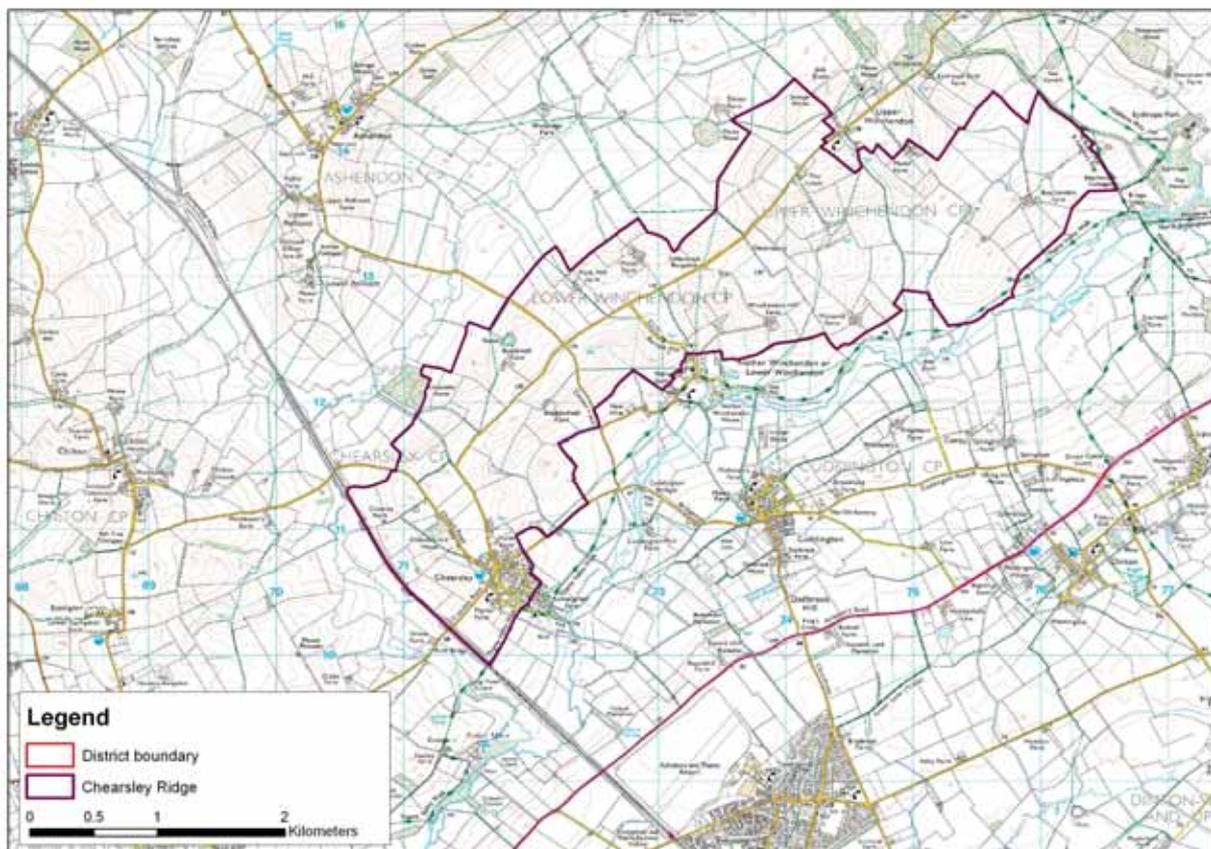
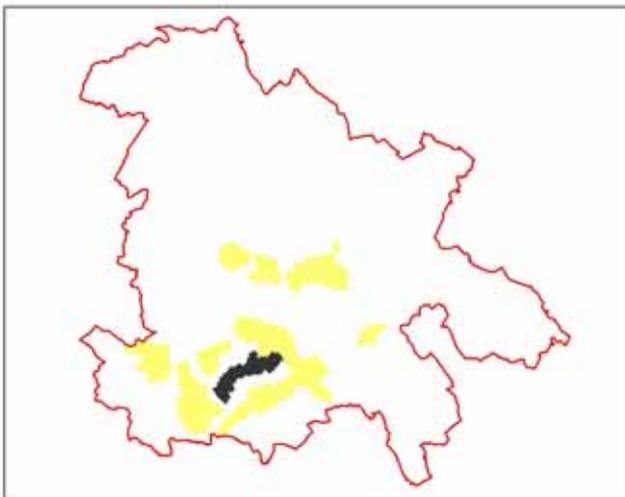


LCA 9.7 Chearsley Ridge

Landscape Character Type: LCT 9 Low Hills and Ridges



LCA 9.7 Chearsley Ridge (LCT 9)

Key Characteristics

- Small well defined ridge
- Narrow ridge top
- Mixed agriculture with slightly more arable
- Small scattered woodlands
- Road along ridge top
- Half the area retains early enclosure pattern
- Large areas of prairie farming
- Good views in all directions
- Open character

Distinctive Features

- Historic settlement of Chearsley
- Sunken lanes on ridge sides
- Farms along ridge sides
- Small historic farm buildings in fields
- Mature trees above Lower Winchendon
- Observatory building
- Railway line in cutting
- Witchert Walls
- Beachendon Farm earthworks

Location On the western side of the district to the north of Haddenham. The ridge runs from the edge of Waddesdon estate in the northeast down to the Thame Valley in the southwest and the railway line.

Landscape character An attractive well defined small ridge with an open, agricultural landscape with good views in all directions. The hedgerow pattern is variable with some areas with poor low cut hedgerows, particularly around arable fields. Some of the hedgerows are gappy and there is evidence of hedgerow removal. The lane along the top is straight and fast whilst those on the steep ridge sides are often sunken enclosed and steep. Chearsley village is situated on the lower slopes with the church and other parts of the historic settlement extending into the Thame Valley LCA. This is an interesting and lively landscape, which has a good landscape quality which has been eroded where the historic landscape pattern of hedgerows has been removed.

Geology The Chearsley Ridge is made up of Kimmeridge clay overlain by Portland stone capped by a small localised outcrops of Purbeck limestone. The western end of the ridge is capped by a deposit of Whitchurch sand, over the Purbeck limestone.

Topography A small well-defined ridge with steep sides and a narrow undulating top. The elevation ranges from about 70m at the bottom of the ridge to 130m AOD.

Hydrology A few small streams cut slight valleys into the steep ridge sides. Several of these streams have springs at their heads. There is a small lake with a retaining wall north of Blackwell Farm.

Land use and settlement This is a mixed agricultural landscape with a slight tendency to more arable farming; particularly on the southern side. The ridge has a fairly dense concentration of farms, mainly on the steep sides. Chearsley is the only village within the area and occupies sloping ground on the south-western end of the ridge. The village extends down into the Thame Valley LCA. The village retains strong historic associations with vernacular buildings built of the local limestone. There are also a few cottages close to the ridge top near Lower Winchendon.

Tree cover Small woodlands are scattered across the area. The amount of trees in hedgerows varies tremendously with the majority being strong hedgerows with trees but there are large areas on the southern side with very few trees. The railway line from Thame makes up the area's western boundary - it is in cutting but has good scrub growth on the embankments.

Biodiversity The Chearsley Ridge is a mix of grassland and arable habitat throughout. Grassland is largely improved however two unimproved areas occur in the south and two pockets of neutral pasture are present in the north. This is a broad habitat type, further habitats in this category are the broadleaved woodland present as small fragments scattered throughout and a very limited amount of open standing water and streams. The hedgerow habitat is valuable for habitat connectivity and in its own right. Coniferous woodland is present in small fragments in the north.

Historic environment The area was part of Bernwood Forest in the early 13th century. Bernwood had been a hunting ground from the time of Edward the Confessor. Although today forests are synonymous with woodland, this part of Bernwood has historically been an open landscape of arable or pasture. The historic landscape includes small areas of meadow and common which are pre

LCA 9.7 Chearsley Ridge (LCT 9)

18th century. Just over half the area retains the pattern of early enclosure, predominantly pre 18th century. The about a third of the area has lost it's historic landscape pattern of early enclosure to prairie farming and new enclosure.

With the exception of the village of Chearsley, the landscape is characterised by dispersed settlement, with a number of isolated farmsteads. There are a few listed buildings in the area, the greatest concentration is found at Chearsley which is also a conservation area. One particular characteristic of the built heritage is that Chearsley is one of the best places in which to see Witchert, which appears in most of the older houses and the boundary walls. Witchert walls, now relatively scarce, are a valuable part of the architectural heritage of Buckinghamshire.

The known archaeology in this area is piecemeal, there are some small areas of ridge and furrow earthworks found across the area, this includes some medieval cultivation terraces or lynchets north of Chearsley Furze. However, the most notable site is the earthworks of a deserted medieval hamlet and manor site at Beachandon, There are also Roman and Saxon finds as well as unsubstantiated evidence for a Roman road which runs through the area from Dorchester-on-Thames to Akeman Street.

The area is served by several promoted Rights of Way, including a walk for the Bernwood Jubilee Way.

Designations

Conservation Area at Chearsley
Archaeological Notification Areas – 8 No.
BNS – 3 No.

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Small farm buildings have often lost their original agricultural use without conservation they will disappear as features within the landscape.



Looking west from the ridge towards Chilton Ridge LCA 9.8 across Crawley Narrow Valley LCA 5.10.

LCA 9.7 Chearsley Ridge (LCT 9)

Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

Condition	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Visual detractors:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Functional integrity:	Weak

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

Guidelines	Conserve and Restore
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Condition

The landscape is generally considered to be in a moderate condition it has retained a coherent landscape pattern based on the hedgerow network. However, in places the hedgerows have been lost or become very fragmented. There is little in the way of visual detractors but some of the very large prairie fields have removed the landscape structure to the extent that much of the landscape quality relies on the views out. The landscape is visually unified by the landform, field pattern and strong agricultural character. The cultural integrity is considered to be variable mainly because in the variations in the condition of the hedgerows and the intermittent distribution of archaeological sites. Ecological integrity is weak despite good connectivity of habitats, because the areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance are low. Overall the area is considered to have a

weak functional integrity.

Sensitivity

The landscape has a distinctive character relating to how the settlement and farming have developed on the small distinct landform. It has a strong sense of historic continuity with unexpanded historic settlements, narrow, sometimes sunken lanes and vernacular buildings. Overall it is considered to have a moderate sense of place. The small ridge landform is a dominant feature, which has influenced farming and settlement patterns. The tree cover is intermittent with a few small woods and some hedgerows having trees scattered along their lengths and others with no trees at all. The steep slopes and intermittent tree cover combine to give an area of high visibility. Overall the moderate strength of place combined with the high visibility combine to give an area of high sensitivity.



The southern edge of the village of Chearsley extends down the ridge sides to the Thame Valley LCA 5.11.

LCA 9.7 Chearsley Ridge (LCT 9)

Landscape Guidelines Conserve and Restore

The landscape guidelines for Chearsley Ridge are as follows:

- Encourage the restoration of the historic field pattern where it has been lost. To enhance the landscape character and strengthen the ecological diversity. Where necessary use historic maps to establish where hedgerows 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.
- Promote good woodland management aiming to create a wide diversity of habitats.
- Maintain the condition and extent of neutral, unimproved and semi-improved grassland. Encourage good management practices.
- Maintain and improve connectivity of grasslands and woodland fragments.
- 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 preservation of historic earthworks and ridge and furrow by maintaining a continuous grass sward.



The landscape character of the area is open with views across narrow valleys to the other small ridges being a feature of the area.