

Local Landscape Designation Review

of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse

**South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse
District Councils**

Final report

Prepared by LUC

September 2024

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Contents

Chapter 1 **5**

Introduction

Background and purpose of this study 5

Chapter 2 **6**

Method

Relevant guidance 6

All landscapes are of value 8

Valued Landscapes and the NPPF 8

Approach 10

Size and coherence 11

Criteria development 11

Criteria for identifying Valued Landscapes – South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse 13

Desk-based scoping and review 18

Full evaluation of candidate LLDs 20

Appendix A **24**

Results of desk-based scoping exercise

Appendix B **25**

Full LLD area profiles

Contents

Table of Tables

No table of figures entries found.

Table of Figures

No table of figures entries found.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background and purpose of this study

1.1 In January 2023, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils commissioned LUC to prepare a Valued Landscapes Assessment covering the two districts (together referred to herein as the ‘study area’).

1.2 This Valued Landscapes Assessment identifies and maps valued landscapes in the study area at the district scale and provides a description of the special characteristics and features of these areas (Local Landscape Designations (LLDs)). The Valued Landscapes Assessment also provides recommendations and guidance for the positive management of the LLDs to retain and enhance their special characteristics.

Chapter 2

Method

2.1 An essential element in reviewing and proposing areas for local landscape designation is the adoption of a consistent systematic and transparent process.

Relevant guidance

2.2 There is no current generally accepted methodology for reviewing or updating local landscape designations in England.

2.3 Natural England's recommended 'Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (2014) includes a definition of 'Landscape Value' in Annex 1, stated as:

"The relative value or importance attached to a landscape... which expresses national or local consensus, because of its quality, special qualities including perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness, cultural associations or other conservation issues".

2.4 The Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 02/21 'Assessing landscape value outside national designations' also includes a helpful summary of the range of factors that can be considered when identifying landscape value (in Table 1). These are:

- Natural heritage - Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape.
- Cultural heritage - Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape.

- Landscape condition - Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure.
- Associations - Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts.
- Distinctiveness - Landscape that has a strong sense of identity.
- Recreational - Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important.
- Perceptual (Scenic) - Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense.
- Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity) - Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies.
- Functional - Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape.

2.5 Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland jointly published Guidance on Local Landscape Designations in 2006, which was updated in 2020. This includes recommendations on the key steps to follow and criteria to use when undertaking local landscape designation studies.

2.6 In 2021 the Landscape Institute published a Technical Guidance Note entitled 'Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations'. This publication recognises that the guidance produced by NatureScot may be helpful for other nations that do not have their own guidance, and suggests that where local designations are used, the identification of their spatial boundaries and their landscape qualities should be supported by evidence.

2.7 The methodology for this study draws from the above guidance as well as LUC's experience in undertaking designation reviews elsewhere in the UK.

Clarification note on the meaning of Valued Landscapes

2.8 A summary of current thinking on the meaning and terms relating to valued landscapes is set out below, with an indication of what this means for the evaluation of Local Landscape Designations.

All landscapes are of value

2.9 At the outset it is important to note that all landscape is of value. This principle was established by the European Landscape Convention (ELC), which came into force in the UK in March 2007. The ELC recognises that landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas. The ELC definition of ‘landscape’ considers that all landscapes matter, be they ordinary, degraded or outstanding. It defines landscape as: “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”.

2.10 The ELC establishes the need to recognise landscape in law; to develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes; and to establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies.

Valued Landscapes and the NPPF

2.11 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), updated December 2023, recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services that it provides.

2.12 In paragraph 180, it states that: “Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: ...protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);”

2.13 It goes on to say in paragraph 181 that “Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.”

2.14 The NPPF does not offer a definition of what constitutes a ‘valued landscape’. However, case law has reached a broad consensus among planning, law and landscape professionals on issues around valued landscapes. While designated landscapes, including LLD, are likely to be considered ‘valued’ for the purposes of para 180 of the NPPF, it is important to note that non-designated areas can also be ‘valued’.

2.15 Case law indicates that: “Many areas of countryside are understandably valued by local residents, but to be considered “valued” in the context of the NPPF, there needs to be something “special” or out of the ordinary that can be defined;”

2.16 To be valued a site is required to show some demonstrable physical attributes rather than just popularity.

2.17 This assessment will:

- elucidate those ‘special’ landscapes within South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse that are valued;
- define the attributes and identify the qualities that make them worthy of local designation;

- ensure a robust and consistent criteria-based approach to defining locally designated landscapes;
- develop appropriate recommendations for policy implementation.

2.18 As noted above this assessment is at a district landscape scale, there will also be areas outside the LLDs that may also have a high landscape value, be locally valued and popular, or possess features, attributes or qualities of value that may also merit protection.

Approach

Geographic scope

2.19 The scope of this study includes a full review of the study area, excluding areas that already fall within the nationally designated landscapes of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and Chilterns National Landscape.

Links to the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Landscape Character Assessment

2.20 This review is being undertaken alongside the update of the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Landscape Character Assessment, also by LUC. The review uses the framework of the Landscape Character Areas (LCA), of which there are 44. However, it should be noted that the Landscape Character Assessment is based on broad variations in landscape character and not quality and value. There may, therefore, be differences in boundaries between the LCAs and LLD areas. It should also be noted that all LCAs within the study area are likely to include some valued qualities or features, even if they do not form part of an LLD area.

Size and coherence

2.21 LLD areas defined through this study should be of a sufficient size and form a coherent recognisable area at a district scale. A single important feature or site is not, on its own, enough to merit landscape designation at this scale. The following points are relevant:

- Is the area of sufficient size to make it practical to develop policies for its protection, management and planning at the district scale?
- Is the area recognisable as a cohesive place or entity, of consistent character at the district scale?

2.22 There will be many individual places, sites and features within the wider landscape of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse which are of high quality but not within an LLD area due to the reasons above. Neighbourhood Development Plans could define smaller areas which are appropriate for more local planning purposes (see paragraph 2.30).

Criteria development

2.23 The evaluation criteria are drawn from the relevant guidance, including the LI Technical Guidance and SNH guidance. They also draw on criteria developed by LUC in previous local designation studies which have been assessed as robust through the Local Plan examination process. The six evaluation criteria are:

1. Local distinctiveness and sense of place;
 - This aligns with the ‘Distinctiveness’ factor for considering landscape value from the LI Technical Guidance Note 02/21
2. Landscape quality;

- This aligns with the 'Landscape condition' and 'Functional' factors for considering landscape value from the LI Technical Guidance Note 02/21

3. Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects;

- This aligns with the 'Perceptual (Scenic)' and 'Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity)' factor for considering landscape value from the LI Technical Guidance Note 02/21

4. Natural and cultural qualities.

- This aligns with the 'Natural heritage' and 'Cultural heritage' factors for considering landscape value from the LI Technical Guidance Note 02/21

5. Recreation value

- This aligns with the 'Recreational' factor for considering landscape value from the LI Technical Guidance Note 02/21

6. Associations

- This aligns with the 'Associations' factor for considering landscape value from the LI Technical Guidance Note 02/21

The relationship with the LI Technical guidance note criteria is provided below.

Criteria for identifying Valued Landscapes – South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse

Criterion 1. Local distinctiveness and sense of place

Definition

- A landscape which is rare/unique or special in the local context.
- A landscape with a strong sense of place derived from its combinations of elements.
- A landscape which contains character/features or elements which are considered to be important, good examples, or rare examples.

Potential Indicators

- A coherent landscape character conferring a recognisable sense of place.
- A distinct landform or topography forming a discrete or recognisable area.
- A distinctive, rare or representative land cover.
- An area representative of a particular phase in landscape history/development.

Evidence

- Landscape Character Assessment
- Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)

- Field survey

Criterion 2. Landscape quality (intactness/condition)

Definition

The physical state of the landscape, intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual natural and cultural elements e.g. hedgerows.

Potential Indicators

- Functional aspects of the landscape e.g. ecological integrity, visually coherent.
- Presence of characteristic and valued features (as listed in the Landscape Character Assessment).
- Presence of well managed, natural and cultural features in good condition.
- Absence of incongruous features/detractors or not visually intrusive.

Evidence

- Landscape Character Assessment
- Presence of other designations indicative of condition
- Field survey

Criterion 3. Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects

Definition

A landscape that appeals to the senses – primarily visual.

Perceptual and aesthetic qualities such as sense of tranquillity and remoteness.

Potential Indicators

- Strong visual character e.g. patterns/composition of vegetation/ landform.
- Memorable, important or distinctive views.
- Qualities of expansiveness, openness, enclosure, seclusion.
- Tranquillity or perceptions of tranquillity – peace, quietness, birdsong, dark skies, presence of water – streams and rivers .
- Uninterrupted tracts of land with few built features.
- Relative lack of human influence/absence of incongruous features.

Evidence

- Landscape Character Assessment
- Dark skies/Light impact assessment for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils, LUC 2024
- Tranquillity Assessment for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils, LUC 2024
- Field Survey
- CPRE Night Blight/Dark Skies

- CPRE Tranquillity

Criterion 4. Natural and cultural qualities

Definition

Presence of natural and cultural attributes or particular associations that contribute to the value of the landscape.

Note: This criterion alone is not enough in its own right for an LLD as likely to be covered under other designations.

Potential Indicators

- Visible expression of geology creating distinctive sense of place.
- Presence of wildlife and/or habitats/species that make a particular contribution to sense of place or scenic quality.
- Presence of settlements, buildings or other structures that make a particular contribution to sense of place or scenic quality.
- Visible presence of historic landscape types or specific landscape elements or features that provide evidence of time depth or historic influence on the landscape.

Evidence

- Landscape Character Assessment
- Designations (national and local)
- Conservation Areas and Conservation Area Appraisals

Criterion 5. Recreation value

Definition

Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where the experience of the landscape is important.

Potential Indicators

Evidence of recreational activity based on experience of the landscape (e.g. walking routes, access opportunities, activities such as birdwatching).

Note: needs to be more than just 'popularity'

Evidence

- Landscape Character Assessment
- Field survey
- OS map data

Criterion 6. Associations

Definition

Landscapes associated with particular people such as artists or writers or events in history that contribute to their character.

Potential Indicators

Associations with written descriptions, artistic representations, and associations of the landscape with people places or events.

Evidence

- Local research
- Landscape Character Assessment

Desk-based scoping and review

2.24 All LCAs outside of the AONBs (including areas of LCAs that are partially within the AONB), were assessed in desk-based scoping exercise. This assessed each LCA against the six criteria using desk-based mapping and other written information. A RAG rating was provided for each criterion with a short description (green – clearly meets the criterion, amber - partially meets the criterion, red – does not meet the criterion).

2.25 Input from stakeholders on the valued attributes and special qualities of the Landscape Character Areas was also be used for this stage of the assessment.

2.26 To go forward as an LLD ‘area of search’ the LCA did not need to fulfil all criteria equally. The candidate LLD may be all or part of an LCA, and the evaluation indicates any spatial differences.

2.27 The outputs of the desk-based scoping and review are included in Appendix A.

Relationship with Neighbourhood Development Plans

2.28 A number of communities within the study area have Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs). Some of these plans contain policies relating to valued landscapes and these were evaluated as part of this valued landscapes assessment.

- The Shiplake NDP (Adopted September 2022) defines three valued landscape areas where distinct rural character, role in AONB setting, intrinsic character and beauty and contribution to distinctive settlement character of Shiplake Cross and Lower Shiplake are to be protected. These areas overlap with the Chilterns Dipslope LLD and the Henley to Sonning Eye Thames Floodplain LLD.
- Kidmore End NDP (Adopted September 2022) identifies a valued landscape area on the basis of valued landscape features and role in the setting of Chilterns National Landscape using criteria based on GLVIA Box 5.1. This area overlaps with the Chilterns Dipslope LLD.

2.29 Other NDPs contain more generalised policies relating to landscape setting, rural character, locally important views and skylines and local gaps between settlements. Whilst there is some overlap with elements of the valued landscapes identified in this assessment, these policies do not define specific valued landscapes.

2.30 As noted in paragraph 2.22, there are valued landscapes in the study area which are not located within an LLD identified at the district scale used for this study. Neighbourhood plans may seek to designate further valued landscapes at a neighbourhood scale, which are not identified at the district scale of this assessment. NDPs could use similar criteria to those set out in this assessment to identify valued landscapes at a neighbourhood scale.

Relationship with National Landscapes

2.31 The North Wessex Downs and Chilterns National Landscapes are excluded from the valued landscapes assessment, although some of the candidate LLDs are located adjacent to the National Landscape boundaries.

2.32 At the time of this assessment, the Chilterns National Landscape is undergoing a boundary review. If any land within the candidate LLDs becomes part of the National Landscape, the National Landscape designation will take precedence and the LLD boundaries will be revised accordingly.

Full evaluation of candidate LLDs

2.33 Areas which met most or all of the criteria in the desk-based scoping exercise were assessed in more detail against the list of criteria. These candidate LLD areas were then assessed as part of a field survey to consider the criteria in more detail and identify appropriate and robust boundaries.

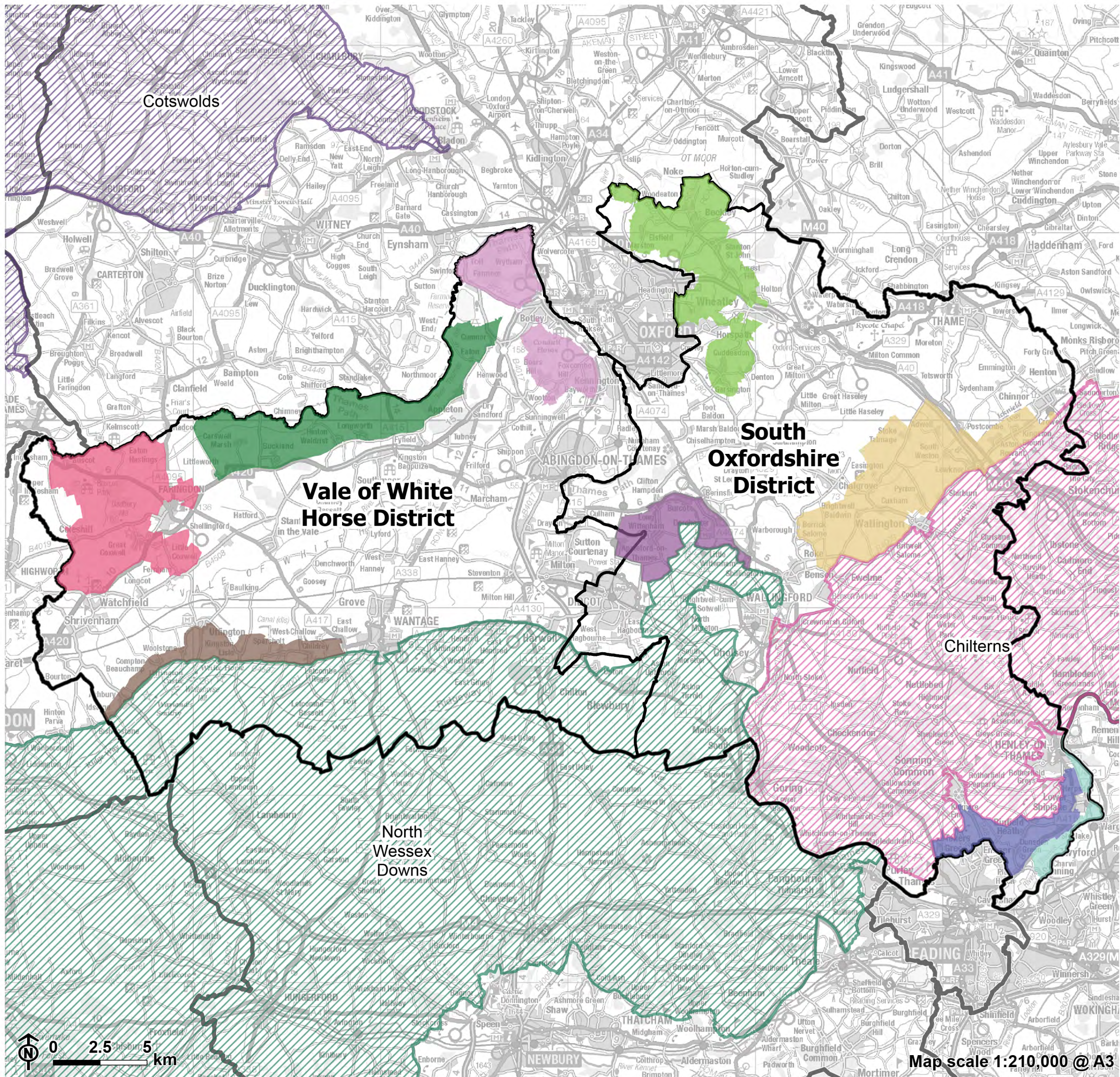
2.34 Landscape is a continuum and boundaries generally represent zones of transition. There is rarely a sharp change in identified landscape qualities either side of an LLD boundary. For ease, boundaries are frequently drawn along best fit physical features including lanes and field boundaries and therefore may include areas of lesser or greater quality or areas of different character. Conversely, there may be some areas within an LLD that do not fully meet the criteria but are part of a wider 'whole' that meets the criteria.

2.35 Nine candidate LLDs have been identified as part of this process:

- Candidate LLD: Appleford to Long Wittenham LLD
- Candidate LLD: Chiltern Chalk Escarpment Footslopes LLD
- Candidate LLD: Chilterns Dipslope LLD
- Candidate LLD: East Oxford Hills and Otmoor Floodplain LLD

- Candidate LLD: Faringdon and Buscot LLD
- Candidate LLD: Henley-on-Thames to Sonning Eye Thames Floodplain LLD
- Candidate LLD: Northern Thames Valley LLD
- Candidate LLD: West Oxford Hills and Thames floodplain LLD
- Candidate LLD: West of Wantage LLD

2.36 The candidate LLDs are mapped in Figure 2.1 and the full profiles are located in Appendix B.



South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Local Landscape Designations Study
South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Councils



Figure 2.1: Location of candidate LLDs in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse

- South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse
- Neighbouring Local Authority
- Local Landscape Designation (LLD)**
 - Appleford to Long Wittenham
 - Chiltern Chalk Escarpment Foothills
 - Chilterns Dipslope
 - East Oxford Hills
 - Faringdon
 - Henley to Sonning Eye Thames Floodplain
 - Northern Thames Valley
 - West Oxford Hills
 - West of Wantage
- National Landscape**
 - Chilterns
 - Cotswolds
 - North Wessex Downs

2.37 Each full LLD evaluation profile is structured as follows:

- Summary information including extent of area and landscape character context;
- Statement of Significance;
- Summary of Special Landscape Qualities;
- Evaluation against the criteria;
- Landscape guidelines (to protect/conservate, manage and enhance/restore and create landscape character); and
- Representative photographs.

Appendix A

Results of desk-based scoping exercise

Please see separate document for Appendix A

Appendix B

Full LLD area profiles

Candidate LLD: Appleford to Long Wittenham LLD

Summary information

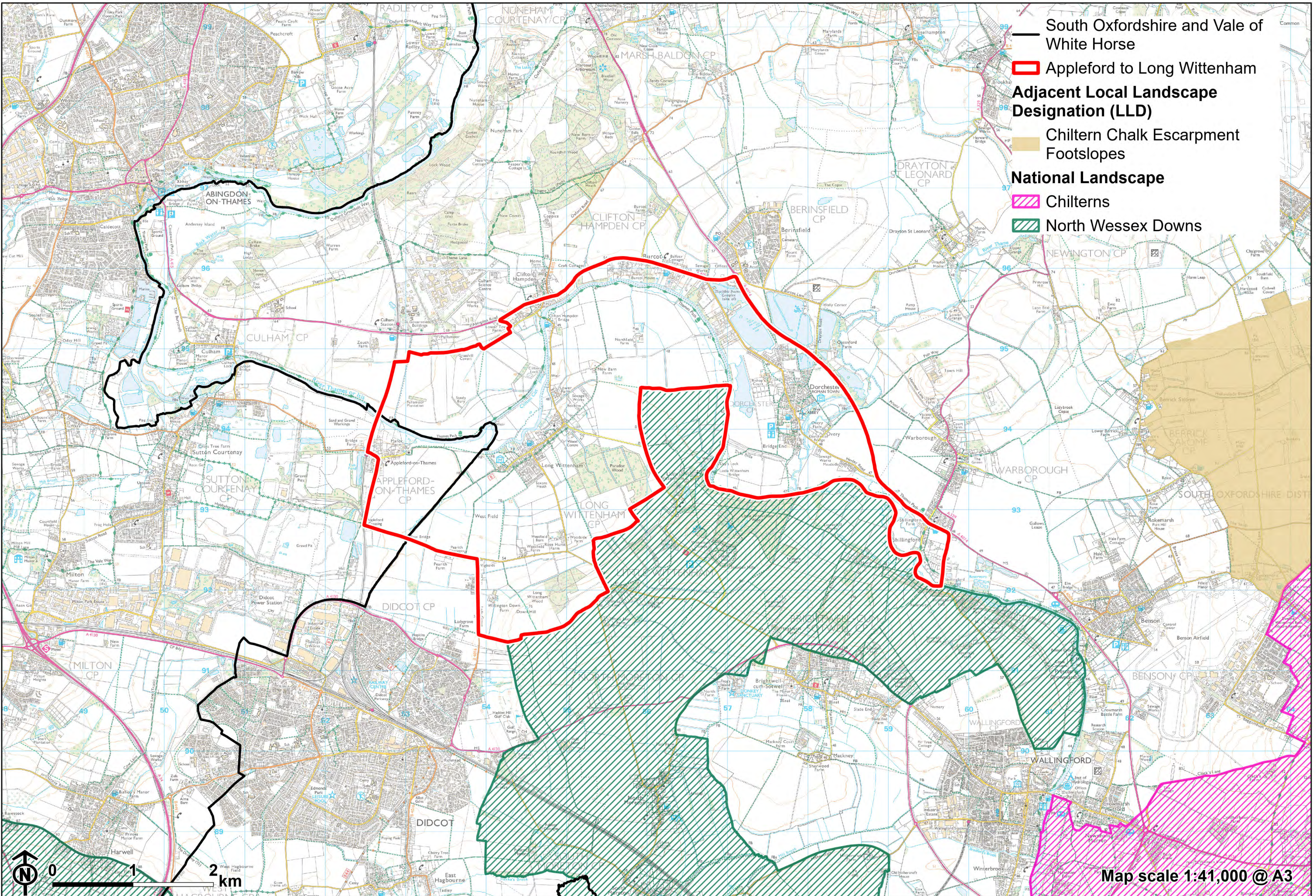
Extent of area

This area extends from Shillingford in the east to Culham in the west, and is adjacent to the North Wessex Down National Landscape, north of Didcot and Little Wittenham. The LLD encompasses the transitional landscape between the vale edge slopes and the low-lying floodplain of the River Thames.

Landscape character context

The LLD includes parts of the following Landscape Character Areas:

- LCA 10A: Sinodun Lower Vale Hills
- LCA 13B: Abingdon-Didcot Lower Vale
- LCA 13C: East Thames Lower Vale



Statement of significance

A low-lying, floodplain landscape highly influenced by the rivers Thames and Thame which provide a strong sense of cohesion in the landscape. Land use is predominantly large-scale arable land where alluvial soils have been drained and smaller-scale pasture adjacent to watercourses. Semi-natural lowland habitats are widespread, with variety provided by small woodlands. Historic settlements are generally located along watercourses and defined by their vernacular of timber framing, thatched roofs and cob walling. The landscape has a strong rural character with high levels of tranquillity away from neighbouring urban and suburban areas, to which it provides a valuable contrast of high recreational and scenic value. The LLD is part of the northern setting to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, with good intervisibility.

Summary of special landscape qualities

- A relatively flat, low-lying floodplain landscape associated with the distinctive River Thames and its transition to the vale edge slopes in the south.
- Tree cover along watercourses, scattered woodland, and hedgerow trees create a partially wooded landscape, combining with other lowland semi-natural habitats to create enclosure and a strong sense of place.
- Good level of public access including the Thames Path National Trail.
- Historic settlement pattern highly influenced by watercourses; a locally distinctive vernacular architecture of timber framing and thatched roofs.
- Strong sense of time-depth from historic settlements and earthwork remains of former settlements on the floodplain.
- Strong visual relationship with the adjacent nationally designated landscape of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

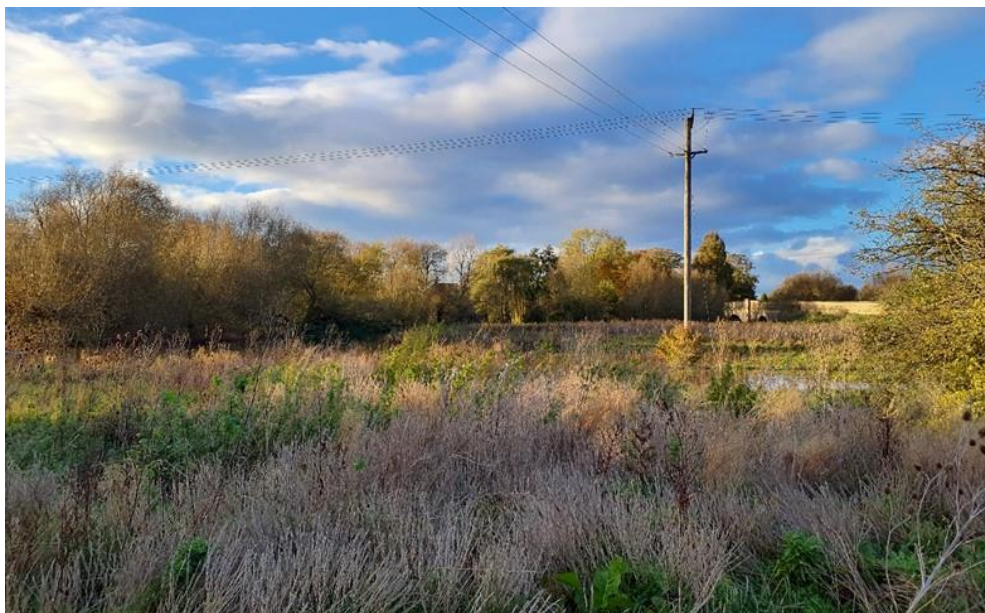
Appleford to Long Wittenham LLD

- Long-distance views across arable farmland, with enclosed, tranquil character where stretches of the river corridor are flanked by mature riparian woodland.

Figure A.2: Views over the River Thames from Clifton Hampden Bridge



Figure A.3: Floodplain grazing marsh near Dorchester



Full evaluation

Local distinctiveness and sense of place

- A flat, low-lying landscape associated with the River Thames, River Thame and several of their small tributaries. The watercourses have a strong influence on the riparian character of the area, creating coherence across the landscape.
- Forms part of the northern setting to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and demonstrates some of its special qualities including river-valley grazed pastures, water meadows, wetlands, and arable production.
- Settlements generally located close to watercourses, many with Listed Buildings and covered by Conservation Areas; due to the alluvial soils and lack of local stone, the local vernacular includes the use of timber framing and thatched roofs with occasional examples of cob walling.

Landscape quality (condition and intactness)

- An area of relatively flat river floodplain, associated with the Thames and Thame rivers. Land use is predominantly arable where alluvial soils have been extensively drained, with a more pastoral character along watercourses.
- Restored areas of gravel extraction and quarrying near Dorchester include rough grassland, scrub, new hedges, and young woodland planting, as well as lakes formed from former gravel extraction, adding to the textural diversity and character of the landscape.
- Recent introduction of pig farming north of Appleford-on-Thames slightly reduces the landscape condition in this area, and introduces structures in an otherwise open floodplain.

- Woodland around settlement edges, and along watercourses creates a limited wooded character, integrates settlement edges and provides some visual screening.

Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects

- The flat landform enables long-distance views across arable farmland. There is a more enclosed character around Burcot, north of Wittenham Clumps, where stretches of the river corridor are flanked by mature riparian woodland.
- Longer-range views comprise the Corallian Limestone Ridge on the horizon in views to the north and the local distinctive Wittenham Clumps to the south.
- Some influence from the adjacent urban areas which locally impact on tranquillity; areas of tranquillity along the Thames, often associated with tree cover, are valued for the contrast they provide to nearby urban areas.
- Open landscape forms gaps between the riverside settlements, helping to retain their individual identities, particularly where there is expanding development on the edge of larger settlements such as Didcot.
- Other detractors include views of occasional electricity pylons which cross the skyline, local impact of noise from the A415 and A4074 and the railway line at Appleford, and views to modern development on the edge of settlements.

Natural and cultural qualities

- The low-lying landscape is underlain by clay and alluvium near the river channel with better-drained gravel terraces elsewhere – giving rise to larger-scale arable land use.
- Small, isolated areas of woodland are a frequent feature across the landscape, much of which is identified as priority habitat deciduous woodland. There are several areas of semi-natural habitat associated with

the floodplains of the Thame and Thames rivers, including floodplain grazing marsh and reedbeds.

- Settlements have favoured a location close to watercourses on terrace gravels since prehistoric times due to the lighter, more workable soils, accessible water supply, and slight elevation above the most flood-prone areas. This is shown in the number of Scheduled Monuments, including earthwork remains of an Iron Age settlement at Dyke Hills, and an Early Bronze Age round barrow cemetery at Fullamoor Plantation. There are Roman remains at Dorchester, Northfield Farm and Appleford-on-Thames.
- Dorchester, at the confluence of the Thames and Thame, was an important Roman fort and settlement, and was the site of the first cathedral of the West Saxons. An Augustinian Abbey church, now a Grade I listed building, still stands, and the town is covered by a Conservation Area. Historic villages at Clifton Hampden, Long Wittenham and Shillingford are also covered by Conservation Area designations and contain clusters of Listed Buildings. Several small areas of traditional orchard, typically feature near settlements and offer time depth and links to historical land uses. Settlements have seen very little modern expansion.
- Historic river crossings at Clifton Hampden Bridge (Grade II*), Shillingford Bridge (Grade II*) and Dorchester (Grade II*) show the historic importance of the Rivers Thames and Thame.

Recreation value

- Public access across the landscape is focused along the Thames Path National Trail but further access can be had via a network of public rights of way.
- The River Thames and its tributaries are popular with locals and visitors for fishing, kayaking, paddling and paddle boarding. The lakes around Dorchester are also used for recreation including sailing and fishing,

Associations

- Dorchester-on-Thames and Long Wittenham are historic manors, both mentioned in the Domesday Book. Dorchester Abbey was used by the band Radiohead to record orchestral sections of their albums *Kid A* and *Amnesiac*.

Figure A.4: View south to Whittenham Clumps from low-lying floodplain



Figure A.5: Riparian woodland flanking the River Thames



Landscape guidelines

Guidance to protect/conservate current landscape character

- Conserve and enhance the distinctive pattern of elements (including river valleys with grazed pastures, water meadows and wetlands; mixed fields and arable production; different types of woodland; and arable habitats) which contributes positively to the character and special qualities of the adjacent North Wessex Downs National Landscape.
- Minimise the impact of any new development on local character and on views from other areas, particularly the adjacent North Wessex Downs National Landscape.
- Ensure that any proposals to enhance or create wetland habitat and improve water quality (such as the 'River of Life II' project) are sensitively designed.
- Protect heritage features in the landscape to ensure their ongoing legibility and historic integrity.

Guidance to manage landscape character

- Maintain the valued recreational use of the landscape and consider opportunities to introduce additional public rights of way connectivity to enhance appreciation of views and landscape character.
- Manage grazing marsh habitats to enhance their biodiversity value and appearance; ensure best practice management through suitable grazing regimes and avoiding agrochemical and fertiliser inputs; manage recreational routes to avoid/minimise disturbance; and manage scrub vegetation appropriately to maintain the open character.
- Maintain existing woodland cover and look to increase this to provide ecological value and help to limit the urbanising influence of development and busy roads, whilst maintaining characteristic open long views across the landscape.

Guidance to plan (enhance, restore, create) landscape character

- Conserve and enhance floodplain grazing marsh, lowland meadows, lowland fens, semi-improved grassland and riparian vegetation, to enhance their contribution to landscape character and their nature conservation and biodiversity value.
- Encourage landowners to develop a woodland management strategy to conserve existing woodlands and extend woodland where appropriate. Ensure any new woodland planting is respectful of local character and ecological conditions and maximises opportunities to link with other wetland habitats.
- Minimise the impact of new development, including additional pig units, on the widely visible floodplain. Respect the existing small-scale, scattered settlement pattern, and use materials which complement the local vernacular of timber framing, cob walling and thatched roofs.
- Ensure the existing settlement pattern of settlements along the river is continued, being careful to avoid the perception of coalescence between the distinct villages.
- Avoid continual development (including jetties and boat houses) along the Thames corridor, retaining its naturalistic character with open spaces.
- Consider the impact of any new development on the floodplain on views from the adjacent North Wessex Downs National Landscape.
- Consider the impact of new lighting on night-time views (refer to the guidance in the Dark Skies / Light Impact Assessment for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse).

Candidate LLD: Chiltern Chalk Escarpment Footslopes LLD

Summary information

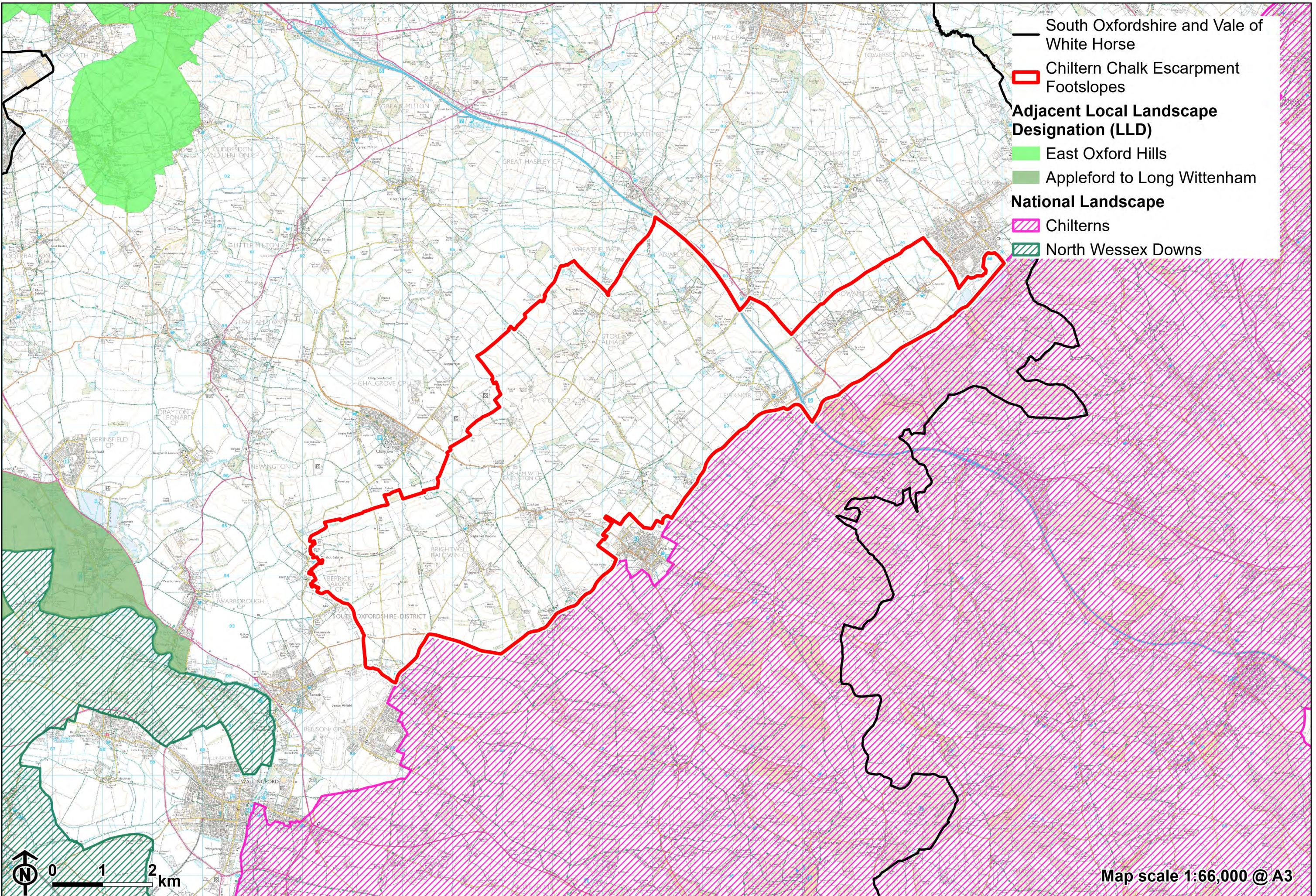
Extent of area

This area is located adjacent to the Chilterns National Landscape, extending to the north, east and west of Watlington. The LLD encompasses the undulating slopes of the Chilterns footslopes, with the northern boundary located where the landscape transitions to the lower, flatter vale landscape. The settlement edge of Chinnor forms the eastern boundary of the LLD. Benson Airfield is located on the south-western boundary.

Landscape character context

The LLD includes parts of the following Landscape Character Areas:

- LCA 6B: Chiltern Chalk Escarpment Footslopes
- LCA 9D: Eastern Vale Edge Slopes
- LCA 11C: Eastern Upper Vale
- LCA 12C: Eastern Middle Vale



Statement of significance

A relatively intact landscape of rolling arable land mixed with grazed pasture, contained within a connected hedgerow network with mature hedgerow trees. Associated linear belts, clumps, hedgerows and blocks of woodland create structure within this generally intensively managed arable landscape and contribute to a sense of intactness. Well-managed parklands and designed estates punctuate the farmed landscape and contribute to a sense of time-depth and local distinctiveness. A network of minor watercourses arising at the chalk springline intersects the landscape, draining in a north-westerly direction to the vale. Historic villages are defined by their historic cores of vernacular brick, flint, limestone buildings, churches, and stone walls, with buildings set back on wide grassy verges. The landscape has a strong traditional rural character with high levels of tranquillity and few detracting features. Long views to the Chilterns escarpment to the south provides a dramatic backdrop and enclosure.

Summary of special landscape qualities

- The rolling topography provides a clear link between the vale landscapes to the north and chalk escarpments to the south, linked by historic holloways and tracks.
- Frequent scattered woodlands contribute to the natural heritage of the landscape and provide visual interest within the landscape.
- Parkland and estate landscapes which provide a well-managed ornamental character and a distinctive sense of place and time depth.
- Historic, nucleated villages at Brightwell Baldwin, Pyrton, Lewknor, Cuxham, Aston Rowant and Kingston Blount with a strong vernacular of brick, flint and stone, provide time-depth.
- Highly rural character, with limited modern distractions or developments.

- Strong visual relationship with the adjacent nationally designated landscape of the Chilterns National Landscape.

Figure A.7: Open pasture field with long views to the Chiltern hills



Figure A.8: Grazing cattle with wooded backdrop



Full evaluation

Local distinctiveness and sense of place

- Gently rolling landscape of undulating chalk with some small local hills which add topographic interest.
- Parkland and estates are frequent features, with characteristic tree avenues, estate fencing and mature individual trees standing in pasture.
- Small-scale nucleated historic villages have grown around the estates, many with listed buildings and a strong vernacular of brick and flint.

Landscape quality (condition and intactness)

- Large-scale rectilinear fields are bounded by a mix of species-rich hedgerows and arable field margins, with some mature hedgerow trees. Occasional reinforcement of hedgerows with post and wire fencing. A large stud farm at Aston Rowant is well integrated into the landscape by mature vegetation.
- A rural and generally undeveloped landscape with few detracting influences, including a lack of vertical features in views.
- A former quarry south of Chinnor is naturally regenerating, and the re-establishing vegetation is softening the stark landscape formed by extraction.
- Intact historic features including designed parklands contribute to sense of time-depth in the landscape.
- The historic cores of the villages are defined by a strong vernacular of brick, flint and stone and are often designated as Conservation Areas.

Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects

- The rolling landform results in sequences of views and variation between openness and enclosure when travelling through the area. Expansive views are possible across the lower-lying vale to the north-west, and there are also glimpsed views north towards to the north of the wooded Corallian Limestone Ridge. The distinct wooded scarp of the Chilterns National Landscape forms a prominent backdrop to the south.
- A rural and generally undeveloped landscape with few detracting influences, including a lack of vertical features in views.
- The M40 runs through the centre of the landscape, with junction 6 in the south-east. The motorway is audibly detracting; however, it is generally hidden from view by vegetation. Occasional noise is heard from low-flying aircraft at the nearby RAF base at Benson.

Natural and cultural qualities

- Small, isolated areas of woodland are a frequent feature across the landscape, much of which is identified as priority habitat deciduous woodland; there are also some areas of ancient woodland in the east, including Wheatfield Wood to the east of Stoke Talmage.
- Chinnor Quarry is designated as a geological SSSI and its ponds are important for migrating birds, forming an ecological network with other former quarries along the escarpment and within the Chilterns National Landscape.
- Small settlements, typically nucleated around the church and manor retain the strip parish pattern, allowing seasonal movement between the vale and wooded slopes. The settlements retain a parkland character, with formal features such as avenues and free-stranding mature trees in pasture. Many of the farmhouses and churches are now listed. Aston Rowant, Berrick Salome, Brightwell Baldwin, Cuxham, Kingston Blount, Lewknor, Pyrton and Shirburn are covered by Conservation Areas. The typical parkland features of avenues and free-standing mature trees in pasture are clearly evident. Further parkland landscapes are found at

Chiltern Chalk Escarpment Footslopes LLD

Aston Rowant, Brightwell Baldwin, Britwell Salome, Kingston Blount, Pyrton Manor and Wheatfield Park.

- Historic routeways the Ridgeway and Lower Icknield Way are important links across the spring-line and escarpments, and are known as some of Britain's oldest roads.
- Shirburn Castle Registered Park and Garden is an 18th and 19th century garden and pleasure grounds on the site of a 14th century castle (now Grade I listed).

Recreation value

- A lattice work of public rights of way, including numerous holloways and ancient tracks, connect the vale to the north-west with the chalk escarpment to the south-east. This includes the Lower Icknield Way and Ridgeway. The Oxfordshire Way Long Distance Path also runs through the east of the area.

Associations

- Shirburn Castle has been used a film location for a number of successful films and television series, including Inspector Morse, Midsomer Murders and Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows.

Figure A.9: Kingston Wood forms a backdrop to the edge of Kingston Blount



Figure A.10: Mature hedgerow trees along field boundaries in distance



Landscape guidelines

Guidance to protect/conserv e current landscape character

- Encourage management in parklands and support plans for restoration where appropriate. Conserve and appropriately manage veteran trees within parkland areas.
- Protect the experiential qualities of the landscape, particularly the high levels of tranquillity and intact rural character.

Guidance to manage landscape character

- Support appropriate management and restoration of parkland and historic landscapes through (for example) the planting of a new generation of specimen trees and extensive grassland management.
- Encourage traditional farming practice and maintain and restore orchards and other horticultural uses where appropriate, including the remaining older orchard trees which have visual and biodiversity value and sense of time depth.
- Encourage landowners to manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.

Guidance to plan (enhance, restore, create) landscape character

- Encourage landowners to develop a woodland management strategy to conserve existing woodlands (including ancient woodland) and extend woodland where appropriate. Ensure any new woodland planting is respectful of local character and ecological conditions and maximises opportunities to link with other habitats.

Chiltern Chalk Escarpment Footslopes LLD

- Restore historic hedgerow field boundaries which have been lost to agricultural intensification to improve the legibility of historic field patterns and strengthen landscape character and structure, and enhance ecological corridors.
- Ensure any new development respects the existing nucleated settlement form, and avoids any coalescence or perceived coalescence between distinct settlements.
- Any new development should consider using materials which fit with the local vernacular of brick and flint.
- Consider views to and from the Chilterns National Landscape when planning new development. Avoid new development in visually prominent locations, particularly where this might be visible from the vales to the north.
- Where possible use existing landscape features to integrate, contain and/or screen new development.
- Consider the impact of lighting on dark skies, both locally and on views from the Chilterns National Landscape and the lower vales (refer to the guidance in the Dark Skies / Light Impact Assessment for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse).

Candidate LLD: Chilterns Dipslope LLD

Summary information

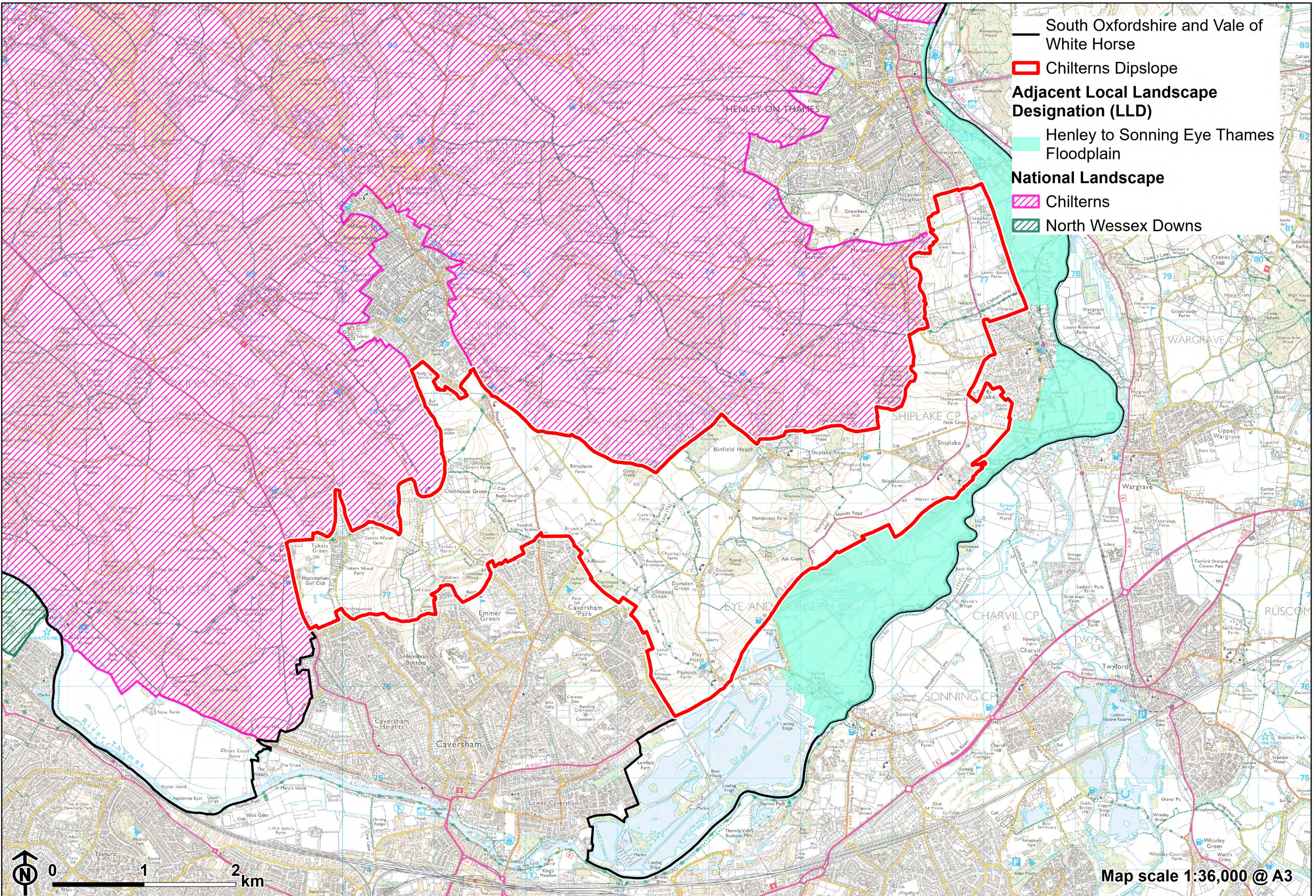
Extent of area

This area is located adjacent to the Chilterns National Landscape, extending to Henley-on-Thames in the east. The southern boundary is formed by the settlement edge of Caversham and the change in topography to the Thames floodplain (which forms part of the adjacent Henley-on-Thames to Sonning Eye Thames Floodplain LLD). The LLD encompasses the undulating dipslope of the Chiltern hills.

Landscape character context

The LLD includes parts of the following Landscape Character Areas:

- LCA 4A: Chiltern Wooded Chalk Plateau and Valleys
- LCA 14G: Caversham to Henley Thames River Valley



Statement of significance

An undulating landscape, which forms an integral part of the chalk dipslope. This creates a distinctive area of transition between the Chiltern Hills and Thames Valley. Small deciduous woodland blocks are separated by arable and pasture fields, contained by a connected hedgerow network with mature hedgerow trees. Small villages at Playhatch, Shiplake Row and Binfield Heath contain a number of historic listed buildings, and there is a strong vernacular of brick, timber framing and flint. Small lanes run up the ridges, and are sometimes sunken. Away from the A4155 there is a good sense of tranquillity and a strong rural character. Visually, there is a contrast between intimate views enclosed by woodland and topography, and more open long-distance views including to Reading and across the Thames valley.

Summary of special landscape qualities

- A distinctive undulating landform, which forms part of the chalk dip slope and transition between the Chilterns National Landscape and the Thames valley.
- Frequent scattered woodlands, often designated as ancient woodland, small areas of semi-improved and calcareous grassland and open meadows contribute to the natural heritage of the landscape and provide visual interest within the landscape.
- Historic former commons, including Binfield Heath, form part of the historic landscape character, and create a distinctive sense of place.
- Small settlements have clusters of listed buildings, with a strong local vernacular of timber frame, brick and flint.
- Relatively rural character, with strong visual relationship to the adjacent nationally designated landscape of the Chilterns National Landscape.

Figure A.12: Arable field with views across woodland



Figure A.13: Sloping grassland with mature woodland forming a backdrop



Full evaluation

Local distinctiveness and sense of place

- Gently undulating chalk landscape, incised by small valleys which add topographic interest, and a continuation in character with the Chilterns National Landscape.
- Combination of arable and pasture fields interspersed with small areas of woodland and grassland, and some remnant heathland habitats creates a strong sense of place.
- Small-scale historic settlements contain many listed buildings and have a strong vernacular of timber-framing, brick and flint.

Landscape quality (condition and intactness)

- Irregular pattern of fields bounded by a network of hedgerows; although there has been some reinforcement by post and wire fencing. Mature hedgerow trees are common. Some areas of pasture have been converted to horse grazing, with associated horse tape.
- A rural and generally undeveloped landscape, with intact small linear settlements and a number of historic buildings. Historic drove roads are intact, and are now often sunken lanes.
- Some localised incongruous features including electricity pylons, new development along the A4115, and views towards Reading and Henley.

Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects

- The undulating landform results in sequences of views and variation between openness and enclosure when travelling through the area. Expansive views are possible across the Thames valley to the south, and towards the hills in the Chiltern National Landscape. In contrast, the

combination of sunken lanes, the dry valley topography and woodland creates more enclosed views, with some sense of remoteness.

- A rural landscape with small hamlets, largely contained within their historic boundaries.
- Some local incongruous features including audible traffic on the A4155, and small-scale commercial and residential development along the A4155.

Natural and cultural qualities

- Discrete priority habitat deciduous woodland blocks are often ancient in origin, and linked by species-rich hedgerows.
- Small areas of semi-improved grassland and calcareous grassland are found at Bints Farm and close to Shiplake. Clayfield Copse, containing open meadows and ancient woodland, is a small Local Nature Reserve close to the settlement edge of Caversham.
- Binfield Heath, as the name suggests, is a former area of heathland common. It was enclosed in the 19th century and is now an area of woodland and farmland.
- The most common form of field pattern is reorganised enclosures and amalgamated fields, although there is some ancient enclosure on the edge of Caversham. Ancient drove roads, connecting the Thames valley and Chiltern hills are still evident in the landscape, and are often now sunken lanes.
- Listed buildings are clustered in the small hamlets, with a strong vernacular of timber-framing, brick and flint with thatch or slate roofs. The church of St Peter and Paul, Shiplake is a Grade II* flint and stone church.
- Shiplake Court and Shiplake House, a Grade II listed building, formerly set within parkland. The building is now in use as a school, with the parkland converted to sports facilities.

Recreation value

- Public rights of way cross the landscape, connecting to Caversham (including National Cycling Network Route 5), to the Chilterns National Landscape and to the Thames valley. A small section of the Chiltern Way crosses the area north of Lower Shiplake.
- Mapledurham Golf Club and part of Reading Golf Club extend into the west of the area.

Associations

- The First World War poet Wilfred Owen was a lay assistant to the vicar at Dunsden Green, and was inspired by the Chilterns countryside.
- Shiplake Court was used by the BBC as a hostel for BBC staff working at Caversham. It became a private boarding school in 1959, and has had considerable success in rowing.

Figure A.14: Gently sloping farmland and woodland, with new tree planting



Figure A.15: St Peter and Paul Church, Shiplake



Landscape guidelines

Guidance to protect/conservate current landscape character

- Encourage management in parklands and support plans for restoration where appropriate. Conserve and appropriately manage veteran trees within parkland areas.
- Protect the experiential qualities of the landscape, particularly the high levels of tranquillity, assessed in the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Tranquillity Study, and intact rural character.

Guidance to manage landscape character

- Encourage the appropriate management of woodland, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases and to increase its age structure and structural heterogeneity (including creation of glades). Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.
- Manage recreational routes to minimise disturbance to important woodland and grassland habitats.
- Manage the remnant areas of heath and common, encouraging a traditional grazing regime to best manage the distinctive mosaic of open areas, scrub, grassland and woodland.
- Conserve the pattern of sunken narrow lanes enclosed by tall hedgerows, ensuring that their character is not lost through unsympathetic highway works, unnecessary signage, lighting, or removal of hedgerows and trees.

Guidance to plan (enhance, restore, create) landscape character

- Encourage landowners to develop a woodland management strategy to conserve existing woodlands (including ancient woodland) and extend woodland where appropriate. Ensure any new woodland planting is

respectful of local character and ecological conditions and maximises opportunities to link with other habitats.

- Restore historic hedgerow field boundaries which have been lost to agricultural intensification to improve the legibility of historic field patterns and strengthen landscape character and structure, and enhance ecological corridors.
- Consider opportunities to increase the area of chalk grassland through recreation and restoration around existing areas, and ensure that areas that might act as refugia from climate change (such as areas with north facing slopes, complex micro-topography and/or low nitrogen levels) are under optimal management.
- New development should be in keeping with the distinctive scattered, linear settlement pattern. Consider using the local vernacular of timber-framing, brick and flint with slate roofs.
- Preserve the openness between areas of settlement, avoiding coalescence or perceived coalescence along the minor road network.
- Ensure any new development does not disrupt the visual relationship between the chalk dipslope and river valley.
- Consider the impact of any new development on views from the Chilterns National Landscape to the north.
- Consider the impact of lighting on dark skies, both locally and on views from the Chilterns National Landscape and lower Thames valley (refer to the guidance in the Dark Skies / Light Impact Assessment for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse).

Candidate LLD: East Oxford Hills and Otmoor Floodplain LLD

Summary information

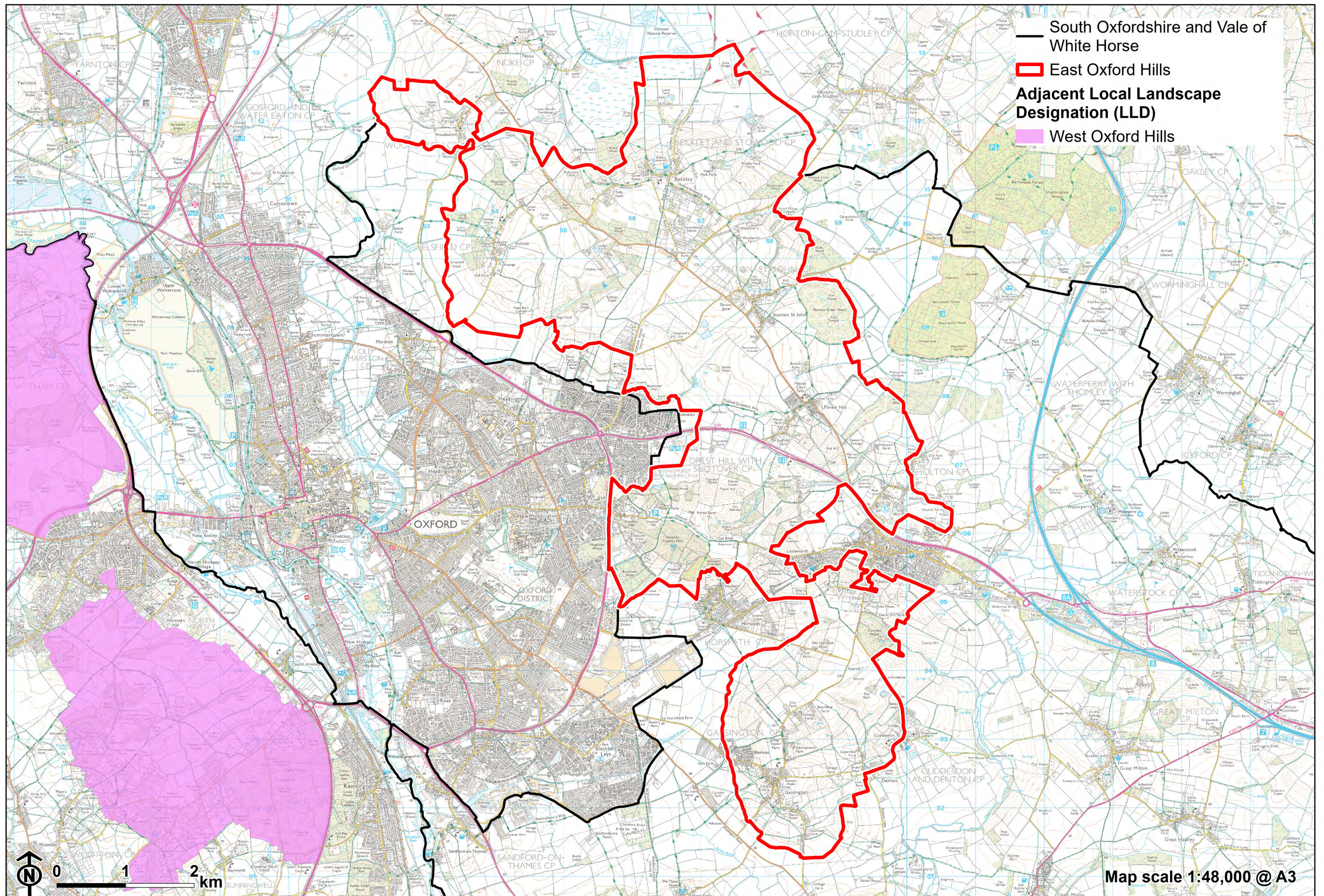
Extent of area

This area is located east of Oxford City and comprises the low wooded ridge that rises above the surrounding vale, and the related important river valley. It stretches from Woodeaton and Otmoor in the north to Garsington in the south. It encompasses Shotover Country Park and Elsfield in the west, and Cuddesdon and Stanton Great Wood in the east.

Landscape character context

The LLD includes parts of the following Landscape Character Areas:

- LCA 7C: Oxford East Ridge Hilltops
- LCA 12D: Oxford Middle Vale
- LCA 12F: Studley Middle Vale
- LCA 12G: Cherwell Middle Vale



Statement of significance

A low belt of limestone and sandstone hills that surround Oxford and rise prominently above Cherwell Valley and Otmoor lowlands in the north, and the River Thames floodplain in the east and south. An agricultural landscape combining arable and pasture in rectilinear patterns. Agricultural land uses together with the sparse settlement pattern create a strong rural character. Large blocks of deciduous woodland are scattered across the landscape, combining with the many small valleys to create a strong sense of enclosure and high levels of tranquillity. Buildings reflect the underlying geology and settlements are connected by a network of small sunken lanes with low trimmed hedges. High recreational value is in the form of a lattice of public rights of way including the Oxfordshire Way promoted path and large areas of publicly accessible woodland such as Shotover Hill.

Summary of special landscape qualities

- Distinctive low limestone and sandstone ridge, with an undulating landform of valleys and hills.
- Woodland features widely throughout, creating a wooded backdrop from the surrounding vales and urban areas. Many areas of woodland are ancient.
- High biodiversity value in the form of a variety of semi-natural habitats including grassland, woodland and fen, many of which are SSSIs.
- A sparsely settled and diverse, patchwork landscape comprising arable farmland, semi-natural habitats and parklands.
- High visual interest with woodland and landform combining to create enclosure, in contrast with the more exposed, open character on ridges and higher ground, and the open floodplain of Otmoor.

East Oxford Hills and Otmoor Floodplain LLD

- Historic parkland, medieval moated sites at Holton House and Church Farm, as well as historic villages provide time depth and a strong sense of place.

Figure A.17: Footpath through Sydlings Copse



Figure A.18: Long-distance view north from Shotover Country Park



Full evaluation

Local distinctiveness and sense of place

- Distinctive undulating landform of hills, ridges and valleys, which contrasts with the surrounding lower-lying vale and floodplain landscapes to the north, east and south.
- Local highpoints include Shotover Hill (170 metres AOD), Thorn Hill (154 metres AOD), Beckley Hill (141 metres AOD) and Red Hill (134 metres AOD), which are distinctive skyline features.
- Sparsely settled with buildings in the villages reflecting underlying geology – many older houses constructed from the distinctive local Corallian Limestone. Red tiles or thatch are common as roofing materials.
- The open landscape provides an immediate setting to settlements, helping to retain their individual and historic character.
- Large and frequent areas of woodland across the hills form a special character and confer a recognisable sense of place.

Landscape quality (condition and intactness)

- The varied topography, mixed land use and strong woodland and tree cover create an attractive, diverse, patchwork landscape.
- Historic clustered settlement has been preserved in villages which are connected by a network of small rural lands, many of which are covered by Conservation Area designations, such as Woodeaton and Elsfield.
- The landscape is drained by a network of watercourses forming tributaries of the Cherwell, Thame, or the Thames to the south-west, creating numerous shallow valleys.

East Oxford Hills and Otmoor Floodplain LLD

- There is a naturalistic wetland landscape near Otmoor which is part of the functioning floodplain of the River Ray (which extends into Cherwell district to the north).
- Predominantly large-scale arable in rectilinear field pattern, often with a weak hedgerow structure in areas that are intensively farmed. Pasture features more widely in the north and combines with smaller-scale fields across the steeper slopes.

Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects

- Contrast between a sense of enclosure formed by the rising landform and woodland, and the exposed character on the more open ridges and areas of high ground where arable farming dominates. Longer views from high points such as Shotover Hill and Beckley Hill allow spectacular views to Oxfordshire and Otmoor respectively.
- Skies are typically darker than in much of the district, contributing to the sense of night-time tranquillity. However, arterial transport corridors and proximity to larger urban areas such as Wheatley and Oxford are locally detracting. Large-scale arable areas which feature electricity pylons reduce the sense of remoteness in the farmland landscape.
- Forms a wooded, green backdrop in views from the lower lying vale and floodplain landscapes in the north, east and south, including the eastern setting of Oxford.

Natural and cultural qualities

- Areas of deciduous woodland (some of which are ancient), and other rare, semi-natural habitats provide ecological value, and contribute positively to the landscape. The landscape has a number of SSSIs associated with woodland (Stanton Great Wood), calcareous fen, acid and limestone grassland (Brasenose Wood and Shotover Hill), and former extraction sites (Woodeaton Quarry).

East Oxford Hills and Otmoor Floodplain LLD

- Historic settlements, many of which are covered by Conservation Area designations, and provide a strong sense of time depth, contain clusters of listed buildings including several Grade I listed churches (Church of St John the Baptist, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Church of the Holy Rood).
- Historically significant sites which provide historic landscape character include medieval moated sites at Holton House and Church Farm (Scheduled Monuments), as well as Shotover House with its 18th century formal parkland, and Beckley Park (both Registered Parks and Gardens). Undesignated historic sites include the medieval village of Woodperry and a palace at Beckley.
- The LLD encompasses part of the Otmoor SSSI which comprises a number of priority habitats including purple moor grass and rush pastures, lowland meadows, lowland fens, and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. These features provide ecological value and contribute positively to the landscape.

Recreation value

- A good level of access to the landscape is provided by a number of public rights of way including the Oxford Greenbelt Way and the Oxfordshire Way promoted paths.
- Shotover Country Park contains locally significant blocks of priority habitat deciduous woodland, and provides important recreational opportunities over 117 acres of publicly accessible land.
- Otmoor RSPB Nature Reserve is one of the largest inland wetland complexes in the country. A small part of the reserve falls within the LLD (the rest is in Cherwell district), and is accessible by public rights of way. It is a haven for birdlife, and a popular destination for birdwatchers with views across the wider reserve to the north.

Associations

- Shotover House was built for James Tyrrell of Oakley, parts of the property were designed by William Townesend and William Kent. The painter John Everett Millais painted *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel* during his stay at Shotover. During WWII there was a prisoner-of-war camp in the grounds.
- The manor at Beckley has a long history of royal ownership including King Richard II who gave it to Anne of Bohemia as part of her dowry.

Figure A.19: footpath through low-lying floodplain near Otmoor



Figure A.20: Long views towards Oxford across open areas of high ground



Landscape guidelines

Guidance to protect/conservate current landscape character

- Retain and enhance woodland cover across the hills, particularly where it makes a strong scenic and ecological contribution.
- Protect the experiential qualities of the landscape, particularly the high levels of tranquillity and intact rural character.
- Encourage management in parklands and support plans for restoration where appropriate. Conserve and appropriately manage veteran trees within parkland areas.
- Conserve the wetland habitat, including by protection against harmful effects of livestock grazing and drainage for agricultural use.
- Seek to prevent further loss or poor management of hedgerows and hedgerow trees and encourage their restoration/reinstatement, while maintaining characteristic longer-range views outward.
- Avoid urban development or other forms of non-agricultural development within more open areas.
- Protect historic features in the landscape to ensure their legibility (contribution to a sense of time-depth) and historic integrity including those that are non-designated.

Guidance to manage landscape character

- Support appropriate management and restoration of parkland and historic landscapes through (for example) the planting of a new generation of specimen trees and extensive grassland management.
- Encourage the appropriate management of woodland, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases and to increase its age structure and structural heterogeneity. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation

adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.

- Encourage appropriate management of the floodplain landscape to enhance its contribution to landscape character and its nature conservation value.
- Maintain the valued recreational use of the landscape which allow appreciation of views and landscape character.

Guidance to plan (enhance, restore, create) landscape character

- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing woodland and tree cover through natural regeneration or small-scale planting, particularly around settlements, whilst maintaining characteristic longer-range views from hillsides and higher ground across the surrounding lower-lying vales.
- Restore historic field boundaries which have been lost to agricultural intensification to improve the legibility of historic field patterns and strengthen landscape character and structure, and enhance ecological corridors.
- Minimise the impact of any new development on the widely visible vale-edge slopes. Respect the existing small-scale, scattered settlement pattern, and use materials in keeping with the existing settlement character such as stone, red brick, red clay tiles, and slate or thatch roofs. Use trees and woodland to integrate development into the landscape, particularly any development close to the edges of Oxford and Wheatley.
- Consider the impact of any new development on views from Oxford City.
- Seek opportunities to enhance connectivity between the floodplain wetland habitats and other nearby habitats to create green corridors and networks.

Candidate LLD: Faringdon and Buscot LLD

Summary information

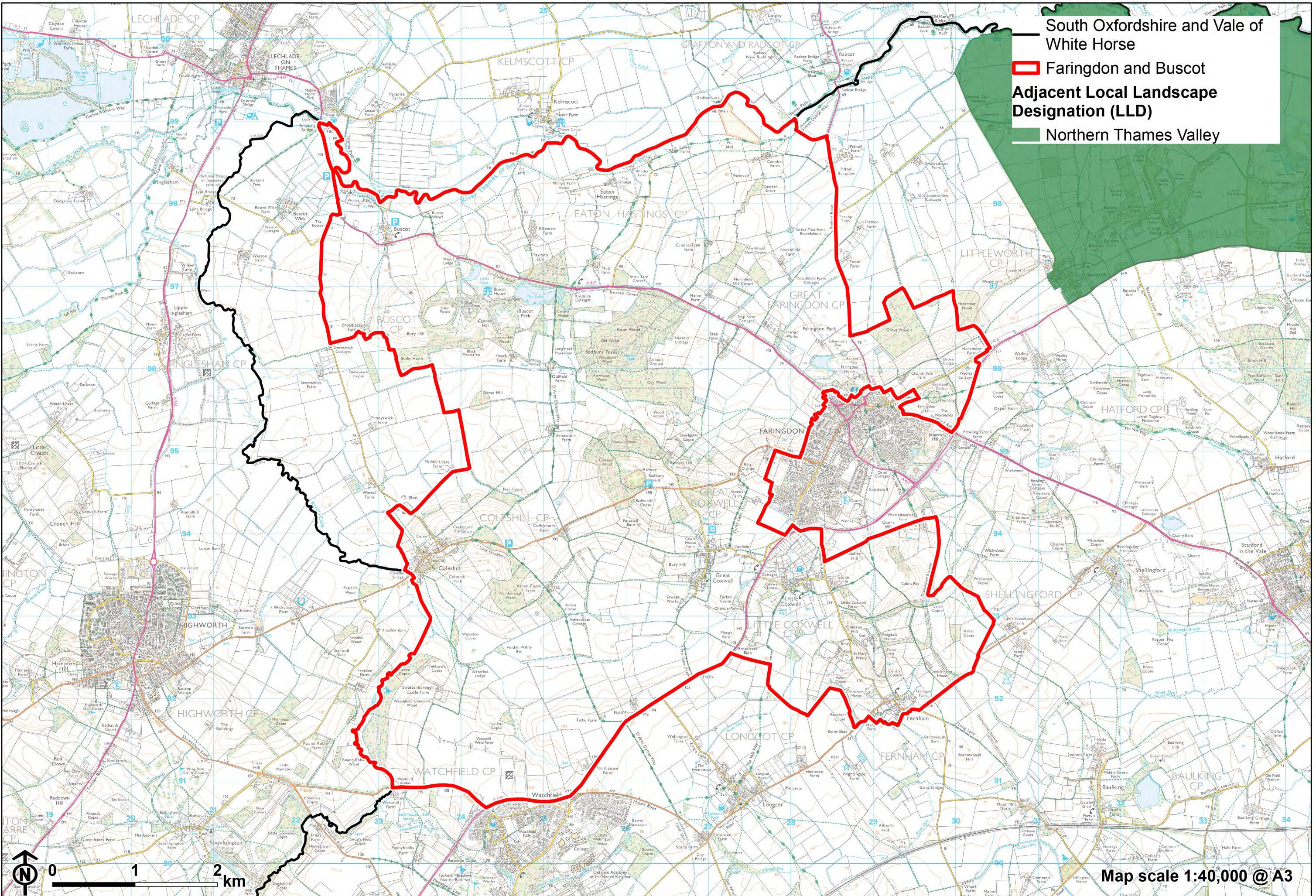
Extent of area

This area is located between the settlements of Watchfield to the south-west and Fernham in the south-east, and between Buscot in the north-west and Eaton Hastings in the north-east. It comprises a low ridge that rises above the Upper Vale landscapes to the north and south.

Landscape character context

The LLD includes parts of the following Landscape Character Areas:

- LCA 7A: Faringdon Ridge Hilltops
- LCA 11A: Thames Upper Vale



Statement of significance

A low, gently undulating ridge rising from the Thames floodplain, with some steeper slopes associated with watercourses and hills. The farmland landscape features a combination of large-scale arable and smaller-scale pasture close to settlements. Large areas of woodland combine with the small valleys to form a strong sense of enclosure. The River Thames lies in the north, and small watercourses vein the landscape on their westward path to the River Cole. Settlement is characterised by historic nucleated towns and villages as well as scattered farmsteads. Faringdon Folly and Buscot House Registered Park and Garden are situated on local high points and serve as local landmarks. Good recreational access to the landscape through a network of public rights of way. Small rural lanes connect the settlements, preserving tranquillity. The LLD forms part of the wider northern setting to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and a backdrop and skyline in views from the lower-lying vales to the north and south.

Summary of special landscape qualities

- Distinctive areas of more complex topography, including steep slopes around watercourses and localised high points, contrast with the Thames floodplain to the north and lower-lying vale to the south.
- A rural, patchwork landscape combining arable and pastoral farmland, estate land, and smaller-scale parcels of land associated with settlement.
- A diverse range of semi-natural habitats, as well as riparian vegetation combine with woodland to contribute positively to the landscape providing visual interest and adding ecological diversity.
- Historic, mostly nucleated settlements at Faringdon, Great Coxwell, Little Coxwell, Buscot, and Coleshill, as well as several other historic sites, provide time-depth.

Faringdon and Buscot LLD

- Strong visual relationship with the adjacent nationally designated landscape of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, and with the Thames floodplain to the north.
- Wooded areas provide a strong sense of enclosure and intimacy, remoteness and tranquillity, and skies are typically darker than in much of the district.

Figure A.22: Long views north towards Badbury Forest



Figure A.23: View south from Faringdon Hill toward North Wessex Downs National Landscape



Full evaluation

Local distinctiveness and sense of place

- A low ridge of limestone, siltstone and mudstone which forms gently undulating farmland with some steeper slopes around watercourses and localised high points which add topographic interest.
- The landscape is predominantly undulating but becomes more complex in places where small streams create shallow valleys and where hills, such as Bradbury Hill and Folly Hill, form local landmarks.
- North-facing slopes are relatively steep and south-facing slopes are gentler, transitioning to the upper vale.
- Settlement comprises several historic villages and scattered farmsteads. There are also a number of large country houses which are generally located on high points with views over the vale landscapes.
- The Thames riverside has a distinct, tranquil character and time-depth.

Landscape quality (condition and intactness)

- A mixture of post-medieval and modern fieldscapes with a relatively intact network of hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees. Some areas of ancient woodland are thought to be medieval or earlier.
- Watercourses with associated valley landforms and riparian vegetation, including the River Thames in the north, the River Cole and Pennyhooks Brook, add landscape and ecological diversity.
- Intact historic features include post-medieval estates associated with country houses such as Buscot Park Registered Park and Garden, with associated avenues of trees, as well as two Iron Age hillforts at Badbury Camp and Little Coxwell Camp.

Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects

- A rural, relatively tranquil, farmland landscape, with an intact network of hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees, providing the rural setting to settlements.
- The LLD forms part of the wider northern setting to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, with a strong visual relationship between the North Wessex Downs and the south of the LLD.
- Forms an undeveloped wooded backdrop and skyline in views from the lower-lying vales to the south and north. Wind turbines at Westmill are prominent in views to and from the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and are locally detracting.
- Wooded areas, particularly in the north, provide a strong sense of enclosure and intimacy, remoteness and tranquillity, and skies are typically darker than in much of the district.
- Long-distance views towards the River Thames to the north and the River Ock to the south contribute to the sense of expansiveness and exposed character of the ridgetop.
- The A420 is the main road through the area and is locally detracting, otherwise access is predominantly via small rural lanes and tracks which connect the small settlements.
- The edges of larger settlements (Faringdon, Shrivenham and Watchfield) are generally well-integrated by vegetation but some exposed edges are evident more recent development has a localised, detracting effect.

Natural and cultural qualities

- Some settlements, including Buscot, Faringdon, Great Coxwell and Little Coxwell, contain historic cores covered by Conservation Areas, and clusters of Listed Buildings (Church of St Mary Buscot, Faringdon House and Coleshill Park gates and piers are all Grade I listed), which contribute to the time-depth of the area; for which the landscape provides a rural character and open landscape setting.

Faringdon and Buscot LLD

- Further historic character is provided by historically significant sites, including Badbury Camp and Little Coxwell Camp which are Iron Age enclosures and hill forts (Scheduled Monuments), as well as more recent landscape history in Buscot Registered Park and Garden, and non-designated sites such as historic parklands associated with large country houses – the Grade II Listed Faringdon Folly Tower is a distinctive local landmark.
- Large areas of deciduous woodland, many of which are ancient (Old Wood/Eaton Wood, Grove Wood, and Coleshill Park-Flamborough Wood) contribute positively to the landscape and provide surviving examples of rare, semi-natural habitats.
- Floodplain habitats along the River Thames including priority habitat coastal and floodplain grazing marsh and lowland meadows. Grafton Lock Meadows SSSI is designated for its unimproved neutral grassland and rare snakes-head fritillary population.

Recreation value

- The area has an abundance of public rights of way, including the D'Arcy Dalton Way and The Vale Way long distance paths.
- National Trust sites at Badbury (famed for its bluebell displays in spring) and Great Coxwell Barn (Scheduled Monument) are popular recreational destinations for walkers.

Associations

- Folly Tower, located on top of Folly Hill was built in 1935 and is thought to be the last folly constructed in England.
- Great Coxwell Barn was a favourite of William Morris, who lived at the adjacent Kelmscott Manor (in West Oxfordshire District). Morris was inspired by this landscape to write his utopian novel *News from Nowhere*. The barn is the sole surviving part of the 13th-century grange that once

Faringdon and Buscot LLD

provided income to Beaulieu Abbey; it is an impressive reminder of Gothic carpenters and the wealth of great monastic orders.

Figure A.24: Westmill Wind Farm near Watchfield



Figure A.25: Woodland-flanked road on approach to Coleshill



Landscape guidelines

Guidance to protect/conservate current landscape character

- Retain and enhance the pattern of dispersed blocks of woodland across the landscape.
- Retain riparian vegetation along watercourses to maintain their distinctive character and ecological value.
- Conserve the wetland habitat of the Thames floodplain, including by protection against harmful effects of livestock grazing and drainage for agricultural use.
- Protect historic features in the landscape to ensure their legibility (contribution to a sense of time-depth) and historic integrity including those that are non-designated. Consider the setting the landscape provides to historic features outside of the administrative boundaries, for example, Kelmscott Manor.
- Encourage management in Buscot Registered Park and Garden and support plans for restoration where appropriate. Conserve and appropriately manage veteran trees within parkland areas and the distinctive avenues of trees on the approach.
- Protect the experiential qualities of the landscape, particularly the high levels of tranquillity and intact rural character.

Guidance to manage landscape character

- Encourage landowners to manage woodland appropriately, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases and to increase the age structure and structural heterogeneity of woodland. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.

- Encourage appropriate management of the floodplain landscape to enhance its contribution to landscape character and nature conservation value. This includes continued light grazing by cattle and reinstatement of gappy hedgerows.

Guidance to plan (enhance, restore, create) landscape character

- Prevent further loss or decline in the quality of remaining boundary hedgerows and encourage their restoration/reinstatement; when establishing new hedges, aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Seek opportunities to enhance connectivity between the floodplain wetland habitats and other nearby habitats to create green corridors and networks.
- Encourage landowners to develop a woodland management strategy to conserve existing woodlands (including ancient woodland) and extend woodland where appropriate. Ensure any new woodland planting is respectful of local character and ecological conditions and maximises opportunities to link with other habitats.
- Encourage farmers to maintain and expand the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers.
- Consider the impact of any new development on the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, particularly in the south of the LLD where there is strong intervisibility.
- Avoid new development on the widely visible ridge hilltops. Use trees and woodland to integrate development into the landscape, including any proposed residential development on the edge of settlements, particularly at Faringdon.

Faringdon and Buscot LLD

- Respect the existing small-scale, scattered settlement pattern, and use materials in keeping with the existing settlement character such as stone, brick and timber, limestone rubble, and thatch.

Candidate LLD: Henley-on-Thames to Sonning Eye Thames Floodplain LLD

Summary information

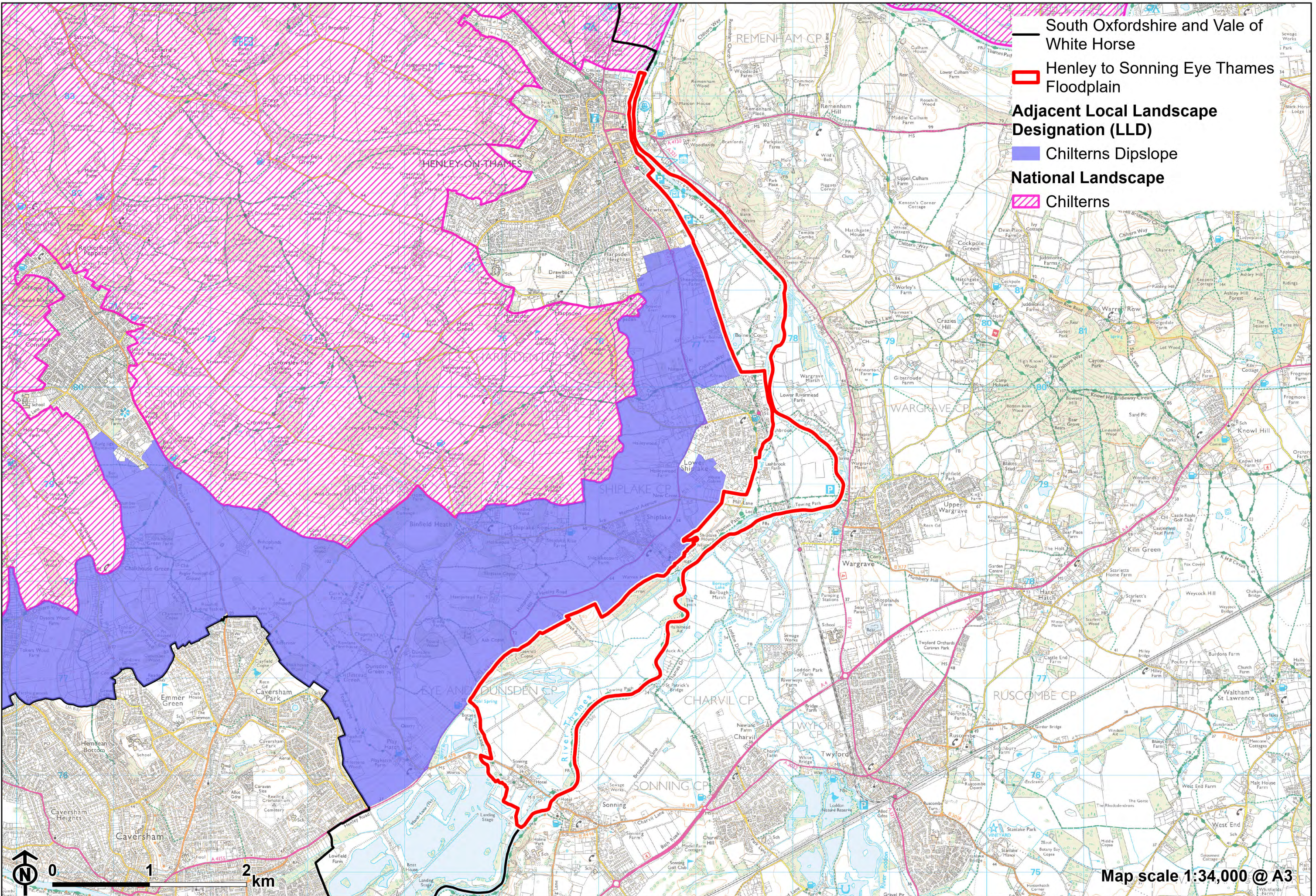
Extent of area

This area is located in the south-east of South Oxfordshire District. The LLD encompasses the Thames river valley, extending from Sonning Eye to Henley-on-Thames. The administrative boundary with Wokingham Borough forms the eastern and southern boundaries, while the valley slopes of the Chiltern footslopes form the northern and western boundaries. The LLD excludes the settlements of Henley-on-Thames and Lower Shiplake.

Landscape character context

The LLD includes parts of the following Landscape Character Area:

- LCA 4A: Chiltern Wooded Chalk Plateau and Valleys
- LCA 14G: Caversham to Henley Thames River Valley



Statement of significance

A relatively intact floodplain landscape centred on the meandering River Thames, with mature bankside trees and significant areas of floodplain grazing marsh. The low-lying valley with views to the Chiltern hills to the north and Remenham slopes to the south provides a distinctive sense of place. The riverside settlement of Sonning Eye has a strong local vernacular of flint and brick, and contributes to the sense of time-depth and local distinctiveness. The Thames Path National Trail provides recreational access along the river, while water-based recreation also allows for an important experience of the landscape. The Thames in South Oxfordshire has a strong association with Kenneth Grahame's 'Wind in the Willows'. The landscape has a strong rural character, centred on the River Thames, with a good level of tranquillity and few detracting features.

Summary of special landscape qualities

- The low-lying River Thames floodplain with gently rising valley sides, linking to the Chiltern hills to the north.
- Wetland and riparian habitats provide ecological value and provide enclosure and visual interest along the river corridor.
- Historic riverside settlements, including Sonning Eye, and large houses along the river provide time-depth and a distinctive sense of place.
- Rural character, with good sense of tranquillity and few modern distractions or developments.
- Recreational value centred on the river, with the Thames Path National Trail, Chilterns Way and water-based recreation on the Thames itself.
- Strong visual relationship with the Chilterns National Landscape, which forms a wooded backdrop to the north, and wooded slopes to the south-east at Remenham (within Wokingham Borough).

Figure A.27: Marsh Lock, with wooded Remenham hills in the background



Figure A.28: Gently sloping pasture fields and riparian vegetation



Full evaluation

Local distinctiveness and sense of place

- Low-lying valley landscape with gently rising valley sides extending north into the Chiltern hills.
- The River Thames, framed by bankside vegetation, confers a recognisable sense of place throughout the area.

Landscape quality (condition and intactness)

- A functional floodplain, with riparian woodland and floodplain grazing marsh along the river course, providing ecological integrity.
- A rural landscape, provided by pasture and arable fields, with few detracting features.
- A working quarry is located in the south of the area, extracting sharp sand and gravel. The past and present quarrying has changed the character of this part of the floodplain, although some areas of extraction pits have ceased quarrying and are being managed for nature conservation.

Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects

- The open river corridor contrasts with the more enclosed character of the floodplain, creating visual interest.
- The River Thames is the focus of many distinctive views. The wooded Chiltern hills and Remenham slopes form a wooded backdrop to views north and south-east.
- A good sense of tranquillity, with some sense of relative remoteness, away from the active quarry.
- Development is limited to small linear settlements and boathouses and individual houses along the riverbank. The working quarry and the railway

line reduce tranquillity. There are occasional views to the urban edges of Henley-on-Thames and Shiplake.

Natural and cultural qualities

- Diverse wetland and woodland habitats, including considerable priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh east of Sonning, and riparian woodland including characteristic willows along the riverbank. Small areas of woodland are classified as priority habitat deciduous woodland.
- Historic buildings relate to the river, including the landmark Grade I Listed stone bridge at Henley-on-Thames and varied styles of boat houses. These buildings add to the historic character, and are also aesthetically pleasing.
- Sonning Eye is typical of the floodplain edge settlements further east on the Thames valley, and is noted for the combination of local building materials including flint, warm traditional red brick and tile, with dark weatherboarding. Brick banding and timber-framing with pitched and half-hipped roofs are also features. The village is covered by a Conservation Area.

Recreation value

- A network of public rights of way crosses the landscape, including the Thames Path National Trail along the river and Chiltern Way north of Shiplake. There is also water-based recreation on the Thames, including boating and rowing.

Associations

- The River Thames in South Oxfordshire forms the setting for 'The Wind in the Willows', a classic children's novel by Kenneth Grahame (1908).
- The Henley Regatta, an integral part of the British establishment season, takes place in and around Henley-on-Thames.

Figure A.29: Tranquil River Thames with picturesque boat houses



Figure A.30: Riparian vegetation along the naturalistic Thames



Landscape guidelines

Guidance to protect/conservate current landscape character

- Conserve and enhance the pattern of floodplain grazing marsh and riparian vegetation along the river, to enhance their contribution to landscape character and their nature conservation value.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape on public rights of way. Consider opportunities to improve public right of way connections, infrastructure and signage.
- Respect the setting to the Sonning Eye Conservation Area and the sensitivity of the historic settlement edges, by resisting changes to the landscape which are not in keeping with the landscape character, including unsympathetic housing developments.
- Conserve the setting of all listed buildings and boat houses which add to the character of the area.

Guidance to manage landscape character

- Encourage the appropriate management of woodland, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases and to increase its age structure and structural heterogeneity. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.
- Seek to prevent further loss or decline in the quality of boundary hedgerows and encourage their restoration/reinstatement; when establishing new hedges, aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Manage arable land to enhance its biodiversity value and connectivity, by maintaining and expanding the area of land available for uncultivated arable field margins; seek to maximise the diversity of margins to provide a range of habitats and to assist in the movement of species through the landscape and include species and cultivars that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter, drier summers.

Guidance to plan (enhance, restore, create) landscape character

- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing woodland and tree cover through natural regeneration or small-scale planting. This will strengthen the landscape character and bring benefits for biodiversity as well as natural flood management.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect areas of priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh and other wetland habitats along the river corridor. This will benefit biodiversity and ecosystem services, including flood management.
- Ensure any future expansion of the mineral extraction will be screened from public view by appropriate vegetation, and does not impinge on the enjoyment of the rural character of the Thames Path.
- Consider views to and from the Chilterns National Landscape and the Remenham Hills when planning any new development. Avoid development which breaks the treeline to retain the often enclosed character along the Thames.
- Retain the small-scale, linear settlement pattern. Ensure any linear extensions to existing settlements do not create coalescence, or perceived coalescence between settlements.
- Retain the naturalistic character of the riverbanks, avoiding a proliferation of boathouses.
- Any new development should consider using materials in keeping with the local vernacular of flint, warm traditional red brick and tile, with dark weatherboarding.
- Consider the impact of lighting on dark skies, both locally and on views from higher ground (refer to the guidance in the Dark Skies / Light Impact Assessment for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse).

Candidate LLD: Northern Thames Valley LLD

Summary information

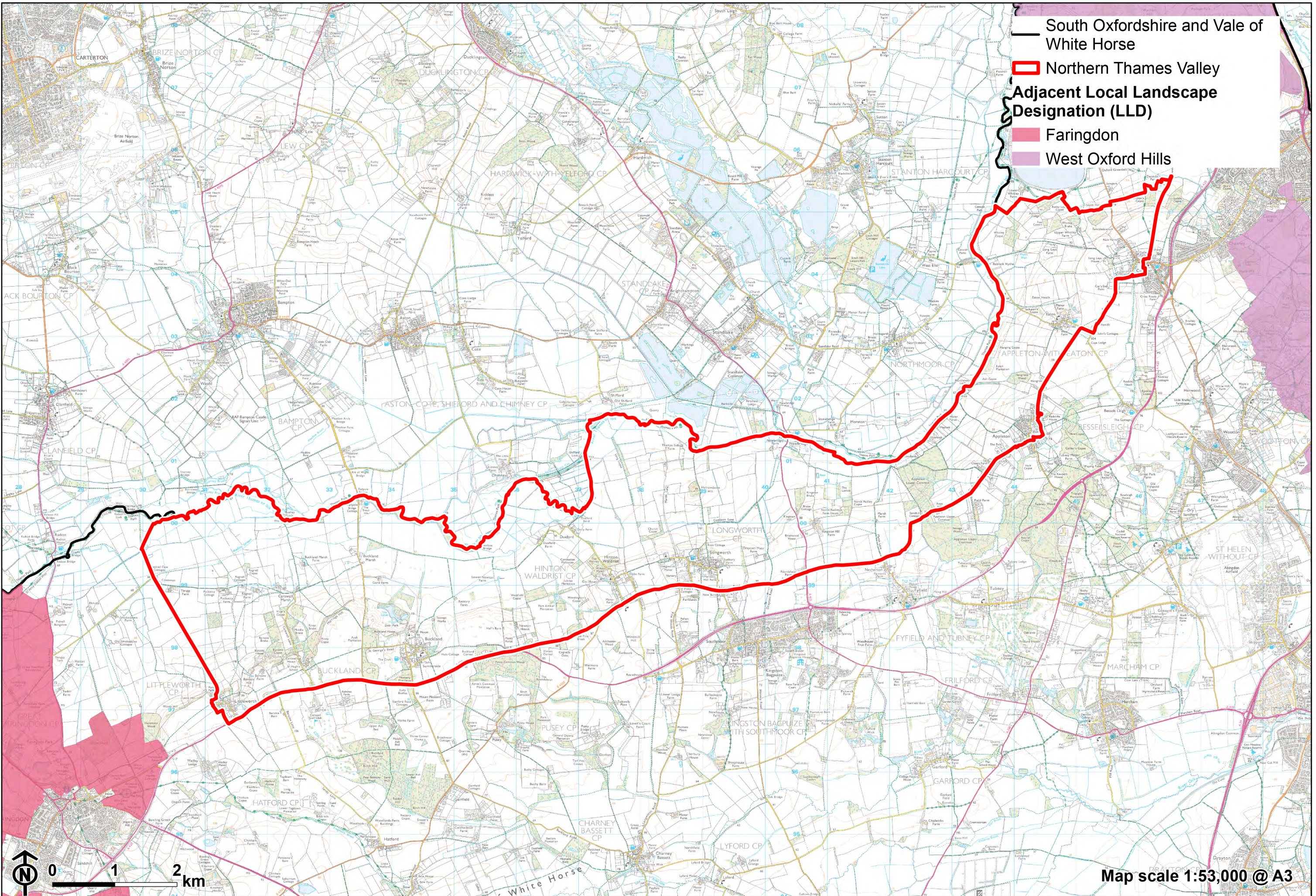
Extent of area

This area is located in the north of the Vale of White Horse district. It consists of the southern floodplain of the River Thames and the distinctive footslopes of the Corallian Limestone Ridge. The northern boundary of the LLD is formed by the River Thames, which also marks the administrative boundary with West Oxfordshire.

Landscape character context

The LLD includes parts of the following Landscape Character Areas:

- LCA 8A: Faringdon to Frilford Ridge Slope
- LCA 8B: Frilford to Sandford Ridge Slope
- LCA 9G: Northern Vale Edge Slopes
- LCA 12A: Thames Middle Vale



Statement of significance

The northern Thames floodplain and associated valley slopes form a distinctive and discrete landscape. The contrast between the flat floodplain and rising slopes provides visual contrast, and allows for long views across the Thames valley, and to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape to the south. Small ancient woodlands, wetland habitats and largely intact hedgerows form a strong landscape structure and provide ecological corridors. The historic settlement pattern of small villages on the top of the valley slopes is intact; the landscape forms an important setting to these heritage features. Parkland and estate landscapes provide a distinctive sense of place and time-depth. Public rights of way, including the Thames Path National Trail provide recreational access.

Summary of special landscape qualities

- The River Thames and its immediate setting have a strong sense of place. Relatively steep slopes transition from the floodplain to the ridge.
- Intact hedgerows, mature trees and scattered ancient woodlands provide landscape structure, ecological corridors and important habitats.
- Historic parkland and estate landscapes, particularly at Hinton Manor and Buckland House. The characteristic tree avenues, estate fencing and mature individual trees standing in pasture provide a distinctive sense of place and time-depth.
- Historic small villages on the top of the slope are characteristic of the area, and provide time-depth.
- Network of public rights of way, including the Oxford Greenbelt Way and Thames Path National Trail provide recreational value.
- Open views across the vales, Thames valley and North Wessex Downs to the south, creating a sense of place.
- Highly rural character with limited modern distractions.

Figure A.32: Tadpole Bridge over the River Thames



Figure A.33: Open arable fields with long-distance views



Full evaluation

Local distinctiveness and sense of place

- Distinctive landscape of the flat floodplain of the River Thames contained by steep slopes rising to the Corallian Limestone Ridge, which forms a recognisable area.
- The low, rounded profile of Harrowdown Hill forms a locally distinctive landmark rising from the low-lying floodplain.
- Combination of dense riparian vegetation, boat moorings and occasional stone bridges result in a landscape with a strong sense of place.
- Parkland and estate character at Hinton Manor and Buckland House create a recognisable sense of place.

Landscape quality (condition and intactness)

- Areas of ancient woodland on the ridge slopes are generally in good condition, although some has since been replanted with conifers. The broadleaved wet ash-wych elm woodland at Appleton Lower Common SSSI is in favourable condition.
- Small pasture fields on the floodplain have greater intact boundary vegetation, with hawthorn and willow common tree species. Larger arable fields on the higher ground tend to have lower clipped hedgerows, with some gaps. Hawthorn and elm are common, with occasional mature oak hedgerow trees.
- The historic field pattern is still intact in some areas, with post Medieval and pre-18th century fields recognised in the Oxfordshire HLC. More modern areas of amalgamation are found in the west.
- Parkland estates at Hinton Manor and Buckland House are all well-managed, with formal gardens, pleasure grounds and parks in good condition.

- The small ridgetop villages of Littleworth, Buckland, Hinton Waldrist, Longworth, Appleton and Cumnor contain listed buildings and are covered by Conservation Areas, resulting in a visually coherent character.
- Detracting features are rare, although electricity pylons routes impinge on the east and west and the A415 is a busy road through the centre.

Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects

- The sloping valley side landform affords long views across the vales and Thames valley, and distant views to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape to the south. Wooded Wytham Hill is visible on the horizon to the north-east. Woodland cover within the LLD provides areas of enclosure, in contrast with the longer views.
- The River Thames is visible from section so the Thames Path along its banks, although often partially screened by riparian vegetation. This contributes to a sense of uninterrupted tracts of land with few built features. Farmoor Reservoir is visible from the northern edge of the LLD, although seen in context with the rising Wytham Woods.
- A sense of peace and tranquillity pervades across the area, and relative remoteness away from the edges of settlements. There is also a good experience of dark night skies.
- Slow moving boats on the Thames are a picturesque occasional feature, although they do reduce a sense of remoteness.

Natural and cultural qualities

- The River Thames with its natural meanders forms an important natural and cultural feature in the landscape. Small areas of priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh and priority habitat deciduous woodland are found along the river corridor.
- Priority habitat deciduous woodland blocks across the area, many recorded as ancient woodland, contribute to a sense of place. Appleton Lower Common is nationally designated as a SSSI.

- Limited settlement on the floodplain is part of the historic pattern of settlement, with villages set on the ridgetop, such as Buckland and Eaton, and occasional large manor houses and farmsteads on rural roads. These all contribute to a sense of place and provide time-depth.
- Historic river crossings at Tadpole Bridge (Grade II listed) and New Bridge (Grade II*) show the historic importance of the River Thames.
- Parkland estates provide a historic influence on the landscape, with parklands still significant at Registered Parks and Gardens Hinton Manor (Grade II) and Buckland House (Grade II*).

Recreation value

- A network of public rights of way, including the Oxford Greenbelt Way long distance footpath and Thames Path National Trail provide recreational value, and connect the chalk ridge in the south to the Thames valley in the north. Some areas of more limited access, particularly within the parklands. There is strong water-based recreation on the River Thames, with small pleasure boats common.

Associations

- Buckland and Hinton Waldrist are historic manors, both mentioned in the Domesday book. The MP Airey Neave is buried at Hinton Waldrist.
- The poet Matthew Arnold enjoyed walking near Cumnor, and set his elegiac poems *The Scholar Gypsy* and *Thyrsis* in these landscapes.

Figure A.34: River Thames with wooded ridge on the horizon



Figure A.35: Parkland character at Hinton Waldrist



Landscape guidelines

Guidance to protect/conserv e current landscape character

- Retain and enhance floodplain habitats, woodland blocks and tree lines; conserve and manage the ancient woodland sites and SSSIs to improve landscape character and encourage biodiversity.
- Encourage management in parklands and support plans for restoration where appropriate. Conserve and appropriately manage veteran trees within parkland areas.
- Maintain the settlement pattern of ridgetop villages, with extremely limited development in the floodplain. Protect and conserve historic assets and their setting, including listed bridges, parklands, and historic villages including those with Conservation Areas.
- Protect and where possible enhance long views north across the vales and the Thames valley, and south towards the North Wessex Downs National Landscape on the horizon.
- Protect the experiential qualities of the landscape, particularly the high levels of tranquillity and intact rural character.

Guidance to manage landscape character

- Ensure best practice management for floodplain grazing pastures and wet grassland, through suitable grazing regimes and avoiding agrochemical and fertiliser inputs; manage recreational routes to avoid/minimise disturbance; and manage scrub vegetation appropriately to maintain the open character of the floodplain.
- Encourage the appropriate management of woodland, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases and to increase its age structure and structural heterogeneity. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.

- Support appropriate management and restoration of parkland and historic landscapes through (for example) the planting of a new generation of specimen trees and extensive grassland management.
- Maintain the valued recreational use of the landscape and consider opportunities to introduce additional connectivity where public rights of way access is currently more limited, to enhance appreciation of views and landscape character.
- Retain the naturalistic character of the Thames, avoiding excessive additional recreational facilities such as jetties and weirs.

Guidance to plan (enhance, restore, create) landscape character

- Encourage landowners to develop a woodland management strategy to conserve existing woodlands (including ancient woodland) and extend woodland where appropriate. Ensure any new woodland planting is respectful of local character and ecological conditions and maximises opportunities to link with other habitats.
- Ensure any new development retains the existing small-scale, scattered settlement pattern. Avoid linear expansion along the roads which would cause coalescence, or perceived coalescence, of the existing small villages.
- Any new development should consider using materials in keeping with the local vernacular of limestone, brick banding and slate roofs.
- New development should consider the role of the parklands and open spaces between the settlements.
- Consider plans to create new access routes linking both the river floodplain and ridge, and linking east-west across the ridge.

Candidate LLD: West Oxford Hills and Thames floodplain

Summary information

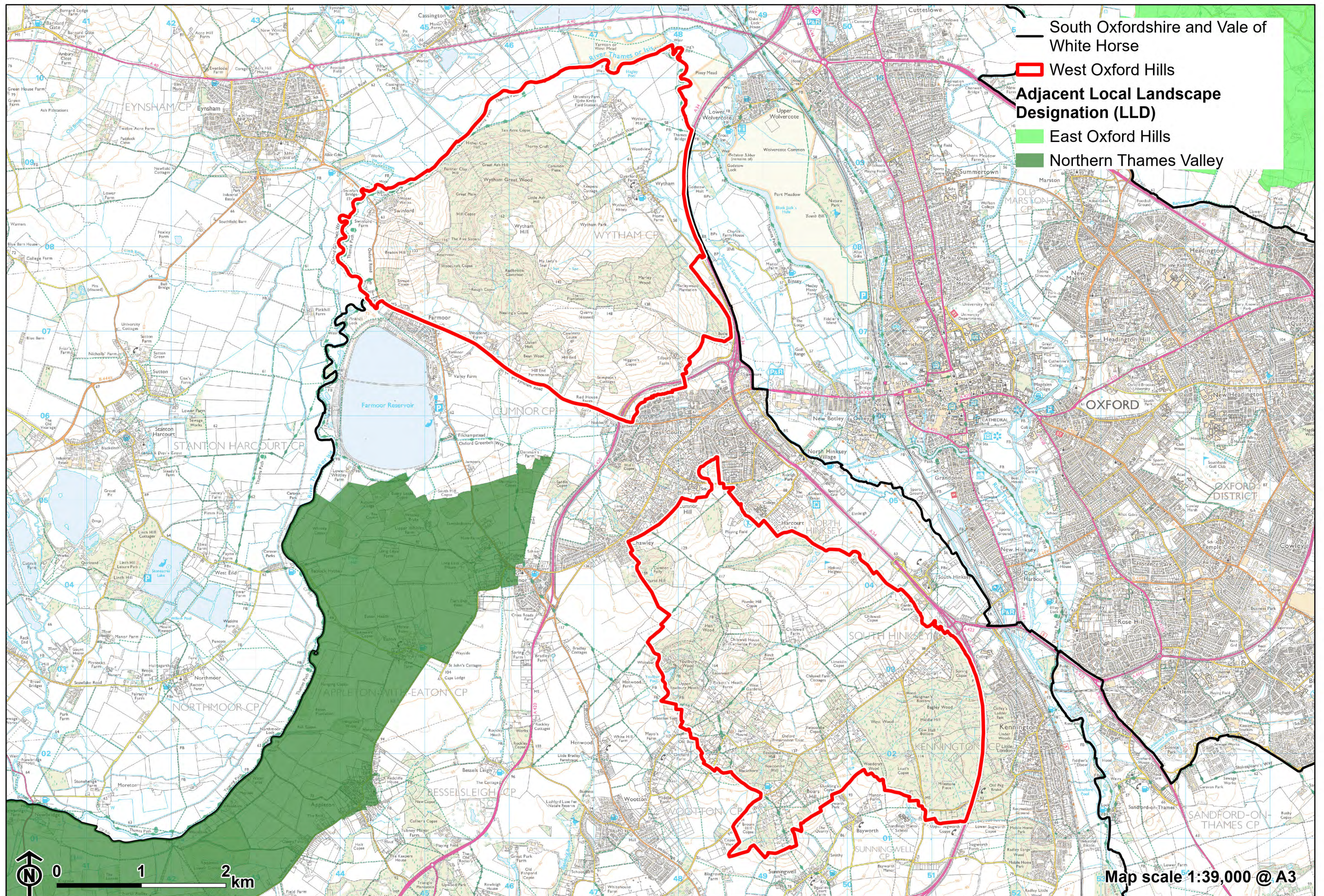
Extent of area

This area is located to the west of Oxford. The Candidate LLD encompasses a distinctive ridge of higher land, separated into two sections by Botley, and the surrounding Thames floodplain. The boundaries are defined by the borough boundary with Cherwell and West Oxfordshire to the north and west, and the settlement edges of Botley. The northern section of the LLD is defined by the change in gradient of the topography and transition towards the more suburban character around the Farmoor Reservoir. The southern section of the LLD is also defined by the change in gradient of the topography.

Landscape character context

The LLD includes parts of the following Landscape Character Areas:

- LCA 7B: Oxford West Ridge Hilltops
- LCA 14A: Farmoor Reservoir Valley
- LCA 14B Eynsham to Oxford Thames River Valley



Statement of significance

A distinctive wooded ridge which forms an important element in views from the surrounding landscape, including the Thames floodplain. It also forms a backdrop to adjacent settlements, including Oxford. The considerable woodland cover includes extensive areas of ancient woodland, which gives the landscape structure and creates a sense of intactness. The floodplain forms an important setting to the wooded ridge, with small tributaries and floodplain grazing marsh. Well-managed arable and pasture fields with intact hedgerows punctuate the woodlands, contrasting with the rough grassland and pasture bounded by ditches and hedgerows on the floodplain, which all contribute to a sense of place. Development within the area is largely set back from roads and hidden from view, resulting in a tranquil and peaceful character. Wytham village, the only settlement in the north, has a small historic linear settlement form, and strong vernacular of local limestone and thatch. Occasionally panoramic views out of the area provide a sense of place, and have provided inspiration for painters and poets, including William Turner. Public rights of way the Oxford Greenbelt Way and Thames Path, and open access land owned by the Oxford Preservation Trust provide access, although there is more limited access in the northern section, which is owned by the University of Oxford.

Summary of special landscape qualities

- Distinctive ridge landform, which forms a wooded backdrop to adjacent settlements at Farmoor, Botley and Wytham, as well as being prominent in strategic views from Oxford.
- Contrast between the wooded ridge and the flat, open floodplain of the River Thames.
- Mosaic of ecologically important ancient woodlands, wood pasture, floodplain grazing marsh and grasslands create a distinctive sense of place.

West Oxford Hills and Thames Floodplain LLD

- Recreational value of the Oxford Greenbelt Way and the Thames Path.
- Long, sometimes panoramic, views across Oxford and the wider county, contrast with the enclosure along narrow lanes and within woodland.
- Historic linear settlement at Wytham, with strong limestone vernacular, designated as a Conservation Area. Wytham Park within Wytham Woods also adds time depth.
- Limited development and enclosure in woodlands result in a relatively tranquil and rural landscape, providing good opportunities to experience dark night skies.

Figure A.37: Wytham Woods seen from the Thames Path



Figure A.38: Swinford toll bridge



Full evaluation

Local distinctiveness and sense of place

- Distinct combination of a steep ridge rising from the Thames valley floodplain, which is visible in views across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts and beyond, and forms a discrete and recognisable area.
- Extensive woodlands on higher ground form a special character in the local context, and confer a recognisable sense of place.
- The landscape contributes to the river valley setting of Wytham.

Landscape quality (condition and intactness)

- Extensive woodland coverage across the ridge, often identified as ancient woodland in good condition. This is interspersed with considerable coniferous coverage.
- Naturalistic floodplain of the Thames, which is a functioning floodplain.
- The lowland calcareous grassland and population of nationally scarce butterfly species *Strymonidia pruni* which make up the Wytham Woods SSSI designation are in favourable condition. The lowland mixed deciduous woodland and vascular plant assemblages are in unfavourable – recovering condition.
- Wytham Ditches and Flushes SSSI supports species-rich eutrophic aquatic and fen flora, now rare in Oxfordshire, as well as priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh. The ditches and lowland fens are in unfavourable – recovering condition.
- Medium to large scale arable and pasture fields are defined by intact hawthorn hedgerows or ditches on the floodplain.
- Limited incongruous features within the landscape, with the exception of occasional detracting views towards, and the sound of, the A34.

Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects

- The contrast between the flat floodplain and wooded steep ridge creates a strong visual character. The ridge provides a backdrop and focal point for views in the vicinity (e.g. Wytham, Botley, Cumnor and Farmoor reservoir), and further afield, including an important backdrop to views from Oxford.
- Panoramic views from the highest points of the ridge are possible, with long views towards the 'dreaming spires' of Oxford city, as well as over the wider Oxfordshire countryside, including to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape to the south and Chilterns National Landscape to the south-east.
- Visual contrast between the enclosure and seclusion within woodlands, and expansive views on the floodplain and in non-wooded areas of the ridge.
- The wooded nature of the landscape and development pattern in the south of individual houses set back from the lanes (e.g. around Boar's Hill) creates a sense of limited development, which results in a sense of tranquillity and remoteness.
- Wytham is a historic village, where the strong local vernacular of limestone, which appeals to the senses.
- The A34 to the east is audibly and sometimes visually detracting, although is often hidden from view by vegetation.

Natural and cultural qualities

- The underlying Corallian and Stanford limestone formations form the distinctive ridge of higher ground.
- Extensive woodland cover across the area is largely identified as ancient woodland, with woodland in the northern section largely covered by the Wytham Woods SSSI.

West Oxford Hills and Thames Floodplain LLD

- Floodplain grazing marsh, lowland meadow, species-rich eutrophic aquatic and fen flora on the floodplain form important wetland habitats, including the Wytham Ditches and Flushes SSSI.
- Wytham Estate, comprising wood pasture, parkland and Wytham Woods, was formerly owned by the Earls of Abingdon, before being acquired by the University of Oxford in the 1940s. The parkland character is still evident.
- Settlement is concentrated at Wytham, a linear village, with a historic nucleus around Wytham Abbey and church. The village is covered by a Conservation Area and contains a number of listed buildings. Outside of Wytham, development is limited. A few buildings are registered as Grade II listed, including Swinford toll bridge, Youlbury House, Templeton College and Chilswell Farm.
- Low-density development along roads at Boars Hill and Fox Lane does not make a particular contribution to sense of place, as houses tend to be large, detached and have no specific vernacular. However, they are set back from the minor roads and often screened by fencing and hedges, and so have a limited negative influence on the landscape.

Recreation value

- Access is concentrated in the southern section of the LLD, including along the Oxford Greenbelt Way. Areas of open access land are owned by the Oxford Preservation Trust, including Old Berkley Golf Course and Jam Mound. The golf course at Hinksey Heights now also includes a nature trail, allowing more public access. The Thames Path provides access along the floodplain in the north, while there are permissive paths within Wytham Woods, which require a permit from the University of Oxford.

Associations

- The 'dreaming spires' of Oxford as seen from Hinksey Hill were painted by William Turner.

West Oxford Hills and Thames Floodplain LLD

- Boars Hill was home to numerous poets and artists, and inspired Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* and Matthew Arnold's *The Scholar Gypsy* and *Thyrsis*, which mentions Wytham, Cumnor and other local landmarks.
- Jam Mound is a historic viewpoint, set within associated gardens on Boars Hill. However, tree cover now restricts the majority of distant views from the mound.
- The Wytham Estate, was purchased in 1920 by the ffennell family, who established Hill End Camp, visited by many school children. The estate was gifted to the University of Oxford in 1942. The John Krebs Field Station University Farm has studied the estate including Wytham Woods ever since.

Figure A.39: Long views to Oxford city and the eastern hills



Figure A.40: Old Berkely Golf Course, Boars Hill, owned by the Oxford Preservation Trust



Landscape guidelines

Guidance to protect/conservate current landscape character

- Retain and enhance woodland cover across the ridge, particularly that on higher ground.
- Conserve the wetland habitat of the Thames floodplain, including by protection against harmful effects of livestock grazing and drainage for agricultural use.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape on public rights of way, particularly along promoted routes. Consider opportunities to improve public right of way connections, infrastructure and signage.
- Maintain physical and visual connectivity between Wytham, including its Conservation Area and the wooded slopes of Wytham Woods to the west.
- Protect and conserve the historic features, including parkland at Wytham Park. Listed buildings, including those within the Wytham Conservation Area, should be protected.
- Conserve the river valley and wooded hill views out of Wytham, which form an important part of its setting.
- Protect and enhance intervisibility with the spires and rooftops of Oxford, including the views set out in the Oxford View Cones, by managing woodland to maintain viewing corridors. Resist any development or land use changes which would negatively impact the views within, or backdrop to, the view cones.
- Conserve and enhance the view from Hinksey Hill as painted by Turner in *Dreaming Spires*.
- Protect the experiential qualities of the landscape, particularly the high levels of tranquillity and intact rural character.

Guidance to manage landscape character

- Encourage the appropriate management of woodland, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases and to increase its age structure and structural heterogeneity. Consider the promotion of natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland, allowing locally native species to develop resilience to the pressures of climate change through natural processes.
- Encourage appropriate management of the floodplain landscape to enhance its contribution to landscape character and nature conservation value. This includes continued light grazing by cattle, and reinstatement of gappy hedgerows.

Guidance to plan (enhance, restore, create) landscape character

- Encourage landowners to develop a woodland management strategy to conserve existing woodlands (including ancient woodland) and extend woodland where appropriate. Ensure any new woodland planting is respectful of local character and ecological conditions and maximises opportunities to link with other habitats.
- Seek opportunities to enhance connectivity between the floodplain wetland habitats and other nearby habitats to create green corridors and networks.
- Ensure any new development is small-scale and avoid visually prominent locations. It should respect the existing limited settlement pattern in the north and pattern of individual houses set back from roads in the south. Use existing landscape features to contain and/or screen the new development.
- Consider the cumulative impact of small suburban changes to residential buildings, which have a negative impact on the landscape character. Examples include large boundary fences, security gates and lighting and entrance CCTV.
- Consider the impact of lighting on dark skies, both locally and on views from lower ground (refer to the guidance in the Dark Skies / Light Impact Assessment for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse).

Candidate LLD: West of Wantage LLD

Summary information

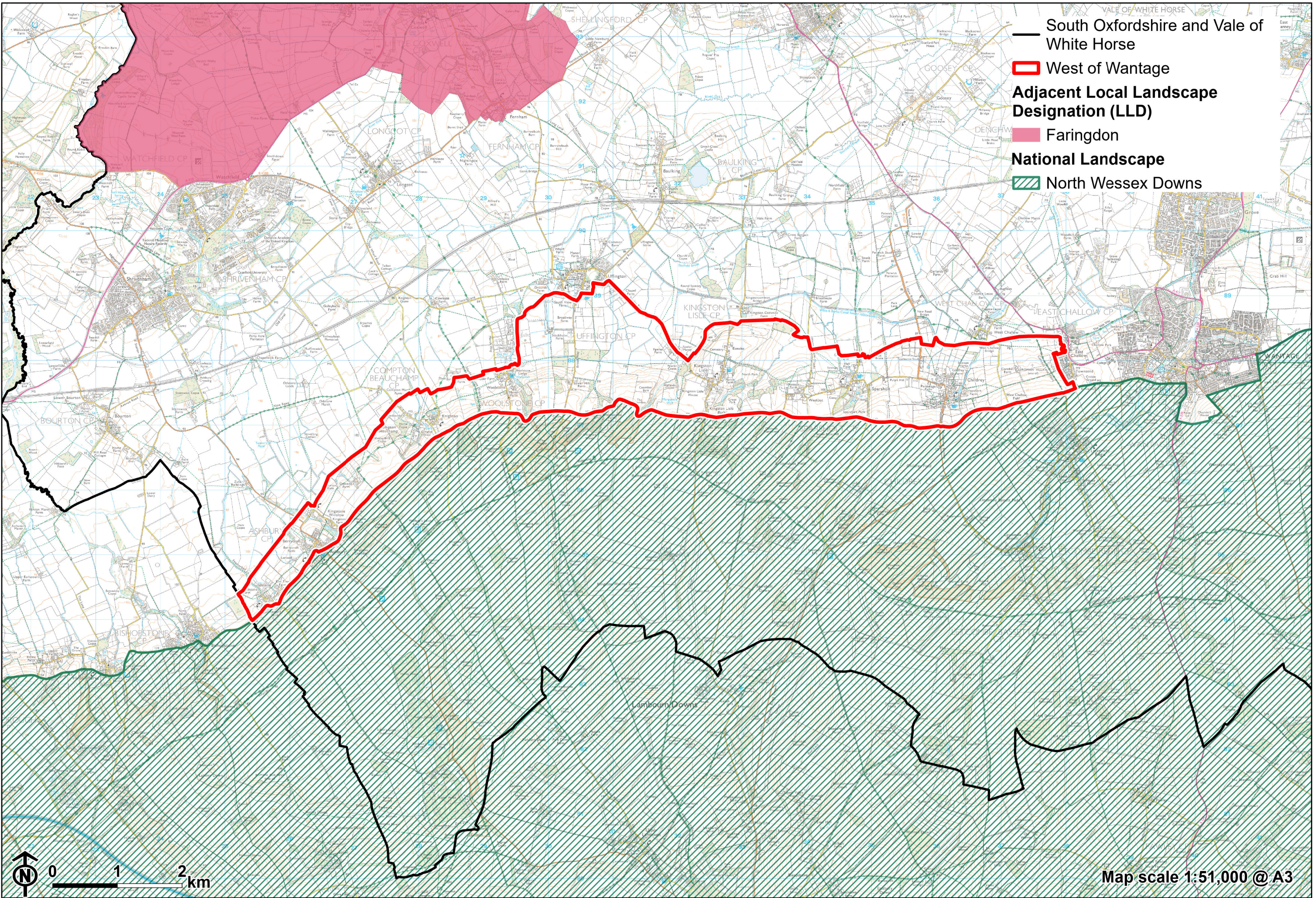
Extent of area

This LLD is located within the Vale of White Horse district, between East Challow in the east and Idstone in the west. It comprises a narrow band of rolling, north-facing slopes which transition between the low-lying vales in the north and the higher North Wessex Downs chalk escarpment and footslopes in the south.

Landscape character context

The LLD includes parts of the following Landscape Character Areas:

- LCA 9A: Western Vale Edge Slopes
- LCA 11B: Western Upper Vale



- South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse
- West of Wantage
- Adjacent Local Landscape Designation (LLD)**
- Faringdon
- National Landscape**
- North Wessex Downs



Map scale 1:51,000 @ A3

Statement of significance

An east-west band of north-facing slopes which form the transition from the chalk escarpment of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape in the south to the low-lying vale in the north. Numerous small streams incise the landscape during their passage from the source, at the foot of the scarp, to the River Ock. Frequent, scattered woodland blocks, many of which are ancient, are often associated with the regularly spaced springline small historic settlements. The landscape also forms an important setting to Uffington in the vale. Recreational access to the landscape takes the form of numerous public rights of way which provide links between the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and the vale. The landscape has a strong traditional rural character with high levels of tranquillity and few detracting features.

Summary of special landscape qualities

- The rolling topography provides a clear link between the vale landscapes to the north and chalk escarpments to the south, numerous spring-fed streams incise the slopes as they flow north towards the River Ock.
- Frequent scattered woodlands contribute to the natural heritage and provide contrast to the open downland to the south.
- Arable landscape with smaller pastoral fields close to villages contribute to the rural setting of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.
- Parkland and estate landscapes which provide a well-managed ornamental character and a distinctive sense of place and time depth.
- Strong visual relationship with the low-lying vale to the north, over which gaps in tree cover allow panoramic views across the vale.

West of Wantage LLD

- Long views from open higher ground contrast with sense of enclosure near watercourses and settlements.

Figure A.42: Long-distance views north across the vale from Knighton



Figure A.43: Open farmland across steep chalk slopes



Full evaluation

Local distinctiveness and sense of place

- A band of relatively steep, north-facing slopes underlain by chalk and sandstones, incised by numerous spring-fed streams flowing north towards the River Ock.

Landscape quality (condition and intactness)

- Predominantly large-scale arable fields, a mixture of pre-18th century and modern fieldscapes. Smaller-scale fields are generally located in proximity to villages. Some deterioration of hedgerows is evident in more intensively farmed areas.
- Open farmland separates villages and hamlets, helping to retain their individual identities and the characteristic regular spacing of settlements along the slopes.
- Tree groupings are often associated with areas of settlement and provide screening, landscape structure, and a sense of enclosure.

Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects

- Large, arable fields on the rolling footslopes serve as an undeveloped backdrop to views from the lower-lying vale in the north.
- More frequent woodland cover and riparian vegetation in and around settlements creates a stronger sense of enclosure and more restricted views.
- Open higher ground in the LLD allows long views north across the lower-lying vale landscapes towards the wooded limestone ridge in the distance.

West of Wantage LLD

- The LLD forms part of the northern, rural setting to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.
- The area has a strong rural quality with limited settlement internally, landform and tree cover reduce the influence of the B4057 where it follows the upper slopes along the boundary of the LLD (the course of a Roman Way) and is locally detracting.

Natural and cultural qualities

- Tree cover comprises small, dispersed blocks of woodland scattered along the footslopes, including areas of ancient woodland, riparian woodland along watercourses, traditional orchard, other small tree groups and trees along field boundaries, particularly in pastoral areas and on the edges of settlement.
- Estates and parkland are associated with some of the settlements, including the Grade II Compton Beauchamp Registered Park and Garden. Sparsholt and Kingstone Lisle (contains an extant Grade II* Manor House) are undesignated parks. Moats, coverts and copses, combine to form a parkland character. Time depth is also provided by a Roman villa near East Challow and Grade I listed churches at Sparholt and Childrey.
- Settlements are generally located near the source of spring-fed streams, resultant of historic land uses. Their historic cores date back to the medieval period and are often covered by Conservation Area designations, they have seen very little modern expansion.

Recreation value

- A good network of public rights of way, including the D'Arcy Dalton Way and Vale Way, provide recreational value and north-south links between the North Wessex Downs and vale. Public rights of way also provide links between the village of Uffington in the vale and the Uffington White Horse to the south (within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape).

Associations

- The manors associated with Childrey, Kingstone Lisle, Woolstone and Compton Beauchamp have links with historic figures and royalty – Kingstone Lisle Park was imparked by Alice de Lisle, granddaughter of Henry I fitzGerold, and Compton Beauchamp House was the home of the King's Councillor, Sir Thomas Fettiplace, from about 1507.
- Kingston Lisle features in Thomas Hughes' novel *Tom Brown's School Days*.

Figure A.44: Dispersed woodland blocks across the footslopes



Figure A.45: Arable fields across the slopes backdrop the low-lying vale



Landscape guidelines

Guidance to protect/conserv e current landscape character

- Retain woodland blocks and tree lines; conserve and manage the ancient woodland sites to improve landscape character and encourage biodiversity.
- Protect long views north across the lower-lying vale landscapes towards the wooded Corallian Limestone Ridge in the distance.
- Maintain the open character of farmland which forms gaps between individual settlements, contributes positively to the setting of North Wessex Downs National Landscape, and forms an undeveloped backdrop to views from the vale.
- Encourage management in parklands and support plans for restoration where appropriate. Conserve and appropriately manage veteran trees within parkland areas.
- Protect historic landscape features as well as their setting and legibility in the landscape. Maintain physical and visual connectivity between Conservation Areas and prominent features in settlement setting.

Guidance to manage landscape character

- Encourage the appropriate management of woodland, including to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases and to increase its age structure and structural heterogeneity.
- Support appropriate management and restoration of parkland and historic landscapes through (for example) the planting of a new generation of specimen trees and appropriate grassland management.

Guidance to plan (enhance, restore, create) landscape character

- Encourage landowners to develop a woodland management strategy to conserve existing woodlands (including ancient woodland) and extend woodland where appropriate. Ensure any new woodland planting is respectful of local character and ecological conditions and maximises opportunities to link with other habitats.
- Prevent further loss or decline in the quality of remaining boundary hedgerows and encourage their restoration/reinstatement, whilst maintaining characteristic long-distance views north; when establishing new hedges, aim to diversify the range of species and select species and provenances adapted to a wider range of climatic conditions.
- Minimise the impact of new development, including housing and horsiculture (including arenas and associated lighting), on the widely visible vale-edge slopes. Use trees and woodland to integrate development into the landscape, including that on the edge of East Challow.
- Respect the existing small-scale, scattered settlement pattern, and use local vernacular materials (such as brick, chalk clunch, and timber framing) in keeping with the existing settlement character.

Report produced by LUC

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