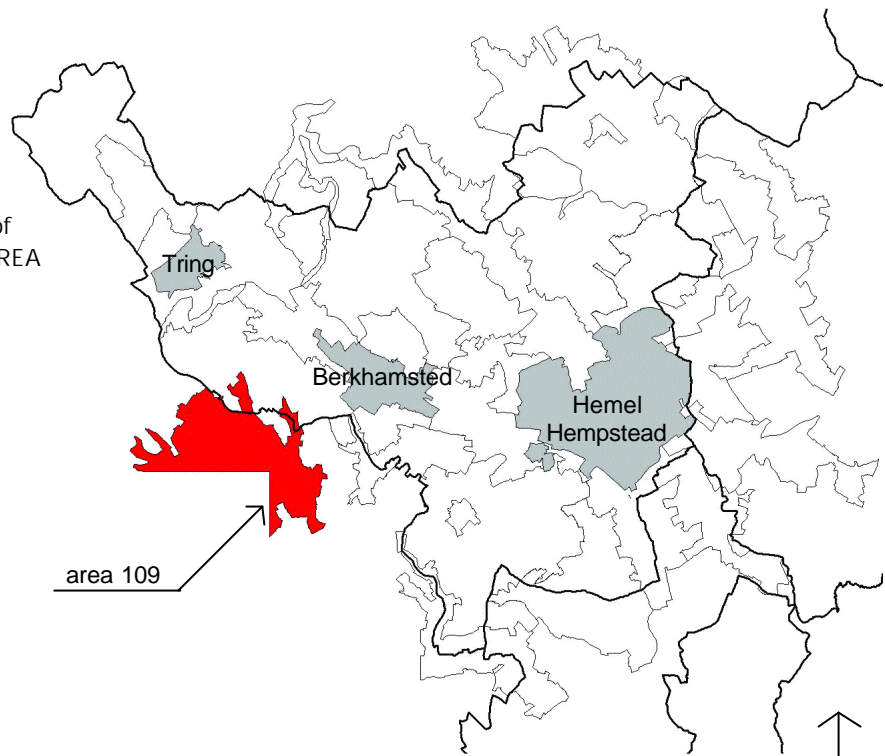


District Map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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**LOCATION**

To the north of Chesham and largely within Buckinghamshire. The character area incorporates the settlements of Cholesbury, Hawridge and Bellingdon. (NB The straight lines to the south and west of the above map (and associated GIS files) indicating the boundaries of the character area do not mark the geographical extent of the character area but reflect the lack of digital OS data available within Buckinghamshire).

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

A series of narrow ridges and dry valleys similar in landform to the Markyate Ridges and Valleys, (see Area 126). Pastoral and equestrian fields, small to medium size, comprise the greater part of the character area. To the north east within Hertfordshire there are some larger arable fields. The landscape is well contained by mixed hedgerows and occasional fenced field boundaries, with localized areas of broadleaf and mixed/plantation woodland. This is a

harmonious landscape, punctuated by small, well integrated settlements on the ridges.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- strong pattern of radiating narrow ridges and valleys
- commons and grazing pasture, also regenerating secondary woodlands
- traditional pattern of settlement and vernacular architecture
- discrete/localized woodland

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- Cholesbury and Hawridge Commons
- Cholesbury Windmill
- Cholesbury Fort earthworks



- Hedged lane (HCC Landscape Unit)

### PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** The principal geological composition is chalky drift in the dry valleys with exposed Upper and Lower Chalk in the valley bottoms. Here the soils (Charity 2 association), are well drained and flinty. On the ridges plateau drift soils overly and clay with flints, (Batcombe association).

**Topography.** A series of converging narrow dry valleys of relatively steep gradient are divided by long fingerlike ridges.

**Degree of slope.** Along the ridges the slopes may be as slack as 1 in 150 or less. In marked contrast the slopes of the dry valleys are often as steep as 1 in 5.

**Altitude range.** From 180m on the ridges to 125m in the valley floors.

**Hydrology.** There are no streams, and little standing water apart from the pond at Cholesbury Common.

**Land cover and land use.** Within Hertfordshire the land use is mainly arable with some woodlands. Throughout the remainder of the area grazing for cattle and horses is more frequent. Equestrian pasture is typically linked with the more open settlement pattern on the ridges. The common at Cholesbury has recreational uses and public access.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The small sections of this area in Hertfordshire have very limited semi-natural vegetation. Remnant stands of calcareous beech/ash woodland occur within secondary plantations which contain spruce, larch and cypress in the valleys near Rossway. There are no old grasslands in the Hertfordshire sections of the area. Woodland cover is relatively higher within the Buckinghamshire section of the area, particularly to the steeper valley slopes with hanging woodlands. Hedges are typically tall particularly along roads. Species are mixed including hazel and holly.

The Rossway estate is known to support significant number of hibernating bats.

### HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Within Hertfordshire the area is essentially influenced by the Rossway Estate, together with associated parklands, buildings and farms. A strong sense of thematic, historical and cultural continuity is evident in what is essentially a working estate landscape. The windmill at Cholesbury, (Buckinghamshire), although disused, is important an important focal point.

**Field Patterns.** The historic pattern within Hertfordshire is 18th century parliamentary enclosure. Some fields have been further enlarged in the 20th century.

**Transport pattern.** A pattern of minor roads radiates out from Chesham to the north. This tends to follow either the valley bottoms or the ridge lines. Few secondary routes and tracks traverse the strongly undulating ridges and valleys.

**Settlements and built form.** There are no settlements within the Hertfordshire part of the character area. Within Buckinghamshire the distinctive settlement pattern follows the narrow ridge lines. At Cholesbury and Hawridge there is a traditional open pattern of ribbon development. Cholesbury has some fine 18th century brick houses fronting the green and a rare, fully rigged windmill nearby. At Bellingdon there is a denser pattern of 20th century settlement, particularly approaching Chesham. Settlement within the valley bottoms is generally restricted to farmsteads.

#### **Other sources of area-specific information**

Buckinghamshire CC: The Landscape Plan for Buckinghamshire-Part 1 Landscape Character Assessment (Landscape Character Zone Z10-Incised Dip Slope)

- Cholesbury Windmill (A.Temporary)



**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The distinctive narrow ridges and valleys create a strong sense of character. The presence of mature woodland in some of the valleys adds to the marked sense of containment. From the ridges there are localized views, however tall hedges and settlement both block views and provide visual enclosure. This is a relatively small scale and intimate landscape with few visual or audible detractors.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This is an rare landscape type within the county when the area as a whole is considered. There are strong similarities with the Markyate Valleys and Ridges.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Most of the development is in sympathy with the scale and historic pattern. The exception is towards Chesham where there is a more widespread suburban influence.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There is a good provision of footpaths throughout the area, both on the ridges and in the valleys. However there are few bridleways, despite the number of equestrians in the area. Cholesbury and Hawridge Commons are important for informal recreation.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This corner of what is mostly a Buckinghamshire landscape character area is well regarded by Hertfordshire residents (C).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

AONB

**CONDITION**

- Land cover change:* **localised**
- Age structure of tree cover:* **mature**
- Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:* **scattered**
- Management of semi-natural habitat:* **not obvious**
- Survival of cultural pattern:* **intact**
- Impact of built development:* **moderate**
- Impact of land-use change:* **moderate**

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

- Impact of landform:* **prominent**
- Impact of land cover:* **apparent**
- Impact of historic pattern:* **apparent**
- Visibility from outside:* **locally visible**
- Sense of enclosure:* **partial**
- Visual unity:* **coherent**
- Distinctiveness/rarity:* **rare**

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	<b>MODERATE</b>	Improve and reinforce	<b>Improve and conserve</b>	Conserve and restore
	<b>POOR</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		<b>WEAK</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>	<b>STRONG</b>
<b>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>				

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING**

**CHANGE: IMPROVE AND CONSERVE**

- promote creation of new hedgerows in place of post and rail fences and temporary enclosure in areas of extensive equestrian activity. Protection from browsing to be included
- promote the retention of the character of local minor roads by the management of hedgerows, hedgebanks and verges. Where part of a hedge has been damaged or removed it should be replanted with a mix of indigenous species
- identify key viewpoints from ridges and along valleys and promote selective openings by hedgerow management to enhance opportunities to view area
- resist proposals to extend sub-urban influences either from within the existing villages or from Chesham
- ensure that local highway improvements are sympathetic to the scale, pattern and character of the existing road network
- promote management plans to Cholesbury Commons to achieve a mix of habitat types including grassland, scrub and woodland and a balance between wildlife and public access. Promote local initiatives for traditional management
- promote improved hedgerow management to retain hedgerow patterns. To include trimming, laying and new planting
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats
- conserve unimproved and semi-improved grassland wherever possible avoiding agricultural improvements in order to maintain their nature conservation value. Encourage traditional management by grazing
- ensure that built development both in the area or adjacent is integrated through the use of native tree and shrub species and the creation of hedging and/or planting to the perimeter
- conserve and enhance the distinctive character of settlements and individual buildings by promoting the conservation of important buildings and high standards of new building or alterations to existing properties, all with the consistent use of locally traditional materials and designed to reflect the traditional character of the area
- encourage the planting of new roadside hedgerow trees including oaks within the Rossway Estate
- encourage the management of mature trees and woodland edge/hedges to maintain habitat opportunities for local bat population within the Rossway Estate
- provide facilities to facilitate quiet recreational activities while not adversely affecting the character and quality of the landscape
- North of Hadden’s Plantation, Chesham Road (HCC Landscape Unit)

