

# East Challow Parish Council Neighbourhood Development Plan

## Landscape Character Assessment

July 2021



**LEPUS** CONSULTING  
LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY, PLANNING & URBAN SUSTAINABILITY



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# East Challow Neighbourhood Development Plan

## Landscape Character Assessment

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# Abbreviations

ALC	Agricultural Land Classification
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BOAT	Byway Open to All Traffic
DPD	Development Plan Document
GI	Green Infrastructure
LCA	Landscape Character Area
LCT	Landscape Character Type
NCA	National Character Area
NDP	Neighbourhood Development Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
OS	Ordnance Survey
PRoW	Public Right of Way
SM	Scheduled Monument

# Acknowledgements

This document was commissioned by East Challow Parish Council in October 2020 to support the East Challow Neighbourhood Development Plan.

It has been assisted by valuable discussions with and contributions from:

- East Challow Parish Council Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group; and
- Jeremy Flawn of Bluestone Planning.

It has been prepared by Neil Davidson BSc MSc CMLI CEnv CIEEM and Rebecca Gregory BSc, PGDipLA.

# Executive summary

- E1 Landscape Character Assessment is the process of identifying and describing variation in character of the landscape. Landscape Character Assessments can help to identify landscape distinctiveness and how landscape might be sensitive to change.
- E2 Lepus Consulting Ltd has been commissioned by East Challow Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Steering Group to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of East Challow Parish to inform the East Challow Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- E3 Landscape Character Assessment seeks to identify and describe the unique combination of landscape elements and features that make landscapes distinctive and leads to the identification and mapping of character types and areas.
- E4 The approach to landscape characterisation follows established best practice guidance, including Natural England's 'Approach to Landscape Characterisation'. The assessment process considers landscape characteristics under three categories 'natural', 'cultural and social' and 'perceptual and aesthetic'. The LCA also draws on the landscape context set out in existing published Landscape Character Assessments, including the National Character Areas, the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) (2004), the Vale of White Horse Landscape Character Assessment (2017) and the North Wessex Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment.
- E5 This LCA has identified six landscape character areas, each of which is considered to have distinct and recognisable landscape characteristics. Each identified LCA is accompanied by a description of the landscape qualities under the categories of 'natural', 'cultural and social' and 'perceptual and aesthetic'. The report also includes recommendations to plan, manage and protect the distinctiveness of the landscape.
- E6 The report also includes a strategic evaluation of views towards the village of East Challow to inform the appraisal of the landscape context of the settlement. These include a strategic evaluation of landscape and visual sensitivity, landscape qualities and also include recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Appointment and scope of work

1.1.1 Lepus Consulting Ltd has been appointed by East Challow Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Steering Group to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of the parish of East Challow. The LCA will be used as part of the evidence which supports development management policies in the emerging NDP. It will also be used to raise awareness and appreciation of the different landscapes that can be found in the parish and their distinctive features.

1.1.2 Lepus Consulting Ltd is an environmental planning practice specialising in landscape and ecological impact assessment. This report has been prepared by Neil Davidson (BSc, MSc, CEnv, CIEEM, CMLI) and Rebecca Gregory (BSc, PGDipLA).

## 1.2 Purpose of this report

1.2.1 The findings of the LCA should be used for the following purposes:

- To identify, conserve and inform the management of the distinctive landscape characteristics of East Challow;
- To inform the development of the NDP and provide evidence for landscape and character policies;
- To identify the special landscape qualities of the area to help ensure that new development proposals are of an appropriate design and complement the existing local character;
- To be used by developers and their architects to help them understand the local character; and
- To inform decision makers in relation to planning applications.

## 1.3 Summary of the landscape context to East Challow

1.3.1 The parish of East Challow lies approximately 2km west of Wantage in the Vale of White Horse District Council area. The location of the parish is illustrated on Figure 1.1 In landscape terms, the settlement sits on the footslopes of the North Wessex Downs and southern parts of the parish lie within the statutorily protected North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a national landscape designation recognising the natural beauty of the landscape.





Figure 1.1 Landscape context to East Challow

- 1.3.2                Towards the north of the parish the land levels fall towards the clay vale, within which are numerous watercourses draining towards the River Ock. Further north, outside the parish, the land rises again towards the limestone of the North Corallian Ridge.
- 1.3.3                Historically, settlements developed along the spring line at the foot of the scarp slope to the North Wessex Downs and, traditionally, have a strong nucleated form.

## 2 Landscape character assessments

### 2.1 Landscape Character Assessment hierarchy

- 2.1.1 Landscape Character Assessment can be undertaken at a range of scales and it is an important consideration when preparing development plans or making planning decisions.
- 2.1.2 The vertical hierarchy of landscape character assessments includes the nationwide National Character Areas, county level landscape character assessments (where they exist), protected landscape character assessments such as those prepared for national parks and AONBs, and at the district level, where landscape character assessments are often prepared to help inform Local Plans.
- 2.1.3 Neighbourhood Plans sit within the context of this hierarchy. It is important that the preparation of any new landscape character assessment ensures consistency of description across boundaries whilst also facilitating vertical integration within the national to local hierarchy of assessments. The level of detail and cartographic granularity increases as the size of the study area decreases.
- 2.1.4 The following chapters discuss the hierarchy of existing landscape character assessments which help to provide a framework to the landscape context of East Challow Parish, including:
- National Character Areas;
  - The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) (2004);
  - Vale of White Horse Landscape Character Assessment (2017); and
  - The North Wessex Downs AONB landscape character assessment.

### 2.2 National Character Areas

- 2.2.1 At a national level, Landscape Character Assessment has been defined by the assessment work of Natural England, which has divided England into 159 areas of similar landscape called National Character Areas (NCAs) and the accompanying descriptions are called National Character Area Profiles.
- 2.2.2 The majority of East Challow Parish lies within the Upper Thames Clay Vales (NCA 108), while the southern most parts of the parish lies within the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs (NCA 116). The boundary between these two NCAs broadly passes through the centre of the settlement on an east-west alignment, separating the landscape of the lower lying clay vale to the north from the more steeply sloping topography which, broadly, forms part of the North Wessex Downs AONB to the south.



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2.2.3 Further details of the NCA profiles are available from Natural England.<sup>1</sup>

## 2.3 Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS)

2.3.1 The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) is one of the landscape character assessments relevant to East Challow Parish and covers the whole of the county of Oxfordshire.

2.3.2 The OWLS report was undertaken by Oxfordshire County Council, Natural England and the Earth Trust and completed in 2004. The study assessed the landscape character and biodiversity of the county and sought to be of interest to a range of groups including planners, conservationists and local communities.

2.3.3 Although it has been over 16 years since its completion, OWLS provides a useful summary of the landscape context. East Challow Parish lies within four of the identified Landscape Character Areas. Relevant extracts from OWLS are summarised below and the locations of the OWLS LCAs are shown on Figure 2.1.

- Clay Vale: H Uffington (WH/24);
- Estate Farmlands: E. Wantage to Idstone (WH/23);
- Rolling Farmland: L. Blewbury (WD/6); and
- Alluvial Lowland: Q. East and West Hanney (WH/27).

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<sup>1</sup> Natural England (2014) National Character Area Profiles <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making> [Accessed on 02/11/20].

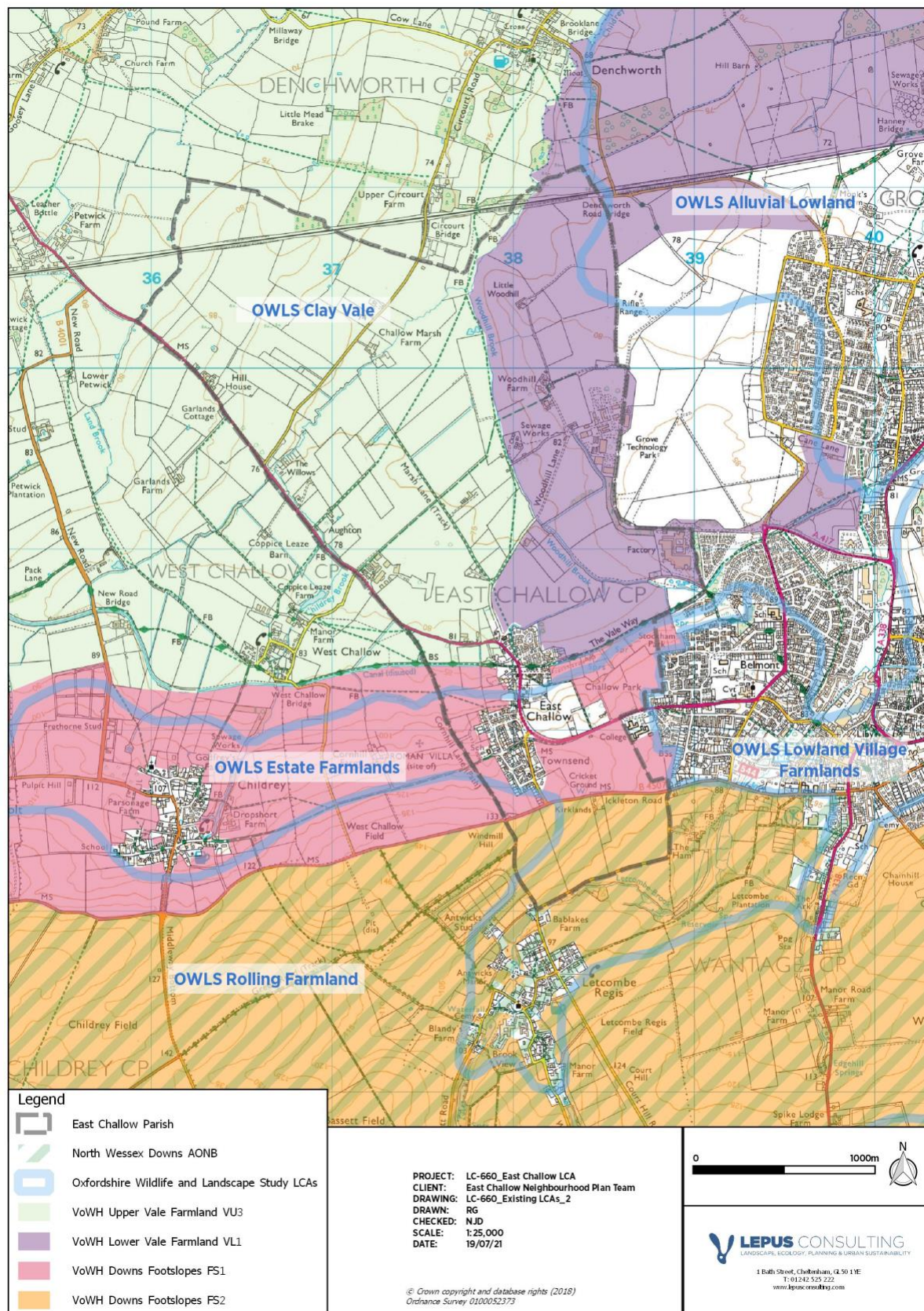


Figure 2.1 Existing Landscape Character Assessment

## 2.4 Clay Vale: H. Uffington (WH/24)

- 2.4.1 The majority of the parish lies within the Clay Vale Landscape Type within the WH/24 landscape character area. The study states,

*"There is a mix of medium to large-sized fields with both arable land and pasture. The grassland is largely confined to the smaller fields close to the river Ock and its tributaries. Large arable fields occupy the land to the west of Grove. Fields are enclosed by hawthorn and elm hedges which, in turn, are often adjacent to ditches. Dense linear strips of willow, ash, field maple and oak border watercourses and are a prominent visual feature which give structure to an otherwise flat low-lying landscape. Densely scattered hedgerow trees of ash, oak, willow and dead elm, particularly within roadside hedges, add to the tree cover. Ash and willow trees in hedges next to ditches are particularly prominent. There are small to medium-sized blocks of ancient and semi-natural oak and ash woodland, as well as deciduous plantations of oak, ash, willow and poplar, scattered throughout the area. Hedges are generally in good condition but some of the internal field hedges are gappy. To the west of Grove they have been removed, resulting in a very open landscape".*

- 2.4.2 In relation to biodiversity the study states,

*"This very large area supports a wide range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, plantations, scrub, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees, species-poor rivers and streams and tree-lined species-poor watercourses".*

## 2.5 Estate Farmlands: E. Wantage to Idstone (WH/23)

- 2.5.1 Southern parts of the parish, particularly the landscape around the settlement itself, lie in the Estate Farmlands Landscape Type in the Wantage to Idstone Landscape Character Area. In relation to landscape character the study states,

*"This is an undulating landform sloping northwards into the Vale of White Horse. The area is characterised by small to medium-sized fields enclosed by tall hawthorn and elm hedges. Land uses are mixed, with small grass fields being largely confined to the outskirts of villages. There are scattered hedgerow trees of ash, sycamore and dead elm throughout the area. Similarly, small discrete plantations, particularly those associated with the parklands at Kingston Lisle and Sparsholt, are also a feature. Areas of secondary woodland occupy some of the minor valleys along the slope".*

- 2.5.2 In relation to biodiversity the study states,

*"Locally important habitats include deciduous woodland and scrub, plantations, semi-improved grassland and species-poor hedges with trees. There are also parklands with associated mature trees and lakes, reed swamp and some ancient semi-natural woodland".*



## 2.6 Rolling Farmland: L. Blewbury (WD/6)

2.6.1 A small area to the south west of the parish, where the land rises towards Windmill Hill falls within the Rolling Farmland Landscape Type. The study states,

*"The landscape is dominated by large-sized arable fields. There are a few surviving areas of unimproved and semi-improved grassland. Fields are enclosed by hawthorn and elm hedges with sparsely scattered ash and elm trees. Hedges are generally fragmented except where they border tracks. Throughout the area there are a number of different sized deciduous and mixed linear plantations. Many of the watercourses are lined by willow, ash, poplar and linear strips of semi-natural woodland. These add to the tree cover and create locally intimate landscapes".*

2.6.2 In relation to biodiversity the study states,

*"This area supports a range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, scrub, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. Priority habitats include small areas of calcareous grassland, less than 5 ha, on Blewburton and Lollington Hills. There are also tree-lined species-rich springlines draining off the chalk, including Ginge Brook and Letcombe Cress Beds".*

## 2.7 Alluvial Lowland: Q. East and West Hanney (WH/27).

2.7.1 A small area to the north east of the parish lies within the Alluvial Lowland Landscape Character Type. In relation to landscape character the OWLS report states,

*"The area is dominated by large-sized arable fields with some semi-improved grassland to the west of Grove, and a little unimproved neutral grassland. Fields are enclosed by hawthorn hedges with very few trees. Hedges are generally gappy with the exception of some roadside hedges. The main features are the tree-lined watercourses with species such as ash, willow and poplar. There are also a few hedges and scattered scrub next to some ditches and a small number of isolated deciduous woods and plantations.*

2.7.2 In relation to biodiversity the study states,

*"There is a range of locally important habitats in this area, including deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There is also a small area of unimproved neutral grassland, some atypical ancient semi-natural woodland and a series of flooded borrow pits (created as a consequence of engineering works) adjacent to the mainline railway".*

## 2.8 Vale of White Horse landscape context

2.8.1 Vale of White Horse District Council commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment as supporting evidence to the policies of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2. Further details of the Local Plan landscape policies are provided in Chapter 3 of this report. The Vale of White Horse Landscape Character Assessment was undertaken by Hankinson Duckett Associates and completed in September 2017. The study identifies twelve Landscape Types, which are then subdivided into Landscape Character Areas. Relevant extracts from the report are provided in Appendix A and are summarised below.

2.8.2 The study identified four Landscape Character Areas within East Challow Parish the locations of which are shown on Figure 2.1:

- Downs Footslopes: FS1 Idstone to Wantage;
- Downs Footslopes: FS2 Seven Acre Hill to Round Hill;
- Lower Vale Farmland: VL1 East Challow to East Hanney; and
- Upper Vale Farmland: VU3 Bourton to Garford.

## 2.9 Downs Footslopes: FS1 Idstone to Wantage

2.9.1 This LCA surrounds much of the settlement of East Challow. To the north the boundary to the LCA is defined by the Wilts and Berks Canal and to the south the boundary is coincident with the boundary to the North Wessex Downs AONB. The study states,

- *"The Character Area is formed by a band of relatively steep, north facing slopes.... Numerous spring fed streams, originating at the foot of the chalk scarp, flow north through the footslopes down into the Vale".*
- *"The area consists predominantly of relatively large arable fields,...however, groups of smaller pastoral fields are also common and often located within the vicinity of villages".*
- *"Small, dispersed blocks of woodland scattered along the footslopes, including areas of ancient woodland. Other small tree groups and trees along field boundaries..."*
- *"There are numerous settlements regularly spaced along the length of the Character Area... The sloping farmland forms gaps between each settlement, although recent permissions have reduced the gap between East Challow and Wantage".*
- *"Most settlements on the footslopes are small nucleated villages...Idstone, Knighton, Woolstone, Kingston Lisle, Westcot, Sparsholt, Childrey and East*

*Challow all have historic cores with medieval history, which mostly abut in their entirety directly onto the surrounding countryside”.*

- *“Most of the villages are located around spring feed streams...East Challow is orientated broadly north-south down the slope, with some small industrial areas and the Wilts and Berks Canal at its northern end”.*
- *“The majority of roads consist of rural lanes cutting north-south through the footslopes, connecting villages with the B4507 which runs along the foot of the scarp to the south...”*
- *“A network of public rights of way, consisting predominantly of footpaths...run in various directions across the footslopes...”*
- *“Gaps in tree cover allow panoramic views north across the slopes towards the Vale, particularly from more elevated positions. Enclosed locations, such as within the vicinity of villages or woodland, have more restricted views. The slopes provide part of the immediate northern setting to the North Wessex Downs AONB”.*
- *“The footslopes have a mixture of post medieval, pre-18th century, and modern fieldscapes. There is ...a Roman Villa near East Challow”.*
- *“This is a pleasant rural area, with the scarp as a backdrop to the south. However, obvious human influence from villages and views of settlement to the north, often reduce the sense of remoteness and tranquillity”.*

## 2.10

### Downs Footslopes: FS2 Seven Acre Hill to Round Hill

#### 2.10.1

The southern most field parcels of the parish lie within this LCA. This area of the parish lies within the North Wessex Downs AONB. In relation to East Challow the study states,

- *“The area has undulating landform, which falls towards Letcombe Brook and other watercourses...”*
- *“The footslopes predominantly consist of large, open arable fields...Hedges, where they exist, include hawthorn and elm, and there are occasional ash trees”.*
- *“There are small parcels of land... associated with the settlement along the brook, in contrast to the adjacent, larger scale, open arable fields across the majority of the footslopes”.*
- *“The footslopes within the Character Area form the separation between nearby settlements...Letcombe Regis is visible from the southern edge of East Challow, although the intervening slopes provide physical, if not visual, separation”.*
- *“A number of roads and lanes cross the footslopes, and are predominantly orientated north-south”.*
- *“The open and undulating nature of the majority of the footslopes facilitates panoramic, long distance, views from the roads and rights of*

*way which cross the arable landscape. There are...views of the scarp which forms a backdrop to the south, as well as views across the footslopes themselves, largely unimpeded by tree cover".*

- *"This is a rural, relatively tranquil area, with a sense of exposure on the open slopes, which provides a sloping setting to the towns and villages to the north, and the scarp to the south. Settlement is set down in the undulating landscape, and assimilated into the countryside by associated tree cover. However, views of settlements within and beyond the Character Area temper the sense of remoteness".*

## 2.11 Lower Vale Farmland: VL1 East Challow to East Hanney

2.11.1 To the north of the Wilts and Berks canal, the study identifies two LCAs within the parish, the Lower Vale Farmland lies to the east and the Upper Vale Farmland to the west. The study states,

- *"The area consists of farmland with an irregular pattern of medium to large size arable fields with...often limited, boundary vegetation. Hedgerows, which predominately consist of hawthorn, are often intensively managed and clipped to low heights, particularly where they are located within areas of arable fields".*
- *"There are a number of woodland blocks, increasing in frequency towards the north of the Character Area".*
- *"A single small area in the southern part of the Character Area is identified as ancient woodland".*
- *"A narrow corridor of riparian vegetation marks the Woodhill Brook as it flows along the western boundary, and through the southern part of the Character Area".*
- *"The northern part of the area is relatively unsettled. However, to the south, there are scattered farmsteads as well as commercial and light industrial sites and sewage works".*
- *"The Character Area (abuts) East Challow, Wantage, and proposed development areas to the north and west of Grove. Both West Hanney and East Challow have historic areas with medieval history which adjoin the adjacent Vale countryside within the Character Area, although the interface between built up areas and the countryside are generally filtered well by boundary vegetation including mature trees"*
- *"The Character Area also contributes to the gap between Wantage and East Challow"*
- *"Vehicle access throughout the area predominantly consists of rural lanes and farm tracks. There are public byways, bridleways and footpaths across the area, increasing in frequency to the north".*

- *"The Great Western Main Line railway, with overhead electrification infrastructure recently installed, crosses east-west through the middle of the Character Area. A section of the old Wilts and Berks Canal, identified by a corridor of vegetation, cuts through the southern part of the Character Area".*
- *"Views within the area vary depending on the degree of tree cover and other intervening features such as settlement, and vegetation along roads and the railway. Large scale open areas have distant views of the Downs on the horizon to the south. From The Ridgeway National Trail, the area is visible as part of the wider Vale".*
- *"The fieldscape has a mixture of modern and post medieval fieldscapes".*
- *"This is a rural area, with a sense of tranquillity in more enclosed areas. However, the notable presence of settlement, transport, utilities and business/light industrial buildings and activity limits the sense of tranquillity and remoteness, particularly within the southern portion of the Character Area".*

## 2.12

### Upper Vale Farmland VU3 Bourton to Garford

#### 2.12.1

Land in the north western part of the parish lies within the Upper Vale Farmland LCA. The study states,

- *"Low lying, but gently undulating, landscape, drained by numerous ditches and minor watercourses".*
- *"Predominantly well maintained farmland, with a pattern of varying size arable fields, and areas of grazed pasture".*
- *"Boundaries are generally well vegetated with hawthorn and elm hedges... and occasional mature trees, such as oaks, located within fields".*
- *"The, partly restored, Wilts and Berks canal winds from east to west through the southern portion of the Character Area".*
- *"The area is lightly settled generally, but includes an even spread of scattered settlement...Elsewhere...there are scattered farmsteads, many of which include listed buildings".*
- *"The A417, B4000 and a network of rural roads and lanes criss-cross the Vale, often with roadside hedges. There is also a comprehensive network of public rights of way (providing) pedestrian access to most parts of the area and links to the Downs to the south".*
- *"The Great Western Mainline railway line crosses east-west through the (area). Overhead electrification infrastructure, recently installed at close, regularly spaced intervals along the railway, are a noticeable feature across adjacent fields".*
- *"Boundary vegetation and woodland frequently shorten views within the Character Area. However, between tree cover, there are views to high*

*ground of the Corallian Limestone Ridge to the north, and the Downs to the south, emphasising the location of the Character Area within a wider Vale. The Character Area forms a significant part of the wider setting to the north of the North Wessex Downs AONB, with the area visible in the distance from vantage points within the Downs, including from The Ridgeway and Open Access land surrounding the Uffington White Horse. A large proportion of the Character Area has fieldscapes identified as post medieval, although there are also significant areas of modern field pattern”.*

- *"Tree cover provides enclosure and aids the sense of peace and tranquillity in some parts of the Character, although human influence including settlement and transport corridors such as the railway with its overhead masts, often reduces the sense of remoteness across the area”.*

## 2.13 The North Wessex Downs AONB landscape character assessment.

- 2.13.1 Southern parts of the parish lie within the North Wessex Downs AONB, which stretches from the west in Wiltshire, through Swindon, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire, to the eastern most section where it abuts the Chilterns AONB along the River Thames. The North Wessex Downs AONB covers approximately 1,730km<sup>2</sup> of rolling chalk-dominated countryside, encompassing several settlements.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.13.2 AONBs and their 'settings' benefit from statutory and planning policy protection, as set out in Chapter 3, below.
- 2.13.3 The AONB has an ancient history of human settlement and land use. It contains a vast number of important cultural heritage assets and features of archaeological interest, including medieval and post-medieval settlements. This includes Neolithic and Bronze Age sites such as Avebury Henge. There are 479 Scheduled Monuments, 15 Registered Parks and Gardens, one Registered Battlefield and over 4,000 Listed Buildings within the AONB.
- 2.13.4 The AONB is dominated by agricultural land use including farmsteads, pasture and arable land, amongst the river valleys, woodland and high chalk plains. The landscape encompasses a range of important habitats for nature conservation including the chalk grasslands, broadleaved woodlands, chalk rivers and streams, wetlands and arable farmland.
- 2.13.5 The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Integrated Landscape Character Assessment was undertaken by Land Use Consultants and published in 2002.

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<sup>2</sup> North Wessex Downs AONB (2019) North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024. Available at: <http://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/publications-resources/aonb-management-plan.html> [Date Accessed: 03/11/20]



- 2.13.6 The southern most parts of the parish fall within Landscape Character Type 5: Downs Plain and Scarp and LCA 5C: Hendred Plain. The study states,

*"The ledge of Lower Chalk protruding from the higher downs is a distinctive landform feature on the northern edge of the AONB, providing a transitional landscape between the high downs and the clay lowlands. Although essentially a flat level Plain, local variation is created by the numerous valleys that cut through the area... In addition the wooded stream sides form a much softer enclosed landscape. At Letcombe, the brook has been dammed to create a lake as part of a designed landscape scheme, and the presence of small parks and mansions at the point where springs emerge is a particular feature of the area... These areas are frequently associated with extensive woodland and parkland planting...*

*The majority of the area is under arable cultivation. The landscape consists of large fields with insignificant boundaries, although the shelterbelts and waterside woodlands provide a sense of enclosure. Orchards lie along the northern edge, around East Hendred, and provide further diversity in land cover. The area includes a large number of straight north-south running lanes, byways or tracks which cross the Plain and terminate on the high downs, where they join the Ridgeway. These tracks would have formerly connected the resources of the Vales and the high downs, but today form good routes for recreational access.*

*...The boundary of the AONB follows the line of the main A417 road. The accessibility this provides and the proximity to main employment centres means that this area is inevitably subject to development pressures. Harwell and Wantage are both expanding settlements located on the border of the AONB...*

*Particular consideration should be given to the impact of new development on the boundary of the AONB (at Harwell and Wantage) on the character of this part of the North Wessex Downs and views from this area".*

- 2.13.7 Some of the most recognisable qualities of the North Wessex Downs are the group of prehistoric features south of Uffington, including the Uffington White Horse,

*"The dramatic scarp landform creates a recognisable horizon visible from the lower lying landscapes to the north. The summit of the slope is characterised by Bronze Age barrows clustered along the skyline and Iron Age hill forts, connected by the prehistoric route of the Ridgeway. Waylands Smithy long barrow, Uffington Hill Fort and the enigmatic chalk-cut figure of the Uffington White Horse are among many symbolic landmarks that characterise these highly visible slopes. The long, sleek figure of the Uffington White Horse is undoubtedly Britain's oldest and most famous hill figure (at least 3,000 years old) and may have inspired the subsequent creation of further chalk carvings within the North Wessex Downs. The route of the Ridgeway has been celebrated in art and literature and today, walkers and cyclists continue to enjoy the experience of the Ridgeway National Trail".*

- 2.13.8 This group of historic features lie on elevated land, at approximately 250mAOD, with expansive views across the landscape in many directions, including towards East Challow. With good visibility, the Crown Packaging Plant and Grove Technology Park can be seen lying in the valley to the east of these features.
- 2.13.9 Key issues of relevance to East Challow Parish include:
- *In the past, agricultural intensification leading to loss of environmental assets including biodiversity (e.g. chalk grassland) archaeological features and landscape character;*
  - *Changes in farming practices - including loss of livestock with some marginal areas on the scarp slope no longer being grazed leading to scrub encroachment, most notably on the steeper scarp slopes;*
  - *Loss of hedgerows boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows;*
  - *Lack of appropriate woodland management particularly the small ancient and semi natural woodlands of the scarp formerly managed by coppicing;*
  - *Climate change... Impact on woodland and parkland with potential increase in non native species and tree loss (drought/windthrow);*
  - *Pressures for housing and peripheral development of attractive springline villages along the scarp - potential loss of local vernacular character, and decline in rural services;*
  - *Impact of development of the edge of the AONB, for example at Wantage, Swindon, Harwell, Didcot - visual impact plus increased pressures on housing, roads, etc.;*
  - *Loss of rural tranquillity, resulting from the combination of the above.*
- 2.13.10 The published landscape character assessments, summarised above, describe the landscape context to East Challow Parish and form the evidence base to landscape-related planning policy, which will be summarised in the following chapter.

## 3 Landscape planning policy context

### 3.1 National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in 2019<sup>3</sup> acts as guidance for local planning authorities, both in plan preparation and making decisions about planning applications. The environmental role of the NPPF is *"to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy"*.
- 3.1.2 In relation to landscape character assessment, in general, the following paragraphs of NPPF 2019 are of relevance.
- 3.1.3 Paragraph 170 states, *"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan)"*.
- 3.1.4 Paragraph 172 states, *"Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues ... The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest"*.

### 3.2 Planning Practice Guidance

- 3.2.1 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on landscape character can be found in Chapter 8: The Natural Environment (dated July 2019) which states,
- "The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.*
- Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary. The*

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<sup>3</sup> MHCLG (2019) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date Accessed: 03/11/20]

*cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully.*

*Where appropriate, landscape character assessments can be prepared to complement Natural England's National Character Area profiles. Natural England provides guidance on undertaking these assessments.*

*To help assess the type and scale of development that might be able to be accommodated without compromising landscape character, a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment can be completed. To demonstrate the likely effects of a proposed development on the landscape, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment can be used".<sup>4</sup>*

3.2.2 The PPG also makes special reference to dealing with development within the setting of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as follows,

*"Land within the setting of (an AONB) often makes an important contribution to maintaining their natural beauty, and where poorly located or designed development can do significant harm. This is especially the case where long views from or to the designated landscape are identified as important, or where the landscape character of land within and adjoining the designated area is complementary. Development within the settings of these areas will therefore need sensitive handling that takes these potential impacts into account".*

### 3.3 Vale of White Horse Planning Policy

3.3.1 The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies was adopted in December 2016, while Part 2: Detailed Policies and Additional Sites was adopted in October 2019<sup>5</sup>.

### 3.4 Landscape

3.4.1 In Part 1 of the Local Plan, Core Policy 44: Landscape states,

*"The key features that contribute to the nature and quality of the Vale of White Horse District's landscape will be protected from harmful development and where possible enhanced, in particular*

- Features such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, field boundaries, watercourses and water bodies;*
- Important landscape settings of settlements;*
- Topographical features;*
- Areas or features of cultural and historic value;*
- Important views and visually sensitive skylines, and*

<sup>4</sup> MHCLG (2019) 'Guidance Natural Environment' Available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#landscape> [Accessed on 03/11/20]

<sup>5</sup> Available at <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/local-plan-2031/> [Accessed on 04/11/20]

- *Tranquillity and the need to protect against intrusion from light pollution, noise, and motion.*

*Where development is acceptable in principle, measures will be sought to integrate it into the landscape character and/or the townscape of the area. Proposals will need to demonstrate how they have responded to the above aspects of landscape character and will be expected to:*

- *Incorporate appropriate landscape proposals that reflect the character of the area through appropriate design and management;*
- *Preserve and promote local distinctiveness and diversity and, where practical, enhance damaged landscape areas.*

*High priority will be given to conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs AONB and planning decisions will have regard to its setting. Proposals that support the economy and social wellbeing of communities located in the AONB, including affordable housing schemes, will be encouraged, provided they do not conflict with the aims of conservation and enhancement”.*

3.4.2 Paragraph 6.113 states that Core Policy 44 will be applied using the most up-to-date legislation and landscape studies available.

3.4.3 In relation to landscape, Part 2 of the Local Plan states,

*“The Part 1 plan seeks to protect, and where possible enhance, key features that contribute to the nature and quality of the district’s landscape.*

*In particular, Core Policy 44: Landscape, as set out in the Part 1 plan, identifies the most important landscape features that should be protected and enhanced and requires proposals to demonstrate how they have responded to these identified aspects of landscape character.*

*Proposals will be expected to:*

- *incorporate appropriate landscape proposals that reflect the character of the area through appropriate design and management, and*
- *preserve and promote local distinctiveness and diversity and, wherever possible, enhance damaged landscape areas*
- *...Proposals will also be considered in accordance with Core Policy 37: Design and Local Distinctiveness and the Council’s Design Guide SPD”.*

## 3.5 Sub-Area Strategies

3.5.1 In Part 1 of the Local Plan East Challow is classed as a ‘Larger Village’ in the settlement hierarchy and falls within the Western Vale Sub Area. This Sub Area is described as a larger rural area, extending from the North Wessex Downs AONB to the River Thames. Larger Villages are defined as settlements with a “*more limited range of employment, services and facilities. Unallocated development will be limited to providing for local needs and to support employment, services and facilities within local communities”.*

- 3.5.2 Core Policy 20: Spatial Strategy for the Western Vale Sub-Area summarises the allocations within the plan for this area. There are no planned allocations within the parish of East Challow. As stated above, unallocated applications for development will be limited to providing for local needs.
- 3.5.3 Section 5 of the plan describes how the Sub-Areas will have changed by 2031. The plan states, the Western Vale Sub-Area will continue to be an attractive and prosperous rural area. Development will have been focused at Faringdon with complementary growth in the Larger Villages, especially Shrivenham and Stanford-in-the-Vale. The quality of the rural environment will have been maintained.
- 3.5.4 Wantage falls within the South East Vale Sub-Area and is defined as a 'Market Town'. Market Towns are defined as settlements that have the "*greatest long-term potential for development to provide the jobs and homes to help sustain, and where appropriate, enhance their services and facilities to support viable and sustainable communities in a proportionate manner*".
- 3.5.5 Paragraph 5.106 describing the South East Vale describes the Sub-Area as having,
- 3.5.6 "*Many areas important for their environmental or landscape value...land between East Challow and Wantage, and Wantage and Grove helps to preserve the separate and unique identities of these communities and so it is important these areas are protected from development*".
- 3.5.7 In relation to maintaining separate settlements, Part 2 of the Local Plan, Development Policy 29: Settlement Character and Gaps states,
- "Development proposals will need to demonstrate that the settlement's character is retained, and physical and visual separation is maintained between settlements. Development proposals will be considered in the context of Core Policy 4 in the Local Plan 2031: Part 1, and in addition, will only be permitted provided that:*
- i. The physical and visual separation between two separate settlements is not unacceptably diminished*
  - ii. Cumulatively, with other existing or proposed development, it does not compromise the physical and visual separation between settlements, and*
  - iii. It does not lead to a loss of environmental or historical assets that individually or collectively contribute towards their local identity*".



## 3.6 Green infrastructure

3.6.1 The Council has developed a joint Green Infrastructure Strategy with South Oxfordshire District Council<sup>6</sup>. The study seeks to assist in the planning, design and delivery of green infrastructure and sets out the two Councils' expectations in relation to the delivery of green infrastructure on development sites. The strategy is also intended to be used to inform the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.

3.6.2 Local Plan Core Policy 45: Green Infrastructure states,

*"A net gain in Green Infrastructure, including biodiversity, will be sought either through on-site provision or off-site contributions and the targeted use of other funding sources. A net loss of Green Infrastructure, including biodiversity, through development proposals, will be resisted.*

*Proposals for new development must provide adequate Green Infrastructure in line with the Green Infrastructure Strategy. All major applications must be accompanied by a statement demonstrating that they have taken into account the relationship of the proposed development to existing Green Infrastructure and how this will be retained and enhanced. Proposals will be required to contribute to the delivery of new Green Infrastructure and/or the improvement of existing assets including Conservation Target Areas in accordance with the standards in the Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Habitats Regulations Assessment".*

3.6.3 Further details of the Green Infrastructure Strategy in relation to East Challow are provided in Chapter 5, below.

3.6.4 Conservation Target Areas are ecological networks in Oxfordshire that promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats and the protection and recovery of populations of priority species. They represent the main components of the ecological networks across Oxfordshire.

## 3.7 Biodiversity

3.7.1 Core Policy 46: Conservation and Improvement of Biodiversity states,

*"Development that will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity in the district will be permitted. Opportunities for biodiversity gain, including the connection of sites, large-scale habitat restoration, enhancement and habitat re-creation will be actively sought, with a primary focus on delivery in the Conservation Target Areas. A net loss of biodiversity will be avoided...*

*The level of protection and mitigation should be proportionate to the status of the habitat or species and its importance individually and as part of a wider network".*

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<sup>6</sup> South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse District Councils (2017) South & Vale Green Infrastructure Strategy, Chris Blandford Associates Available at [https://data.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/dynamic\\_serve.jsp?ID=1019020450&CODE=6FC84D5697E564DA1F77A5D61D3F14CC](https://data.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=1019020450&CODE=6FC84D5697E564DA1F77A5D61D3F14CC) [Accessed on 04/11/20]

## 3.8 Highway improvements

- 3.8.1 The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 states that the Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) was approved by Oxfordshire County Council in July 2015. LTP4 safeguards land to deliver the West Wantage Link Road (WWLR) connecting the A417 from Mably Way in Wantage to East Challow. Core Policy 21: Safeguarding of land for strategic highway improvements within the Western Vale Sub-Area sets out the details of this policy. A plan illustrating the location of the safeguarded land is provided in Figure 3.1.



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## 3.9 Other relevant Local Plan development policies

3.9.1 The following table summarises other policies in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 (Parts 1 and 2) which are of relevance to the protection of landscape character.

Policy reference	Title	Relevance to LCA
<b>Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies</b>		
Core Policy 22	Housing Mix	Seeks to ensure that the right mix of housing sizes, types and tenures are provided on all residential development sites
Core Policy 23	Housing Density	Seeks to ensure that residential dwellings are provided at an appropriate density to reflect the need to use land efficiently whilst also taking account of local circumstances.
Core Policy 25	Rural Exception Sites	Identifies the circumstances in which affordable housing can be provided on 'exception sites' in the rural areas, where residential development would not normally be permitted
Core Policy 28	New Employment Development on Unallocated Sites	Sets out the Council's approach to assessing proposals for employment on sites not already allocated.
Core Policy 31	Development to Support the Visitor Economy	Seeks to support the visitor and tourism sector across the district.
Core Policy 37	Design and Local Distinctiveness	Seeks to ensure that all development achieves high quality design standards.
Core Policy 39	The Historic Environment	Sets out the Council's approach to conserving historic assets across the district.
Core Policy 41	Renewable Energy	Sets out the Council's approach to supporting proposals for renewable energy.
Core Policy 43	Natural Resources	Sets out the Council's approach to minimising environmental impacts associated with development proposals.
<b>Part 2: Detailed Policies and Additional Sites</b>		
Core Policy 20a	Housing Supply for Western Vale Sub-Area Housing Delivery	This policy updates the housing supply for the Western Vale Sub-Area to ensure consistency with the other two Sub-Areas located across the district. No additional site allocations in East Challow Parish are set out within the Part 2 plan.
Development Policy 1	Self and Custom Build	Promotes Self Build and Custom Build to meet the need highlighted within the Self Build Register.
Development Policy 5:	Replacement Dwellings in the Open Countryside	Sets out criteria to guide development in the open countryside of replacement dwellings.

Development Policy 6	Rural Workers' Dwellings	Sets out the criteria for the development of rural workers dwellings in the open countryside.
Development Policy 7	Re-use, Conversion and Extension of Buildings for Dwellings in the Open Countryside	Sets out the Council's criteria and requirements for the re-use, conversions and extension of buildings for dwellings in the open countryside.
Development Policy 12	Rural Diversification and Equestrian Development	Supports proposals for rural diversification and new equestrian uses and buildings in the countryside provided they are accessible and respect the landscape and the surrounding environment.
Development Policy 21	External Lighting	Sets out measures to ensure that development involving external lighting is appropriately designed and located.
Development Policy 25	Noise Pollution	Seeks to ensure new development is acceptable in relation to noise pollution
Development Policy 31:	Protection of Public Rights of Way, National Trails and Open Access Areas	Seeks to support improvements to the Public Rights of Way Network and Open Access Areas, and to protect National Trails.
Development Policy 32	The Wilts and Berks Canal	Seeks to support the long-term vision for the restoration of the Wilts and Berks Canal.
Development Policy 35	New Countryside Recreation Facilities	Supports the development of small-scale countryside recreational facilities in the open countryside.
Development Policy 36	Heritage Assets	Sets out the Council's approach to conserve and enhance heritage assets in the Vale.
Development Policy 37	Conservation Areas	Sets out measures to ensure Conservation Areas are protected from inappropriate development
Development Policy 38	Listed Buildings	Sets out the Council's measures for assessing development proposals that affect a Listed Building and / or its setting.
Development Policy 39	Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments	Sets out the Council's approach to the conservation and enhancement of Scheduled Monuments, nationally important archaeological remains and other non-designated archaeological sites.

### 3.10

#### Recently Permitted Development in East Challow

##### 3.10.1

Four development proposals in the parish of East Challow have been granted permission in the last 11 years, as summarised below:

- Planning application P08/V1169/FUL for 14 homes on the 'Country Club' site, Woodhill Lane. Full planning permission was granted in February 2009. This development is currently under construction.

- Planning application P12/V1261/FUL sought permission for 71 homes on the Nalder Estate. Full planning permission was granted in June 2013. This development appears to be complete.
- Planning application P16/V1714/O for 38 homes at Challow Park, to the north of the A417. Outline planning permission was granted in September 2016. This development is currently under construction.
- Planning application P16/V0652/O sought permission for 88 homes on Park Farm to the north and east of the A417. Outline planning permission was granted in October 2016. This development is currently under construction.

### 3.11 North Wessex Downs AONB

- 3.11.1 Southern parts of the parish of East Challow lie within the North Wessex Downs AONB. AONBs are designated by Government for the purpose of ensuring that the special qualities of the nation's finest landscapes are conserved and enhanced. AONBs benefit from statutory and planning policy protection.
- 3.11.2 The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area, as confirmed by Section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act). Within Section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000 there is a duty on all relevant authorities to have regard to this purpose in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or affecting, land in AONBs.
- 3.11.3 National planning policy in relation to AONBs is set in the NPPF and Chapter 8 of the Planning Practice Guidance describes the protection of the setting to such protected landscapes, as described above.
- 3.11.4 North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners has produced a Position Paper<sup>7</sup> in relation to the setting of the AONB which states,
- "The setting of the North Wessex Downs does not have a defined geographical boundary but it should be addressed as the area within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting, materials or design can be considered to have an impact, either positive or negative, on the natural beauty and special qualities of the North Wessex Downs AONB".*
- 3.11.5 The Position Statement also makes reference to paragraph 180 of the NPPF which, in summary, seeks to ensure that new development is appropriate to its location and takes account of its potential effects on pollution, health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development.

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<sup>7</sup> North Wessex Downs AONB Position Paper: Setting (2019) Available at [https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/uploads/File\\_Management/Publications/Position\\_Statements/Setting\\_Position\\_Statement\\_2019\\_Final.pdf](https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/uploads/File_Management/Publications/Position_Statements/Setting_Position_Statement_2019_Final.pdf) [Accessed on 04/11/20]



- 3.11.6 The AONB Management Plan 2019 – 2024<sup>8</sup> seeks to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the landscape. The inherent value and importance of the North Wessex Downs includes the natural environment, geology, ecology and archaeology, as well as the relationship of the landscape with people over time.

### 3.12 25 Year Environment Plan

- 3.12.1 The document: 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' was published in January 2018 by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)<sup>9</sup>. A summary of the plan states,
- 3.12.2 *"This 25 Year Environment Plan sets out government action to help the natural world regain and retain good health. It aims to deliver cleaner air and water in our cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. It calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first".*
- 3.12.3 The plan identifies six key areas around which action will be focused. This includes the policy 'recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes'. An action identified within this policy relevant to this LCA is as follows: *"Identifying opportunities for environmental enhancement in all of England's 159 National Character Areas and monitoring indicators of our landscape's character and quality to improve landscapes for people, places and nature".*
- 3.12.4 The 25 Year Environment Plan recognises that *"our landscapes – our hills, valleys and plains – were created by age-old geological processes but the way our rural and urban environment looks now owes as much to the work of people as nature. Down the centuries, we have shaped and adapted our rural and urban landscape to suit our purpose, not always aware of the lasting effects of our actions – for good or ill – on the appearance and health of the environment"*

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<sup>8</sup> North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019-2024 Available at <https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/publications-resources/aonb-management-plan.html> [Accessed on 04/11/20]

<sup>9</sup> Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2018) 25 Year Environment Plan. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan> [Date Accessed: 03/11/20]

## 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Overview

4.1.1 The methodology for this study has been derived from aspects of:

- Guidelines for Landscape Visual and Impact Assessment Third Edition (2013)<sup>10</sup>;
- The Countryside Agency Topic Paper 6 (2002) Techniques and criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity<sup>11</sup>; and
- Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment<sup>12</sup>.

4.1.2 The process can be summarised as having four steps:

- Define purpose and scope of the project;
- Desk study;
- Field study; and
- Classification and description of landscape character types and areas.

### 4.2 Step 1: Define purpose and scope of the project

4.2.1 East Challow NDP Steering Group requested a Landscape Character Assessment to be undertaken. Upon commencement of the project, Lepus held several conferences with the East Challow NDP Steering Group to confirm the precise aims and objectives of the project, defining the scope of assessment.

### 4.3 Step 2: Desk study

4.3.1 An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' describes the landscape as having many different components, grouped into three types, 'natural', 'cultural and social' and 'perceptual', as illustrated in Figure 4.1.

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<sup>10</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition) Abingdon: Routledge

<sup>11</sup> The Countryside Agency (2002) Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5601625141936128> [Date Accessed: 03/11/20]

<sup>12</sup>

Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Date Accessed: 03/11/20]



Figure 4.1: What is landscape?

4.3.2 The desktop study stage consists of an information gathering exercise to prepare a baseline review of natural, cultural and social aspects of the NDP area.

#### 4.4 Step 3: Field study

4.4.1 As stated in 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'<sup>13</sup>: *"the field study is an essential part of the Landscape Character Assessment process. It presents the opportunity to observe and understand how all the factors identified as part of the desk study interact and are perceived and experienced, to give us landscapes of distinct character. It also enables the identification of other factors that are not evident from the desk study and the chance to record aesthetic and perceptual aspects"*.

<sup>13</sup> Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Accessed on 07/09/17. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Date Accessed: 03/11/20]<sup>[1]</sup>

4.4.2 The field visits for the East Challow Landscape Character Assessment were undertaken in October 2020 and November 2020. The site visits were undertaken by two appropriately qualified Landscape Architects in order that observations and judgements could be compared and agreed.

#### 4.5 Step 4: Classification and description of landscape character types and character areas

4.5.1 The fourth stage of the landscape character assessment guidance from Natural England states that this part of the process deals with the final classification and description of landscape types and character areas, and explains: the difference between landscape types and landscape character areas, and their use; classification at different scales; involvement of people; boundary confirmation; naming landscape character types and areas; how to describe landscape character; and mapping landscape character types and / or areas.

4.5.2 Overall, the landscape classification was informed by these stages which were used to divide the landscape into areas of distinct, recognisable and consistent character, and groups areas of similar character together. This provided information on the extent and distribution of different landscape character areas. The process of Landscape Character Assessment, as described in 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' is illustrated in Figure 4.2.

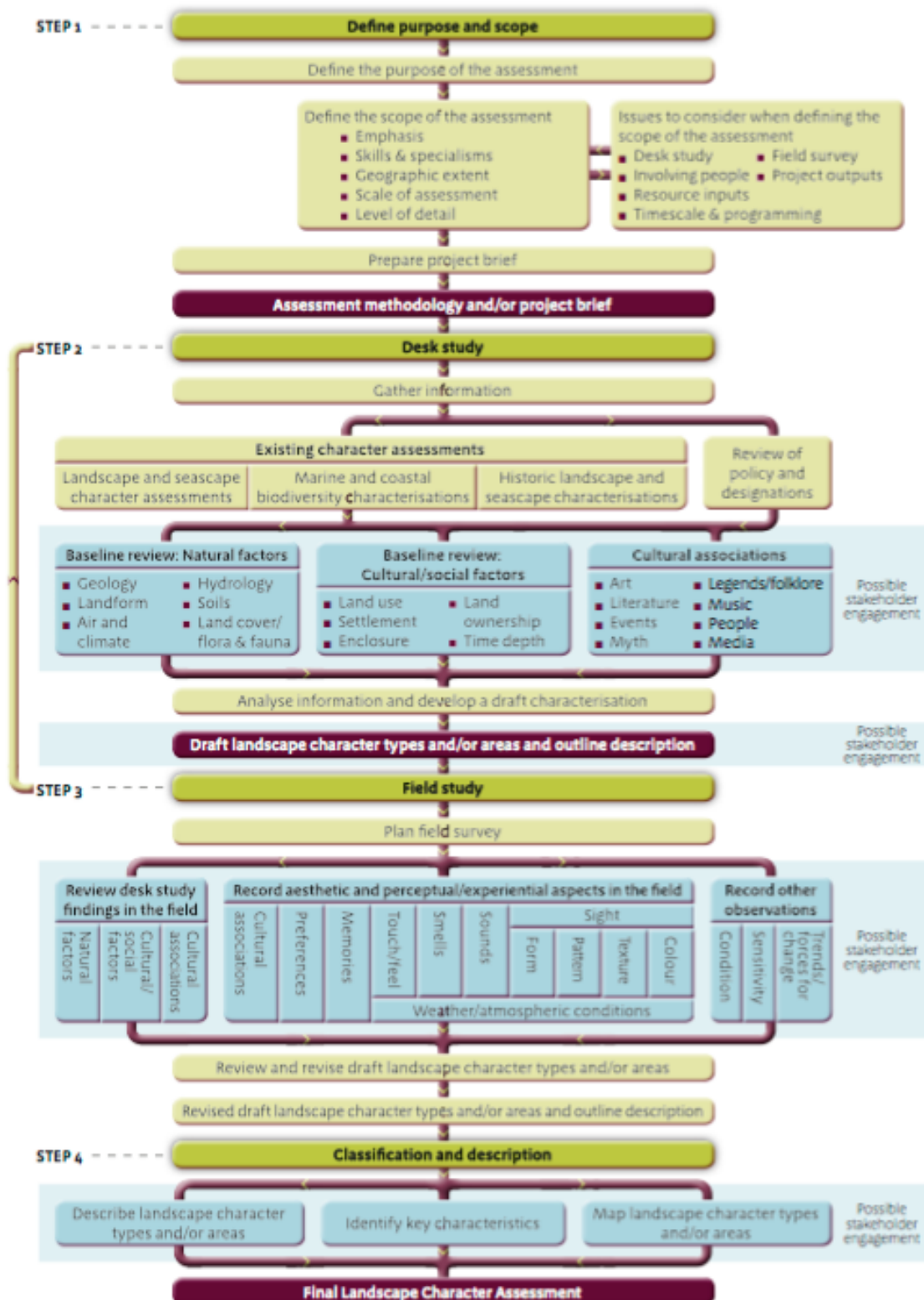


Figure 4.2: Landscape Character Assessment - the process

- 4.5.3           Landscape classification can be prepared at a variety of scales depending on the purpose and scope of the project. The scale of the area to be assessed determines the likely level at which the differences between homogeneous and distinctive factors are separated to identify character areas. The three previous stages of assessment have provided a spatially referenced framework on which landscape character descriptions, and judgements about future policy development, design strategies, or land management may be based.
- 4.5.4           Landscape Character Areas do not include main settlements, although the LCAs may wash over rural dwellings and farmsteads. The built up areas shown on the mapping does not constitute a settlement boundary or directly relate to policy areas, and may incorporate areas of open space associated with the settlement edge, such as schools and playing fields. Areas on the edge of the settlement which are committed for development and are likely to form part of the built up areas in the near future, are also excluded from the Landscape Character Areas.



## 5 Landscape evolution

### 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The following summarises the baseline landscape context within the parish of East Challow. Further details of each of the features described below are provided in the East Challow LCA descriptions in Chapters 7-12.

### 5.2 Geology and landform

- 5.2.1 The underlying geology has a formative role in the development of the landscape and the often influences the subsequent human activity which takes place.
- 5.2.2 British Geological Survey maps<sup>14</sup> illustrate that the settlement of East Challow lies on the boundaries between the West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation and the Upper Greensand Formation. While to the north lies Gault Formation (Mudstone). The Gault Formation extends into northerly parts of the parish to approximately Circourt Road. The area around Circourt Road and further north comprises Clay Formations. There are numerous areas of superficial deposits of sand and gravel across the parish.

### 5.3 Soils

- 5.3.1 Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) grades are available from Natural England.<sup>15</sup> There are five ALC grades, grade one is the best quality land and grade five the poorest. The provisional grades are based on a number of criteria, including climate (temperature, rainfall, aspect, exposure, frost risk), site (gradient, micro-relief, flood risk) and soil (depth, structure, texture, chemicals, stoniness). The provisional ALC grading assessment does not involve field surveys. ALC Grades 1 to 3a are classified as best and most versatile agricultural land<sup>16</sup>. Provisional mapping does not distinguish between Grades 3a and 3b; Grade 3 land has been considered as potentially best and most versatile land in this LCA.

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<sup>14</sup> British Geological Survey Map App. Available at <https://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> [Accessed on 05/11/20]

<sup>15</sup> Natural England Open Data Available from [https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/5d2477d8d04b41d4bbc9a8742f858f4d\\_0?geometry=-1.503%2C51.582%2C-1.402%2C51.601](https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/5d2477d8d04b41d4bbc9a8742f858f4d_0?geometry=-1.503%2C51.582%2C-1.402%2C51.601) Accessed on 05/11/20]

<sup>16</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (2019) Annex 2: Glossary Available at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/810197/NPPF\\_Feb\\_2019\\_revised.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf) [Accessed on 05/11/20]

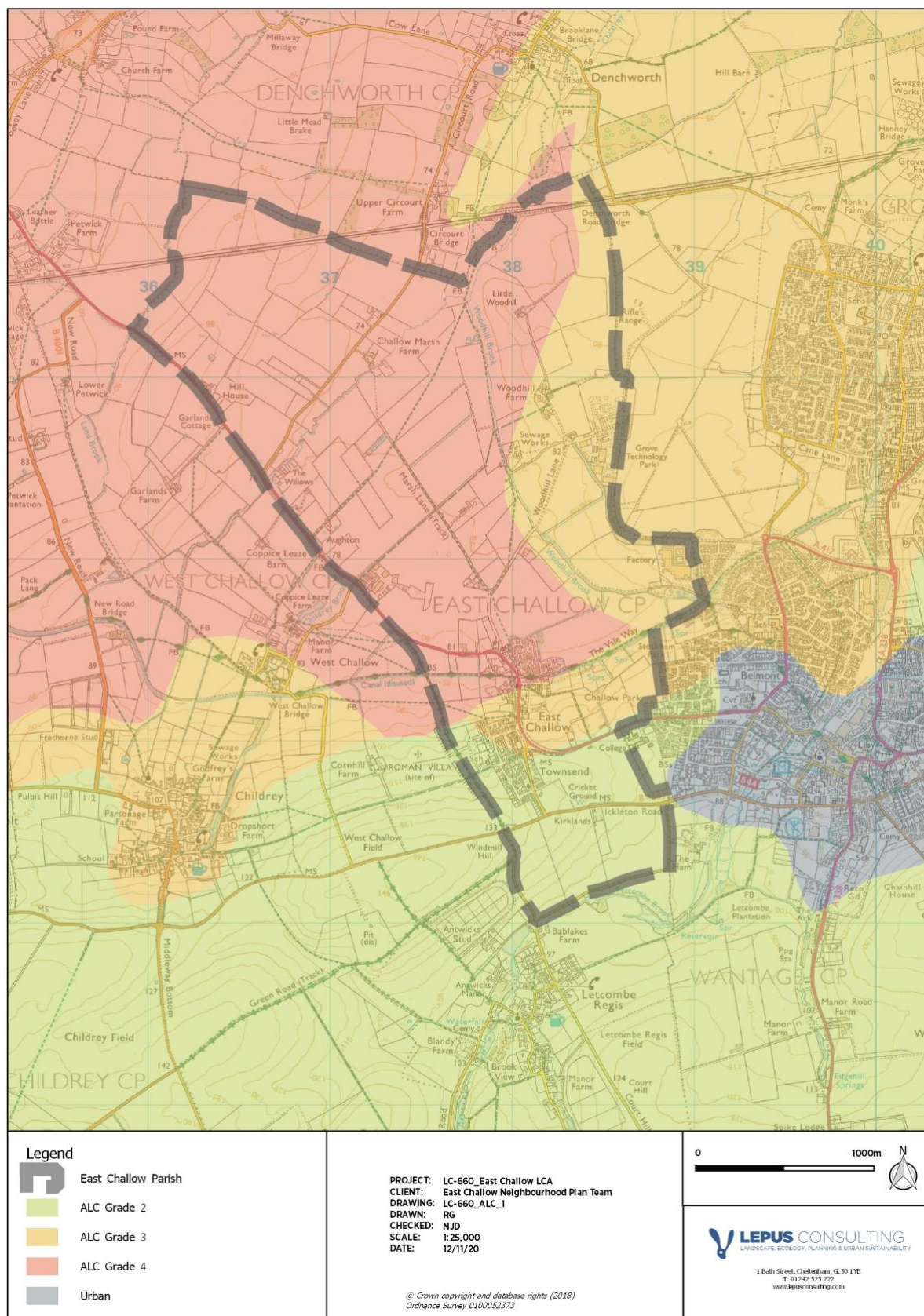


Figure 5.1 Agricultural Land Classification Grades

5.3.2 There are three ALC grades within East Challow Parish as illustrated on Figure 5.1. To the south of the parish, on the more freely draining soils, the land is Grade 2; central and eastern parts of the parish are Grade 3, while the western parts of the parish are ALC Grade 4.

5.3.3 There are four different soil types across East Challow Parish<sup>17</sup>.

- Shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone largely lie to the south of the settlement;
- Freely draining slightly acid loamy soils is a narrow band of soils in the centre of the parish and eastwards towards Wantage;
- Freely draining lime-rich loamy soils lie to the centre and west of the parish;
- Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils lie to the north and extend southwards along Woodhill Brook.

Soil Type	Texture	Drainage	Fertility	Typical habitats for soil type	Typical landcover for soil type
Shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone	Loamy	Freely draining	Lime-rich	Herb-rich Downland and limestone pastures; Beech hangers and other lime-rich woodlands	Arable and grassland
Freely draining slightly acid loamy soils	Loamy	Freely draining	Low	Neutral and acid pastures and deciduous woodlands	Arable and grassland
Freely draining lime-rich loamy soils	Loamy	Freely draining	Lime-rich	Herb-rich chalk and limestone pastures; lime-rich deciduous woodlands	Arable with grassland at higher altitude
Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils	Loamy and clayey	Impeded drainage	Moderate	Seasonally wet pastures and woodlands	Grassland and arable some woodland

## 5.4 Hydrology

5.4.1 The parish is crossed by a number of watercourses, largely flowing in a northerly direction towards the River Ock and onwards towards the River Thames. The locations of these watercourses and their associated floodplains are illustrated on Figure 5.2.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cranfield Soil and Agrifood Institute (no date) Soilsmap. Available at: <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilsmap/index.cfm> [Date Accessed: 05/11/20]

<sup>18</sup> Environment Agency Open Data Flood Map for Planning (updated September 2020) Available at <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/cf494c44-05cd-4060-a029-35937970c9c6/flood-map-for-planning-rivers-and-sea-flood-zone-2> [Accessed on 05/11/20]

- 5.4.2 Childrey Brook appears to originate in proximity to Childrey and flows north towards the A417 and then, broadly, follows Circourt Road in a northerly direction. Childrey Brook is classed as a statutory main river<sup>19</sup>. Woodhill Brook appears to originate at the eastern boundary of the parish in proximity to Wantage and forms a confluence with Childrey Brook in the northern part of the parish. The Letcombe Brook lies outside the parish towards the south, with southern land parcels within the parish draining in this direction. There are modest areas of floodplain associated with these watercourses.
- 5.4.3 The Wilts and Berks Canal crosses the parish in an east-west direction, passing through the centre of the settlement.
- 5.4.4 OS 1:25,000 leisure mapping identifies two springs to the east of the settlement and just to the south of the Wilts and Berks Canal. Springs tend to emerge where an area of permeable geology overlies a layer of impermeable geology. Historically, village settlements developed along 'spring lines' where there was a reliable water supply. East Challow is likely to be one of a number of such settlements located at the foot of the North Wessex Downs.

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<sup>19</sup> Environment Agency Main Rivers Mapping Available at <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=17cd53dfc524433980cc333726a56386> [Accessed on 09/11/20]



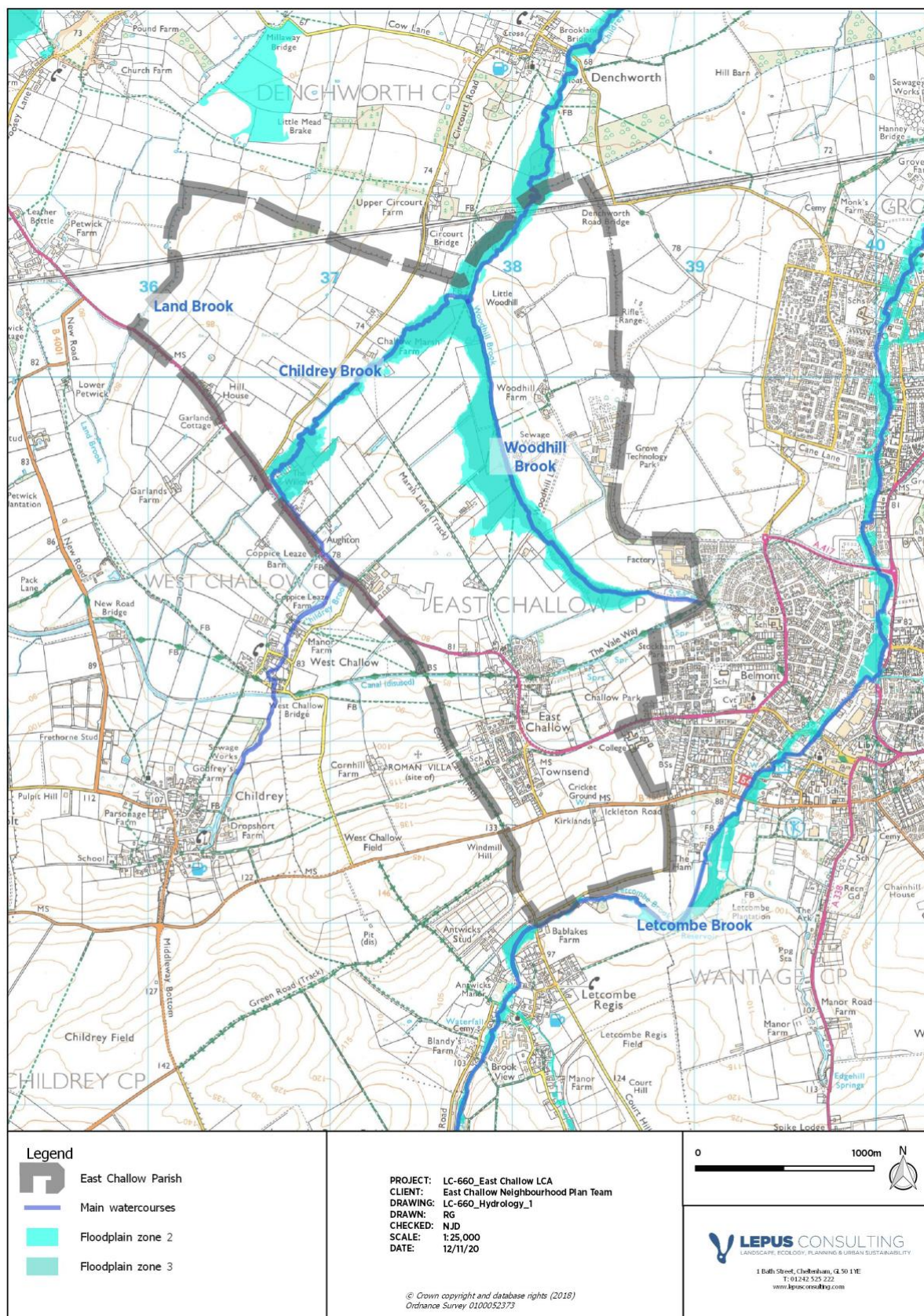


Figure 5.2 Hydrology and floodplains

## 5.5 Biodiversity, flora and fauna

- 5.5.1 The parish of East Challow has a range of undesignated biodiversity assets supporting an array of flora and fauna. The landscape within the parish is predominantly agricultural, with grassland and arable land uses. There are patches of deciduous woodland, hedgerow field boundaries and various waterbodies, such as watercourses, the Canal and ponds, which offer a range of habitat types and connectivity between biodiversity assets.

## 5.6 Priority Habitats

- 5.6.1 The Priority Habitat Inventory was taken from Natural England's publicly available data<sup>20</sup>. This mapping shows the location of Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41 habitats of principal importance and these habitats are shown on Figure 5.3.
- 5.6.2 A small area of Ancient Woodland to the east of the parish, is shown on this mapping, called Woodhill Copse. Woodhill Copse is an Ancient Semi-natural Woodland.
- 5.6.3 The NPPF defines ancient woodland as: "*Ancient woodland: An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes Ancient Semi Natural Woodland and Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)*". Paragraph 175C states, "*development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons<sup>58</sup> and a suitable compensation strategy exists.*"
- 5.6.4 Other Priority Habitats identified on this mapping include five patches of deciduous woodland, scattered within the parish, principally associated with linear routes or dwellings, and a potential Traditional Orchard at the property called Aughton to the east of the A417.

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<sup>20</sup> Natural England Open Data (updated October 2020) Available from [https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/e8eac9a6297f4544896b667b204ed31a\\_0](https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/e8eac9a6297f4544896b667b204ed31a_0) Accessed on [05/11/20]



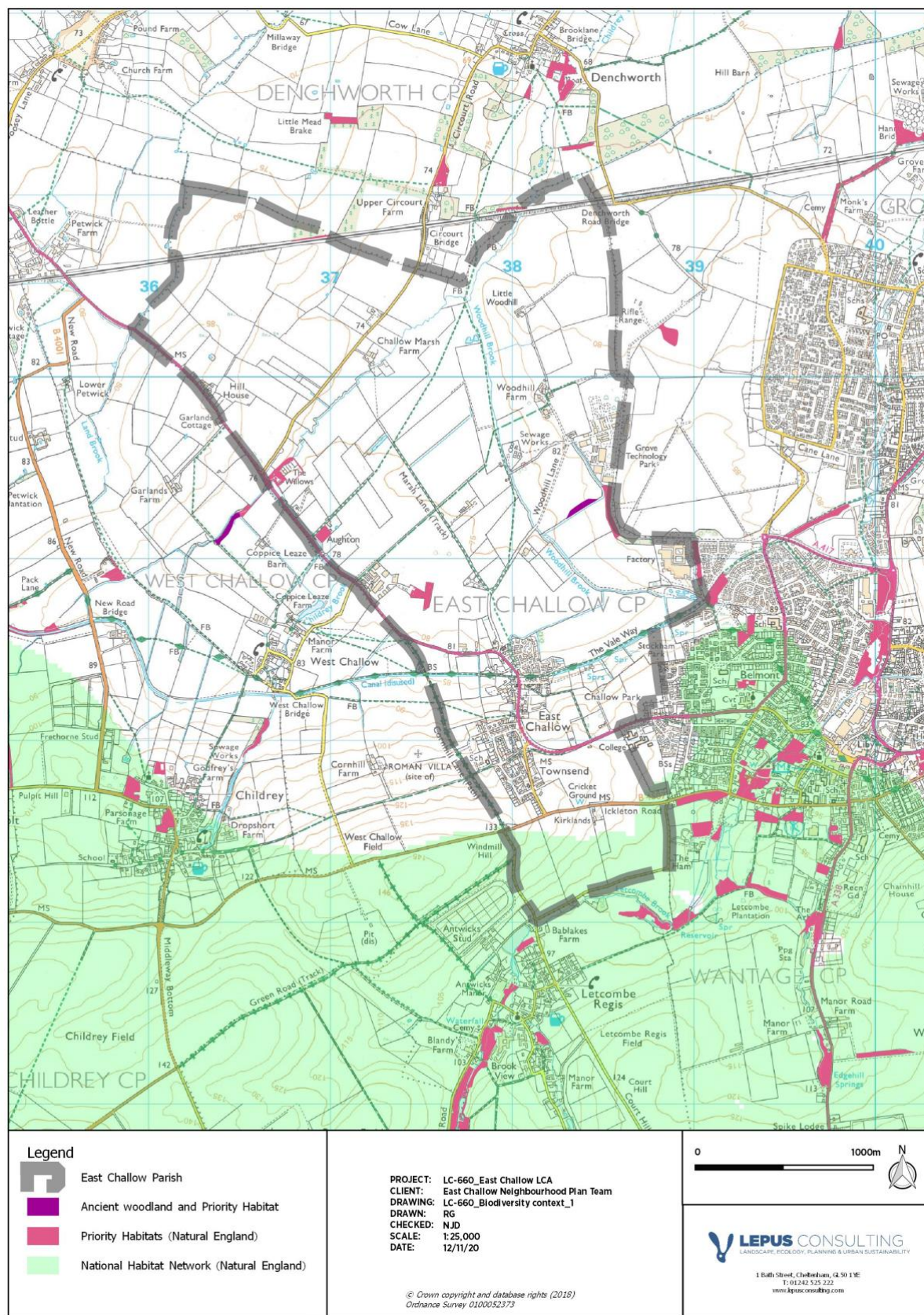


Figure 5.3 Biodiversity context

- 5.6.5 Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre (TVERC) offer a note of caution in relation to the use of the mapping of Priority Habitats<sup>21</sup>, stating that the information Natural England used is now out-of-date and it may under-represent habitats such as arable field margins, eutrophic standing waters, mesotrophic lakes, ponds, rivers, lowland beech and yew woodland, wet woodland, lowland wood pasture and parkland, open mosaics on previously developed land, possible priority grassland and possible priority fen, lowland fen, reedbed and traditional orchards. The data may over represent coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, lowland calcareous grassland, lowland dry acid grassland, lowland meadows, lowland heathland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland and purple moor grass and rush pasture.

## 5.7 National Habitat Network

- 5.7.1 The National Habitat Network (NHN) has been mapped by Natural England who describe the network as follows,

*"Natural England created these maps to provide a national overview of the distribution of habitat networks with suggestions for future action to enhance biodiversity. It is hoped that these maps will help to stimulate local engagement with partners and to agree local priorities and identify where action might help build more ecologically resilient ecosystems across landscapes".*

- 5.7.2 Priority Habitats are identified outside the parish to the south and east, broadly associated with Letcombe Brook, including Traditional Orchards, Reedbeds and Deciduous Woodland. These habitats are incorporated into Natural England's NHN mapping. Natural England has also identified two wider zones, the 'Network Enhancement Zone 1' and the 'Network Expansion Zone' as having potential to enhance the NHN. These identified zones include land parcels in the south of the parish; the locations of these zones are illustrated on Figure 5.3.

## 5.8 Conservation Target Areas

- 5.8.1 The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 identifies Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) as some of the most important areas for wildlife conservation in Oxfordshire. There are no CTA within East Challow Parish.

## 5.9 Cultural heritage

- 5.9.1 East Challow Parish Council has produced a summary of the heritage assets in the Plan area<sup>22</sup>, based on a number of reference materials including historic maps, reference books and the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record. The study provides a useful summary of the history of the parish.

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.tverc.org/cms/content/habitats> [Accessed on 05/11/20]

<sup>22</sup> Heritage Assets in the Parish of East Challow (undated) Available at <http://www.eastchallowpc.co.uk/neighbourhood-plan/news/> [Accessed on 05/11/20]

5.9.2 This LCA has also interrogated the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation<sup>23</sup> to inform the assessment of the historic development of the landscape, what is referred to as 'time-depth' in LCA guidance<sup>24</sup>.

5.9.3 The locations of the following cultural heritage assets are illustrated on Figure 5.4.

## 5.10 Scheduled monuments

5.10.1 A scheduled monument is identified lying outside the parish to the west, called 'Roman Villa E of Cornhill Farm' (number 1004854). There is currently no citation available on the Historic England website.<sup>25</sup> East Challow Parish Council's document 'Heritage Assets in the Parish of East Challow' states,

*"The site of a Roman villa was first recorded to the east of Cornhill Farm in 1876 when the foundations of five rooms of a corridor villa were reported by Ordnance Survey fieldworkers. ... The villa is reported to have been totally destroyed by stone robbing of the walls in the same year, although later investigations would prove that elements of the building survived.*

*In 1969 a trench was excavated across the site. This recorded a wall made from chalk blocks along with associated floors and a rubbish pit. Further excavations in 1972 recorded a rubble and flint floor along with further walling and a chalk floor. Other features, which appear to form a complex around the main villa hub have been identified from cropmarks noted on aerial photographs".*

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<sup>23</sup> Oxfordshire County Council (undated) Available at <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/archaeology/landscape-characterisation> [Accessed on 05/11/20]

<sup>24</sup> Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Date Accessed: 03/11/20]

<sup>25</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1004854> [Accessed on 05/11/20]



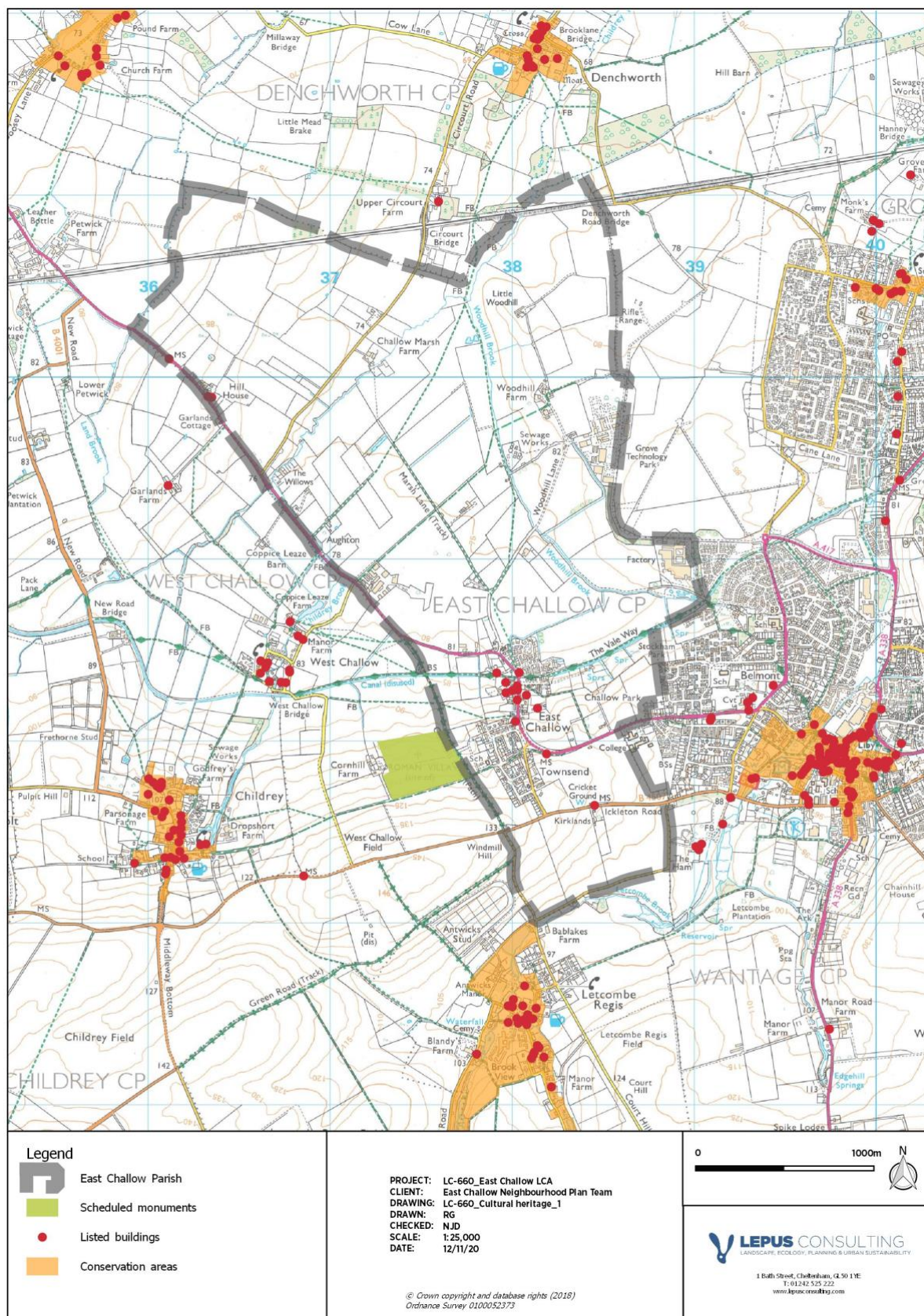


Figure 5.4 Cultural heritage context

5.10.2 Further heritage assessment would be required to establish the role of the landscape within the parish in relation to the setting of this Scheduled Monument.

5.10.3 Segsbury Camp or Letcombe Castle Hill Fort is a scheduled monument lying approximately 1.5km to the south of Letcombe Regis. This Iron Age hillfort occupies a commanding position on elevated land with views over the lower lying clay vale.

## 5.11 Listed buildings

5.11.1 Information about the locations and details of listed buildings has been taken from Historic England.<sup>26</sup> The study 'Heritage Assets in the Parish of East Challow'<sup>27</sup> also provides a helpful summary of the listed buildings within the parish and the historic development of the settlement.

5.11.2 East Challow is mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086 as one of the villages located within the parish of Letcombe Regis. Letcombe Regis Manor was owned by the crown up to the Norman Conquest, following which, William I assumed ownership and it remained in royal ownership throughout the later medieval era.

5.11.3 The Church of St. Nicholas dates from the mid-12th century. In the 13th century the chancel and chancel arch were rebuilt and the bell-cot and north aisle were added. The church is now a Grade II\* listed building. This ancient church is architecturally attractive; it does not have a tower or spire and reads as a modest building in its landscape setting.

5.11.4 Many of the other listed buildings in the parish are Grade II and are clustered in the centre of the settlement. Wise's Farmhouse dates from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century while Bridge House dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Challow House Farmhouse dates from c.1790 and Manor House Farmhouse, with a listed barn lying to the west, date from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. These buildings are located to the north west of the settlement in proximity to the Church of St Nicholas. To the east of the church is a listed Barn dating from the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century.

5.11.5 Challow Industries is an imposing two storey building located on the junction of Main Street and the Wilts and Berks Canal. This building accommodated Nalder and Nalder, an agricultural engineering business. To the south, The Old School House, dating from 1855, is located to the west of the A417.

5.11.6 Hill Farmhouse and the adjacent Stable and Coach House lie outside of main settlement to the north of the parish on the A417. Both are Grade II listed buildings.

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<sup>26</sup> Available at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search?clearresults=true> [Accessed on 09/11/20]

<sup>27</sup> Heritage Assets in the Parish of East Challow (undated) Available at <http://www.eastchallowpc.co.uk/neighbourhood-plan/news/> [Accessed on 05/11/20]

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## 5.12 Conservation areas

- 5.12.1 There are no conservation areas within the parish. The Letcombe Bassett and Regis Conservation Area lies to the south of the parish and shares a short section of the parish boundary. Land parcels in the south of the parish may be considered to play a role in creating the landscape setting to this conservation area.

## 5.13 Historic mapping and highways

- 5.13.1 The 1801 Enclosure Map for Letcombe Regis and East Challow<sup>28</sup> provides a useful indication of the pattern of the landscape at this time, particularly in relation access routes and field patterns.
- 5.13.2 The snaking shape of the A417 through the centre of the settlement is clearly identifiable. To the north of the settlement there are access routes which appear to align with the route of Woodhill Lane and footpath 196/10/20, marked as Marsh Way and now called Marsh Lane. The route of the Wilts and Berks Canal can be seen, crossing through the centre of the settlement.
- 5.13.3 In the south of the parish lies the Lower Icknield Way, this is widely recorded as being an ancient trackway, and is now marked by the route of Ickleton Road. Circourt Road and the unnamed roads leading to Letcombe Regis are also discernable.
- 5.13.4 The land parcels shown on the Enclosures Map are generally small to medium sized. It is noticeable that there are numerous often smaller enclosures to the west and south of the watercourses, with larger field parcels to the east of Woodhill Brook and north of Childrey Brook.
- 5.13.5 A Paddock and Pleasure Ground is marked in the land parcel to the south east of the Church of St Nicholas, further details are given in the text below describing the identified LCAs.

## 5.14 PRoW and National Trails

- 5.14.1 The routes of Public Rights of Way have been taken from Oxfordshire County Council's Countryside Access Map<sup>29</sup> and Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 leisure mapping.
- 5.14.2 Cornhill Lane is a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) number 196/3/10 and forms the south western boundary to the parish. The Vale Way follows the alignment of the Wilts and Berks Canal through the parish on an east-west route and is marked as footpath 196/7/10.

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<sup>28</sup> Available at [http://ww2.berkshirenclosure.org.uk/CalmView/getimage.ashx?app=Archive&db=Catalog&fname=Q\\_R\\_D\\_C\\_82B\\_Map.jpg](http://ww2.berkshirenclosure.org.uk/CalmView/getimage.ashx?app=Archive&db=Catalog&fname=Q_R_D_C_82B_Map.jpg) [Accessed on 09/11/20]

<sup>29</sup> Available at <https://publicrightsofway.oxfordshire.gov.uk/Web/standardmap.aspx> [Accessed on 09/11/20]



5.14.3 Footpath 196/5/10 connects Canal Way in the centre of the village to Challow Road (A417).

5.14.4 Footpath 196/11/20 connects from the A417 in the west and heads in a north eastly direction towards Denchworth. Footpath 196/2/20 connects from Woodhill Lane in the south to footpath 196/11/20. Footpath 196/10/20 connects the two footpaths named above, creating a triangular connection. Bridleway 196/1/20 connects the W and G Industrial Estate to Woodhill Farm; this bridleway then terminates. During the site visit in October 2020 footpath 196/10/20 was found to be highly overgrown with vegetation and impassable in at least two locations.

## 5.15 The Wilts and Berks Canal

5.15.1 The route of the disused Wilts and Berks Canal traverses the parish. There is a footpath along its northern bank for the section of the canal lying within the parish. This is also the route of Vale Way, a long distance walking route, connecting Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon.<sup>30</sup>.

5.15.2 Sections of the Wilts and Berks Canal are subject to programmes of restoration and there has been considerable recent works in the section of the canal within the parish. There is now standing water throughout this section, with additional works to trees and other waterside vegetation. The canal is now lined by well-maintained tree and shrub vegetation, which, combined with the standing water is likely to be considered to form an important part of the green infrastructure of the local area and provide potential ecological connectivity through the area.

## 5.16 Green infrastructure

5.16.1 Natural England defines Green Infrastructure (GI) as,

*"A strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering those ecological services and quality of life benefits required by the communities it serves and needed to underpin sustainability. Its design and management should also respect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area with regard to habitats and landscape types.*

*Green Infrastructure includes established green spaces and new sites and should thread through and surround the built environment and connect the urban area to its wider rural hinterland. Consequently, it needs to be delivered at all spatial scales from sub-regional to local neighbourhood levels, accommodating both accessible natural green spaces within local communities and often much larger sites in the urban fringe and wider countryside".*

5.16.2 As stated in the Natural England guidance, GI includes the following:

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<sup>30</sup> [https://ldwa.org.uk/ldp/members/show\\_path.php?path\\_name=Vale+Way](https://ldwa.org.uk/ldp/members/show_path.php?path_name=Vale+Way) [Accessed 09/11/20]

- Parks and gardens – urban parks, country and regional Parks and formal gardens;
- Amenity greenspace – informal recreation spaces, housing greenspace, domestic gardens, village green, urban commons and green roofs;
- Natural and semi-natural urban greenspace – woodland and scrub, grassland, heath or moor, wetlands and open and running water;
- Green corridors – rivers and canals including their banks, road and rail corridors, cycle routes and PRoWs; and
- Other assets – allotments, community gardens, city farms, cemeteries and churchyards.

5.16.3 As set out above in Local Plan Core Policy 45, Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council have commissioned a Green Infrastructure Strategy<sup>31</sup>, which forms part of the Evidence Base to the Local Plan.

5.16.4 Figure 3.3.19 of the study illustrates the green infrastructure network in and around the village of East Challow. The key green infrastructure assets identified comprise:

- Areas of priority habitats, such as woodlands;
- Amenity greenspaces such as the cricket ground, playing fields and allotments;
- The Public Rights of Way network;
- Natural watercourses and the Wilts and Berks Canal; and
- Vegetated highways.

5.16.5 A copy of Figure 3.3.19 from the study is provided Figure 5.5, below.

5.16.6 The baseline information collected at the desk top stage, summarised above, and the findings of the fieldwork have been used to define and describe the LCAs for East Challow Parish. The LCAs are described in the following chapters.

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<sup>31</sup> South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils 'South and Vale Green Infrastructure Strategy' (2017) Available at [https://data.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=FolderView&ID=1019020186&CODE=AADB659EF81E63B1128E105FAFFAF419&NAME=The%20Local%20Plan%202031%20Part%202:%20Detailed%20Policies%20and%20Additional%20Sites%20-%20Examination%20Library&REF=VALE\\_2031\\_3&REFERER\\_URL\\_IN=&SOVA\\_IN=VALE#exactline](https://data.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=FolderView&ID=1019020186&CODE=AADB659EF81E63B1128E105FAFFAF419&NAME=The%20Local%20Plan%202031%20Part%202:%20Detailed%20Policies%20and%20Additional%20Sites%20-%20Examination%20Library&REF=VALE_2031_3&REFERER_URL_IN=&SOVA_IN=VALE#exactline) [Accessed on 09/11/20]

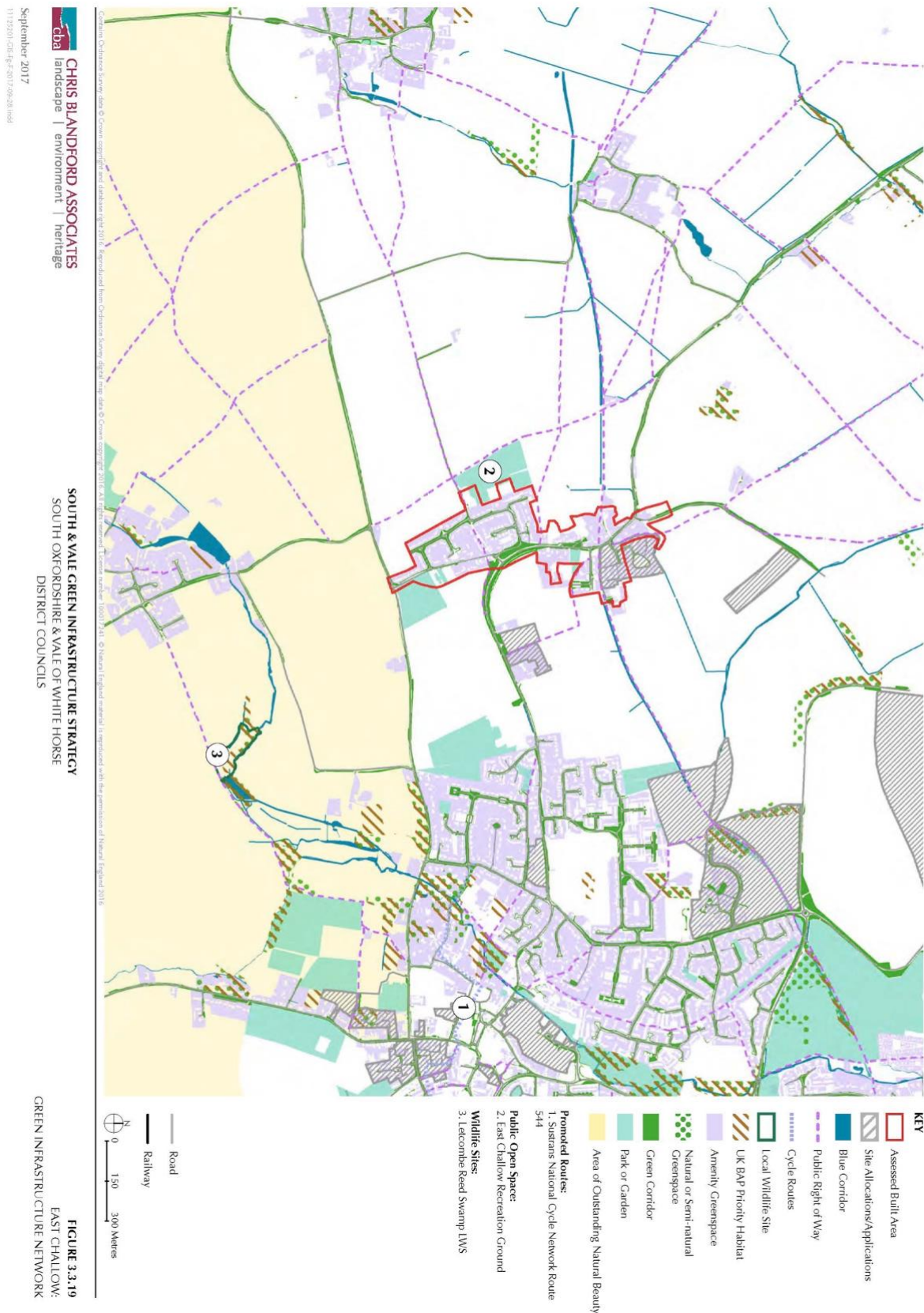


Figure 5.5: Extract from South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils 'South and Vale Green Infrastructure Strategy' (2017)

## 6 East Challow Landscape Character Areas

### 6.1 Identification of Landscape Character Areas

6.1.1 The method for identifying LCAs is presented in Chapter 4 and has been derived from aspects of:

- Guidelines for Visual and Landscape Impact Assessment 3 (2013)<sup>32</sup>;
- The Countryside Agency Topic Paper 6 (2002) Techniques and criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity<sup>33</sup>; and
- Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment<sup>34</sup>.

6.1.2 Natural England's guidance, 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'<sup>35</sup>, explains why landscape character assessment can be used to inform land use planning and specifically local plans. Figure 6.1 illustrates the various components that together make a landscape. These are under umbrella headings of (i) natural, (ii) cultural and social, and (iii) perceptual and aesthetic factors.

6.1.3 Natural England's guidance (2014) includes a definition of landscape character areas. These have been reproduced in Box 6.1.

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<sup>32</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition) Abingdon: Routledge

<sup>33</sup> The Countryside Agency (2002) Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5601625141936128> [Date Accessed: 09/11/20]

<sup>34</sup> Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Date Accessed: 09/11/20]

<sup>35</sup> ibid

### Box 6.1: Landscape types and landscape character areas

#### Landscape character areas:

- Are the unique individual geographical areas in which landscape types occur;
- Share generic characteristics with other areas of the same type, but have their own particular identity;
- Can often be more readily recognised and identified by non-specialists – sense of place is often important to local people and visitors for example;
- May often be more prevalent than landscape character types, because some types will occur in more than one area;
- Can be identified at each level in the hierarchy of assessment;
- Can provide a good spatially referenced framework from where patterns of local distinctiveness, and factors influencing sense of place, can be drawn; and
- Can be used to develop tailored policies and strategies, that reflect the characteristics that make a given landscape different or special.

6.1.4 The landscape character assessment has resulted in the development of six Landscape Character Areas in East Challow Parish:

- LCA 1: Windmill Hill
- LCA 2: Pastoral Footslopes
- LCA 3: Pastoral Footslopes with Parkland
- LCA 4: Upper Clay Vale I
- LCA 5: Lower Clay Vale
- LCA 6: Upper Clay Vale II

6.1.5 The locations of these LCAs are shown on Figure 6.1 and the following paragraphs describe the key characteristics of each of the LCAs.



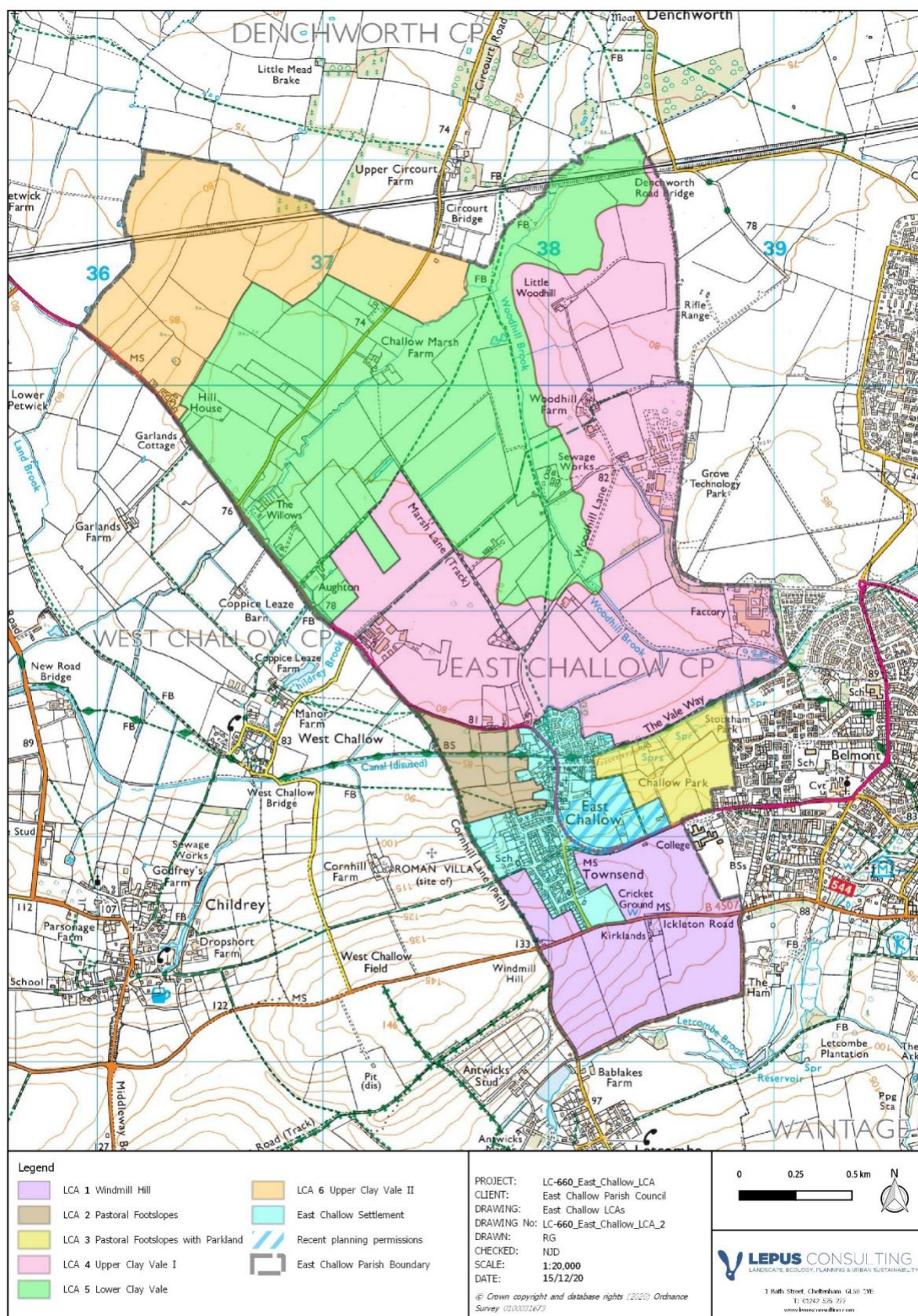


Figure 6.1: Landscape Character Areas in East Challow Parish



## 7 LCA 1: Windmill Hill

### 7.1 Location and boundaries

- 7.1.1 Located in the southern part of the parish, the extents of the LCA are defined by the southern edge of the settlement of East Challow to the north and Cornhill Lane to the west (BOAT 196/3/40), while the southern and eastern boundaries are defined by the boundary to the parish which partially follows an unnamed road in this location.

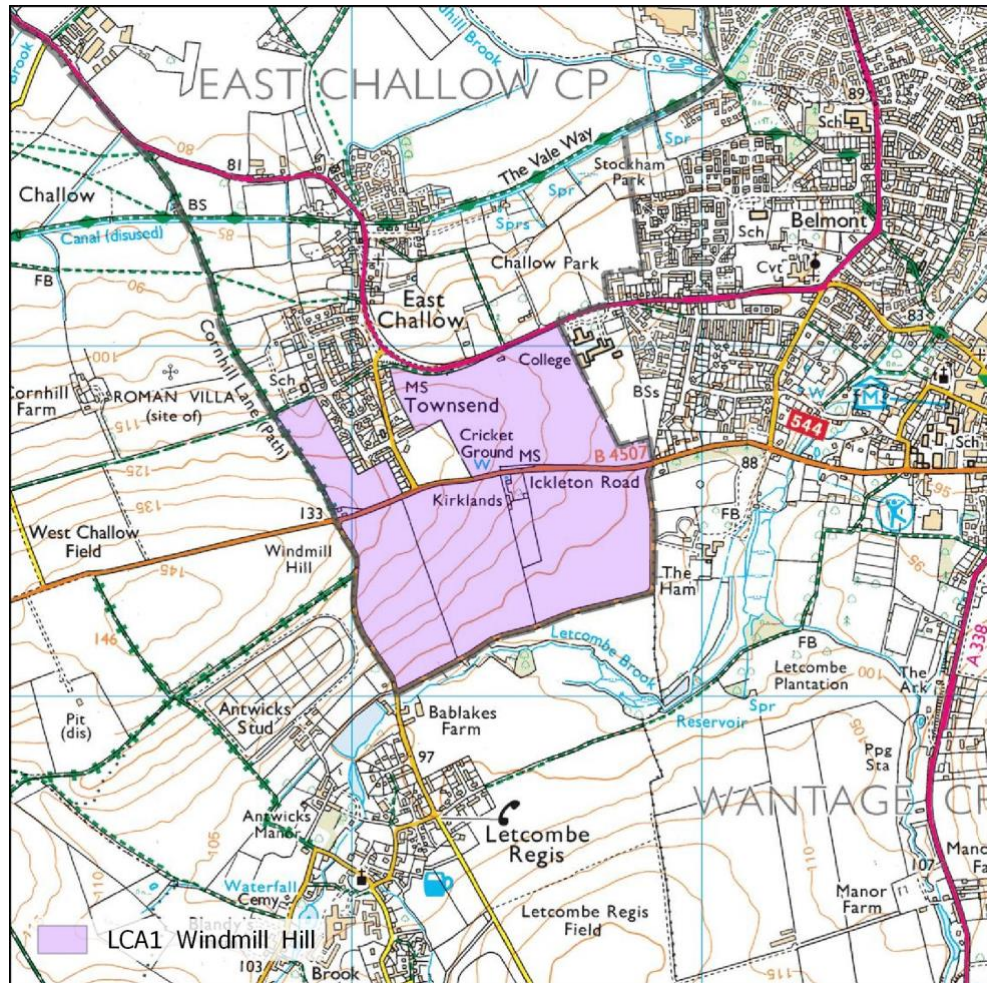


Figure 7.1: LCA 1: Windmill Hill

### 7.2 Key characteristics, distinctiveness and features

#### Natural

- Distinctive, south and east facing sloping topography forming part of Windmill Hill, which is a locally prominent topographic feature the summit of which is located outside the parish to the south west. Elevations within the LCA vary from 133mAOD to the west to approximately 95mAOD in the south eastern

corner. The land continues to rise to the west of the parish to the summit of Windmill Hill, which reaches an elevation of 146m AOD.

- The LCA is underlain by chalk geology and forms part of the wider topographic feature of the scarp slope to the North Wessex Downs to the south.
- Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) mapping illustrates the land in the LCA is likely to be Grade 2, which is classed as Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land.
- Woody vegetation is predominantly confined to boundary features. Field boundaries are often defined by trimmed hedgerows of predominantly Hawthorn, Elm and Hazel with occasional mature Ash and, less frequently, Oak. In places, trees lie offset from the field boundary or isolated within the field itself, creating a degree of 'parkland' character. Dense vegetation more frequently bounds highways (such as the B4507) and Cornhill Lane (a BOAT) and comprises tall hedgerows with some standard mature trees. Some field boundaries are defined by metal 'estate fencing', some of which is in need of repair or restoration.
- There are no watercourses within the LCA. The land broadly slopes in a south easterly direction towards the Letcombe Brook, which lies just outside the parish to the south. Despite its proximity to the parish, the floodplain to the Letcombe Brook does not extend into the parish boundary. The Letcombe Brook Project<sup>36</sup> seeks to protect and enhance the ecology of the watercourse and improve community engagement and understanding of this valuable chalk stream.
- No Priority Habitats are identified within this LCA, however, various habitats are identified outside this LCA, and outside the parish boundary, to the south and east including: Traditional Orchards, Reedbeds and Deciduous Woodland. Letcombe Reed Swamp is identified as a Local Wildlife Site. These habitats are incorporated into Natural England's National Habitat Network (NHN) mapping. The wider zone, called the Network Enhancement Zone 1 and the Network Expansion Zone, identify much of this LCA as having the potential to enhance the National Habitat Network. The National Habitat Network is described in Chapter 5 and illustrated on Figure 5.3 in that chapter.

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<sup>36</sup> Available at <http://letcombebrook.org.uk/> [Accessed on 09/11/20]

#### Cultural and social

- A predominantly farmed landscape of medium to large sized, rectilinear field parcels.
- Land use is predominantly arable with smaller areas of grassland in extensive domestic gardens.
- There are no settlements within the LCA; dwellings comprise scattered rural properties, none of which are classed as Listed Buildings. Building materials are frequently red brick with clay or slate tile roofs. Kirklands, on Ickleton Road, is a distinctive detached dwelling within this LCA, primarily red brick with detailed brickwork and decorative eaves.
- The B4507, or Ickleton Road, passes through the LCA on an east west alignment. This highway could be the route of the ancient trackway, the Icknield Way said, in numerous sources, to the oldest routeway in Britain. The highway called Windmill Hill, leading to Letcombe Regis, defines part of the western boundary to the LCA with two other rural highways defining the southern and parts of the eastern boundaries.
- There are no Public Rights of Way within this LCA, although Cornhill Lane, a BOAT, forms part of the western site boundary. There are no off-road Public Rights of Way linking the settlement of East Challow to Letcombe Regis or onwards to the North Wessex Downs.
- In relation to the historic development of the landscape, the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Classification (HLC) describes the following, "*majority of internal boundaries lost creating a large prairie type enclosure defined on all sides by roads. The roads are at least pre 18th century in date maybe older*". Some elements of the landscape pattern, therefore, have a good sense of time-depth. Some areas of the LCA to the north west of Ickleton Road are described as Unenclosed Land or Rough Land at the end of the 18th century. Windmill Hill is marked as Crane Hill on First Edition OS Mapping (published in 1830), although it is not clear why this is the case.
- In relation to designations, the land parcels to the south of the B4507 are subject to statutory protection as part of the North Wessex Downs AONB, recognising the qualities and scenic beauty of this part of the parish. Those land parcels in this LCA to the north of Ickleton Road are likely to be considered as part of the setting to the AONB, in that development proposals, or other changes, within these land parcels may be considered to affect the character and special qualities of the AONB itself.

- This LCA plays an important role in creating the setting to Letcombe Regis and Letcombe Bassett, lying in the valley of the Letcombe Brook, which have Conservation Area status, recognising the historic interest of these settlements and their settings.

#### Perceptual

- An open landscape with frequent long distance, attractive views available from vehicular highways. There are a number of locations where expansive views are available across the valley of the Letcombe Brook and towards the rising scarp slope of the North Wessex Downs AONB. There are also opportunities for views along the valley, which have a greater degree of enclosure. In other locations, public roads are bounded by vegetation creating a sense of enclosure with restricted views.
- This LCA plays an important role in creating a physical and visual gap between the settlements of Wantage, East Challow and Letcombe Regis.
- Southern land parcels in this LCA are noticeably visible in views from higher land within the North Wessex Downs AONB, including in views from the Ridgeway near Gramps Hill and from Segsbury Camp.
- Tranquillity is generally good throughout much of the LCA, with noise sources largely confined to traffic noise and occasional farm machinery. Street lighting is limited within this LCA, with lighting being focused on the settlements of East Challow and Wantage to the north. In locations in proximity to the A417, the sense of tranquillity is poorer, with greater noise from traffic using the A417, greater street lighting and more views towards built form.

## 7.3

### Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness

#### Landscape character:

- Protect the landscape character of the North Wessex Downs AONB and its setting. Resist development that would result in the removal of characteristic features or qualities of this landscape, including proposals that lead to the erosion of the visual and physical gap between settlements.
- Protect the historic landscape pattern created by the layout of public roads and rights of way, which are likely to reflect the pre 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape and have good time depth;
- Protect the rural character of highways and rights of way and resist suburbanising features, such as concrete curbstones to footways;

- Protect existing vegetated field boundaries for their contribution to landscape character, biodiversity, soils and surface water runoff management;
- Support traditional hedgerow management techniques which contribute to biodiversity and good hedgerow strength;
- Protect existing standard trees for their contribution to landscape character, biodiversity and surface water runoff management;
- Seek opportunities for biodiversity enhancement to contribute to Natural England's National Habitat Network and the Letcombe Brook Project. Engage in partnership working to agree priorities, projects and funding to realise these goals.
- Tree planting schemes: small to medium scale tree planting schemes may be appropriate in this LCA, such as linear woodlands and copses, which would also maintain the character of the landscape and opportunities to appreciate the openness of views towards the North Wessex Downs.

Views and visual amenity:

- Maintain opportunities to experience the openness of this landscape and views of the rising scarp slope of North Wessex Downs AONB from publicly accessible locations within this LCA;
- Protect views from Segsbury Camp and the Ridgway by maintaining the rural character of this LCA and resist proposals that would negatively impact on the special qualities of these views;
- Support sustainable transport routes to create improved access from East Challow through this LCA towards Letcombe Regis, such as cycling routes and improvements to pedestrian safety to promote public enjoyment of the landscape;
- Maintain the visual separation of settlements and the experience of leaving one settlement and arriving in another;
- Protect and, where possible, enhance tranquillity. For example, through carefully considered lighting schemes, while maintaining public safety, and through traffic reduction through improved sustainable transport routes.





*Photograph 1: Windmill Hill LCA at the junction of Cornhill Lane and bridleway 196/12/10*



*Photograph 2: Windmill Hill LCA view from Vicarage Hill towards the North Wessex Downs*



*Photograph 3: Windmill LCA seen from the unnamed road to the south*



*Photograph 4: Windmill Hill LCA seen from the unnamed road to the south*





*Photograph 5: View from Segsbury Camp Scheduled Monument*



*Photograph 6: View from the Ridgeway at Gramps Hill*

## 8 LCA 2: Pastoral Footslopes

### 8.1 Location and boundaries

- 8.1.1 Located on the lower lying land to the west of the settlement, the boundaries to this LCA are formed by the settlement edge of East Challow, the boundary to the parish to the west and the A417 to the north. The Wilts and Berks Canal passes through this LCA.

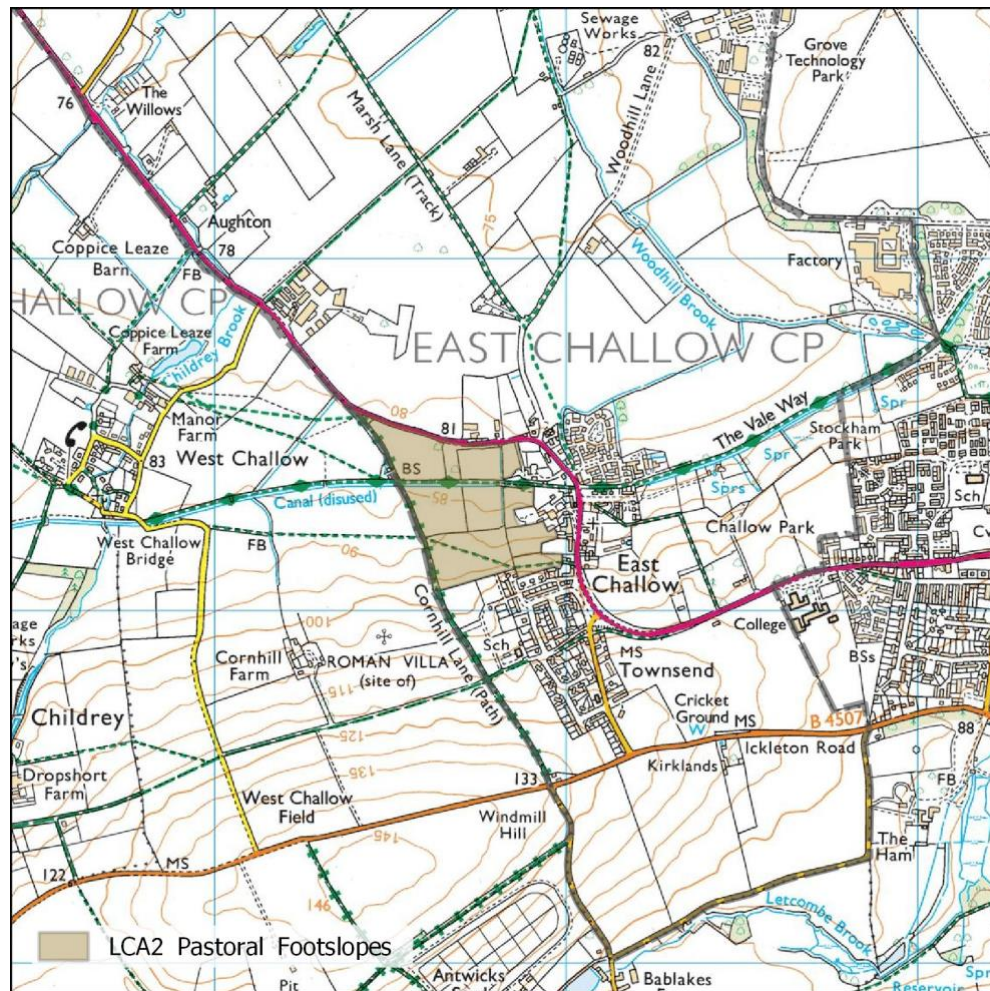


Figure 8.1: LCA 2: Pastoral Footslopes

### 8.2 Key characteristics, distinctiveness and features

#### Natural

- Gently sloping land with a predominantly north facing aspect. Land varies in height from approximately 80m AOD in the north to 95m AOD in the south.
- This LCA is underlain by Gault Clays and Upper Greensand, the latter forms a narrow band between the Gault Clay and Chalk in this area.

- Provisional mapping illustrates the land quality may be ALC Grade 4, possibly reflecting the clay soils and poor drainage. Grade 4 land would not be classed as Best and Most Versatile land.
- The field parcels are largely improved grasslands used for grazing. Some boundaries are formed by native mixed species hedgerows, often of Elm, Hazel and Hawthorn, amongst other species. Field boundaries are also marked by post and wire in some locations. Trees within the hedgerows include Field Maple, Ash and Oak. Cornhill Lane, lying to the west and the route of the Wilts and Berks canal, towards the north, are heavily vegetated on either side with mature trees and hedgerows often of mixed native species. Here, tree species include Oak, Ash and Willow along the route of the canal as well as Horse Chestnut along Cornhill Lane.
- There are no watercourses within this LCA. The land slopes downwards towards the Wilts and Berks canal which forms an attractive feature and walking route on the lower lying land to the north.
- No Priority Habitats have been identified on Natural England's mapping, however the linear routes of the Wilts and Berks Canal and Cornhill Lane are likely to be considered to form important parts of the green infrastructure of the local area and provide potential ecological connectivity. Both routes are lined with mature vegetation and the former is combined with substantial areas of standing water. These features, combined with a substantial area of grassland used to graze cattle, have the potential to provide habitats for a range of native species.

#### Cultural and social

- This is primarily a farmed landscape with the majority of land used for grazing livestock; cattle were observed grazing during the fieldwork visit. The rectilinear field parcels are small to medium in size.
- There is a small agricultural supplies business called Cannings, located to the west of the settlement. There are occasional views towards the storage areas associated with this business from the Public Rights of Way network.
- There are three Public Rights of Way within this LCA. Cornhill Lane, a BOAT, forms the western boundary and has strong vegetation on either side. The Vale Way is a Long Distance Path, a recreational walking route, which follows the Wilts and Berks Canal in this location. Footpath 196/6/10 connects Cornhill Lane to the village at Main Street/A417. There are no public roads within this LCA.



- There are no domestic dwellings within this LCA. There are views available towards dwellings at the edge of the village settlement, which lies on slightly elevated land to the south and east of the LCA. There are two dwellings located to the west of Cornhill Lane and north of the Wilts and Berks Canal. These dwellings lie just outside the parish boundary and are only occasionally visible in views from public locations.
- The Oxfordshire HLC identifies the majority of land as being unenclosed or rough land at the end of the 18th century. The descriptions for the end of the 19th century identify an area of orchards or horticulture lying immediately to the north west of the village settlement, in the area now occupied by Cannings, with the remaining areas of the LCA having undergone planned enclosure by this time.
- There are two areas of ridge and furrow visible in the landscape within this LCA. One area lies to the south of the Wilts and Berks Canal and east of Cornhill Lane and a second area to the north of the Wilts and Berks Canal and west of Wise's Farmhouse. The presence of ridge and furrow indicates these field parcels may have been in cultivation in medieval times and have since been left relatively undisturbed, leaving the distinctive visible cultivation marks.

#### Perceptual

- The character of this LCA creates a rural setting to the village settlement which appears to lie on more elevated land when viewed from the Public Rights of Way network.
- A small-scale intimate landscape with many views being contained by the mature vegetation associated with Public Rights of Way and field boundaries.
- Tranquillity is generally moderate. Noise sources include traffic from the A417 and occasional farm machinery. It is likely that street lighting associated with the settlement would be visible at night, as well as the internal lighting emitted from the dwellings themselves.

## 8.3 Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness

#### Landscape character:

- Protect the historic landscape pattern created by Public Rights of Way, the Wilts and Berks Canal and field boundaries.

- Protect, enhance and maintain the strong wooded features associated with Public Rights of Way and the Wilts and Berks Canal for their contribution to biodiversity and landscape character.
- Protect, replace and maintain vegetated field boundaries which contribute to the sense of scale and intimacy of the landscape as well as their contribution to biodiversity, soils and surface water management.
- Support traditional hedgerow management techniques which contribute to biodiversity and good hedgerow strength.
- Seek opportunities to reintroduce the planting of fruit trees, as orchards were a feature of the historic landscape of East Challow.
- Support projects which seek to enhance the public experience of the landscape, such as improvements to the Wilts and Berks Canal.
- Seek new opportunities to enhance the public to experience of the local landscape, for example, through the creation of circular walking routes or improved access along Cornhill Lane to facilitate walking and cycling opportunities.
- Tree planting schemes: Smaller scale tree planting schemes may be appropriate in this LCA, such as woodland copses, which reflect the smaller scale intimate nature of the landscape.

#### Views and visual amenity

- Protect the rural setting of the village and opportunities for people to view the settlement in its rural setting.
- Seek opportunities to lessen the effects of visual detractors, such as storage areas, for example, through appropriate planting schemes using native species.
- Protect and maintain tranquillity through carefully considered lighting schemes and resist other noise generating proposals.



*Photograph 7: Pastoral footslopes seen from Cornhill Lane*



*Photograph 8: The Wilts and Berks Canal to the north of the LCA*





*Photograph 9: The Pastoral Footslopes LCA seen from the Wilts and Berks Canal*

## 9 LCA 3: Pastoral Footslopes with Parkland

### 9.1 Location and boundaries

9.1.1 This LCA shares similar characteristics to the Pastoral Footslopes LCA, however, there are considered to be sufficient differences in the character and role of this LCA to distinguish it as a separate character area.

9.1.2 This is a modest sized LCA lying to the east of the settlement, the boundaries to this LCA are formed by the parish boundary to the east and the Wilts and Berks Canal to the north. To the west the boundary is formed by the edge of the settlement, taking into account the more recent planning permissions which are in various stages of construction at this time. The short southern boundary is formed by the A417.

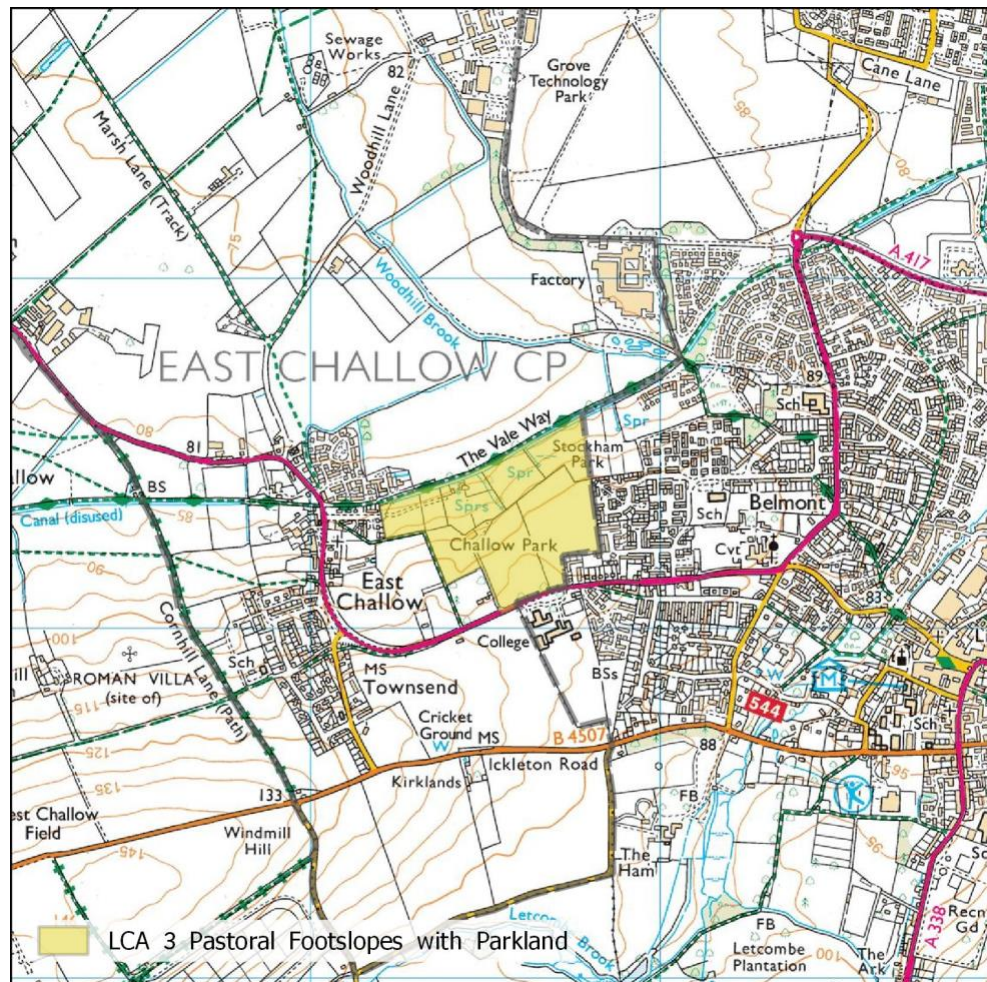


Figure 9.1: LCA 3: Pastoral Footslopes with Parkland



## 9.2 Key characteristics, distinctiveness and features

### Natural

- Southern land parcels, adjacent to the A417, form a noticeable elevated plateau at approximately 110m AOD. The land then slopes gently downwards in a northerly direction to approximately 85mAOD in proximity to the Wilts and Berks canal.
- This LCA is underlain by Upper Greensand, with the more poorly draining Gault Clays lying to the north of the canal.
- Provisional mapping illustrates the land quality may be ALC Grade 3, which is potentially considered to be Best and Most Versatile agricultural land.
- There are three groups, or clumps, of trees within the large southern field parcel, which are predominantly mature Pines. These tree clumps, combined with the open and extensive grassland areas, create 'estate parkland' influences to the character of the LCA, see Photograph 10. Historic mapping from 1899 indicates tree clumps in these locations.
- Field parcels on lower lying levels are small to medium in size and appear to be largely used as for grazing horses. Some field boundaries to the east of the LCA, are defined by native mixed species hedgerows, often of Elm, Hazel and Hawthorn, amongst other species. In locations in proximity to the settlement of East Challow, there is greater use of post and wire fencing to define field parcels. Trees within the hedgerows include Field Maple, Ash and Oak. The route of the Wilts and Berks canal, defining the northern boundary, is heavily vegetated on either side with mature trees and hedgerows often of mixed native species. Here, tree species include Oak, Ash and Willow.
- Some of the mature trees appear to be very old and have the potential to be considered as 'ancient trees'.
- There are no watercourses within this LCA. A series of three springs is shown emerging on the lower lying land to the north of the LCA. The land slopes downwards in a northerly direction towards the canal.
- No Priority Habitats have been identified on Natural England's National Habitat Network mapping, however, as in the Pastoral Farmlands LCA, the linear route of the Wilts and Berks Canal, lined with mature vegetation and surrounding standing water, is likely to be considered to form an important part of the green infrastructure of the local area and provide potential ecological connectivity through the area.

#### Cultural and social

- The widely spaced groups of mature pines, set in open grassland, create the distinctive parkland character. Historic mapping from 1899 illustrates tree clumps in these locations, and it is likely that these features are contemporary with the adjacent, large, detached dwelling, which was the site of Challow Studios. These elements combine to form a coherent sub-unit within the Pastoral Footslopes with Parkland LCA.
- The pastoral landscape lying to the north and east of the parkland comprises small to medium sized field parcels with hedged boundaries, with mature trees within field parcels and within hedgerows. This pastoral landscape contributes to, and enhances, the character of the parkland and together they create a cohesive landscape unit with a strong sense of distinctiveness.
- The majority of fields comprise improved or semi-improved grasslands. It was not clear from the fieldwork visit, whether the management of these grasslands is through grazing or mowing. Horse grazing was observed in some field parcels. The field parcels are small to medium in size and are both rectilinear and irregular in shape and pattern.
- There are no dwellings within this LCA. Two recent planning permissions for the development of residential dwellings have been granted to land to the west of the LCA and are currently under construction. These land parcels have been excluded from this assessment.
- There are views of the new dwellings at the edge of the village settlement as well as views of development in Wantage, to the east of the parish, including both residential and commercial development. This adjacent residential development creates some urbanising influences to the character of this LCA. The distinctive, large, detached red brick property, which used to accommodate Challow Park Studios, lies to the west of the Parkland landscape.
- There are no public roads within the LCA. A short section of the southern site boundary is defined by the A417, which is a well-used vehicular highway. The Vale Way is recreational walking route, following the Wilts and Berks canal to the north of the LCA. A public footpath passes along the western boundary of the LCA.
- The Oxfordshire HLC for the late 18<sup>th</sup> century identifies the area currently under construction for residential dwellings at Fullers Grove as 'Recreation-Country Park'. Land to the east of this is described as having 'piecemeal

enclosure' with 'open field systems' lying to east of the enclosed land. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the country park is still identified, while to the east the land is now classified as 'reorganised enclosures' with 'piecemeal enclosure' further east.

- The 'country park' or estate at Challow Park appears to be relatively poorly documented. East Challow Parish Council has undertaken their own assessment of heritage assets in the Parish, based on the Historic Environment Records (HER), supplemented with other documents and records.
- East Challow Parish Council's document 'Heritage Assets in the Parish of East Challow' states,

*"The House of John Bance East Challow Manor was built by John Bance (died 1755). It was located near a chapel of ease which is now the site of St Nicolas Church, East Challow. The manor was sold to Bartholomew Price after Bance's death. Price in turn sold the house to Exuperius Turner probably in September 1786 when he sold the contents and livestock at auction. In a small letter in 'Notes and Queries', no 77, Feb 1918, an enquirer suggested that a good oil painting remained of the manor although the building itself had been demolished. The house was in existence until at least 1801 when an enclosure map was drawn by W Church...It is surprising that a house of this size, which existed into the nineteenth century, is not recorded in any detail in any sources".*

- On the map of 1761, illustrated in the Parish Council's report, several large buildings are shown, which may be the location of the manor house and associated buildings. The map illustrates a number of strong avenues across this LCA as well as an obelisk in the field parcel to the south of the A417 with a long avenue stretching through the landscape towards Circourt Road. The words 'Long Vistow' are possibly written along this feature. It is unclear if these features were identified views or if they represented features such as avenues of trees. These features are not readily identifiable on the ground today.

#### Perceptual

- This LCA plays a crucial role in providing separation between the settlements of East Challow and Wantage. Historically, spring line settlements had a strong nucleated form, with discernible separation between the settlements. There are areas where the visual and physical separation of the settlements is greater, as experienced, for example, from the Vale Way walking route along the Wilts and Berks Canal. Recent planning permissions have substantially eroded the experience of separation for users of the A417 particularly, due to the scattered existing development along this route.

- There are opportunities for open views from the elevated parkland plateau, to the south of the LCA. Here, there is good intervisibility with the scarp slope of the North Wessex Downs AONB, including features on the crest of the slope, such as Segsbury Camp. The elevated parkland plateau, and particularly the groups of mature pines, are also a feature of views from the lower lying vale to the north, for example, from Woodhill Lane.
- Tranquillity varies across the LCA. Traffic noise associated with the A417 diminishes tranquillity in locations in proximity to this route. The Vale Way has a stronger sense of tranquillity with little noise or street lighting and fewer views of built form.

### 9.3

#### Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness

##### Landscape character

- This LCA plays a crucial role in providing separation between the settlements of East Challow and Wantage. Resist proposals which would result in the further erosion of the visual, physical and experiential separation of East Challow and Wantage.
- Protect and maintain the Parkland sub-unit of this LCA, including the groups of mature Pine trees in an open grassland setting, and consider their potential relationship to the distinctive building, formerly the site of Challow Park Studios.
- Protect the historic landscape pattern created by Public Rights of Way, the Wilts and Berks Canal and field boundaries;
- Protect, maintain and enhance the strong wooded features associated with the Wilts and Berks Canal for their contribution to biodiversity and landscape character;
- Protect, replace and maintain vegetated field boundaries which contribute to the sense of scale and intimacy of the landscape as well as their contribution to biodiversity, soils and surface water management;
- Protect and enhance individual free-standing trees and trees within hedgerows. Some of the mature Oak and Pine trees have the potential to be considered as 'ancient'<sup>37</sup>. Consider commissioning an assessment to clarify the value of these trees and protect accordingly.

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<sup>37</sup> 'Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: protecting them from development' (November 2018) Available at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) [Accessed on 16/12/20]

- Support traditional hedgerow management techniques which contribute to biodiversity and good hedgerow strength;
- Seek opportunities to reintroduce traditional orchards, a feature of the historic landscape of East Challow, for example, through community orchards;
- Support projects which seek to enhance the public experience of the landscape, such as improvements to the Wilts and Berks Canal;
- Seek new opportunities to enhance the public experience of the local landscape, for example, through the creation of circular walking routes or improved pedestrian routes along, or as an alternative to, the A417;
- Tree planting schemes: Smaller to medium scale tree planting schemes may be appropriate in this LCA.

#### Views and visual amenity

- Protect the visual separation of the settlements of East Challow and Wantage and resist proposals that would further erode this gap.
- From this LCA, there are opportunities for open views towards the scarp slope of the North Wessex Downs and there are also return views from the Downs towards this location. Changes within this LCA may be considered to affect the setting of the AONB and should be subject to an appropriate assessment, such as LVIA.
- Support projects that re-establish the separate identity of the settlements for example, through landscape planting and signage.
- Protect and maintain the tranquillity of the Wilts and Berks Canal by resisting proposals that would diminish the character of this route.





*Photograph 10: View of the Pastoral Footslopes with Parkland as seen from the A417*



*Photograph 11: View towards the scarp slope of the North Wessex Downs, with Segsbury Camp on the ridgeline*



*Photograph 12: Pastoral Footslopes with Parkland LCA seen from the Wilts and Berks Canal*



*Photograph 13: The Wilts and Berks Canal*



# 10 LCA 4: Upper Clay Vale I

## 10.1 Location and boundaries

- 10.1.1 A larger, more extensive LCA lying to the north of the village settlement. The southern boundary to the LCA is defined by the A417, the northern extents of the settlement edge and the Wilts and Berks Canal. To the east and west the boundary is largely defined by the parish boundary, while to the north the boundary is defined by the 75m AOD contour, which appears to largely separate this landscape character area from the Lower Clay Vale, which has a noticeably different character, particularly in relation to field pattern, vegetation and consistency of land use.

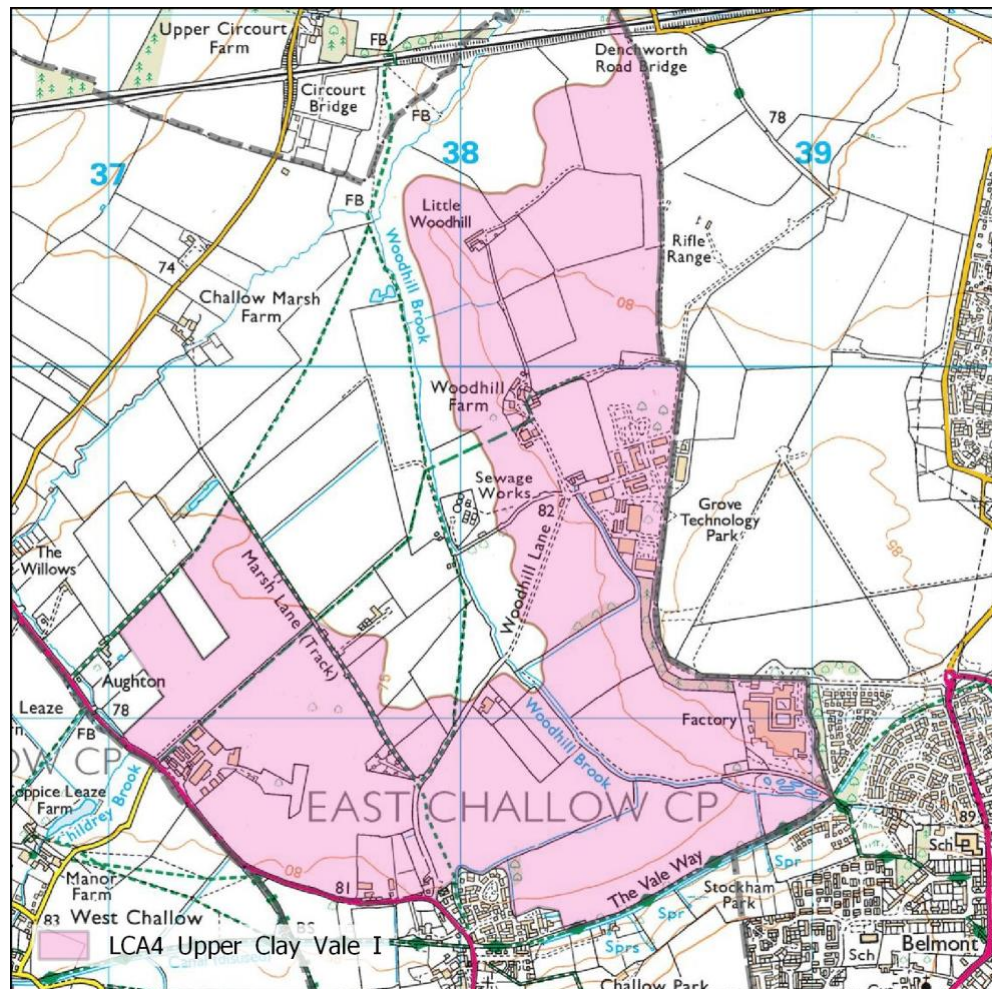


Figure 10.1: LCA 4: Upper Clay Vale I

## 10.2 Key characteristics, distinctiveness and features

### Natural

- The topography of the Upper Clay Vale is notably flatter and less varied than that of the Pastoral Footslopes. The land ranges modestly in height from approximately 75mAOD in the north to 80mAOD in the south. Further north, within the parish, land levels continue to fall gently.
- The underlying geology is Gault Clay, leading to some poorly drained soils in places. There are superficial deposits of sand and gravel to the east of this LCA.
- Provisional mapping illustrates, the land within this LCA may be of agricultural Grade 3, potentially classed as Best and Most Versatile land.
- The majority of the LCA is used for arable crop production, with occasional isolated fields used for grazing. Field parcels are often large and woody vegetation most frequently found defining boundary features, such as public roads and Public Rights of Way, as well as occasional field boundaries.
- The landscape character of this LCA has become degraded in some areas, with a loss of hedgerow boundary features and some areas of poor landscape management.
- Tree species include Oak, Ash and Field Maple with native mixed species hedgerows including Hawthorn, Elm, Hazel and Blackthorn. Many hedgerows are closely trimmed; some have been left unmanaged for some time and are becoming overgrown.
- Mature woody riparian vegetation is also associated with watercourses, such as the Woodhill Brook, where Willow becomes a more prominent tree species, although this type of vegetation is generally confined to a modest width band adjacent to the watercourse itself.
- There are small areas of commercial and industrial development in peripheral areas of this LCA. In these locations, the range of tree species may be less diverse and include species such as Poplar. Mature trees play a crucial role in helping to integrate built form into the landscape that may otherwise have a greater level of visual intrusion.
- The Woodhill Brook appears to emerge in the south eastern corner of the LCA. This may be the origin of this watercourse, however, this assessment has not been able to confirm if this is the case. The Childrey Brook flows

northwards along the A417 for a short section within the LCA. Both watercourses have a greater presence in the Lower Clay Vales LCA.

- To the south of the Crown Packaging site a number of large ponds have been created as part of a Great Crested Newt habitat compensation scheme. This scheme is associated with planning application P13/V1826/FUL for the development of 90 homes and the site mitigates for the loss of habitat associated with that application. There is a total of 6 ponds and associated terrestrial habitats. There is no public access to the area, to prevent disturbance to this protected species.
- Natural England's Priority Habitats mapping shows three small areas marked as Deciduous Woodland, one of which is also classed as Ancient Woodland, known as Woodhill Copse. None of these woodland areas are accessible to the public.

#### Cultural and social

- In terms of land use, this is predominantly a farmed landscape where arable crop production is common, with scattered field parcels used for grazing horses.
- Field parcels are often medium to large scale with some loss of boundary features, probably to facilitate arable crop production. The field pattern is often rectilinear, although there are occasional irregular shaped field parcels.
- The Oxfordshire HLC describes the area in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century as planned enclosure to the west of Woodhill Lane, with piecemeal enclosure to the east. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century much of this LCA is classified as reorganised enclosures and by the 21<sup>st</sup> century the enclosure pattern is described as amalgamated. First Edition OS Mapping (published in 1830) shows a pattern of routes which reflects the public roads and rights of way present today, indicating a good level of time-depth to these features. The small area of woodland, now classified as Ancient Woodland, is also shown.
- East Challow Parish Council's review of heritage assets<sup>38</sup> outlines the more recent history of land use in the Upper Clay Vales and Lower Clay Vales LCAs as part of Grove Airfield in the Second World War. The following is a summarised extract from this document.

*"The southern part of Grove airfield was located within the parish, with the majority of structures located around Woodhill Lane. This also included*

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<sup>38</sup> Heritage Assets in the Parish of East Challow (undated) Available at <http://www.eastchallowpc.co.uk/neighbourhood-plan/news/> [Accessed on 05/11/20]



*temporary accommodation (tent city) for American troops...The bomb storage area at Grove airfield was installed for the RAF, but was never used as access was difficult and it was not required as the airfield never launched bombing raids. Until recently, the three fuse stores... were still present, but all three have now been demolished. Close to them was the wastewater treatment plant...Between there and the west gate of the airfield there were three 'fusing sheds' one of which remains... However, these also were never used. Centre of the photo was a hutted area, and at the end closest to the bomb store was a small hut containing a huge electricity meter. Alongside the track running N-E from the junction bottom left of centre was a row of concrete air raid shelters and the building further along that track on the right was the sergeants mess (the Country Club). This building burned down and was rebuilt after 1945".*

- Grove Technology Park and the Crown Packaging Factory are medium scale industrial and commercial areas towards the eastern boundary of the parish, which visually and physically have greater connectivity to Wantage than the wider landscape of the Parish. The latter is often seen set within a more wooded vegetation and this limits the visual intrusion of this development into views to some extent, although there are a number of locations where the factory buildings are more visually prominent, particularly from close proximity locations in the Pastoral Footslopes with Parkland LCA. Grove Technology Park, however, has little mature vegetation within or surrounding the development and there is a harsh transition from built form to rural landscape as a result.
- There is a small industrial complex, the W and G Industrial Estate, to the west of this LCA, with access from the A417. These buildings are of medium scale and are a noticeable element of views from close proximity locations within the Upper Clay Vale I and are noticeable in views from the elevated land at Windmill Hill, outside the Parish boundary. Haynes of Hallow, a family run business, is also located within this LCA, with access from the A417. The latter appears to be a varied business and includes a vehicle reclamation yard. Views towards this site and the yard are generally contained and there is limited visual intrusion into the wider landscape.
- The Woodhill Lane Caravan Park is a Gypsy and Travellers site managed by Oxfordshire County Council. The site accommodates twelve plots and is accessed from Woodhill Lane. The site lies in an isolated location within the wider landscape. There are views towards the caravans and other permanent buildings at the site from adjacent field parcels. When viewed from the north, views of the site are often seen against a wooded backdrop and this helps to integrate the site into the landscape.

- Rural dwellings and barns are located at Woodhill Farm and Little Woodhill to the eastern side of the LCA. There is another building in this location, which appears to be the fusing sheds, erected when the area was part of Grove Airfield in the Second World War.
- The former Challow Country Club site, which lies in the centre of this LCA, was granted planning permission in 2009 for 14 homes (P08/V1169/FUL) and is currently under construction. This development is entirely separate from the main settlement at East Challow and appears as an incongruous, isolated development which does not integrate into the wider character of this landscape.
- There are few public roads within this LCA. The A417 forms a short section of the western boundary of the LCA. Woodhill Lane appears to form part of the highways network and is publicly accessible for part of its length before becoming a private road providing access to Woodhill Farm.
- There are a number of Public Rights of Way crossing the LCA. Footpath 196/11/20 connects from the A417 in the west and heads in a north eastly direction towards Denchworth. Footpath 196/2/20 connects from Woodhill Lane in the south to footpath 196/11/20. Footpath 196/10/20 connects the two footpaths named above, creating a triangular connection. Bridleway 196/1/20 connects the W and G Industrial Estate to Woodhill Farm; this bridleway then terminates. During the site visit in October 2020 footpath 196/10/20 was found to be highly overgrown with vegetation and impassable in at least two locations.
- The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 currently shows an area of safeguarded land within this LCA. This land is safeguarded for a potential western relief road for the A417, which currently passes through the centre of the village settlement. The location of this safeguarded land is shown on Figure 3.1. This highways scheme has the potential to substantially influence the character of this LCA and special care should be taken to ensure any future proposals respect the key landscape and visual characteristics of this area.

#### Perceptual

- This LCA plays an important role in providing a sense of separation between settlements. There remains a modest physical and visual gap between the settlement of East Challow and development which forms parts of Wantage. This is particularly the case given that the former Grove Airfield, lying outside

the parish, is an allocated site for future development in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031.

- In views from this LCA towards the elevated scarp slope of the North Wessex Downs AONB, the settlement of East Challow is seen on the lower land of the footslopes set amongst mature trees which soften and integrate built form into the landscape. From many locations there are opportunities to experience the unbroken skyline formed by the elevated, more open, landscape of the Downs.
- Tranquillity varies across the LCA from moderate to good. In some locations, there is a good sense of calm and remoteness, and natural elements are the most notable features of views. In other locations, the visual presence of built form associated with commercial or industrial development or road noise from the A417 reduces the sense of tranquillity. Parts of this landscape have a notable level of disturbance and in a few locations there is a noticeable loss of landscape features, such as hedgerows, and poor landscape management.

## 10.3

### Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness

#### Landscape character

- This LCA plays a role in providing separation between the settlements of East Challow and Wantage. Resist proposals which would result in the erosion of the visual, physical and experiential separation of East Challow and Wantage.
- Protect the historic landscape pattern created by Public Rights of Way which appear to reflect the alignment of routes shown on the 1801 Enclosure Map.
- Protect and enhance watercourses and ponds and support schemes which enhance biodiversity through increased habitat creation and management, particularly in relation to Great Crested Newts which have been shown to be present in this area.
- Protect, replace and maintain vegetated field boundaries which contribute to the sense of place well as for their contribution to biodiversity, soils and surface water management.
- Support traditional hedgerow management techniques which contribute to biodiversity and good hedgerow strength.
- Seek opportunities to reintroduce traditional orchards, a feature of the historic landscape of East Challow, for example, through community orchards.

- Restore access along existing Rights of Way where vegetation currently restricts access.
- Seek to create new links to rights of way which currently terminate without an onward route, such as bridleway 196/1/20 which terminates at Woodhill Farm.
- Seek new opportunities to enhance the public to experience of the local landscape, for example, through the creation of circular walking routes and improved cycling access.
- Tree planting schemes: Medium to large scale tree planting schemes could be accommodated here, provided any such scheme also maintain visual amenity as described below and does not result in the loss of habitats required to support protected species, such as Great Crested Newts.
- In consultation with the local community, seek solutions to visual detractors, such as the bonfire sites in proximity to the junction of Woodhill Lane and footpath 196/10.

#### Views and visual amenity

- Protect the visual separation of the settlements of East Challow and Wantage and resist proposals that would erode this gap.
- Maintain opportunities for views from publicly accessible locations towards East Challow and the skyline created by the scarp slope of the North Wessex Downs.
- Support or seek schemes which would soften the transition between commercial and industrial development and the rural landscape, such as woodland planting schemes using appropriate native species, particularly in relation to Grove Technology Park and the Crown Packaging Plant.
- Protect medium and long distance views from the North Wessex Downs AONB by resisting proposals that would introduce eye-catching urbanising development, such as large scale built form.
- Protect and maintain the tranquillity of the Wilts and Berks Canal by resisting proposals that would diminish the character of this route.



*Photograph 14: Upper Clay Vale I LCA seen from Woodhill Lane*



*Photograph 15: The former Country Club site now being redeveloped for housing*





*Photograph 16: Upper Clay Vale, seen from Woodhill Lane*



*Photograph 17: Grove Technology Park*

# 11 LCA 5: Lower Clay Vale

## 11.1 Location and boundaries

- 11.1.1 A large LCA occupying lower lying land, largely below the 75mAOD contour. The Childrey Brook and the Woodhill Brook flow in a northerly direction and form a confluence at the northern end of this LCA. The boundary to this LCA is largely formed by the 75mAOD contour in the south, the parish boundary and A417 to the west and to the north the boundary follows field boundaries which reflect the differences in landscape character between this LCA and the Upper Clay Vale II.

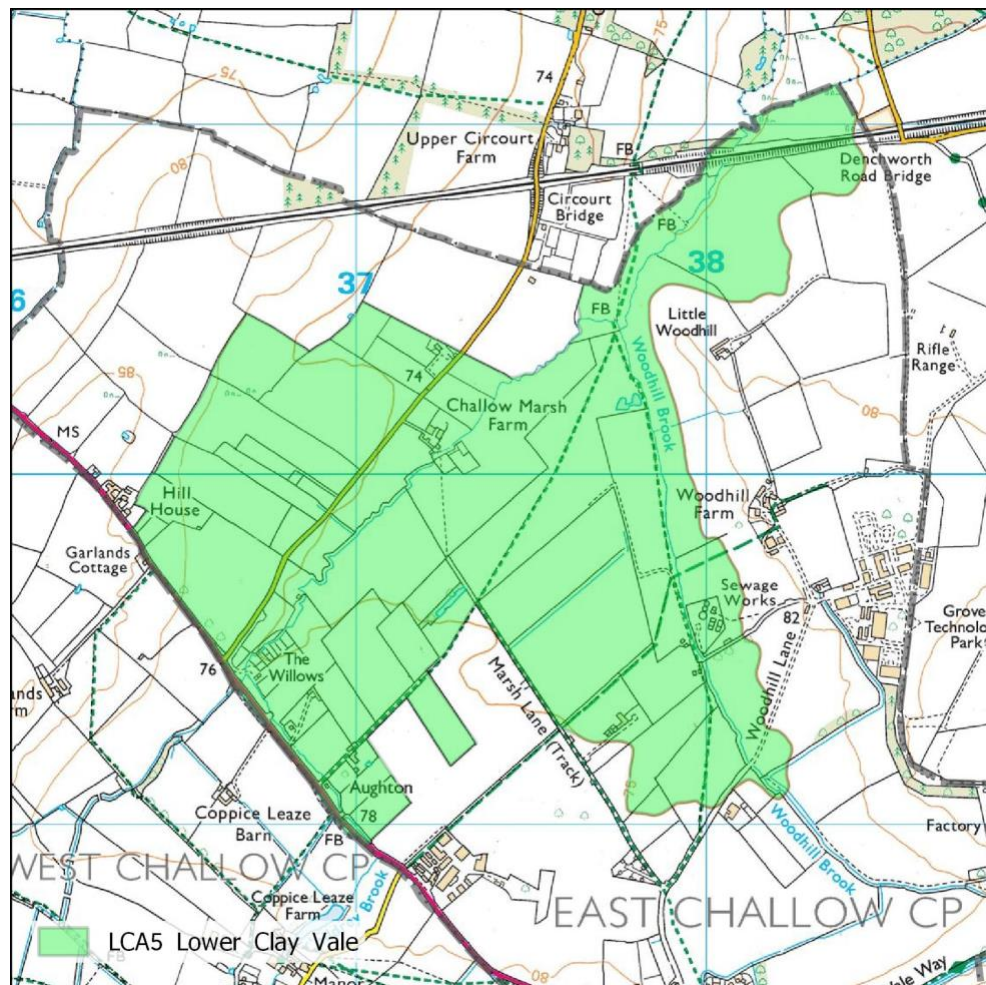


Figure 11.1: LCA 5: Lower Clay Vale

## 11.2 Key characteristics, distinctiveness and features

### Natural

- This LCA is partially defined by the 75mAOD contour and characterised by the unvarying and flat nature of the land, with levels varying from approximately 74mAOD to 80mAOD towards the west of the LCA.

- The LCA is underlain by the Ampthill Clay Formation and Kimmeridge Clay Formation, principally following the Circourt Road and Childrey Brook, with areas of Gault Clays to the south of this LCA. There are superficial deposits of alluvium following watercourses.
- Provisional ALC mapping illustrates the land may be classified as Grade 4 and, as such, would not be considered Best and Most Versatile agricultural land. This is possibly a consequence of the poorly draining soils in this LCA.
- Small to medium sized field parcels characterise this LCA, often used for grazing livestock or horses. Occasionally arable crop production is found in more southerly and easterly areas of the LCA.
- Field boundaries are often defined by hedgerows which form stronger features in this landscape compared to the Upper Clay Vales I or II LCAs. There are scattered mature trees within field boundaries and these are also a notable characteristic of the landscape. Field boundaries are also defined by post and wire or post and rail fencing in some areas. Tree species include, Oak, Ash and Willow. Hedgerows are generally mixed native species including Hazel, Elm, Hawthorn and Blackthorn, with a more limited range of species in some hedgerows. Rural dwellings and farmsteads are sometimes associated with evergreen tree species, such as conifers, which do not reflect the traditional characteristics of this landscape. There are a few scattered small woodland areas comprising native deciduous tree species.
- The Childrey Brook and Woodhill Brook are watercourses flowing through the LCA in a northerly direction. These watercourses are associated with a band of riparian vegetation, frequently of woody species, including Oak, Ash and Willow. The floodplain associated with these watercourses varies in width across the LCA from approximately 50m to 200m wide in some locations (see Figure 5.2)
- An elongated pond is shown on OS mapping to the north and east of The Willows, while two additional ponds are shown close to the confluence of the Childrey Brook and Woodhill Brook. OS mapping also illustrates a pond to the north of Hill Farmhouse, surrounded by a small area of woody vegetation.
- Two areas of Priority Habitats have been identified on Natural England's National Habitat Network mapping, including a small area of deciduous woodland, associated with the property called The Willows and a Traditional Orchard identified at the property called Aughton, both of these properties are located on Faringdon Road (A417).



- The two watercourses are lined with woody riparian vegetation and associated with areas of pasture. These features have the potential to support a range of ecological species and provide ecological connectivity and therefore could be considered to form part of the green infrastructure of the local area.

#### Cultural and social

- In terms of land use, this is predominantly a farmed landscape where grazing livestock is common; some field parcels are used to graze horses. There are occasional fields used for crop production.
- Field parcels are often small to medium scale and rectilinear to elongated with generally good boundary features formed by hedgerows in many locations. Some field boundaries are formed by post and wire or post and rail fencing.
- There is no settlement within this LCA and views towards built form and settlement are limited. There are scattered rural dwellings and farmsteads associated with Faringdon Road (A417) and the more rural highway, Circourt Road.
- There is a small group of properties to the west of the LCA located on the A417, including Hill House which is also called Hill Farmhouse. Hill Farmhouse and the Stable and Coach House to the north are Grade II listed buildings. The listing describes the house as being built in c.1820. It is a Regency style red brick building using Flemish bond with flared headers and a slate roof. The Stable and Coach House were built at approximately the same time as Hill Farmhouse. These are built from coursed limestone rubble with red brick quoins and dressings and a slate roof.
- The A417, Faringdon Road, forms the boundary to the LCA to the west and is a well-used highway with frequent traffic. Circourt Road is a rural highway leading from the A417 to Denchworth; with grassed edges and no footways or curb stones it has an attractive rural character.
- Several Public Rights of Way cross the LCA, as described for the Upper Clay Vale I. Footpath 196/11/20 connects from the A417 in the west and heads in a north easterly direction towards Denchworth. Footpath 196/2/20 connects from Woodhill Lane in the south to footpath 196/11/20. Footpath 196/10/20 (Marsh Lane) connects the two footpaths named above, creating a triangular connection. Bridleway 196/1/20 connects the W and G Industrial Estate to Woodhill Farm; this bridleway then terminates. During the site visit in October 2020 footpath 196/10/20 (Marsh Lane) was found to be highly overgrown with vegetation and impassable in at least two locations.



- The names of some farmsteads and footpaths, such as Challow Marsh Farm and Marsh Lane, reflect the poor drainage and clayey soils in this LCA. No marshes were observed during the site visits and it is likely modern land drainage has improved the character of the soils. However, a review of aerial photography indicates possible marshy areas to the south of Challow Marsh Farm.
- The Great Western Mainline crosses in an east-west direction through the northern part of this character area. The overhead electrification infrastructure spaced at regular intervals along the railway, is occasionally a noticeable feature, although is frequently seen against a wooded backdrop when viewed from within this LCA, which softens its visual impact.
- The Oxfordshire HLC shows planned enclosure surrounding much of the land around Challow Marsh Farm in the late 18th century, with a small area of piecemeal enclosure to the north of this LCA. This remains the same into the 21st century, with a small area of reorganised enclosures marked in proximity to the dwellings on the A417. Much of the field pattern seen today may therefore have a good time-depth.

#### Perceptual

- This is a largely flat landscape, with strong vegetated features such as field boundaries and watercourses, as well as occasional woodland features. These characteristics generally serve to create a sense of enclosure and visual containment. This LCA forms part of the more extensive open clay vale landscape when viewed from more elevated areas, including from East Challow recreation ground, Public Rights of Way on Windmill Hill and in long distance views from the North Wessex Downs AONB.
- Tranquillity is generally moderate to good. There are few busy public roads within the LCA. Circourt Road is a rural highway with no street lighting. Noise sources, such as the A417 and the Great Western Mainline, serve to reduce the sense of tranquillity in some locations and at certain times of day.

## 11.3

### Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness

#### Landscape character:

- Protect the landscape character this attractive rural LCA and resist development that would result in the removal of characteristic features of this landscape, such as woodland copses and orchards;
- Protect the historic landscape pattern created by public roads, rights of way and field boundaries which are likely to have good time depth;

- Protect the rural character of highways and rights of way and resist suburbanising features such as concrete curb stones;
- Protect and enhance watercourses and support schemes which enhance biodiversity through increased habitat creation and management;
- Protect existing vegetated field boundaries for their contribution to landscape character, biodiversity, soils and surface water runoff management;
- Support traditional hedgerow management techniques which contribute to biodiversity and good hedgerow strength;
- Protect existing standard trees for their contribution to landscape character, biodiversity and surface water runoff management;
- Tree planting schemes: smaller scale tree planting schemes may be appropriate in this LCA, such as smaller linear woodlands and copses, which would also maintain the character of the landscape.
- Seek opportunities to enhance the public experience of the local landscape, for example, through the creation of circular walking routes and removing blockages to routes.

Views and visual amenity:

- Protect the rural character of views from publicly accessible locations such as Circourt Road and footpath 196/20;
- Protect opportunities for long distance views towards the rising scarp slope of the North Wessex Downs AONB;
- Protect and mitigate effect on views from the North Wessex Downs AONB towards the vale, which may arise as a result of the introduction of any future additional development, and associated lighting, in this LCA;
- Protect and, where possible, enhance tranquillity. For example, through carefully considered lighting schemes, while maintaining public safety, and through traffic reduction through improved sustainable transport routes.



*Photographs 18 and 19: Lower Clay Vale LCA seen from Circourt Road; Plate 15 illustrates long distance views to the North Wessex Downs AONB*



## 12 LCA 6: Upper Clay Vale II

### 12.1 Location and boundaries

- 12.1.1 This is a modest-sized LCA lying to the north of the parish and shares many of the characteristics and features of the Upper Clay Vale I. The southern LCA boundary broadly marks the transition between the small scale and more intimate landscape of the Lower Clay Vale and the more open landscape of the Upper Clay Vale. The northern, western and eastern LCA boundaries are defined by the parish boundary although this landscape type appears to extend beyond the parish boundary towards the north and west.

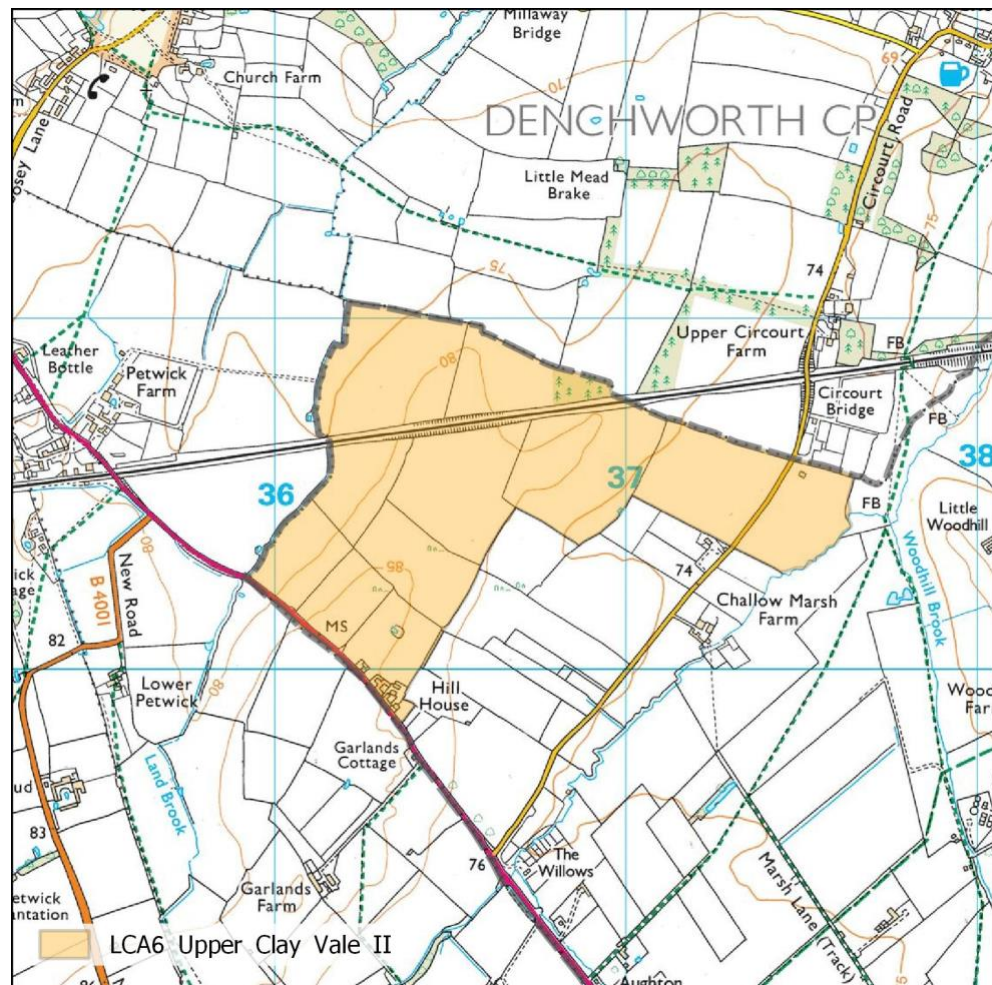


Figure 12.1: LCA 6: Upper Clay Vale II



## 12.2 Key characteristics, distinctiveness and features

### Natural

- This a gently undulating landscape with levels varying from approximately 85mAOD at Hill House/Hill Farmhouse to the west of the LCA to 75mAOD towards the north and east.
- This LCA is largely underlain by Gault Clays with a narrow band of superficial alluvium following Land Brook at the northern boundary to the LCA.
- Provisional ALC mapping illustrates that the land may be classified as Grade 4 and, as such, would not be considered Best and Most Versatile agricultural land. This is possibly a consequence of the poorly draining soils in this LCA.
- Land Brook is a smaller watercourse and there is no area of floodplain associated with it. It appears to flow in a northerly direction towards the River Ock and forms part of the parish boundary.
- Field parcels are often large; woody vegetation is most frequently found defining boundary features, such as field boundaries, as well as the A417 to the west. Hedgerows are generally more closely trimmed than in the Lower Clay Vale with fewer mature trees within hedgerows. There is a band of vegetation associated with Land Brook to the north of the LCA, although this is generally narrower and less diverse than that associated with Childrey Brook or Woodhill Brook. Tree species include Oak, Ash and Field Maple with native mixed species hedgerows including Hawthorn, Elm, Hazel and Blackthorn.
- There is a triangular wooded copse lying to the north of the Great Western Mainline which appears to be part of a wider planting scheme comprising linear features and blocks of woodland, of a similar age. These areas of planting are not fully mature and it is not clear if these have been planted in relation to a woodland planting scheme or if they are part of a mitigation strategy associated with the railway line, or another purpose. These woodlands serve to provide a wooded setting to views across this area and particularly help to integrate the overhead electric infrastructure of the railway into the landscape, where they create a wooded backdrop to the structures, giving the structures themselves less prominence in views.
- Natural England's Priority Habitat mapping does not identify any features within this LCA.

#### Cultural and social

- Land use is mixed with some field parcels used for arable crop production, some areas of grazing, including grazing horses, and some leisure uses in proximity to Hill House.
- Field boundaries form a rectilinear or irregular pattern of medium-sized field parcels.
- There is no settlement within the LCA.
- There are no Public Rights of Way within this LCA. The A417 lies to the west of the LCA, bounded by hedgerows, and views across the LCA are often contained.
- The Great Western Mainline crosses in an east-west direction through this LCA. The overhead electric infrastructure is a noticeable element in views, when seen from Faringdon Road and Circourt Road. It is likely that these features are noticeable in views across this LCA, although this could not be directly assessed due to limited public accessibility.
- The Oxfordshire HLC shows piecemeal enclosures to the north of Hill Farmhouse and describes this area as, “an area of unenclosed meadow land enclosed in the early 19th century. One straight internal boundary has been added in the 20th century but the remaining boundaries are late 18th-early 19th century in origin”. To the north of the LCA the HLC describes an “area of open field enclosed in the early 19th century; the field pattern was changed in the later 19th century by subdivision and the creation of the railway line running through the area”.

#### Perceptual

- This LCA forms part of the more extensive clay vale landscape when viewed from more elevated areas, including from East Challow recreation ground, Public Rights of Way on Windmill Hill and from the North Wessex Downs AONB.
- Tranquillity is generally moderate. Natural features are generally the most prominent element of the experience of being in this landscape. Noise sources, such as the A417 and the Great Western Mainline, serve to reduce the sense of tranquillity in some locations and at certain times of day. There is little street lighting.

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## 12.3 Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness

### Landscape character

- Protect the remaining historic landscape pattern created by field boundaries;
- Protect, replace and maintain vegetated field boundaries which contribute to the sense of place well as for their contribution to biodiversity, soils and surface water management;
- Support traditional hedgerow management techniques which contribute to biodiversity and good hedgerow strength;
- Protect and enhance watercourses and support schemes which enhance biodiversity through increased habitat creation and management;
- Seek opportunities to reintroduce traditional orchards, a feature of the historic landscape of East Challow, for example, through community orchards;
- Tree planting schemes: Medium to large scale tree planting schemes could be accommodated here.

### Views and visual amenity

- Seek opportunities to create a greater wooded context to the Great Western Mainline to soften the visual effects of the overhead electrification structures.
- Maintain tranquillity by resisting proposals that would result in an increase in street lighting, noise and disturbance.



*Photograph 20: Upper Clay Vale II LCA looking towards the Great Western Mainline*



*Photograph 21: View towards the North Wessex Downs from Circourt Bridge across the Upper Clay Vale II and the Lower Clay Vale*



# 13 Settlement landscape context

## 13.1 Plan making considerations

13.1.1 The LCA of East Challow Parish seeks to provide both a framework and an evidence base to inform decision-making in relation planning applications and land management. For each of the LCAs, the recommendations provide strategic information about the key characteristics and features which should be protected, managed or enhanced when considering landscape change.

13.1.2 To help inform the NDP from a settlement perspective, this chapter has been included to consider finer grain landscape matters at the settlement scale.

## 13.2 The settlement of East Challow in a landscape context

13.2.1 A range of example views have been selected to provide perspective about the setting of the settlement of East Challow in its landscape context.

13.2.2 In accordance with the methodology in Chapter 4, each view provides the following information:

- Landscape Character Area name;
- A description of the key landscape characteristics in terms of natural, cultural and social features, as well as key aesthetic and perceptual qualities;
- Information about landscape character sensitivity;
- Information about visual sensitivity;
- Information about landscape value;
- Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness as well as conserve visual integrity.

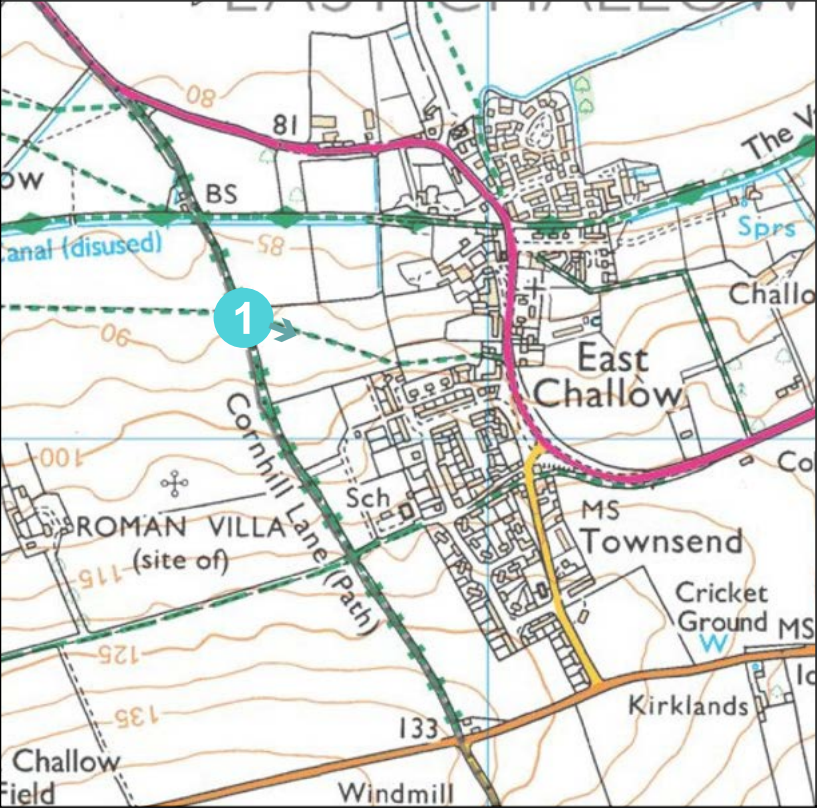
13.2.3 The photographs illustrate four key aspects of the visual setting of the settlement:

- From locations in the Pastoral Footslopes, the settlement is seen set in a small scale, enclosed and often treed landscape, on the rising land of the Footslopes, with a rural setting in the foreground.
- From the more elevated parts of the Pastoral Footslopes, in proximity to the settlement, there are frequent opportunities for views both towards the lower lying land of the Vale landscapes to the north, as well as the rising land of the scarp slope of the North Wessex Downs AONB to the south.

- From the Lower Clay Vale, the settlement is seen on the rising land of the Footslopes with the scarp slope of the North Wessex Downs forming an uninterrupted skyline in the distance.
- From the higher land of the North Wessex Downs, the settlement can be seen set in a treed context on the lower lying land, surround by the Vale landscapes.






East Challow Settlement Landscape Context View from Cornhill Lane in the Pastoral Footslopes	Landscape Character, Distinctiveness and Key Features (natural, cultural and social features, as well as key aesthetic and perceptual qualities)	Landscape Value	Landscape Character Sensitivity and Visual Sensitivity
<p>This is an illustrative photograph and is not to scale. It has been taken with a 50mm lens from Cornhill Lane (SU 37597 88202) in an easterly direction towards East Challow (approx 90m AOD).</p> 	<p><b>LCA 2 Pastoral Footslopes</b></p> <p>In views from the Pastoral Footslopes, the settlement of East Challow can be seen set on rising ground.</p> <p>The foreground of the view has a rural, pastoral character, with scattered dwellings forming part of the middle distance of the view. The dwellings are seen in a treed and well vegetated context which softens the built forms and enhances the rural character of the view.</p> <p>A combination of roof tops and vegetation form the skyline of the view. The roof tops are often irregularly spaced and angled, softening their presence in the view.</p> <p>The overhead wires are a minor visual detractor; they are not visually dominant in the view.</p>	<p>While this is an undesignated landscape, it has many attractive, rural qualities which contribute to the setting of the settlement. These qualities are likely to be locally valued.</p> <p>The Pastoral Footslopes form the setting to a number of views from the rights of way network, including Cornhill Lane and the Vale Way, which follows the Wilts and Berks Canal. These attractive routes appear to be well used by the public and the views from them are likely to be valued locally.</p>	<p>The view has a strong, pastoral character which creates a rural setting to the settlement in the middle distance.</p> <p>Native vegetation, including hedgerows and trees, as well as the open grassland, should be retained and enhanced for its contribution to the character of the view and in softening the presence of built form in the view.</p> <p>Built form is scattered and arranged on irregular angles, which contributes to the rural character of the view. Where this is not the case, the dwellings have a stronger, more dominating, presence in the view, which can detract from its rural character.</p>






East Challow Settlement Landscape Context View from Challow Road in the Pastoral Foothslopes with Parkland LCA	Landscape Character, Distinctiveness and Key Features (natural, cultural and social features, as well as key aesthetic and perceptual qualities)	Landscape Value	Landscape Character Sensitivity and Visual Sensitivity
<p>This is an illustrative photograph and is not to scale. It has been taken from Challow Road (SU 38546 88060) in a north easterly direction (approx 110m AOD).</p> 	<p><b>LCA 3 Pastoral Foothslopes with Parkland</b></p> <p>The Pastoral Foothslopes with Parkland lies on sloping topography. From more elevated locations, as shown in the photograph above, there are opportunities for views across the lower lying Vale landscapes to the north, as well as views towards the steeply rising scarp slopes of the North Wessex Downs to the south.</p> <p>The widely spaced groups of mature pines, set in open grassland, create a distinctive parkland character in this view. Historic mapping from 1899 illustrates tree clumps in these locations, and it is likely that these features are contemporary with the adjacent, large, detached dwelling, which was the site of Challow Studios. These elements combine to form a coherent sub-unit within the Pastoral Foothslopes with Parkland LCA.</p> <p>The pastoral landscape lying to the north and east of the parkland comprises small to medium sized field parcels with hedged boundaries, with mature trees within field parcels and within hedgerows. Some of the mature Oak trees have the potential to be ancient trees.</p> <p>This pastoral landscape contributes to and enhances the character of the parkland, and together they create a cohesive landscape unit with a strong sense of distinctiveness.</p> <p>From this location, there are also opportunities to appreciate open views towards the distinctive scarp slope of the North Wessex Downs. These views are discussed further on View 4.</p>	<p>While this is an undesignated landscape, it has many attractive, qualities which contribute to the setting of the settlement. These qualities are likely to be locally valued.</p> <p>Ancient trees are subject to protection under the provisions of the NPPF and the potential for mature trees in this LCA to be considered as ‘ancient’ should be assessed.</p> <p>From this LCA there are opportunities for open views towards the scarp slope of the North Wessex Downs and there are also return views from the Downs towards this location. Changes within this LCA may be considered to affect the setting of the AONB and should be subject to an appropriate assessment, such as LVIA.</p>	<p>The view has a strong, parkland character, primarily as a consequence of the tree groups set in open grassland and the types of boundary treatments found in this LCA. These features should be protected and managed appropriately.</p> <p>The mature trees, inducing Oaks and Pines, in this LCA should be subject to particular protection and assessed for their potential as ancient trees.</p> <p>The elevated location of this part of the LCA creates a sense of openness and provides opportunities for attractive views in a northerly and southerly direction. Opportunities to appreciate these views should be maintained.</p> <p>The mature vegetation also serves to soften views of built form at the edge of Wantage and, to a lesser degree, East Challow. Trees, shrub areas and hedgerows should be retained for their role in enhancing visual amenity and opportunities should be sought to increase native planting, where possible, to soften the visual effects of the more recent planning permissions for residential development.</p>





East Challow Settlement Landscape Context View from Woodhill Lane in the Upper Clay Vale I LCA	Landscape Character, Distinctiveness and Key Features (natural, cultural and social features, as well as key aesthetic and perceptual qualities)	Landscape Value	Landscape Character Sensitivity and Visual Sensitivity
<p>This is an illustrative photograph and is not to scale. It has been taken from Woodhill Lane (SU 38303 89635) in a southerly direction (approx 82m AOD).</p> 	<p><b>LCA 4 Upper Clay Vale I</b></p> <p>From the lower lying landscapes of the Clay Vale there are views towards the settlement of East Challow, which lies on the rising land of the footslopes in the middle distance of the view.</p> <p>The foreground is characterised by a sense of openness and a lack of woody vegetation, such as trees and woodland. In the middle ground the wooded stream side vegetation, associated with Woodhill Brook, including Oak, Ash and Willow, forms a strong element of the view and contributes to the setting of the settlement.</p> <p>The Parkland landscape, to the left of Challow Studios, can be seen quite prominently and forms a distinctively characteristic element of the view.</p> <p>The higher ground of the North Wessex Downs AONB forms the skyline and the built form within East Challow does not break this skyline. The settlement is seen set within a treed or wooded context, with a rural foreground and unbroken views of the attractive, ridgeline in the distance.</p>	<p>While this is an undesignated landscape, it has many attractive qualities which contribute to the setting of the settlement. These qualities are likely to be locally valued.</p> <p>From this LCA there are opportunities for open views towards the scarp slope of the North Wessex Downs and there are also return views from the Downs towards this location. Changes within this LCA may be considered to affect the setting of the AONB and should be subject to an appropriate assessment, such as LVIA.</p>	<p>The view has a strong, character, primarily as a consequence of the treed context and these features should be protected and enhanced, where possible, for their contribution to the setting of the settlement. The key wooded features include the steam side vegetation associated with Woodhill Brook and trees within and surrounding the settlement, including the mature trees forming the Parkland.</p> <p>The ridgeline of the North Wessex Downs AONB forms a distinctive feature of the view and this characteristic should be protected. There are areas (to the right of the photograph) where built form is located on the rising land in the middle distance. The effect is to increase the prominence of built form in the view and this detracts from its character.</p>





East Challow Settlement Landscape Context View from Segsbury Hillfort, North Wessex Downs AONB	Landscape Character, Distinctiveness and Key Features (natural, cultural and social features, as well as key aesthetic and perceptual qualities)	Landscape Value	Landscape Character Sensitivity and Visual Sensitivity
<p>This is an illustrative photograph and is not to scale. It has been taken from Segsbury Hillfort (SU 38373 84645) in a northerly direction (approx 210m AOD).</p>	<p><b>North Wessex Downs AONB</b></p> <p>From the elevated ridgeline of the North Wessex Downs there are expansive, uninterrupted views across the wider landscape, including towards the Pastoral Foothills surrounding East Challow, and the low lying Clay Vale landscapes to the north.</p> <p>The most southerly field parcels in East Challow Parish, in the Windmill Hill LCA, are highly visible in this view, and are also visible in views from other locations along the ridgeline, such as from the Ridgeway near Gramps Hill.</p> <p>The distinctive openness of the higher land in this view gives way to a more patterned and vegetated landscape on the footslopes, in proximity to the settlements. Field boundaries and winding highways are often associated with hedgerows and trees on the footslopes. The open Clay Vale landscapes can be seen extending into the distance in the view.</p> <p>In this view, the settlement of East Challow lies on the lower land of the footslopes. Windmill Hill serves to restrict many views of development within the village, although there are some views of built form. Built form in Wantage forms a more prominent element of the view.</p>	<p>The North Wessex Downs AONB is a nationally designated landscape, statutorily protected for its scenic beauty and special qualities. Segsbury Hillfort is a scheduled monument and is accessible for public enjoyment. This type of view is considered to be highly valued in landscape terms.</p>	<p>Located in the North Wessex Downs AONB, this view is considered to have high landscape and visual value and high landscape and visual sensitivity. The key characteristics of the view are the expansive, open foreground with settlements nestled on the lower land of the footslopes and in local valleys and the open clay vale extending into the distance.</p> <p>Wooded vegetation forms an important landscape element in the middle distance of the view and serves to integrate settlements into the landscape. Wooded vegetation should be protected and enhanced where possible.</p> <p>Residential built form in East Challow lies nestled on the lower lying land and is not prominent in this view. This characteristic should be protected. Commercial development, for example at Grove Technology Park, has greater visual prominence and lacks tree planting, which may have mitigated this visual effect. Future development should be subject to appropriate landscape assessment to consider and mitigate adverse effects on views from the AONB.</p> <p>The separation of settlements along the footslopes is a key characteristic of the landscape, and settlement coalescence should be avoided. The gap between East Challow and Wantage is just perceptible and any further erosion of this gap should be resisted.</p>



# 14 Appendix A: Extracts from Vale of White Horse Landscape Character Assessment: Evaluation and Guidance

## 14.1 Landscape Type FS: Downs Footslopes Evaluation and Guidance

### 14.1.1 Key positive landscape attributes

### 14.1.2 The key positive features that contribute to the character of the area and that should be conserved and enhanced are:

- A rolling landscape, prominent below the Downs Scarp in views north from the lower lying Vale.
- Numerous spring feed streams flowing chalk of the Downs, north into Vale and towards the rivers Ock and Thames.
- Small, traditional nucleated villages and hamlets, frequently located along streams towards the foot of the Downs Scarp, with historic cores and edges which abut directly onto the surrounding countryside.
- A considerable number of conservation areas and numerous listed buildings.
- A network of rural lanes and public rights of way, connecting settlements and the Vale to the Downs.
- Varying degrees of tree cover, but some significant blocks of woodland which are prominent in the local landscape and visible from the Vale to the north.
- Ribbons of riparian vegetation along winding streams and brooks.
- Views north from elevated public vantage points, across the Vale and towards the Corallian Limestone Ridge to the north.
- Large parts of the footslopes are within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Beauty.

### 14.1.3 Forces for change/sensitivities/pressures

- Loss of hedgerows and woodland due to intensification of farming.

- Hedges intensively managed to low heights and/or species-poor.
- Introduction of tall linear tree belts.
- Decline in orchards and other horticultural practices.
- Spread of sporadic dwellings along lanes.
- Development, and increase in settlement edge uses such as paddocks, on the edges of villages.
- Large scale housing extensions to the edges of towns and villages.  
Development at Harwell Campus.
- Growth of settlements, reducing gaps between settlements and increasing the potential for coalescence.
- Development within the Vale effecting (*sic*) views from the Downs and it's wider setting.
- Introduction of pylons within the east of the District.
- The A34 dual carriageway within the east of the District.

#### 14.1.4 GUIDANCE

#### 14.1.5 Landscape Strategy

14.1.6 The landscape strategy for the Downs Footslopes is to conserve the rural nature of the landscape and protect the historic character of the small settlements located within the footslopes. Development associated with larger settlements should be carefully considered to prevent detrimental effects on the landscape and the setting of the AONB. Woodland and hedgerow boundaries should be maintained or replanted where possible. Given the areas partial location within the North Wessex Downs AONB, the objectives and policies set out in the current AONB management plan should also be considered.

#### 14.1.7 Landscape Guidelines

#### 14.1.8 Land Management

- Encourage landowners to maintain an appropriate management regime using traditional farming techniques where these will conserve and enhance landscape features such watercourses, ancient and semi-natural woodland, and hedgerows.



- Conserve and enhance connectivity of areas of high biodiversity value and key positive landscape attributes, such as riparian woodland.
- Respect the setting to conservation areas and sensitivity historic settlement edges, by resisting changes to the landscape which are not in keeping with the landscape character.
- Resist introduction of further pylons, and encourage underground routing of cables where possible.
- Raise awareness of the historic dimension and underlying archaeology of the landscape to landowners including the woodlands, orchards, field patterns and streams.
- Areas of tree planting should reflect historic woodland pattern, topography and field boundaries, and avoid new incongruous linear shelter belts. Inclusion of additional or replacement appropriate deciduous planting, should be encouraged within existing tree belts. Encourage consistent management and restocking of hedgerows and nurture new hedgerow trees to maintain stock, including the use of locally appropriate species such as oak, beech and elm.
- Encourage retention and enhancement of orchard and horticultural uses where appropriate.
- Promote responsible management of existing public rights of way, with appropriate surfacing, materials and signage for footpaths to retain the rural, unsettled character of the landscape
- Encourage landowners to maintain or enhance accessibility and provide additional routes where opportunities arise
- Protect the route of the dismantled Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway line from development which would inhibit future public transport use.

#### 14.1.9

##### Built Development

- Retain the settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads towards the foot of the Downs Scarp.
- Protect the sensitivity of historic edges of settlements from development and an increase in settlement edge uses such as paddocks and horse keeping.

- Where extensions to larger settlements are planned, develop landscape strategies which minimise effects on the surrounding landscape and are in keeping with the landscape character of the area. Planting within development should utilise species of local provenance, such as beech, poplar, oak and hawthorn, and disease resistant varieties of elm and ash. Open spaces, planting and housing with low densities and height, should be located along the edges of settlements where they adjoin the countryside. Resist the spread of ribbon or sporadic development along roads.
- Conserve gaps between settlements to prevent coalescence and retain separate settlement identities.
- Improve understanding of the general pattern of settlements and their relationship to the landscape and maintain development control to ensure that new development is sympathetic to the wider pattern of settlement.
- Conserve the rural roads minimising small-scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network or bridges which would change their character.

## 14.2 Landscape Type VL: Lower Vale Farmland Evaluation and Guidance

### 14.2.1 Key positive landscape attributes

### 14.2.2 The key positive features that contribute to the character of the area and that should be conserved and enhanced are:

- Areas of peaceful rural farmland.
- Distinctive views to rising ground to the north and south, including the Corallian Limestone Ridge nearby to the north, and the North Wessex Downs AONB on the horizon to the south.
- Network of drainage ditches.
- Dispersed woodland blocks.
- Limited settlement, consisting predominantly of scattered farmsteads.
- Rural lanes and a network of public rights of way.
- The course of the old Wilts and Berks canal, under various stages of restoration.

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14.2.3	Forces for change/sensitivities/pressures
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loss of hedges and fragmentation of the hedgerow network along field boundaries.</li><li>• Decline in numbers of hedgerow trees and riparian vegetation along ditches.</li><li>• Amalgamation of fields into larger parcels of arable land.</li><li>• Large scale gravel quarrying.</li><li>• Disturbance from transport networks, including the A34 dual carriageway and the Great Western Mainline railway.</li><li>• Introduction of 'wirescapes' including overhead pylons and electrification of the Great Western Mainline railway.</li><li>• Development of solar farms.</li><li>• Expansion of settlement and roads within the east of the District.</li></ul>
14.2.4	GUIDANCE
14.2.5	Landscape Strategy
14.2.6	The strategy for the Lower Vale Farmland is to conserve the rural nature of the landscape and limit further urbanising influences from infrastructure and expanding settlements. Hedgerows, and hedgerow trees should be replanted to restore the network of vegetation along field boundaries.
14.2.7	Landscape Guidelines
14.2.8	Land Management
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage landowners to maintain an appropriate management regime using traditional farming techniques where these will conserve and enhance key landscape features such as the hedgerows, hedgerow trees, and woodland.</li><li>• Conserve, enhance and restore hedgerows through effective long term management and replanting with species of local provenance.</li><li>• Promote traditional woodland management techniques such as coppicing with local landowners and the farming community.</li><li>• Encourage sustainable and multi-purpose woodlands.</li></ul>

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- Raise awareness of the historic dimension of the field patterns and boundaries to landowners, and conserve local historic dimension of the landscape, alongside local hydrology to encourage sustainable drainage.
- Resist further increase in overhead wires underground and encourage underground routing of cables where possible.
- Limit further solar farms where they would have a detrimental effect on the character of the landscape.
- Encourage the restoration of former gravel pits to enhance biodiversity and reflect the local landscape character.
- Promote responsible management of existing public rights of way, with appropriate surfacing, materials and signage for footpaths to retain the rural, unsettled character of the landscape.
- Encourage landowners to maintain or enhance accessibility and provide additional routes where opportunities arise.

#### 14.2.9

##### Built Development

- Retain the pattern of limited settlement and avoid the development of sporadic dwellings.
- Promote the use of traditional buildings materials and signage features with particular regard to local style and materials.
- Resist development which would have a detrimental effect on views from the North Wessex Downs AONB, and its wider northern setting.
- Where extensions to larger settlements are planned, develop landscape strategies which minimise effects on the surrounding landscape and are in keeping with its characteristics. Planting within development should utilise species of local provenance, such as beech, poplar, oak and hawthorn, and disease resistant varieties of elm and ash. Open spaces, planting and housing with low densities and height, should be located along the edges of developments where they adjoin the countryside.
- Ensure that any new large scale development does not impact adversely on rural views. Maintain relationship and quality of views to adjoining river floodplains and surrounding wider areas.



- Ensure any new development has regard for retaining local views of the high ground to the north and south, which help emphasise the Vale location.
- Conserve gaps between settlements to prevent coalescence and retain separate settlement identities.
- Improve understanding of the general pattern of settlements and their relationship to the landscape and maintain development control to ensure that new development is sympathetic to the wider pattern of settlement.
- Conserve the rural roads minimising small-scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network or bridges which would change their character.
- Maintain and enhance vegetated boundaries to transport corridors and adjacent infrastructure.

## 14.3 Landscape Type VU: Upper Vale Farmland Evaluation and Guidance

### 14.3.1 Key positive landscape attributes

### 14.3.2 The key positive features that contribute to the character of the area and that should be conserved and enhanced are:

- Tranquil, rural farmland.
- Distinctive views to rising ground to the north and south, including the Corallian Limestone Ridge nearby to the north, and the North Wessex Downs AONB on the horizon to the south.
- A network of drainage ditches and minor watercourses
- A varying network of hedgerows along field boundaries, with mature hedge trees. Scattered blocks of woodland, including ancient woodland.
- A substantially rural landscape, with settlement consisting predominantly of scattered farmsteads and occasional small villages with conservation areas and listed buildings which abut directly onto the surrounding countryside.
- Rural lanes and a network of public rights of way, including the D'Arcy Dalton Long Distance Path.
- The course of the old Wilts and Berks canal, under various stages of restoration.

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14.3.3 Forces for change/sensitivities/pressures

- Fragmentation of hedgerows along field boundaries.
- Disturbance from transport networks, including the A417 road and the Great Western Mainline railway.
- Introduction of masts and wires along the length of the Great Western Mainline railway due to electrification.
- Increase in small scale rural development along roads, and intensification of settlement edge uses such as subdivision of land for paddocks.

14.3.4 GUIDANCE

14.3.5 Landscape Strategy

14.3.6 The strategy for the Upper Vale Farmland is to conserve the rural nature of the landscape and resist urbanising influences from infrastructure and residential development. Hedges and trees should be planted to strength the hedgerow network along field boundaries.

14.3.7 Landscape Guidelines

14.3.8 Land Management

- Encourage landowners to maintain an appropriate management regime using traditional farming techniques where these will conserve and enhance key landscape features such as the hedgerows, hedgerow trees, and woodland
- Conserve, enhance and restore hedgerows through effective long term management and restocking of hedgerows and nurture new hedgerow trees to maintain stock, including the use of appropriate species of local provenance.
- Promote traditional woodland management techniques such as coppicing with local landowners and the farming community.
- Encourage sustainable and multi-purpose woodlands.
- Raise awareness of the historic dimension of the field patterns and boundaries to landowners, and conserve local historic dimension of the landscape, alongside local hydrology to encourage sustainable drainage.
- Conserve and enhance connectivity of areas of high biodiversity value and key positive landscape attributes, such as riparian woodland.

- Respect the setting to conservation areas and sensitivity of historic settlement edges, by resisting changes to the landscape which are not in keeping with the landscape character.
- Promote responsible management of existing public rights of way, with appropriate surfacing, materials and signage for footpaths to retain the rural, unsettled character of the landscape.
- Encourage landowners to maintain or enhance accessibility and provide additional routes where opportunities arise.

#### 14.3.9

#### Built Development

- Retain the rural and undeveloped character of the area and avoid the development of sporadic dwellings and infrastructure.
- Promote the use of traditional buildings materials and signage features with particular regard to local style and materials.
- Ensure that any new development does not impact adversely on rural views, and resist development which would have a detrimental effect on views from the North Wessex Downs AONB, and its wider northern setting.
- Ensure any new development has regard for retaining local views of the high ground to the north and south, which help emphasise the Vale location.
- Improve understanding of the general pattern of settlements and their relationship to the landscape and maintain development control to ensure that new development is sympathetic to the wider pattern of settlement.
- Conserve gaps between settlements to prevent coalescence and retain separate settlement identities.
- Conserve the rural roads minimising small-scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network or bridges which would change their character.
- Maintain and enhance vegetated boundaries to transport corridors and adjacent infrastructure.

Ecological Services

Green Infrastructure

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Sustainability Appraisal



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