dominant land use. Therefore, whilst the overriding need is to conserve the landscape there is a need for restoration, in particular restoration of hedgerow elements at the periphery of the forest area, recreation of a more mixed and deciduous woodland character and restoration of heathland, as areas of coniferous plantation reach the end of their rotation. Opportunities for further integration of the A34, for example, through appropriate mass planting should also be considered.

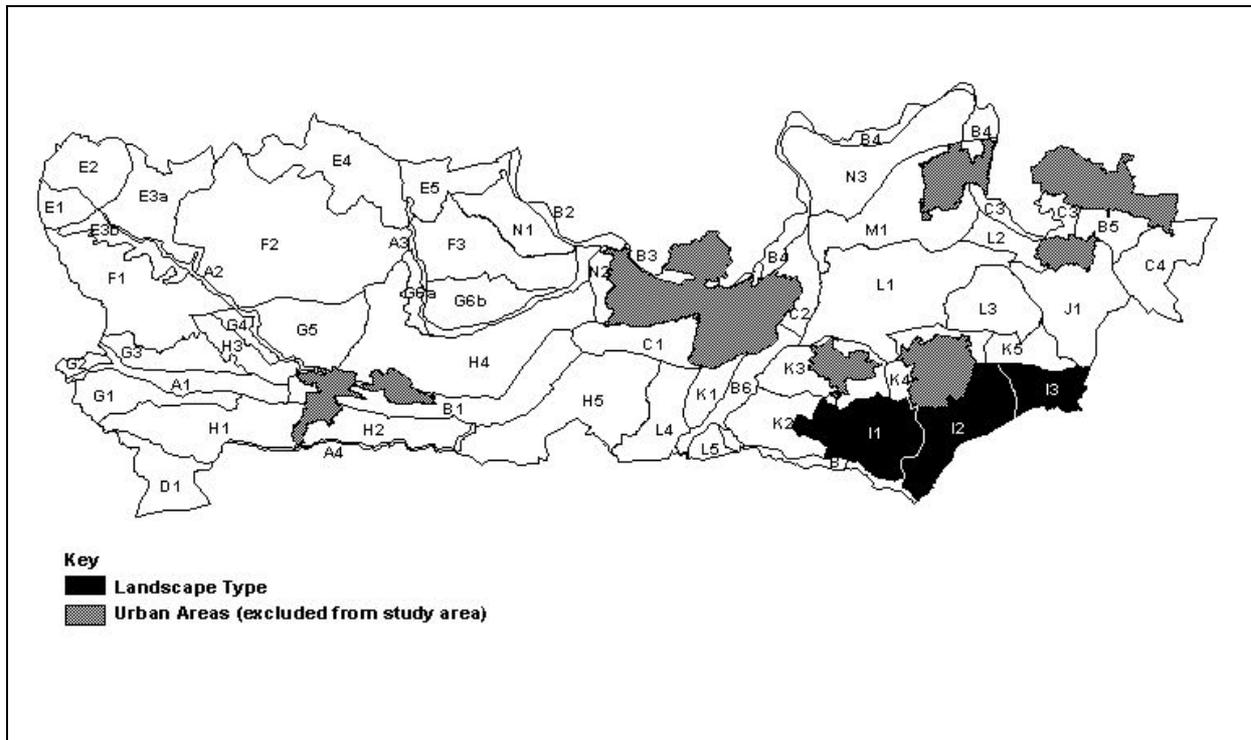
H4: Cold Ash

- 12.44. The *Cold Ash Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* is an important area with a strong landscape character. The condition of the landscape is also good and the main challenges are the intrusion of the M4 along the northern boundary and the expansion of settlements such as Thatcham, located along the river valley edges. Therefore there is a need to conserve the current landscape and to ensure that new development does not lead to dilution of the rural character. There are also opportunities to consider management of areas of recently wooded common land to reintroduce a stronger heathland presence.

H5: Burghfield

- 12.45. The *Burghfield Woodland and Heathland Mosaic* has a moderate character on account of the larger scale of the landscape, with geometric coniferous plantation and larger scale settlement. The condition of the landscape has declined due to the loss and fragmentation of heathland and the decline in the level of deciduous woodland. There is a need to conserve and restore this habitat with emphasis on the conservation of the important parkland and archaeological resource and restoration of the declining heathland and deciduous woodland habitats. Potential enhancement of the boundaries of the military institutions should also be explored. Positive management of land on the fringes of settlement is also required.

13. TYPE I: FORESTED SANDS



Type I: Forested Sands

- I1: Crowthorne
- I2: Bracknell Forest
- I3: Sunninghill

Location and Boundaries

The *Forested Sands* landscape type occupies a single tract of land in the southeastern part of Berkshire. The northern and western boundaries follow roads (particularly the A329) that delineate the transition to the adjoining *Settled Farmlands* (K) and the settlement of Bracknell. To the southwest the area is defined by the distinctive valley landscape of the *Blackwater Lower Valley Floor* (B7). The county boundary forms the remaining edge, although the landscape type extends over this boundary into Surrey.

TYPE I - Forested Sands

Typical Characteristics of the Rural Landscape



DESCRIPTION

Landscape Character

- 13.1. The *Forested Sands* is an undulating landscape, underlain by the Bagshot Beds and dominated by extensive forestry plantation on the infertile, sandy soils. The plantations are principally coniferous and are managed on a commercial rotation resulting in a landscape of dense dark and enclosed character. Within this context there are large areas of clear fell, sometimes colonised by birch and rhododendron, and blocks of replanted woodland. The large-scale nature of the landscape is emphasised by the relative inaccessibility of the forest landscape, being traversed by few transportation corridors. There are in addition a number of training areas under the control of the Ministry of Defence to which public access is denied. Together, enclosed character and inaccessibility create a strong sense of remoteness. However, the heart of the forest is accessible to pedestrians via straight Forestry Commission trackways and woodland rides, including the distinctive highpoint known as Lower Star Point.
- 13.2. The forest character extends to the settlements, with low density detached houses set within a context of coniferous (Sitka Spruce and Scots Pine) and smaller mixed woodlands. Development mostly originates from the 20th century with modern design. Much of the settled area is focussed around or connected by long straight roads, which are a very distinctive feature of the area. These include a magnificent redwood avenue located east of Finchampstead. The settlements include areas of Finchampstead North, Crowthorne and Sandhurst (to the west), which are largely laid out in a geometric pattern, and (to the east) the more organic settlements of Broomhall, Sunninghill and Ascot. These have a largely modern appearance, although some centres have a more Victorian appearance with brick and bargeboards. There are, in addition, a number of large institutional buildings and land uses throughout the area such as the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, Broadmoor hospital and the Road Research Laboratory. The large modern settlement of Bracknell (excluded from the study but discussed more fully in *Settled Farmlands*) is located to the north of this area and is influenced by the character of the *Forested Sands* with coniferous and heathy influences extending into the urban area.
- 13.3. Lowland heathland is highly characteristic of the *Forested Sands* and is of great ecological significance. It is found in small remnant patches and along the roadside embankments, which are enlivened by the colour of the heather and gorse. The poor acidic soils have resulted in little agricultural activity in this area, although there are a few paddocks in the south. Generally where fields are present these have been assarted from the woodland. Within this landscape there are also archaeologically important sites including Caesar's Camp, a former Iron Age Hill Fort, and redoubts associated with The Devil's Highway – formerly a Roman road.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Large-scale, enclosed** landscape.
- **Densely wooded with vast coniferous plantations.**

- **Low density modern settlements** within mixed woodland context.
- Notable **absence of farmland**.
- Internationally important **heathland** characteristic of the acidic sandy soils, including both dry and wet heathland.
- **Acidic wetlands**, lakes, ponds and bogs of ecological importance.
- Sites of **archaeological importance** including an Iron Age hill fort.

Factors Contributing to Landscape Character

Physical Influences

- 13.4. The landform of the *Forested Sands* is gently undulating, with a domed structure, which rises to around 130m AOD. The underlying sandy geology is unique within the county. The Bagshot Formation (Bagshot Beds, Camberley Sand Formation and Windlesham Formation), formed in the Tertiary, is the dominant geological influence. Later deposits include gravel and sand river terrace deposits, which tend to occur at higher elevation, and localised pockets of alluvium.
- 13.5. The sandy gley-podzolic soils and podzols/brown sands are free draining, contributing to the 'dryness' of this landscape type, although often have high groundwater levels due to the impeded drainage caused by the presence of the London Clay below. Consequently, although water is not a prominent feature of the landscape and there are no named water courses, there are a number of meres, small lakes and ponds. Some of these originate in borrow pits from the brick making industry. The sandy substrate also directly influences the natural vegetation and human use, with the poor quality soils (ALC grade 4) being unproductive for agricultural use.

Historic Environment

Historic Land Use

- 13.6. The presence of Bronze Age round barrows indicate initial clearance of areas of woodland. By the Iron Age, the hillfort at Caesar's Camp (the only iron Age hillfort in East Berkshire) had been established and suggests centralised political control covering a wide area. It is possible that the Camp functioned as a centre for the storage of agricultural surpluses, which would have resulted in continued clearance and cultivation of the woodland leading to a rapid loss of soil fertility and the formation of heathland.
- 13.7. During the Roman period political control of the region had moved to *Calleva* and remains of the agger (earthen embankment) of the connecting Roman road from London, known locally as the Devil's Highway, survive running through Sunninghill, Crowthorne and Finchampstead.
- 13.8. By the medieval period, this area was part of Windsor Forest, which covered all of east Berkshire in 1221. Pig husbandry was an important part of the forest economy as evidenced by The Royal Domesday woodland entry for Finchampstead which records 200 swine. In 1770 one-third of Windsor Forest was owned by the Crown. Early maps show that only small areas had been inclosed for agriculture with large

tracts of woodland including forestry plantations remaining in use for hunting and for timber. A number of straight rides, such as the Nine Mile Ride, were created throughout this area of Windsor Forest for Queen Anne (and later George III) enabling the hunt to be followed by carriage. Other prominent features are the redoubts in Crowthorne Wood used for large-scale military exercises in 1792. The military influence continued with the founding in 1812 of the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.

- 13.9. Between 1813 and 1817 most of the huge Windsor Forest inclosure was carried out, affecting over 20,000 acres in fifteen parishes, and the last remnants of heaths in Windsor Forest were replaced by further plantations in 1857. Wellington College was founded in 1859 and the station at ‘Wellington College for Crowthorne’ on the South Eastern and Chatham Railway, was built in response to pressure by the college. Further institutional uses of the area include The Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum, which was opened in 1863, and the Transport and Road Research Laboratory at Crowthorne, which dates from 1930.

Settlement Evolution

- 13.10. Early settlement in the area was limited by the poor soils although there is evidence that by the Bronze Age the area was being settled as a result of expansion from valley settlements. A Roman settlement, possibly a villa, at Wickham Bushes immediately to the south may indicate continuity of settlement but may owe its location more to the proximity of the Roman road between London and Calleva.
- 13.11. A single settlement at Finchampstead, sited just off the Blackwater valley floor, is recorded in the Domesday Book, the village being granted a market charter in the mid 14th century. Crowthorne grew up in the second half of the 19th century when the establishment of Wellington College and Broadmoor Hospital attracted people to the area for work.

Historic Designations

Designation	Summary
Scheduled Ancient Monuments:	
Woodenhill (SAM 19016)	A large bowl barrow,
Unnamed (SAM 110)	Round barrow or a motte.
Bowledge Hill (SAM 12076),	Bell barrow and round barrow.
Ridge Mount (SAM 23004)	Bowl barrow
Caesar's Camp (SM 28182)	A contour hillfort with single bank & ditch on the NW. Elsewhere there is an additional outer bank & to the south a second ditch & third bank.
Wickham Bushes (SAM 28178)	A line of field kitchens from Napoleonic war training is known and several earthwork redoubts.
Wagbullock Hill (SM 28180).	One of a series of practise redoubts, constructed in 1792.
Unnamed (SAM 28178/02)	One of five redoubts built in 1792.
Unnamed (SAM 28178/03)	One of 5 practise redoubts constructed 1792
Unnamed (SAM 28178/04)	One of five practise redoubts constructed in 1792
Unnamed (SAM 28178/05)	One of five practise redoubts constructed in 1792.
Caesar's Camp (SAM 32)	A possible redoubt within Caesar's camp.
Crowthorne Wood Bypass (SM 28175)	One of a series of practise redoubts on Easthampstead plain.

Swinley Park Barrow (SM 19023)	Well preserved bowl barrow.
Wickham Bushes (SAM 28176)	An extensive linear settlement.
Wickham Bushes	Extensive building debris.
Windmill Stem (SM 28181).	A mound called windmill stem is suggestive of a barrow.
Devil's Highway (SAM 28179)	Stretch of road scheduled. Where it is said to be very visible, includes agger 17m wide.
Devil's Highway (SM 28179)	Section of roman road.
Crowthorne Woods (SM 28180)	System of trenches on Wagbullock Hill.
English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens	
None	

Current Rural Land Use

- 13.12. The land is notable for the absence of agriculture and is predominantly used for forestry, being characterised by vast continuous tracts of Sitka spruce and Scots pine. Within the forest a number of activities occur. Large areas are used for military training activities associated with the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. Recreation is also an important land use and there are a number of footpaths and bridleways, including the Three Castles Path. A heritage and interpretation centre is located close to Caesar's Camp. A number of golf courses have also been constructed within the woodland context. These are largely screened from general view by the woodland but are visible at close range introducing a somewhat artificial character into the area.

Settlement and Building Character

- 13.13. The absence of development over large areas is a key characteristic of the landscape type. There are, however, a number of settlements within the forested context. Most settlement originates from early nineteenth century cores, although most buildings are post 1870 with the majority of development occurring in the last twenty years, including suburban expansion around the new town of Bracknell.
- 13.14. Modern residential areas associated with Crowthorne and the interface with Bracknell typically comprise low-density brick, sometimes modern weatherboarded housing in extensive gardens. These settlements often incorporate mature pine and oak trees and have a strong grid-like pattern. In contrast the settlements in the east of the area have a somewhat more traditional character with attractive railway stations and high streets of Victorian character, such as at Broomhall (Sunningdale Station). There are also areas around South Ascot with large houses set in gardens within a wooded context.
- 13.15. There are numerous large 'national institutions' set within landscaped grounds. These include the 1960's architecture of the Road and Transport Research Laboratory as well as the more classically inspired buildings of the Sandhurst Military Academy.

Nature Conservation

- 13.16. The *Forested Sands* contains numerous Sites of Special Scientific Interest including the Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI. Together with a number of other nationally and internationally important sites located in the Thames Basin Heaths Natural Area (extending into the adjoining counties) this SSSI is an important habitat

for rare and protected species of ground nesting birds and consequently forms part of the Thames Basin Heaths pSPA. This landscape type is particularly valued for its base-poor flora communities including heathland and wet heathland. Wetland communities in this area are, similarly, important and include assemblages rare or unknown elsewhere in the county. Woodland is also a significant resource and in addition to designated sites, which include important veteran trees, there are areas of ancient woodland.

Nature Conservation Designations

Designation	Summary
Sites of Special Scientific Interest and pSPA	
Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths	Mosaic of woodland, dry and wet heathland and valley mires including most important valley bogs in East Berkshire. This area forms part of the Thames Basin Heaths pSPA.
Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths	Wet and dry heathland – the most important heathland in East Berkshire. This area forms part of the Thames Basin Heaths pSPA.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	
Longmoor Bog, near California Park (K2).	One of the few base-poor valley mires in Berkshire with well-developed alder, grey willow, wet heathland, mosses and liverwort.
Englemere Pond	Relatively rare lowland base-poor wetland-dry ground plant community.
Swinley Park and Brick Pits	Important veteran trees including pollarded oaks, beech and sweet chestnut supporting rare invertebrates.
Rapley Lakes	Artificial base-poor ponds with wet heath and supporting important dragonfly fauna.
Wellington College Bog	Valley bog or mire – one of the floristically richest in the county - with associated heathland.
Heath Lake	Only example of acid lake in Berkshire retaining characteristic flora.

Character Area Descriptions

- 13.17. There are three potential subdivisions within the *Forested Sands* landscape type. These areas retain the general characteristics of the generic landscape type but vary in character locally. The following descriptions highlight these distinctions in landscape character.

II: Crowthorne

- 13.18. The *Crowthorne Forested Sands* are distinguished by the settlement of Crowthorne and Finchampstead North and parts of the nearby settlements of Sandhurst that have all largely developed since 1870. The architecture of these settlements is unremarkable being predominantly brick. The settlements extend along the roads with long narrow land-parcels associated with individual dwellings. There are numerous institutional buildings closeted within extensive private grounds including the impressive brick and stone building of Wellington College, Broadmoor Hospital, and the post war modern architecture of the Transport and Road Research laboratory. The National Trust has landholdings within the area, for example at Finchampstead Ridges, and there are some areas of ancient woodland, which include Sweet Chestnut trees. There are also localised pockets of heathland and a number of lakes and meres including California Country Park with the important designated SSSI at Long Moor Bog. One

particularly impressive feature of the area is the long avenue of conifers (Wellingtonias), which stretches for around 1km to the east of Finchampstead.

12: Bracknell Forest

- 13.19. The *Bracknell Forested Sands* in the centre of the landscape type comprise the Crown Estate plantation forestry that is distinguished by its extensive and dense commercial character, which create densely wooded and, in parts, almost wild quality. The key features within the forest are the long linear rides created for Queen Anne and the multitude of archaeological features, particularly the distinctive earthworks of the Iron Age hill fort and the former Roman road. Settlement within this area is very sparse, except for dense modern suburban areas on the outskirts of Bracknell in the north of the area. These settlements retain a strong coniferous context. Heathland is also an important characteristic throughout this area. The military has a particularly strong presence with the Royal Military Academy mansion house at Sandhurst and military training areas within the forest.

13: Sunninghill

- 13.20. To the east is an area comprising the linked low-density commuter settlements of Broomhall, Sunninghill, Sunningdale and South Ascot, all of which are set within a wooded framework. The 'villages' originate from the late Victorian period with the opening of the railway and contain an older core of modest red brick and clay tile buildings. Subsequent peripheral suburban expansion has resulted in the merger of settlements, although each retains a distinct central core and identity. There are, in addition, small areas of parkland and associated country houses which flank the edge of Windsor Great Park in the east of the area. The extensive development means that the ecological value of this area is lower than in the adjoining character areas.

Evaluation

Evaluation of Landscape Type

FEATURES OF KEY SIGNIFICANCE

- **Extensive coniferous plantations** creating a wooded landscape context.
- **Heathland and heathland fragments** on the acidic sandy soils, including both dry and wet heathland.
- **Acidic wetlands** and lakes of ecological importance.
- Sites of **archaeological importance**.
- **Inaccessible 'remote' character** – with absence of development over large areas.

Strength of Landscape Character

- 13.21. This coniferous and heathland landscape is unique within the Berkshire context and is enhanced by presence of smaller-scale features, such as the areas of archaeological

importance. However, the character of the landscape is diminished by the sprawl of the settled areas. Consequently, it is considered that overall the landscape is of moderate character.

Landscape Condition

- 13.22. The condition of the landscape is considered to be intermediate - good. There is evidence that the character of the landscape is being protected and enhanced through heathland restoration projects. It would also appear that the forest is being managed to ensure cyclical regeneration of the plantation woodland to avoid clear felling on an extensive scale.

Key Issues

- Pressure for further expansion and infill of settled areas (and consequent loss of woodland), particularly along the long, linear connecting roads.
- Particular vulnerability of the area to development due to the screening properties offered by the existing woodland.
- Visual impact of clear fell forestry systems including opening views to existing and new development.
- Changing operational requirements of the military and other institutional users.
- Potential colonisation and scrubbing-up of remnant heathland areas due to decline of traditional management.
- Presence and importance of the Thames Basin Heaths pSPA with implications for recreation, forestry and heathland management.
- Increasing recreational pressure including additional demands for golf courses and intrusive/noisy recreational facilities.
- Over-maturity of the veteran trees in parkland.
- Sensitivity of wetland areas to recreational damage or run-off.
- Damage to archaeological features – including erosion as a result of visitor pressure.
- The removal of some of the conifers to allow areas of heathland to re-establish and link together.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall strategy for the *Forested Sands* landscape type is to **conserve and enhance** the existing character of the landscape. This entails careful management of the forestry resource and appropriate conservation of the archaeological and ecological resource, including sensitive management and restoration of heathland habitats.

Guidelines

13.23. Broad objectives to realise the aims of the strategy include the following:

Landscape Management

- Adopt appropriate management practices, conserve and seek to restore and increase the connectivity of remnant areas of heathland habitat (particularly associated with the pSPA) and seek to particularly manage the habitat for valued ground-nesting birds – this will be a positive opportunity as forestry rotations are clear felled.
- Conserve and manage the important habitat areas including wetland and parkland including conservation of the veteran tree resource and planning for its future replacement.
- Continue to encourage appropriate best-practice management of the forestry area following a cycle of felling and replanting, where possible, sympathetic to the visual character of the landscape and including development of a system of rides and glades.
- Maximise the contribution made by the forestry resource for ecological and recreational purposes.
- Protect and conserve features of archaeological value and seek to interpret these to the visiting public to ensure respect and reduce potential damage.
- Ensure that recreational use is appropriate and does not damage the landscape resource.
- Encourage adoption of ecologically-sensitive management regimes for areas in military and other institutional land-ownership.

Managing Future Change

13.24. With regard to any future change, the aim should be to maintain the forest and heathland landscape context and conserve the remote character that exists over a large part of this area. In addition to the features of key significance outlined earlier, main attributes to be considered with regard to any future change are:

- Long straight roads that currently include long remote stretches through pine forest.

- Wooded context of the developed areas and mature trees within settlements, which assist in the integration of the built form into the landscape (and implications of ongoing woodland cycles).
- The distinction and individual identity of settlements.
- Absence of buildings and settlement over much of the forested area and a consequent strong sense of remoteness.

Character Area Evaluation

13.25. The guidance outlined above applies throughout this landscape type. Distinctions and variations between the individual character areas are noted below:

11: Crowthorne

13.26. The *Crowthorne Forested Sands* has a moderate character due to extensive residential development within this area. However, the condition of the landscape is good with a strong heathland presence and well-interconnected remnant blocks of forestry and important acidic wetland landscapes. In consequence there is a need to conserve and strengthen the character of this landscape. Conserving the nature conservation interest of this area is a priority and there is potential for habitat creation, particularly of heathland on the sandy soils around California Park.

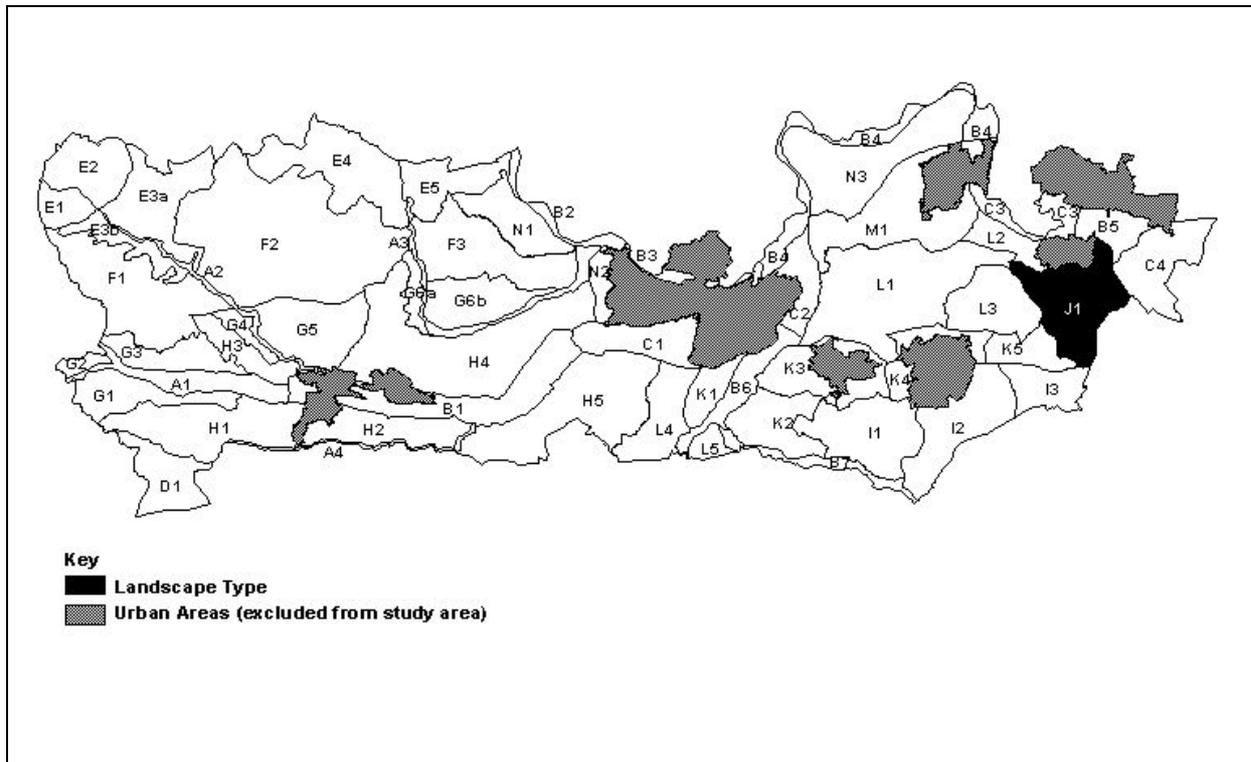
12: Bracknell

13.27. The *Bracknell Forested Sands* has a very strong character containing extensive plantations of coniferous forest. Although many of these coniferous plantations are now mature there is evidence of appropriate renewal strategies and as such the condition of the landscape is considered to be good. As a consequence the strategy for this area is to conserve the existing character of the landscape and, where appropriate, restore lost features. The management of areas of archaeological and ecological value is a particular requirement, with substantial opportunities for heathland creation. The military areas also require sensitive management.

13: Sunninghill

13.28. The *Sunninghill Forested Sands* retains a moderate character, although the blurring of settlement boundaries has had an impact on the identity of this area. Generally the condition of the landscape is good although fragmentation of the woodland has occurred. The strategy within this area will be to conserve and strengthen the existing character. Important considerations within this area include maintaining the connectivity of the woodland habitat, conserving wetland and bog habitat and seeking opportunities to restore lost heathland habitat. In particular this needs to be considered in the context of the adjoining land of Windsor Great Park.

14. TYPE J: ROYAL FOREST



Type J: Royal Forest

J1: Windsor Great Park

Location and Boundaries

The *Royal Forest* is located in the east of Berkshire, on the county boundary. The boundary of this landscape type is clearly defined by the edge of the historic parkland and woodland. This can be easily distinguished from the surrounding landscape types, which have very different characters: the Thames valley floodplain landscapes of the *Lower River with Open Water* (C) and *Lower Valley Floor* (B) to the east and the settled/agricultural landscapes of the *Open Clay Lowlands* (L) and *Settled Farmlands*(K) along the western boundary. This landscape type clearly extends into the adjoining county of Surrey.

TYPE J - Royal Forest

Typical Characteristics of the Rural Landscape



DESCRIPTION

Landscape Character

- 14.1. The *Royal Forest* is a flat to gently undulating historic parkland landscape, of vast deer-grazed pastures scattered with large trees, fringed by large and dense ancient forests, which form the setting to important buildings in use by the Royal Family and their employees.
- 14.2. The land is in the ownership of the Crown Estate, which has ensured a unified landscape of distinctive character and uniqueness that is recognised nationally. The Royal parkland landscape is centred upon and has grown up around Windsor Castle with its prominent Round Tower (Grade I). The juxtaposition of this dramatic stone castle on a distinctive chalk outcrop above the Thames has ensured its acknowledgement as one of the famed landmarks of Berkshire, and indeed of the nation. It is particularly important as a 'gateway' for those entering Berkshire along the M4.
- 14.3. The wider landscape comprises three principal parkland areas: Windsor Great Park, Home Park (immediately around the Castle) and Virginia Water. Within this wider context are localised ornamental landscapes, including Frogmore Gardens, Royal Lodge and Royal residences, gate lodges and 'grace and favour' estate workers' dwellings. The parkland has a restrained, verdant character inspiring a sense of freedom, with large grassy expanses grazed by roaming herds of deer. Important features of this parkland setting are the veteran trees - oak, sweet chestnut and beech - which punctuate the landscape. There are also dramatic long avenues of trees which provide structure including 'The Long Walk' which is over three kilometres long. Local ponds and lakes, including the upper arms of Virginia Water in the south of the park and Great Meadow Pond, also contribute to the character of this landscape type.
- 14.4. Surrounding, and visually defining, the deer park are large blocks of woodland, mostly deciduous but with some mixed and coniferous plantation. These ancient forests are the largest continuous woodlands within Berkshire and are important both ecologically and aesthetically, retaining the quality of the ancient 'wildwood' of the medieval forest. The park boundary is clearly defined by continuous wooden park pale, brick wall, distinctive white-painted gates, co-ordinated signage, and the presence of the gate lodges.
- 14.5. At the periphery of the park there are small areas of more 'secular' landscapes including the residential area of Old Windsor, and the presence of the Legoland theme park which has been constructed within an area of forest contiguous with the estate.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

- Crown Estate land with **distinctive regal and ancient ambience** due to continuity of Royal association from the 11th Century.
- **Openness and freedom** of verdant and naturalistic landscape.

- Presence of **historic Royal buildings** including **Windsor Castle** and surrounding grounds, Cumberland Lodge and Royal Lodge.
- Residential '**grace and favour**' buildings and gate lodge.
- Historically important **designed ornamental landscapes**.
- Pleasant flat to gently undulating **deer-grazed parkland**.
- **Very large and mature veteran trees** including oak pollards, beech and chestnut.
- **Extensive densely-forested tracts** including deciduous, coniferous and mixed woodlands creating woodland envelope.
- **Perimeter 'park pale' fence**.

Factors Contributing to Landscape Character

Physical Influences

- 14.6. The *Royal Forest* is predominantly underlain by London Clay strata and the landscape is consequently fairly flat with some gentle undulations, rising to the south where the area is underlain by alluvium and the sands of the Bagshot Beds and the Lambeth Group. The landscape is at a low elevation relative to the surrounding landform (up to 60m AOD and as low as 20m AOD). In the north of the area a solitary outcrop of chalk results in a locally pronounced topography overlooking the floodplain of the Thames and this exceptional topographical and landscape situation has been exploited to great effect in the location of Windsor Castle.
- 14.7. The soil is clayey and stagnogleyic, with some horizons containing flint nodules, and is prone to waterlogging. There are also several areas of sandy and loamy soils associated with the pockets of alluvium and the Bagshot Formation. There are numerous small streams (e.g. Battle Bourne) and ponds (with evocative names such as Prince of Wales Pond and Bear's Rails Pond) located across the Parkland. There are also some larger water bodies including Great Meadow Pond and the upper reaches of Virginia Water (which is predominantly within the adjoining county of Surrey), designed as part of the ornamental landscape.

Historic Environment

Historic Land Use

- 14.8. William I built the original castle at Windsor around 1070 on the chalk ridge overlooking the Thames. It consisted of a motte topped by a timber tower and flanked by two baileys, and it became the Royal residence in 1110. The first stone castle was built by Henry II between 1165 and 1179, with major additions at various times up until the 18th century, initially to enhance its defences, latterly to enhance its appearance.
- 14.9. This area was part of the wider Windsor Forest, making it subject to Forest Law, and giving the crown rights over hunting, timber and other resources. These rights were extended, at the expense of local inhabitants, with the creation of the Royal Parks, surrounded by the fenced ditches of the "park pale", lengths of which still survive. A

Royal Park at Windsor is first mentioned in 1132, and it was considerably enlarged on various occasions during the 14th century. While few new private parks were created after the mid-14th century, continued Royal interest in hunting meant that new Royal Parks were established at Windsor. Moat Park, south of Windsor, may date from the reign of Edward IV (1461-70) - in 1607 it covered 390 acres, but had expanded to 650 acres by 1652, although at that date there were no deer, and in 1701 it was absorbed into the Great Park. The inclosure of 200 acres for the creation of Windsor Little Park in 1467 caused deprivation to the local population by removing their common and pasture rights to the land. Deer were kept in the park until 1807, and in 1846 it was also joined to the Great Park to the south.

- 14.10. During the medieval period Windsor Forest was progressively felled of its oak trees for ship construction and building. In 1580 Queen Elizabeth I instructed oak plantations to be established at Windsor by sowing acorns, so creating the first recorded plantation of oak trees, with continued plantings into the 19th century. The oaks were extensively felled during World War I, and systematic replanting and forest management commenced in the 1920s, but some continuity in the woodland management is evident in the ancient oak pollards, some of which are around 800 years old.
- 14.11. In 1680, Charles II bought land to plant the great avenue of elm trees of the Long Walk that links the Castle with the Great Park, starting a process, as elsewhere in the county, of landscaping open parkland. Lodges were built in the 17th and 18th centuries to house park administrators, one of whom, the Duke of Cumberland, created the great artificial lake at Virginia Water. George III experimented with agricultural innovations on his model farms in the park, Prince Albert also developing the park's farming and forestry interest.
- 14.12. The 1813 Windsor Forest Inclosure Act allowed the Crown to retain 6500 acres of old forest and 1500 acres of mature woodland at Cranbourne, and some 3000 acres were set aside for deer and cattle and could not be cultivated. This area covers Windsor Great Park and large areas were later opened to the public.

Settlement Evolution

- 14.13. There was Saxon settlement at Old Windsor, which extends into the *Lower River with Open Water (C)*, and by the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042-66) the town had become a Royal residence, the reference in the Domesday Book to 25 hage (urban plots) possibly referring to the settlement that serviced the Royal manor. From 1110, when Henry I transferred the residence to Windsor Castle, the focus of settlement moved to New Windsor.
- 14.14. During the medieval and post-medieval periods rural settlement within this part of Windsor Forest was severely limited by the creation of the Royal deer parks, and the later landscaped parks. In the 20th century a small settlement, The Village, was built to house park workers and their families.

Historic Designations

Designation	Summary
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	
Moated site, Virginia Water (SM12050)	Only the N and W arms of the moat remain
Windsor Castle (SAM 80)	Built c1070 in clewer parish consisting of an earthen motte and surmounted by a tower surrounded by a ditch between an upper and lower bailey. The round tower and outer walls of the castle were built in stone by Henry II (1154-89).
Moat Park (SM12051)	Moat poorly defined in a low-lying area.
Tileplace Farm (SM 12031)	Earthwork moat with standing water in 3 arms.
Bear's Rails (SM 12017)	Moated site containing a Royal manor house.
English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens	
Windsor Castle and Home Park, The Royal Estate, Windsor (Grade I)	England's premier castle with moat garden and a terrace garden by Sir Jeffrey Wyatville surrounded by pleasure grounds and a landscape park, originating as a medieval deer park.
Cumberland Lodge, The Royal Estate, Windsor: (Grade I)	A country house, the largest house within Windsor Great Park, surrounded by the remains of gardens and associated parkland laid out mainly in the C18th.
Frogmore Gardens, The Royal Estate, Windsor, (Grade I)	Picturesque landscape garden, laid out in the 1790s for Queen Charlotte with advice of William Price, on site of earlier C18th formal garden. Developed further by Queen Victoria
Windsor Great Park, The Royal Estate, Windsor (Grade I)	A Royal park of medieval origin containing many ancient trees. The park was later landscaped and contains gardens attached to four principal residences within the park: Cumberland Lodge, Royal Lodge, Cranbourne Lodge and Forest Lodge.
Royal Lodge, The Royal Estate, Windsor (Grade I)	A country house set within the Great Park with surrounding woodland- some remaining from C18th and C19th.
Virginia Water, including Fort Belvedere and the Clockcase (Grade I)	Landscaped lake created c. 1750 by Henry Flitcroft, and largest artificial lake of its day. Enlarged in 1780s and embellished in mid 1820s.

Current Rural Land Use

- 14.15. The *Royal Forest* is dominated by large scale woodlands, particularly along the perimeter. The east perimeter is particularly densely wooded including the large woodland blocks of Holiday's Plain, Cranbourne Chase, South Forest and High Standinghill Woods. The woodland surrounds a central core of parkland grazed by the famous Windsor deer. The parkland is interspersed with smaller woodland copses.
- 14.16. Besides forestry and game the main use of the parkland is for recreation. The park is traversed by the Three Castles Path and is popular with visitors for walking and riding. Outside of the 'park proper' in the outlying land to the east of the park the modern visitor attraction of Legoland is present. The park is crossed by one road – the A332 – which passes through the core of the park.

Settlement and Building Character

- 14.17. There are a variety of buildings within the *Royal Forest*. These are all of different character and ages, but are principally detached dwellings of good architectural quality being designed for the use and visual satisfaction of royalty. The main building is, of course, Windsor Castle, which is England's largest castle. Within the parkland the principal buildings are the residences of Frogmore House (eighteenth century

with nineteenth century extensions) and Cumberland Lodge; the lodges of Royal Lodge (Adelaide Lodge), which has attractive barge-boards, Home Park Lodges and Frogmore Cottage; a mausoleum; various farmhouses such as Shaw Farm, and non-residential buildings including Clock Case (a small square tower of brick) and Fort Belvedere. There are in addition a number of smaller houses built for estate workers and their families. This includes the 20th century settlement of The Village. Outside of the imparked area is the more modern suburban settlement of Old Windsor (around a core of historic origin).

Nature Conservation

- 14.18. The *Royal Forest* is a very important habitat much of which is designated as a SSSI and a cSAC. The most important resource within the parkland are the trees, many of which are known to be of 500 years old and some of which are thought to be up to 800 years old.

Nature Conservation Designations

Designation	Summary
Sites of Special Scientific Interest and candidate Special Area of Conservation	
Windsor Forest and Great Park (846.33ha) (J1)	An ancient Royal hunting forest – part of the largest continuous tract of woodland in Berkshire. Range of habitats including ancient broadleaved woodland, coniferous and mixed plantations and open parkland and acid grassland. Ancient veteran oak pollards. Habitat for rare invertebrates (second only to the New Forest). Also includes Great Meadow Pond which is an important habitat for wildfowl. Groves of hornbeam home to one of largest wintering flocks of hawfinches in Britain.

Character Area Descriptions

- 14.19. Although within the park subtle character distinctions can be made, e.g. between the Home Park; Virginia Water; the dense woodlands along the eastern boundary; the central parkland core and the Cumberland Lodge Area, on the whole at the county-wide scale there is sufficient homogeneity to consider this landscape type to be part of one character area. As such no character area distinctions have been made.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of Landscape Type

FEATURES OF KEY SIGNIFICANCE

- **Royal Buildings**, particularly Windsor Castle.
- Well-maintained and deer grazed **historic parkland landscape**.
- **Veteran trees**.
- **Dense forest areas** creating a wooded backdrop.
- **Unity** created by co-ordinated signage, park pale etc.

Strength of Landscape Character

- I4.20. Continuity of ownership and consistency of management and design of the Royal Forest has resulted in a very distinctive landscape of great ecological, historical and aesthetic value. Consequently, this landscape type contributes considerably to the Berkshire landscape and is recognised nationally. It is therefore considered to have a very strong character.

Landscape Condition

- I4.21. The condition of the landscape appears to be good and there is evidence that there are strong management regimes in place to ensure the long-term character and condition of the landscape resource.

Key Issues

- Impact of any changes upon the character of this important historic landscape including important historic views of Windsor Castle.
- Pressure of visitors upon park infrastructure and, potentially, demands for further visitor facilities.
- Impact of visitors at the periphery to the parkland: particularly the build up of cars near park entrances.
- Impact of traffic upon the ambience of the park landscape.
- Loss of veteran trees or woodland as trees over-reach maturity.
- Possible effects of diseases such as foot and mouth on deer and consequences for long term management of the parkland.
- Potential impact of land management changes or run-off upon the wetland resource.
- Potential pressure for additional Crown Estate buildings within the park.
- Opportunities for further park diversification and ecological enhancement.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The landscape strategy for the *Royal Forest* is to **conserve** the character of the existing landscape with its attractive combination of parkland and woodland landscapes.

Guidelines

- I4.22. Broad objectives to realise the aims of the strategy include:

Landscape Management

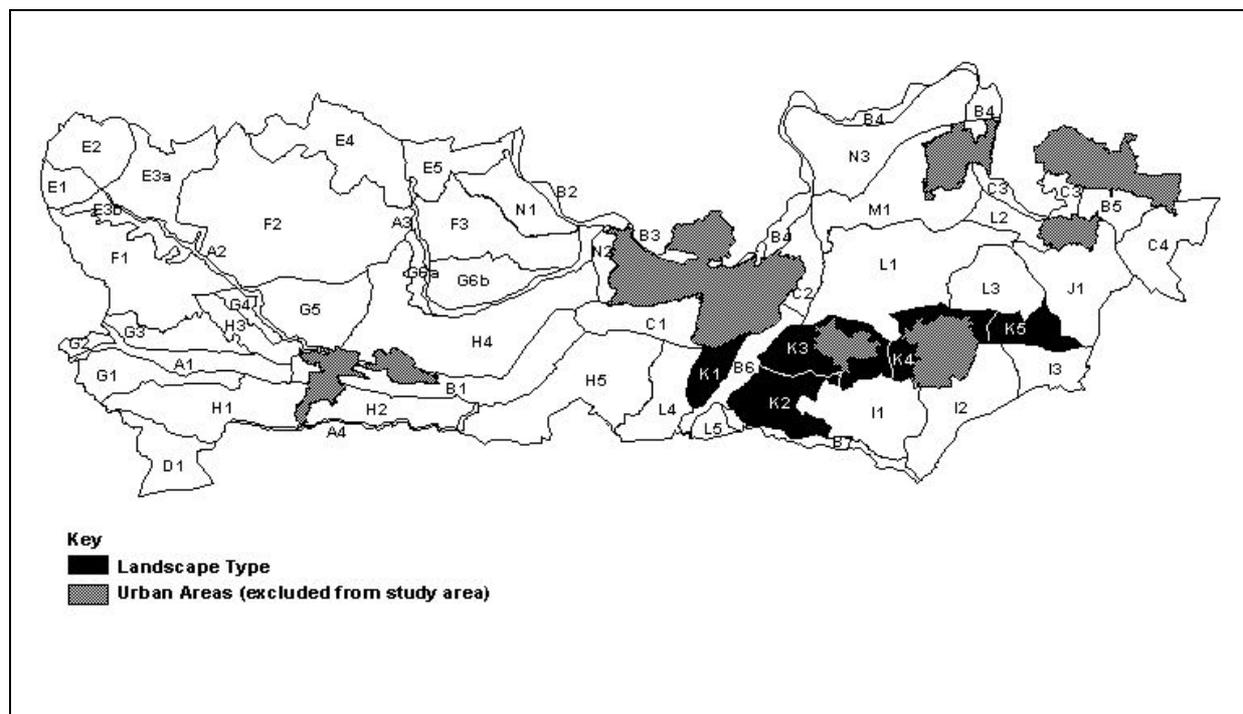
- Conserve and manage the historic landscape with its important designed landscape and historic buildings.
- Cooperate with adjoining landowners to ensure important positive views of the landscape and castle are maintained.
- Conserve the existing wetland habitat including the important small ponds and lakes, particularly Great Meadow Pond which is an SSSI.
- Manage the woodland resource to ensure that it retains its ecological richness and 'wildwood' qualities.
- Protect and prolong the longevity of veteran trees, particularly avenue trees, and ensure that younger 'recruits' are planted to ensure a cycle of veterans will always be present.
- Consider the possibility for the creation of areas of heathland upon the sandier substrates found in the south of the park, where this can be accommodated without detriment to the existing woodland resource.
- Pursue a rigorous visitor management policy and consider subtle landscape treatments to prevent car parking around the park entrances.
- Seek to avoid the creation of additional roads within the park and prevent upgrade of existing roads to 'highway engineering' standards.

Managing Future Change

14.23. Most of the *Royal Forest* is Crown Estate land and therefore is not subject to the same planning controls as elsewhere within Berkshire. However in addition to the features of key significance outlined earlier, main attributes to be considered with regard to any future change are:

- High architectural quality of the current buildings which contribute to the character of the park.
- The perception of the parkland as an open and rural landscape of ancient origin.
- Important perimeter edge of the Royal Forest along 'ancient' rural lanes, which creates an impression of the strong character and quality of the landscape.

15. TYPE K: SETTLED FARMLANDS



Type K: Settled Farmlands

- K1: Spencers Wood
- K2: Arborfield
- K3: Wokingham
- K4: Bracknell
- K5: Ascot

Location and Boundaries

The *Settled Farmlands* landscape type is found in the south east of Berkshire and comprises a broad arc of land stretching from Spencers Wood and Arborfield, adjacent to the Loddon Floodplain, to the densely urbanised areas of Bracknell, Wokingham and Ascot in the east. This is a transitional landscape grading from the *Open Clay Lowlands*, to the north, and the *Forested Sands* to the south/east, sharing characteristics of each. There is no definitive topographical (or other) demarcation. Therefore, boundaries in the *Settled Farmlands* areas generally follow roads where these represent pragmatic divisions in the transition between landscape types. Much of the area within this landscape type is urban and therefore excluded from specific consideration by this study.

TYPE K - Settled Farmlands

Typical Characteristics of the Rural Landscape



DESCRIPTION

Landscape Character

- 15.1. The *Settled Farmlands*, found in the south and east of Berkshire, are a transitional landscape with a generally flat to shelving landform and with some gently undulating or domed areas. The *Settled Farmlands* are characterised by their densely-settled character which includes the major Berkshire town of Wokingham and large parts of the new town of Bracknell (both outside of the study area boundary), as well as the larger villages of Ascot, Arborfield, Spencers Wood and Shinfield. These are connected by a dense, and sometimes intrusive, network of transportation corridors including motorways and railways. Although the Bracknell and Wokingham urban areas are excluded from this assessment their presence within the *Settled Farmlands* landscape has a significant effect upon landscape character both directly, through the presence of large commercial and industrial buildings visible in the wider countryside, and indirectly, leading to replacement of farmland with characteristic edge-of-town uses such as country parks and golf courses. However, the edges of these settled areas are often well integrated into the surrounding countryside due to the presence of edge-of-town woodland and the continuation of mature trees into the urban fabric.
- 15.2. The agricultural landscape, which provides the context to the settled area, is generally mixed farmland with medium and large scale open arable fields, generally used for cereal growing, and smaller areas of permanent pasture. Some areas have retained their historic hedgerow pattern, including areas of irregularly shaped fields, although many hedgerows in this type have a mechanically-managed character. Generally the traditional landscape is more intact in the south and west of the *Settled Farmlands* landscape, such as around Arborfield, becoming more fragmented and marginal around the urban areas in the east and north. Towards the east, particularly around Ascot, horse racing has a considerable influence upon the character of the landscape, notably including the famous racecourse at Ascot, but extending into the countryside which has a high number of paddocks.
- 15.3. The landscape is subtly wooded due to the presence of small farm and copses, belts of coniferous trees associated with areas of sandy nutrient-poor soils and larger coniferous and mixed woodlands on elevated areas. This effect is complemented by the presence of hedgerows with mature trees, and remnant free-standing hedgerow standards which visually merge to create the impression of a wooded horizon. Where the landscape is underlain by clays, deep water-filled, and sometimes rush-colonised ditches are found bordering the fields and along the roads and small farm ponds are present which impart a lush and verdant character. There are also small tributaries, although these are usually hidden within bankside vegetation. A number of moderately large lakes are found associated with historic parklands and country parks. Areas of base-poor soils give rise to the localised areas of bogs and mires which are important ecological habitats.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Flat to shelving and gently undulating landform.**
- **Transitional landscape** with much of the traditional pattern subsumed by modern development, particularly towards the east.
- **Densely settled areas** that strongly influence the character of the surrounding landscape.
- **Urban fringe uses** including characteristic edge-of-town uses such as golf courses, educational institutions, country parks and marginal farmland.
- **Dense network of transportation corridors** including motorways and railways.
- **Mixed farmland with areas retaining historic field boundary patterns** including areas of permanent pasture (often associated with tributaries) and open arable farmland with mechanically managed hedgerows.
- **Wooded context** due to presence of scattered mature oak trees that are remnant hedgerow standards and managed copses/farm woodlands and large mixed and coniferous woodland on elevated areas.
- **Characteristic water-filled ditches**, small farm ponds, larger lakes and small (often unseen) tributaries associated with the drainage of the poorly-draining clay soils.
- **Presence of horse racing infrastructure** including the racecourse at Ascot, with many small paddocks nearby.
- **Presence of historic parkland** and manor houses, now frequently used by institutions such as education establishments.

Factors Contributing to Landscape Character

Physical Influences

- 15.4. The *Settled Farmlands* area is underlain by London Clay with some overlying deposits of alluvium associated with those areas influenced by minor river tributaries. There are also significant sand and gravel deposits of the formation known as the Bagshot Beds, which occupy a distinct band of land in the southern sector of this landscape type. The London Clay produces heavy gleyed clay soils that have impeded drainage and, consequently, have a tendency to become waterlogged. To combat this, a network of drainage ditches have been dug around the fields, which are characteristic of the arable landscape.
- 15.5. The claylands have produced flat shelving landscapes and, where differential deposition has occurred, the area undulates into a series of gentle domes, though rarely exceeding an elevation of above 85m AOD. There are no principal rivers in this area although smaller tributaries, are present. The most significant of these is

The Cut, a tributary of the Thames, which has its origins near Bracknell. There are a number of lakes and small farm ponds that, locally, are important recreational and visual features, such as Bear Wood Lake near Wokingham, which was developed as part of a historic designed landscape.

Historic Environment

Historic Land Use

- 15.6. This landscape was once extensively wooded but clearance and cultivation of the forest commenced by the early Bronze Age. By the Saxon period it is evident that areas of largely open and cultivated land had been created particularly to the west, as indicated by the recurrence of place names with a “-feld” element (such as Arborfield). In medieval times Forest Law protected the Crown’s hunting and timber rights in the Forest of Windsor, but widespread disafforestation occurred in 1227 and a number of Royal deer parks were created. Subsequently, and up until the 18th century, piecemeal clearance of woodland to form cultivable land by assarting and later by agreement continued, resulting in the pattern of small irregular fields intermixed with woodland that is still noticeable in some areas towards the south and west including Shinfield, Three Mile Cross and Farley Hill. The Windsor Forest Enclosure Act in 1813 led to the creation of regular, straight edged field boundaries that are particularly prevalent south and east of Wokingham including in the Arborfield and Barkham areas. The subsequent, and surviving, pattern of mixed farming in small/medium enclosed fields with small areas of woodland contrasts with the more wooded landscape in the east, where the demand for timber led to the steady contraction of the forest and the creation of extensive areas of scrub and heath, which, following enclosure, was largely turned into plantation woodland. Horse racing on Ascot Common started in 1711, moving to Ascot Heath in 1740, and the present frequency of small paddocks, for instance around Ascot, Winkfield and Warfield, reflects the continuing importance of horse-related activities in the area.
- 15.7. Historically, the landscape was crossed by a number of roads including the Roman road between Calleva (Silchester) and London, known locally as the Devil’s Highway. There were few major roads until the 18th century when the early turnpike road between Reading and Basingstoke was established (1718). The railway network was developed in the mid 19th century with the line from Reading to Basingstoke running along the west of the area. To the east, the South Eastern and Chatham Railway and the London and South Western Railway provided transport for Berkshire’s brick industry. Exploiting the combination of clay soils, particularly from Wokingham to Bracknell, and fuel from the heath and woodland, the industry provided the main building material in the southern part of the county from the late 17th century.

Settlement Evolution

- 15.8. As part of Windsor Forest, the *Settled Farmlands* were sparsely populated in the medieval period. Wokingham, first recorded in 1146, was the only medieval town in east Berkshire not sited along the Thames. From the late 18th century, the scenic quality of the area and the proximity to London led to the construction of a significant number of country houses surrounded by mostly small ornamental and

landscaped parks. These remain prominent features of the landscape often indicated by the presence of large imposing gateways and located in elevated positions commanding views with the surrounding elevated wooded parkland creating an attractive backdrop throughout the landscape type.

Historic Designations

Designation	Summary
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	
Bill Hill Round Barrow (SM 12077)	A bowl barrow on top of a steep sided hill.
Moat At Kenny's Farm (SM 12021)	Two arms of moat water filled and in good condition.
Moat At Church Farm (SM 12022)	Water-filled moat surrounding Church Fm.
Barrows NW Of Warren Lodge(SAM 12057)	Scheduled bell barrow and probable bowl barrow which is not scheduled.
Warren Lane (SM 12057)	Exceptionally large bell barrow: diameter about 200ft.
Cropmarks- Wheatlands Manor (SAM 187)	Complex of buildings astride the Roman road (aisled buildings).
Wheatlands Manor (SAM 187)	Timber- built aisled building. Two rows of up to 5-6 interior posts.
Moat, Arborfield Garrison (SAM 20335) (prev SAM 160).	Moat formerly belonging to Briggs (or Biggs) farm. Moathouse is modern. Surrounded kitchen garden in 1963.
Arborfield Stables (SAM 199)	Two ranges of stables built c1911-2 for sick horses. Specialised construction details include specially drained floors, support slings etc.
Devil's Highway (SAM 187).	Section of road with traces of at least 5 buildings in close proximity.
English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens	
Newbold College (formerly Moor Close). (Grade II*) (K4)	A late C19th country house surrounded by an early C20th garden, the first commission Oliver Hill received after setting up as an independent architect.
Bearwood College (Grade II*) (K3)	A C19th landscape park and woodland surrounding a Victorian country house, standing on formal terraces with a Pulhamite rock and water garden of 1ha.
Swallowfield*(Grade II) (extends into B6)	C17 and later country house with gardens and pleasure grounds, surrounded by a landscape park laid out in the C18
Farley Hall (formerly Farley Hill Place) (Grade II) (K2)	Country house surrounded by gardens and a landscape park, incorporating the remains of an early to mid C18th layout.

Current Rural Land Use

- 15.9. The settled landscapes dominate much of this landscape type, resulting in a gradation from the rural intact *Settled Farmlands* in the south and west of the area to a more fragmented and urbanised landscape in the central and eastern areas. The large commercial (technology), hotel and industrial park buildings on the urban edge of the larger towns of Bracknell and Wokingham are highly conspicuous and overshadow the remnant arable landscape, although where the landscape is wooded the interface is more positive. Coniferous trees, such as Scots pine, or mixed woodlands have been planted throughout much of the limited area of the Bagshot Beds that remains unsettled, but these areas lack the presence of large commercial conifer plantations prevalent in other parts of the county with Bagshot Beds, such as the *Forested Sands (I)*. The presence of many of communications routes (road and rail) has clearly marginalised some remnant agricultural areas, resulting in degraded landscape with poor, gappy hedgerows and rough set-aside or pasture land. Some areas are given over to military operations in the form of training and housing for MOD staff.

- 15.10. Recreational uses also feature significantly around the urban areas. This includes Ascot, home to the well-known racing ground which welcomes thousands of visitors each year. Nearby there are numerous areas of paddocks. Elsewhere, particularly based within former parkland and agricultural landscapes, there are golf courses and country parks with fishing lakes but, generally, the landscape lacks a strong public connective network of recreational trails.
- 15.11. Outside of the settled areas, the traditional agricultural character is more evident. This is of mixed character including extensive intact mixed arable and pastoral areas with small farm woodlands and well maintained historic hedgerow patterns (assarted and Parliamentary). However, there are also areas of intensive arable farmland of weak character owing to the flat and open nature of the landscape, which has favoured the use of large farm vehicles. Here, hedgerows are usually mechanically managed and mature trees are declining as hedgerow remnants and standards are not replaced.

Settlement and Building Character

- 15.12. The modern settlement pattern comprises large more urban settlements in the north and east of the area, closest to London, with smaller nucleated and linear settlements and farmsteads in the more rural areas. Brick and flint are notable elements of more traditional buildings such as churches but otherwise the settlements lack a strong vernacular or picturesque appeal. Most housing is modern post-war (1960s-1990s architecture) with some Victorian dwellings in the older and larger settlements, such as Shinfield and Spencers Wood. The growth of the new town of Bracknell, an industrial town and important centre for technology, has predominantly taken place in the latter part of the 20th century. The architecture of the town contrasts with the surrounding open and rural areas and buildings are conspicuous skyline elements from the surrounding rural landscape. In the eastern part of the area, post-1950s residential development of predominantly green-field land has effectively eroded most traces of the rural landscape.

Nature Conservation

- 15.13. There are few SSSI sites in the *Settled Farmland* areas indicating, perhaps, the adverse influence that human activities have had upon the value of this, once forested, landscape type in terms of nature conservation. There are numerous small areas of ancient woodland, which include former sweet chestnut coppice. These include Wykery Copse near Bracknell which has been classified as a SSSI. Patches of coniferous and mixed woodland also occur on the more sandy and fine loamy soils of the Bagshot Beds, including belts of trees permeating into the suburban framework. Heathland once contributed significantly to the ecology of this area but only a few fragmented heathland areas remain in the modern landscape due to the plantation of coniferous. There are, consequently, no specifically designated heathland areas, although Longmoor bog does contain some wet heathland habitat.

Designations

Designation	Summary
<i>Sites of Special Scientific Interest</i>	

Wykery Copse (K4)	A fragment of ancient broad-leaved woodland, very diverse for its size.
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Character Area Descriptions

- 15.14. There are five potential subdivisions within the *Settled Farmlands* landscape type. These areas retain the general characteristics of the generic landscape type but vary in character locally. The following descriptions highlight these distinctions in landscape character.

K1. Spencers Wood

- 15.15. This small character area is located to the west of the Loddon, which forms the eastern boundary. The A33 forms the western boundary separating it from the *Open Clay Lowland (L)* around Grazeley. The area is dominated by settlement. Spencers Wood has a Victorian character due to the extensive use of red brick and slate with yellow brick banding and barge boards. Shinfield retains its distinct identity but there is a very narrow gap surviving between the village and the urban edge of Reading. These settlements are located on a gentle ridge sloping back towards the valley of the River Loddon. Extensive linear development along the roads creates the appearance of a semi-urban area. Mixed farmland includes arable fields and some pasture with many hedgerows and free-standing remnant hedgerow standards. There is evidence of early field systems formed by assarting, particularly in the vicinity of Shinfield and Three Mile Cross to the north of the area. However, in some areas the hedgerows have deteriorated and have become gappy and fragmented. A subtle wooded quality is created by numerous copses, including small coniferous copses, but, in contrast to other areas of this landscape type, larger coniferous and mixed woodlands are not present and there are no heathland areas.

K2. Arborfield

- 15.16. The *Arborfield Settled Farmlands* landscape covers a wide area of land in the south of the county. In this area the character of the landscape has been affected by settlement and intensive farming methods. In particular, arable land is more dominant and there are large flat cereal fields which are divided by gappy flailed hedgerows and overgrown unmanaged hawthorn monoculture hedgerows. In some areas smaller, more intact, field systems and pasture are still present (associated with areas of sandier soils) and there are remnant areas of both assarted field boundaries, for example around Farley Hill, and geometric Parliamentary field boundaries created by The Windsor Forest Enclosure Act around Arborfield and Barkham. Ditches are also a feature. The landscape still has a wooded quality, although there are fewer mature oak hedgerow trees or standards. A wooded horizon is maintained by a few large mixed woodland blocks, for example at Farley Hill and the presence of numerous woodland copses. The woodland at Farley Hill is part of the designed English Heritage-listed Grade II C18th historic landscape at Farley Hall. The landscape at Farley Hill is also distinguished by its more undulating topography.
- 15.17. The landscape is well-settled with modern and earlier settlements. Of particular note are the military areas including Arborfield Garrison with its institutional estate housing. There is also a small, picturesque villages such as Barkham and many timber framed buildings of vernacular interest at Farley Hill as well as historic buildings in

Arborfield. The area is also crossed by numerous lines of pylons that intrude on the rural qualities of the unsettled areas.

K3. Wokingham

- 15.18. The *Wokingham Settled Farmlands* landscape is very influenced by the presence of the large urban settlement of Wokingham (not included in the assessment). Numerous transportation corridors radiate from and pass around Wokingham, which have collectively fragmented the remaining unsettled areas and created marginal farmland. These include the A329 (M) and M4, which are on embankments defining the area's northern perimeter, and a branching railway line. This fragmentation has been further compounded by the presence of numerous lines of pylons which cut through the landscape. As a result there is little evidence of the traditional field pattern. In particular, north of Wokingham, the landscape is dominated by large flat arable (cereal) fields and the hedgerows have nearly all been removed or declined through lack of management, resulting in a somewhat bleak neglected character. To the south and west, the landscape is more intact and there are some remnants of a more traditional and rural character. There is also evidence of recreational use including a number of golf courses and a riding centre with associated bridleway network. There is one large mixed woodland around Bear Wood College, a Victorian country house (west of Wokingham), which occupies an elevated position. The woodland integrates the western boundary of Wokingham into the surrounding landscape and provides a wooded backdrop to the area. Bear Wood is part of a C19th landscape park standing on formal terraces with a rock and water garden which is listed Grade II* by English Heritage. Barkham Manor is also an important listed building.

K4. Bracknell

- 15.19. The *Bracknell Settled Farmlands* is almost entirely settled and the remaining undeveloped land is strongly affected by the influences of the urban areas. The landscape immediately around Bracknell is affected by the presence of large commercial and industrial buildings located on the town's outskirts, although the presence of wooded shelterbelts around the buildings provides screening and softens the impact. The character of the area is also affected by the presence of transportation corridors and pylons, although to a lesser extent than the *Wokingham Settled Farmlands*.
- 15.20. The remaining undeveloped land is largely in agricultural use and still contains many farms, some of which appear to be marginal, with evidence of degraded, unmanaged and set-aside land. These fields are sometimes divided by overgrown hedgerows or shelterbelts. There are also many woodland copses and small deciduous, mixed and coniferous woodlands that impart more traditional pattern to the landscape and create a wooded quality. There are two larger woodlands blocks comprising Big Wood, to the west, and a series of interlinked woodlands, to the east. These help integrate Bracknell into the surrounding landscape. Many of the woodlands are classified as ancient including Wykery Copse, which is an SSSI. There is also an area of EH Grade II listed historic parkland at Newbold College, west of Bracknell. Site-based recreational facilities, such as golf courses and a ski slope, are a feature of the landscape, but the Bracknell fringes do not have a comprehensive network of public paths and bridleways linking the urban and rural areas.

K5. Ascot

- 15.21. The *Ascot Settled Farmlands* occupies the landscape to the east of Bracknell and is focused upon Ascot. The principal distinguishing characteristics of Ascot are the associations with the horse racing world, which are given visible presence in the landscape by the famous flat racecourse with its large grandstand and white perimeter fencing; the presence of stud farms; and the concentration of paddocks in the wider landscape. There are also other recreational uses including golf courses (one within the racecourse itself).
- 15.22. The landscape is wooded with deciduous, mixed and coniferous woodland, generally in large blocks. A large area of this woodland is ancient. This includes Wood End, which, although not designated, is of particular importance because it is interconnected with an SAC in the adjoining *Royal Forest* landscape type. The intact pastureland of the landscape also contributes to the wooded character of the landscape due to the presence of large veteran trees within the fields, which create the impression of parkland.
- 15.23. Heathland was once an important component of this landscape following the clearance of Windsor Forest. However today there are only a few heathland fragments remaining including some remnants of Ascot Heath within Ascot Racecourse. The ecology and landscape of the area are enriched by the presence of water bodies, accessible by public footpath. These include several small lakes which have been created in the minor tributary valleys that, ultimately, drain into Virginia Water (outside Berkshire).

EVALUATION

Evaluation of Landscape Type

FEATURES OF KEY SIGNIFICANCE

- **Peaceful, rural** quality of the less urbanised areas.
- **Intact remnants of historic field boundary pattern** including areas of small irregular assarted fields and regular geometric Parliamentary field enclosures.
- **Mature oak hedgerow standards and hedgerow remnants** within open arable landscape.
- Presence of distinctive water-filled **drainage ditches** and small tributary streams in the most clayey arable farmland.
- Pleasant wooded quality due to presence of **small copses and farm woodlands**.
- **Wooded horizons** created by large woodlands on more elevated areas contrasting with the more open character of the surrounding landscape.
- Contribution of **historic parklands** to landscape.
- **Coniferous trees** and fragments of **heathland** character indicative of the

underlying presence of the Bagshot Beds.

Strength of Landscape Character

15.24. This landscape has been much affected by the human activity and settlement leading to a certain degree of fragmentation and lack of continuity within this landscape which is consequently perceived to be of moderate to weak character (although locally varied and particularly weak or strong). Whilst the principal elements of the landscape – diverse urban settlement, mixed farmland and the flat to gently undulating landform - are ubiquitous, the variability from a more intact system in the south and west to a more settled and urbanised landscape in the north and east affect the overall strength of character.

Landscape Condition

15.25. The condition of the landscape is variable and appears to be declining. Throughout much of the *Settled Farmlands* there is the sense that much of the traditional landscape has been replaced by a modern landscape, that has yet to establish its own positive identity. Furthermore it is perceived that piecemeal and disjointed management around the urban fringe and intensification or alternatively marginalisation of the more rural agricultural areas is threatening the viability and quality of the landscape structure and features such as hedgerows.

Key Issues

15.26. Key issues affecting this landscape are:

- Pressure for new housing particularly around and within existing settlements.
- Particularly intense development pressure and issues around Wokingham and Bracknell potentially resulting in the amalgamation of urban areas.
- Requirements for large and prestigious commercial and industrial buildings, particularly associated with transportation corridors.
- Potential requirements for alternative use of farmland on the urban fringe e.g. as golf courses and other recreational facilities, potentially extending to more intrusive forms of recreation (e.g. quad biking).
- Deterioration of marginal farmland held in 'hope' value around urban areas and not positively managed for agriculture.
- The upgrade of existing or requirement for additional transportation routes – further fragmenting the landscape.
- Declining viability of livestock grazing and the consequent impact upon the remnant pastoral landscape.
- Lack of or inappropriate management of the wetland resource including the small tributaries.

- Potential further deterioration in the visual quality of the arable fields due to loss of remnant oak hedgerow standards and loss of hedgerows, particularly historic field boundary patterns, due to increased mechanisation of agricultural activity or pressure for greater productivity and rationalisation.
- Lack of or inappropriate woodland management leading to loss of diversity within wooded areas and decline in farm woodlands.
- Skyline pressure (e.g. masts and poles) particularly upon the wooded 'domed' elevated landscapes.
- Potential insensitive reuse, management or development within remaining areas of historic parkland.
- Uncertain future trends regarding MOD activity and infrastructure in the area.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall strategy for the *Settled Farmlands* is to **strengthen** and **enhance** the landscape character. This necessitates strengthening the character of the remaining mixed pastoral and arable farmed landscapes with their small woodland copses and mature trees; actively managing large woodlands, particularly those of ecological and landscape importance; and enhancing and potentially creating new character within those areas most affected by settlement. There is an opportunity to create new character to ensure a positive interface between the rural and urban areas.

Guidelines

15.27. Broad objectives to realise the aims of the strategy include:

Landscape Management

- Conserve and manage the existing woodland resource, especially those of ancient origin and those large elevated woodland blocks that create a wooded landscape context within this area.
- Consider possibilities for woodland creation in urban fringe areas where these could enhance landscape character and quality, provide recreational potential, and assist in the positive integration of the urban into the rural landscape.
- Conserve and manage the existing wetland resource, including tributaries and small farm ponds and lakes.
- Manage wetland habitats to for the benefit of wildlife, particularly areas of designated habitat.
- Conserve and sensitively manage remnant historic parkland areas, particularly those on the English Heritage Register.
- Encourage restoration of traditional agricultural landscapes including arable and pastureland, where viable. Priorities should include the management and

replanting of oak trees within field boundaries, in particular, those field boundaries conforming to specific assarted or Parliamentary inclosure patterns.

- Conserve and manage the water-filled ditches, which define many fields, especially in the west of this landscape type.
- Enhance the recreational value of the area and, in particular, encourage development of a more comprehensive footpath and bridleway network in that countryside nearest to the centres of population.
- Seek to prevent intrusion of the skyline by such features as pylons, poles and masts and, where possible, try to integrate existing features in a more harmonious manner.
- Seek to enhance integration of buildings at the urban fringe, for example through selective screening and landscaping.
- Consider opportunities for creation of heathland habitats in those areas with a suitable geological substrate, possibly in association with longer-term plans associated with the final felling of coniferous plantations.
- Seek to work with government agencies (MOD) to improve the presentation of military landscapes and encourage adoption of ecologically sensitive management regimes.
- Seek to avoid the development of further new roads that fragment the agricultural landscape and minimise their impact through landscaping and other measures.

Managing Future Change

15.28. With regard to any future change, the aim should be to retain the small scale of settlement in those areas retaining a more rural character and ensure the existing settled areas have a positive interface with the surrounding countryside. In addition to the features of key significance outlined earlier, main attributes to be considered with regard to any future change are:

- Distinct identity and separation (physical and visual) between the small, nucleated towns and villages and the pattern of interspersed farmsteads.
- Need for a positive landscape character at the interface of the built and urban area.
- Wooded character of mixed woodland planting that assists the integration of built development within the countryside.
- Open countryside that currently serves to maintain the distinct identity of the larger settlements, for example separating Bracknell from Wokingham and Ascot from Bracknell.
- Views from the road network to a rural farmed landscape.

- The intactness of parts of the rural landscape.

Character Area Evaluation

- 15.29. The following are potential subdivisions within the *Settled Farmlands* landscape type. They indicate variation in character within the landscape type, highlighting features or characteristics of particular importance, indicating any key issues or objectives for future management.

K1. Spencers Wood

- 15.30. Overall the strength of character of Spencers Wood is good with a more intact feel than most other areas of this type. However, this landscape is particularly sensitive to loss and deterioration of the hedgerow structure, remnant oak standards and small woodland copses and management of these (particularly the vulnerable intact field systems near Shinfield) will be critical. Furthermore, the proximity of this landscape to the urban fringe may make it vulnerable to development pressure. Consequently there is a need to conserve and restore this landscape to provide a positive rural setting to Reading.

K2. Arborfield

- 15.31. The character of the *Arborfield Settled Farmlands* is being eroded through declining condition of the farmland and encroachment into the agricultural landscape by residential development. It will be important to reinforce the landscape pattern where it is being threatened and to prevent further decline. In particular ensure that ditches are adequately managed and conserve mature oak trees. The intact, more intimate landscape character of Farley Hill, with its distinct wooded horizons should be conserved.

K3. Wokingham

- 15.32. Whilst there are some vestiges of the more traditional farmed landscape much of this area has been affected by the impact of Wokingham and its associated transportation network resulting in a moderate character and declining condition. Consequently, there is a need to conserve and restore all that remains of the former landscape and to restore and enhance or create new character in the urban fringes, where character is diminishing or has been degraded. In particular, the landscape between Wokingham and the motorway(s) has become very poor and opportunities to repair and revitalise this landscape should be sought.

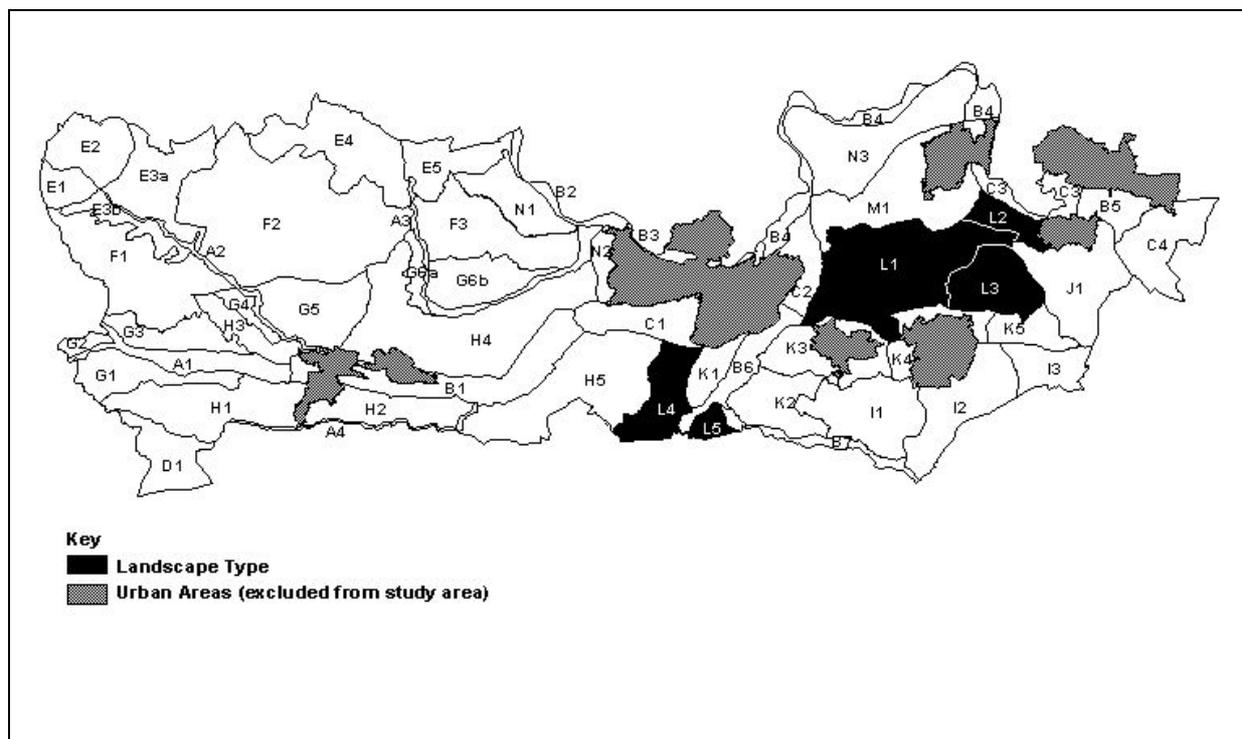
K4. Bracknell

- 15.33. Despite the influence of Bracknell's large buildings, the effect of agricultural marginalisation at the urban fringe, and continued decline of landscape condition, the *Bracknell Settled Farmlands* retain many elements of the traditional farmed and wooded landscape resulting in a moderate character. Therefore there is a need to conserve and enhance the existing landscape resource. In particular, it will be vital to protect the high quality ancient woodland. Improved recreation and green links could provide an opportunity to bring forward improvements to marginal farmland on the Bracknell fringe.

K5. Ascot

- 15.34. The Ascot landscape has a strong wooded character, although the condition is declining, and should therefore be conserved and enhanced. Particular attention needs to be paid to the presentation of Ascot racecourse and the town as a landmark and important destination within the Berkshire landscape. Whilst paddocks are part of the character of Ascot it is essential that the quality of the landscape is maintained. The conservation of the woodland, particularly ancient woodland is a key priority and there are opportunities for heathland restoration and creation, particularly to link existing fragmented areas.

16. TYPE L: OPEN CLAY LOWLANDS



Type L: Open Clay Lowlands

- L1: Shurlock Row
- L2: Bray
- L3: Maidens Green
- L4: Grazeley
- L5: Riseley

Location and Boundaries

The *Open Clay Lowlands* occupy a broad arc of land stretching from Swallowfield and Beach Hill in the south of the county towards Windsor in the east, falling largely between the chalk landscapes to the north (*M: Open Chalk Lowland*) and the heavily settled mixed clay/sand landscape to the south (*K: Settled Farmlands*). The eastern edge of the landscape type is bordered by *J: Royal Forest* and the Thames Valley. The unifying feature of this landscape type is the underlying London Clay strata.

The continuity of this landscape type is broken by the valley of the River Loddon and urban influences, which divides those areas in the south from those in the east of Berkshire. The change in geology is not dramatic across the area and there are limited corresponding topographical features or abrupt land use changes. Generally, therefore boundaries follow physical landscape features such as roads and trackways chosen to represent the broad transition between the *Open Clay Lowlands* and the *Settled Farmlands*.

TYPE L - Open Clay Lowlands

Typical Characteristics of the Rural Landscape



DESCRIPTION

Landscape Character

- 16.1. The *Open Clay Lowlands* are predominantly a flat to gently undulating open mixed agricultural landscape of pasture and arable land, with distant views to wooded horizons. It is peaceful working landscape of small villages, connected by narrow rural lanes. One of the key characteristics is the presence of water, with small springs and minor watercourses, such as the Bourne and the Cut, emerging on the less permeable clay base. These streams are frequently hidden within the wider landscape, as a result of the flat topography and vegetation. However, the presence of water is evident through the construction of ditches around field boundaries to drain the heavy and waterlogged soils and in numerous farm ponds. The reed-filled roadside ditches, lined with willows and bound by a wide grass verge, are a notable feature.
- 16.2. The nature of the agricultural land use is a dominant influence on local character. On areas of lighter soils it comprises expansive arable landscapes with regular medium-large fields of cereal crops, from which hedgerows have often been removed, and replaced by post and wire fences. Isolated former hedgerow standard oak trees frequently remain within the farmland and form a distinctive feature. The remaining hedgerows are often low flailed hawthorn monocultures, although this is variable and there remain areas of high quality with intact hedgerow systems, particularly around the villages. In contrast, the heavier undrained clays remain in pasture, with fields often enclosed by high, unmanaged mixed hedgerows.
- 16.3. There are numerous small and medium sized farm woodlands within this landscape, many of ancient origin. These include small farm copses as well as large blocks of mixed woodland. Together, these features create a wooded context to the farmland and a more enclosed character. The area is also considerably enriched by the presence of parkland, originating as medieval deer parks or landscape schemes around 19th century country houses. Isolated mansions and country houses are an occasionally visible within the landscape. Farm buildings are a further notable feature and include distinctive black timber-framed and red brick buildings, sometimes located at historic moated sites.
- 16.4. Other rural settlement comprises hamlets and small villages of traditional vernacular character, clustered around a green and served by a loose network of country lanes. Built form includes brick and flint. The villages are often set within a small-scale grazed pasture landscape, with cattle or, frequently, horse paddocks. The M4 and A329(M) dissect this character type but despite this intrusion, the area generally maintains an intact rural character.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Peaceful rural landscape.**
- **Distinctive flat to gently rolling clay lowland.**

- **Mixed farmland** with medium – large arable cereal fields and areas of grazed pasture.
- **Remnant hedgerow trees**, some retaining hedgerow boundaries but some with post and wire fences.
- **Regular grid of drainage ditches.**
- **Farm woodlands, many of ancient origin**, creating a **wooded context** and horizons.
- **Small rural settlements**, often with vernacular built character and a village green.
- **Parkland** associated with manor houses.

Factors Contributing to Landscape Character

Physical Influences

- 16.5. The areas of *Open Clay Lowlands* are defined by their underlying London Clay strata which is expressed as a flat and open landscape at a low elevation (up to 77m AOD and as low as 25m AOD). The land rises gradually from the north to the south but this is barely perceptible on the ground.
- 16.6. The clay soils have impeded drainage with high groundwater levels and suffer periodic waterlogging. There are consequently, numerous small streams and ponds sometimes associated with localised alluvium pockets. The main drainage channel is The Cut, which follows a corridor running in a north-easterly direction through the centre of this landscape type to drain into the River Thames. The soils have numerous flint nodules which, with the heavy and waterlogged nature of the soil, make farming difficult. However, the construction of drainage ditches and the capabilities of modern machinery have considerably improved the viability of farming within the area.

Historic Environment

Historic Land Use

- 16.7. There are few Saxon charters in the east of Berkshire, but two of these granting land at Waltham, dated 940 and 1007, could be the present parishes of Waltham St. Lawrence, Shottesbrooke and White Waltham (within landscape type M), which extends south to include a significant part of this area. The clay soils in this area, being harder to cultivate, were little used until the medieval period.
- 16.8. This area was part of Windsor Forest making it subject to Forest Law, and giving the crown rights over hunting, timber and other resources. Two deer parks were created in the area, at Billingbear in 1208 and Foliejon in 1317, both of which have survived as ornamental parks, although the 16th century mansion at Billingbear was demolished in the 1920s following a fire. Numerous other country houses with their associated parks were built in this area from the 16th to 19th centuries, drawn by the area's proximity to the court at Windsor, and to London.

- 16.9. There was an expansion of arable farming in the late medieval and during the agricultural revolution of the post-medieval period. Small irregular fields around the villages suggest early assart inclosures taking in areas of woodland, but the large straight-sided fields over much of the rest of the area are typical of later Parliamentary inclosures.
- 16.10. The main river and road routes run to the north and there were no major lines of communication running through this area (until the construction of the M4 motorway). In addition to agricultural production, the clay soils were exploited for brick making, the industry providing the main building material in the southern part of the county from the late 17th century.

Settlement Evolution

- 16.11. Unlike the chalk lowlands to the north, this area of clay soils appears to have been relatively sparsely settled until the medieval period. The Domesday Book records a single settlement within this area, at Warfield, and there are many other small hamlets and villages with their origins in the medieval period; a significant number (as indicated by their names) developing around village greens. Moated sites are a feature of the late medieval period. As New Windsor developed as a town it expanded west into this area, but the pattern of settlement remained predominantly rural, and includes numerous large country houses and their associated parks.

Historic Designations

Designation	Summary
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	
Moat at Foliejon Park (SM 12032)	Moat: three sides of this moat remain,
Winkfield Lane moat (SM 12033)	Moat: a sub rectangular moat clearly defined on 3 sides (the w arm clearly defined on w side of road). A building stood on the site until C1920.
The Moat House (formerly Smewins Farm) (SAM 12028 (prev SM 166)	Moat: the greater part of this moat survives. The house is half-timbered with brick nogging and is probably late Tudor in date.
English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens	
Ascot Place: Grade II* (L3)	Late C18th country house surrounded by contemporary landscape park and pleasure grounds, and C19th/early C20th garden, with outstanding mid to late C18th grotto overlooking the house and lake

Current Rural Land Use

- 16.12. The clay lowlands are a working rural landscape which is dominated by mixed farmland comprising large cereal (mainly wheat) fields, with dairying and livestock represented by areas of pasture. In some areas the fields are divided by well-managed hedgerows but in others boundaries have been lost and replaced by post and wire fences. Some of the lighter soils in the area support intensive vegetable production.
- 16.13. Parkland, creating a pastoral landscape with large parkland trees and ornamental planting, is evident throughout the area, including the listed Ascot Place as well as (unlisted) Foliejon Park, Bill Hill Park, Billingbear Park, Warfield Hall, Allanbay Park,

Hurst Lodge, Fernhill Park, Honeys Park, Cruchfield Manor and Haines Hill Park. On the whole the country houses around which these are based remain in private use.

Settlement and Building Character

- 16.14. There are numerous small and distinctive nucleated village settlements in the area connected by a network of rural lanes. These settlements are often clustered around neat and well-maintained village greens. Outside the villages the settlement of the area is dispersed. This includes a large number of vernacular brick-built farmsteads as well as the impressive large country houses associated with the remaining historic parkland. There are few institutional buildings – the research station at Jealott’s Hill being a notable exception.

Nature Conservation

- 16.15. The *Open Clay Lowlands* contain few habitats of national importance and only one SSSI (Chawridge Bourne) is located within the area. This is a small area of unimproved grassland, scrub and broadleaved woodland, valued for its flora. The landscape type contains a high amount of small ancient or replanted ancient woodlands relative to the size of the woodland resource in this area.

Nature Conservation Designations

Designation	Summary
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	
Chawridge Bourne (8.94 ha)	Unimproved neutral to acidic grassland (partly grazed) and neglected coppice woodland.

Character Area Descriptions

- 16.16. There are five potential subdivisions within the *Open Clay Lowland* landscape type. These areas retain the general characteristics of the generic landscape type but vary in character locally. The following descriptions highlight these distinctions in landscape character.

LI: Shurlock Row

- 16.17. The *Shurlock Row Open Clay Lowlands* (LI), is the largest area of this type. It is a variable landscape with the northern part dominated by grazed pasture on heavy clay soils, with water and reed-filled ditches, willow boundaries and wide grass verges along the roads being characteristic elements. Towards the Loddon Valley, it is characterised by a more open arable landscape and with large scale field systems. In contrast, superficial deposits of sands and gravels are represented by areas of pine and placename evidence for former heathland such as at Beenham’s Heath. The woodland in the area includes some larger woodland blocks and includes areas of mixed and coniferous woodland, including a significant amount of ancient woodland. Settlement is very dispersed and comprises the linear village of Shurlock Row, the northern extension of Binfield and ‘valley edge’ settlement of Hurst. Elsewhere settlement is restricted to small hamlets such as the attractive settlement of Ruscombe within its red brick church, isolated farmhouses and the occasional large country house associated with the remaining parkland landscapes such as Allanbay Park. The dominant vernacular influence in this area is brick, and much of the

settlement occurred after the 19th century, although older buildings sometimes have conglomerate incorporated into them as a decorative feature and churches are often brick and flint. This character area is affected by the M4 that cuts through the heart of this landscape, although the presence of woodlands in the vicinity of the motorway lessen its visual impact.

L2: Windsor-Bray

- 16.18. This is the most settled landscape of the *Open Clay Lowlands* and includes the east extension of the modern town of Windsor, which has subsumed former villages such as Clewer. Other settlements include Fifield, Holyport and Moneyrow Green, the open areas between which are currently being diminished by newer roadside development. The landscape has intact remnants of parliamentary field systems as well as areas of the, less common, irregular field systems all predominantly in arable land use, plus grazed paddocks. There are few woodland areas. The adjacent settled areas are the dominant influence on the landscape – both visually in the form of hard settlement edges and on the character of the farmland, which includes horse paddocks and some pockets of more marginal unmanaged land.

L3. Maidens Green

- 16.19. The *Maidens Green Open Clay Lowland* is distinguished by its intact and intimate character. This includes the survival of rectilinear field strips, small regular parliamentary boundaries, paddocks and large areas of parkland. The parkland includes Foliejon Park with its remarkable folly-like building as well as smaller areas around Warfield House, Ascot Place (listed) and Fernhill Park. The parkland landscapes are usually centred around a lake. Woodland is an important component of the landscape, including Windsor Forest that defines the eastern boundary. Settlements are dispersed throughout the area and include Winkfield, Winkfield Row, Warfield, Maiden's Green, and Cranbourne. These frequently have a loose linear form, with settlement spread out along a road. Interestingly many of the churches within this area (including Winkfield and Warfield Parish Churches) include the rarely-used dark brown Conglomerate associated with the Bagshot Beds. Elsewhere Brick and Flint is commonly used and there are also many older timber-framed buildings.

L4. Grazeley

- 16.20. The *Grazeley Open Clay Lowland* is the most westerly example of this landscape type, extending to the west of the River Loddon, with the A33 forming the eastern boundary. The southern boundary (and county boundary) is marked by the Devil's Highway – a distinctive straight Roman Road. This is a broad scale, open rural landscape with a flat to gently undulating landform centred around the floodplain of the Foudry Brook and other minor tributaries of the Loddon which are prone to extensive flooding. Mixed farmland in this area includes both arable fields and pasture, enclosed by flailed hedgerows, with free-standing remnant hedgerow standards. In some areas the hedgerows have deteriorated and have become gappy and fragmented. The landscape has a lush 'verdant' quality as a result of the wide grass verges with water-filled drainage ditches alongside the roads. Small road bridges cross the minor brooks and there are numerous farm ponds. The landscape

is enhanced by the presence of small woodland copses and trees fringing the minor watercourses.

- 16.21. Settlement includes Beech Hill located on a higher ridge and Grazeley on the clay lowland. Both are little more than hamlets and are linear in form extending along the road. There are numerous isolated farmsteads. Buildings are predominantly red-brick, sometimes with burnt header course detail. The rural character is disturbed by proximity to the M4 and A33, lines of pylons and the local dominance of a military compound with angular grassed concrete bunkers and tall metal poles. However, overall the landscape has a pleasant and quiet character.

L5. Riseley

- 16.22. This is a very small character area located on the floodplain of the River Loddon and its tributary the Blackwater (Broadwater reach). It is very similar in character to *Grazeley*, comprising damp flat pasture and local areas of more undulating arable farmland. There are, in addition, numerous mixed woodland copses. The A33 continues through this character area within a series of cuttings. The Devil's Highway Roman road also defines the boundary to the south. Distinctive features include the willow lined ditches, farm ponds and poplar shelter hedges. There are two small villages – Swallowfield and Riseley – and numerous isolated farmhouses, with more modern residential development extending in a linear form along the roads. The local vernacular is brick-based with some patterning, and flint buildings, including Swallowfield Church.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of Landscape Type

FEATURES OF KEY SIGNIFICANCE

- **Peaceful** rural ambience.
- **Woodlands** including ancient woodland creating **wooded horizons**.
- Intact **hedgerow systems** and **remnant hedgerow trees**.
- **Pastoral farmland** creating variety within the landscape.
- **Rural settlement** and vernacular built character.
- **Parkland**.
- **Streams, farm ponds and drainage ditches**.
- **Wide grass verges** bordering rural lanes.
- **Moats**.

Strength of Landscape Character

- 16.23. This landscape is distinctive due to its flat landform, mixed pasture and arable farmland, wooded horizons and the presence of features such as areas of parkland. Settlement in this area has a distinct character with consistent architectural materials

and traditional features such as village greens. It remains a working rural agricultural landscape and consequently, this landscape is perceived to have a strong character.

Landscape Condition

- 16.24. The condition of this landscape appears to be declining and will continue to decline as important features such as remnant hedgerow trees are not replaced and further hedgerows are lost. Changes in agricultural management are critical to the condition of the landscape with a reduction in grazing, for example, leading to an open more neglected character in some areas, and pressures for the expansion of development.

Key Issues

- Pressure for additional residential development including infill within the villages and along the roads, particularly in those areas close to the urban edges of Windsor and Reading.
- Dilution of vernacular character as a result of suburbanising trends and/or inappropriate new development.
- Pressure to upgrade the existing rural road network resulting in a more urbanised landscape and erosion of verges.
- Changing agricultural practice and corresponding management priorities leading to the loss of traditional features such hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Loss of viability of small farms leading to neglect of agricultural land.
- Decline in woodland management leading to loss of biodiversity.
- Potential conversion of country houses to institutions and residential complexes and associated insensitive reuse, management or development of remaining areas of historic parkland.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall strategy for the *Open Clay Lowlands* is to **conserve and restore** landscape character. This entails conservation of the peaceful and rural character of the mixed working farmed landscape including management of the woodland copses and blocks, areas of parkland, and conservation of the traditional settlement pattern and form. Positive enhancements should be sought where the rural, peaceful character diminishes.

Guidelines

- 16.25. Broad objectives to realise the aims of the strategy include:

Landscape Management

- Conserve and manage the existing woodland resource, especially any blocks of ancient origin.

- Consider opportunities for increasing woodland cover within the landscape, for example in those areas in the east of this landscape type where the woodland has been lost.
- Conserve and sensitively manage parkland areas, including appropriate reuse of country houses, and promote replanting and renewal of parkland trees.
- Promote active management of features of the agricultural landscape, including hedgerows, farm copses and ponds and continue to promote sensitive management under agri-environment schemes.
- Enhance boundary elements such as hedgerows, particularly around areas where the farmland has been neglected.
- Conserve and manage the water filled ditches that define many fields, and the associated grass verges lining the rural lanes.
- Avoid unsympathetic upgrading of rural roads and introduction of kerbing, signage, lighting or other features that will intrude upon the rural character.

Managing Future Change

16.26. With regard to any future change, the aim should be to maintain the peaceful, rural character of the landscape. In addition to the features of key significance outlined earlier, main attributes to be considered with regard to any future change are:

- Rural character of the roads.
- Small clustered and linear villages and scattered rural dwellings and general absence of, large buildings, particularly those of an industrial nature.
- Individual identity of the villages and clear relationship to the surrounding landscape with distinct settlement boundaries.
- The vernacular character of the existing settlements.
- Opportunities for sensitive planting of woodland.
- Flat and open character of the landscape, which is currently unaffected by intrusive tall structure such as pylons.

Character Area Evaluation

16.27. The above issues, guidelines and considerations apply throughout the landscape type. However, there are some distinctions to be made within the individual character areas:

LI: Shurlock Row

16.28. The *Shurlock Row Open Clay Lowlands* suffers from declining agricultural condition and has the greatest prevalence of open arable landscapes with denuded field boundaries. In some areas (particularly those to the east) the condition could be described as

poor. However it retains a strong – moderate character. Consequently, within this character area there will need to be greater emphasis upon restoration, particularly including restoration of degraded boundary elements and replanting of boundary trees.

L2: Windsor-Bray

- 16.29. The character of the *Windsor-Bray Open Clay Lowlands* has been much affected by the presence of the settled areas. Therefore the character is moderate. However, the remaining agricultural landscape appears to be of reasonably good condition with some features still intact. In consequence there is a need to conserve and strengthen the existing character of the agricultural landscape and retain the land in productive use. In practice it may be difficult to reduce the adverse impacts of the settlement.

L3. Maidens Green

- 16.30. The *Maidens Green Open Clay Lowlands* has a strong, intact character and is in good condition. The emphasis should therefore be on conservation of the existing character. In particular the unimproved pasture of this area requires protection, and rejuvenation of the unmanaged coppice woodland (adjacent to the SSSI) is recommended. The conservation and management of parkland landscapes is also important to perpetuate features such as parkland trees, avenues and woodlands. The linear character of settlement, which extends along many of the rural roads, means that there are few opportunities for further development, without merging and blurring the identity of individual settlements.

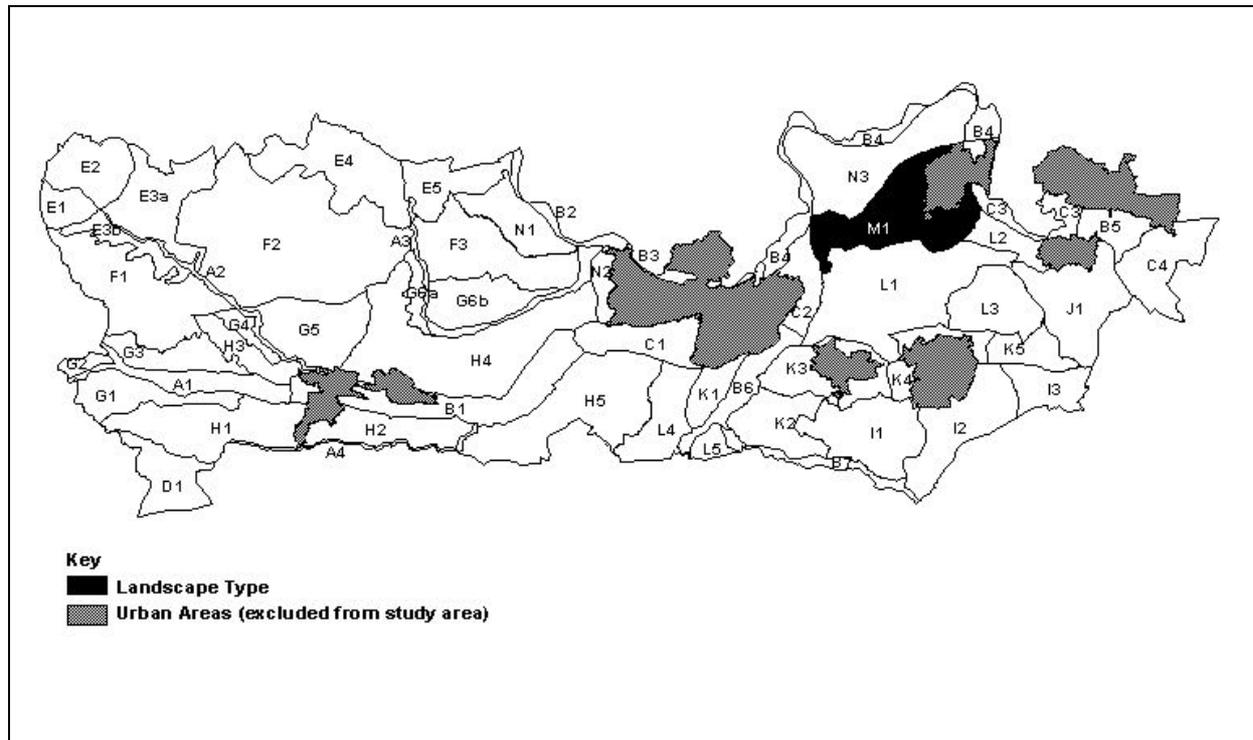
L4. Grazeley

- 16.31. Overall the strength of character of *Grazeley* is moderate. However, this landscape is particularly sensitive to loss and deterioration of the hedgerow structure, remnant oak standards, small woodland copses and remaining pasture. Furthermore, the proximity of this landscape to the Reading fringes and relatively easy access to the M4 and A33 in the north of the area has made it particularly vulnerable to development pressures, with some deterioration in agricultural land. Consequently there is a need to conserve and enhance the landscape character – notably the grazed pastures, hedgerow network and hedgerow trees, ditches and woodland copses. Development must be sensitive to the rural character and context and should recognise the flood risk associated with the area around the Foudry Brook.

L5. Riseley

- 16.32. In common with *L4* the *Riseley* landscape is of moderate character with a number of distinctive, intact features including the ponds, ditches, pasture and woodlands. The condition is declining as some boundary features such as hedgerows are no longer actively managed and the imposition of a more ‘suburban’ character with modern development extending into the area, particularly around Riseley village. The emphasis should be on conservation and enhancement of the pastoral landscape and, in particular, of the hedgerows. Development should be sensitive to the rural character and context.

17. TYPE M: OPEN CHALK LOWLAND



Type M: Open Chalk Lowland

MI: Waltham

Location and Boundaries

The *Open Chalk Lowlands* landscape type is found in a single location in the northeast of Berkshire, encompassing land from the Thames valley at Maidenhead to the east to the Loddon valley in the west. It comprises a large outlying chalk area that, in contrast to the undulating chalk landscapes of the downland in the western part of the County, is fairly flat and at a low elevation. This area forms a transitional landscape between the *Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes* landscape type to the north and the *Open Clay Lowlands* landscape type to the south. The boundaries are defined by the combination of roads and topographical features, roughly coinciding with the geology.

TYPE M - Open Chalk Lowlands

Typical Characteristics of the Rural Landscape



DESCRIPTION

Landscape Character

- 17.1. The *Open Chalk Lowland* forms the southern edge of the chalk dip slope of the Chilterns. It is a level, open, low lying landscape of large arable fields, with the flat topography distinguishing it from the rolling chalk downlands that characterise the west of the county. To the north, the higher land (Character Area N3) forms a strong sloping wooded backdrop to this lowland area. The absence of woodland and hedgerow cover creates a large scale landscape offering long views. Church spires, such as that at Shottesbrooke Park, are features within these views.
- 17.2. The area appears remote and even isolated, because although crossed by major communication routes such as the A4 and railway there are few roads, providing access into the area. Those that do exist are minor lanes, sometimes bound by intact mixed or hazel hedges but more often with boundaries removed and only a thin grass verge bordering the adjacent open arable fields. The absence of water is a further notable feature although springs and small watercourse emerge at the junction with the clay to the south. This strategic location, between the chalk and clay, is also the site of several parkland landscapes as at Shottesbrooke and Waltham Place. Here, the parklands, with their mature trees and greater proportion of woodland cover, much of ancient origin, create a more intimate enclosed character. Other more enclosed areas, with pockets of woodland cover occur in the west, for example around Kiln Green.
- 17.3. Settlement includes distinctive loosely clustered villages located around a village green along the northern boundary such as 'Littlewick Green' and 'Woolley Green'. Linear villages, with development located along roads occur at the southern boundary. Elsewhere settlement is sparse and limited to occasional isolated farmsteads. Farm buildings include old red brick barns, which are an attractive feature, as well as more modern buildings, including polytunnels in areas of market gardening.
- 17.4. This rural area extends to the edge of the large settlement of Maidenhead in the eastern part of the area and includes the suburban growth of the town around Woodlands Park. In the south east, proximity to the urban area and presence of the motorway network M4, A404(M) and A308(M) are dominant features of the landscape. Fragmentation of agricultural land, suburban development and land uses such as golf courses create a more 'urban fringe' character, although to an extent this is mitigated by the presence of larger blocks of woodland and a more undulating topography.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Distinctive flat and open chalk lowland.**
- **Arable farmland within large fields**, often divided by gappy hedgerows or post and wire fences.
- **Some areas of market gardening.**

- **Long, open views** – punctuated by church spires.
- **Subtly wooded context with** dispersed patchwork of small deciduous farm woodlands and parklands in the east and south areas of this landscape type.
- **Distinct settlement pattern** – sparsely settled central area with villages located on boundaries of the landscape type.
- **Loosely clustered village around central green are a feature** of the northern boundary.
- **Parkland landscapes** to the south.
- **Suburban growth** of Maidenhead and Twyford on the periphery.

Factors Contributing to Landscape Character

Physical Influences

- 17.5. The areas of *Open Chalk Lowlands* are underlain by Upper Chalk strata, creating a flat and open lowland landscape of between 25m and 60m elevation. This area of Upper Chalk forms the lower boundary of the chalk extending southwards from the Chiltern Hills. There are some superficial deposits of sands from the Lambeth Group as well as London Clay, along the southern edge of the landscape type. The pockets of London Clay may lead to differential water-logging of the area, though the area is largely influenced by the high permeability of the chalk. The absence of standing water and watercourses is a characteristic that clearly distinguishes this area from the clay-dominated landscapes to the south. While there are no major hydrological features in the wider landscape small ponds frequently form a feature within areas of settlement, often in the form of moated sites. Similarly, on the southern boundary of the landscape type water issues at the junction of the chalk and clay and creates small water features within parkland landscapes such as at Waltham Place and Shottesbrooke Park.
- 17.6. The Upper Chalk is characterised by the development of flint, which forms numerous horizons within the chalk. This flint is evident as a local building material notably brick churches and flint such as that at Waltham St. Lawrence. The geology has resulted in good loam soils used for intensive arable farmland and market gardening.

Historic Environment

Historic Land Use

- 17.7. A low density of Late Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement evidence suggests that there may have been early clearance of the woodland and cultivation of the chalk soils. The presence of at least four possible Roman villas indicates the agricultural potential of the chalk soils, in contrast to the adjacent soils of the Reading Beds to the south, which remained largely unoccupied. It is possible that some of the boundaries of the Roman villa estates survived into the Saxon period.
- 17.8. Unlike west Berkshire there are few Saxon charters in the east of the county, but two of these, dated 940 and 1007, grant land at Waltham. Their area is uncertain but they could be the present parishes of Waltham St. Lawrence, Shottesbrooke and

White Waltham, the irregular eastern boundary of Shottesbrooke suggesting it was carved out of an estate. These parishes straddle the southern boundary of the landscape type enjoying the varying resources of the Upper Chalk, the Reading Beds and the London Clay.

- 17.9. The area originally formed a part of Windsor Forest making it subject to Forest Law, and giving the crown rights over hunting, timber and other resources. It is likely that the soils would have supported mixed farming during the medieval period, but still maintained a wooded character as shown by the large number of swine recorded in the Domesday Book for the Royal estate at Waltham. Small irregular fields around the villages suggest early assart inclosures taking in areas of woodland, but the large straight-sided fields over much of the rest of the area are typical of later Parliamentary inclosures. The proximity to the court at Windsor, and to London, made this a popular area for country houses. The moated manor house at Ockwells, south of Maidenhead, dates to the 15th century, the buildings and church at Shottesbrooke Park are 14th century while the estate at Waltham Place is from a later date.
- 17.10. While the Thames, the main trade and communication route between rural Berkshire and the capital, makes a loop round the north of the chalk, later communication routes cut across this area. The main London to Bristol road, having crossed the Thames at Maidenhead, runs west to cross the Loddon at Twyford and forms the northern boundary of the landscape type. A similar line was taken by the Great Western Railway, opened in Berkshire in 1840 following the construction of a railway bridge at Maidenhead the previous year. More recently the M4 has cut through the south eastern section of the area.
- 17.11. The landscape remains predominantly rural and agricultural in nature. From the 19th century the land has supported largely arable farming and the growing of vegetables; the good loam soils of the chalk being ideal for nurseries and market gardening. There is an airfield at White Waltham, which was built in 1928 by the de Havilland flying school and was requisitioned by the MOD for WWII use. It is now the home of Fairey Aviation and the West London Aero Club.

Settlement Evolution

- 17.12. This area of chalk, bounded by the loop in the Thames, saw an expansion of prehistoric settlement from the river valley, and by the Roman period villa settlements were well represented. The Domesday Book records settlements at Waltham, Shottesbrooke and White Waltham, which had a Saxon minster church, all but Shottesbrooke continuing as villages through the medieval period. A number of small settlements developed around village greens, such as Littlewick Green, Cox Green and Stud Green, while villages like Knowl Hill, Hare Hatch and Twyford developed along the main London to Bristol road. The numerous moated sites are a feature of the late medieval period. As Maidenhead developed as a town its suburbs extended beyond Thames valley floor into the rural areas on the chalk to the west. The urban area of Twyford is similarly located on the edge of the Loddon valley in the west.

Historic Designations

Designation	Summary
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	
Botany Bay Copse (SM 12024)	Quadrilateral moat with straight regular sides. It is believed to be the site of the C13 manor of Minton Pipard. Immediately to the W of the moat is an oblong pond. It is of similar depth to the moat and appears contemporary. It may have served as a fishpond, reservoir or both.
Foxley's Farm (SM 12026)	The moated platform contained a manor house which was burnt down in c18. Site is now an orchard.
Moor Farm, Holyport (SAM 144)	An extensive area of worked flint. The site, producing 1000's of worked flints may represent 1 large, or several smaller camp site beside a reed swamp/lake.
Great Thrift Wood	A damp coppiced woodland with areas of permanently waterlogged land. A stream borders the north side of the wood. The site represents 5 stand-types and is home to several important floral species.
Robin Hood's Arbour (SAM 95)	A ditch rectilinear enclosure with a well defined bank and ditch with a causewayed entrance on the W.
Maidenhead Thicket (SM19024)	Ordnance survey show remains of a bowl barrow.
English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens	
(None)	

Current Rural Land Use

- 17.13. Today, the landscape is dominated by large cereal fields. These are subdivided by post and wire fences with some intact hedgerows remaining. Areas of market gardening are also common and polytunnels are prominent features within the open landscape. Woodland cover is generally limited to small blocks, although in some areas, the landscape is more wooded, for example around Kiln Green and in association with the parklands at the southern boundary where there are several small ancient woodlands. Communications in the form of the rail line, A4 and M4 are also a dominant feature.

Settlement and Building Character

- 17.14. The area is characterised by its sparse settlement pattern and, in this respect, has similarities with the open chalk downland to the west of the county. Settlements are limited to small attractive villages located around a central green on the northern boundary of the area close to the route of the A4, as at Littlewick Green, Knowl Hill, Woolley Green and Kiln Green. Other more linear settlements occur at Waltham St. Lawrence (with historic buildings including pub and church from the 13th and 14th centuries) and White Waltham along the southern boundary at the junction of the chalk and clay. Elsewhere settlement is very sparse comprising isolated farms, including a number of historic moated sites and occasional more recent linear development. Red brick and tile are the dominant building materials, some with attractive flint ornamentation, including Victorian 'villa' style houses and redbrick farm buildings/barns. The exception is the eastern part of the area where modern suburban growth of Maidenhead has extended out, from the river valley onto the chalk. In the west, on the edge of the Loddon Valley, the town of Twyford follows a similar pattern.

Nature Conservation

- 17.15. The *Open Chalk Lowlands* are an intensively farmed landscape with key features including the remnant hedgerow network and associated grass margins and mature hedgerow trees. The parklands, with ancient woodlands and old trees are also important features.

Nature Conservation Designations

Designation	Summary
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	
Great Thrift Wood	A damp coppiced woodland with areas of permanently waterlogged land. A stream borders the north side of the wood. The site represents 5 stand-types and is home to several important floral species.

Character Area Descriptions

- 17.16. The *Open Chalk Lowland* landscape type occurs in a single location and forms one character area. There are no additional subdivisions at this scale of assessment. A local study, for example, at the District scale may potentially create further subdivisions, for example separating the urban fringe from the more rural areas.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of Landscape Type

FEATURES OF KEY SIGNIFICANCE

- Sense of **openness** and long views.
- **Distinct settlement pattern** – villages clustered around greens on northern boundary.
- **Sparsely settled** central core – rural character.
- **Wooded framework** created by small-scale farmland copses and parkland.
- **Parkland** landscapes.
- **Vernacular buildings** including red brick barns.
- **Local historic features** – e.g. moated sites.

Strength of Landscape Character

- 17.17. This landscape retains a moderate rural character, with large open arable fields, long views and attractive villages located on the boundaries. The rural quality is enhanced by the absence of settlement and roads into the area. In the south east, the suburban edge of Maidenhead and the motorway network are a dominant influence on character, resulting in a more fragmented, even weak landscape structure.

Landscape Condition

- 17.18. Landscape condition is considered to be declining, as represented by the loss or poor management of hedgerows and trees and absence of features such as farm

woodlands. The open character of the landscape, low-lying topography and long views which are key characteristics means that hedgerow loss does not have such a high impact in this area as some other more topographically enclosed landscapes. In some areas agricultural management appears to be in decline with unmanaged/set aside land having a high visual impact and contrasting with other areas of very intensively managed farmland. The encroachment of the urban fringe around Maidenhead, and to a lesser extent Twyford is resulting in land use change with fragmentation of farmland, and new uses including recreation and paddocks and pressure for development.

Key Issues

- Potential further amalgamation and deterioration in character of arable fields as a result of changes in farming practice, including both greater intensification – (leading to loss of valued features e.g. hedgerows) and conversely decline in management (leading to neglect).
- Poor management of remaining hedgerows– with a particularly high visual impact along roadsides.
- Need for management of the small farm woodlands and parkland landscapes in order to retain these as key features.
- Land use change and development pressures arising from proximity to Maidenhead and Twyford.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall strategy for the *Open Chalk Lowland* is to **conserve and enhance** landscape character, with local opportunities to **strengthen** character around the Maidenhead fringe. This entails conservation of the open agricultural character of the lowland and seeking to enhance the traditional arable landscape, woodland copses and the distinctive settlement pattern.

Guidelines

17.19. Broad objectives to realise the aims of the strategy include:

Landscape Management

- Promote active management of remaining features of the agricultural landscape, including hedgerows and woodlands and continue to promote agri-environmental management.
- Conserve the balance and nature of existing woodlands and consider possibilities for small-scale woodland creation in areas where they could enhance landscape character.
- Conserve and enhance the features associated with the parkland landscapes including avenues, parkland trees and woodland copses.

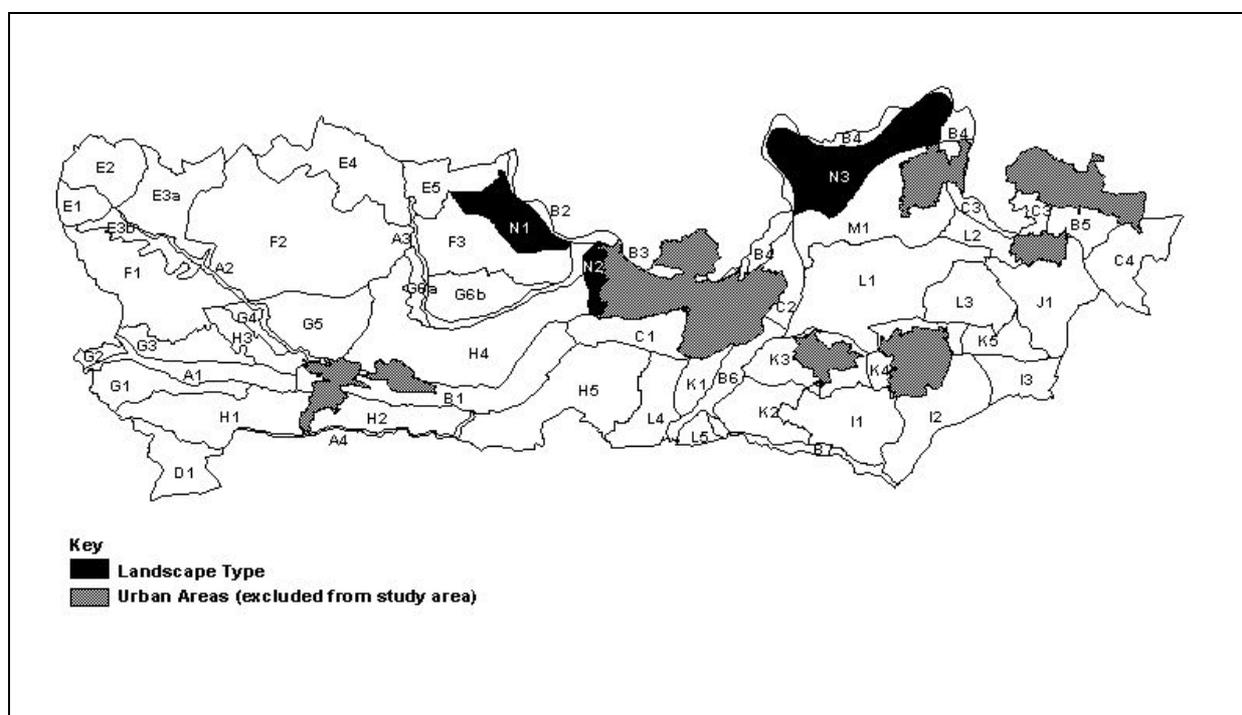
- Consider opportunities to strengthen landscape character around the urban fringe of Maidenhead – e.g. through an urban fringe management plan. This will need to reconcile development needs with positive landscape management.

Managing Future Change

17.20. With regard to any future change, the aim should be to maintain the open rural quality of the landscape. In addition to the features of key significance outlined earlier, main attributes to be considered with regard to any future change are:

- The characteristic settlement pattern with loosely clustered villages, set around greens along the northern boundary and small linear settlements to the south.
- The sparsely settled character of the main part of the area with dispersed farms and other rural buildings.
- The distinct rural village of White Waltham and sense of separation from Maidenhead.
- The ‘remote’ rural character of the few narrow lanes that cross the area.

18. TYPE N: ELEVATED WOODED CHALK WITH SLOPES



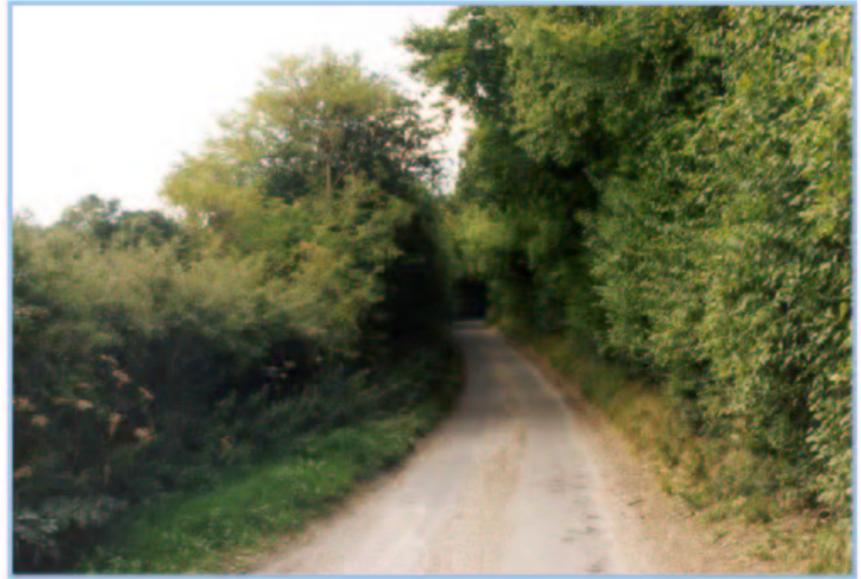
Type N: Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes

- N1: Basildon
- N2: Sulham
- N3: Cookham Dean

Location and Boundaries

The *Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes* is found in three locations across Berkshire associated with the Thames river valley, stretching in a (non-continuous) linear belt from Streatley and the Goring Gap in the west to Cookham Dean in the northeast. It is a distinctive chalk-based landscape, in places capped by clay deposits, which includes areas of steep incised slopes and significant areas of woodland. It is unified by the adjoining landscapes of the Thames *Lower Valley Floor* and the Chiltern Hills (outside of the county) of which there are important views from this landscape type. Generally this is a rural landscape but is influenced by adjoining urban areas, which include the towns of Reading and Maidenhead. Wherever possible the boundaries follow physical features of the landscape.

TYPE N - Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes **Typical Characteristics of the Rural Landscape**



DESCRIPTION

Landscape Character

- 18.1. The *Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes* is a diverse landscape type with a mixed land use pattern, resulting from the underlying varied geological and topographical conditions. It is predominantly an upper chalk landscape including outlying areas of the dip slope of the Chilterns capped in places with gravel and clay-with-flint formations. The landform is variable and strongly articulated including rolling hills and localised flatter 'plateau' areas and upland chalk knolls, but common to the northern periphery of each character area of this landscape type is the presence of steep and incised slopes shelving to the Thames Valley. These create a dramatic river corridor sharing characteristics of the Chilterns on the northern side of the Thames. Water is not a feature of this landscape type due to the porosity of the chalk and the incised valleys are dry, although seasonal-flowing streams are present.
- 18.2. The landscape is characterised by the presence of woodlands commonly located on the steepest slopes corresponding to the incised ghyll stream valleys or areas where the chalk has been overlain by deeper deposits of Clay-with-Flints. Deciduous woodland occurs in a distinctive pattern within the ghylls, where they emphasise the varied landform, and mixed woodland is also common in bands blanketing the steep slopes or in larger blocks in elevated areas.
- 18.3. Set within this wooded context there are a wide variety of land uses including pasture with chalk grassland on the steepest land and arable farmland where the landform flattens. The pastures include open verdant sheep grazed grassland, reminiscent of the *Wooded* and *Open Downlands*, and areas of formal paddocks enclosed within regular and well-maintained timber fences. The arable farmland tends to be characterised by medium-scale fields framed within wooded horizons and often bounded by overgrown hedgerows. The steep grassy areas include important floristically rich unimproved chalk grassland habitats.
- 18.4. Valley-edge parklands are also a feature of this landscape type. These are associated with historic manors located to overlook and exploit views to the River Thames and tend to occupy large areas being surrounded by wooded parkland settings. Many of these landscapes are of historic importance. The presence of spectacular views has also resulted in the purchase of significant areas within this landscape type for public recreation by the National Trust, who hold land at Lardon Chase (N1) and Winter Hill (N3), resulting in the presence of footpaths allowing recreational access and providing strategic scenic viewpoints. From these areas the attractive views to Chilterns AONB and Thames valley including the Goring Gap can be appreciated.
- 18.5. This landscape is sparsely settled with predominantly linear and dispersed villages such as Warren Row and Upper Basildon. The larger villages are located at the top of the slope overlooking the Thames, such as Cookham Dean, or have grown up from a nucleus originating at the edge of the Thames floodplain, such as parts of Wargrave and Pangbourne. The riverside towns have a strong Victorian influence with brick and timber bargeboards. There are also numerous isolated farmsteads including some large modern agricultural buildings. Attractive and imposing manor

houses are a focus of the historic parkland such as Purley House, Basildon House and Park Place but these are often hidden within their surrounding woodland and can only be appreciated from inside the estate.

- 18.6. The largest settlement in Berkshire – Reading (outside of the study remit) – borders parts of this landscape type and Maidenhead also borders the easternmost areas. To some extent it could be considered that Reading is actually located on an area which would once have had the character of the *Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes*. Despite the presence of Reading and Maidenhead this area retains a predominantly peaceful rural character, with significant transportation corridors (roads and railways) largely confined to the periphery of the landscape type i.e. following the edge of the Thames valley floodplain. Elsewhere the landscape is connected by a network of small quiet and rural lanes including some deeply incised lanes with prominent hedgebanks, including some attractive lanes set within grassy banks and ‘green’ lanes that wind up the dip slope through the dappled woodland blocks.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Varied geology** with the underlying upper chalk mantled by deposits of gravels and clay.
- **Varied settlement form and pattern** including linear and nucleated villages, small riverside towns.
- Presence and influence of **adjacent urban areas** (including Reading and Maidenhead).
- **Mixed land use** of deciduous and mixed woodland, arable fields, pasture and paddocks.
- **Wooded context** created by distinctive wooded slopes and ghyll valleys and occasional hill top woodlands.
- Presence of naturalistic open ‘**downland**’ sheep pastures within a wooded context with more angular and regular medium sized formal **paddocks** and medium sized **arable** fields.
- Deeply incised **dry valleys** and **seasonal streams**.
- Valley-edge **country houses** set within extensive **historic parkland estates**.
- **Winding, sometimes sunken, rural lanes** and green lanes with intimate character.
- Important **calcareous grassland** and **woodland** habitats.

Factors Contributing to Landscape Character

Physical Influences

- 18.7. The *Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes* is composed predominantly of the dip slope of the Upper Chalk overlain with pockets of the clayey sands of the Lambeth Group and capped in places by clay-with-flints. This mixture of calcareous, neutral and somewhat acidic influences has resulted in variable soil conditions - ranging from brown calcareous earths, paleo-argillic brown earths, to limited areas of stagnogleys.

These are mostly well drained and there are no visible streams, ponds or other hydrological features in the area, although seasonally winterbournes may be present coursing down the incised valleys of the chalk slopes and natural springs are also present making some areas, such as Bowsey Hill, more permanently damp.

- 18.8. The landform is topographically varied characterised by the unifying presence of the very distinctive steep slopes of the Thames valley of up to 150m AOD. The landform has a strong influence on the character of this landscape type with rolling and undulating hills and, locally, the presence of high knolls interspersed with areas of flatter 'plateaux'. The slopes are incised with dry valleys and shelve to the valley side of the River Thames. Along the northern border of the county the chalk dip slope of the Chilterns AONB provides a dramatic backdrop to the River Thames creating a well-defined corridor and mirroring the chalk landscapes of this landscape type.

Historic Environment

Historic Land Use

- 18.9. Towards the Thames at Streatley, there are considerable surviving lengths of the Grim's Ditch linear earthworks, similar to those that may define territorial boundaries on the downs which indicate that by the Iron Age this landscape was settled (though probably not densely), a pattern that continued into the medieval period.
- 18.10. The whole of this landscape, spanning Windsor Forest in the east and the Forest of Berkshire in the other areas, would have been subject to Forest Law. Following extensive disafforestation in 1227, deer parks were created across the landscape. Part of these retain a predominantly wooded character, particularly where the chalk is overlain by areas of clay-with-flints and gravel deposits (NI). This pattern was repeated with the creation of landscaped parkland around country houses in the 18th and 19th centuries. As these landscape areas are adjacent to the Thames Valley, along which the main roads radiated from Reading, most of the roads of the type are minor roads and country lanes.
- 18.11. The landscape contains contrasting field types, with significant areas of assarting, probably of medieval and post-medieval date, visible in the irregular shapes of the woods and in some of the irregular field boundaries, although 20th century boundary removal has created some prairie-style fields located on the more elevated areas. At the start of the 19th century these areas predominantly supported arable farming, but by 1930 there was a significant element of nurseries and market gardening in the east.

Settlement Evolution

- 18.12. The general location of this landscape type, at the interface of the chalk and the Thames river valley, is reflected in its settlement pattern, with many of the towns and villages, from the 11th century onwards, being sited close to the valley floor in positions suitable for exploiting the agricultural potential of both zones. Those settlements at a distance from the main rivers were more dispersed in the landscape, a significant number being deserted in the medieval period, while all the urban centres grew up on the communication routes provided by the rivers.

- 18.13. Of the latter, however, only those in the most favourable locations, such as Reading, developed into major centres. Although Wargrave, for example, was a Royal manor until 1194, and a borough from 1225, it did not maintain its urban status, being eclipsed by the growth of Reading and bypassed by the London road, and it was later referred to as a rural village.

Historic Designations

Designation	Summary
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	
Moat SW of Bear Place (SM 12034).(N3)	Water-filled moat in good condition
Grims Ditch (SAM 104)	High Holies Wood, Holies Shaw, Portobello Wood.
English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens	
Basildon Park (Grade II) (N1)	Late C18 house surrounded by contemporary park and woodlands, elements having been designed by Lancelot Brown in 1778. Also Mid C19 formal gardens laid out with advice from William Andrews Nesfield.
Caversham Park (Grade II) (urban area)	A country house within the remains of an early C18th formal garden by Stephen Switzer. The site flanks mid C19th formal terraces, surrounded by the remains of a landscape park laid out in the 1790s by Lancelot Brown.
Purley Hall (Grade II*)(part in adjoining A area)	Remains of an early C18 formal landscape surrounding a country house, to designs by Charles Bridgeman, set within a later park.
Park Place and Temple Combe (Grade II*)	C19 house surrounded by C18 and C19 gardens and pleasure grounds and landscape park with work in the mid to late C19 by Robert Marnock. Temple Combe developed during the late C18 lies enclosed within the Park Place Estate.

Land Use

- 18.14. The *Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes* continues to be used for a variety of farming and forestry uses with a fairly even mix of woodland, pasture and arable fields. It includes rural working landscapes as well as more densely settled areas associated with the river valley edge. The mixed farmland comprises medium sized regular cereal fields, divided by overgrown hedgerows and set within the wooded context. Often the hedgerows adjacent to the roads have been retained creating greenways. There are also extensive areas of permanent pasture. Those used for sheep-grazing are large and open with a character reminiscent of the *Wooded Downland (F)*, whilst pasture for cattle and horses tends to be smaller scale, and the hedgerows have been replaced by formal timber or less formal post and wire fencing.
- 18.15. Forestry and woodland is a significant land use. This includes large blocks of mixed woodland found associated with the upland areas on the deeper soils where the chalk has been capped, such as around the knolls at Bowsey, Pudding and Ashley Hills. The steep riverside slopes also include extensive areas of mixed woodland with natural deciduous woodlands nestled within the dry valleys forming linear bands down the slopes.
- 18.16. Parkland, with large trees and ornamental planting, is evident throughout the area, particularly on the valley edge, such as at Basildon Park and Park Place. There is a strong National Trust presence in this landscape type, extending to more natural chalk grassland areas providing scenic viewpoints over the Thames Valley, for

example from Winter Hill and Lough Down/Lardon Chase. The National Trust also owns significant woodlands at Cookham Dean and Pinkneys Green.

Settlement and Building Character

- 18.17. Settlement character within this landscape type ranges from the dense urban centres of Reading and Maidenhead at the periphery of this landscape type which have grown up from their original nuclei at crossing points in the Thames valley to a less dense traditional village pattern elsewhere.
- 18.18. Extending out from the Thames valley are a number of small riverside towns including the outskirts of Pangbourne and Wargrave. There are also large dwellings including the magnificent Georgian mansion at Basildon Park.
- 18.19. Away from the valleys there is a dispersed network of distinctive traditional nucleated villages. Some of these villages, such as Cookham Dean have a central village square or green, often being very attractive. Between these along the network of rural lanes are a number of linear and dispersed settlements, such as Warren Row and Upper Basildon, which include more modern houses as well as older dwellings. 'Ashlar' dwellings of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian age are characteristic, particularly of the 'riverside' towns and include red and blue bricks, tile hanging, barge-boarding and some timber-framed dwellings.

Nature Conservation

- 18.20. The variety of the *Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes* results in a range of habitats of importance for nature conservation including a large concentration of ancient woodlands, including the ancient beech woods at Bisham, and important grassland habitats and small areas of heath.

Nature Conservation Designations

Designation	Summary
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	
Bisham Woods. (40.25ha.)	Predominantly beech high forest representing a southern outlier of the Chiltern beechwoods (a cSAC). Richest ground flora of any woodland in Berkshire and a range of woodland types. Mollusc fauna including some species of ancient woodlands and chalky soils.
Holies Down. (6.03ha) (NI)	Area of important chalk grassland which is grazed and supports a large number of flowering plant species in close association. Also bees, grasshoppers and butterflies.
Lardon Chase. (0.64ha.) (NI)	One of the largest remaining fragments of unimproved chalk grassland on the Berkshire Downs. The site is important for butterfly fauna.

Character Area Description

- 18.21. The following are potential subdivisions within the *Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes* landscape type. These three areas retain the general characteristics of the generic landscape type but vary in character locally and the following descriptions highlight some of these distinctions in landscape character.

N1: Basildon

- 18.22. The *Basildon Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes* is a dramatic landscape of steeply sloping land dropping into the Thames valley and overlooking the Chilterns AONB. The land is divided by small dry valleys that create an undulating landform emphasised by the presence of woodland on the steeper valley sides that contrasts with the open arable fields within. Many of the small rural lanes have a very intimate character with very tall hedgerows.
- 18.23. The drama of the location has been exploited by the creation of Basildon House – the grandest Georgian house of the county – surrounded by an important area of restored landscape parkland. This area is also very important for its species-rich chalk grassland, as at Lardon Chase and Holies Down and there are also popular walking areas with good views to the Goring Gap. Generally the landscape is sparsely settled. However, Upper Basildon is an extended linear development of housing cutting across the landform, and there are also some large valley side dwellings at Lower Basildon. This area includes the outskirts of the large riverside village of Pangbourne, which was a popular Edwardian resort.

N2: Sulham

- 18.24. This area comprises a small area around Tilehurst in which the landscape is influenced by the adjoining urban area of Reading (not considered within the study) to the east. It occupies an area of alluvium and a steep slope of upper chalk, which defines the edge of the Pang and Thames valleys. To the east the residential estates located on the outskirts of Reading and Purley on Thames and associated facilities, such as a golf course, affect the character of the area. However, generally, the area is relatively free from development excepting the small settlement of Sulham nucleated around a flint church at the base of the slope. The landscape is very wooded with the upper slopes and ‘plateau’ having large areas of mixed woodland. This woodland is important in integrating Reading into its landscape context. There are localised areas with a more heathy and coniferous character located over members of the Lambeth group.

N3: Cookham Dean

- 18.25. The *Cookham Dean Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes* is located within a loop of the Thames between Cookham Dean and Wargrave. The area adjacent to the boundary with the adjoining Lower Valley Floor is steeply sloping, sharing many similarities with N1 and parts of N2, including dramatic views of the Thames from the National Trust land at Winter Hill and important calcareous grassland habitats. The core of the landscape is topographically varied with a gently rising plateau top punctuated by a number of small hills or knolls that are extensively wooded. These create an undulating wooded backdrop that contrasts with the adjoining *Open Chalk Lowland (M)*. It has a fairly intimate character with deciduous (beech and oak) and coniferous woodland interspersed with open pastoral landscapes. Quarry and Bisham Woods are important landscape features forming wooded slopes and horizons in views. The hedgerows dividing the fields are low monocultures, however many of the hedges bordering the winding sunken rural lanes are tall and diverse. Within this area there are also some large pastoral areas with a ‘downland’ appearance defined by close-

grazed grassland divided by angular low-flailed hedges and straight-edged coniferous woodlands.

- 18.26. This area is settled but the settlement is small-scale and well-spaced creating a pleasant traditional character. It includes the larger riverside settlement of Wargrave with attractive Edwardian houses and large elegant houses overlooking the Thames. There are also scattered villages/hamlets of Remenham, Burchetts Green and Crazies Hill and linear villages such as Warren Row. In the east of the area is Cookham Dean with its broad green and picturesque high street. The vernacular is based on warm and mellow red brick with occasional tile hanging and pantiles.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of Landscape Type

FEATURES OF KEY SIGNIFICANCE

- **Attractive linear and nucleated villages and small riverside towns.**
- Mosaic of **mixed farmland** including arable land, '**downland**' pasture and large paddocks mirroring the nearby landscape of the **Chilterns**.
- **Wooded context** created by ridge and hill top woodlands and wooded slopes and valleys.
- **Winterbourne** streams.
- **Country houses** and associated **historic parklands**.
- Network of **quiet rural lanes**.
- Important habitats – **chalk grassland** and **ancient woodland**.

Strength of Landscape Character

- 18.27. Despite the topographic diversity and mixed land use of this landscape type the strong unifying presence of views to the River Thames and Chiltern Hills, of which this landscape type could be considered an outlier, and the presence of an attractive wooded context results in a very distinctive landscape with an overall strong landscape character. Of particular importance to the perceived quality of the landscape character are the enclosing mixed wooded horizons, the winding rural lane network connecting dispersed rural farmsteads and villages and the presence of important remnant calcareous grassland, ancient woodland and historic parkland estates.

Landscape Condition

- 18.28. The condition of the landscape is good. However, there is some evidence of declining condition due to the continued loss of field boundary elements resulting in an increase in field size. It is also affected by the continued expansion of the urban fringe (particularly around Reading/Sulham and Cookham/Maidenhead). Unsympathetic design and siting of rural buildings and new woodland plantations could threaten the integrity of this landscape type. The long-term viability of the remnant calcareous grassland is also threatened by the declining viability of livestock

grazing. However, the presence of recreational and visitor attractions in this area, including the extent of the National Trust, is a strong force for ongoing positive management here.

Key Issues

- Decline in the viability of grazing leading to further conversion of arable farmland and decline of species richness of the chalk grassland habitat.
- Increase of horse paddocks with weak/urbanised boundary elements and poor quality grassland.
- Inappropriate or lack of woodland management.
- Need for ongoing parkland management.
- Potential conversion of deciduous or mixed woodland to coniferous plantation, with loss of assorted irregular field pattern.
- Further loss or decline of boundary hedgerows and diversity.
- Potential demands for upgrading of the winding network of rural lanes.
- Pressure for further industrial or commercial building, particularly around Reading and Maidenhead.
- Potential pressure for new developments around or away from the existing settlements, particularly those located along the linear roads (that may lead to a loss of distinction between settlements) and valley-side settlements (that may be visible from within the valley landscapes).
- Erosion and degradation of areas associated with viewpoints and other foci of recreational use.
- Intrusive developments (such as the construction of large buildings or tall communications towers) in adjoining landscapes, particularly within the Thames valley or the Chilterns AONB.
- Changes to the wooded skyline as a result of development or woodland management cycles.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The strategy for the *Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes* is to **conserve** this landscape although, where necessary, important characteristics that are declining in quality or extent should be restored. This particularly entails conservation of the mixed woodland horizons and slopes and valley woodlands and appropriate management of the chalk grassland and ancient woodlands and retain traditional settlement pattern and form. It will also be important to promote positive views of the Thames and Chilterns from within this landscape type.

Guidelines

18.29. Broad objectives to realise the aims of the strategy include:

Landscape Management

- Conserve and protect pasture and encourage appropriate management by grazing.
- Conserve and restore remnant chalk grassland habitats to link existing fragmented sites, and seek to prevent further habitat loss.
- Secure appropriate woodland management in particular for deciduous ancient and semi-natural woodland areas.
- Conserve the character of the wooded skylines.
- Ensure that new woodland planting follows the existing pattern of wooded ridges, wooded steep slopes and wooded dry valleys.
- Conserve the mixed woodland character in areas by selective reintroduction of deciduous species within coniferous monoculture plantation.
- Ensure that new woodland boundaries are sensitive to landform.
- Conserve and strengthen existing boundary elements, seek to prevent further loss or decline of boundary hedgerows, and undertake selective replanting of hedgerows in denuded arable landscapes.
- Manage recreational areas to prevent degradation of the natural landscape.
- Conserve the rural character of the road network.
- Cooperate with owners and managers to secure the management of historic parkland landscapes.
- Cooperate with authorities managing adjacent landscapes visible from this area to ensure the continued presence of positive cross-valley views between the Chilterns AONB and this landscape type.

Managing Future Change

18.30. With regard to any future change, the aim should be to maintain the rural landscape context, with particular attention to areas surrounding the urban settlements. In addition to the features of key significance outlined earlier, main attributes to be considered with regard to any future change are:

- The winding rural roads and sunken lanes, which are an attractive characteristic of the area.
- The wooded context which helps integrate settlements within the landscape.
- Separation between and distinctiveness of the settlements.
- Highly prominent wooded ridgetops.
- Opportunities for enhancement of the immediate urban fringe e.g. around the Reading and Maidenhead urban areas.
- The views to adjoining valley and downland landscapes which are very visible from some areas within the *Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes*.

Character Area Evaluation

18.31. The above issues, guidelines and considerations apply throughout the landscape type. However, there are some distinctions to be made within the individual character areas:

N1: Basildon

18.32. The *Basildon Elevated Wooded Chalk with Slopes* has a particularly strong and memorable character due to its dramatic landform, strongly wooded character, important chalk grassland and spectacular views of the Goring Gap from the National Trust Land as well as the presence of the large important parkland of Basildon House. However its landscape condition has declined due to loss of arable field boundaries resulting in an open and degraded quality in some areas. The continued linear expansion of settlements will challenge the remaining rural qualities of the area. Therefore the landscape requires conservation with a significant amount of restoration, with careful consideration given to the likely impact of any further development upon settlement character.

N2: Sulham

18.33. This area retains much of its rural character, despite the influence of Earley, with a strong wooded context creating an overall moderate character. However, the landform is less dramatic, although there are some excellent views of the Lower Pang Valley, for example from the western edge of Sulham Woods. Furthermore the character of this area is threatened by increasing urban fringe uses such as golf courses, field amalgamation and encroachment of commercial buildings from the settled area. Therefore the condition of the landscape is declining. The strategy for this landscape is therefore to restore and, where possible, enhance the existing character, although in practice there are few opportunities to address the impact of

the urban area on the fringe landscape. However it will be important to enhance and strengthen those positive features that remain, such as remaining boundary woodland, and to ensure that the visual links with wooded open space and historic parkland within the adjoining urban framework are retained.

N3: Cookham Dean

- 18.34. This character area has a very strong and distinctive landscape character due to its diversity, wooded context, pleasant views, distinctive landform, important habitats and attractive settlements. The floristically diverse and attractive slopes around Winter Hill overlooking the Thames at Cock Marsh are particularly noteworthy. Like *N1* the condition of the landscape is declining due to the replacement of hedgerows with fences and planting of angular coniferous blocks. In addition erosion and degradation of areas associated with viewpoints and recreation pressure is a concern. Therefore the strategy for this area entails conservation and restoration of the landscape with particular emphasis on retaining the character and form of the traditional villages and restoration of key hedgerows and woodland. The overall aim should be to conserve and protect the distinctive wooded slopes and horizons.

19. IMPLEMENTATION – GUIDANCE ON ACHIEVING THE LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

- 19.1. The preparation of the landscape character assessment and associated guidelines highlights key issues, opportunities and priorities. However, this document on its own will not bring about positive change. Implementation will be dependent on existing mechanisms and structures. In turn, the strategic landscape guidelines produced for Berkshire should also influence the operation and help target existing mechanisms.
- 19.2. A number of significant recent developments provide a strong policy framework to help manage the future direction of change and Government policy is currently moving forward with the aim of making farming more forward looking, competitive, flexible and capable of responding to market changes and consumer demands . The Rural White Paper published in 2000 sets out a vision for a living, working, protected and vibrant countryside. In addition, rural development policy established by Agenda 2000 is taken forward through the England Rural Development Plan and other documents such as *'Farming and Food a Sustainable Future'*.
- 19.3. Within this context, the landscape character assessment will be adopted as a technical paper to support the Berkshire Structure Plan 2001-2016 (particularly Policy EN1). The assessment will also be used to inform the preparation of more detailed district-wide Local Plans, as well as the Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plans. At the local level the study should also provide a framework for community planning tools such as the development of Parish Plans or Village Design Statements.
- 19.4. The landscape character assessment and its recommendations should therefore guide and assist the implementation of policy in Berkshire to ensure that its distinctive character, valued features and attributes are conserved for future generations.
- 19.5. This section concludes with an outline of the main mechanisms and initiatives that can help deliver the aims of the landscape strategy. It also highlights the key players involved and sources for further advice. Some are funding mechanisms and provide grant aid – these are denoted by the suffix (F). In addition, there is considerable potential for Section 106 agreements to help achieve positive change in association with new development.
- 19.6. The table does not include local geographic initiatives, such as those operated by individual district authorities – although these initiatives may have considerable influence in delivering action on the ground; local conservation projects and volunteer groups are a good example. In addition there may also be a wide range of additional funding mechanisms available for local projects. These include funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), for example the Local Heritage Initiative.

STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE OBJECTIVE	IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM (F) – funding	KEY PLAYERS
LAND MANAGEMENT		
Restoration/Management of agricultural landscapes including chalk grassland/pastures, water meadows, waterside pastures	ERDP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside Stewardship (F) • Rural Enterprise Scheme (F) Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and relevant Habitat Action Plan (HAP) Catchment Management Plans Whole Farm Plans Section 106 Agreements	BBOWT CPNWD AONB CVSC DEFRA EA EN FWAG GT JSPU/UA NFU/CLA RF
Conservation and Restoration/Management of former heathland	ERDP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside Stewardship (F) BAP Lottery Funds (HLF) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tomorrow’s Heathland Heritage (F) Section 106 Agreements	BBOWT CPNWD AONB Crown Estate (re. Windsor) DEFRA EA EN FC FWAG HLF JSPU/UA MOD NFU/CLA
FEATURES OF THE AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE		
Restoration and management of hedgerows and hedgerow trees and locally distinctive vernacular agricultural features – e.g. watercress beds.	ERDP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside Stewardship (F) BAP and Hedgerow Habitat Action Plans (HAP) Hedgerow Regulations	CPNWD AONB CVSC DEFRA EN FWAG JSPU/UA NFU/CLA
HISTORIC LANDSCAPE		
Restoration and management of historic parkland and	ERDP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside Stewardship (F) 	Crown Estate (re.

STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE OBJECTIVE	IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM (F) – funding	KEY PLAYERS
surviving archaeological and historic features.	<p>Heritage Land Capital Transfer Tax (F)</p> <p>HLF (F) (Historic Landscape Management Plans – produced as part of all the above initiatives)</p> <p>Management Agreements</p> <p>Section 106 Agreements</p>	Windsor) DEFRA EH HPAGT JSPU/UA RF
TREES AND WOODLAND		
<p>Creation of new woodland cover and management of existing woodland particularly ancient coppice and wooded boundaries</p> <p>Control of nature of felling and restocking existing woodland resources</p>	<p>ERDP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland Grant Scheme (F) • Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (F) • Energy Crops Scheme (F) <p>BAP & Woodland Habitat Action Plans (HAPs)</p> <p>UK Forestry Standard and England Forestry Strategy</p> <p>Felling Licences, Partnerships and advice.</p> <p>Section 106 Agreements</p>	BBOWT CLA/NFU CPNWD AONB Crown Estate (re. Windsor) DEFRA EN FC FWAG
RIVERS AND WETLAND		
<p>Restoration and conservation of riparian landscapes including restoration of the natural river form (sensitive river bank/channel engineering) and management of associated landscape features including riverside pollards</p> <p>Maintenance of water flows and high water quality</p> <p>Sensitive management of</p>	<p>Catchment Management Plans</p> <p>Local Environment Agency Plans</p> <p>River LCAs and Management Plans</p> <p>ERDP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside Stewardship (F) <p>BAP and relevant HAPs</p> <p>Section 106 Agreements</p>	CLA/NFU CPNWD AONB CVSC DEFRA EA EN FWAG GT JSPU/UA

STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE OBJECTIVE	IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM (F) – funding	KEY PLAYERS
flooding – flood control		
SETTLEMENT AND BUILDINGS		
Maintenance of the characteristic settlement pattern and identity and local built vernacular	ERDP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside Stewardship (F) • Rural Enterprise Scheme (F) Development Plans (Structure and Local) and SPG Countryside Design Summary Village Design Statements Local (Parish) Initiatives including Parish Plans Section 106 Agreements	CCB Countryside Agency Developers JSPU/UA
INFRASTRUCTURE		
<p>Ensure sensitive design and location of infrastructure proposals to respect local landscape character and reduce visual intrusion (notable current issues include traffic, road improvements, masts/poles/pylons, gravel extraction, chalk quarrying, military infrastructure and new recreational land uses e.g. golf courses)</p> <p>Encourage appropriate restoration and management of mineral extraction and waste sites</p>	Development Plans (Structure and Local) and SPG Minerals and Waste Plans MOD Estate LCA and Management Plans Landfill Tax (F) Aggregates Levy (F) Section 106 Agreements	Countryside Agency Developers Highways Agency JSPU/UA Mineral extraction and Waste Operators MOD Utility Companies
RECREATION		
<p>Promote sensitive management of recreational use to respect local landscape character and environmental features particularly archaeological sites</p> <p>Encourage appropriate tourism/recreation in support of the rural economy/landscape</p>	Regional and Local Tourist and Recreation Plans/Strategies Site Management Plans River LCAs and Management Plans Provisions of the CROW Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rights of way management • open access 	CPNNWD AONB Countryside Agency CVSC EA EH FC GT Highways Authority (RoW) JSPU/UA

STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE OBJECTIVE	IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM (F) – funding	KEY PLAYERS
	Thames Path and Ridgeway National Trails	UA (RoW) Recreation providers e.g. NT. South East England Tourist Board
PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES		
Conserve the special perceptual landscape qualities of tranquillity, remoteness, openness and rural character	All above	All above

Abbreviations

BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BBOWT	Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust
CA	Countryside Agency
CLA	Country Land and Business Association
CPNWD AONB	Council of Partners for the North Wessex Downs AONB
CROW	Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
CVSC	Colne Valley Standing Conference
DEFRA	Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EA	Environment Agency
EH	English Heritage
EN	English Nature
ERDP	England Rural Development Programme
FC	Forestry Commission
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (in West Berkshire this work will mainly be undertaken by the Pang and Kennet Valley Countryside Projects)
GT	Groundwork Trust (Thames Valley).
HAP	Habitat Action Plan
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
HPAGT	Historic Parks and Gardens Trust
JSPU	Joint Strategic Planning Unit (Berkshire)
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NFU	National Farmers Union
RoW	Rights of Way
RF	The Royal Farms
SAM/SM	Scheduled Ancient Monument/Ancient Monument
SEETB	South East England Tourist Board
UA	Unitary Authorities

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GLOSSARY

Agger	Raised embankment of a Roman road.
Ancient woodland	Woodland which has been continuously wooded since at least AD1600 but which may have been felled and replanted since that time.
Ashlar	'Square hewn stone' : implies polite as opposed to vernacular architecture.
Assart (assarting)	The informal inclosure of private farmland by encroachment into woodland or heath.
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum (sea level).
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; –a statutory national landscape designation.
Bargeboards	Projecting decorated boards placed against the incline of the gable of a building.
BP	Before Present.
Base-poor	Acidic, generally poor in alkaline compounds.
Bourne	Seasonally-flowing watercourse.
Borrowed character	Character of an adjoining area that influences the character of an area whilst not being part of that area's intrinsic character.
Borrow pits	Small pits from which minerals e.g. clay or gravel have been worked, usually by hand.
Browse	Twigs, young shoots etc. used as fodder for cattle.
Burnt header course	Dark (oxidised) bricks used to create patterns in walls.
Calcareous	'Containing calcium carbonate' i.e. base-rich with high calcium content.
Carr	Woodland dominated by tree species tolerant of high water tables such as alder, willow and birch, which tend to develop on unmanaged fen areas. Often densely vegetated with many shrubs, shade-tolerant herbs and lower plants including guelder rose, buckthorn, dog rose and bramble, ferns mosses and liverworts, and lichen populations.
Causewayed enclosure	Early Neolithic (4000-3000 BC) monument formed by concentric interrupted ditches, of uncertain function but possibly a social/ceremonial centre.
Celtic fields	Generic term for fields of Late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman date.

Clasts	Rock fragments e.g. flint nodules shattered by transport that are a constituent of river gravels.
Combe (coombe)	Valley on the flank of a hill.
Common	(Largish piece of land) belonging to a community.
Coppice	Small wood of undergrowth and small trees, periodically cut.
Covert	Shelter, especially vegetation for hiding game.
Crenellation	Furnished with battlements.
Cursus	Late Neolithic (3000-2400 BC) elongated rectilinear earthwork enclosure, of uncertain function but possibly ceremonial.
Deerpark	Enclosed private hunting ground.
Distinctive	Marking or expressing difference.
Flailing (flailed)	Threshing (esp. hedgerows), traditionally done selectively by hand but now often using machinery.
Folded (sheep fold)	Enclose sheep in folds, often to manure land.
Forest area	Not necessarily wooded, where the crown has the right to keep and hunt deer, and make Forest Laws.
Furze	Area dominated by gorse scrub.
Gallops	Large linear fenced enclosures for horse riding.
Ghyll woodland	Woodland following a steep-sided narrow stream valley.
Heath/heathland	Open flat tract of land esp. if covered with shrubs including heathers.
Hillfort	Defended Iron Age hilltop enclosure.
Inclosure	The placing in private hands of land to which their was previously common rights; the merging of strip fields to form a block surrounded by hedges.
Linear settlement	Settlement arranged in a linear pattern, particularly following a linear feature such as a road or watercourse.
Landscape character	The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how this is perceived by people.
Landscape character type	A landscape character type will have broadly similar patterns of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field pattern.
Landscape quality (or condition)	Landscape quality of condition is based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness from visual, functional and ecological perspectives. It also reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements which make up the character in any one place.

Long barrow	Early Neolithic burial monument.
Lynchets	Difference in ground level (bank or eroded hollow) made by ploughing.
Mere	Small natural mesotrophic and eutrophic lake or pond usually fed by inlet and outlet streams, but some are ground-water fed. Often associated with threatened wetland habitats such as carr woodland, fens and swamps.
Monoculture	Extensive cultivation of a single species e.g. hawthorn in hedgerows or cereal crops.
Motte and bailey castle	Castle on a flat-topped mound surrounded by a ditch (motte), with attached earthwork and palisade enclosure (bailey).
Nucleated settlement	Settlement arranged in a clustered pattern, particularly around a focal feature such as village green, square, or church.
Oppidum	Large proto-urban settlement of Late Iron Age date.
Osier (osier bed)	Species of willow especially <i>Salix viminalis</i> , used in basketwork.
Pannage	Fattening of domestic pigs on fallen acorns.
Pantile	Clay tile of S- shaped section.
Parliamentary inclosure	Inclosure established by Act of Parliament.
Pericline	A geological fold with elliptical or circular outcrop in which dips vary around the structure.
Pillboxes	Gun emplacement, usually concrete.
Podsol	Soil with certain minerals leached from surface layers to lower strata.
Pollard	Tree lopped so as to produce a close rounded head of young branches.
Riparian	Of or on river-bank.
Redoubts	Outwork or field-work usually square or polygonal and without flanking defences.
Round barrow	Bronze Age burial monument.
Saxon charter	Document recording a Royal gift of land.
Stagnogley	Slowly permeable clay or loam over clay soils with a heavy texture and drainage impeded at moderate depths.
Staddles/Staddie stones	'Mushroom' shaped stones originally used to support barns often used for roadside boundary markers/bollards.
Timber frame	Method of construction where walls are built of timber framework with the spaces filled in by plaster.
Turnpike	Road on which toll is collected.

Unique	Sole, only one of.
Univallate	(Hill fort) defended by a single bank and ditch.
Vernacular	Domestic architecture – ordinary buildings - and their construction in local materials and styles.
Weather-board	Overlapping horizontal boards, covering a timber-framed wall.
Withy (withy bed)	Tough flexible branch esp. of willow used for binding bundles etc.

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APPENDIX I

Field Record Sheet

BERKSHIRE LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT: FIELD SURVEY SHEET

Sheet No: _____ Photograph Nos: _____
Location: _____ Date: _____
Direction of view: _____ Time: _____
OS Grid Reference: _____ Weather: _____

FINAL APPRAISAL (To be determined on completion of field and desk survey)

FINAL LANDSCAPE TYPE:	FINAL CHARACTER AREA:
------------------------------	------------------------------

DRAFT LANDSCAPE TYPE _____

DRAFT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA: _____

Keywords describing the landscape: _____

—

—

—

PHYSICAL FEATURES

GEOLOGY

- | | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chalk (U/M/L) | <input type="checkbox"/> Gravel | <input type="checkbox"/> Clay | <input type="checkbox"/> Highly Mixed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alluvial | <input type="checkbox"/> Clay with Flints | <input type="checkbox"/> Sand | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

ELEVATION

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upland | <input type="checkbox"/> Transitional | <input type="checkbox"/> Lowland |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|

LANDFORM

- | | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flat | <input type="checkbox"/> Escarpment | <input type="checkbox"/> Downland | <input type="checkbox"/> Broad valley |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rolling | <input type="checkbox"/> Ridge | <input type="checkbox"/> Hills | <input type="checkbox"/> Narrow valley |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Undulating | <input type="checkbox"/> Knoll | <input type="checkbox"/> Floodplain | <input type="checkbox"/> Dry valley |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steep slopes | <input type="checkbox"/> Plateau | <input type="checkbox"/> Basin | <input type="checkbox"/> Coomb/combe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gentle slopes | <input type="checkbox"/> Rock outcrops | <input type="checkbox"/> Vale | <input type="checkbox"/> Gully |

WATER/HYDROLOGY

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> River (S/M/L) | <input type="checkbox"/> Stream | <input type="checkbox"/> Canal | <input type="checkbox"/> Pond |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speed (F/M/S) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bourne | <input type="checkbox"/> Flooded gravel pits | <input type="checkbox"/> Bog |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clarity (C/M) | <input type="checkbox"/> Spring | <input type="checkbox"/> Reservoir | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> River Meanders? | <input type="checkbox"/> Drainage channels | <input type="checkbox"/> Lake | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

LAND COVER

LAND USE

<input type="checkbox"/>	Farmland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Residential	<input type="checkbox"/>	Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/>	Forestry
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parkland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	Natural
<input type="checkbox"/>	Historic Parkland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Leisure/Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mineral Working	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

VEGETATION COVER

<input type="checkbox"/>	Arable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amenity grassland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Small farm woods	<input type="checkbox"/>	Heathland
<input type="checkbox"/>	Perm. pasture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Common/Green	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shelterbelts	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hedgerow trees
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pasture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parkland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Copses/ clumps	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hedgerows
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ley/improved	<input type="checkbox"/>	Avenues	<input type="checkbox"/>	Woodland belt	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wetland/Aquatics
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rough grazing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Woodland: Conif	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hanging woodland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gardens
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wet Meadow	<input type="checkbox"/>	Christmas trees	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scattered Trees	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chalk grassland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Decid. woodland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Orchards (type..)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set-aside	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed woodland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scrub	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Notes on ecological character _____

LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS/FEATURES Subtle Evident Conspicuous

<input type="checkbox"/>	Motorway	<input type="checkbox"/>	Farm buildings	<input type="checkbox"/>	Earthworks	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nucleated settlem.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dual Carriageway	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manor/Parkland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moats	<input type="checkbox"/>	Linear settlement
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural Road	<input type="checkbox"/>	Landmark Building	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ridge and furrow	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dispersed settlem.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural Lanes Track	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mills	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tumuli	<input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial workings
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sunken Lane	<input type="checkbox"/>	Church	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hamlet	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mast/poles
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bridleway	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fortifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	Village	<input type="checkbox"/>	Telecom. Masts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Footpath	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hill forts	<input type="checkbox"/>	Town Edge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	Railway	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/>	Suburb	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

BUILT/ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

<input type="checkbox"/>	Chalk	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ragstone	<input type="checkbox"/>	Conglomerate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tile
<input type="checkbox"/>	Timber	<input type="checkbox"/>	Flint	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stone	<input type="checkbox"/>	other
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sarsen	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brick	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slate	<input type="checkbox"/>	other

Notes on built/settlement character _____

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

(highlight condition/survival, threats/pressures, fragility/vulnerability, management issues and opportunities)

Agriculture

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.....

Field patterns/boundaries

.....
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Trees and woodland

.....
.....

Archaeology/historic components

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.....

Buildings/settlement/development

.....
.....

Linear features

.....
.....

Quarrying/mineral reclamation

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.....

Other land uses

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.....

General Notes on Management

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SKETCH AND NOTES

APPENDIX 2

Consultees

2A First Stage Consultation

First Stage Consultation

Agency/Organisation	Conclusion of Response (to date)
English Nature	Responded in full: No comment
The Forestry Commission	Responded in full
English Heritage	Responded in full
Environment Agency	No response
Environment Agency	Initial response to be followed up when time permits.
South East of England Regional Assembly (SEEDA)	No response
Government Office for the South East (GOSE)	Responded in full
Countryside Agency	Responded in full
Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)	Responded in full
The Wildlife Trust	Responded: declined to comment (verbal)
National Trust	No response
Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)	Has been circulated internally – will comment in due course.
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	Responded in full.
Country Land Association (CLA)	No response.
National Farmers Union (NFU)	Partial response: was passed on internally. Plan to comment in due course.
NFU	
Southern Tourist Board	Responded in full.
Community Council for Berkshire	No response
Oxfordshire County Council	Responded in full: no comment
Hampshire County Council	Responded in full.
Surrey County Council	Responded in full.
Wiltshire County Council	Responded in full.
Buckinghamshire County Council	Responded to in full (Via Hyder Consulting – Hampden Hall, Stoke Mandeville, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 5TB).
South Oxfordshire District Council	Responded in full: no comment.
South Bucks District Council	Responded in full: no comment (verbal)
Surrey Heath Borough Council	Responded in full.
Kennet District Council	No formal response – is currently being circulated internally.
Wycombe District Council	Responded in full.
Vale Of White Horse	Responded in full.
Spelthorne Borough Council	Responded in full.
Runnymede Borough Council	No response
Hart District Council	Responded verbally.
Borough Of Basingstoke And Dean	Responded in full
Rushmoor Borough	No response.
Test Valley Borough Council	Responded in full: no comment

Berkshire Unitary Authorities (consultation coordinated by JSPU)	
Berkshire Joint Strategic Planning Unit	Steering Group Member
Wokingham District Council	Steering Group Member
West Berkshire Council	Steering Group Member

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead	No response
Bracknell Forest Borough Council	No response
Reading Borough Council	No response
Slough Borough Council	Responded in full.

2B Second Stage Consultation

Second Stage Consultation

Organisation	Response Received
1. Ascot Racecourse	Yes
2. Association of Central Earley Residents	
3. Babtie	
4. Barlows Plantation Environmental Trust (represented by Hankinson Duckett Associates)	Yes
5. BBOWT (Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust)	
6. Berkshire Association of Local Councils	
7. Binfield Residents Association	
8. Binfield Village Protection Society	
9. Blagrove Lane Residents Association	
10. Borough of Basingstoke and Dean	
11. Bracknell District Urban Wildlife Group	
12. Bracknell Forest Borough Council	
13. British Horse Society	
14. British Telecom PLC	
15. British Waterways	
16. Broadway Malyan Planning	
17. Bushwood Park Residents Association	
18. Charvil Village Society	
19. Chavey Down Association	Yes
20. Community Council for Berkshire	Yes
21. Copas Brothers	
22. Country Landowners Association	
23. Countryside Agency (SE Reg Office)	Yes
24. CPRE - Chair Wokingham	
25. CPRE- Bracknell	
26. CPRE- Bradfield District, also Berks-wide contact	
27. CPRE- Chair Western District	
28. CPRE- Cookham and Bisham	
29. CPRE national office	
30. CPRE-Berks County Branch (also Bradfields District	Yes
31. Cranborne Society	
32. Crazies Hill Residents Association	
33. Crowthorne Action to Protect the Environment	
34. Defence Estates Organisation	
35. Defence Land Agent	
36. DEFRA	
37. Department of Soil Science	
38. Englefield Estate	
39. English Heritage- South East Region	
40. English Nature Thames & Chiltern Team	
41. Environment Agency (Thames Region)	
42. Farley Farms Estate Office	
43. Farley Wood Community Association	
44. Forestry Commission	
45. Friends of the Earth - Newbury	
46. Friends of the Earth -Bracknell and District	

47.	Friends of the Earth- Wokingham	
48.	Friends of the Earth-Bracknell	
49.	Friends of the Earth-Maidenhead	
50.	Friends of the Earth-Maidenhead & District	
51.	Friends of the Earth-Reading	
52.	Friends of the Earth-Wokingham	
53.	Froghall Residents Association	
54.	FWAG (Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group)	Yes
55.	Geoff Stevenson Associates	
56.	GOSE	
57.	GOSE Rural Development Service	
58.	Greenpeace	
59.	Hankinson Duckett Associates	Yes
60.	Hare Hatch & Kiln Green Residents Association	
61.	Hart District Council	
62.	Hennerton Residents Association	
63.	Kennet District Council	Yes
64.	Interlaken Investments Ltd – representation by Hankinson Duckett Associates	Yes
65.	JA Pye (Oxford) Limited – representation by Hankinson Duckett Associates	Yes
66.	Lafarge Aggregates Ltd – representation by Hankinson Duckett Associates	Yes
67.	Loddon Residents Association	
68.	Maiden Erleigh Residents Association	
69.	Maidens Green Society	
70.	Matthews Chase Residents Association	
71.	National Farmers' Union	
72.	North Ascot Residents Association	
73.	Northern Parishes Action Group	
74.	Peacock Lane Action Group	
75.	Ramblers Association - Twyford	
76.	Ramblers Association (SE Berks)	
77.	Reading Borough Council	
78.	Remenham Residents Association	
79.	River Thames Society	
80.	Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead	
81.	RSPB	
82.	Runnymede Borough Council	
83.	Rushmoor Borough Council	
84.	Sandhurst Action Group	
85.	South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA)	
86.	Sir Richard Sutton's Settled Estates – representation by Hankinson Duckett Associates	Yes
87.	Slough Borough Council	
88.	Society for the Protection of Ascot & Environs	Yes
89.	South Bucks District Council	
90.	South Oxfordshire District Council	Yes
91.	Southern Tourist Board	

92.	Spelthorne Borough Council	
93.	Spencers Wood & District Residents' Association	
94.	Sport England (South East Region)	
95.	Springfield Residents Association	
96.	Stratfield Saye Estate	
97.	Surrey Heath Borough Council	Yes
98.	Test Valley Borough Council	
99.	The Hurst Village Society	
100.	The National Trust	
101.	Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society	
102.	Twyford Traders Group	
103.	University of Reading – representation by Hankinson Duckett Associates	Yes
104.	Vale of White Horse	Yes
105.	West Berkshire Council (Steering Group member)	Yes
106.	Winkfield Residents' Association	
107.	Winkfield Row Association	
108.	Wokingham District Council (Steering Group member)	
109.	Woodland Trust	
110.	Wycombe District Council	

Parish Councils

111.	Aldermaston Parish Council	
112.	Aldworth Parish Council	Yes
113.	Arborfield & Newland Parish Council	
114.	Ashampstead Parish Council	Yes
115.	Barkham Parish Council	Yes
116.	Basildon Parish Council	
117.	Beech Hill Parish Council	
118.	Beedon Parish Council	
119.	Beenham Parish Council	
120.	Binfield Parish Council	
121.	Bisham Parish Council	Yes
122.	Boxford Parish Council	Yes
123.	Bracknell Town Council	
124.	Bradfield Parish Council	
125.	Bray Parish Council	
126.	Brightwalton Parish Council	
127.	Brimpton Parish Council	
128.	Bucklebury Parish Council	Yes
129.	Burghfield Parish Council	
130.	Catmore Parish Meeting	
131.	Chaddleworth Parish Council	Yes
132.	Charvil Parish Council	
133.	Chieveley Parish Council	
134.	Cold Ash Parish Council	Yes
135.	Combe Parish Council	
136.	Compton Parish Council	
137.	Cookham Parish Council	Yes

I38.	Cox Green Parish Council	
I39.	Crowthorne Parish Council	
I40.	Datchet Parish Council	Yes
I41.	Earley Town Council	Yes
I42.	East Garston Parish Council	
I43.	East Ilsley Parish Council	
I44.	Enborne Parish Council	
I45.	Englefield Parish Council	
I46.	Eton Town Council	
I47.	Farnborough Parish Meeting	Yes
I48.	Fawley Parish Meeting	
I49.	Finchampstead Parish Council	Yes
I50.	Frilsham Parish Council	
I51.	Great Shefford Parish Council	
I52.	Greenham Parish Council	Yes
I53.	Hampstead Norreys Parish Council	Yes
I54.	Hamstead Marshall Parish Council	
I55.	Hermitage Parish Council	
I56.	Horton Parish Council	
I57.	Hungerford Town Council	
I58.	Hurley Parish Council	Yes
I59.	Inkpen Parish Council	
I60.	Kintbury Parish Council	
I61.	Lambourn Parish Council	
I62.	Leckhampstead Parish Council	Yes
I63.	Midgham Parish Council	
I64.	Newbury Town Council	
I65.	Old Windsor Parish Council	
I66.	Padworth Parish Council	
I67.	Pangbourne Parish Council	Yes
I68.	Peasemore Parish Council	Yes
I69.	Purley-on-Thames Parish Council	Yes
I70.	Remenham Parish Council	
I71.	Ruscombe Parish Council	
I72.	Sandhurst Town Council	Yes
I73.	Shaw-cum-Donnington Parish Council	
I74.	Shinfield Parish Council	Yes
I75.	Shottesbrooke Parish Meeting	Yes
I76.	Sonning Parish Council	Yes
I77.	Speen Parish Council	
I78.	St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council	
I79.	Stanford Dingley Parish Council	Yes
I80.	Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council	Yes
I81.	Streatley Parish Council	
I82.	Sulhamstead Parish Council	
I83.	Sunningdale Parish Council	
I84.	Sunninghill Parish Council	Yes
I85.	Surrey Heath Borough Council	Yes
I86.	Swallowfield Parish Council	Yes

187.	Thatcham Town Council	
188.	Theale Parish Council	
189.	Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council	
190.	Tilehurst Parish Council	
191.	Ufton Nervet Parish Council	
192.	Waltham St Lawrence Parish Council	Yes
193.	Warfield Parish Council	Yes
194.	Wargrave parish Council	Yes
195.	Wasing Parish Meeting	Yes
196.	Welford Parish Council	
197.	West Ilsley Parish Council	
198.	West Woodhay Parish Meeting	Yes
199.	White Waltham Parish Council	
200.	Winkfield Parish Council	
201.	Winnersh Parish Council	Yes
202.	Winterbourne Parish Meeting	
203.	Wokefield Parish Meeting	
204.	Wokingham Town Council	Yes
205.	Wokingham Without Parish Council	
206.	Woodley Town Council	Yes
207.	Woolhampton Parish Council	
208.	Wraysbury Parish Council	Yes
209.	Yattendon Parish Council	Yes

APPENDIX 3

Ramsar Site, Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Berkshire

Ramsar, (proposed) Special Protection Areas, (candidate) Special Areas of Conservation and Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Berkshire as at October 2003

Source: Berkshire Unitary Authorities (www.berks-jsu.gov.uk), English Nature (www.english-nature.org.uk), Joint Nature Conservation Committee (www.jncc.gov.uk). Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (www.magic.gov.uk), RSPB (www.rspb.org.uk).

SAC's and SPA's

Natura 2000 is the European Union-wide network of nature conservation sites being established under the EC Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and under the EC Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC). Sites established under the Habitats Directive are known as Special Areas of Conservation. Sites established under the Wild Birds Directive are known as Special Protection Areas. Before formal adoption they are referred to as *proposed* Special Areas of Conservation and *candidate* Special Areas of Conservation.

The objective of the Directives is to safeguard European biodiversity through designating and protecting key sites. The Directives requires member governments to identify sites and take steps to protect them ensuring that they have what is called favourable conservation status.

Component SSSI's

Site boundaries for SSSI's, SPA's, SAC's and Ramsar sites may well overlap: while an SAC, SPA or Ramsar site may contain more than one SSSI the boundaries of these component SSSI's may extend beyond those of the SPA /SAC/ Ramsar. This is because sites are designated under different legislation and for different reasons so the qualifying criteria, e.g. the presence of a certain species or habitat, may have different geographical areas.

Site name (EU Reference Number)	Berkshire Authority	Component SSSI's in Berkshire
SPA (Special Protection Area) and Ramsar		
South West London Water Bodies (7 UK 148)	RBWM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wraysbury and Hythe End Gravel Pits • Wraysbury No.1 Gravel Pit
pSPA's (Proposed Special Protection Area)		
Thames Basin Heath (UK 9012141)	Bracknell Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths • Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths
cSAC's (Candidate Special Area of Conservation)		
Chilterns Beechwoods (UK0012724)	RBWM (also Bucks, Herts and Oxon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bisham Woods
Kennet and Lambourn Floodplains (UK0030044)	West Berkshire (also Wiltshire)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kennet and Lambourn Floodplains • Thatcham Reed Beds SSSI • Boxford Water Meadows SSSI
Kennet Valley Alderwoods (UK0030175)	West Berkshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kennet Valley Alderwoods
River Lambourn (UK0030257)	West Berkshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Lambourn
Windsor Forest and Great Park (UK0012586)	RBWM and Bracknell Forest (also Surrey)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windsor Forest & Great Park

SSSI's in Berkshire as at October 2003

Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI	Kings Copse SSSI
Aldermaston Gravel Pits SSSI	Lardon Chase SSSI
Averys Pightle SSSI	Lodge Wood and Sandford Mill SSSI
Bisham Woods SSSI. Component of Chilterns Beechwoods cSAC	Longmoor Bog SSSI
	Old Copse, Beenham SSSI
Bowdown and Chamberhouse Woods SSSI	Parkfarm Down SSSI
Boxford Chalk Pit SSSI	Pincents Kiln SSSI
Boxford Water Meadows SSSI. Component of Kennet and Lambourn Floodplains cSAC	Redhill Wood SSSI
Bray Meadows	River Kennet SSSI
Bray Pennyroyal Field SSSI	River Lambourn SSSI. Component of River Lambourn cSAC
Briff Lane Meadows SSSI	
Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI. Component of Thames Basin Heath pSPA	Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths SSSI. Component of Thames Basin Heath pSPA
Cannoncourt Farm Pit SSSI	Seven Barrows SSSI
Catmore and Winterley Copses SSSI	Snelsmore Common SSSI
Chawridge Bourne SSSI	Streatley Warren SSSI
Cleeve Hill SSSI	Sulham and Tidmarsh Woods & Meadows SSSI
Cock Marsh SSSI	Swinley Park and Brick Pits SSSI
Cold Ash Quarry SSSI	Thatcham Reed Beds SSSI. Component of Kennet and Lambourn Floodplains cSAC
Combe Wood and Linkenholt Hanging SSSI	Wasing Wood Ponds SSSI
Coombe Wood, Frilsham SSSI	Wellington College Bog SSSI
Croker's Hole SSSI	West Woodhay Down SSSI
Decoy Pit, Pools and Woods SSSI	Westfield Farm Chalk Bank SSSI
Easton Farm Meadow SSSI	West's Meadow, Aldermaston SSSI
Ellesborough and Kimble Warrens SSSI	White Shute SSSI
Englemere Pond SSSI	Windsor Forest and Great Park. Component of Windsor Forest and Great Park cSAC
Freemans Marsh SSSI	
Great Thrift Wood SSSI	Woolhampton Reed Bed SSSI
Greenham and Crookham Commons SSSI	Wraysbury and Hythe End Gravel Pits SSSI.
Hamstead Marshall Pit SSSI	Component of South West London Water Bodies Ramsar and SPA
Heath Lake SSSI	
Hogs Hole SSSI	Wraysbury No.1 Gravel Pit SSSI.
Holies Down SSSI	Component of South West London Water Bodies Ramsar and SPA
Inkpen and Walbury Hills SSSI	
Inkpen Common SSSI	Wykery Copse SSSI
Inkpen Crocus Field SSSI	
Irish Hill Copse SSSI	
Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SSSI. Component of Kennet and Lambourn Floodplains cSAC	
Kennet Valley Alderwoods SSSI Component of Kennet Valley Alderwoods cSAC	

