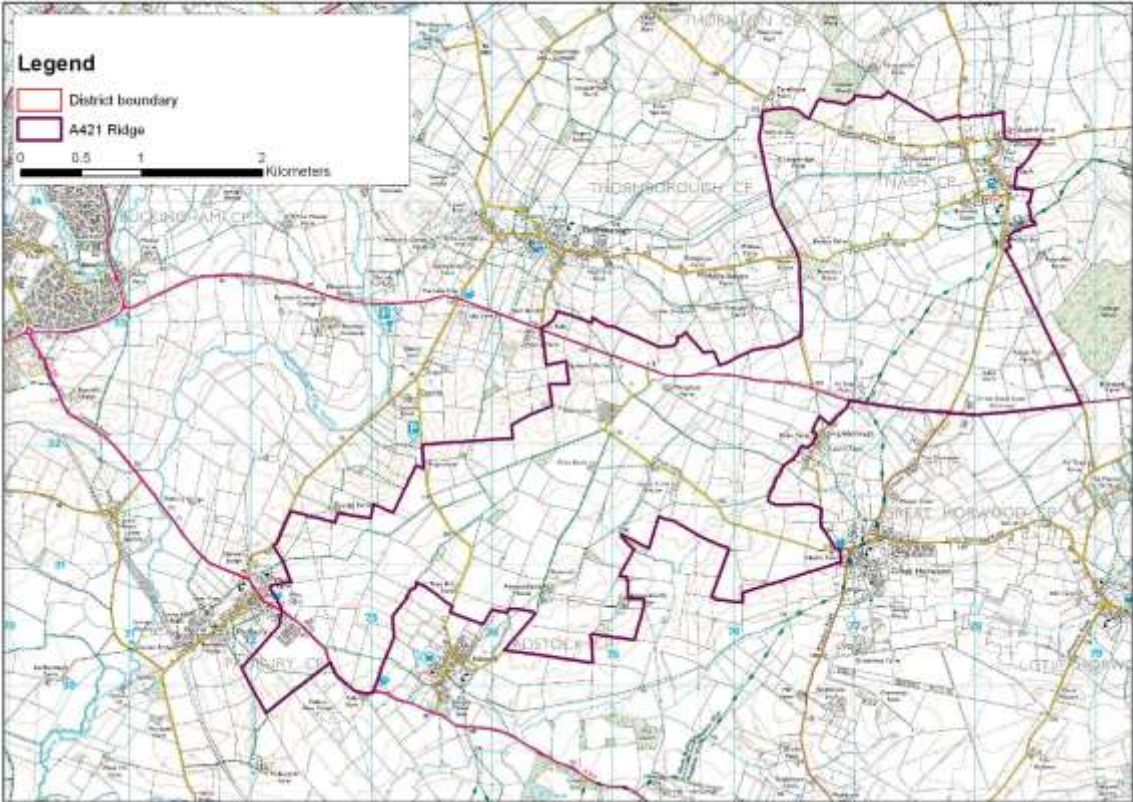


LCA 4.6 A421 Ridge

Landscape Character Type: LCT4 Undulating Clay Plateau



LCA 4.6 A421 Ridge (LCT 4)

Key Characteristics

- Ridge runs east to west
- Land drains towards Padbury Brook
- Sparse settlement
- Small dispersed copses
- Mixed farmland use
- Predominantly parliamentary enclosure fields

Distinctive Features

- Village of Nash
- Dispersed farmsteads
- Irregular shaped fields
- Straight roads
- Pilch Fields SSSI
- Wet pastoral fields
- Fen

Intrusive Elements

- Traffic on A421
- Industrial poultry units
- Pylons

Location A sparsely settled area stretching between Padbury in the southwest to Nash in the northeast, contained by the settlements of Thornborough to the northwest and Great Horwood and Singleborough to the southeast. The A421 Buckingham to Milton Keynes road runs across the middle of the area.

Landscape character A shallow ridge with steeper slopes on the northern side and shallower slopes and eroded valleys on the southern side, lying between two tributaries to the Padbury Brook. The area is intrinsically rural and sparsely settled. Smaller scale grazing parcels to the north with mature hedgerows and scattered mature trees. Small woodland copses are frequent. General intensification of arable land use in the southwest. The settlement of Nash lies at north eastern end of area. The area is crossed by the A421 road which is heavily used and there is small scale commercial development adjacent to A421.

Geology Glacial till with undifferentiated glacial deposits. Exposures of mudstone (Stewartby Member and Peterborough Member) as well as head deposits in incised valleys.

Topography The ridge slopes gently from 140m AOD in the east to approximately 105m AOD in the west. The land falls away fairly gently to the north and the south of the ridge until it joins the valley network that drains to the west. The lowest parts of these valleys vary between 90-100m AOD.

Hydrology The A421 runs along the highest part of the ridge and forms the watershed between two streams which drain into the Padbury Brook to the west. Around Nash there are a number of springs which feed streams and ditches draining westward. North of Great Horwood there is an extensive area of marsh/wetland which drains into the adjacent area joining with the meandering streams that rise on the southern face of the A421 Ridge.

Land use and settlement The area is predominantly used as grassland. Settlement comprises the nuclear village of Nash and dispersed farmsteads.

Tree cover Small pockets of mixed woodland and broadleaved woodland are dispersed over the area. Predominantly oak and ash within the deciduous woodlands and hedgerow trees. Mature hedgerow trees are present along the A421.

Biodiversity There is a distinct pattern in the major habitats - the southwest of the area is dominated by arable, whereas the northeast contains a higher proportion of grassland. The grassland throughout is almost entirely improved.

Two large areas of fen are also present, one in the south, and the other as part of Pilch Fields SSSI. This is of particular interest as it is one of the last remnants of old meadowland in Aylesbury Vale. It is composed of lowland calcareous grassland and purple moor grass rush pasture. Biodiversity interest is increased further by a small amount of scrub woodland and coniferous woodland and the numerous small areas of broadleaved woodland which include ancient woodland at Nash Brake and the CWS at Nansleys Brake. Hedgerows and streams contribute to habitat connectivity.

Historic environment The area is traversed by a minor Roman road and contains a possible villa site. Apart from this, archaeological remains are largely restricted to a scattering of fields containing ridge and furrow earthworks. The extreme east of this of this area was formerly Great Horwood Common, a part of Whaddon Chase, but today the whole area is almost entirely covered by well preserved parliamentary enclosure fields.

LCA 4.6 A421 Ridge (LCT 4)

The only significant historic settlement is the interrupted row plan village of Nash, a conservation area with timber-framed, rubble-stone and later brick buildings.

Designations

Conservation Area at Nash (3)

Archaeological Notification Areas – 22 No.

SSSI: Pilch Fields

CWS – 2 No.

LCA 4.6 A421 Ridge (LCT 4)



Shallow clay valley with small arable field, south of the A421 and west of Great Horwood.



Thornborough Road. Narrow winding lane with mature tree cover.

LCA 4.6 A421 Ridge (LCT 4)

Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

Condition	Good
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Visual detractors:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	VariableModerate
Ecological integrity:	Coherent
Functional integrity:	

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

Guidelines	Conserve and Reinforce
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Condition

Overall the condition of the landscape is considered to be good. The pattern of elements is coherent, albeit that the field pattern is different on either side of the ridge. The unifying element of mature hedgerows and tree cover compliments the undulating landform of local valleys that drain off the ridge. The area is intrinsically rural in character. There are few visual detractors and these are often screened by mature vegetation. Traffic on the A421 and associated noise are a significant local intrusion. Cultural integrity is variable, notably expressed around the settlement of Nash and in the very extensive survival of parliamentary enclosure fields. Ecological integrity is moderate despite strong connectivity and a relatively large area of priority habitat types and Site of Special Scientific Interest, because of the low number of other designated sites and of

habitats of District significance. Functional integrity remains coherent.

Sensitivity

Overall sensitivity is considered moderate. The area has retained its distinctiveness with an emphasis on historic continuity particularly in the north of the area. Sense of place is moderate. The landform of the ridge and local valleys that drain off the ridge are an apparent feature where the elevation permits longer distance views over the area. However, visibility is variable due to the intermittent maturity and extent of tree and hedgerow cover.



Small parcels of pasture south of Nash.

LCA 4.6 A421 Ridge (LCT 4)

Landscape Guidelines Conserve and Reinforce

The landscape guidelines for A421 Ridge are as follows:

- Encourage the retention and strengthening of the historic hedgerow pattern with replanting of hedgerows where they have been lost.
- Encourage the restoration of hedgerows where they have become weak or gappy with new planting of shrubs and trees of indigenous species. Promote management of hedgerows by traditional cutting regimes.
- Maintain the condition and extent of woodlands.
- Conserve and enhance the distinctive character of settlements and individual buildings.
- New housing and alterations to existing housing should be designed to reflect the traditional character of the area and be consistent in the use of locally occurring traditional materials.
- Retain the rural character of minor roads by minimising signage and kerbing.
- Encourage the conservation and management of small, traditional agricultural buildings scattered in the landscape.
- Encourage landowners to improve ecological diversity by and maintaining varied land maintenance regimes to benefit landscape and habitats.
- Identify key views from publicly accessible locations and promote the management and enhancement of these viewpoints.
- Encourage the conservation and management of the rich historic environment.
- Ensure the preservation of archaeological earthworks by maintaining grassland.
- Maintain the existing extent and condition of Pilch Fields Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- Maintain connectivity of habitats.
- Maintain the condition and extent of fens.