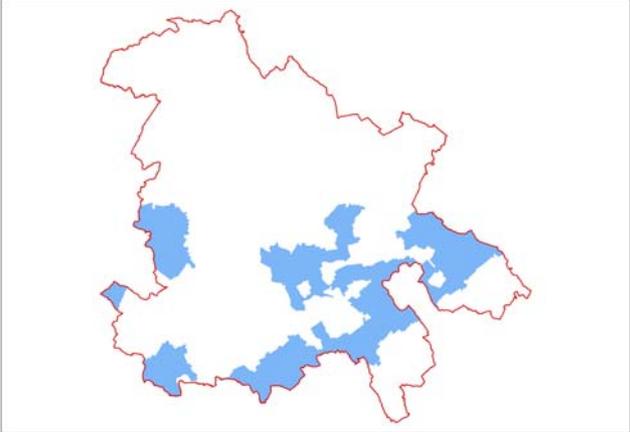


LCT 8 Vale



Constituent LCAs

- LCA 8.1 Marsh Gibbon Vale
- LCA 8.2 Kingsbridge Valley
- LCA 8.3 Ouzel Valley Catchment
- LCA 8.4 Pitstone-Edlesborough Slopes
- LCA 8.5 Northern Vale
- LCA 8.6 Hulcott Vale
- LCA 8.7 Cheddington Vale
- LCA 8.8 Panshill Vale
- LCA 8.9 Haddenham Vale
- LCA 8.10 Southern Vale
- LCA 8.11 Peppershill Arable
- LCA 8.12 Ickford Pastoral Vale



LCT 8 Vale

Key Characteristics

- Flat, low lying area
- Poorly drained by a network of streams from the chalk scarp to the south and the clay plateau to the north
- River Thames passes to the north of Aylesbury
- Aylesbury centre stands on a low ridge within the Vale
- Roads radiate out from Aylesbury crossing the Vale landscape
- Mixed agricultural use but with extensive prairie fields dispersed over the area especially the fringes

Distinctive Features

- Network of streams and ditches often forming field boundaries
- Area to north and east of Aylesbury is sparsely populated
- To the south of Aylesbury the marginally higher ground is settled
- Extensive linear settlement pattern along main roads
- Mature black poplar trees are a feature of ditches and watercourses
- Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union Canal
- Medieval earthworks at Quarrendon
- Sense of remoteness at fringes of the area
- New major roads

General Description

Accords with CA 108 Upper Thames Clay Vales, identified by the Character of England map and with the National Landscape Typology LCT LBN in the south and LCN in the north. The area around Aylesbury extends eastwards to the Bedfordshire border and southwest to Thame in Oxfordshire. There are three smaller detached parcels of the Vale in the west at Marsh Gibbon and Panshill also at Ickford where the LCT includes LWW. In geological terms the area is split between Gault clay in the southeast and Kimmeridge clay to the north and west.

The Vale is characterised by the presence of black poplars associated with the watercourses. This is a tree species of national importance that has one of its main population centres in the Vale. Great crested newts are a European Protected Species, with its stronghold in the UK. Targeted great crested newt surveys in parts of the Vale have shown that many small farm ponds support populations. Water voles have been rapidly declining nationwide - the majority of the water vole populations in Buckinghamshire are now confined to the Vale. Recent surveys of the populations in the Vale have shown that they too are replicating the nationwide decline. Its flat, low-lying, poorly drained characteristics have made the area historically important for over-wintering birds.

A majority of grassland within the Vale has been subject to agricultural improvement resulting in restricted botanical diversity. Those areas that retain species-rich swards tend to be remnants of wet, neutral grassland, occasionally of ridge and furrow pasture. Where known botanically diverse grassland sites meet the criteria for designation they are identified as SSSIs or CWSs. A cluster of good examples are to be found in the west of the district near Ludgershall. This area is part of the Upper Thames Tributaries Environmentally Sensitive Area and notable for a series of flood meadows and fields supporting a nationally rare plant community type. It is also considered to be rare in a European context.

The low lying vale landscape is enclosed by the Clay Plateau to the north and the Chilterns Scarp to the south. The area collects all the water running off the high ground and this works its way towards the river Thame which runs west towards the Thames catchment. A low limestone ridge crosses the flat landscape, which is an extension of the A418 Ridge and Berton Ridge (LCT 9). Various streams have cut shallow valleys across this ridge with isolated sections of high ground remaining. The centre of Aylesbury sits on one of these remnants. The landscape beyond the suburban fringe of the town can feel remote and unspoilt particularly where pastoral management is practiced. Other parts mainly nearer the fringes of the area are occupied by large arable fields with well trimmed hedges allowing long distance views to the higher ground beyond. The scale is best appreciated from surrounding high ground, which allows uninterrupted long distance views.

Aylesbury Vale District Council & Buckinghamshire County Council
Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment

Important communications links connect Aylesbury with other principal settlements. The Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union Canal is now used primarily as a recreational corridor.

East of Aylesbury and the Haddenham Vale the water meadows along the various streams are noted for their ecological value. A distinctive feature of the watercourses and ditches are the mature black poplar trees a nationally rare species.

The naturally wet areas of the Vale encouraged the development of moated properties. Sites now abandoned, are often associated with archaeological sites of County importance. There are Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) sites at Quarrendon, north of Aylesbury, at Broughton and Aston Clinton. Hulcott Vale also supports two SAM sites to the southeast and east of Haddenham. Parliamentary enclosure is of particular note in the Marsh Gibbon area LCA 8.1 as is ridge and furrow close to Lagershall. There are medieval and Tudor earthworks at Quarrendon. The A41 is on the route of the Roman road Akeman Street this is the focus of Roman and more recent settlement.