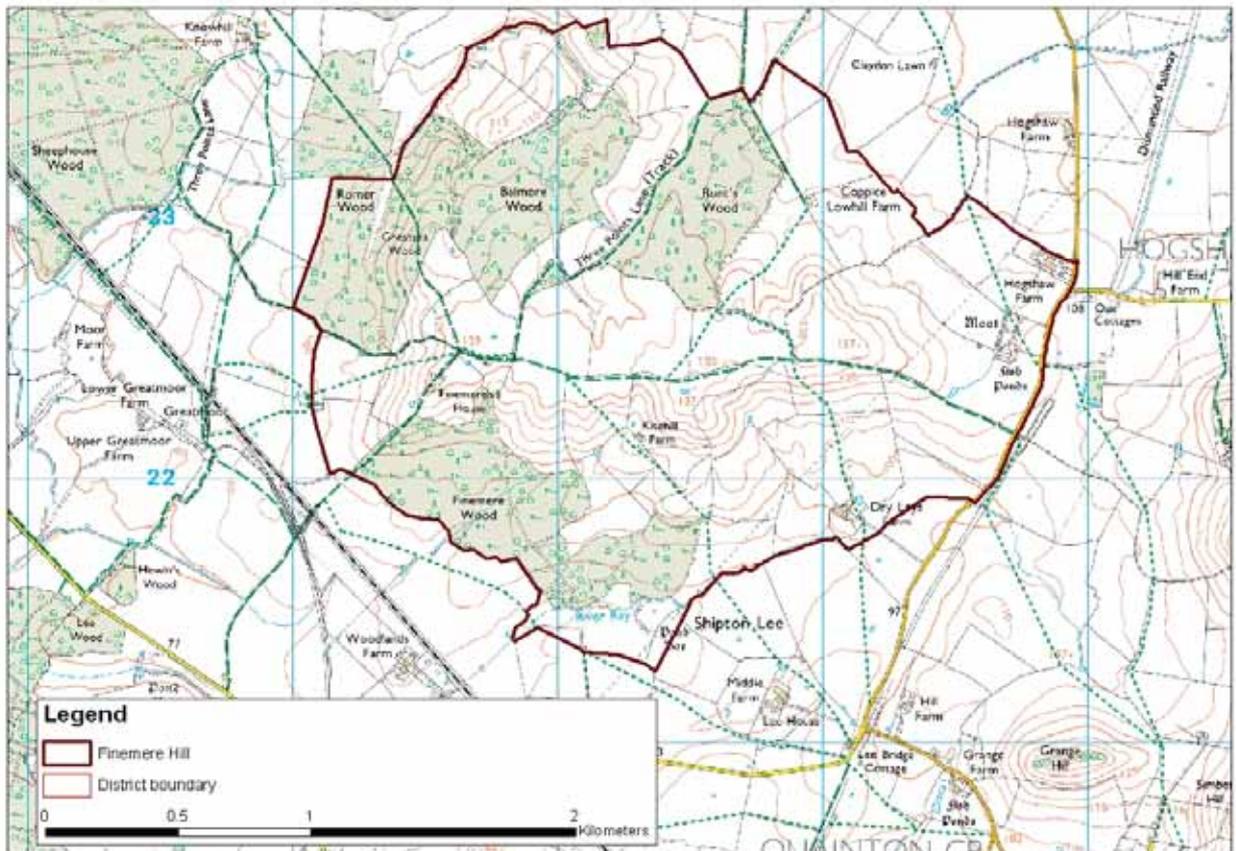
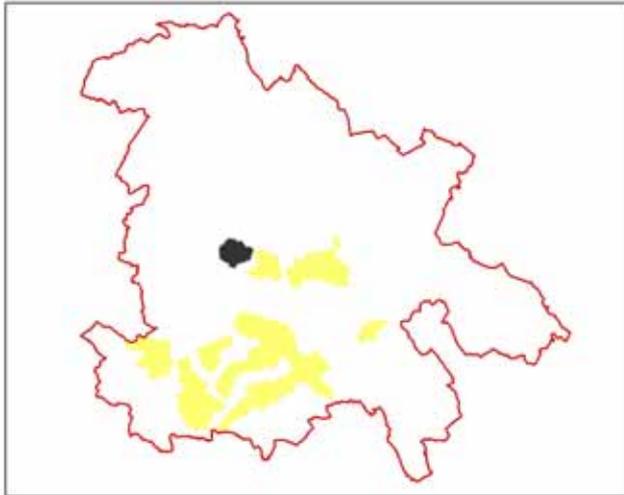


LCA 9.1 Finemere Hill

Landscape Character Type: LCT 9 Wooded Rolling Lowlands



LCA 9.1 Finemere Hill (LCT 9)

Key Characteristics

- Hill with steep sides particularly to the south
- Very high level of woodland cover
- Source of several streams including the river Ray
- Predominantly grassland, half of which is unimproved
- Good Rights of Way network following distinctive historic tracks
- Ancient woodland with probable assarts.

Distinctive Features

- Views from the top of hill
- Views of Waddesdon Manor parkland
- Finemerehill House
- Woodland flora
- Ponds on top of hill
- Medieval moat, fishponds and ridge and furrow
- Large blocks of woodland
- Calcareous grassland
- Watershed

Intrusive Elements

- Pylon line
- Small area of prairie farming

Location A small hill on the western side of the district to the southwest of Winslow and north of the A41.

Landscape character A hill, which is most distinct where it rises from lower ground to the south, and is notable for its very high density of woodland cover, the majority of which is ancient woodland. The majority of the rest of the area retains a pre 18th century enclosure pattern and has good strong hedgerows around small irregular fields. Although in places the hedgerow pattern has been lost or the hedgerows are very fragmented. The only settlement in the area is a few scattered farms and Finemere Hill house close to the top of the hill and a local landmark. There is no road access to the area but a good network of Public Rights of Way. The bridleway along the top of the hill affords panoramic views. The area has great visual appeal this largely relates to the landform, high level of woodland cover and long distance views. In some locations particularly on the top of the hill or within woodland there is a remote and wild character.

Geology Weymouth calcareous mudstone in the west and West Walton calcareous mudstone in the east. The area is covered with a cap of till and glacial deposits.

Topography The hill has strong steep slopes on the southern side but the surrounding land on the other sides is higher so the hill landform is less steeply. This is particularly evident in views from the north within Claydon Bowl LCA 7.3. There is a small flat ridge along the top of the hill. The elevation ranges from around 135m to 85m AOD.

Hydrology There are no major watercourses within the area. Several streams arise from the steep sides. The stream on the south of the hill is the source of the river Ray. The top of the hill marks the change in water catchments between water that falls to the south and the river Thames and then the Thames and precipitation that falls to the north and drains into the Great Ouse and out to the Wash. There are several ponds including some on top of the hill.

Land use and settlement Besides the large area of woodland this is a mixed agricultural landscape with more grassland and about half of this is unimproved. The area has no villages but a scattering of farms most of these are on the lower slopes but Kitehill Farm and Finemerehill House are situated close to the top of the hill on its more dramatic southern side. Finemerehill House is a feature in views from below being a small brick house with tall chimneys, situated at the top of steep slopes surrounded by woodland. There are no roads through the area but a network of footpaths and bridleways crosses it. The bridleway across the ridge top has exhilarating panoramic views across lower ground, with Waddesdon Manor woodland being a key feature in these views.

Tree cover The area has a very high level of woodland cover at about 40% most of this is broadleaved but about a quarter is coniferous. The woodland is predominantly on the western end of the hill. Finemere Wood has rich ground flora and is a Wildlife Trust Reserve managed as oak standards with coppice. Much of the woodland is ancient in origin.

The tree cover within hedgerows is generally good although the eastern side has an area with few hedgerow trees.

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Biodiversity Almost one third of Finemere Hill is covered in woodland habitats, both broadleaved and coniferous, which is distributed mainly in the western half and includes all three priority and broad habitat types found within the District. Finemere Wood is an SSSI and the designation corresponds to the area of ancient woodland. The nearby woodlands of Runts Wood, Balmore Wood, Greatsea Wood and Romer Wood are all designated as CWSs and are also ancient woodlands displaying a range of habitat and species. Further ancient woodlands are present close by within LCA 7.3 Claydon Bowl making this an important concentration of woodland habitat within the District.

The rest of the habitat is comprised largely of grassland grouped in blocks to the northwest, to the east and a central block, whilst arable land is grouped centrally. The grassland includes calcareous and unimproved pasture, with calcareous grassland restricted to the south.

With the exception of standing water, there is little other natural habitat.

Historic environment This area was part of the medieval hunting forest of Bernwood. This would have been a mixed agricultural landscape of woodland rough grazing land shared out between nearby settlements and arable open fields. The historical connection with Bernwood Forest is emphasised by the large surviving blocks of ancient woodland, which makes up a quarter of the landscape. Woodlands such as Finemere Wood, has lost a proportion of its broadleaf character through coniferous replanting. The other significant characteristic of landscape is the irregular shaped fields, some of which are assarts, created as a result of woodland clearance in medieval period. It is likely historically this area was influenced by land improvement by the Verneys at Middle Claydon. About 80% of this area is likely to represent woodland and enclosure that is pre 18th century in origin. There are small areas of later enclosure and secondary woodland and some recent enclosure and prairie farming on the north side.

There are no nucleated settlements - the historic settlement pattern is one of isolated farmsteads. The only listed building is the 19th century Finemerehill House. In terms of the archaeological dimension the area contains some well preserved ridge and furrow, fishponds and also contains the earthworks of a moated site and church at Hogshaw Farm which originated as a preceptory of the Knights Hospitaller. St. John's Church was destroyed in the English Civil War.

The area has a high amenity value, there are numerous rights of way which follow the distinctive pattern historic routes winding into the centre of this area and are actively promoted through the Bernwood Jubilee Way guides.

Designations

Scheduled Ancient Monuments: Moated site NW of St Leonards Church,
Moated Site

Archaeological Notification Areas – 6 No.

SSSI: Finemere Wood

CWS – 4 No.

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View looking up to Finemere Hill from the south, Finemerehill House is just visible on the left hand side.



The southern side of the ridge is predominantly woodland and pasture with dramatic views to woodland of the Waddesdon Manor parkland and the Chiltern escarpment on the horizon.

LCA 9.1 Finemere Hill (LCT 9)

Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

Condition	Very Good
Pattern of elements:	Unified
Visual detractors:	Few
Visual unity:	Strongly unified
Cultural integrity:	Good
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Strong

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

Guidelines	Conserve
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Condition

The landscape of this area is generally in a very good condition there is a unified pattern of woodland and hedgerows across the strong landform. The only real visual detractors are the pylon line on the eastern side and the small areas of prairie farming which fragment the sense of unity. Overall the landscape is considered to be strongly unified. The cultural integrity is good with a good sense of history from the hedgerow pattern, ancient woodland and archaeological interest. The sense of historic continuity is enhanced by the lack of roads but good historically-based rights of way network. Additionally woodland that is being managed with the traditional method of coppice with standards gives strong historic associations. Ecological integrity is moderate because of the areas of designated sites and broad habitats of District

significance present relative to the rest of the District, and because connectivity is not at a maximum. The good cultural integrity and moderate ecological integrity combine to give the area a strong functional integrity.

Sensitivity

This area has a distinct landscape character from the variety and quality of landscape features it also has a good sense of historic continuity giving it a moderate sense of place. The landform is a dominant feature in the character of the area. Although the area has a much higher level of woodland cover than in most of the surrounding countryside the tree cover is considered to be intermittent as there are large areas where the only cover is from fairly widely spaced hedgerow trees. This gives the area a high level of visibility. Overall the moderate sense of place and the high visibility combine to give a landscape of high sensitivity.



The northern side of the ridge has more arable farming amongst large areas of woodland.

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Landscape Guidelines Conserve

The landscape guidelines for Finemere Hill are as follows:

- Encourage the retention and strengthening of the existing historic hedgerow pattern with new hedgerow trees, predominantly oak.
- Encourage the restoration of the historic hedgerow pattern where it has been lost. To enhance the landscape character and strengthen connectivity of habitats. Where necessary use historic maps to identify where hedgerows have been lost.
- Maintain and improve condition of existing hedgerows through traditional cutting regimes.
- Maintain the condition and extent of woodland using traditional techniques to create and manage a wide diversity of habitats.
- Maintain the existing extent of the calcareous grassland.
- Promote connectivity of habitats, particularly the calcareous grassland and woodland.
- Maintain the distinctive pattern of historic routeways.
- Support and promote recreational access by footpaths and bridleways to the hill.
- Promote information and understanding about the historic importance and appropriate management of historic woodland features such as irregular edges, assarts, banks and ditches.
- Maintain the sparsely settled remote character of the landscape.
- Retain and enhance views from publicly accessible land.
- Ensure the preservation of archaeological earthworks by maintaining grassland.



The hill is well served by bridleways and footpaths.