

# Milton Keynes

## Review of Local Landscape Designations

### Milton Keynes City Council

#### Final report

Prepared by LUC

May 2024



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Photo: Tyringham Bridge, Tyringham.



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Milton Keynes

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

**1.1** Milton Keynes City Council (MKCC) is currently in the process of preparing the MK City Plan 2050, which is expected to be adopted in 2025.

**1.2** To assist this local planning process, MKCC commissioned LUC in October 2023 to undertake a review of the landscapes within the Borough and provide recommendations on landscapes that could merit local landscape designation. This report presents the results of that review and will form part of the evidence base for the MK City Plan 2050.

## Background

**1.3** In 1995 Milton Keynes Council recognised areas of valued landscape in the Borough that were considered to be strategic assets at a local level. This local landscape designation, Areas of Attractive Landscape (AALs), was defined in the Milton Keynes Local Plan in 1995, and continued in the Local Plan 2001-2011. Two AALs were identified:

- Brickhills; and
- Ouse Valley.

**1.4** The designation was dropped in 2019, when Plan: MK 2016-2031 was adopted.

**1.5** In 2022 MKCC commissioned LUC to provide a Valued Landscape Policy Review to consider approaches to identifying valued landscapes within the Borough. This review is found in **Appendix C**. A glossary of terms and abbreviations is provided in **Appendix A**.

## This study

**1.6** This study is the outcome of recommendations in the 2022 Valued Landscape Policy Review. LUC was commissioned to provide a full review of the landscape in Milton Keynes to identify landscapes of the highest quality and most value that could potentially merit local landscape designation in line with current best practice.

**1.7** LUC reviewed information within the Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment (2022) on valued landscapes, and undertook further detailed desk and site work to:

- consider whether landscapes in Milton Keynes, including those areas within the former AALs, do or do not meet agreed criteria for local landscape designation;
- provide up to date evidence and justification for areas recommended for local landscape designation and appropriate boundaries.

**1.8** Local landscape designation can play an important part in protecting and enhancing landscapes with special qualities. Evidence on local landscape designations can be useful to inform development management and potential site allocation and landscape policies. Designation does not prevent development from taking place, but can be used to ensure that special landscape qualities are considered.

## Clarification on valued landscapes

**1.9** 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 local landscape designation in Milton Keynes.

## All landscapes are of value

**1.10** 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".

**1.11** 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. The 'all landscape' approach in Milton Keynes is represented by the comprehensive updated Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment (2022) [\[See reference 1\]](#).

## Valued landscapes and the NPPF

**1.12** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), re-issued in December 2023, recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services that it provides.

**1.13** In paragraph 180, it states that:

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: a) *protecting and enhancing valued*

*landscapes... (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);”*

**1.14** 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.”

**1.15** 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 local landscape designations, 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’.

**1.16** 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;
- To be valued a site is required to show some demonstrable physical attributes rather than just popularity.

## What this means for local landscape designation in Milton Keynes

**1.17** This review will help:

- identify those ‘special’ rural landscapes within Milton Keynes that are valued;



- define the attributes and identify the qualities that make these landscapes worthy of local designation;
- ensure a robust and consistent criteria-based approach to defining locally designated landscapes;
- develop proposed appropriate wording for future policy implementation.

**1.18** As noted above, there will also be areas outside the local designation that may have a high landscape value, be locally valued and popular or possess features, attributes or qualities of value that may also merit protection. The Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment (2022) identifies the valued attributes for all landscapes within the Borough and should be used to inform future development proposals and decision making through the planning process.

# 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.

**2.2** There is no guidance on local landscape designation in England. By contrast Scottish and Welsh national planning policy supports the designation of local landscapes, and guidance is provided in ‘Guidance on Designating Local Landscape Areas’ in Scotland [\[See reference 2\]](#), and LANDMAP Guidance Note 1: LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas in Wales [\[See reference 3\]](#).

**2.3** The current Landscape Institute/ Institute Of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) [\[See reference 4\]](#) includes a helpful summary of the range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes, set out in Box 5.1.

**2.4** In 2021 the Landscape Institute published a Technical Guidance Note on ‘Assessing landscape value outside national designations’ [\[See reference 5\]](#). This note included a range of factors that can be considered when identifying landscape value, set out in Table 1 of the document. This guidance is intended to be complementary to the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3).

**2.5** The methodology for this study draws on the above guidance as well as LUC’s experience in undertaking designation reviews elsewhere in the UK.

## Size and coherence

**2.6** A locally designed landscape should be of a sufficient size and form a coherent recognisable area. An important feature or site is not, on its own,

enough to merit local landscape designation. The following points are therefore relevant:

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

**2.7** There will be many individual places, sites and features within the wider landscape of the Borough which are of high quality but not within a designated area due to the reasons above.

## Geographic scope

**2.8** The scope of this study includes a full review of all the rural landscapes in the Borough, including those areas formerly designated as AALs, as shown on **Figure 2.1**.

## Links to the Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment

**2.9** This review has been undertaken following the update of the Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment (2022), also by LUC. The review uses the framework of the Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), of which there are 14 within the Borough. 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 designated areas.

**2.10** In general, where an LCA is indicated to merit potential designation, the neighbouring LCA has also been reviewed to assess how it relates to the area and its relevant qualities.

**2.11** It should also be noted that all LCAs within Milton Keynes include valued qualities or features, even if they do not form part of an area put forward for local landscape designation.

**2.12** **Figure 2.2** illustrates the landscape character framework and those area formerly designated as AALs.

## Key stages and tasks

**2.13** This review followed five main stages, each focussing in at a more detailed level to develop the candidate Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) and identify their qualities.

### Stage 1: Method development

**2.14** A method was developed in discussion with MKCC to understand the background to local landscape designation in Milton Keynes and the desired outcomes of the study.

### Stage 2: Develop criteria

**2.15** The evaluation criteria are drawn from the source documents listed above. They also draw on criteria developed by LUC in previous landscape designation studies, which have been assessed as robust through the Local Plan examination process. They were refined to reflect the particular landscapes of Milton Keynes. The criteria, and their relationship with GLVIA3 and the Landscape's Institute's (LI) Technical Guidance Note (TGN) is provided below.

**Table 2.1: Local landscape designation criteria**

Milton Keynes criteria	GLVIA3 Box 5.1 criteria	TGN Table 1 criteria
Natural heritage	Conservation interests	Natural heritage
Cultural heritage	Conservation interests Associations	Cultural heritage Associations
Recreation	Recreation value	Recreational
Landscape quality (condition and intactness)	Landscape quality	Landscape condition
Local distinctiveness	Rarity Representativeness	Distinctiveness
Perceptual and scenic	Scenic quality Perceptual aspects	Perceptual (scenic) Perceptual (wildness and tranquillity)
Functional	n/a	Functional

**2.16** The full criteria and potential indicators are set out in detail in **Appendix B**.

## Stage 3: Desk review and identification of ‘areas of search’

**2.17** The desk review involved a review of each LCA in the Borough against the criteria to identify broad ‘areas of search’ that stood out as potentially distinctive or of high landscape quality in the context of the Borough as a whole. The results of this review are presented in **Chapter 3**.



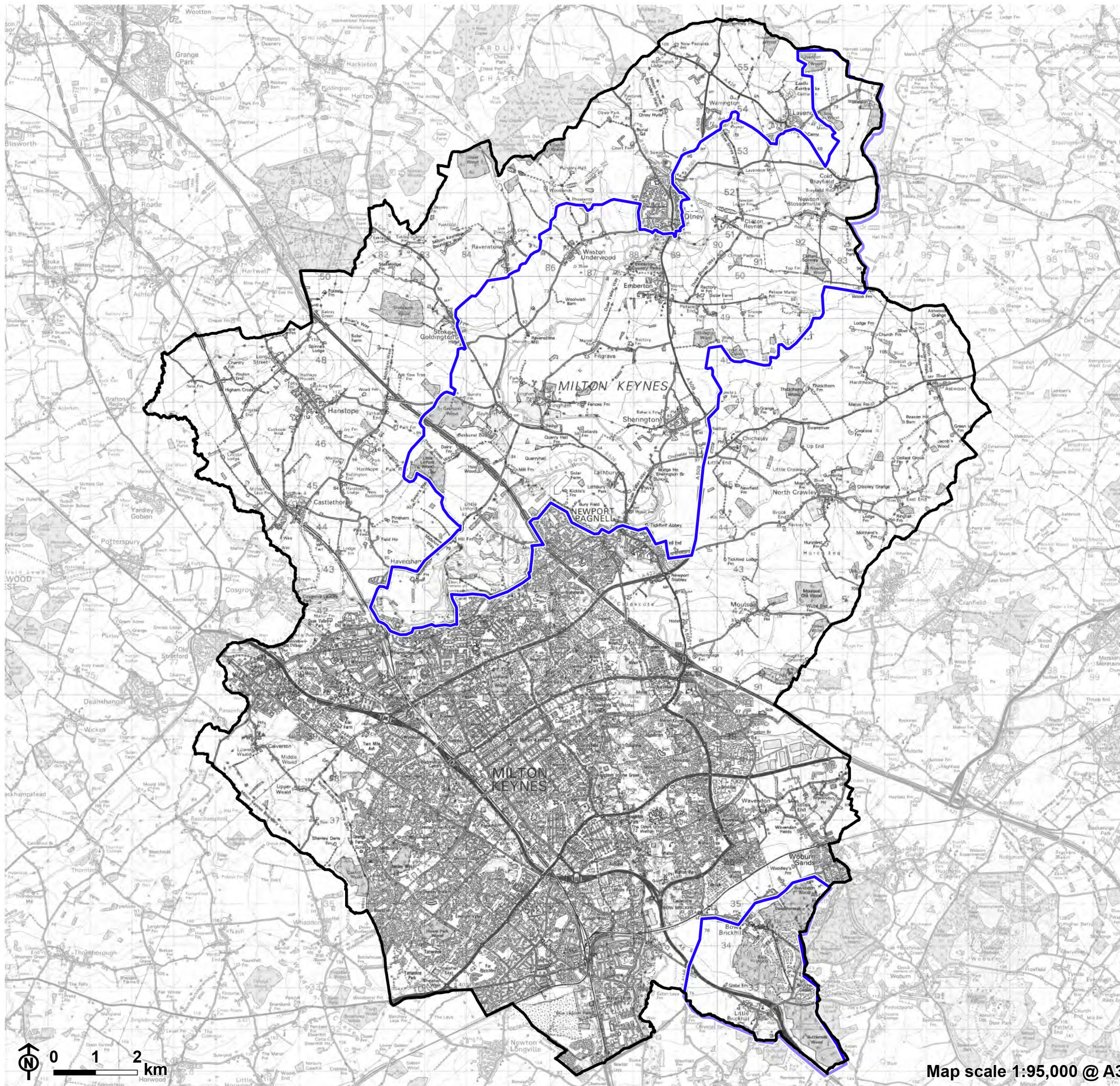
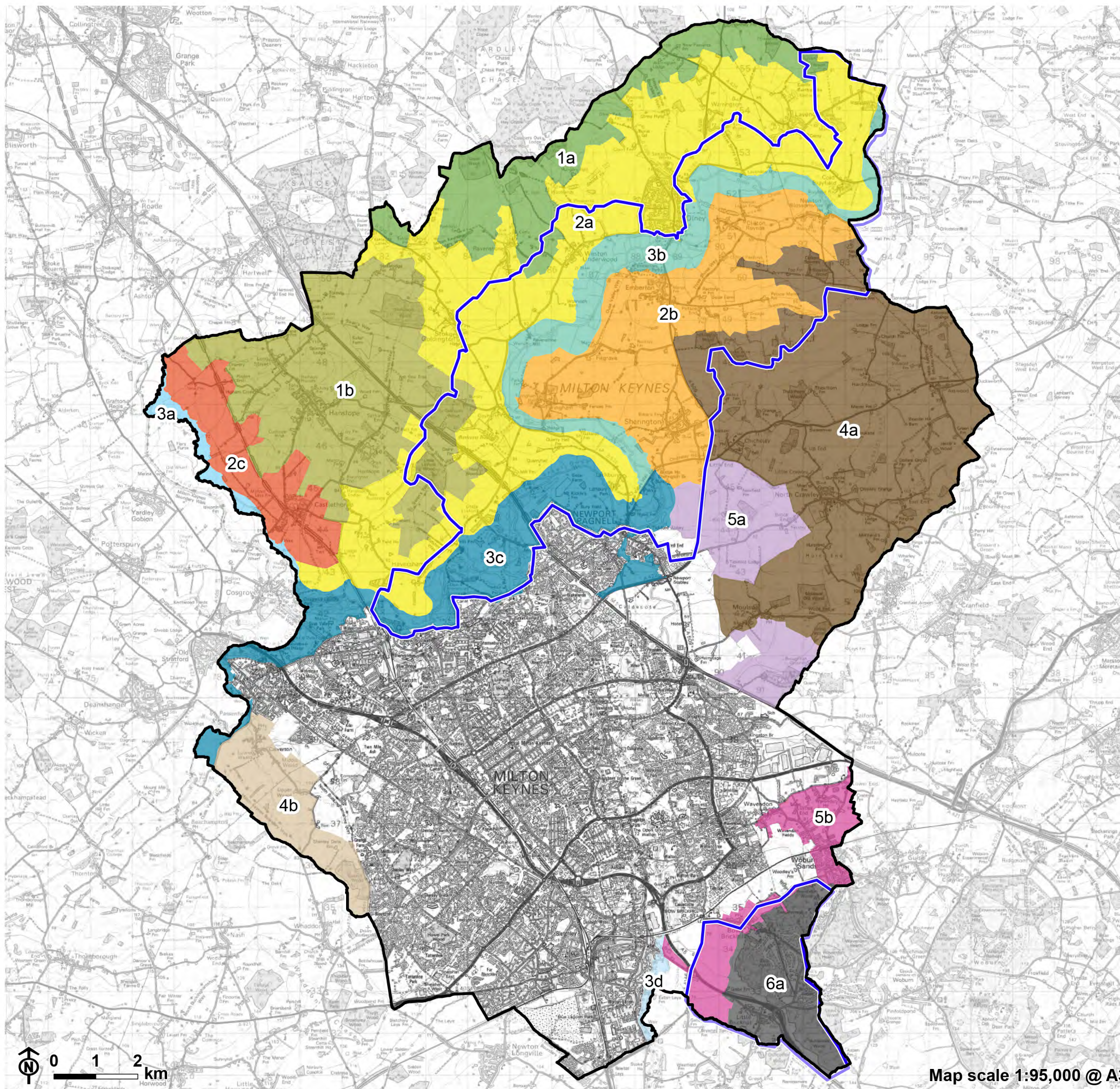


Figure 2.1: Former Areas of Attractive  
Landscape

- Milton Keynes borough boundary
- Former Area of Attractive Landscape





**Figure 2.2: Landscape context to Areas of Attractive Landscape**

- Milton Keynes borough boundary
- Former Area of Attractive Landscape
- Landscape Character Area**
- 1a: Yardley Chase Wooded Wolds
- 1b: Gayhurst and Stokepark Wooded Wolds
- 2a: Ouse Northern Undulating Valley Slopes
- 2b: Ouse Southern Undulating Valley Slopes
- 2c: Tove Undulating Valley Slopes
- 3a: Tove Floodplains
- 3b: Ouse Floodplains
- 3c: Ouse Lakes and Parkland Floodplains
- 3d: Ouzel Parkland Floodplains
- 4a: North Crawley Undulating Clay Plateau
- 4b: Weald Undulating Clay Plateau
- 5a: Lower Ouzel Clay Vale
- 5b: Upper Ouzel Clay Vale
- 6a: Brickhill Greensand Ridge



## Stage 4: Full evaluation of candidate Special Landscape Areas and definition of boundaries

**2.18** A bespoke field survey of those 'areas of search' identified in Stage 3 was undertaken to consider the criteria in more detail and identify appropriate and robust boundaries for candidate SLAs.

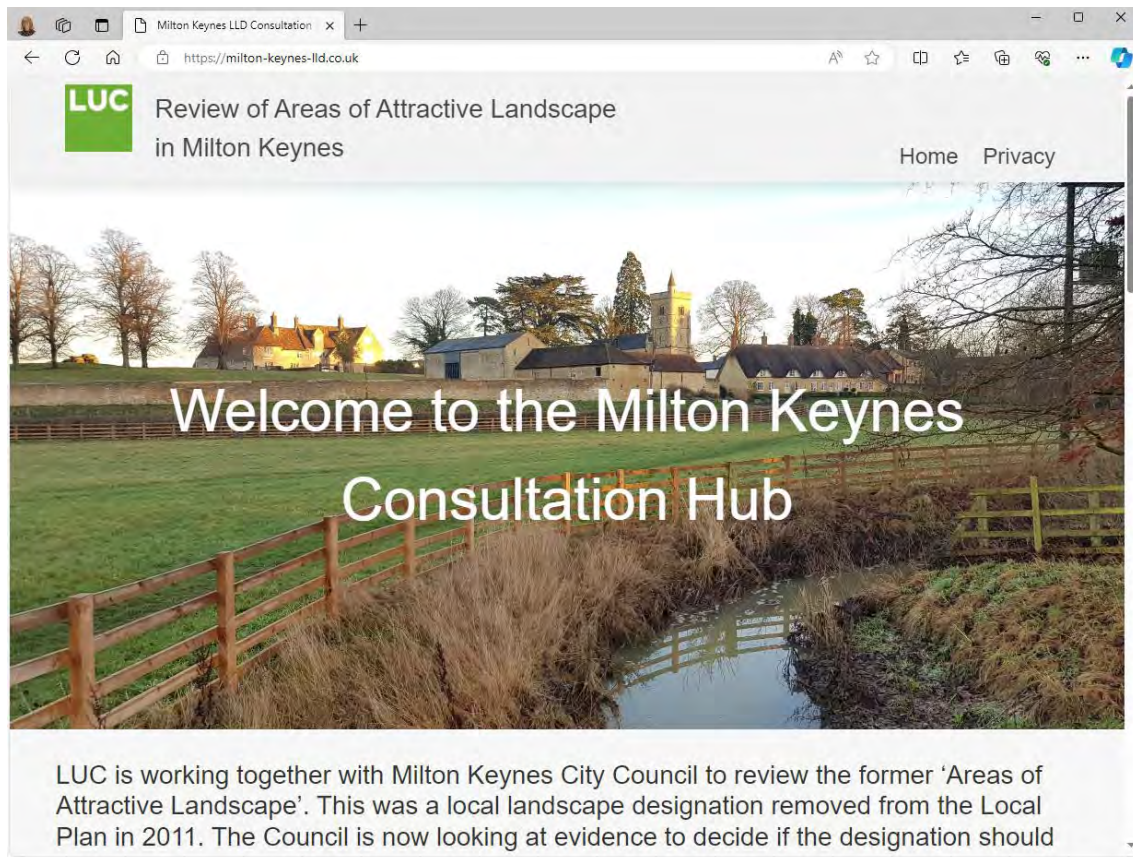
**2.19** Landscape is a continuum and the boundaries for designation are generally drawn to follow identifiable features on the ground such as field boundaries or roads that provide a 'best fit' or are sometimes drawn to LCA boundaries for ease of reference. As boundaries generally represent zones of transition, there is rarely a perceptible change in landscape character and quality along every boundary.

**2.20** The outputs of the evaluation exercise and the resulting candidate SLAs are presented in **Chapter 4**.

## Stage 5: Stakeholder consultation

**2.21** A workshop was held for key stakeholders on 29 February 2024. This was followed by an online consultation that remained open for three weeks. Participants were encouraged to provide additional information to add weight to the criteria and submit their views on the candidate SLAs via an interactive map and questionnaire.

**Figure 2.3: Screenshot of the online consultation hub**



## Stage 6: Confirmation of candidate Special Landscape Areas

**2.22** Taking into account comments received during the stakeholder consultation and from officers at MKCC, the areas recommended for local landscape designation were provided to MKCC. This is a technical report and as such it does not represent MKCC policy. The candidate SLAs will be consulted on as part of the Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 consultations for the MK City Plan 2050. The SLAs will then be adopted once the new city plan is successfully adopted.

## Chapter 3

# Identifying Areas of Search

**3.1** This chapter presents the results of an initial evaluation of the 14 LCAs against the agreed landscape value criteria. The LCAs are shown on **Figure 2.2**.

**3.2** For each criterion, the LCA was assessed to:

- partially meet;
- fully meet; or
- does not meet.

**3.3** This provided a starting point for identifying areas likely to be put forward for local landscape designation. It also allowed for scoping out areas which did not meet the criteria, where no further evaluation was required.

**3.4** The results of this desk study assessment are set out below.



## LCA 1a Yardley Chase Wooded Wolds

Extent of LCA within former Area of Attractive Landscape: 6%

**Figure 3.1: LCA 1a: Panoramic views across the Ouse valley to the Greensand Ridge**



### Description of the LCA against Local Landscape Designation criteria

- **Natural heritage:** Species-rich hedgerows, interspersed with small areas of ancient woodland (some replanted), provide some evidence of ecological interest which contributes positively to landscape character.

- **Cultural heritage:** Historically the LCA formed part of Yardley Chase and Salcey Forest which provides some cultural time depth. There is a mixed field pattern of 20<sup>th</sup> century prairie fields with some historic enclosed furlongs and strips. Limited historic landmarks or designed landscape elements reduce the contribution to the cultural interest of the landscape. There are no known associations with notable people, events or the arts.
- **Recreation:** There are large areas with no public access, although the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk and Three Shires Way promoted routes provide recreational value, including links into wider woodland to the north in West Northamptonshire.
- **Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** Although hedgerows are generally in good condition, the rural quality of the area is reduced by detracting features including busy roads, electricity pylons and views to large infrastructure at Petsoe Manor wind farm. The proximity of the edge of Milton Keynes city also detracts from landscape quality.
- **Local distinctiveness:** The strong elevated plateau landform and wooded backdrop are distinctive features, and relatively rare within Milton Keynes district, contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place.
- **Perceptual and scenic:** A strong visual character derived from views to woodland within the LCA and to the north, very limited settlement, and a relative lack of human influence contributes to perceptual and scenic qualities. However, the presence of busy roads reduces tranquillity.
- **Functional:** The woodland and hedgerows are part of an important healthy functioning landscape, and contribute to the multifunctional green infrastructure network, although there are gaps in the network.

**Table 3.1: Summary of LCA 1a against the Local Landscape Designation criteria**

Local Landscape Designation Criterion	Extent the LCA meets the criterion
Natural heritage	Partially meets

<b>Local Landscape Designation Criterion</b>	<b>Extent the LCA meets the criterion</b>
Cultural heritage	Partially meets
Recreation	Partially meets
Landscape quality (condition and intactness)	Partially meets
Local distinctiveness	Fully meets
Perceptual and scenic	Partially meets
Functional	Partially meets
<b>Conclusion</b>	Do not take forward

## LCA 1b Gayhurst and Stokepark Wooded Wolds

Extent of LCA within former Area of Attractive Landscape: 10%

Figure 3.2: LCA 1b: Arable rural setting to Hanslope



### Description of the LCA against Local Landscape Designation criteria

- **Natural heritage:** Ancient woodlands are concentrated in the east, with Stokepark Wood and Little Linford Wood designated as a Local Wildlife



Site (LWS). These woodlands and hedgerow boundaries provide some evidence of ecological interest which contribute positively to landscape character.

- **Cultural heritage:** A landscape with important cultural features. Historically the LCA formed part of Yardley Chase and Salcey Forest which provides cultural time depth. The Royal Forest was incorporated into the parkland character of Hanslope Park, originally a deer park within Salcey Forest. There is a strong historic field pattern with assarts and pre-18<sup>th</sup> century co-axial enclosure. Historic features are clustered at Hanslope, which has a designated Conservation Area and includes the Grade I listed St James the Great, which has the tallest church spire in Buckinghamshire. These features all contribute to the cultural interest of the landscape. There are no known associations with notable people, events or the arts.
- **Recreation:** The LCA has excellent recreational access, with a number of long-distance routes including the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk, Three Shires Way, Midshires Way and Hanslope Circular Ride.
- **Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** The parkland character at Hanslope Park has been negatively impacted by 20<sup>th</sup> century development, including floodlighting and security gates. Major transport routes and a solar farm, and the variable condition of hedgerows, also detract from landscape quality.
- **Local distinctiveness:** The strong elevated plateau landform and wooded backdrop are distinctive features, and relatively rare within Milton Keynes district, contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place. The landscape provides an important rural setting to Hanslope village.
- **Perceptual and scenic:** Views to woodland within the LCA and to the north, and long views over adjacent river valleys results in a strong visual character. The contrast between enclosure within woodlands and openness in the arable fields contributes to the scenic quality of the landscape. Overall, this is a strongly rural landscape although the busy transport corridors reduce tranquillity locally.



- **Functional:** The woodland and hedgerows are part of an important healthy functioning landscape, and contribute to the multifunctional green infrastructure network, although there are gaps in the network.

**Table 3.2: Summary of LCA 1b against the Local Landscape Designation criteria**

Local Landscape Designation Criterion	Extent the LCA meets the criterion
Natural heritage	Partially meets
Cultural heritage	Fully meets
Recreation	Fully meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Local distinctiveness	Fully meets
Perceptual and scenic	Partially meets
Functional	Partially meets
<b>Conclusion</b>	Take forward

## LCA 2a Ouse Northern Undulating Valley Slopes

Extent of LCA within former Area of Attractive Landscape: 48%

Figure 3.3: LCA 2s: Parkland at Gayhurst Court



### Description of the LCA against Local Landscape Designation criteria

- **Natural heritage:** A landscape with a few areas of natural heritage importance. Small woodlands, often recorded as priority habitat and some

of ancient origin, and areas of semi-improved grassland and meadow are designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). These, along with hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees, provide some evidence of ecological interest which contributes positively to landscape character. A number of tributary streams and ponds are also important natural features and contribute to landscape character.

- **Cultural heritage:** The landscape includes many important historic features and cultural associations. Historic villages and the market town of Olney, designated as Conservation Areas due to their numerous historic buildings and landmark church spires and towers, contribute to the sense of place and scenic quality of the landscape. The field pattern is mixed, although remaining pre-18<sup>th</sup> century and Parliamentary field patterns contribute to the time-depth of the landscape. Historic houses and parklands also contribute to the cultural interest of the landscape. Olney is associated with radical Christians in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, including the poet William Cowper and John Newton who wrote the words to 'Amazing Grace'.
- **Recreation:** The LCA has excellent recreational access including the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk and Three Shires Way promoted routes.
- **Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** Hedgerows are in variable condition, and the area has many characteristic and valued features. However, there are a number of detractors within the landscape including a solar farm, new residential and commercial development on the edge of Olney and an aggregates quarry north of Lathbury.
- **Local distinctiveness:** The river valley landform is a distinctive feature forming a recognisable area. The landscape forms an important 'gateway' and contributes positively to the character of Olney.
- **Perceptual and scenic:** An open landscape with fine panoramic views which contribute positively to the scenic qualities of the landscape, including views to the wooded skyline of Yardley Chase to the north, wooded Greensand Ridge (LCA 6a) to the south-east and over the River Ouse to historic parklands (LCA 2b). However, the Petsoe Manor wind farm is intrusive in views across the Ouse river valley and detracts from

scenic qualities. Although the area is rural, tranquillity is impacted by the transport corridors of the M1 and West Coast Mainline railway.

- **Functional:** The woodlands and meadows contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape, and contribute to the multifunctional green infrastructure network, although there are gaps in the network.

**Table 3.3: Summary of LCA 2a against the Local Landscape Designation criteria**

Local Landscape Designation Criterion	Extent the LCA meets the criterion
Natural heritage	Partially meets
Cultural heritage	Fully meets
Recreation	Fully meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Local distinctiveness	Fully meets
Perceptual and scenic	Partially meets
Functional	Partially meets
<b>Conclusion</b>	Take forward



## LCA 2b Ouse Southern Undulating Valley Slopes

Extent of LCA within former Area of Attractive Landscape: 100%

Figure 3.4: LCA 2b: Parkland at Tyringham Hall



### Description of the LCA against Local Landscape Designation criteria

- **Natural heritage:** The landscape is characterised by hedgerows, small areas of woodland (often recorded as priority habitat and some of ancient

origin) and areas of semi-improved calcareous grasslands, scrub and ponds designated as LWS. These provide evidence of ecological interest which contributes positively to landscape character. A number of tributary streams of the Ouse are also of ecological interest and contribute to landscape character.

- **Cultural heritage:** A landscape with important cultural features. Historic villages, designated as Conservation Areas due to their many listed buildings, contribute to the sense of place and scenic quality of the landscape. The field pattern is mixed, with considerable areas of pre-18<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century field enclosures, although large modern prairie fields around Sherington and Filgrave detract from the time-depth of the landscape. Tyringham Hall parkland and views across the Ouse to parkland at Gayhurst Court also contribute to the cultural interest of the landscape. Tyringham Hall was designed by Sir John Soane, with gardens laid out by Humphry Repton and later Edwin Lutyens.
- **Recreation:** The LCA has good recreational access, including along the promoted routes Three Shires Way and Ouse Valley Way.
- **Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** Hedgerows are in variable condition, with some replacement by post and rail, although there has been some new planting. Intact historic field patterns provide a strong landscape structure, except for boundary loss around Sherington and Filgrave. A solar farm at Petsoe End, the A509 and electricity pylons west of Newton Blossomville are detractors within the landscape.
- **Local distinctiveness:** The river valley landform with localised shallow valleys is a distinctive feature, and the landscape forms an important 'gateway' and contributes positively to the character of Olney.
- **Perceptual and scenic:** An open landscape, with views across the rural undulating landscape and the River Ouse, including to the landmark church spire at Olney, with a wooded backdrop to the north. However, clear views to the Petsoe Manor wind farm and tall buildings and warehouses within Milton Keynes city to the south, reduce the scenic qualities. The A509 is a busy road which locally reduces tranquillity.

- **Functional:** The hedgerows, woodlands, scrub, grasslands, streams and ponds contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape, and the multifunctional green infrastructure network.

**Table 3.4: Summary of LCA 2b against the Local Landscape Designation criteria**

Local Landscape Designation Criterion	Extent the LCA meets the criterion
Natural heritage	Partially meets
Cultural heritage	Fully meets
Recreation	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Local distinctiveness	Fully meets
Perceptual and scenic	Partially meets
Functional	Fully meets
<b>Conclusion</b>	Take forward

## LCA 2c Tove Undulating Valley Slopes

Extent of LCA within former Area of Attractive Landscape: 0%

Figure 3.5: LCA 2c: Pasture with wooded backdrop



### Description of the LCA against Local Landscape Designation criteria

- **Natural heritage:** The landscape does not have strong natural attributes. Hedgerows, a few small, mature copses, and riparian trees which follow the tributary streams and ditches of the Tove, make a limited contribution to the ecological interest of the landscape.



- **Cultural heritage:** The field pattern is largely pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular enclosure, with field patterns derived from Parliamentary enclosure around Castlethorpe, which contributes to the time depth of the landscape. Areas of large modern prairie fields south of Castlethorpe detract from the cultural interest of the landscape. Castlethorpe, the only settlement within the LCA, is designated as a Conservation Area due to its distinctive motte and bailey castle (Scheduled Monument) and number of listed buildings, which contribute to the sense of place locally. There are no known associations with notable people, events or the arts.
- **Recreation:** There is limited recreational access within the LCA, although sections of the promoted routes Milton Keynes Boundary Walk and Hanslope Circular Ride, and National Cycling Route 6 pass through the LCA.
- **Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** The hedgerows are in good condition, and north of Castlethorpe the historic field pattern is intact. However, the railway line with large catenary is an incongruous feature, as is a solar farm at Lodge Farm Business Park.
- **Local distinctiveness:** The sloping valley landform provides some local distinctiveness, and the motte and bailey castle at Castlethorpe is a recognisable distinct feature. However, there are few distinctive features.
- **Perceptual and scenic:** There are long views west across the Tove valley floodplain, including to the Grand Union Canal, and across to the wooded plateau in Northamptonshire, which contributes to the scenic qualities. Tranquillity is locally reduced by the railway line and noise from the busy A508.
- **Functional:** The landscape does not contain many elements which contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape.

**Table 3.5: Summary of LCA 2c against the Local Landscape Designation criteria**

Local Landscape Designation Criterion	Extent the LCA meets the criterion
Natural heritage	Does not meet
Cultural heritage	Partially meets
Recreation	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Local distinctiveness	Partially meets
Perceptual and scenic	Partially meets
Functional	Does not meet
<b>Conclusion</b>	Do not take forward

## LCA 3a Tove Floodplains

Extent of LCA within former Area of Attractive Landscape: 0%

Figure 3.6: LCA 3a: Low-lying floodplain



### Description of the LCA against Local Landscape Designation criteria

- **Natural heritage:** The landscape does not have especially strong natural attributes. However, large floodplain fields, in use for pasture, are bounded by hedgerows. Scattered trees lining the River Tove and some priority

habitat deciduous woodland, make some limited contribution to the ecological interest of the landscape.

- **Cultural heritage:** An area with few cultural associations. Ridge and furrow earthworks near Castlethorpe Mill provide time-depth, while the Mill itself is the only building on the floodplain. These cultural heritage features contribute positively to landscape character but are small components within the wider landscape. There are no known associations with notable people, events or the arts.
- **Recreation:** Limited public rights of way are concentrated around Castlethorpe, while the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk promoted route crosses the north of the area.
- **Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** Hedgerows are in a variable condition, with some replacement and reinforcement by post and wire fencing. The landscape is remote from large settlements, and there are limited incongruous features within the LCA.
- **Local distinctiveness:** The remote floodplain landscape and shallow valley topography imparts some sense of place, although there are no particularly distinctive features within the landscape.
- **Perceptual and scenic:** A strongly rural landscape, with limited access by road or foot, and only one building. There are long views west across the floodplain to the Grand Union Canal (in Northamptonshire), with small villages and wooded horizons visible. To the east there are views up the rising valley slopes, to the landmark church tower at Hanslope. Tranquillity is impacted in proximity to the mainline railway and the A50 in Northamptonshire.
- **Functional:** The floodplain of the River Tove contributes to the healthy functioning of the landscape, and the multifunctional green infrastructure network.

**Table 3.6: Summary of LCA 3a against the Local Landscape Designation criteria**

Local Landscape Designation Criterion	Extent the LCA meets the criterion
Natural heritage	Does not meet
Cultural heritage	Does not meet
Recreation	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Local distinctiveness	Partially meets
Perceptual and scenic	Fully meets
Functional	Fully meets
<b>Conclusion</b>	Do not take forward



## LCA 3b Ouse Floodplains

Extent of LCA within former Area of Attractive Landscape: 100%

Figure 3.7: LCA 3b: Naturalistic River Great Ouse floodplain



### Description of the LCA against Local Landscape Designation criteria

- **Natural heritage:** An area with many valued natural features. The meandering River Ouse is lined by mature riparian vegetation, much designated as priority habitat deciduous woodland, while areas of priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh and chalk grassland are found on the

floodplain. The whole river channel is designated as the River Ouse Wildlife Corridor. These features provide evidence of ecological interest which contributes strongly to landscape character.

- **Cultural heritage:** The landscape includes many important historic features and cultural associations. Ridge and furrow earthworks within pasture fields provide time-depth, and with historic stone bridges (designated as Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings) provide clear evidence of cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape character. Parkland landscapes at Tyringham Hall and Gayhurst Court (Registered Parks and Gardens), provide time-depth and a sense of place. There is also archaeological evidence of previous occupation on the floodplain. Olney is associated with radical Christians in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, including the poet William Cowper and John Newton who wrote the words to 'Amazing Grace'. Landscape gardener Humphrey Repton designed parts of both Tyringham Hall and Gayhurst Court.
- **Recreation:** The promoted Ouse Valley Way crosses the floodplain at various points, however access to the river itself is generally limited. Emberton Country Park provides recreational opportunities in a former gravel works contributing to the recreational value of the landscape.
- **Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** Open fields are bounded by drainage ditches, which are in generally good condition, or occasional over-mature hedgerows and post and wire fencing. Former gravel extraction has weakened the structure of the landscape at Emberton. Modern intrusions within the landscape are limited.
- **Local distinctiveness:** The functioning floodplain character, with considerable areas of parkland, water-filled former gravel pits, and limited settlement creates a recognisable sense of place, and an important approach to both Olney and Newport Pagnell.
- **Perceptual and scenic:** The landscape has strong perceptual qualities, with a sense of rural tranquillity, and scenic views across the floodplain to villages and towns on the rising valley sides. The church spire of St Peter and St Paul, Olney is a distinctive landmark feature. Modern features in longer-distance views include the wind farm at Petsoe Manor and electricity pylons in adjacent landscapes.

- **Functional:** The landscape is a functioning floodplain, which contributes to the healthy functioning of the landscape, and contributes to the multifunctional green infrastructure network.

**Table 3.7: Summary of LCA 3b against the Local Landscape Designation criteria**

Local Landscape Designation Criterion	Extent the LCA meets the criterion
Natural heritage	Fully meets
Cultural heritage	Fully meets
Recreation	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Local distinctiveness	Partially meets
Perceptual and scenic	Fully meets
Functional	Fully meets
<b>Conclusion</b>	Take forward



## LCA 3c Ouse Lakes and Parkland Floodplains

Extent of LCA within former Area of Attractive Landscape: 68%

Figure 3.8: LCA 3b: Railway over the River Great Ouse



### Description of the LCA against Local Landscape Designation criteria

- **Natural heritage:** An area with important natural features. The River Ouse is locally designated as a Wildlife Corridor. Although former mineral

workings considerably altered this landscape, these have been restored and contain wetlands and plantations designated as LWS. Significant areas of wetland and floodplain grazing marsh habitat are found across the floodplain. The two Local Geological Sites show the importance of the underlying geology to the character of the landscape. These features provide evidence of ecological interest which contribute positively to landscape character.

- **Cultural heritage:** Mineral extraction has removed traces of historic field patterns. However, a number of historic listed buildings and sites (Scheduled Monuments) relating to priories and monasteries, as well as river crossings, provide time-depth to the landscape. The open floodplain forms an important landscape setting to the historic town of Newport Pagnell (including the Conservation Area), and the historic separation of Tickford End and Newport Pagnell. There are no known associations with notable people, events or the arts.
- **Recreation:** The area has considerable local value for recreation. The former gravel workings have been restored to provide recreational facilities, while there are a number of public rights of way including the promoted Grafton Way, Ouse Valley Way and Milton Keynes Boundary Walk, and National Cycling Route 6. The Grand Union Canal, an important recreational feature, runs through the floodplain.
- **Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** Transport corridors including the M1, A6 and West Coast mainline are detracting features within the landscape, as are static caravans at Cosgrove Leisure Park and a solar farm north of Newport Pagnell. However, the restoration and flooding of the former gravel pits have created a new landscape structure.
- **Local distinctiveness:** This riverside landscape forms a recognisable sense of place which is distinctive within Milton Keynes, and an important riverside approach to Newport Pagnell.
- **Perceptual and scenic:** The open character of the floodplains has a strong visual character adding to the perceptual qualities of the landscape. There is limited settlement within the LCA, with built features generally limited to farmsteads and recreational facilities. However, the road

corridors and proximity to Milton Keynes city and Newport Pagnell reduce tranquillity.

- **Functional:** The floodplain landscape contributes to the healthy functioning of the landscape and is an important part of the multifunctional green infrastructure network connecting to Milton Keynes.

**Table 3.8: Summary of LCA 3c against the Local Landscape Designation criteria**

Local Landscape Designation Criterion	Extent the LCA meets the criterion
Natural heritage	Fully meets
Cultural heritage	Partially meets
Recreation	Fully meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Local distinctiveness	Fully meets
Perceptual and scenic	Partially meets
Functional	Fully meets
<b>Conclusion</b>	Take forward



## LCA 3d Ouzel Parkland Floodplains

Extent of LCA within former Area of Attractive Landscape: 0%

Figure 3.9: LCA 3d: Ousel floodplain



### Description of the LCA against Local Landscape Designation criteria

- **Natural heritage:** This narrow valley contains the River Ouzel, designated locally as a Wildlife Corridor, with areas of priority habitat wetland grassland, lowland meadows and deciduous woodlands. Waterhall Park is designated as an LWS. These features, within the wider landscape,

provide some evidence of ecological interest which contribute positively to the landscape locally.

- **Cultural heritage:** Cultural interest which contributes to landscape character is limited. Mill Farm and house are the only listed heritage assets and the Grand Union Canal, a historic waterway with distinctive brick humpbacked bridges, which runs parallel to the river. There are no known associations with notable people, events or the arts.
- **Recreation:** The landscape offers extensive recreational opportunities, with Waterhall Park in the south, playing fields and pitches, and allotments in the north. Public rights of way, including the Grand Union Canal Walk provide considerable access throughout the area.
- **Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** Intensive recreational use of the landscape means the landscape condition is not as good as other areas of floodplain within Milton Keynes. However, distinctive Lombardy poplar trees along the canal are in good condition, as are the priority habitats.
- **Local distinctiveness:** The Grand Union Canal and River Ouzel shape the character of this landscape, and are locally distinctive features. The landscape forms an important separation between new development at Easton Leys and Fenny Stratford.
- **Perceptual and scenic:** Long distance views to the Wooded Greensand Ridge provide a backdrop to views east from the area. Views of the settlement edge of Fenny Stratford are partially visible through vegetation to the west. Noise from the A4146 and A5 are apparent, although the landscape retains a largely tranquil character, especially along the canal. The use of the landscape for recreation reduces the perception of naturalness.
- **Functional:** The River Ouzel floodplain contributes to the healthy functioning of the landscape, and the multifunctional green infrastructure network.

**Table 3.9: Summary of LCA 3d against the Local Landscape Designation criteria**

Local Landscape Designation Criterion	Extent the LCA meets the criterion
Natural heritage	Partially meets
Cultural heritage	Does not meet
Recreation	Fully meets
Landscape quality	Does not meet
Local distinctiveness	Partially meets
Perceptual and scenic	Partially meets
Functional	Partially meets
<b>Conclusion</b>	Do not take forward

## LCA 4a North Crawley Undulating Clay Plateau

Extent of LCA within former Area of Attractive Landscape: 15%

**Figure 3.10: LCA 4a: Plateau with electricity infrastructure at Petsoe Farm**





## Description of the LCA against Local Landscape Designation criteria

- **Natural heritage:** Extensive areas of intensive agriculture, although bounded by hedgerows and hedgerow trees, do not contribute to the natural heritage of the landscape. Deciduous woodland blocks are scattered through the landscape, including many of ancient origin such as Hollington Wood (LWS). Small watercourses bisect the plateau, including the Chicheley Brook (designated as a Wildlife Corridor). The woodlands and watercourses provide some evidence of ecological interest which contribute positively to landscape character.
- **Cultural heritage:** The landscape includes many important historic features. A varied historic field pattern, including 17<sup>th</sup> century enclosure patterns and remnant ridge and furrow are evidence of time-depth in the landscape. The landscape is characterised by three large estates, including Chicheley Hall which has an intact Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden, while the house itself is Grade I listed. Moated sites which are the remains of historic manors are designated as Scheduled Monuments. North Crawley is the largest village and has the only Conservation Area in the LCA. These varied historic features provide clear evidence of cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape. There are no known associations with notable people, events or the arts.
- **Recreation:** There are significant areas with no public access. The Milton Keynes Boundary Walk in the east provides access locally.
- **Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** Hedgerows are generally in good condition, with some modest replanting across the landscape. The ancient woodlands are in good condition, and there has been little alteration to the historic parkland at Chicheley Hall (Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden). However, incongruous features within the landscape detract from the landscape condition, including electricity pylons in the east and the seven-turbine wind farm at Petsoe Manor Farm, which are highly visible across this LCA.
- **Local distinctiveness:** The plateau landscape is dissected by small watercourses, which forms a recognisable area. The strong estate

character at Chicheley, North Crawley and Moulsoe creates a recognisable sense of place.

- **Perceptual and scenic:** The large-scale arable fields and limited settlement creates a remote, empty character in places, particularly north of the A422. Road noise from busy roads within the LCA and the M1 to the west reduce tranquillity. Views to Cranfield Airport to the south-east also detract from the rural character. Long panoramic views south to the Brickhill Wooded Greensand Ridge (LCA 6a), across Milton Keynes city and across the Ouse valley to the Wooded Wolds (LCAs 1a and 1b) are distinctive. The church spire of St Peter, Olney is a landmark feature in views north. This landscape also forms a rural setting to Milton Keynes city.
- **Functional:** The woodlands and small streams contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape, and the multifunctional green infrastructure network.

**Table 3.10: Summary of LCA 4a against the Local Landscape Designation criteria**

Local Landscape Designation Criterion	Extent the LCA meets the criterion
Natural heritage	Partially meets
Cultural heritage	Fully meets
Recreation	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Local distinctiveness	Partially meets
Perceptual and scenic	Partially meets
Functional	Partially meets
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>Do not take forward</b>

## LCA 4b Weald Undulating Clay Plateau

Extent of LCA within former Area of Attractive Landscape: 0%

**Figure 3.11: LCA 4b: Open plateau with Oakhill Wood in midground**



### Description of the LCA against Local Landscape Designation criteria

- **Natural heritage:** An area with important natural features. Woodland is concentrated in Oakhill Wood in the south, which is part of the North Bucks Way Wildlife Corridor. Smaller linear woodlands and riparian

woodland along the Calverton Brook also provide ecological interest. Traditional orchards and unimproved species-rich calcareous grassland, designated as an LWS, are surviving semi-natural habitats. These provide evidence of ecological interest which contributes positively to landscape character.

- **Cultural heritage:** A landscape with important cultural features. The historic field pattern was formed by Parliamentary enclosure, which was further sub-divided in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Some ridge and furrow field patterns are still evident within the landscape. Historic hamlets, designated as a Conservation Area, contain a number of listed buildings, while there is a distinctive parkland landscape around Calverton House. Oakhill Wood and its surroundings was once part of the medieval hunting ground of Whaddon Chase, which also provides time-depth. These features provide evidence of cultural interest which contributes positively to landscape character. There are no known associations with notable people, events or the arts.
- **Recreation:** The Milton Keynes Boundary Walk provides the main public access through the landscape, and local public rights of way connect to the small settlements and Milton Keynes city.
- **Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** Hedgerows are in mixed condition, some reinforcement by post and wire fencing. Conversion of pasture to horse grazing has created a slightly unmanaged character in parts. Electricity pylons are the main detracting features in the landscape.
- **Local distinctiveness:** The parkland character around Calverton House and steep sided valley landform along the Calverton Brook in the centre of the LCA are distinctive features which provide a sense of place. The rural character of the plateau contrasts with the built-up area of Milton Keynes city, a contrast which makes this area distinctive.
- **Perceptual and scenic:** This is a rural landscape, which retains a strong separation from Milton Keynes city, although road noise from the A5 reduces tranquillity. Enclosure along the Calverton Brook contrasts with extensive views across the Aylesbury Vale to the west and wooded horizons to the north, contributing to a strong visual character.

- **Functional:** The woodlands and small streams form part of the healthy functioning of the landscape, and the multifunctional green infrastructure network.

**Table 3.11: Summary of LCA 4b against the Local Landscape Designation criteria**

Local Landscape Designation Criterion	Extent the LCA meets the criterion
Natural heritage	Fully meets
Cultural heritage	Fully meets
Recreation	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Local distinctiveness	Partially meets
Perceptual and scenic	Fully meets
Functional	Partially meets
<b>Conclusion</b>	Take forward



## LCA 5a Lower Ouzel Clay Vale

Extent of LCA within former Area of Attractive Landscape: 10%

**Figure 3.12: LCA 5a: Open arable vale with views to higher plateau at Moulsoe**



### Description of the LCA against Local Landscape Designation criteria

- **Natural heritage:** Intensive arable agriculture, with gappy hedgerows, is common across the area and does not contribute to the natural heritage of the landscape. Small areas of priority habitat deciduous woodland across



the area, including areas of ancient woodland, and riparian vegetation along the Chicheley Brook, provide some evidence of ecological interest which contributes positively to landscape character. The A509 is a designated as a Wildlife Corridor.

- **Cultural heritage:** An area with limited evidence of historic interest and no known associations with notable people, events or the arts.
- **Recreation:** This LCA is partially inaccessible. Where Public Rights of Way exist, they provide some recreational value.
- **Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** Gappy or unmanaged hedgerows, sometimes reinforced with wire fencing, and busy roads detract from the landscape condition.
- **Local distinctiveness:** Open views across the flat farmland to higher wooded landscapes north and north-east (LCA 4a) provide a sense of separation between Milton Keynes city and the wider countryside.
- **Perceptual and scenic:** Settlement is limited to isolated farms, creating some sense of remoteness. However, proximity to Milton Keynes East, major road corridors (A509 / M1), electricity pylon routes and views to the windfarm near Petsoe Manor Farm detract from perceptual and scenic qualities.
- **Functional:** The woodland copses, trees, hedgerows and Chicheley Brook support carbon capture and biodiversity, contributing to the healthy functioning of the landscape and multifunctional green infrastructure network.

**Table 3.12: Summary of LCA 5a against the Local Landscape Designation criteria**

Local Landscape Designation Criterion	Extent the LCA meets the criterion
Natural heritage	Partially meets
Cultural heritage	Does not meet

<b>Local Landscape Designation Criterion</b>	<b>Extent the LCA meets the criterion</b>
Recreation	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Local distinctiveness	Partially meets
Perceptual and scenic	Partially meets
Functional	Fully meets
<b>Conclusion</b>	Do not take forward

## LCA 5b Upper Ouzel Clay Vale

Extent of LCA within former Area of Attractive Landscape: 39%

**Figure 3.13: LCA 5b: Parkland at Cross End looking towards new development**



### Description of the LCA against Local Landscape Designation criteria

- **Natural heritage:** A landscape with extremely limited woodland cover, except for small areas of priority habitat deciduous woodland around

Wavendon House. There is a lack of recorded semi-natural habitat or distinctive geological features that contribute to landscape character.

- **Cultural heritage:** The landscape is largely characterised by modern field patterns. Small areas of historic field patterns remain, including Parliamentary enclosures, which were subsequently divided around Bow Brickhill, remnant areas of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular and regular enclosures around Wavendon, and pockets of ridge and furrow earthwork. Woburn Sands developed as a health resort and spa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is designated as a Conservation Area for its special architectural and historic interest, providing cultural time depth to the landscape. Historic assets include the archaeological remains of the Roman settlement of *Magiovinium*, and historic parkland at Cross End and Wavendon House (Grade II Registered Park and Garden). These features provide some evidence of cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape. There are no known associations with notable people, events or the arts.
- **Recreation:** A network of Public Right of Way (PRoW), including the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk, provides some recreational value.
- **Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** Incongruous features include busy roads, large-scale commercial developments along the M1 at Magna Park, and the former golf course at Wavendon, which all detract from landscape condition. While some historic field patterns remain, hedgerows are often gappy and unmanaged, or reinforced with wire fencing.
- **Local distinctiveness:** The vernacular character of historic buildings, including within Woburn Sands, provide some local distinctiveness but the flat farmed landscape does result in a strong sense of identity.
- **Perceptual and scenic:** Open views across farmland provides some contribution to visual character. In the south the greensand ridge provides an important backdrop to views. Perceptual and scenic qualities are impacted by new residential expansion, including at Eaton Leys, Caldecotte and north of Wavendon. The Bedford to Bletchley railway which crosses the LCA and the A5 also disrupt the rural tranquillity of the area.

- **Functional:** There is limited evidence of a healthy and functional landscape.

**Table 3.13: Summary of LCA 5b against the Local Landscape Designation criteria**

Local Landscape Designation Criterion	Extent the LCA meets the criterion
Natural heritage	Does not meet
Cultural heritage	Partially meets
Recreation	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Does not meet
Local distinctiveness	Partially meets
Perceptual and scenic	Partially meets
Functional	Does not meet
<b>Conclusion</b>	Do not take forward



## LCA 6a Wooded Greensand Ridge

Extent of LCA within former Area of Attractive Landscape: 98%

**Figure 3.14: LCA 6a: Important woodland habitats on the greensand ridge**



### Description of the LCA against Local Landscape Designation criteria

- **Natural heritage:** An area with valued natural associations. Small pockets of ancient woodland, with larger replanted ancient woodlands, including at Back Wood and Bell's Copse, contribute to the sense of place. The



steeper slopes and plateau are characterised by priority habitat deciduous woodland, while the ridgeline has small areas of priority habitat lowland fen, providing evidence of ecological interest which contributes positively to landscape character. The prominent escarpment, with its greenstone geology which is unique within Milton Keynes, is a distinctive feature and creates a strong sense of place.

- **Cultural heritage:** The ridge has clear evidence of archaeological and historical interest which contribute positively to the landscape. This includes its connections to pre-Roman and Roman occupation of area (including sites associated with Watling Street and Danesborough hill fort), and the Medieval deer park pale earthworks at Bow Brickhill Park, that evidence medieval and post-medieval woodland management. The historic linear settlement pattern and buildings constructed from local materials in Little Brickhill provide cultural identity and aesthetic value. Local paintings of the area contribute to the cultural heritage of the LCA, including Thomas Webster's painting 'A village choir' 1847, and Stanley Roy Badmin's 1940 painting of Bow Brickhill which formed part of the "Recording Britain" project. Both paintings are held by the Victoria & Albert Museum.
- **Recreation:** The Wooded Greensand Ridge is crossed by many PRoW, and provides recreational opportunities such as walking, horse riding and mountain biking.
- **Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** Modern influences on the landscape are only locally visually intrusive. However, reinforcement of hedgerows by post and wire fencing, fencing around a former quarry on Church Road (now in use as a reservoir), and communications towers on Church Road and in Little Brickhill impact landscape condition.
- **Local distinctiveness:** A highly distinctive landscape which forms part of a wider ridge extending beyond Milton Keynes. The steep escarpment which rises to a wooded plateau is distinctive in its geology, topography and its strong visual character as a wooded backdrop to Milton Keynes city. The patchwork of pastoral and arable fields also creates a strong sense of place.

- **Perceptual and scenic:** Views within the LCA are generally enclosed due to the high woodland cover, which provides a sense of enclosure and tranquillity, and contributes to perceptual and scenic qualities. In contrast, panoramic views from the edge of the woodlands across the surrounding valleys and Milton Keynes city are memorable and distinctive. Traffic noise from the A5 locally reduces tranquillity.
- **Functional:** The extensive areas of woodland support biodiversity, stabilises soil quality, and play an important role in regulating local air quality, which contributes to the healthy functioning of the landscape and multifunctional green infrastructure network.

**Table 3.14: Summary of LCA 6a against the Local Landscape Designation criteria**

Local Landscape Designation Criterion	Extent the LCA meets the criterion
Natural heritage	Fully meets
Cultural heritage	Fully meets
Recreation	Fully meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Local distinctiveness	Fully meets
Perceptual and scenic	Partially meets
Functional	Fully meets
<b>Conclusion</b>	Take forward

## Results of desk assessment

**3.5** The desk assessment indicated the following:

- LCAs which were part of the former AALs generally meet the criteria for local landscape designation;
- Some adjustment of the former AALs is required, including extensions and deletions;
- Some additional areas (e.g. LCA 4b) which were not part of the former AALs also meet the criteria to be put forward as areas of search.

## Areas of search

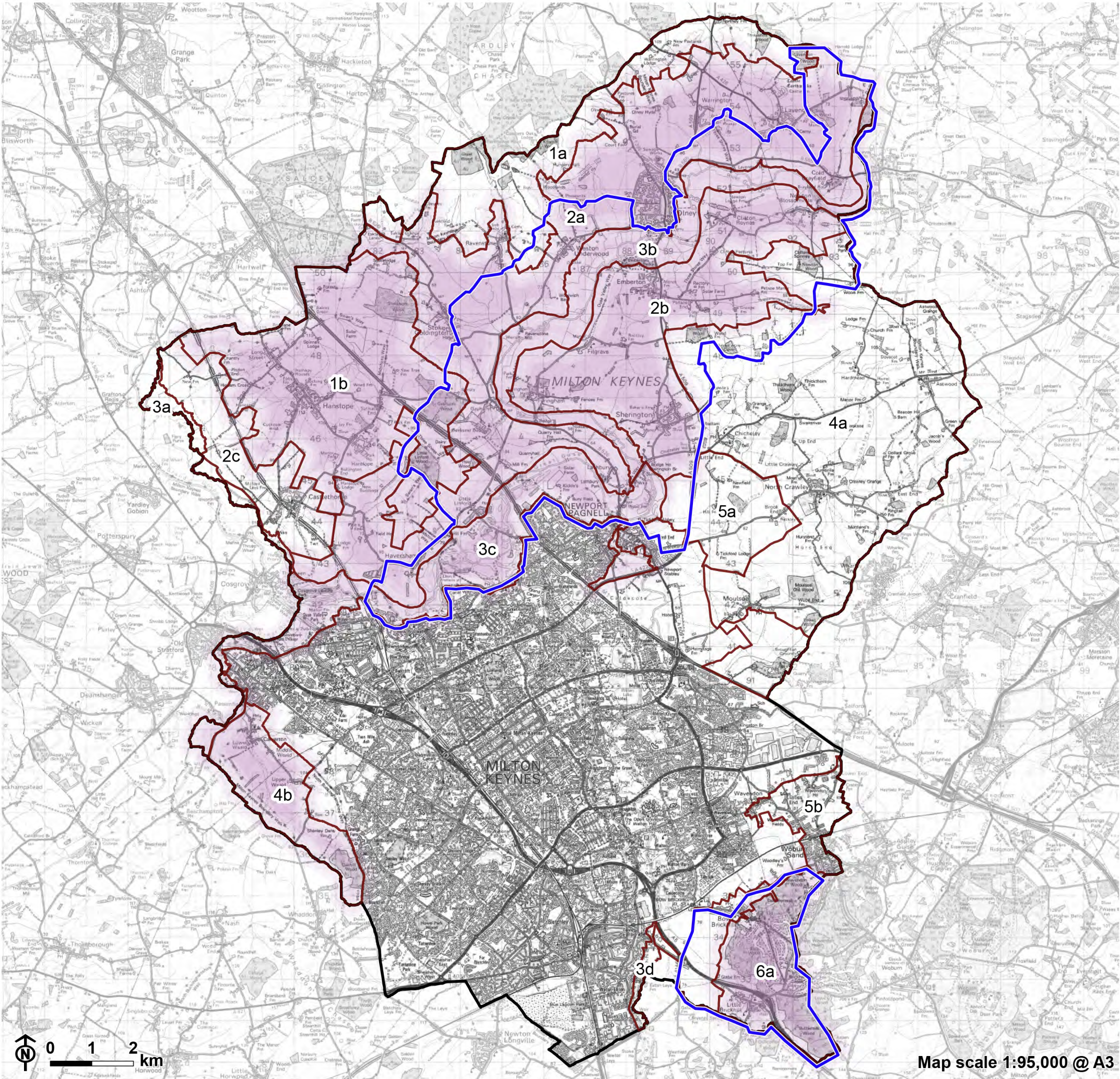
**3.6** The Areas of Search for the candidate SLAs consist of:

- Brickhills (LCA 6a and part of 5b)
- Ouse Valley (Parts of LCAs 1b, 2a, 2b, 3b, 3c)
- Western Plateau (LCA 4b and part of 3c).

**3.7** These areas of search, shown on **Figure 3.15**, formed the basis for more detailed field survey and evaluation. The results are presented in **Chapter 4**.



Figure 3.15: Areas of search



- Milton Keynes borough boundary
- Former Area of Attractive Landscape
- Area of search
- Landscape Character Area
- 1a: Yardley Chase Wooded Wolds
- 1b: Gayhurst and Stokepark Wooded Wolds
- 2a: Ouse Northern Undulating Valley Slopes
- 2b: Ouse Southern Undulating Valley Slopes
- 2c: Tove Undulating Valley Slopes
- 3a: Tove Floodplains
- 3b: Ouse Floodplains
- 3c: Ouse Lakes and Parkland Floodplains
- 3d: Ouzel Parkland Floodplains
- 4a: North Crawley Undulating Clay Plateau
- 4b: Weald Undulating Clay Plateau
- 5a: Lower Ouzel Clay Vale
- 5b: Upper Ouzel Clay Vale
- 6a: Brickhill Greensand Ridge



## Chapter 4

# Evaluation and Recommendations

**4.1** This chapter presents the results of the evaluation of the three areas of search identified in Chapter 3. These are illustrated in conjunction with the former Areas of Attractive Landscape (AALs) on **Figure 4.1** and in **Figure 4.2** and recommended as candidate Special Landscape Areas (SLAs).

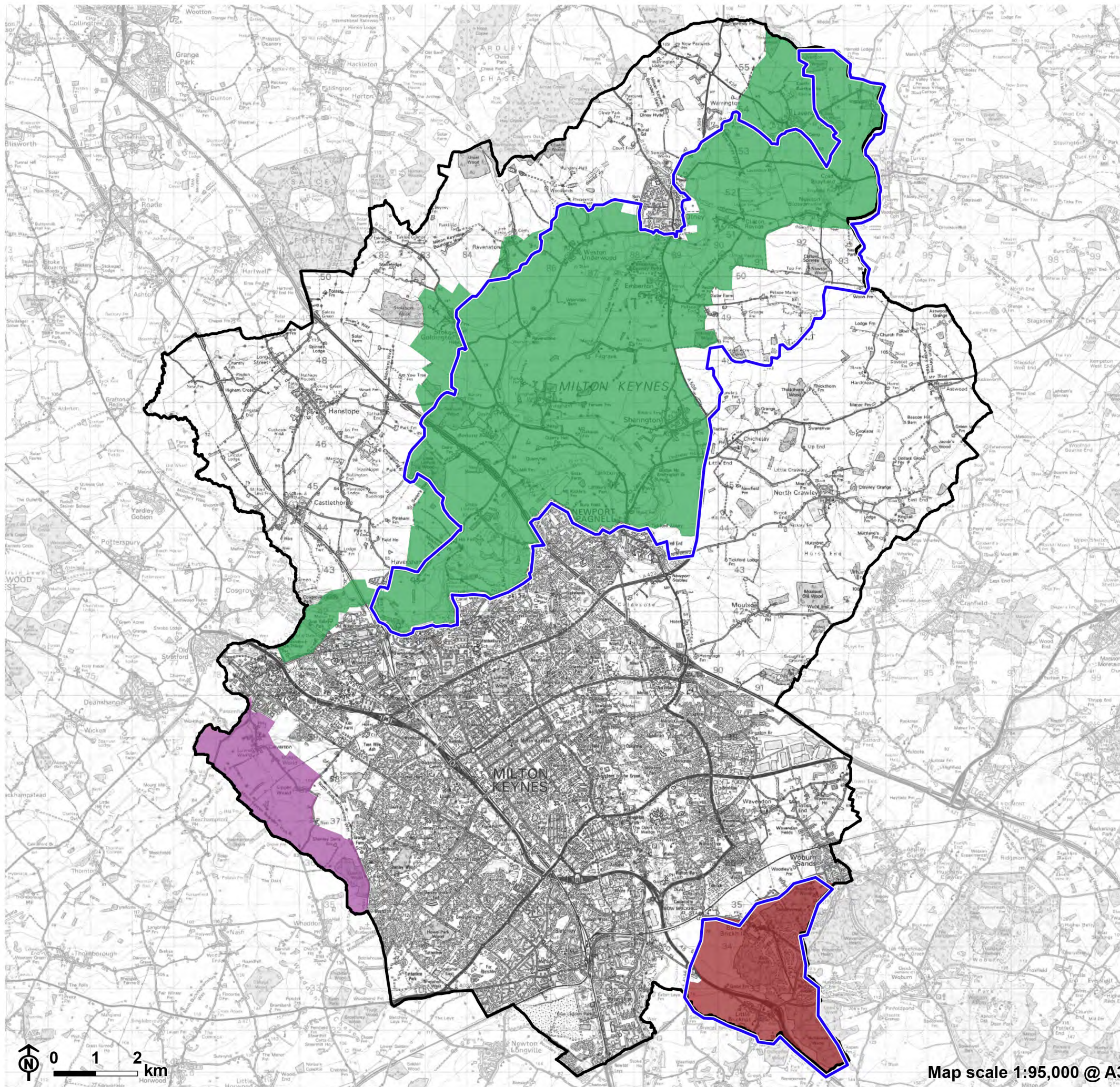
**4.2** Each candidate SLA evaluation contains:

- Summary and recommendations;
- Evaluation against the criteria;
- Photos illustrating representative character; and
- Mapping

## A note on boundaries

**4.3** Landscape is a continuum, and all boundaries will generally represent zones of transition. There will rarely be a sharp change in identified landscape qualities either side of an SLA 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. In some cases, boundaries have been extended where an area for example adjoins an urban edge and would leave a small vulnerable gap. Likewise, there may be some areas within an SLA encapsulated by the boundary that do not fully meet the criteria but are part of a wider 'whole.'

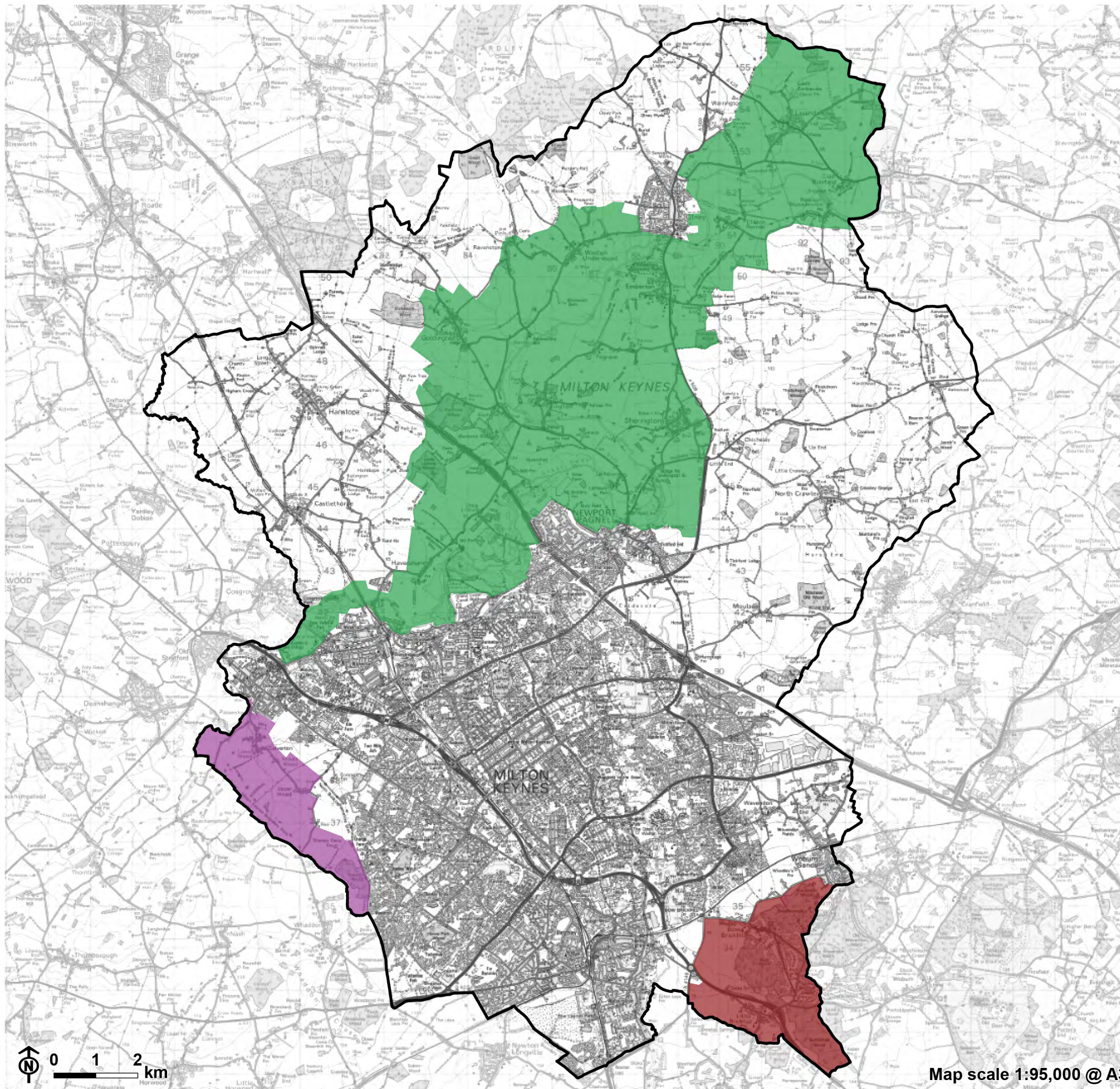




**Figure 4.1: Former Areas of Attractive Landscape and Candidate Special Landscape Areas**

- Milton Keynes borough boundary
- Former Area of Attractive Landscape
- Candidate Special Landscape Area
  - Brickhills
  - Calverton Clay Plateau
  - Ouse Valley





**Figure 4.2: Candidate Special Landscape Areas**

- Milton Keynes borough boundary
- Candidate Special Landscape Area**
- Brickhills
- Calverton Clay Plateau
- Ouse Valley



## Brickhills: Candidate Special Landscape Area

**Figure 4.3: Wooded Greensand Ridge seen from Brickhill Road**



## Statement of Significance

### Relationship to former and existing local landscape designations

The landscape in the candidate area was largely formerly designated as the Brickhills AAL. It is contiguous with LCA 6a Bow Brickhills Greensand Ridge (98%) and LCA 5b Upper Ouzel Clay Vale (39%).

The greensand ridge within Milton Keynes Borough is part of the wider greensand landscape which runs from Buckinghamshire to Cambridgeshire. It is championed by the Greensand Trust.

The greensand ridge to the south of the Milton Keynes borough boundary is designated by Buckinghamshire Council as the Brickhills Area of Attractive Landscape.

The Statement of Significance for the Brickhills AAL states: *The Brickhills are the western extent of the greensand ridge which stretches into and across Bedfordshire; a distinct landform with wooded scarp slopes and interspersed agricultural areas and heathland, that fall down to the enclosed valley of the River Ouzel and Grand Union Canal. Open and panoramic views from the hilltops across the landscape of the Vale of Aylesbury to the Quainton Wing hills, contrast with the intimate environment and enclosed views within the valley floor. Strong natural value is indicated by numerous ecological designations including heathland. Areas of woodland provide strong ecological and visual appeal as well as opportunity for public recreation at Rushmere Country Park. Strong historic continuity provides a rich and varied environment.*

## Evaluation

The majority of the area fully meets the criteria assessed in Work Stage 3 (see below for the detailed evaluation) and is proposed for designation as an SLA.

## Extent of area

The candidate SLA encompasses the western extent of a ridge of greensand geology which extends into Central Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. The distinctive landform of the ridgeline has extensive woodland coverage and heathland, while agricultural fields at the foot of the ridge provide an important rural setting. It is contiguous with an area of local landscape designation in Buckinghamshire to the south-west.

## Boundary commentary

See **Figure 4.6** below.

- The eastern and southern boundaries are formed by the administrative boundaries with Central Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire Councils.
- The land south of the A5 (in LCA 6a) is recommended to be retained in the candidate SLA. Although the A5 cuts through the ridge and is a modern influence on the landscape, the village of Little Brickhill which is located immediately south of the trunk road, provides time depth and scenic quality to the landscape. The greensand ridge continues south from Little Brickhill into Buckinghamshire.
- The proposed boundaries of the candidate SLA follow Bow Brickhill Road, Brickhill Road and the A4146 to include the shallower slopes of the ridge due to their importance as a rural setting to the wider ridgeline.



**Figure 4.4: Paths within the well-maintained woodland**



**Figure 4.5: Historic brick and limestone buildings in Little Brickhill**





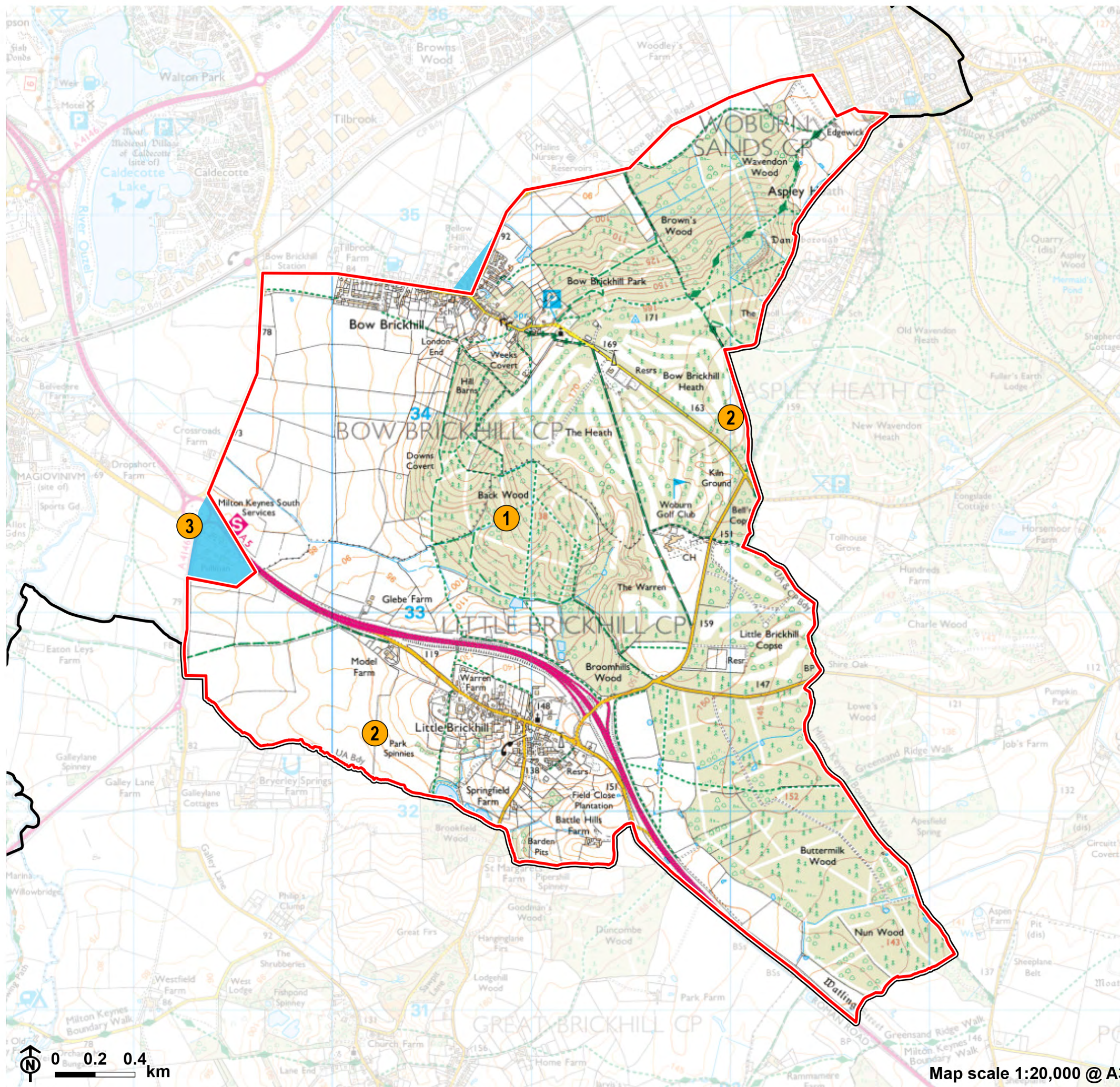


Figure 4.6: Brickhills Candidate Special  
Landscape Area (SLA)

▭ Milton Keynes borough boundary

▭ Brickhills candidate SLA

#### Change to SLA

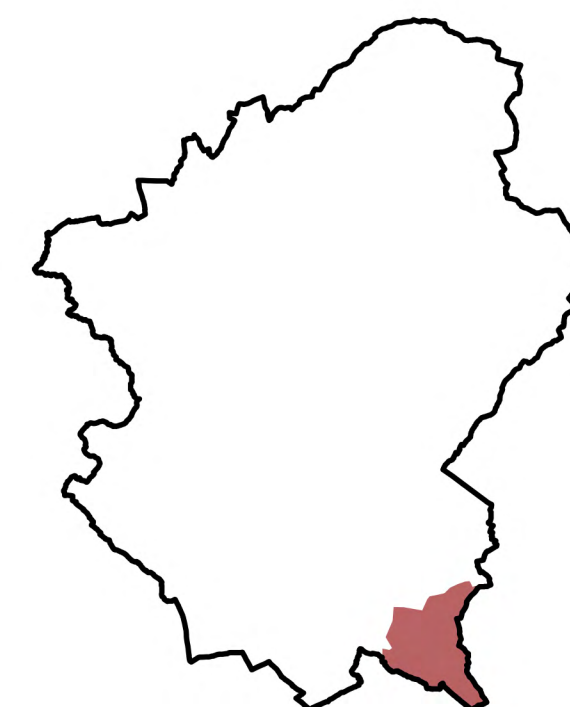
■ Removal

● Notes

1: Retain extent of the previous Brickhills  
AHLV.

2: Landscape extends into  
Buckinghamshire and Bedford.

3: Exclude the service station.



Map scale 1:20,000 @ A3



## Summary of special landscape qualities

- Distinctive topography of the steep greensand escarpment which is a unique geological landform within Milton Keynes.
- Extensive woodland, including priority habitat deciduous woodland, some of ancient origin, interspersed with remnant heathland habitats. This provides visual contrast and ecological interest which contribute to landscape character and provides a contrast with the open agricultural fields on the shallower slopes.
- A relatively remote, elevated area, with long-distance views from the edge of the ridge over Milton Keynes city and the rest of the borough. The wooded ridge forms a distinctive backdrop in views across the borough and provides a unique setting to Milton Keynes city.
- Limited development on the ridge and lower slopes, with high levels of tranquillity within the woodland.
- Historic settlement pattern concentrated at Bow Brickhill and Little Brickhill (designated as a Conservation Area), which has a distinct vernacular architecture and contains many listed buildings.
- Archaeological importance of the landscape with connections to the pre-Roman era through Danesborough hill fort (Scheduled Monument) and to the Roman occupation, along Watling Street.
- Extensive recreational opportunities, including mountain biking and horse riding, and a network of Public Rights of Way (including the promoted Milton Keynes Boundary Walk), which provide recreational access across the area, and connections to neighbouring settlements.

**Figure 4.7: Grazing pasture and parkland character at Edgewick Farm.**



## Full evaluation

The following description of the landscape of the candidate SLA relates to each assessment criteria considered when identifying landscape value.

**Natural heritage qualities:** The Brickhills have clear evidence of ecological and geological interest which contribute positively to the landscape. The steeper slopes and ridge are cloaked in woodland, much of which is coniferous, but there are also areas of priority habitat deciduous woodland. Some small areas of the woodland are recorded as ancient woodland, with larger replanted ancient woodlands, such as Back Wood and Bell's Copse. The ridgeline also has small areas of priority habitat lowland fen, and purple moor grass and rush pastures, which provide evidence of remnant heathland habitats which

contributes positively to the landscape. The shallower slopes are in agricultural use, with a strong hedgerow network and occasional scrub, although there are no recorded priority habitats.

The prominent escarpment, with its underlying greenstone geology, is unique within Milton Keynes.

**Cultural heritage qualities:** Brickhills has clear evidence of archaeological and historical interest which contribute positively to the landscape. This includes its connections to pre-Roman and Roman occupation of area, including sites associated with Watling Street and Danesborough hill fort, a Scheduled Monument. Medieval deer park pale earthworks at Bow Brickhill Park may be evidence of medieval and post-medieval woodland management. The areas of ancient woodland provide natural time-depth. The historic perpendicular field pattern on the shallower slopes is intact, and also provides time-depth. The historic linear settlement pattern and buildings constructed from local limestone and brick in Little Brickhill and Bow Brickhill provide cultural identity and aesthetic value, and Little Brickhill is designated as a Conservation Area. Local paintings of the area contribute to the cultural heritage of the LCA, including Thomas Webster's painting 'A village choir' 1847, and Stanley Roy Badmin's 1940 painting of Bow Brickhill which formed part of the "Recording Britain" project. Both paintings are held by the Victoria & Albert Museum.

**Recreation value:** Brickhills offers recreational opportunities where the experience of the landscape is important. It is crossed by many public rights of way, and provides opportunities such as walking, horse riding and mountain biking through the woodlands on the ridge, creating recreational value. The ridge forms an important backdrop to views from recreational routes across the borough, including the footpaths on the shallower slopes, which lead up to the ridge, adding enjoyment to the experience.

**Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** The condition and structure of the landscape is considered to be good overall. The area has good ecological integrity as the woodland provides habitat connectivity, and visually coherent backdrop to many surrounding areas in the borough.



There are few detracting features, although the communications towers on Church Road and in Little Brickhill, are locally intrusive. Conversion of part of the ridge to the Woburn Golf Club impacts the landscape intactness. The hedgerows on the lower slopes are largely in good condition, although there is some reinforcement by post and wire fencing throughout the area, and conversion of land to horse grazing.

**Local distinctiveness:** A highly distinctive landscape forming part of the wider greensand ridge which stretches into Buckinghamshire and Cambridgeshire. The steep greensand escarpment which rises to a wooded plateau is a distinctive landscape feature in Milton Keynes. The area provides a wooded backdrop to Milton Keynes city which together with the patchwork of pastoral and arable fields on lower slopes creates a strong sense of place.

**Perceptual and scenic:** Brickhills has strong scenic qualities due to the visual contrast between the open lower slopes and the striking escarpment cloaked in woodland.

Panoramic views from the edge of the woodlands across the surrounding valleys and Milton Keynes city are locally memorable. Views within the woodland are generally enclosed, which provides a sense of tranquillity.

Proximity to warehousing on Brickhill Road and residential development at Eaton Leys and roads (A4146 and A5) reduces tranquillity and the sense of remoteness in some parts.

**Functional:** The extensive areas of woodland on the ridge, combined with the hedgerows bounding the lower slope fields all contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape, such as supporting biodiversity and stabilising soil quality. These elements also contribute to the multifunctional green infrastructure network. The lower slopes provide clear separation between Milton Keynes city and the wooded greensand ridge.

**Figure 4.8: Panoramic views above Bow Brickhill across Milton Keynes city**



**Figure 4.9: Lower slopes provide a setting to the wooded ridge, Bow Brickhill**





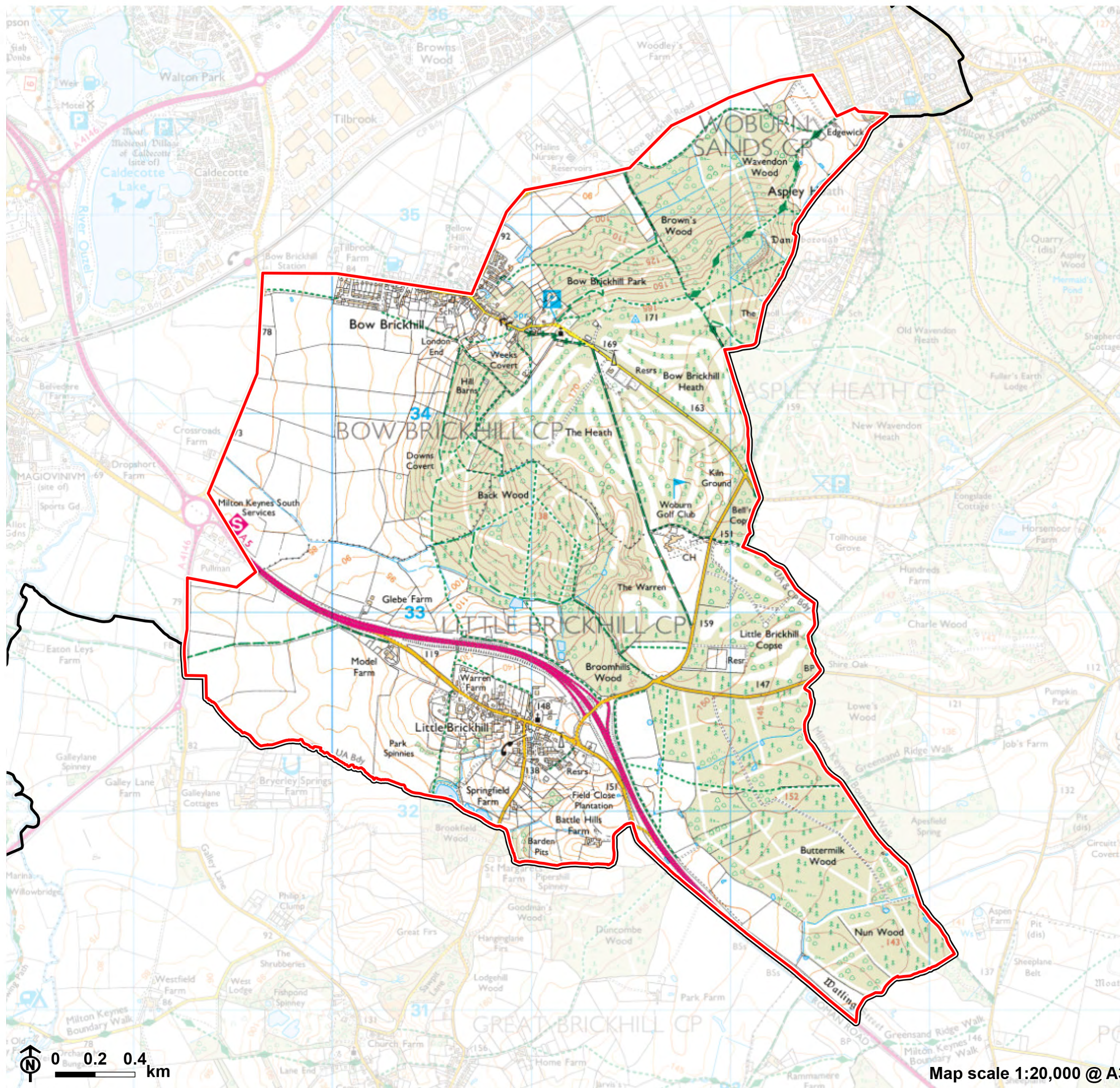
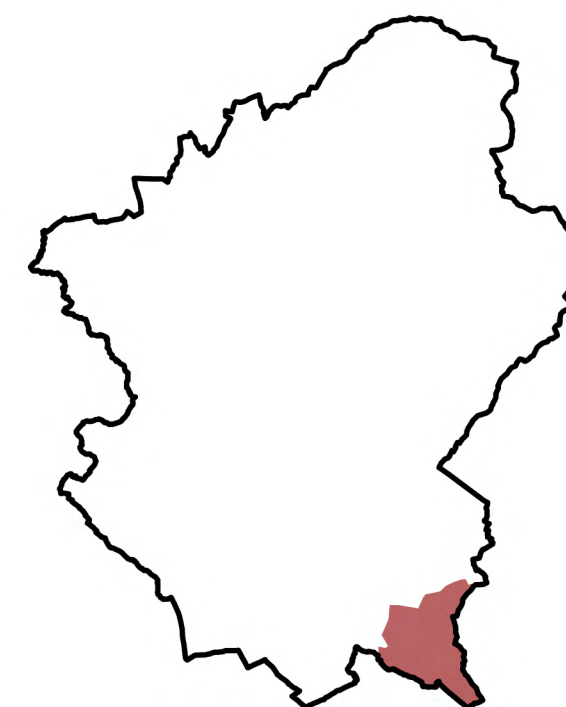


Figure 4.10 Brickhills Candidate Special  
Landscape Area (SLA)

- Milton Keynes borough boundary
- Brickhills candidate SLA



Map scale 1:20,000 @ A3



## Management guidelines

### Protect

- Protect the distinctive wooded escarpment which provides a visually important setting to Milton Keynes city.
- Retain framed views from the farmed slopes to the Brickhills ridge, and protect these as a setting to the ridge.
- Consider the views from the Brickhills escarpment when planning future extensions to Milton Keynes city. This is particularly important if new tall buildings are proposed, as these will be more prominent in views.
- Conserve and enhance existing woodland, including ancient woodland, promoting a balanced woodland community of native deciduous trees with indigenous conifers.
- Support measures for the conservation and interpretation of archaeological sites, and where appropriate provide further access.
- Maintain the tranquillity of the wooded landscape, ensuring any development within or adjacent to the SLA uses appropriate planting to screen it from view, and reduce the impacts of light pollution.
- Protect the historic villages of Bow Brickhill and Little Brickhill conserving the strong vernacular of historic buildings.
- Conserve the rural separation between Milton Keynes city and the outlying villages of Bow Brickhill and Little Brickhill.

### Manage

- Where appropriate, enhance landscape resilience by promoting localised reversion from woodland to traditional heathland habitat. Seek to restore, extend and connect these sandy heathland habitats, including through appropriate grazing regimes.



- Manage and increase the biodiversity of agricultural fields by creating uncultivated margins to arable fields, and where appropriate, converting some arable land to permanent pasture.
- Manage and enhance hedgerows on lower slopes, including laying and gapping up of hedgerows to strengthen the perpendicular field pattern and improve links between habitats.
- Encourage sympathetic integration of horse paddocks and associated facilities, through maintenance and improvement of existing field boundaries.
- Manage and monitor invasive native or harmful species in woodlands and grasslands, and the impact of pathogens, pests and diseases as a result of climate change.
- Manage recreational access and infrastructure to minimise the erosion of habitats and negative impacts on the tranquillity and remoteness of the landscape.

### Plan

- Plan for climate change, researching appropriate species mixes and designing woodland to minimise damage as a result of increased storms.
- Explore opportunities to extend woodland, including strengthening woodland connections into Central Bedfordshire and identifying opportunities for green infrastructure enhancements as set out in the Milton Keynes Green Infrastructure Strategy. Ensure any new woodland planting is respectful of local character, ecological conditions and maximises opportunities to link with other habitats.
- Aim for the long-term restructuring of coniferous plantation to mixed deciduous woodland at maturity or felling, using native broadleaf species, aiming for a balance of sustainable timber production, climate-resilience and biodiversity value.
- Consider intervisibility of views when planning large-scale or very tall development in areas outside of the Brickhills SLA.

## Ouse Valley: Candidate Special Landscape Area

**Figure 4.11: Long views across Ouse valley from Weston Road**



## Statement of Significance

### Relationship to former and existing local landscape designations

Most of the landscape in the candidate area was formerly designated as the Ouse Valley AAL. This included LCA 2b Ouse Southern Undulating Valley Slopes and LCA 3b Ouse Floodplains. Smaller areas of LCA 2a Ouse Northern Undulating Valley Slopes (48%), LCA 3c Ouse Lakes and Parkland Floodplains (68%) and LCA 1b Gayhurst and Stokepark Wooded Wolds (10%) were also part of the Ouse Valley AAL.

Landscapes west of the candidate SLA are locally designated in the South Northamptonshire Local Plan as the Tove Valley Special Landscape Area.

The Statement of Significance states: *The Tove Valley is a ribbon of distinctive broad landscape plateau rich in scenic quality surrounded by hilltop settlements and woodland feature. The watercourses and land feature of the Grand Union Canal, River Tove and its tributaries meander through the landform whilst forming the feature point of the landscape and giving the local landscape its character. The strong landscape views filter down towards the developed Towcester where the landform begins to change and become more undulating. This landscape enhances in historic value and the change gives residence to the distinctive parkland landscape of Easton Neston and the iconic Grade II grounds that accompanies it and the Towcester Racecourse. As the landscape changes towards Towcester the introduction of more dense woodland features form providing strong ecological and visual attraction as well as public recreation through the gardens and grounds of Easton Neston.*

## Evaluation

The area fully met the majority of the criteria in Work Stage 3 (see below for the detailed evaluation) and is proposed for designation as an SLA.

## Extent of area

The candidate SLA encompasses the valley floodplains and rural valley slopes of the River Great Ouse.

## Boundary commentary

See **Figure 4.14** below. The boundary of the former Ouse Valley AAL should be retained with the following boundary changes:

- The eastern boundary is formed by the administrative boundary within Bedford District.
- The south-eastern boundary edge will follow the defined change of landform along the top of the Ouse valley slopes.
- The clay plateau (LCA 4a) to the east is largely recommended for exclusion from the SLA due to the change in landform and character to a flatter landscape, larger field pattern and visual intrusion of incongruous features. The excluded area includes the solar farm and wind farm at Petsoe Manor, which are incongruous features within the landscape.
- Minor amendments to the boundary around the town of Olney to exclude land that has since been developed.
- Minor amendments to the boundary around Tickford End to exclude land that has been granted planning permission for development.



- Extend the boundary north to encompass the historic villages on the valley sides (Stoke Goldington, Ravenstone and Lavendon), as well as Scheduled Monuments east of Lavendon.
- Extend the boundary west to include the Ouse Valley Park, Floodplain Forest Nature Reserve and historic monuments of Old Wolverton. Although affected by traffic noise from the A5 and industrial edge of Wolverton, the pools and meadows create a distinctive landscape, with echoes of the historic extraction industry. The landscape also provides excellent recreational opportunities and functional floodplain processes.

**Figure 4.12: Limestone vernacular in Ravenstone**

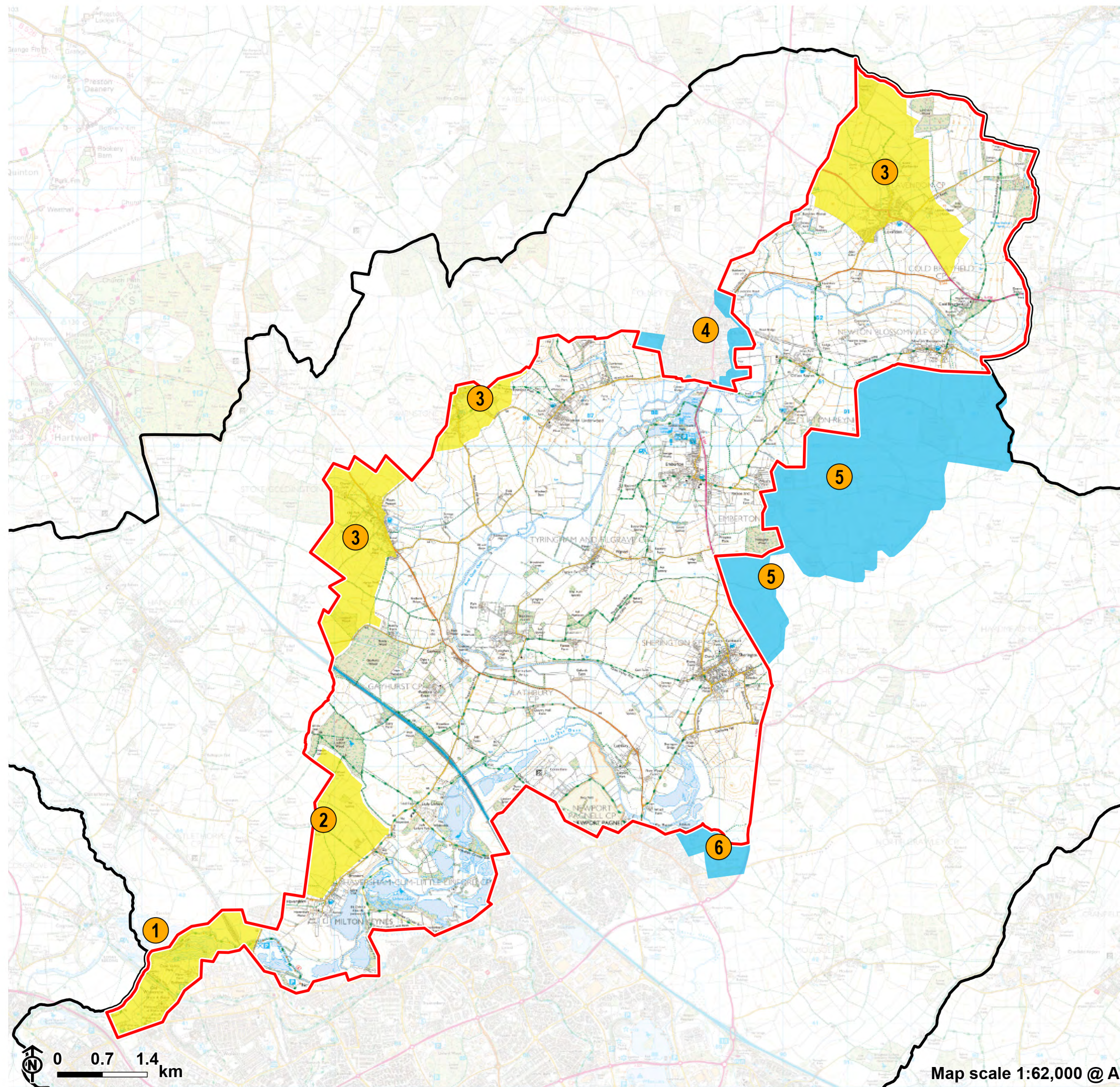


**Figure 4.12: Riparian vegetation along the River Great Ouse at Haversham**





**Figure 4.14: Ouse Valley Candidate  
Special Landscape Area (SLA)**



- Milton Keynes borough boundary
- Ouse Valley candidate SLA

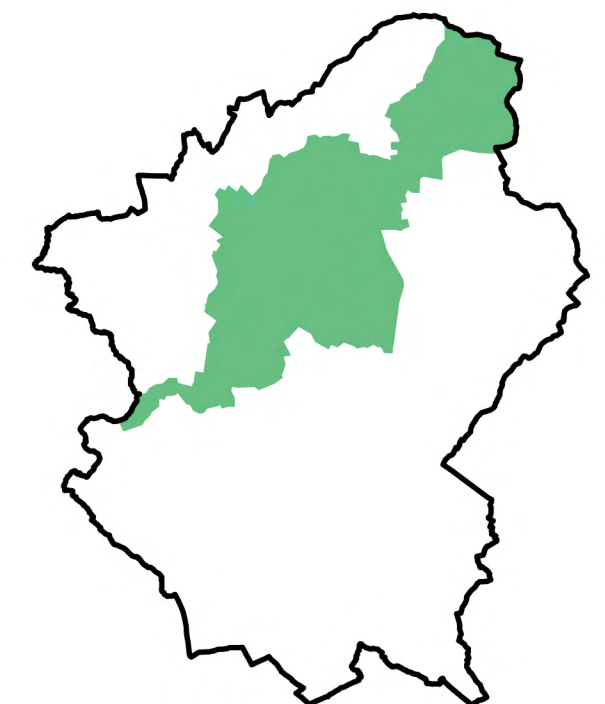
**Change to SLA**

Addition

Removal

Notes

- 1: Extend into Ouse valley.
- 2: Extend onto Ouse valley slopes.
- 3: Extend to cover all of historic, scenic villages of Stoke Goldington, Ravenstone and Lavendon.
- 4: Removal of land developed around Olney.
- 5: Exclude land on clay plateau with different character, and exclusion of the solar farm and wind turbines at Petsoe End.
- 6: Exclude land with allocated development around Tickford End.





## Summary of special landscape qualities

- The low-lying shallow valley of the winding River Great Ouse and its tributaries which confer a recognisable sense of place and provide a key gateway to Olney and Milton Keynes city.
- Extensive woodland, sinuous water bodies and floodplain meadows provide visual contrast and ecological interest which contribute to landscape character. These provide a contrast with the more intensively farmed land on the valley sides.
- Historic field patterns of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century and Parliamentary enclosure retain a good network of hedgerows. Small areas of assarts on higher ground indicate a past landscape with higher woodland cover.
- The medieval settlement pattern of nucleated villages on the valley sides with distinctive limestone vernacular provide time depth and cultural identity.
- Parkland landscapes at Gayhurst and Tyringham, with their associated stone bridges over the river, are distinctive landscape features, that provide a connection to the local history of the area.
- Panoramic views of the meandering river, the undulating valley sides and views to distinctive tall church towers and spires provide a strong sense of place.
- The network of Public Rights of Way including the Ouse Valley Way and Milton Keynes Boundary Walk provide recreational access to the landscape, and connections between neighbouring settlements.

**Figure 4.15: Recreationally valued shallow low-lying floodplain at Wolverton**



## Full evaluation

The following description of the landscape of the candidate SLA relates to each assessment criteria considered when identifying landscape value.

**Natural heritage qualities:** There is considerable natural heritage interest associated with the meandering river valley of the River Great Ouse. The river is lined by mature riparian vegetation, much designated as priority habitat deciduous woodland. Extensive wetland habitats are found across the floodplain meadows, including priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh and chalk grassland. The whole river channel is designated as the River Ouse Wildlife Corridor. In the west, former mineral workings considerably altered this landscape. However, these have been restored and contain wetlands and

plantations designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). Konik ponies have recently been introduced to graze these areas for conservation management. These all provide evidence of ecological interest which contributes strongly to landscape character.

Small areas of woodland are found on the valley sides, often recorded as priority habitat and some of ancient origin. Hedgerows also contribute positively to the structure and habitat connectivity of the landscape.

**Cultural heritage qualities:** The area has considerable historic interest. Historic villages and the market town of Olney contribute positively to the landscape. Many are designated as Conservation Areas due to their numerous historic buildings. Church spires and towers provide local landmarks, particularly the spire of St Peter and St Paul, Olney. The open floodplain forms an important landscape setting to the historic towns of Newport Pagnell and Olney.

Ridge and furrow earthworks within pasture fields, and considerable areas of pre-18<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century and Parliamentary field patterns contribute to the time-depth of the landscape. However, mineral extraction has removed traces of historic field patterns in the west of the area.

The landscape is characterised by a number of historic buildings (Listed Buildings) and sites (Scheduled Monuments) relating to former priories, monasteries and manor houses, established in the Ouse Valley in the early Medieval period. Historic stone bridges (designated as Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings) cross the river at several points and contribute positively to the character of the landscape.

Historic houses and associated parklands at Tyringham Hall and Gayhurst Court (Registered Parks and Gardens) contribute to the cultural interest of the valley landscape. Tyringham Hall was designed by Sir John Soane, with gardens laid out by Humphry Repton and later Edwin Lutyens. Repton was also involved with the design of gardens at Gayhurst Court. The parklands lie next to



each other, taking advantage of the valley sides either side of the River Great Ouse.

The market town of Olney is associated with radical Christians in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, including the poet William Cowper and John Newton who wrote the words to 'Amazing Grace'.

**Recreation value:** The LCA has excellent recreational access, with a number of long-distance routes including the promoted Milton Keynes Boundary Walk and Ouse Valley Way. Appreciation of the landscape is an important part of the experience along these routes. Although access to the river is sometimes limited, a series of public parks on sites associated with former mineral extraction provides excellent recreational opportunities in the west. Emberton Country Park was the first dedicated Country Park in England. Part of the Grand Union Canal also crosses this area, with recreational opportunities both along the canal and its tow path. Bury Field is a valued area of Open Access Land on the edge of Newport Pagnell.

**Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** Overall the landscape structure is strong although it is influenced locally by expanding settlements and infrastructure development. Hedgerows are in variable condition, with some replacement by post and rail or post and wire, but new planting of hedgerows is a sign of active management in the area. In the east historic field patterns are largely intact, except around Sherington and Filgrave. Horse grazing on the edges of villages also reduces landscape condition locally.

Former gravel extraction has removed the historic field pattern in the west, but the restoration and flooding of the former gravel pits have created a new landscape structure. Some larger structures such as weirs and pipes along the river are evidence of human intervention.

Detractors within the landscape include major transport corridors including the M1 and West Coast Mainline railway. A solar farm north of Newport Pagnell, and electricity pylons west of Lavendon and Newton Blossomville are also incongruous features within the landscape. Residential and commercial

development on the edge of Olney and at Cosgrove Park, and the wind farm at Petsoe End introduce urban features into views from the valley.

**Local distinctiveness:** The shallow river valley of the Great Ouse is a distinctive feature within Milton Keynes. The main river channel and its tributaries in localised shallow valleys confer a recognisable sense of place. The water-filled former gravel pits along the River Great Ouse are also a characteristic feature of this area. Parklands at Gayhurst and Tyringham are distinctive, and provide a link to the history of large estates in the area. The river and valley form an important 'gateway' and contributes positively to the character of Olney, and an important approach to Newport Pagnell.

**Perceptual and scenic:** The open valley landscape has a strong visual character. There are fine panoramic views from the valley to the wooded skyline of Yardley Chase to the north and the wooded Greensand Ridge to the south-east, and open views across the valley floor to the historic parklands at Gayhurst and Tyringham, with their distinctive stone bridges. The church spire of St Peter and St Paul, Olney provides a landmark feature. Views of the Petsoe Manor wind farm, tall buildings and warehouses within Milton Keynes city to the south, and electricity pylon routes are modern influences on the landscape, but largely do not detract from its scenic rural character.

Areas of rural character, particularly along the river corridor in the east where there is more limited access, are relatively tranquil. There is also a perception of naturalness, even within the flooded former gravel pits. The busy transport corridors which cross the area are locally audible.

**Functional:** The floodplain landscape of grasslands, streams and ponds, combined with the woodland on the valley slopes and riparian woodland contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape. This includes supporting biodiversity and stabilising soil quality. These all contribute to the multifunctional green infrastructure network connecting to Milton Keynes city.

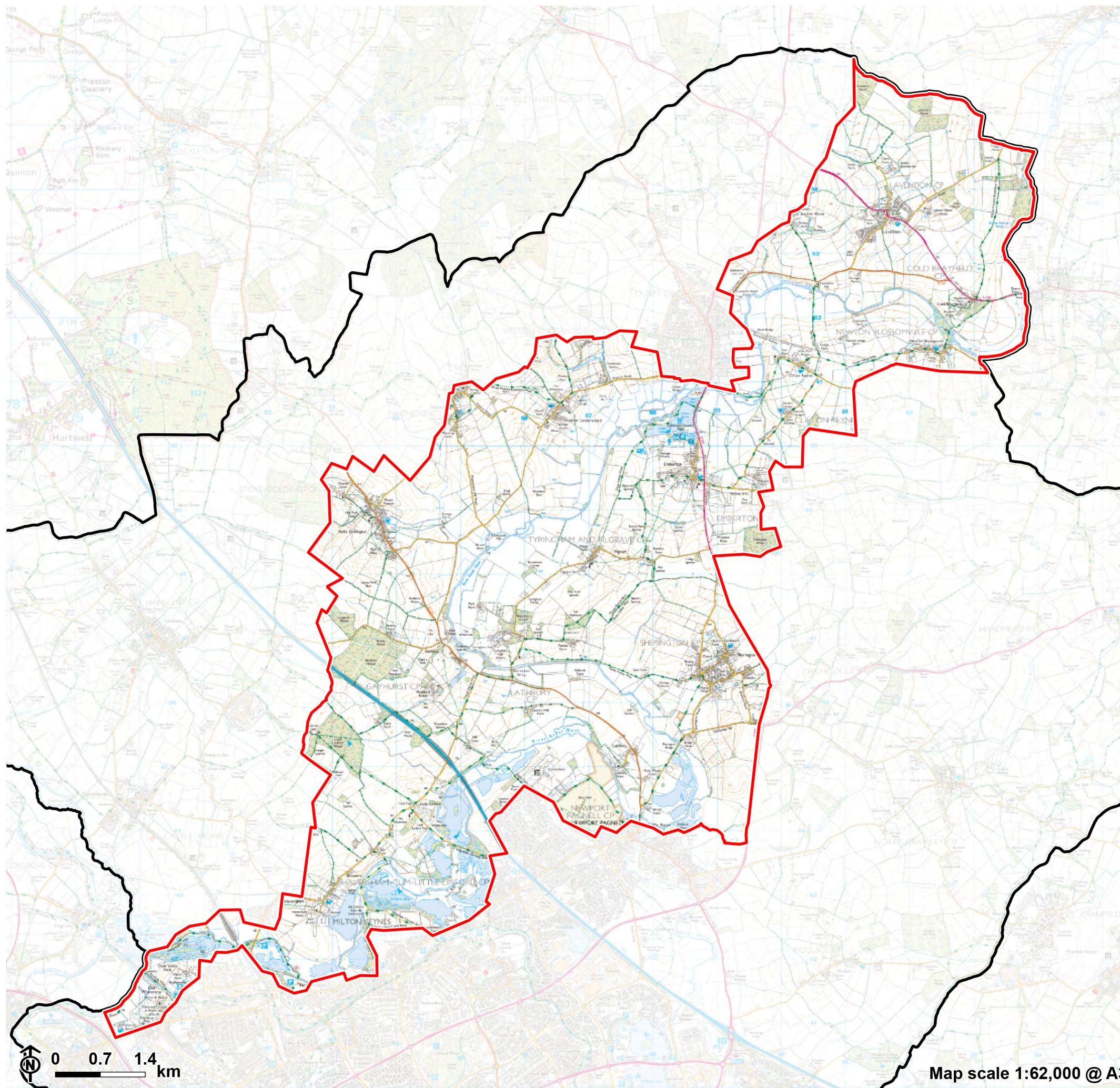
**Figure 4.46: Tyringham Bridge over the River Ouse, part of the Registered Park and Garden at Tyringham Hall**



**Figure 4.17: Prominent skyline features Olney church spire and Petsoe Manor wind farm**

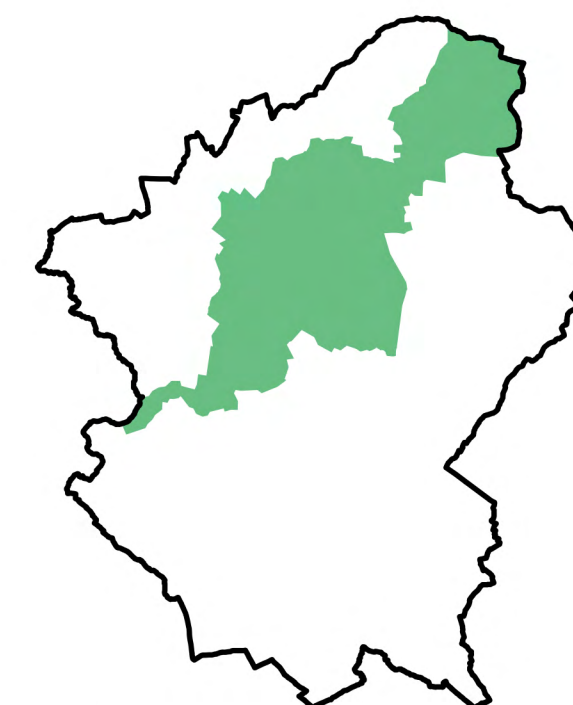






**Figure 4.18: Ouse Valley Candidate  
Special Landscape Area (SLA)**

- Milton Keynes borough boundary
- Ouse Valley candidate SLA





## Management guidelines

### Protect

- Manage and enhance floodplain meadows. Protect existing meadows from ploughing, grassland improvement or further mineral extraction.
- Conserve and enhance the biodiversity interest of wetland habitats and watercourses. Ensure a whole valley approach is taken, identifying opportunities for green infrastructure enhancement.
- Protect and restore boundary hedges by coppicing, laying and gapping up to improve links between habitats and improve landscape structure.
- Protect the valued recreational use of the rural landscape through public rights of way, exploring opportunities for informal access and enjoyment.
- Conserve the open landscape and avoid the introduction of large-scale or very tall elements, both within the rural and urban areas of the borough, which would have a visual impact over a wide distance.
- Conserve and reinforce the parkland /estate character of Tyringham and Gayhurst, particularly planning the succession of veteran trees which form an integral part of the historic landscape.
- Conserve the distinctive vernacular of historic buildings and their rural setting, particularly within Conservation Areas, and ensure that landscape continues to provide a rural setting to these areas.
- Conserve the medieval settlement pattern of nucleated villages with surrounding open fields. Restrict built development away from the villages to retain the agricultural landscape setting.
- Protect the important undeveloped landscape setting to Milton Keynes, Newport Pagnell and Olney.
- Identify, retain and manage key viewpoints across the river floodplain and to the surrounding undulating valley slopes. Consider these views and those to the landmark churches and clocktowers in any future development.

## **Manage**

- Minimise water pollution from agriculture through sensitive land management practices, including restoration of buffer strips along watercourses to minimise run off, which will also improve biodiversity and connectivity.
- Manage and monitor invasive native or harmful species in woodlands and the impact of pathogens, pests and diseases as a result of climate change.
- Draw on the advice of the Upper and Bedford Ouse Catchment Partnership on the management of floodplain meadows and implementation of natural flood management schemes. Identify opportunities for green infrastructure enhancements, as set out in the Milton Keynes Green Infrastructure Strategy and Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping.
- Promote improvements to the river and lake habitats to encourage increased biodiversity value through marginal planting and localised bank profiling and sympathetic maintenance of drainage ditches.
- Manage recreational access and infrastructure to minimise the erosion of habitats and negative impacts on the tranquillity and remoteness of the landscape.

## **Plan**

- Plan the introduction of new hedges following roads, public rights of way and historic boundaries. Plant individual hedgerow trees to provide replacement for mature and over mature stock.
- Maximise opportunities from the restoration of mineral extraction sites for recreation and biodiversity. Develop diverse mixed age woodland communities to retain a balance between screening recreation, wildlife and public safety.
- Plan to increase the extent of native deciduous woodland on the valley slopes, using locally occurring species to link the existing small woodland blocks, copses and hedgerows, as set out in the Milton Keynes Green



Infrastructure Strategy. Encourage progressive removal of conifer hedgerows and shelter belts where appropriate.

- Plan for climate change, researching appropriate species mixes and designing woodland to minimise damage as a result of increased storms.
- Consider intervisibility of views when planning large-scale or very tall development in areas outside of the Ouse Valley SLA.

**Figure 4.19: View over Haversham and Linford Lakes**



## Calverton Plateau: Candidate Special Landscape Area

**Figure 4.20: Oakhill Wood and long views across the Aylesbury Vale**



## Statement of Significance

### Relationship to former and existing local landscape designations

The landscape of the candidate area was not previously designated as an AAL.

Landscapes immediately west and south west of the candidate SLA are designated as Local Landscape Areas (LLAs) in the Buckinghamshire District Local Plan. This includes:

Great Ouse Valley East LLA: This area is located to immediately west of the village of Lower Weald. The Statement of Significance for the Great Ouse Valley East LLA states that: *The Great Ouse Valley East is a small, shallow enclosed river valley with gently rolling sides. The river is marked out by lush bank side vegetation. An intimate, often enclosed, landscape adjacent to the river with some scenic views provides the setting for a number of intact historic features including the Thornborough Bridge and nearby Roman barrows, an intact medieval landscape pattern, weirs and historic riverside buildings.*

Whaddon-Nash LLA: The area is located immediately adjacent to Oakhill Wood. The Statement of Significance for the Whaddon Nash Valley states: *The Whaddon - Nash Valley is an undulating landscape with valleys carved into it by tributaries of the River Great Ouse. A rural and ancient landscape containing remnants of the medieval forest of Whaddon Chase, its agricultural land use provides a historic tie to the farming history of the area. The landscape of fields and woodland provides an attractive setting for the villages and Conservation Areas of Whaddon and Nash and is*



*prominent when viewed from the north. The area is rich in ecological landscape value including woodlands, fens and lowland meadows.*

## Evaluation

The area fully met the majority of the criteria in Work Stage 3 (see below for the detailed evaluation) and is proposed for designation as an SLA.

## Extent of area

The candidate SLA encompasses the undulating clay plateau in the west of the Borough and is contiguous with a two areas of local landscape designation in Buckinghamshire to the west and south west.

## Boundary commentary

See **Figure 4.23** below.

- The proposed SLA boundaries is largely contiguous with the boundaries of LCA 4b Weald Undulating Clay Plateau.
- The eastern boundary is formed by the edge of Milton Keynes city and the western boundary by the administrative border with Buckinghamshire.
- The northern boundary extends into LCA 3c Ouse Lakes and Parkland Floodplains to include the floodplain of the River Great Ouse. This area forms a continuation of the plateau landscape, incised by watercourses, and has therefore been included in the SLA, despite a slight difference in landscape character. It's inclusion also ensures a continuity in local landscape designation across local authority boundaries between Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire.

**Figure 4.21: Calverton Brook**

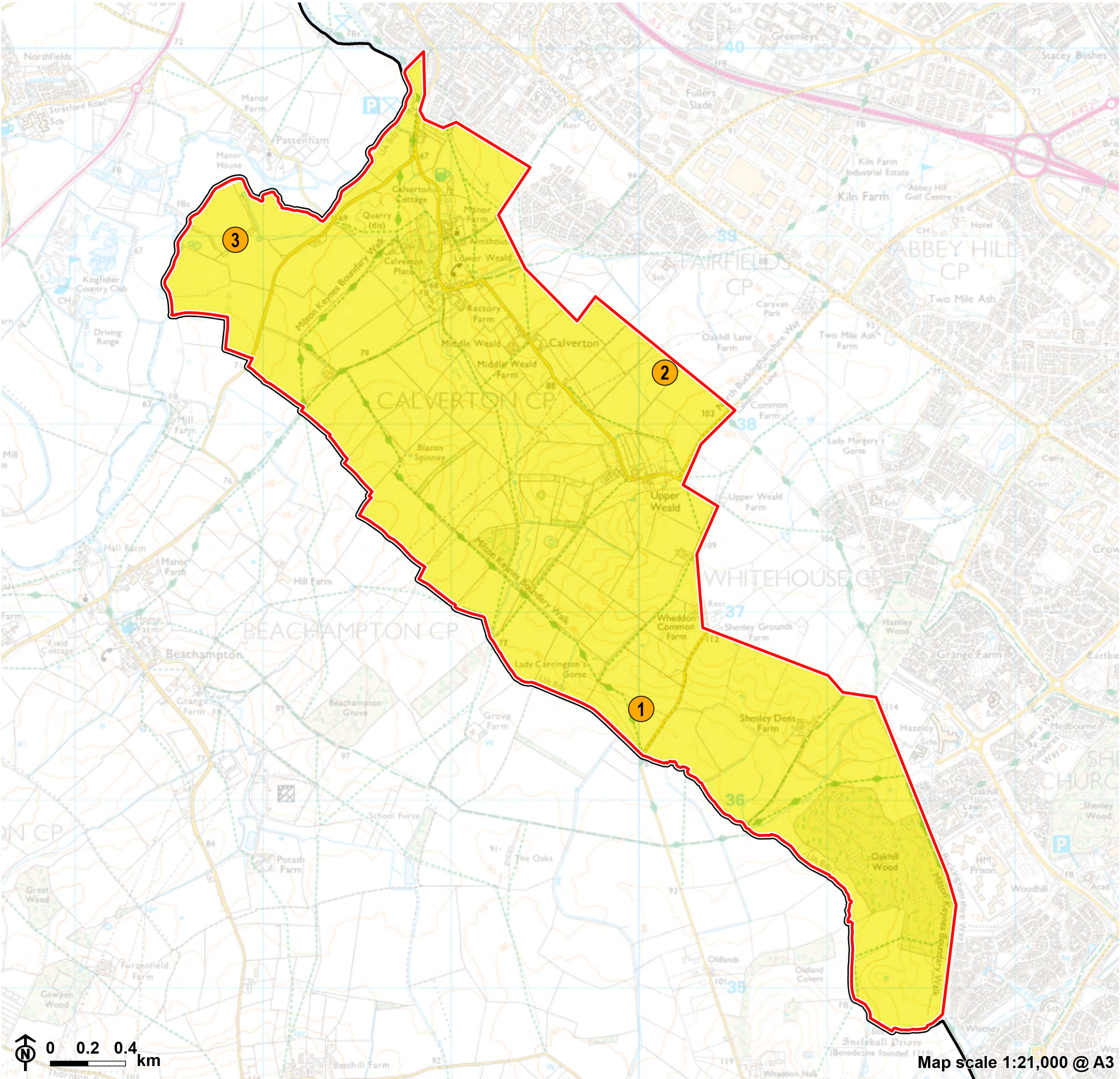


**Figure 4.22: All Saints Church tower, pasture fields and the modern edge of Milton Keynes city**

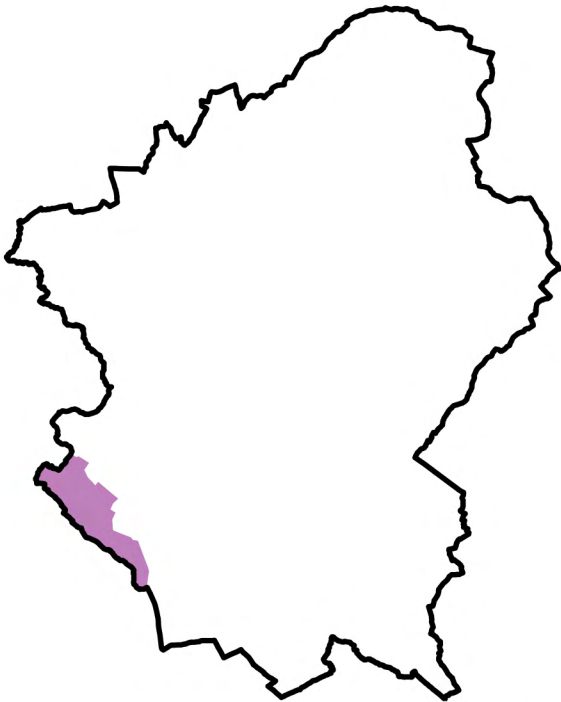




Figure 4.23: Calverton Clay Plateau Candidate Special Landscape Area (SLA)



- Milton Keynes borough boundary
- Calverton Clay Plateau candidate SLA
- Change to SLA
  - Addition
  - Notes
    - 1: Landscape continues into Buckinghamshire.
    - 2: Edge of Western Expansion Area forms the eastern boundary.
    - 3: Extends into Ouse floodplain.





## Summary of special landscape qualities

- The open, elevated plateau, with an intact agricultural character, has a strong sense of place and provides a rural setting to Milton Keynes city.
- Small deciduous woodland copses, trees and hedgerows support biodiversity, form part of an important green infrastructure network and create a strong landscape structure.
- Small streams cross the area providing topographic and ecological interest and contributing to green infrastructure.
- Historic estates and small villages with a strong local vernacular provide a connection to history, cultural identity and aesthetic value. There are historic links to the Whaddon Chase forest and parkland in the south.
- The open character of the plateau allows long-distance views from the ridges to the surrounding landscapes both within and outside of Milton Keynes and contributes to a strong visual character.
- The network of Public Rights of Way, including the promoted Milton Keynes Boundary Walk, connects the settlements and provides recreational access through the landscape from Milton Keynes city.

**Figure 4.64: Historic settlement at Lower Weald**



## Full evaluation

The following description of the landscape of the candidate SLA relates to each assessment criteria considered when identifying landscape value.

**Natural heritage qualities:** The area has important natural heritage features. Oakhill Wood in the south is an important area of woodland, recorded as ancient woodland (although largely replanted), which is part of the North Bucks Way Wildlife Corridor, and forms part of the wider green infrastructure network. Smaller linear woodlands, riparian woodland and meadows along the Calverton Brook also provide ecological interest. Priority habitat traditional orchard and unimproved species-rich calcareous grassland, designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) at Old Limestone Quarry, are surviving semi-natural habitats. These



provide evidence of ecological interest which contribute positively to landscape character, where they occur.

**Cultural heritage qualities:** The area has considerable heritage interest. The historic field pattern was formed by Parliamentary enclosure, which was further sub-divided in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Some ridge and furrow field patterns are still evident within the landscape.

Historic hamlets at Lower Weald, Calverton and Upper Weald contain a number of listed buildings and are designated as part of the Calverton Conservation Area. A distinctive local vernacular of limestone also contributes to the cultural interest of the landscape. There is a distinctive parkland landscape around Calverton House.

In the south, time-depth is provided by Oakhill Wood and its surroundings which formed part of the medieval hunting ground of Whaddon Chase, which extends into Buckinghamshire.

These features all provide evidence of cultural interest which contribute positively to landscape character. There are no known associations with notable people, events or the arts.

**Recreation value:** Recreational access is good across the area. The Milton Keynes Boundary Walk is the main public access through the landscape and provides important recreational links into the countryside from Milton Keynes city. The North Bucks Way also crosses the south-east of the area.

**Landscape quality (condition and intactness):** The rural landscape is generally in good condition with some local detractors. The parkland at Calverton House is in good condition, with parkland features such mature trees in pasture. Hedgerows across the landscape are generally in good condition, with a strong network of hedgerow trees. However, there has been some reinforcement by post and wire fencing, and some localised loss of hedgerows. Wire fencing along the Calverton Brook is sometimes unsightly. Conversion of pasture to horse grazing has created a slightly unmanaged character in parts.

Electricity pylons between Calverton and Upper Weald are the main detracting features in the landscape. The Grade II listed Shenley Dens Farm, part of the historic landscape associated with the Whaddon Estate, is now derelict.

**Local distinctiveness:** The plateau topography, which falls gently west into Buckinghamshire, is incised by the Calverton Brook forming a steep sided valley in the centre of the LCA, which contributes positively to the landscape. The parkland character around Calverton and Lower Weald provides a sense of place. The vernacular of brick and limestone also contributes to local character. The landscape forms a strong rural setting to Milton Keynes city, especially the recently constructed Western Expansion Area.

**Perceptual and scenic:** This is a rural landscape, which retains a strong sense of separation from Milton Keynes city which lies to the east. There is also a sense of tranquillity, despite recent development of the Western Expansion Area. The A5 to the east and A422 to the north are occasionally audibly intrusive.

Settlement is concentrated in historic villages located along a single local road resulting in a traditional rural character. Enclosure along the Calverton Brook contrasts with the open character on higher ground in the north and south which enables extensive views across the Aylesbury Vale to the west and wooded horizons to the north. This contributes to a strong visual character.

**Functional:** The small streams, woodlands and hedgerows form part of the healthy functioning of the landscape, and the multifunctional green infrastructure network.

**Figure 4.25: Long views north and west across Buckinghamshire near Calverton**



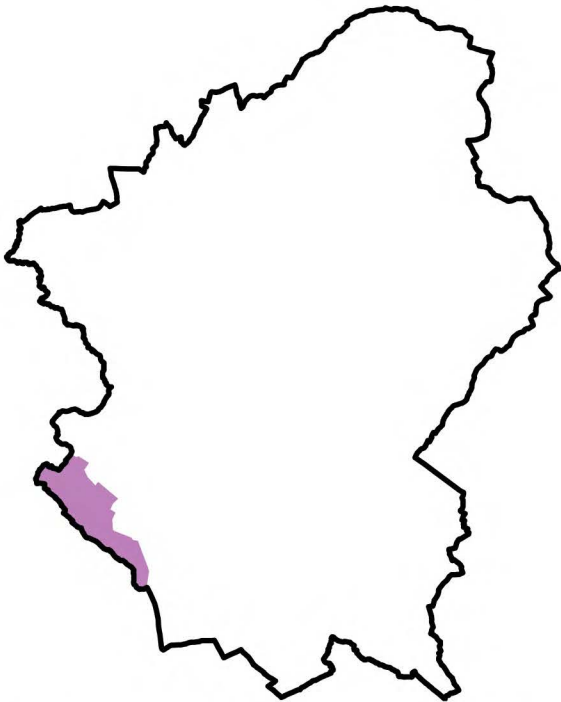
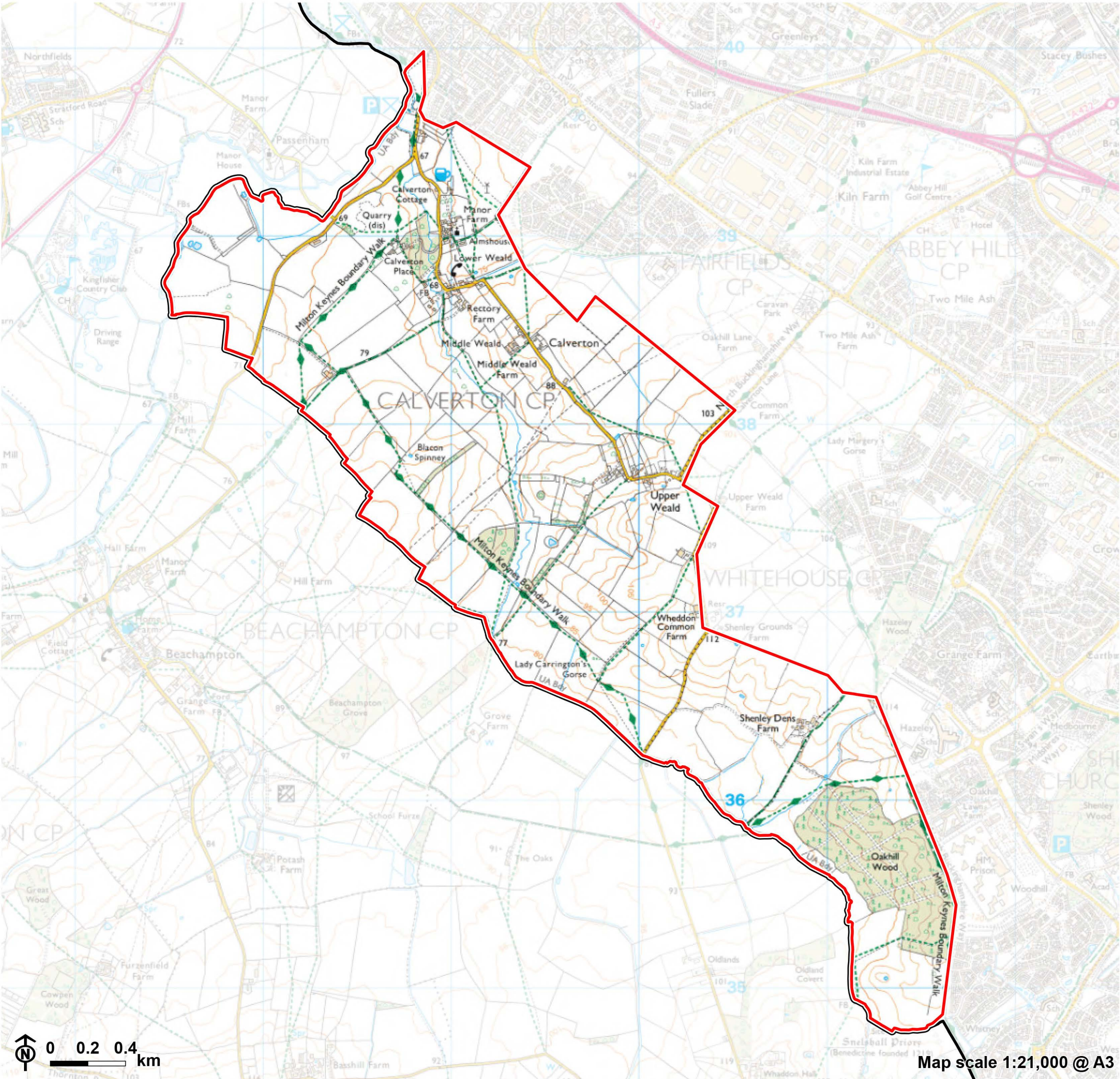
**Figure 4.26: Sheep pasture and mature hedgerow trees on Middle Weald**





Figure 4.27: Calverton Clay Plateau  
Candidate Special Landscape Area (SLA)

- Milton Keynes borough boundary
- Calverton Clay Plateau candidate SLA





## Management guidelines

### Protect

- Protect and enhance the historic character of the landscape, including historic parkland at Calverton House and ridge and furrow earthworks under existing pasture.
- Conserve the distinctive vernacular of historic buildings and their rural settings, including within the Calverton Conservation Areas. Ensure key views within and from the villages referenced in the Conservation Area Appraisal are retained.
- Conserve the long views and intervisibility within the historic Whaddon Chase landscape between the Calverton Plateau and Buckinghamshire.
- Retain framed views to local landmark buildings, including the church tower at Calverton.
- Protect and conserve ancient woodland at Oakhill Wood.
- Conserve and enhance the biodiversity interest of wetland habitats and watercourses. Ensure a whole valley approach is taken, identifying opportunities for green infrastructure enhancement.
- Manage and enhance floodplain meadows. Protect existing meadows from ploughing, grassland improvement or further mineral extraction.
- Protect and restore boundary hedges by coppicing, laying and gapping up to improve the network of linkages between habitats.
- Protect the valued recreational use of the rural landscape through PRoW, exploring further opportunities for informal access and enjoyment.
- Conserve the open character of the landscape.

## **Manage**

- Promote an increase in biodiversity in the agricultural fields, including through creation of uncultivated margins to arable fields and converting some arable land to permanent pasture where possible.
- Consider impacts of horse grazing, including infield structures, to reduce the impact on the open character of the landscape.
- Manage and monitor invasive native or harmful species in woodlands and the impact of pathogens, pests and diseases as a result of climate change.
- Encourage progressive conversion of conifer plantations within Oakhill Wood to indigenous native broadleaved tree and shrub species using local provenance stock.
- Minimise water pollution from agriculture through sensitive land management practices, including restoration of buffer strips along watercourses to minimise run off, which will also improve biodiversity and connectivity.
- Manage the existing PRoW network, and consider opportunities for extending it, particularly where this can tie-in with wider initiatives to promote and enable sustainable transport in association with the extensions to Milton Keynes city.
- Manage recreational access and infrastructure to minimise the erosion of habitats and negative impacts on the tranquillity and remoteness of the landscape.

## **Plan**

- Promote the introduction of new hedges following roads, PRoW and historic boundaries. Plant individual hedgerow trees to provide replacement for mature and over mature stock.
- Plan to increase the extent of native deciduous woodland and tree cover, particularly to link existing small woodlands, copses and hedgerows. Use locally occurring, climate resilient species.



- Plan for climate change, researching appropriate species mixes and designing woodland to minimise damage as a result of increased storms.
- Retain the characteristic settlement pattern of small historic ridgetop villages, avoiding out of scale residential developments.
- Avoid the introduction of large-scale elements, or development which breaches the ridge along the urban edge of Milton Keynes, which would have a visual impact over a wide distance.
- Encourage sensitive management of new development, ensuring the existing historic villages retain a sense of separation from new development on the edge of Milton Keynes city.
- Ensure a strong landscape structure to the adjacent parkland areas within the Western Expansion Area, providing a landscape buffer to soften the impact of residential areas on adjacent landscapes.
- Reference the pattern of local buildings materials and local identity in any new development or boundary treatments.

## Chapter 5

# Planning policy recommendations

**5.1** Three candidate SLAs are recommended for inclusion within planning policy in the forthcoming MK City Plan 2050:

- Ouse Valley;
- Brickhills; and
- Calverton Plateau.

**5.2** The policy wording for SLAs could be part of an overall landscape policy, or a separate SLA policy. Examples from other Local Planning Authorities, which show both approaches, are given below. These policies have all been through Local Plan Examination.

### County Durham (Adopted 2020)

#### Landscape

Proposals for new development will be permitted where they would not cause unacceptable harm to the character, quality or distinctiveness of the landscape, or to important features or views.

Proposals will be expected to incorporate appropriate measures to mitigate adverse landscape and visual effects.

Development affecting Areas of Higher Landscape Value defined on Map H, will only be permitted where it conserves, and where appropriate enhances, the special qualities of the landscape, unless the benefits of development in that location clearly outweigh the harm.

Development proposals should have regard to the County Durham Landscape Character Assessment and County Durham Landscape Strategy and contribute, where possible, to the conservation or enhancement of the local landscape.

## Perth and Kinross (Adopted 2019)

### All Landscapes

Development and land use change, including the creation of new hill tracks, should be compatible with the distinctive characteristics and features of Perth and Kinross's landscapes; which requires reference to the Tayside Landscape Character Assessment. Accordingly, development proposals will be supported where they do not conflict with the aim of maintaining and enhancing the landscape qualities of Perth and Kinross. They will need to demonstrate with reference to an appropriate landscape capacity study that either in the case of individual developments, or when cumulatively considered alongside other existing or proposed developments:

- (a) they do not erode local distinctiveness, diversity and quality of Perth and Kinross's landscape character areas, the historic and cultural dimension of the area's landscapes, visual and scenic qualities of the landscape, or the quality of landscape experience;
- (b) they safeguard views, viewpoints and landmarks from development that would detract from their visual integrity, identity or scenic quality;
- (c) they safeguard the tranquil qualities of the area's landscapes;
- (d) they safeguard the relative wildness of the area's landscapes including, in particular, the areas identified on the 2014 SNH Wild Land Areas map;



(e) they provide high-quality standards in landscape design, including landscape enhancement and mitigation schemes when there is an associated impact on a landscape's qualities;

(f) they incorporate measures for protecting and enhancing the ecological, geological, geomorphological, archaeological, historic, cultural and visual amenity elements of the landscape; and

(g) they conserve the experience of the night sky in less developed areas of Perth and Kinross through design solutions with low light impact.

Development which would affect a Wild Land Area, as defined on the 2014 SNH map of Wild Land Areas, will only be permitted where the Council as Planning Authority is satisfied that it can be demonstrated that any significant effects on the qualities of these areas can be substantially overcome by siting, design or other mitigation.

Local Landscape Areas (LLAs) are the local landscape designation.

Development should only be permitted where it will not have a significant adverse impact on their special character or qualities, or where these impacts are clearly outweighed by social and economic benefits that are more than of local significance to Perth and Kinross.

Note: Reference should be made to Landscape Supplementary Guidance, and the individual statements of significance for each LLA should be used to consider potential impacts on their special qualities and objectives.

## Cotswolds (Adopted 2018)

### Special Landscape Areas

Development within Special Landscape Areas (as shown on the Policies Map) will be permitted provided it does not have a significant detrimental impact upon the special character and key landscape qualities of the area including its tranquillity.

## Ceredigion (Adopted 2013)

### Special Landscape Areas (SLAs)

Proposals for development within Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) will be assessed in relation to scale and nature of development and their ability to be accommodated without significant damage to, and where possible the enhancement of, the valued visual, historic, geological, ecological and cultural characteristics of the SLA.

The areas designated as SLAs are included on the proposals maps and their management will be subject to Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG): 'Special Landscape Areas.'

## Appendix A

### Glossary and abbreviations

**Table A.1: Glossary of terms**

Term	Definition
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum (sea level)
Ancient Woodland	Woodland which the evidence shows has had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 CE and has only been cleared for underwood or timber production. It is an extremely valuable ecological resource, with an exceptionally high diversity of flora and fauna.
Arable	Land used for growing crops.
Assart	The informal enclosure of private farmland by encroachment into woodland or heath.
Assessment	An umbrella term used to encompass all the many different ways of looking at, describing, analysing, and evaluating landscape.
Condition	A judgement on the intactness and condition of the elements of the landscape.
Description	Verbal description of what a landscape looks like. This is usually carried out in a systematic manner, but it may also include personal reactions to the landscape.
Element	A component part of the landscape (e.g. hedges, roads, woods).



## Appendix A Planning policy recommendations

Term	Definition
Enclosure	The placing in private hands of land to which there were previously common rights; the merging of commonly held strip fields to form a block surrounded by hedges.
Equine development	A term used to describe areas on the fringes of settlements which are dominated by horse paddocks, stable buildings, and associated paraphernalia.
Feature	A prominent, eye-catching element (e.g. wooded hilltop, church spire).
Floodplain	The area that would naturally be affected by flooding if a river rises above its banks, or if high tides and stormy seas cause flooding in coastal areas.
GIS	Geographic Information System
Grassland	Land used for grazing. Grassland can be improved (by management practices) semi-improved (modified by management practices and have a range of species less diverse than unimproved grasslands), or unimproved (not treated with fertiliser, herbicide or intensively grazed and consequently species diversity is high).
Habitat	The natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism.
HLC	Historic Landscape Characterisation
Hydrology	The science dealing with the occurrence, circulation, distribution, and properties of the waters of the earth and its atmosphere.
Intact	Not changed or diminished.

Term	Definition
Land cover	Combinations of land use and vegetation that cover the land surface.
Landmark	An object or feature of a landscape, city or town that is easily seen and recognized from a distance, especially one that enables someone to establish their location.
Landscape	The term refers primarily to the visual appearance of the land, including its shape, form, and colours. However, the landscape is not a purely visual phenomenon; its character relies on a whole range of other dimensions, including geology, topography, soils, ecology, archaeology, landscape history, land use, architecture, and cultural associations.
Landscape character	A distinct pattern or combination of elements that occurs consistently in a particular landscape.
Landscape character area (LCA)	A unique geographic area with a consistent character and identity, which forms part of a landscape character type.
Landscape condition	Based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness, from visual, functional, and ecological perspectives. It reflects the state of repair or intactness of individual features or elements (relating to that feature's primary condition or ultimate desire).
Landscape strategy	Principles to manage and direct landscape change for a particular landscape type or character area including identification of any particular management needs for specific elements.

## Appendix A Planning policy recommendations

Term	Definition
Landscape value	The relative value that is attached to different landscapes. In a policy context the usual basis for recognising certain highly valued landscapes is through the application of a local or national landscape designation. Yet a landscape may be valued by different communities of interest for many different reasons without any formal designation, recognising, for example, perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness; special cultural associations; the influence and presence of other conservation interests; or the existence of a consensus about importance, either nationally or locally.
Linear settlement	A settlement that is built along a road, in comparison to a nuclear or dispersed settlement.
Listed Building	A building, object or structure that has been judged to be of national importance in terms of architectural or historic interest.
Local Plan	A development plan prepared by local planning authorities.
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
Nucleated settlement	A settlement that is clustered around a centre, in comparison to a linear or dispersed settlement.
Open-field system	An area of arable land with common rights after harvest or while fallow. The fields date from the medieval period and are usually without internal divisions (hedges, walls, or fences).
OS	Ordnance Survey



## Appendix A Planning policy recommendations

Term	Definition
Parliamentary fields / enclosure	Fields formed by a legal process of enclosure (or inclosure), typically during the 18 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> centuries – by passing laws causing or forcing enclosure to produce fields for use by the owner (in place of common land for communal use).
Pastoral	Land used for keeping or grazing sheep or cattle.
Pollarding	A traditional woodland management practice in which the branches of a tree are cut back every few years to encourage new long, straight shoots for harvesting. Differs from coppicing because the cuts are made at sufficient distance from the ground to prevent them from being eaten by animals.
PRoW	Public Right of Way
Remnant	A part or quantity left after the greater part has been used, removed, or destroyed.
Riparian habitat	Riverbank habitat.
Scheduled Monument	Nationally important archaeological sites or historic buildings, given protection against unauthorised change.
Semi-natural vegetation	Any type of natural vegetation which has been influenced by human activities, either directly or indirectly.
Sense of place	A person's perception of a location's indigenous characteristics, based on the mix of uses, appearance and context that makes a place memorable.
Sensitive	The response to change or influence.

## Appendix A Planning policy recommendations

Term	Definition
Skyline	The outline of a range of hills, ridge or group of buildings seen against the sky.
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
Time depth	The time period expressed in the landscape, or the extent to which the landscape reflects a certain time period (a landscape with greater time depth will comprise older elements than a landscape with lesser time depth).
Topography	Combinations of slope and elevation that produce the shape and form of the land surface.
Valued landscape attributes	Positive features and characteristics that are important to landscape character and that, if lost, would result in adverse change to the landscape.
Vernacular	Buildings constructed in the local style, from local materials. Concerned with ordinary rather than monumental buildings.

## Appendix B

# Criteria for identifying valued landscapes

## Natural heritage

Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape.

### Potential indicators

- Presence of wildlife and/or habitats and species of ecological interest, including designated sites, that make a particular contribution to sense of place or scenic quality of the landscape.
- Extent and survival of semi-natural habitat that is characteristic of the landscape.
- Visible expression of distinctive geological or geomorphological features creating sense of place, including designated sites.
- Landscape which makes an identified contribution to a nature recovery/green infrastructure network.



## Cultural heritage

A landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest, and with notable people, events in history and the arts which contribute positively to the landscape.

- Presence of historic landmark structures or designed landscape elements (e.g. monuments, follies, avenues, tree roundels)
- Presence of historic parks and gardens, and designed landscapes, including those designated locally or nationally.
- Presence of settlements, buildings or other structures that make a particular contribution to sense of place or scenic quality of the landscape, or landscapes that contribute to the significance of heritage assets (e.g. forming the setting of those assets). This could include designated and non-designated structures.
- Evidence of time depth or historic influence on the landscape. This includes natural time-depth (e.g. ancient woodland and heathland) and visible cultural time depth (historic field patterns, historic rights of way, such as drove roads, ridge and furrow earthworks). These could include both designated and non-designated features.
- Associations with well-known literature, poetry, art, TV/film and music , or with people, places or events that contribute to the perceptions of the landscape.

## Recreation

A landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of the landscape is important.

## Potential indicators

- Presence of open access land (e.g. village greens, commons) and walking routes (particularly National Trails, long distance trails) where appreciation of the landscape is a feature.
- Areas with good access opportunities which provide opportunities for outdoor recreation/ inspiration.
- Landscape that forms part of a view that is important to enjoyment of a recreational opportunity.

Note: values which are considered to be more than just ‘popularity.’

## Landscape quality (condition and intactness)

Landscape which is in a good physical state, with regard to the condition of individual elements and overall landscape structure.

## Potential indicators

- Good condition/intactness of individual landscape features e.g. parkland, trees, walls.
- Strong landscape structure e.g. intact historic field patterns.
- Presence of characteristic and valued features (as listed in the Landscape Character Assessment).
- Absence of incongruous or detracting features (or these features are not visually intrusive).

## Local distinctiveness

A landscape with a strong sense of identity in the context of Milton Keynes..

### Potential indicators

- A coherent landscape character conferring a recognisable sense of place.
- Presence of distinctive features that are identified as being characteristic of a particular place (e.g. distinct landform or topography, such as key ridges or valleys, forming a discrete or recognisable area).
- Presence of rare or unusual features, particularly those that confer a strong sense of place (e.g. a distinctive or rare land cover).
- An area representative of a particular phase in landscape history/development.
- Areas which form settlement 'gateways' and contribute to the character of the settlement or important separation between settlements.

## Perceptual and scenic

A landscape that appeals to the senses – primarily visual. Strong perceptual and aesthetic qualities such as sense of relative tranquillity and remoteness.

### Potential indicators

- Strong visual character, due to patterns/composition of vegetation/landform (e.g. striking landform or harmonious combinations of landcover).



## Appendix B Criteria for identifying valued landscapes

- Memorable, important or distinctive views and landmarks (or landscape which contributes to distinctive views/landmarks).
- Qualities of expansiveness and openness, or enclosure and seclusion.
- Tranquillity or perceptions of relative tranquillity – peace, quietness, birdsong, dark skies, presence of water.
- Uninterrupted tracts of land with few built features.
- Perception of perceived ‘naturalness’ (resulting from relative lack of human influence/absence of modern artefacts, remoteness from mechanised access).

## Functional

Landscapes which form a clearly identifiable and valuable function, either in the healthy functioning of the landscape or as a spatial role.

## Potential indicators

- Landscape and landscape elements that contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape e.g. floodplains, areas that form carbon sinks such as woodlands, areas of undisturbed and healthy soils, areas of diverse landcover, pollinator-rich habitats such as wildflower meadows.
- Areas that form an important part of multifunctional Green Infrastructure network.

## **Appendix C**

### Valued Landscape Policy Review (2022)

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

**1.1** LUC was commissioned by Milton Keynes City Council (MKCC) to review the effectiveness of current landscape policy in relation to valued landscapes within the borough, and to provide recommendations towards new policies which would allow for the protection of these valued landscapes.

**1.2** In this report 'Milton Keynes' refers to the administrative area covered by MKCC, and will be abbreviated to MK. Until it was awarded city status in 2022, the local authority was called Milton Keynes Council (MKC).

### Valued landscapes

**1.3** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>1</sup> requires that planning policies 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) and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside (paragraph 170).

**1.4** The phrase "in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan" infers there is a hierarchy of valued landscapes. Nationally designated landscapes (National Parks, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Broads) are clearly 'valued landscapes'. However, outside the national designations, there is no definitive threshold across the UK above which a landscape is considered to be a 'valued landscape'. It is a judgment that must be made at a local authority scale, and based on evidence. There should be a weight of evidence that supports the recognition of a landscape as valued above more everyday landscapes, and justification will need to be set out.

**1.5** The Landscape Institute (LI) has set out the ways in which landscape value can be recognised in Local Plans in their guidance note 'Assessing landscape value outside national designations'<sup>2</sup>. This explains that landscape value at the local authority or neighbourhood level can be:

- assessed and mapped spatially, i.e. through identifying areas for local landscape designation. The guidance note goes on to say; "studies to support spatial

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<sup>1</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (2021), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

<sup>2</sup> Landscape Institute (2021), TGN02-21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations, <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/publication/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations/>

designations should identify the landscape qualities of each area of landscape proposed for designation”; or

- part of the evaluation stage of a landscape character assessment. In this case landscape qualities will be identified in relation to individual character areas or types. Currently these are commonly described as 'valued landscape characteristics' or 'landscape qualities'.

**1.6** The LI support both approaches as they are both capable of highlighting the particular aspects of a landscape that are valued. However, only local landscape designation actually identifies 'valued landscapes'. Where value has been placed on a landscape by the local planning authority (whether spatially or attributed to specific characteristics or features), this should ideally be defined in the development plan documents.

## Purpose of identifying valued landscapes

**1.7** The European Landscape Convention recognises that all landscapes are of value whether they are designated or not. However local landscape designations can play a role in protecting and enhancing landscapes which are of particular value in the context of the local authority area.

**1.8** The existence of local landscape designations may therefore be useful for a number of purposes<sup>3</sup>:

- Recognise that a specific landscape has special importance, helping to protect it from inappropriate development by highlighting the landscape values that are important to local communities
- May encourage positive landscape management, prioritising resources for positive action
- Play an important role in developing an awareness of the landscape qualities that make particular areas distinctive
- Promote a community's sense of pride in its surroundings, raising awareness and understanding among communities and wider stakeholders

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<sup>3</sup> Nature Scot and Historic Environment Scotland, Guidance on Designating Local Landscape Areas (2020)

## Chapter 2

# Former and existing landscape designations in Buckinghamshire

### Inconsistent use of local landscape designations

**2.1** The inconsistency in use of local landscape designations from district to district is not uncommon in England, largely due to the former Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (ODPM 2004) which advised local planning authorities to only maintain local designations where it could be clearly shown that criteria-based planning policies could not provide the necessary protection. In the 1990s to early 2000s therefore many councils removed local landscape designations from their policies.

**2.2** In 2012 the NPPF replaced the former planning policy statements, and introduced the notion of 'valued landscapes', which has led to an increased interest in local landscape designations as a means of identifying these valued landscapes.

### Local landscape designations in Buckinghamshire

**2.3** Areas of Attractive Landscape (AAL) were first introduced in the Buckinghamshire County Structure Plan, in 1979. The AAL accorded generally with previously defined Areas of Great Landscape Value, first identified in the early 1950s. The 1979 report described the areas as having 'sufficient county-wide landscape value as to justify the application of the same planning restrictions on development as apply to the Chilterns AONB'.

**2.4** The two criteria used in the 1979 report to identify AALs were 'that the area has a special quality and that it is large enough to warrant identification at the county wide scale'.

**2.5** The AALs were carried through into the Buckinghamshire County Structure Plan 1991-2011. The constituent local district authorities adapted the AALs as follows:

#### South Bucks District

**2.6** AALs were broadly defined in the Structure Plan for South Bucks, and detailed boundaries provided in the 1989 Local Plan, defined as 'areas of significant county-wide value'. In addition to the areas of county-wide value, South Bucks



also defined Local Landscape Areas (LLA). The criteria used to define LLA were:

- the area has to be large enough to warrant identification at the district-wide scale; and
- the area has to have a special quality which is characteristic of the attractive landscape of the District; and
- the area should be largely unspoilt and free from major intrusions which harm the character of the landscape.

**2.7** All local landscape designations were subsequently removed in the next (current) South Bucks District Local Plan (adopted 1999, consolidated 2007 and 2011), so South Bucks now does not have any local landscape designations.

### Chiltern District

**2.8** Chiltern District also adopted the two-tier approach to landscape designations, retaining AALs and introducing smaller Locally Important Landscape Areas (LILAs). Chiltern contained one AAL at Bulstrode Park, carried through from the Buckinghamshire Structure Plan. LILAs were identified as areas of landscape which were significant at a local level. Nine LILAs were identified, with the reasons for identification set out in the Local Plan. The policy for LILAs was not saved in the 2007 Chiltern District Local Plan. The Core Strategy for Chiltern District adopted 2011 also withdrew the Area of Attractive Landscape policy. Chiltern now does not have any local landscape designations.

### Wycombe District

**2.9** Wycombe District also adopted the two-tier approach to landscape designations, retaining the AALs from the Buckinghamshire County Plan and introducing smaller Local Landscape Areas (LLAs). As with South Bucks, the criteria used to define these LLA were:

- the area has to be large enough to warrant identification at the district-wide scale; and
- the area has to have a special quality which is characteristic of the attractive landscape of the District; and
- the area should be largely unspoilt and free from major intrusions which harm the character of the landscape.

**2.10** The Wycombe District Local Plan, adopted 2019, deleted the 2004 policies for Areas of Attractive Landscape and Local Landscape Areas. Wycombe now does not have any local landscape designations.

### Milton Keynes Borough

**2.11** Milton Keynes was part of Buckinghamshire County Council and became a separate borough in 1997. It retained the two AALs previously identified by the county, as shown in **Figure 2.1** at the end of this chapter. These are:

- Ouse Valley (downstream from Newport Pagnell); and
- Brickhills.

**2.12** The precise boundaries of the AALs within Milton Keynes were defined with the Milton Keynes Local Plan in 1995 and confirmed in the 1999 Landscape Character Study undertaken by LDA<sup>4</sup>. The study followed guidance published by the Countryside Agency and undertook a comprehensive and systematic evaluation of the whole landscape within Milton Keynes against selection criteria. These criteria included scenic quality, unspoiled character and tranquillity, sense of place, condition, intactness and integrity, visual or topographic unity and setting, landscape as a resource, conservation interest and consensus (public opinion and professional judgement).

**2.13** The study concluded that the Ouse Valley and the Brickhills were still the only landscapes of sufficient quality to merit AAL status. The study also suggested boundary modifications to improve consistency of the local landscape designation.

**2.14** A more local level designation of 'areas of locally attractive landscape' were also identified which were not of sufficient extent or quality to merit AAL status, were suggested as a potential designation but not taken forward.

**2.15** The main drawback of the 1999 LDA study is the lack of transparency in the workings of the evaluation, which were not appended to the report. There is also no mention of public consultation.

**2.16** Policy S11 from the Local Plan 2005 identified the location of the AALs (with evidence from a subsequent study by the Landscape Partnership in 2005) and set out criteria that development in these areas should:

- not damage the special character of the area;
- enhance important landscape features where possible;
- protect and enhance features of natural conservation value; and
- retain and improve public access and opportunities for countryside recreation.

**2.17** This policy approach to landscape protection was reviewed in the subsequent Milton Keynes Local Plan

<sup>4</sup> :LDA (1999), Milton Keynes Landscape Character Study

(Plan:MK 2016-2031) and Policy S11 (Areas of Attractive Landscape) was not retained in the Development Plan for Milton Keynes when the Plan was adopted in 2019.

**2.18** This was in line with government guidance at the time, which directed local authorities away from using local landscape designations to protect landscape towards a criteria-based approach to the assessment of the impact of development on landscape character (see para 2.1 above). MKC decided that the updated 2016 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)<sup>5</sup> could provide sufficient evidence by which development could be assessed. However, the 2016 LCA did not set out landscape qualities for each of the identified Landscape Character Types as part of the evaluation stage of the assessment, as suggested in later LI guidance published in 2021 (see para 1.4). This has subsequently been addressed in the current Milton Keynes LCA (2022).

### Aylesbury Vale District Council

**2.19** A different approach was taken by Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC). The county-level AALs were retained in successive plans in AVDC. The Rural Areas Local Plan, adopted in 1995, identified a further level of landscape designation, Local Landscape Areas (LLA). These were identified as 'areas of distinctive quality at the district rather than county level' and defined as 'areas that make a special contribution to the appearance and the character of the landscape within Aylesbury Vale'. Six LLAs were created, in addition to the six AALs.

**2.20** In 2016 LUC defined the special qualities of the local landscape designations in the district. This evidence base 'Defining the special qualities of local landscape designations in Aylesbury Vale District' was published to support the emerging Local Plan<sup>6</sup>.

**2.21** The report recommended that AVDC retained the hierarchy of AALs and LLAs in order to distinguish the different scales at which the landscapes are valued. AVDC accepted these recommendations, and together with the support for locally designated landscapes received in response to the VALP Issues and Option consultation, designated new AALs and LLAs.

**2.22** The LUC report provided further information on the special qualities of the district's 12 designated landscapes to augment information in the Landscape Character Assessment. This information also fed into the landscape policy approach in

the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP), adopted September 2021. AALs and LLAs were incorporated into the VALP as policy NE5 Landscape character and locally important landscape.

**2.23** In 2018 LUC provided an addendum to the 2016 report in response to the questions that had arisen during planning appeals, over whether the non-designated areas of the District might be considered 'valued' in the sense meant in Paragraph 109 of the NPPF. The Addendum confirmed that in LUC's professional opinion, informed by expertise in landscape planning and relevant case law (notably the appeal by Gladman Developments Ltd against Stroud District Council (2014))<sup>7</sup> a landscape could be considered 'valued' for the purposes of Paragraph 109 of the NPPF despite the absence of designation in the emerging Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan.

### Recent developments

**2.24** In April 2020 Buckinghamshire County Council, Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Buck and Wycombe District Councils were all dissolved. The new Buckinghamshire Council was formed in their place.

**2.25** The individual Local Plans are retained currently, including the new VALP, which runs to 2033. A new Buckinghamshire Local Plan must be in place by April 2025 and will cover the whole council area, for the period up to 2040.

**2.26** At this early stage it is unclear what the approach to local landscape designation will be across the Buckinghamshire Council area.

**2.27** MKCC is preparing its review of Plan:MK, with a new Local Plan anticipated to be submitted for examination in 2025.

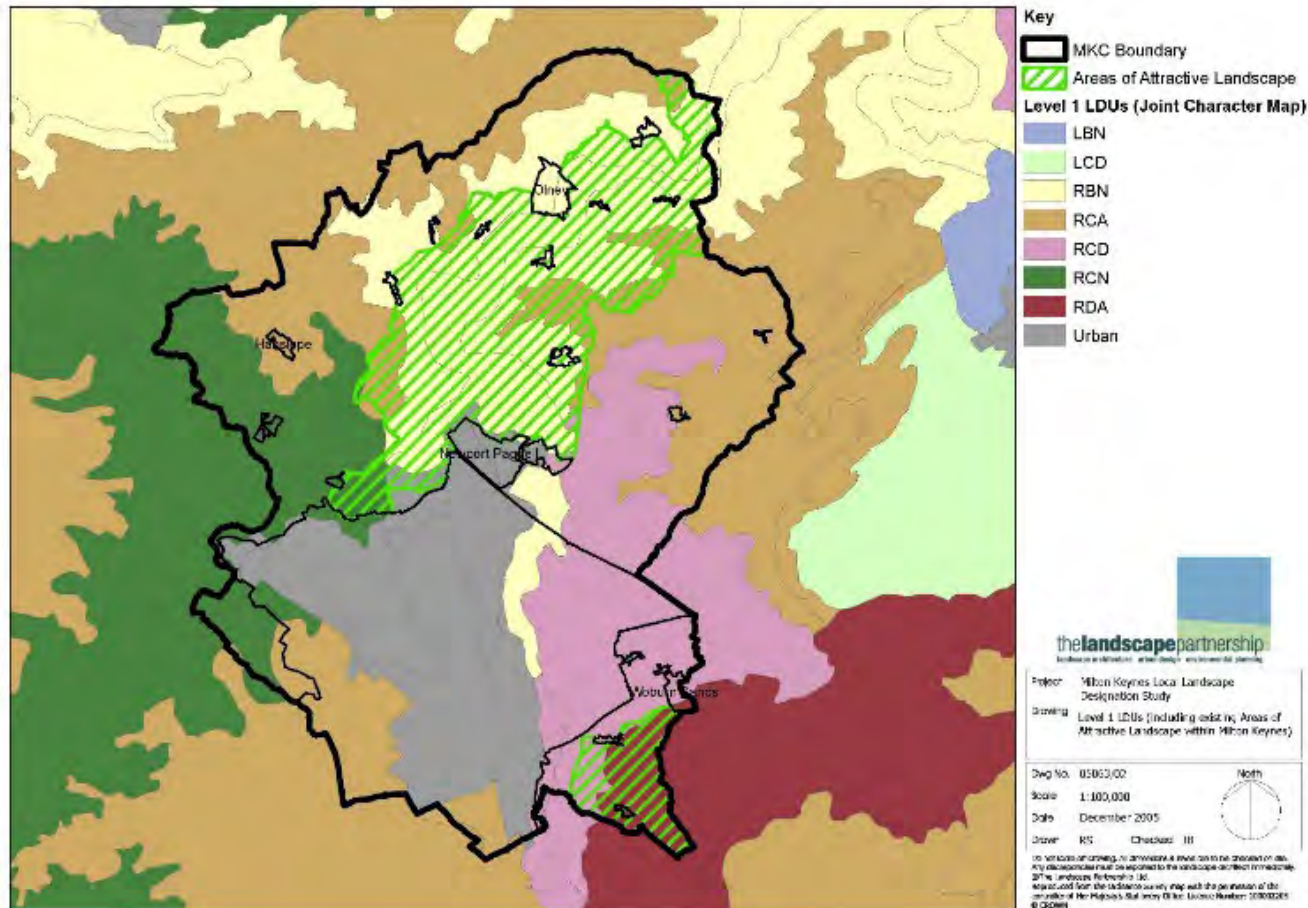
<sup>5</sup> Gillespies (2016), Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment, Gillespies, [https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-02/OX5198%20MK%20Landscape%20Character%20Assessment%20FINAL%20160628\\_.pdf](https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-02/OX5198%20MK%20Landscape%20Character%20Assessment%20FINAL%20160628_.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> LUC (2016), Defining the special qualities of local landscape designations in Aylesbury Vale District, [https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/page\\_download](https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/page_download)

<s/Aylesbury%20Vale%20Local%20Landscape%20Designations%20FINAL%20REPORT%2027%2004%2016.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Appeal by Gladman Developments Ltd against Stroud District Council (2014) where the Inspector determined that for a landscape to be valued would require the site to show some demonstrable physical attribute, rather than just popularity that would take the landscape beyond mere countryside.

Figure 2.1: Areas of Attractive Landscape in Milton Keynes (The Landscape Partnership, 2005)





## Chapter 3

# Effectiveness of local landscape designation policy in Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale

**3.1** This chapter reviews the effectiveness of past and current policies in relation to local landscape designation adopted in MK and Aylesbury Vale District. Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) has retained local landscape designation-based policies, while MKC adopted a landscape character-based policy in 2019. The effectiveness of these divergent approaches to landscape policy is tested through comparing the outcomes of a number of applications and appeals in similar or contiguous landscapes across the local authority areas.

**3.2** Examples of relevant planning applications and appeals were provided by MKCC.

### Local Landscape Designation Policies

#### Local Landscape Designation Policies in Milton Keynes Borough

**3.3** MKC retained locally designated landscapes (AALs) until 2019. **Policy S11 Areas of Attractive Landscape** of the Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001-2011 provided protection for AALs in the Brickhills and Ouse Valley. The policy sought to ensure that development should protect and enhance the special character, landscape features and nature conservation interests of AALs and gave some broad criteria that should be met by any development, including opportunities for public access and countryside recreation.

#### **Policy S11** stated:

The following areas are defined on the Proposals Map as Areas of Attractive Landscape:

- 1 The Brickhills
- 2 The Ouse Valley, north and west of Newport Pagnell

Within these areas, development should:

- (i) Not damage the special character of the areas
- (ii) Enhance important landscape features where possible
- (iii) Protect and enhance features of nature conservation value
- (iv) Retain and improve public access and opportunities for countryside recreation.

**3.4** When the new local plan, Plan:MK (2016-2031), was adopted in March 2019 MKC moved to a LCA based approach as set out in **Policy NE5 Conserving and Enhancing Landscape Character**.

**Policy NE5 states:**

A. Where development in the open countryside is acceptable in principle under other policies in this plan, it will need to be undertaken in a manner that respects the particular character of the surrounding landscape.

B. In particular, development proposals will need to demonstrate that the following aspects of landscape character have been conserved and where possible enhanced through sensitive design, landscape mitigation and enhancement measures:

1. The locally distinctive natural and man-made features that contribute towards the landscape character and its quality.
2. The historic setting and structure of the villages and hamlets.
3. Important views e.g. of local landmarks.
4. Tranquillity and the need to protect against intrusion from light pollution, noise, and motion.

C. **Development proposals should take into account the findings of the Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment (2016)** and any other relevant landscape and visual assessments or studies. Where appropriate a site-specific landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) will be required as part of a planning application and it must be demonstrated that the development proposal has been informed by a LVIA written in accordance with the standard method, Guidance for LVIA version 3 from the Landscape Institute

#### Local Landscape Designation Policies in Aylesbury Vale

**3.5** AVDC retained **Policy NE5: Landscape character and locally important landscape** in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan adopted in 2021. The policy will remain in place until a new Buckinghamshire Local Plan is adopted.

**Policy NE5 states:**

The Policies Map defined areas of attractive landscape (AALs) and local landscape areas (LLAs) which have particular landscape features and qualities considered appropriate for particular conservation and enhancement opportunities. Of the two categories, the areas of attractive landscape have the greater significance.

**Development in AALs and LLAs should have particular regard to the character identified in the**

#### **report 'Defining the special qualities of local landscape designations in Aylesbury Vale District' (Final Report, 2016) and the LCA (2008).**

Development will be supported where appropriate mitigation to overcome any adverse impact to the character of the receiving landscape has been agreed. Where permission is granted, the Council will require conditions to best ensure the mitigation of any harm caused to the landscape.

#### Local Landscape Designation Policies tested through planning application and appeal

##### Land at Eaton Leys, Little Brickhill: Planning Application 15/01533/OUTEIS and 19/0412/REM

**3.6** In June 2015 an outline application was made for up to 1,800 dwellings on a green field site that straddled the local authority boundary, with part of the development located within MK and part falling within AVDC. Permission was sought for the development of up to 600 dwellings within MK and up to 1,200 dwellings in AV.

**3.7** The open and agricultural appearance of the site, and the context of its rural surroundings, meant that the proposed development was contrary to the **Policy S10** of the Milton Keynes Local Plan (the objective of which was to protect the open countryside and to concentrate new development within existing settlement boundaries). The site, although well screened by existing landscaping, was visible from various points outside the site, and it was considered by the MKC landscape officer that the site formed a visually important setting to the adjacent Brickhill Greensand Ridge LCA.

**3.8** The southern part of the site lay within AVDC and was subject to local landscape designation (Brickhills AAL). The land in Milton Keynes was not subject to a landscape designation, however there was no distinction in landscape character terms between the landscape within MK and that in AV, as it was all part of the same landscape character area. Therefore, the MK **Policy S11** (Areas of Attractive Landscape) and AVDC policy **NE5** (Landscape character and locally important landscape) were also relevant.

**3.9** Outline permission was given in 2017 in the context of the Council's inability to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply and the provision of paragraph 49 of the NNP.

**3.10** By the time the reserved matters application came forward at the end of 2019, Policy S11 Areas of Attractive Landscape had been deleted from the MK Local Plan. The reserved application sought permission for 450 dwellings and associated infrastructure and landscaping, all within MK.

**3.11** On the other side of the local authority boundary, in a response dated November 2016, AVDC did not accept the

findings of the LVIA contained within the ES on either landscape or visual impact. The landscape officer considered that development of the site would have a harmful landscape and visual impact on qualities and key characteristics of the AVDC AAL. AVDC also considered the site within MK to make a significant contribution to the immediate foreground to the Brickhills AAL. Subsequently the developers withdrew their application. AVDC has rejected the site for possible future development in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan.

This case would seem to illustrate the effectiveness of the extant local landscape designation in AVDC to protect the landscape from development despite the similarities of the landscape on either side of the authority boundary.

#### Land off High Street, Sherington: Appeal decision ref APP/Y0435/W/15/3133886 (March 2016)

**3.1** In September 2014 an application was made for 36 residential units on a site off High Street, Sherington in MK. The application was refused in March 2015 and the Council cited Policy S10 within its reasons for refusal as the site was located in open countryside outside the defined settlement boundary for Sherington. The site was located within the Ouse AAL with reference to Policy S11, however this was not cited in the decision notice as a reason for refusal.

**3.2** An appeal was allowed, and outline permission granted in January 2016 due to the council's inability to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. However, the effect of development on the character and appearance of the site and the local landscape were raised as important considerations by the Inspector. The Council Officer reported that the site was part of the Ouse AAL with reference to Policy S11 but at the Hearing, MKC confirmed the site was not a 'valued landscape' for the purposes of paragraph 109 of the NPPF (paragraph 18). In conclusion, the Inspector considered that harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area would be limited (paragraph 30) and as such would not be contrary to Policy S11 and Policy NE4.

Designation as part of the Ouse AAL was not cited by MKC as a reason for refusal, and at the Appeal designation as an AAL was not enough to identify the site as a 'valued landscape'.

#### Land at Linford Lakes, off Wolverton Road, Milton Keynes APP/Y0435/W/3175391

**3.3** In August 2016 an outline application was made for residential development, up to 250 units, and car parking off little Linford Lane, as an extension of the River Valley Park. The application was refused in April 2017. An appeal was made at the end of that year and dismissed in early 2018.

**3.4** The proposed effect of the development on the character and appearance of the landscape was one of the main issues identified at appeal. The site lay within the Ouse Valley AAL (saved Policy S11) and was also within the Ouse Valley Linear Park (Saved Policy S12). The Inspector referenced both the 2016 LCA and the 1999 LCA descriptions of the Ouse Valley.

**3.5** *'...to my mind, these assessments accurately describe this part of the Ouse Valley. The valley and its floodplain are among the most significant and influential landscape features of the Milton Keynes area...In my view these are demonstrable physical attributes that more than justify the area's designation as an AAL and OVLP, and the protection given to it by Policies S11 and S12. It follows, in my view, that this section of the Ouse Valley may justifiably be regarded as a 'valued landscape', falling within the terms of the advice in NPPF paragraph 109.'* (para 43)

**3.6** The Inspector concluded that the site played a role as part of a valued landscape.

**3.7** *'I note the appellants' view that the 'Box 5.1' criteria<sup>8</sup> for valued landscapes are not met. However, the appeal site lies within the designated AAL and, OVLP and thus in planning policy terms, its value is already established'.*

**3.8** Despite the Council's lack of a 5 year housing supply, the Inspector concluded that the appeal proposal would conflict with Policy S11, by failing to protect or enhance the AAL, with Policy NE1, and Policy S12's requirements as to landscape and nature conservation matters.

The Appeal illustrates the effectiveness of the extant local landscape designation in the Ouse Valley to protect the landscape from development. In the Inspector's opinion the location of the site within the designated AAL established its landscape value, citing qualitative descriptions in the Landscape Character Assessment to justify this decision.

However, the site's location within the Ouse Valley Linear Park and a Wildlife Corridor were also cited as a reason for dismissal.

<sup>8</sup> In the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment, 3rd edition ('the GLVIA'), published by the Landscape

Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment



**Land at Long Street Road, Hanslope: Appeal decision ref APP/Y0435/W/17/3177851 (March 2018)**

**3.9** In October 2016 an application was made for up to 141 dwellings on land at Long Street Road, Hanslope in Milton Keynes. The application site was not part of an AAL. The application was refused in April 2017. Among the reasons for refusal were the effect of the scheme on the character of the rural landscape, setting of Hanslope and the gap between settlements.

**3.10** At appeal in late 2017, MKC and the appellants agreed that the site was not part of a 'valued landscape'. MKC raised objections due to the loss of open countryside with reference to Policy S10.

**3.11** The application was allowed March 2018, due to the Council's inability to demonstrate a 5-year housing supply. However, the Inspector concluded that the proposal would conflict with Policy S10, and amongst other issues, cause moderate harm to the character of the local area. The Inspector agreed that the site contributed to the countryside setting of Hanslope and that development would significantly reduce the sense of a gap between Hanslope and Long Street, although the remaining gap, albeit limited, would be sufficient to enable the two settlements to be distinguished from one another and to retain individual identities (paragraph 14).

MKC and the appellants agreed that the site was not a 'valued landscape'. Nevertheless, harm to the character of the local area, with reference to Policy S10 was acknowledged by the Inspector

**Land off Olney Road, Lavendon: Appeal decision ref APP/Y0435/W/17/3182048 (May 2018)**

**3.12** In January 2017 an application was made for 95 dwellings and associated public open space for a site off Olney Road, Milton Keynes. The Ouse AAL lay on the southern edge of the site and was extended following the 1999 study to include the appeal site and its environs. The application was refused in July 2017 due to the site being within an area designated as Open Countryside (Policy S10), and within an AAL (Policy S11).

**3.13** The application was taken to appeal in 2018, and in May 2018 the appeal was allowed. At this time the Policy S11 was still current. The effect on the character and appearance of the landscape of the AAL was one of the main issues at the appeal.

**3.14** MKC suggested that AALs differentiate between locally designated and therefore valued landscapes, and the remaining non-designated landscape. The Inspector referred to *Stroud DC v SoSCLG*<sup>9</sup>, which states that designation and value do not mean the same thing. The Inspector in *Stroud DC v SoSCLG* noted that a landscape needs sufficient 'demonstrable physical attributes' to take it beyond 'ordinary landscapes'. The land under appeal was noted in the report on extending the AAL (LDA, 1999) as a 'fairly undistinguished landscape along the sloping ground to the south of Lavendon'. The inspector therefore did not consider the site to be a 'valued landscape'.

**3.15** As the AAL policy and designation did not set out the special qualities and values of the land, the Inspector used the LCA to set out the special character of the site (paragraphs 25 and 27). The Inspector concluded that there would be neutral effects on the majority of the special characteristics of the landscape of the landscape as set out in the LCA (mixed field pattern retained, woodland cover increased, views of the church tower partially lost), and the proposed development would cause limited harm to the open countryside.

In the Inspector's opinion, designation as an AAL was not enough to identify the site as part of a 'valued landscape'. In Milton Keynes the local landscape designation policy was not supported by a report which set out the special qualities and values of the local landscape.

**Land at Brickhill Street, South Caldecotte: Appeal decision ref APP/Y0435/W/20/3251121 (October 2020)**

**3.16** In July 2019 an outline application was made for a logistics and distribution space on land at Brickhill Street in MK. The proposed site was located on land below the Brickhills AAL, although the local landscape designation was in the process of being dropped from the Local Plan that year. Landscape officers at MKC raised objections on the landscape and visual grounds, including impacts on the wider landscape referencing Policy NE5 (Conserving and Enhancing Landscape Character) and harm to the setting of the Brickhills AAL with reference to Policy S11. With the imminent removal of Policy S11 in Plan:MK, the Landscape Officer proposed that weight be placed on the recommendations of the MK LCA 2016, which stated that it was important to '*Retain the visually important setting of the ridge in the context of Milton Keynes...*'.

**3.17** The application was refused by MKC in February 2020, by which time Policy S11 had been dropped from the Local Plan. Reasons for refusal were stated as harm to the historic

<sup>9</sup>Stroud DC v SoSCLG [2015] EWHC 488

environment, loss of priority habitats and ecological assets which would result in an impact on biodiversity, and the harmful impact on the transport network.

**3.18** The application was allowed on appeal in October 2020. Impacts on the landscape and visual amenity were raised by local residents objecting to the scheme, and the Inspector considered these under 'other matters'. The Inspector agreed with the conclusions of the LVIA that the proposed development would not give rise to *significant* effects in terms of landscape character and that the proposed development could be integrated without significant harm to the receiving visual environment. The Inspector concluded that *'Whilst some longer views would be available from the Greensand Ridge, these would be in the context of a panoramic view of Milton Keynes which includes some larger buildings. The separation between the foot of the slope and the built up area would still be apparent and the general character of the view would be maintained...My overall assessment is that the scheme has demonstrated that place-making principles have been considered, to the extent that is possible at this outline stage, consistent with Policy SD1. The proposed building heights have been informed by the LVIA and would avoid unacceptable impact on the wider landscape, consistent with SD14(6).'*

**3.19** In his summary of landscape and visual issues, the Inspector referenced strategic development policies, including Policy SD1 which required development to demonstrate that place-making principles have been considered, and the site-specific policies of the strategic employment allocation within SD14.

The Greensand Ridge was no longer locally designated as an AAL within MK at the time of the Appeal, and the visual impacts of the development on the ridge were not considered to be significant by the Inspector as the general character of the view would be maintained.

## Chapter 4

### Future approaches and recommendations

**4.1** Based on Landscape Institute's guidance and how landscape value has been approached in the planning applications and appeals reviewed, the Council have two options for identifying landscape value/ valued landscapes within the context of the UK Town and Country planning system:

- Reference in policy the landscape values expressed in the updated Landscape Character Assessment
- Commission a local landscape designation study /update

**4.2** The LI supports both approaches, as they are both capable of highlighting particular aspects of a landscape that is valued.

**4.3** Local designations do not mean other places are unimportant or not valued, and GLVIA3 recognises that landscape value is not always signified by designation: *'the fact that an area of landscape is not designated either nationally or locally does not mean that it does not have any value'* (paragraph 5.26).

**4.4** Landscapes that are not designated are still likely to have value, and NPPF paragraph 170 b requires planning policies and decisions to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It is well established that a landscape does not have to be a 'valued landscape', or designated, to be afforded protection from inappropriate development.

**4.5** Local designations can also overlap with other non-statutory local designations, including nature conservation sites, the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure or future local nature recovery networks, as well as facilitating enjoyment and understanding of natural and cultural heritage among the local community.

**4.6** However, local landscape designations can be a valuable tool in the development plan toolbox. Local designation is a long established and well-regarded means of identifying areas with particular landscape value, as has been shown in some (but not all) of the appeals illustrated Chapter 3 above, such as the appeal at Eaton Leys which was successfully dismissed within AV (but not within MK) and the appeal at Linford Lakes which was dismissed by the Inspector due to its location within both the Ouse Valley AAL and Ouse Valley Linear Park .



**4.7** However local designation as Areas of Attractive Landscape or similar is not enough to identify a site as 'valued' (as illustrated in the appeals at Sherington and Lavendon). For a local designation policy to be effective it must be backed up by evidence highlighting particular landscapes and aspects to be safeguarded, clearly setting out the special qualities and values of each landscape.

**4.8** Many local authorities have undertaken reviews of their landscape in recent years and updated or reinstated their Local Landscape Designations. This has enabled them to strengthen the protection of their valued landscapes. Examples relevant to Milton Keynes includes authorities such as Canterbury City and Bracknell Forest, where areas of land adjacent or near to the existing settlement edge often provide a sustainable location for development which consequent pressures on land use and condition.

### Future Approaches

#### Option 1: Set out a criteria-based policy relating to information in the updated MK LCA 2022

- Reference, in policy, the value expressed in the **landscape qualities** identified for the individual Landscape Character Type in the updated MK Landscape Character Assessment (2022). Refer specifically to relevant landscape character area and the role they play and related landscape guidance. Any linked policy should specify a requirement to reinforce/enhance these key qualities of the landscape.

#### Option 2: Retain and refresh the existing AALs

- **Retain the AALs broadly as they were defined in 1999** as a local landscape designation (excluding recent allocations/development and/or with some small boundary extensions). Use the existing evidence from the 1999 LDA study as a starting point, broadly following the AAL boundaries suggested by this report, updating these with a statement of significance / report on special qualities. From our knowledge of the landscapes of MK, we would not recommend other areas within MK for local designation.
- Stakeholder engagement and collaboration with local communities could be utilised to help understand what people value about the local landscape (especially as no public consultation seems to have been undertaken in 1999).
- Include policy recognition that these areas are valued for the quality of the landscape as well as the role that the landscape plays in views and the setting of the city.

#### Option 3: commission a new local landscape designation study

- Commission a more wide-ranging study to identify the spatial boundaries and special qualities of areas of landscape proposed for **local designation**. This study could start at first principles, considering all landscapes within the local authority area to assess them against a set of criteria.
  - The Landscape Institute TGN 02-21 refers to guidance on how to identify local landscape designations produced in Scotland and Wales that may be helpful for other nations that do not have their own guidance (such as England).

**4.9** Other possible landscape-related designations which MKCC may want to consider include:

- **Strategic or local gaps** which can be used to identify areas between specified settlements that play a role in preventing coalescence of settlements and maintain settlement pattern. Strategic green gaps are, however, not focussed on the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and ecological assets in the open countryside. The disadvantage of this approach is that local green gaps are not referenced in the NPPF, so a need would have to be identified.
- **Local Green Space designation** (ref. Para 101-103 of NPPF) – which can be used to identify local green areas of particular importance to local communities. This enables communities, in particular circumstances, to identify and protect areas that are of value to them through local and neighbourhood plans. The land has to be 'demonstrably special to a local community' in terms of historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, habitats, and local in character, 'not an extensive tract of land'.
- **Green Belt** - as set out in the NPPF the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Current planning guidance makes it clear that the Green Belt is a strategic planning policy constraint designed primarily to prevent the spread of built development and the coalescence of urban areas. It is not a landscape protection designation. NPPF paragraph 139 emphasises that 'the general extent of Green Belts across the country is already established' and 'new Green Belts should only be established in exceptional circumstances, for example when planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or major urban extensions'.

## Recommendations

**4.10** As shown in **Chapter 3 Effectiveness of local landscape designation policy in Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale**, no single designation or policy solution delivers a guaranteed level of protection for valued landscapes in MK.

**4.11** It is recommended that **Option 2** is followed, creating a new local landscape designation broadly based on the existing evidence from the 1999 LDA study. This should be developed with reference to the 2022 landscape character assessment.

**4.12** Local landscape designation criteria include criteria such as:

- Local distinctiveness and sense of place;
- Landscape quality;
- Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects;
- Natural and cultural qualities;
- Recreation value;
- Associations.

**4.13** The 1999 using similar criteria to those above and could be used as a baseline for the study.

**4.14** However, for some authorities a further criterion is included considering spatial function which puts additional emphasis on the role the landscape plays in relation to the setting of a town or city (including its role as a wooded/rural backdrop and opportunities for views).

**4.15** Much of the 'value' of the former Brickhills AAL relates to its functional context to Milton Keynes, the visual/physical connections to the city and the role of the hills in relation to providing a wooded skyline, rather than just landscape quality. It is recommended that a consideration of spatial function should be included in the update to the LLD.

**4.16** The relevant policy should consider the following:

**4.17 Preamble:** Highlight the landscape context of Milton Keynes in its setting and the important contribution and role of wooded valley slopes around the city and the floodplain and valley slopes along the Ouse Valley. Highlight the relevant landscape character areas and associated guidelines, and link to key views.

**4.18 Suggested policy:**

- Development will be permitted that:
  - does not adversely affect the special landscape character of the area and landscape context of Milton Keynes City
  - makes a positive contribution to the landscape character of the area

- It is recommended that any proposal for development within this LLD should be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) or landscape appraisal to show how the proposed change will conserve and enhance the rural landscape, including conservation and protection of valued views.

## References

- 1 LUC, Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment (2022).
- 2 NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland, Guidance on Designating Local Landscape Areas (2020).
- 3 Cyfoeth Naturil Symru / Natural Resources Wales, LANDMAP Guidance Note 1: LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas (2017).
- 4 Landscape Institute and IEMA, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (third edition, 2013).
- 5 Landscape Institute TGN02-21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations (2021).



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