

TYPE 5: CLAY VALES

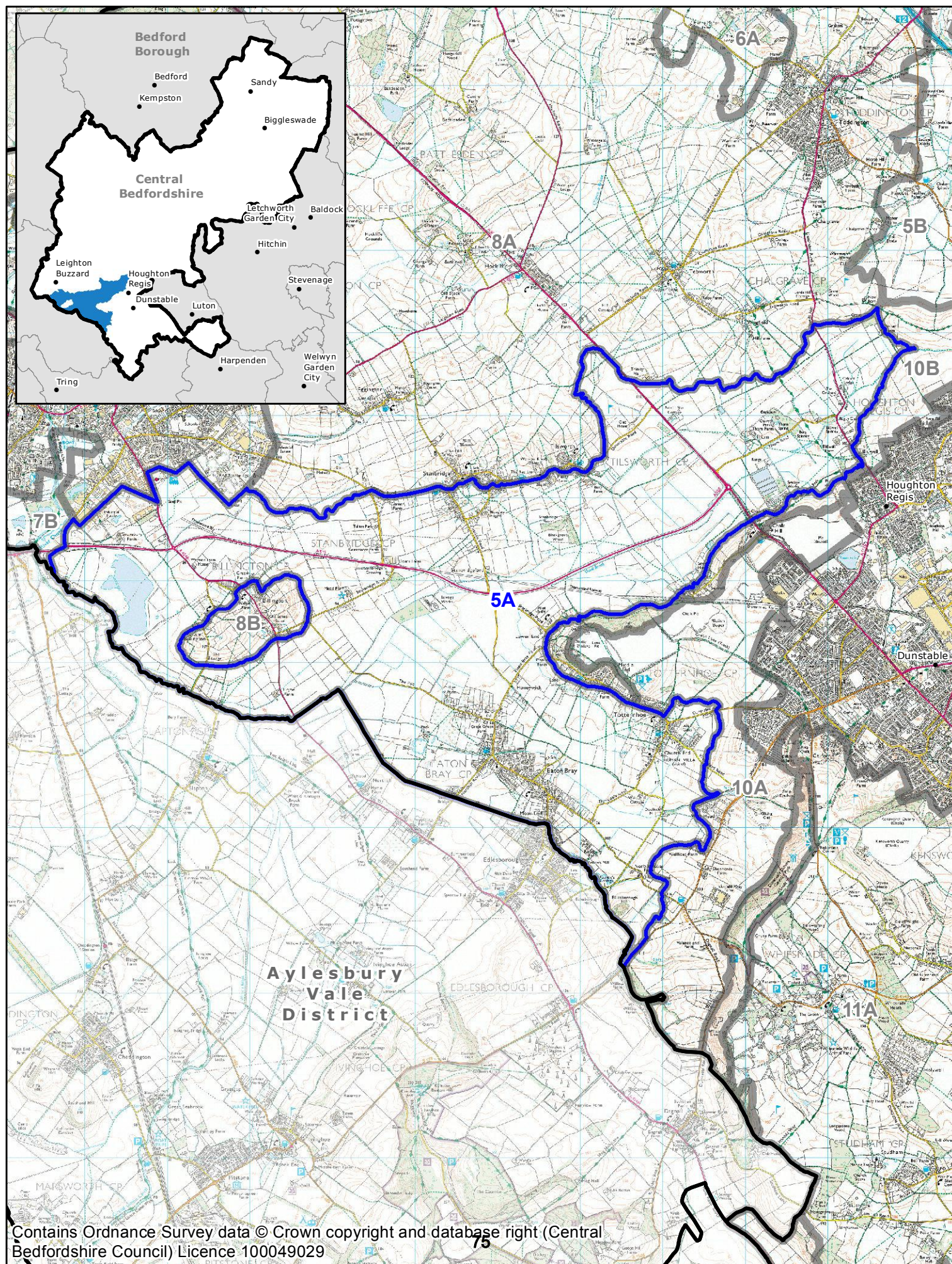
Key Characteristics

- A large-scale landscape with a low-lying, flat landform providing distant views.
- Bordered by pronounced, elevated landscapes of the *Greensand Ridge* and the *Chalk Escarpments* that form prominent backdrops and offer a sense of containment.
- A predominantly agricultural landscape characterised by large geometric field units with variable field boundaries including remnant hedgerows, scrubby margins and drainage channels.
- Crossed by a number of tributaries of the Rivers Great Ouse, Ivel, Flit and Ouzel.
- Land use dominated by arable crop production but with significant areas of land divided up for horse paddocks.
- Previous brick-workings have created large scale clay pits and sites restored through land raising such as at Stewartby or restoration as lakes offering recreation and habitat.
- Listed chimney stacks at Stewartby and airship sheds at Shortstown mark former industries in the Vale.
- Modern large distribution warehouses are prominent south and west of Bedford.
- Main transport routes – including the M1, A6, A5, A1M and Midland Mainline Railway have an audible and visual presence in the landscape.
- Adjacent towns of Bedford and Leighton Buzzard bring urban fringe characteristics to the landscape.
- The Forest of Marston Vale stretching between Bedford, Ampthill and Milton Keynes - one of 12 Community Forests in England.
- Series of lakes formed through restoration of former clay pits form network of valued wildlife and recreationa lsites.

Location and Boundaries

- 5.1 The *Clay Vales* landscape type covers a large proportion of the Central Bedfordshire and countryside – occurring within two separate areas. The landscape type extends north into Bedford Borough – refer to the companion Landscape Character Assessment for Bedford Borough for descriptions of landscape character areas within this area. The vales occur to the north and south of the greensand ridge and are interspersed by the *Clay Valleys* landscape type. The vales are defined geologically and topographically. They are underlain by Oxford Clay (to the north) and Gault Clay (to the south) both capped with drift deposits of Boulder Clay. The vales are distinctly low-lying and flat – forming a strong visual contrast with the adjacent landscapes of the *Wooded Greensand Ridge* and *Chalk Escarpments*.

5A: Eaton Bray Clay Vale



5A Eaton Bray Clay Vale

Location and boundaries

- 5A.1 The flat landscape of the Eaton Bray Clay Vale character area occurs in the south of Central Bedfordshire. Defined by Gault Clay and some overlying Totternhoe Stone, the open vale is surrounded by more elevated landscapes that provide a striking backdrop and some degree of containment. The undulating landscape of the Toddington-Hockliffe Clay Hills (8a) demarcates the northern boundary with the steep slopes of the Totternhoe Chalk Escarpment (9b) and the elevated terrain of the Totternhoe-Dunstable Downs Rolling Chalk Farmland (10a) marking the eastern limits of the vale. The town of Leighton Buzzard borders the western boundary. To the south, the vale is defined by the boundary with Buckinghamshire (marked by the River Ouzel) but the character extends beyond.

Summary of landscape character: Key characteristics

- 5A.1.1 A large scale, low lying flat, open landscape (defined by Gault Clay and Lower Chalk geology) cut by the Ouzel Brook and minor tributaries of the River Ouzel.
- 5A.1.2 Intensive agricultural landscape, predominantly arable, but with some pockets of pasture (sheep grazing and horse paddocks) particularly near settlements. Fields are medium to large in scale and follow an essentially Medieval pattern.
- 5A.1.3 Framed by the striking chalk scarp of *Dunstable Downs* and *Totternhoe* (9a and 9b) to the south and the *Toddington-Hockliffe Clay Hills* (8a) to the north which form a prominent backdrop, offer some degree of containment and provide extensive views across the vale. *Billington Clay Hills* (8b) bring variation in landform and form a distinct point of focus.
- 5A.1.4 Field boundaries are mixed including short-flailed and gappy as well as overgrown hedges. Post and wire and barbed-wire fencing is also common.
- 5A.1.5 The area around Totternhoe and Eaton Bray is notable for a number of old orchards of Aylesbury prune - distinctive to this area. The skins of the fruit were used for felt dyeing by Luton's hat industry.
- 5A.1.6 A number of busy 'A' roads cross the vale - the A4146, A505 and A5. These have a strong visual and audible presence.
- 5A.1.7 The built environment includes major industrial development south of Leighton Buzzard and a major urban extension south of Leighton Buzzard. Other settlements are smaller and more contained villages and hamlets, including Eaton Bray, Church End, Lower End and Honeywick. Individual farmsteads are scattered throughout the landscape.
- 5A.1.8 Historic features include medieval ridge and furrow pasture. There are a number of moated sites which are Scheduled Monuments. Historical mill sites are located at the headwaters of the River Ouzel.
- 5A.1.9 Pylon lines cut across parts of the vale and are prominent vertical structures against the simple, flat landform.
- 5A.1.10 Sand quarries in the west of the area south of Leighton Buzzard, including Grovebury (still active) and a flooded former sand extraction site forms a large area of open water.
- 5A.1.11 Occasional blocks of secondary woodland. Areas of unimproved neutral and calcareous grassland do occur but are very localised.
- 5A.1.12 There are a number of local public rights of way although significant tracts of the vale do not have public access.

Landscape Character Description

Physical and natural landscape

- 5A.2 For the most part under intensive arable crop production, the vale has a relatively simple, land cover. Areas of sheep grazing and horse paddocks intersperse the large arable tracts and bring some variation, with a number of small farm ponds to the east. A large number of hedgerow boundaries have been lost and are in a poor condition but much of the geometric field patterning is still evident - particularly when viewed from the nearby elevated chalk scarps (*Dunstable Downs Chalk Escarpment 9a* and *Totternhoe Chalk Escarpment 9b*). The Ouzel Brook and small tributaries of the River Ouzel which rise as chalk springs at the base of the escarpment flow through the vale and create small scale variation with associated grassland, willow pollards and occasional black poplar. This gives more local enclosure to such areas, Occasional remnant prune orchards are a further distinctive landscape feature.
- 5A.3 The vale is predominantly unsettled, which contributes to its open, exposed character with Eaton Bray being the only sizeable settlement. A number of primary transport routes, flanked in places by pockets of marginal land, and pylon lines interrupt the landscape and detract from the rural character of the vale. Bordered by the town of Leighton Buzzard although views into the urban environment are frequently screened by the embanked A505.

Biodiversity

- 5A.4 The vale is dominated by intensive arable agriculture. Farmland habitats such as arable field margins, hedgerows, ponds (particularly in the east), ditches and improved grassland are the main features of ecological interest. Unimproved neutral grassland would have been widespread at one time, but only small scattered remnants remain as at Eaton Bray Meadow. Areas of semi-improved grassland are also present along some of the road verges. Small areas of semi-natural and replanted ancient woodland are scattered throughout the area and the prune orchards at Eaton Bray and Totternhoe, as well as being a distinctive landscape feature are of potential interest for lichens and invertebrates. The River Ouzel and its tributaries are also of significant ecological interest - as well as the watercourses themselves the river corridors supports additional habitats including riverside grassland, small stands of wetland vegetation, mature willow pollards and native black poplar. Watercourses tend to overflow after heavy rain, leading to frequent flooding.



Open agricultural field and a block of trees off Dunstable Road near Tilsworth. Pylon lines stand out in the flat landscape.



The Five Knolls on the Dunstable Downs provide a distinctive backdrop, seen from Well Head Road, east of Totternhoe.

Visual and perceptual character

- 5A.5 This is a strikingly flat, open clay landscape offering distant views across an exposed plain. The vale contrasts dramatically with the steep slopes and ridgelines of the *Dunstable Downs*, *Totternhoe Chalk Escarpments* (9a and 9b) and *Toddington- Hockcliffe Clay Hills* (8a) that form prominent backdrops to views and offer some sense of enclosure. Similarly, the small knoll of *Billington Clay Hills* (8b) that rises out of the vale is a distinct landmark feature.
- 5A.6 The landscape is typically rural, open and exposed with little development – beyond the major growth and development south of Leighton Buzzard. The influence of poorly integrated urban development detracts from the rural character locally, in addition to the A505 and pylon lines.

Cultural pattern and historic character

- 5A.7 The history of settlement in this area has been strongly influenced by the difference between the lighter soils on the Lower Chalk in the upper Ouzel tributary valleys, and the intractable nature of the exposed Gault Clay in the lower western part of the vale. Some scatters of Neolithic/Bronze Age flints on the chalky soils show clearance for agriculture in early prehistory. Evidence of Iron Age and Roman settlement occurs regularly along the foot of the chalk escarpment around the edge of the vale, with villas occupying prime positions at the head of the valleys, south of Totternhoe (a Scheduled Monument) and north of Houghton Regis. Springs arising at the foot of the chalk scarp attracted ritual deposition as sacred sites. The exposed Gault Clay in the lower parts of the vale has never been attractive for settlement, and there is a notable scarcity of archaeological evidence.
- 5A.8 The medieval landscape comprised small villages and hamlets, with associated irregular closes, surrounded by extensive areas of open common fields. Several of the historic settlements developed round the edges of greens. The south edge of Stanbridge and Tilsworth greens fall within the north of this area. Eaton Bray had several distinct foci before 20th century agglomeration, of which the north and south (round Great Green Farm, and Moor End) were centred round greens. Church End, Totternhoe is a nucleated settlement focussed on the parish church, while Middle End and Lower End developed as linear settlements around the foot of the Totternhoe promontory, probably serving the castle and quarries above. At the north-east end of the area, pockets of old enclosure survive round the historic areas of Thorn, Calcutt Farm and Bidwell.
- 5A.9 Some ridge and furrow survives within areas of early enclosure, e.g. south of Stanbridge, and there are lynchets on Edlesborough Hill south of Eaton Bray, cut into the slopes during a time of serious arable land shortage. Ancient woodland and relict early enclosure boundaries survive south of Tilsworth, as do elements of the medieval deer park landscape at Park Farm, Eaton Bray.
- 5A.10 Otherwise, this is a landscape of predominantly Parliamentary Enclosure origin, with its characteristic rectilinear field boundary patterns, though there was significant removal of boundaries in the later 20th century.
- 5A.11 Orchards expanded in Eaton Bray and round the edges of Totternhoe after enclosure in the mid-19th century. Honeywick originated as a linear scatter of houses, each in its own orchard plot.
- 5A.12 The western end of the area was subject to extensive sand quarrying in the later 20th century (some are still active, such as Grovebury, south of Leighton Buzzard). The medieval priory of Grove was destroyed (after archaeological excavation) in the course of quarrying, though the fishponds survive in a strip of unquarried land adjacent to the River Ouzel.

- 5A.13 Scheduled ancient monuments are located at Thorn (moat, shrunken settlement and medieval woodbanks in the adjacent ancient woodland), Tilsworth Manor moat, and Park Farm, Eaton Bray (moat, fishponds and fragments of medieval deer park boundary).



Church in Stanbridge

Settlement pattern; built character

- 5A.14 The settlement pattern of the vale follows an essentially medieval pattern and is typically characterised by dispersed small villages and hamlets, with occasional scattered farms, but with extensive tracts of undeveloped land between areas of settlement. The major urban extension and development to the south of Leighton Buzzard is an exception to this pattern.
- 5A.15 The relatively sparse settlement contributes to the open, exposed character of the vale, with Eaton Bray being the only sizeable settlement, resulting from the agglomeration and amalgamation of a number of smaller settlement foci. The village has further expanded and merged with Edlesborough (in Buckinghamshire) - a mill stream running beneath former flour mills forms the village and county boundary. In the centre of the village are many good examples of timber-framed houses and cottages, with the edge of the settlement made up of buildings of mixed architectural style and age. The influence of the vale's geology is evident, with Eaton Bray church of Totternhoe stone forming a prominent feature. The water filled moat - the only remnant of a Norman Castle is a distinctive historic feature of the settlement.
- 5A.16 The vale also includes smaller hamlets and distinctive 'Ends' such as at Church End, Lower End which developed as linear settlements at the foot of the scarp. Although largely falling within the adjacent *Toddington-Hockliffe Clay Hills* (8a) the linear settlement of Stanbridge has extended into the vale. Individual farmsteads and associated agricultural buildings are scattered throughout the landscape (frequently bordered by solid coniferous hedges).
- 5A.17 Brick is the predominant building material, with some remaining roofs of thatch, but mostly now tiled.

Evaluation

Landscape Change

Past change	Potential Future Change
Agricultural intensification.	East of Leighton Linlade urban extension.
Loss and decline of hedgerows.	North Houghton Regis urban extension.
Major urban expansion and development south of Leighton Buzzard.	A5-M1 link road.
Settlement expansion – e.g. the linear development of Eaton Bray village.	Renewable energy developments.
Development of road and rail corridors	

Key positive landscape features/ strategic sensitivities of the landscape

- 5A.1.13 The flat, open character, which can be disrupted by inappropriate bunding, earth mounding, tree screening or creation of domed landforms which would appear as incongruous features within the vale context.
- 5A.1.14 Containment and backdrop provided by the *Toddington-Hockliffe Clay Hills* (8a) and the *Dunstable Downs* and *Totternhoe Chalk Escarpments* (9a and 9b).
- 5A.1.15 Medieval moats associated with historic settlements, often within areas of small irregular ancient closes.
- 5A.1.16 The extensive enclosure landscape, much diminished by 20th century boundary loss.
- 5A.1.17 Small areas of ridge and furrow grassland and small remnant areas of neutral grassland.
- 5A.1.18 Surviving hedgerow network which forms a strong geometric landscape pattern and is indicative of historic field patterns.
- 5A.1.19 Occasional blocks of secondary woodland and two blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland which are important as landscape features and for their biodiversity.
- 5A.1.20 Locally distinctive Aylesbury prune orchards at Eaton Bray and Totternhoe representing a significant phase in the landscape history of the area.
- 5A.1.21 Native black poplar and willow pollards along the Ouzel tributaries.
- 5A.1.22 The biodiversity corridors for the Ouzel tributaries.
- 5A.1.23 Rights of way crossing the vale providing public access.
- 5A.1.24 Panoramic views to the chalk escarpments, particularly Totternhoe Knolls and Dunstable Downs.
- 5A.1.25 Presence of historic mills eg Bellows Mill and Doolittle Mill.

Visual Sensitivity

- 5A.1.26 Clear views to, and prominent backdrop of, the *Toddington-Hockliffe Clay Hills* (8a) and the *Dunstable Downs* and *Totternhoe Chalk Escarpments* (9a and 9b) and panoramic views over the vale from these more elevated landscapes are sensitive.

- 5A.1.27 In general, views within the vale are sometimes limited or buffered by intervening features such as the embanked A505, overgrown hedges and areas of secondary woodland.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Eaton Bray Clay Vale is for **enhancement/renewal** of the landscape with some opportunities for creating new landscape character. Enhancing the overall condition of the landscape by restoring and repairing elements that have been lost or degraded would significantly strengthen the landscape pattern and distinctiveness of the vale.

Guidelines for New Development

- 5A.1.28 Create new woodland where this would expand and link to the existing woodland resource. Ensure that this respects the open views across the vale. There are particular opportunities for woodland creation adjacent to the transport corridors to minimise visual intrusion.
- 5A.1.29 Conserve the rural character of secondary roads and verges and limit urbanising influences such as widening, kerbing and the introduction of lighting.
- 5A.1.30 Conserve views to the landscapes of *Toddington-Hockliffe Clay Hills* (8a) and *Dunstable Downs and Totternhoe Chalk Escarpments* (9a and 9b).
- 5A.1.31 Retain village identity by preventing the merger of settlements and conserve the distinct and separate 'ends' e.g. expansion of Eaton Bray along the Eaton Bray Road towards Lower End and Totternhoe.
- 5A.1.32 Enhancements and improvements to entrances to villages.
- 5A.1.33 Ensure the scale and form of new development responds to the flat, open character of the landscape.
- 5A.1.34 Avoid creation of bunding or land raising in an attempt to conceal development. Such features are inappropriate in the context of this flat, open landscape.
- 5A.1.35 Ensure new development integrates well into the landscape. Ensure housing and industrial growth on existing urban edges also provides a strong landscape setting e.g. on the northern edge of Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable. Ensure that the A5-M1 link is well integrated into the local landscape and relates well to the new settlement edge.
- 5A.1.36 Encourage appropriate tree planting and discourage the development of solid coniferous shelterbelts around farmsteads and other properties.
- 5A.1.37 Avoid proliferation of industrial-style agricultural features e.g. steel gateways and concreting of field access points.
- 5A.1.38 Retain mature hedgerow trees, black poplars and willow pollards and encourage regeneration of saplings as replacement stock.
- 5A.1.39 Ensure restoration of sand pits responds to landscape character and nature conservation objectives e.g. consider opportunities for creating further areas of woodland and neutral grassland.

Landscape Management Guidelines

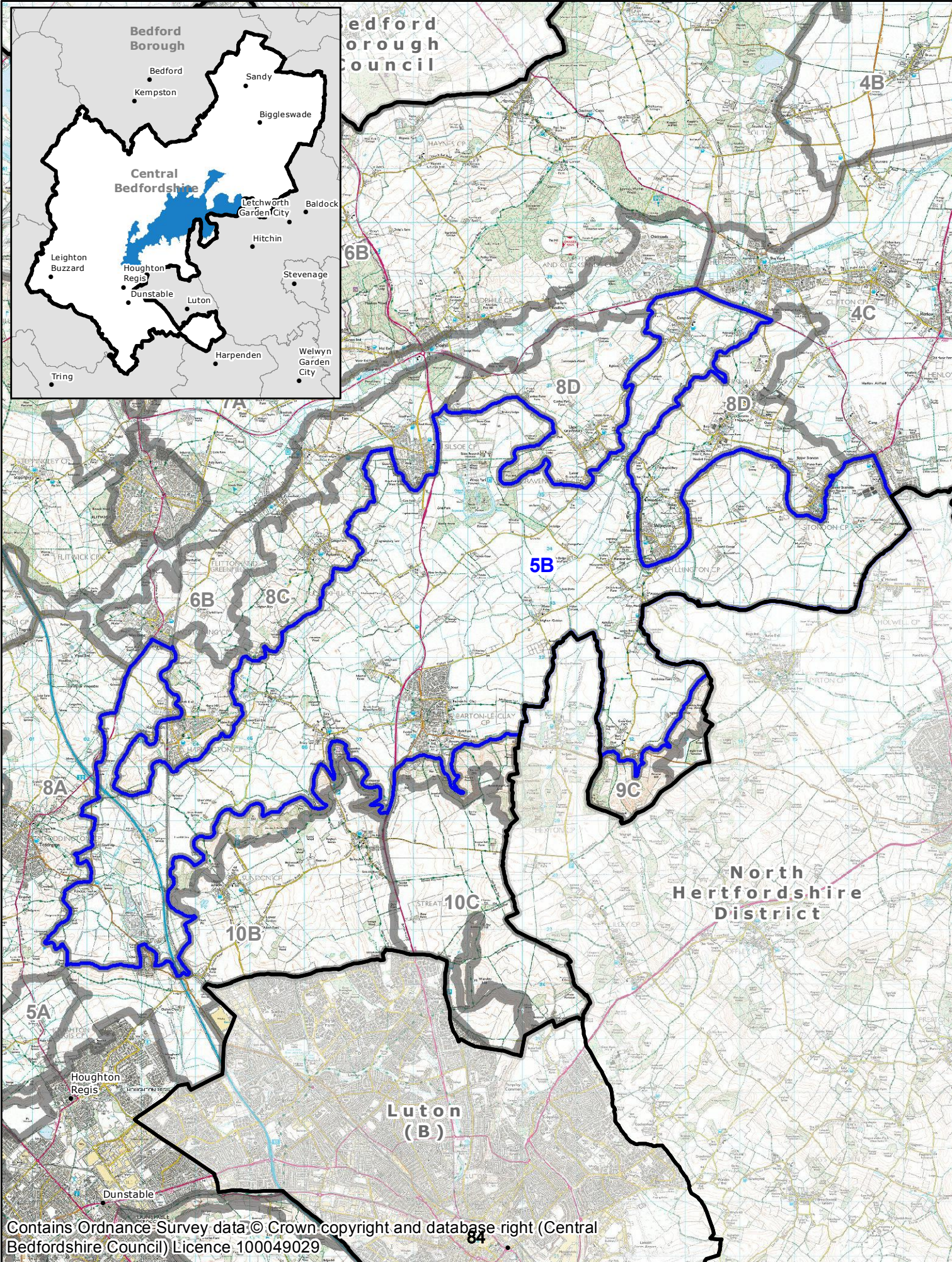
- 5A.1.40 Bring existing ancient woodlands under appropriate management regimes e.g. reintroduce coppice management.
- 5A.1.41 Promote the restoration and management of surviving historic orchards and explore opportunities for re-establishing plum orchards (particularly the growing of locally distinctive varieties).
- 5A.1.42 Restore and improve the condition and structure of the enclosure hedgerow boundaries, particularly adjacent to the transport corridors by laying, coppicing and gapping up. The small irregular fields around settlements should be conserved and enhanced.

- 5A.1.43 Conserve the medieval moats and earthworks, and their historic landscape settings, particularly Park Farm (Eaton Bray) and Thorn.
- 5A.1.44 Encourage restoration and management of neutral grassland - priority areas for grassland recreation are the tributary corridors and areas where ridge and furrow survives. Conserve existing areas of pasture with ridge and furrow.
- 5A.1.45 Enhance the ecological value, visual presence of and access to the Ouzel Brook and associated Ouzel tributaries.
- 5A.1.46 Promote positive management of areas used for horse grazing, including retention of hedgerows, good sward management and minimising proliferation of associated buildings and structures.
- 5A.1.47 Improve opportunities for recreation within the vale e.g. access to the River Ouzel and connections from the Dunstable Downs Chalk Escarpment (9a) which, enjoys excellent views but poor connection with the vale landscape.
- 5A.1.48 Improve arable farmland habitats, for example by managing arable field margins, overwintering stubbles, etc.

Also refer to the following documents:

- Luton and Southern Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan: Network Area 3 Leighton Linlade to Dunstable
- Totternhoe Countryside Area Masterplan
- Chalk Arc Landscape Assessment

5B: Barton-le-Clay Clay Vale



5B Barton-le-Clay Vale

Location and Boundaries

- 5B.1 Defined by the underlying Gault Clay geology, the vale is bordered to the north by the elevated landform of the *Clay Hills* (where Boulder Clay has capped the underlying Gault) and by the southern extent of the prominent *Mid Greensand Ridge* (6b). To the south, the vale abuts *The Clappers Chalk Escarpment* (9c) - that marks the northern edge of the band of chalk. A landscape of similar character extends eastwards across administrative boundaries into Hertfordshire.

Summary of landscape character: Key characteristics

- 5B.1.1 A flat or gently rolling large scale open landscape (defined by a Gault Clay geology), with the River Flit, River Ivel and their associated tributary streams running through the Vale.
- 5B.1.2 Expansive views across the vale to the prominent hill landscapes of the Chalk Escarpment, (9c), Greensand Ridge (6b) and Clay Hills (8a and 8d) that border the vale and provide a sense of containment.
- 5B.1.3 Land use predominantly defined by intensive arable cropping in medium to large arable fields, with some smaller fields remaining in pasture at the base of the Toddington-Hockliffe Clay Hills (8a). Small scale market gardening complexes occur occasionally along the main routes e.g. at Flitwick Road, north of Westoning.
- 5B.1.4 Field boundaries are largely characterised by short flailed, gappy hedges. Old hedgerow lines are marked in places by surviving hedgerow trees.
- 5B.1.5 Some areas of marginal, unmanaged, farmland (as well as horse grazing paddocks) intersperse arable fields, line transport corridors, and occur around settlements.
- 5B.1.6 The M1, A6 and Midland Mainline Railway cut north-south through the landscape, having a strong visual and audible presence. Toddington Services are prominent, clearly visible from the adjacent Toddington-Hockliffe Clay Hills (8a) landscape character area.
- 5B.1.7 Pylons and electricity lines cross the landscape - the concentration around the settlement of Chalton, for example, forming a cluttered skyline.
- 5B.1.8 Dispersed pattern of settlement - dominated by Barton-le-Clay. Individual farmsteads and associated agricultural buildings occur regularly.
- 5B.1.9 Settlement character is varied. Reddish-brown and buff brick, slate and clay tiling and some thatch are consistent materials of pre 20th century properties.
- 5B.1.10 Historic features include medieval earthworks and several moats – which are significant visual features surviving within a historic landscape context.
- 5B.1.11 Wrest Park (Grade 1 listed, managed by English Heritage, with an extensive and complex area of pleasure grounds and park surrounding a country mansion) imparts a designed character with tree-lined avenues and plantations creating a wooded context.
- 5B.1.12 Some small knolls occur within the vale at Higham Gobion and adjacent to Hipsey Spinney bringing localised variation to the landform.
- 5B.1.13 Occasional unimproved neutral and calcareous meadows (some retaining ridge and furrow), together with scattered remnant semi-natural ancient woodland, including the nationally important Fancott Woods and Meadows SSSI.
- 5B.1.14 The recreational routes of the Icknield Way Trail and the John Bunyan Trail connect the Vale with the adjacent Chalk Escarpment, Clay Hills and Greensand Ridge.

Landscape Character Description

Physical and natural landscape

- 5B.2 The Barton-le-Clay Clay Vale is a flat, open agricultural landscape affording distant views. It is dominated by intensive arable cropping; very little dairying, the traditional vale land use, remains. A number of key features create local variations in character. The vale is strongly influenced in the north, by the Grade 1 listed Wrest Park, managed by Heritage England. Here, the parkland and pleasure grounds bring a designed quality to the landscape and a noticeable increase in tree cover and pasture. To the north east the vale becomes narrower and takes on more of a valley form - marking the transition to the adjacent Ivel Clay River Valley.
- 5B.3 The agricultural land is characterised by thin, gappy and short-flailed hedges that no longer create a strong landscape pattern. Although dominated by arable cropping, the vale contains some important areas of nature conservation value including Fancott Woods and Meadows SSSI. Tributary streams, including the source and main tributary of the River Flit and Campton Brook, plus seasonally wet drainage channels run through the landscape. These can be picked out by trees aligning the corridors.
- 5B.4 One of the defining characteristics of this landscape is its interrelationship with *The Clappers Chalk Escarpment* (9c) that lies immediately to the south. The scarp provides a dramatic contrast in landform and land cover - the steep, heavily wooded, slopes forming a prominent backdrop. Similarly, the hill and ridge landscapes that border the vale to the north provide a sense contrast and containment.



The Clappers scarp ridge provides a dramatic contrast and prominent backdrop against the wide flat landscape



Long open views into the vale from the higher ground of the clay hills north of Upper Gravenhurst, and across to the clay hills the other side of the valley.

Biodiversity

- 5B.5 Farmland habitats such as arable field margins, hedgerows, pond, ditches and improved grassland are dominant and support a range of farmland species. Unimproved neutral grassland would have been a particular feature of the vale in the past although little now remains with the exception of occasional scattered sites. Fancott Meadows (SSSI) is a good example of unimproved neutral/marshy grassland.
- 5B.6 In general, woodland is scarce - small copses of ancient woodland such as Hipsey Spinney and Aspleybury Wood are scattered through the area. The most extensively wooded area is around Wrest Park, which contains large stands of semi-natural woodland and

ornamental plantations. The River Flit and Campton Brook are significant ecological features. As well as the watercourses themselves, additional habitat features include willow pollards, scrub and small stands of wetland vegetation present along their margins and in adjacent ditches.

Visual and perceptual character

- 5B.7 The flat, open agricultural landscape affords distant views. Although the vale is predominantly rural in character, it is influenced by main transport corridors, settlement and infrastructure that dilute the sense of tranquillity locally. This is particularly evident in the west where the M1 and Midland Mainline converge close to the village of Chalton and where the skyline is dominated by pylons and electricity lines. Views across the vale to the more elevated landscapes of the *Clappers Chalk Escarpment* (9c), *Greensand Ridge* (6b) and *Clay Hills* (8d) are a key feature.



The avenue to Wrest House

Cultural Pattern and Historic Landscape

- 5B.8 The historic landscape character is one of dispersed and fragmented settlement and historic land units. For example, Portobello Farm and Faldo (now in Pulloxhill and Barton parishes) were historically outlying detached parts of Higham Gobion parish. Much of the area was anciently enclosed, with open fields occupying small pockets. The dispersed settlements were surrounded by small irregular closes, many areas of which survive.
- 5B.9 A line of settlements grew up along the spring line at the foot of the chalk escarpment – Pegsdon, Barton, Sharpenhoe and Chalton. Others occupied slightly raised positions between the stream valleys.
- 5B.10 Wrest Park has played a very influential role on the landscape in the north of the area, not just in the immediate area of the park but in the element of design and retention of specific features in the surrounding landscape.
- 5B.11 The south-western end of the area has been heavily impacted by the construction of the M1 and Midland Railway, and by the extensive chalk quarrying around Sundon.
- 5B.12 There are a number of substantial medieval earthworks, reflecting the dispersed settlement pattern; many are associated with shrunken or deserted medieval sites. Several pockets of medieval ridge and furrow also survive. The scheduled monuments are: Bury Farm moat (Sharpenhoe), Faldo moat (Barton), Upbury moats (Pulloxhill); Higham Gobion fishery, two moats at Aspley, and 'Church Panel' moat (Shillington). Most of these are significant visible features within a still surviving historic landscape context.

Settlement pattern; built character

- 5B.13 An essentially dispersed pattern of settlement across the vale. Settlement is concentrated at Barton-le-Clay dramatically located at the foot of the chalk escarpment and with views back to the hills. Proximity to Luton and good communications (A6) has resulted in considerable post war expansion of the village. Barton-le-Clay contains a core area with a rural village character. The wide grass verge along the High Street a vestige of a former common, is a distinctive feature.
- 5B.14 Buildings are typically white or pale coloured (plaster or colour washed brick) with tiles - the expanded edges of the settlement are of a range of styles and building materials - resulting in a mixed settlement character overall. Sharpenhoe is a smaller scarp foot settlement closely linked to the chalk as is Chalton to the west. Higham Gobion a small village located on a rise in land within the vale. Elsewhere settlement is limited to small scattered dwellings/farms with reddish-brown and buff brick, slate and clay tiling and some thatch being consistent materials of pre 20th century properties. Larger scale development includes industrial estates within farmland and the Charlton substation west of the M1.
- 5B.15 To the north of the character area Wrest House and associated buildings form an important built feature.

Evaluation

Landscape Change

Past Change	Potential Future Change
Loss and decline of hedgerows changing the landscape pattern.	New M1 Junction 11a, connecting to the A5-M1 Link Road and Woodside Link, and potential M1-A6 link.
Utility services and national grid infrastructure (pylon lines and substation at Chalton).	Sundon Rail Freight Interchange and associated employment.
Major road and railway development cutting through the vale.	Recreational pressure arising from growth north of Luton.
	Potential for future growth at Barton-le- Clay, to be identified through the Neighbourhood Plan.
	Renewable energy developments.

Key positive landscape features/ strategic sensitivities of the landscape

- 5B.1.16 Clear views to the *Clay Hills* (8a and 8d), *Mid Greensand Ridge* (6b) and the *Chalk Escarpment* (9c) which provide a strong sense of containment and prominent backdrop.
- 5B.1.17 Remaining hedgerows - indicating historic field patterns. Scattered mature trees - marking the position of former hedgerow lines.
- 5B.1.18 Wrest Park is a nationally important designed landscape with a significant effect on the characteristics of the surrounding area - wider planned estate landscape.

- 5B.1.19 Medieval earthworks and surviving blocks of old enclosure reflect the historically dispersed settlement pattern.
- 5B.1.20 Historic features notably medieval earthworks and moated sites.
- 5B.1.21 John Bunyan Trail and the Icknield Way Trail - recreational routes that connect the vale to the *Wooded Greensand Ridge* and the *Clay Hills*.
- 5B.1.22 Remaining areas of woodland providing visual interest as well as an ecological resource (areas of ancient woodland such as at Hipsey Spinney).
- 5B.1.23 The sense of rural tranquillity which is notable in the eastern part of the area related to absence of settlement and transport routes.

Visual Sensitivity

- 5B.1.24 The flat and open vale affords some long views and is therefore visually sensitive, although long views are frequently restricted and buffered by embankments, overgrown hedgerows and some areas of more undulating landform. Visual sensitivity is increased where the vale meets with the adjacent, prominent landforms of *The Clappers Chalk Escarpment* (9c), *Mid Greensand Ridge* (6b) and the *Clay Hills* (8a, 8c and 8d), due to elevated views across the vale from such landscapes.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Barton-le-Clay Clay Vale is for **enhancement/renewal** of the landscape. Enhancing the condition of the landscape by restoring and repairing elements that have been lost or degraded (such as the hedgerow network) could significantly strengthen the character of the vale. In addition, there is scope for introducing new landscape elements such as woodland creation particularly aligning the main transport corridors. Also to conserve and enhance the setting of significant historic landscape assets such as Wrest Park.

Guidelines for New Development

- 5B.1.25 Opportunities for woodland creation adjacent to the transport corridors e.g. to minimise visual intrusion of Toddington Services and M1 corridor and extending the existing woodland resource and connecting to other areas of existing woodland. Woodland planting should ensure views across the flat, open vale are retained, and reflect the historic grain of the landscape, reinforcing former hedgerow lines and field patterns.
- 5B.1.26 Conserve the rural character and tranquillity associated with the eastern part of the vale, which is less affected by the influences of transport corridors and housing development.
- 5B.1.27 Enhance the ecological value and visual presence of and access to the River Flit, Campton Brook and other tributary streams crossing the vale. These areas are a priority for establishing areas of pasture.
- 5B.1.28 Conserve the open views to the *Mid Greensand Ridge* (6b), *The Clappers Chalk Escarpment* (9c) and *Toddington-Hockliffe, Harlington-Pulloxhill* and *Upper Gravenhurst-Meppershall Clay Hills* (8a, 8c and 8d) and the areas of undeveloped land at the base of the adjacent slopes to retain the visual contrast between these landscapes.
- 5B.1.29 Retain individual settlement identity and consider appropriate limits to expansion of Barton and Chalton at the base of the scarp and seek to enhance integration of these settlements within the vale setting.

- 5B.1.30 Ensure that conversion of farm buildings for business use does not result in large number of industrial estates located within the rural area.
- 5B.1.31 Avoid cluttering on the skyline by additional large vertical structures in areas of high pylon density as at Chalton.
- 5B.1.32 Avoid creation of bunding or land raising in an attempt to conceal development. Such features are inappropriate in the context of this flat, open landscape.
- 5B.1.33 Safeguard and enhance areas of old enclosure around surviving or shrunken/deserted historic settlements.
- 5B.1.34 Conserve historic landscape features such as medieval earthworks and moated sites and their intact landscape setting.
- 5B.1.35 Conserve the landscape and setting of Wrest Park house and gardens.

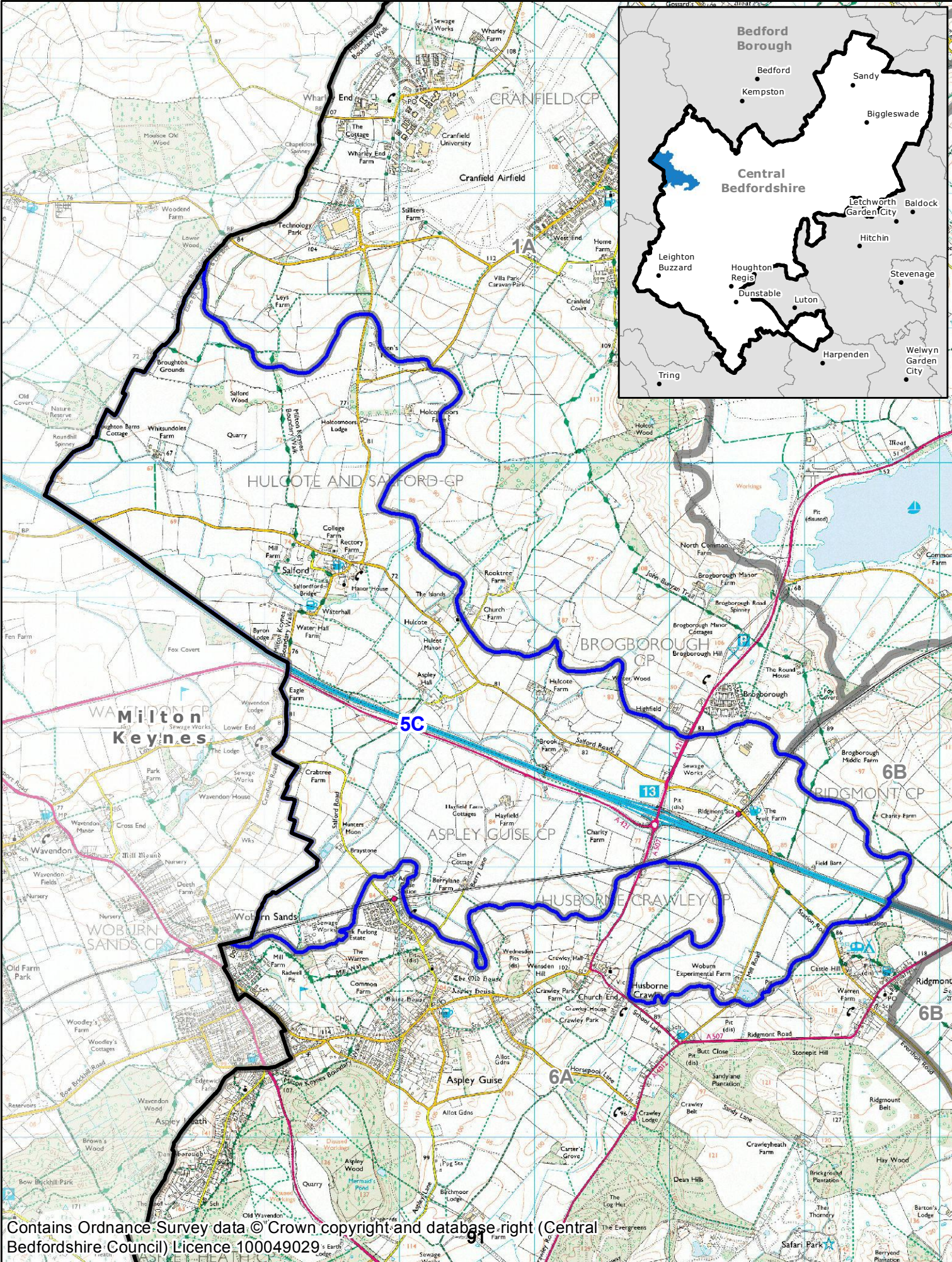
Landscape Management Guidelines

- 5B.1.36 Restore and improve the condition and structure of hedgerow boundaries, particularly adjacent to the transport corridors and promote a new generation of hedgerow trees.
- 5B.1.37 Seek to improve arable farmland habitats, for example by managing arable field margins, overwintering stubbles, etc.
- 5B.1.38 Conserve historic landscape features such as medieval earthworks and moated sites and their intact landscape setting.
- 5B.1.39 Conserve the landscape and setting of Wrest Park house and gardens.

Also refer to the following documents:

- Mid Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan

5C: Salford - Aspley Clay Vale



5C Salford – Aspley Clay Vale

Location and boundaries

- 5C.1 The *Salford – Aspley Clay Vale* is a relatively small character area on the western boundary of Central Bedfordshire. Defined by a combination of its flat topography and Oxford Clay geology, the vale is bordered to the north by elevated landscape of the *Clay Farmland* and to the south by the prominent *Wooded Greensand Ridge* (6a and 6b). The dramatic landform of the *Wooded Greensand Ridge* and plateau landscapes - on either side of the vale emphasise the flat and open character of the vale. This area of the landscape type is geographically separated from the other vales (5d and 5e) that lie to the north of the *Wooded Greensand Ridge* by the intervening area of *Clay Farmland* (1c) which extends around Cranfield. The area is partly within the Forest of Marston Vale.

Summary of landscape character: Key characteristics

- 5C.1.1 A large to medium scale, gently undulating landscape from 65-80m AOD defined by the underlying Oxford Clay geology and relatively flat topography, with minor areas of river gravel associated with tributary streams along the western boundary.
- 5C.1.2 Intermittent views provided across the vale to the prominent landscapes of the *Greensand Ridge* that borders the vale to the south and provide a sense of containment, plus views to the elevated clay plateau landscape to the north.
- 5C.1.3 Land use predominantly defined by intensive arable cropping contained within large arable fields, although pockets of ridge furrow survive in small areas of pasture.
- 5C.1.4 Fairly strong surviving pattern of field boundaries, although these are typically in a poor condition - short flailed, gappy or overgrown, strengthened by post and wire fencing. Old hedgerow lines are marked in places by surviving hedgerow trees.
- 5C.1.5 Tributary streams and drainage channels (aligning Salford Road) associated with the River Great Ouse, cut through the landscape - underlain by alluvium and valley gravels.
- 5C.1.6 The prominent, embanked M1 with conspicuous junction 13 with the A421 dual carriageway cuts east-west and dissects the landscape, having a dominant visual and audible presence together with the A421 and A507.
- 5C.1.7 The loosely clustered settlement of Salford and small hamlet of Hulcote are sheltered at the base of the subtle tributary valley of the River Great Ouse.
- 5C.1.8 Settlement character is consistent and has some relationship with the vernacular style of the *Wooded Greensand Ridge* - dark reddish-brown with buff brick detailing and clay tiling, characteristic of pre and early 20th century properties.
- 5C.1.9 Individual farmsteads and associated agricultural buildings are scattered throughout the landscape are often set back from the roadside by long drives lined with tree planting.
- 5C.1.10 Development surrounding J13 of the M1 including large scale building units exert a large scale and industrial influence in the south east of the area. Views south west to the edge of Milton Keynes enhance the perception of the area's proximity to the urban centre.
- 5C.1.11 Prominent views from the vale to Cranfield University and Technology Park located on an elevated area of plateau in the adjacent *Clay Farmland* landscape type.
- 5C.1.12 Some small remnant areas of woodland including the ancient woodland at Salford Wood.
- 5C.1.13 The recreational routes of the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk and various public footpaths link the vale with Woburn Sands and the adjacent village of Aspley Guise.

Landscape Character Description

Physical and natural landscape

- 5C.2 This is a large to medium scale flat and open clay vale contained by the adjacent elevated landscapes of the *Wooded Greensand Ridge* to the south and the *Clay Farmland* to the north. Intermittent views to these landscapes are characterised by dramatic wooded horizons - on the Greensand Ridge - and to modern, built development at Cranfield University and Technology Park - on the plateau, and views to houses and large scale retail units to the eastern edge of Milton Keynes in the south west of the character area.
- 5C.3 Arable farming remains the predominant land use contained within a fairly strong surviving hedgerow network. However, the vale has been subject to large scale fragmentation. Highly urbanised transport corridors including the embanked M1 corridor, A421, A507 and interchange at J13, large-scale building units to the north and south of Junction 13 and areas of marginal land are frequently in view. Some diversification away from agriculture is evident, including business use of former farm buildings.
- 5C.4 Distinctive landscape elements include the subtle tributary valleys which permeate the landscape, particularly to the west, and the essentially rural 'unsettled' character. Areas of pasture with the predominantly arable landscape are an important visual feature and contain some earthworks evidence of former settlement and ridge and furrow.

Biodiversity

- 5C.5 Farmland habitats such as arable field margins, hedgerows, pond, ditches and improved grassland are dominant and support a range of farmland species. Unimproved neutral grassland would have been a particular feature of the vale in the past although little now remains with the exception of occasional scattered sites such as at Aspley Guise Meadows. In general, woodland is scarce, with occasional small copses and tree belts - a small area of ancient woodland at Salford Wood. Within this area there are numerous drainage channels and small tributary streams, particularly to the west, which form valuable ecological corridors in the landscape.

Visual and perceptual character

- 5C.6 Intermittent views to the wooded horizons of the elevated landscape of the *Wooded Greensand Ridge* to the south, and the built development at Cranfield University and Technology Park on the plateau of the *Clay Farmland* character area to the north provide a sense of enclosure. Views to the urban edge of Milton Keynes and Junction 13 of the M1 exert an industrial influence on the flat open vale. The rural and unsettled character remains away from the primary road corridors and pockets of industry.



A tributary stream cutting through flat agricultural fields to the south of Salford



The flat, rural character away from the busy road corridors - on Wavedon Road near Salford

Cultural pattern and historic character

- 5C.7 Iron Age and Roman occupation on gravels on the north side of the vale indicate that this was an open and farmed landscape from early times.
- 5C.8 Much of the area was subject to piecemeal or early private enclosure, possibly contemporary with the establishment of some of the outlying farmsteads; some areas of these early fields survive well. The regular fields to the south-east, towards Husborne Crawley and Ridgmont, have an appearance of parliamentary enclosure, but were actually the result of the reorganisation of an older irregular pattern by the Bedford estate in the 19th century.
- 5C.9 There are few substantial earthwork sites. There are slight settlement earthworks around Salford & Hulcote, and a medieval moated site at Conn's Farm, Cranfield; the latter was probably an assart settlement derived from woodland clearance on the outer perimeter of Cranfield parish, just within the edge of the Salford vale. There are pockets throughout the area of medieval ridge and furrow.

Settlement pattern; built character

- 5C.10 The vale is generally unsettled apart from the small village of Salford and neighbouring hamlet of Hulcote, both sheltered in the base of the subtle tributary valley of the River Great Ouse. The settlements have a similar vernacular character to settlement on the adjacent *Wooded Greensand Ridge* - red brick, clay tiles, white windows being the typical building materials. Large individual farmsteads are dispersed throughout the vale, typically set back from the roadside by long drives lined by mature trees. Large-scale building units around the J13 interchange exert an industrial influence locally in the south-east of the character area and views to the residential edge of Milton Keynes and of large scale retail units to the east of Milton Keynes from the south west of the character area enhance the perception of proximity to the urban centre of Milton Keynes.



Mature trees line a long drive to a farm off Cranfield Road in the north of the character area

Evaluation

Landscape change

Past Change	Potential Future Change
<p>Loss and declining condition of hedgerows.</p> <p>Major road and railway development cutting through the vale</p> <p>Urban development within and outside the character area including at Cranfield Airport and Technology Park, Brogborough and Junction 13 of the M1 and A507 and on the outskirts of Milton Keynes.</p> <p>Expansion on the eastern fringe of Milton Keynes and to the north of Aspley Guise located on the adjacent <i>Wooded Greensand Ridge (6a)</i>.</p>	<p>Potential further urban expansion of Milton Keynes, particularly residential development to the east of the town.</p> <p>Improvements to the railway line between Milton Keynes and Bedford as part of East West Rail, and redevelopment of Ridgmont Station.</p> <p>Upgrade to the A421 from Junction 13 to Milton Keynes.</p> <p>Pressure for future growth on land between Aspley Guise and the M1.</p>

Key positive landscape features/ strategic sensitivities of the landscape

- 5C.1.14 The subtle tributary valleys and drainage channels associated with the River Great Ouse which is particularly vulnerable to loss as a result of built development.
- 5C.1.15 Strong pattern of remaining hedgerows and hedgerow trees - which are vulnerable to further loss and decline through lack of management.
- 5C.1.16 A varied field pattern - some of the field patterns survive from late medieval/early post-medieval times, as a result of early private enclosure. Others are a result of 19th century reorganisation.
- 5C.1.17 Small fields around Hulcote and Salford which contain some earthwork evidence of former settlement. Surviving pockets of ridge and furrow.
- 5C.1.18 Consistent settlement character and strong identity of Salford which is especially vulnerable to change as a result of its proximity to the eastern edge of Milton Keynes with potential for amalgamation of settlements or encroachment by development which is urban in character.
- 5C.1.19 Remnant areas of deciduous woodland including the small Salford Wood – vulnerable to change, as well as fragments of woodland which form part of wider woodland links.
- 5C.1.20 The recreational routes of the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk and various public footpaths link the vale with Woburn Sands and the adjacent village of Aspley Guise located on the *Wooded Greensand Ridge (6a)*.

Visual Sensitivity

- 5C.1.21 Views to the adjacent *Woburn and Mid Greensand Ridge (6a, 6b)* to the south, gained from the wide open areas of the vale, which forms a wooded and undeveloped skyline – particularly in locations where views are long range;
- 5C.1.22 The visual setting of the Greensand Ridge, including the setting of villages such as Aspley Guise, with open land creating the contrasting foreground at the foot of the ridge.
- 5C.1.23 The subtle character of the vale, largely defined by the hedgerow framework.

Landscape Strategy

Within *Salford - Aspley Clay Vale* the aim should be to **conserve** the subtle tributary valleys associated with the Great Ouse, settlement character of Salford and the hedgerow pattern. The overall strategy is for **enhancement/renewal** of the landscape. Enhancing the overall condition of the landscape by restoring and repairing elements that have been lost or degraded, notably hedgerows, would significantly strengthen the landscape pattern and distinctiveness of the vale.

The Forest of Marston Vale Forest Plan should be referred to as the endorsed strategy for environmentally-led regeneration of that part of the area which falls within the Forest.

Guidelines for New Development

- 5C.1.24 Opportunities for introducing new landscape elements e.g. woodland creation along busy transport corridors to reduce their visual and audible intrusion i.e. along the M1, junction 13 and A421. Woodland planting should respect wide, open views across the vale.
- 5C.1.25 Safeguard open land at the foot of the ridge to provide the setting for the ridge and the associated villages on the Greensand.
- 5C.1.26 Avoid expansion of main roads and junctions and ensure that any further growth of business parks does not further dilute the surviving rural character within the vale.
- 5C.1.27 Prevent further embanking of roads which interrupt the landform of this flat vale landscape and restrict views.
- 5C.1.28 Ensure any new development respects the consistent use of building materials at Salford and Hulcote - retaining the relationship with the vernacular style of the Wooded Greensand Ridge.
- 5C.1.29 Ensure an appropriate rural interface between settlement edges and the adjoining rural landscape. This is particularly important where settlement edge expansion is proposed e.g. to the east of Milton Keynes.
- 5C.1.30 Retention of agricultural hedgerows, appropriate new tree screening and careful design of boundaries and lighting will help create a sympathetic rural/urban edge.
- 5C.1.31 Creation of woodland links - e.g. between Holcott Wood to Salford Wood. Strong structural woodland planting and landscaping, such as grassland, hedgerow corridors, new public green space and enhanced management of existing ancient woodlands.
- 5C.1.32 Conserve the clear views and visual relationship with the adjacent *Clay Farmland* (1a) and *Wooded Greensand Ridge* (6a, 6b).
- 5C.1.33 Conserve and enhance recreational access and connections e.g. from the vale to the *Woburn Wooded Greensand Ridge* (6a) as well as improved links between the west of the character area and Milton Keynes. There is a major opportunity for creation of a green corridor with recreational access links to form part of a potential linear park (Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Project).
- 5C.1.34 Prevent further fragmentation of the landscape by large scale development and ensure active management of those areas that have already been fragmented/become marginal e.g. opportunities for habitat enhancements and landscape improvements at Brogborough Lake.
- 5C.1.35 Prevent further urbanisation of the rural roads - widening/kerbing and ensure that traffic management measures are sympathetic to the rural character.
- 5C.1.36 Enhance recreational links with the Milton Keynes boundary walks and improve recreational connections with the *Wooded Greensand Ridge*.

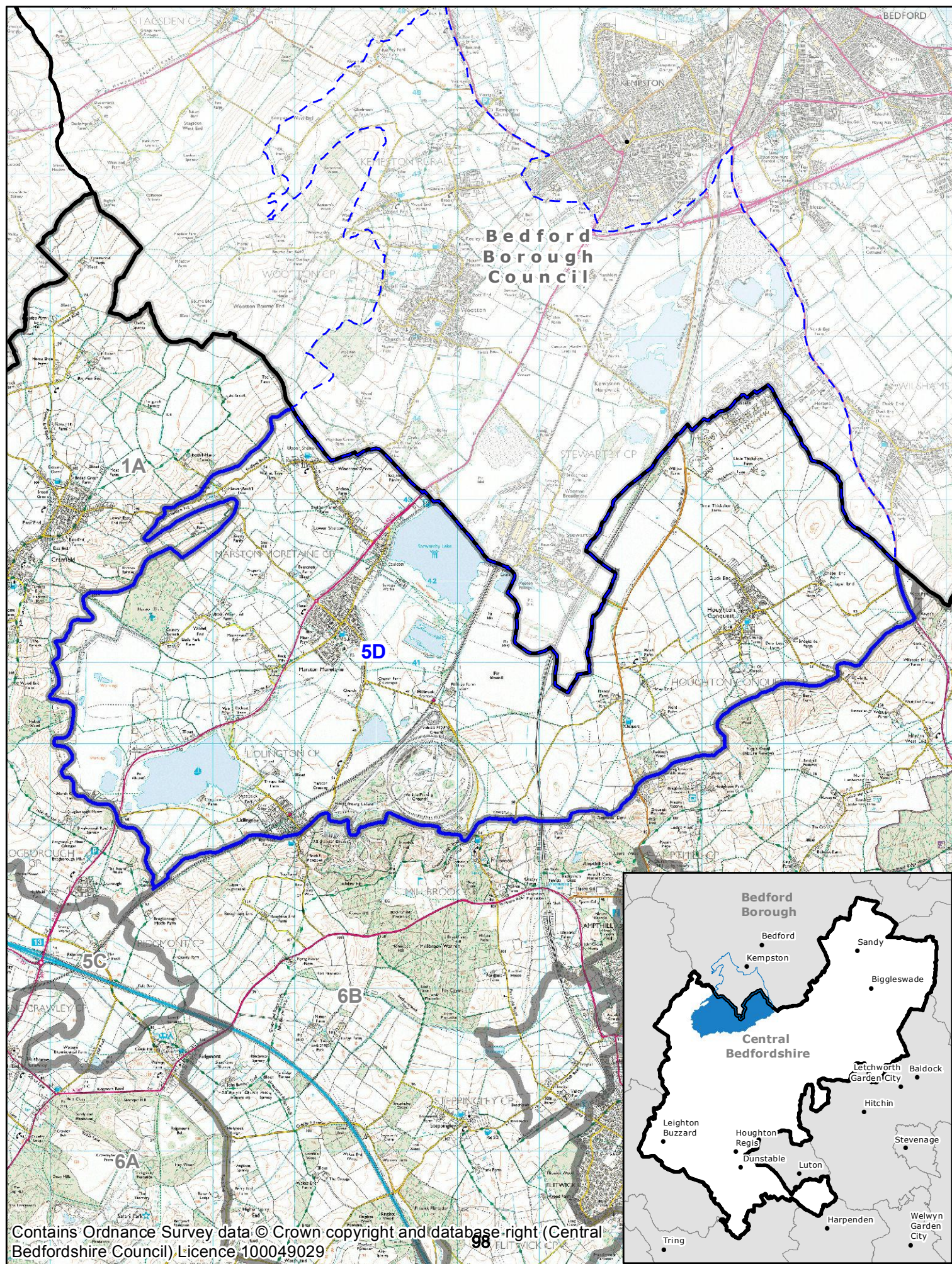
Landscape Management Guidelines

- 5C.1.37 Maintain and enhance the condition and structure of hedgerow boundaries to strengthen landscape/historic pattern and ecological value.
- 5C.1.38 Enhance the character and ecological value of the subtle tributary valleys running through Salford by planting appropriate aquatic species along the water courses.
- 5C.1.39 Extend and link areas of woodland whilst respecting the open character of the vale - particularly on the upper slopes to the north of the vale where woodland was historically located.
- 5C.1.40 Enhance the efficiency, aesthetics and ecological value of drainage ditches - implementing appropriate management strategies.
- 5C.1.41 Conserve the areas of sheep pasture that intersperse the arable land.

Also refer to the following documents:

- Mid Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan
- Aspley Guise project (Mid Bedfordshire GI Plan) including opportunities for conservation and recreation.
- Marston Vale Forest Plan
- the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Park
- Aspley Triangle Landscape Character Assessment

5D: North Marston Clay Vale



5D North Marston Clay Vale

Location and Boundaries

- 5D.1 The *North Marston Clay Vale* occurs in the north of Central Bedfordshire and spans the border with Bedford Borough. The northern part of the character area lies within Bedford Borough – refer to the companion LCA for Bedford Borough. Within Central Bedfordshire the landscape is defined by the prominent, elevated landform of the *Woburn and Mid Greensand Ridge* (6a and 6b) on its southern boundary and the *Cranfield to Stagsden Clay Farmland* (1a) to the west - forming a strong contrast to the vale, exaggerating its flat and open character. The whole area is within the Forest of Marston Vale.

Summary of landscape character: Key characteristics

- 5D.1.1 A large scale, open vale, defined by Oxford Clay geology, located between the elevated landscapes of the *Wooded Greensand Ridge* (6b) and the *Cranfield to Stagsden Clay Farmland* (1a) that provide a sense of containment.
- 5D.1.2 A large scale landscape with a mix of agriculture and fragmented by industrial activity including brick works, open cast clay pits, landfill, distribution centres and industrial estates, and major transport corridors including the A421.
- 5D.1.3 A legacy of clay extraction (for brick making) has resulted in a disturbed landscape with past and ongoing restoration. Flooded clay pits form a series of lakes throughout the vale such as at Marston Vale Millennium Country Park. These have created recreational value and ecological interest.
- 5D.1.4 Mature woodland is relatively scarce - the area does contain Marston Thrift SSSI a nationally important ancient ash/maple woodland site and more recent areas of community woodland as part of The Forest of Marston Vale including Conquest Wood.
- 5D.1.5 Open character with expansive views across the vale to the prominent landscapes of the wooded ridge to the south (*Mid Greensand Ridge* (6b)) and the *Cranfield to Stagsden Clay Farmland* (1a).
- 5D.1.6 Within Bedford Borough and the north of the character area, Bedford's urban fringe and town expansions e.g. Wootton and Wixams, bring strong urban fringe characteristics.
- 5D.1.7 A number of busy transport routes cut north south through the landscape - including the A421 and the main railway lines running from Bedford to London and Milton Keynes.
- 5D.1.8 Lines of pylons cut across the landscape and are highly visible - extending from the *Greensand Ridge*.
- 5D.1.9 Settlement is generally concentrated on the flattest areas of the vale, often associated with minor tributary valleys. The more undulating land towards the *Wooded Greensand Ridge* and the *Cranfield Clay Farmland* is characterised by occasional individual farmsteads. Late 20th century development has resulted in the coalescence of settlement as at Marston Moretaine.
- 5D.1.10 Stewartby (located just within Bedford Borough) – a model village is characterised by consistent red-brick houses set around large areas of green space. The adjacent Grade II listed chimney stacks dominate views.
- 5D.1.11 A number of restored landfill sites (creating domed landforms) and sewage treatment works which are often bounded by harsh, industrial boundary fencing.
- 5D.1.12 Numerous public rights of way including the John Bunyan Trail, Greensand Ridge Walk and the Marston Vale Trail provide connections to nearby recreational routes.

Landscape Character Description

Physical and natural landscape

- 5D.2 This is a large scale, flat and open clay vale with distant views to the contrasting landscapes of the *Mid Greensand Ridge* (6b) and the *Cranfield to Stagsden Clay Farmland*(1a) – which contain the vale and form a prominent backdrop to the south and west.
- 5D.3 The vale is distinctive as a result of large scale industrial activities including former clay extraction and landfill, more recent large scale industrial buildings and commercial development, major road and rail corridors, and areas that have undergone (and are undergoing) landscape restoration - notably the flooded clay pits forming a series of lakes, as well as arable farming contained within large open fields and the ongoing establishment of the Forest of Marston Vale. In the northern area within Bedford Borough, the vale is also greatly influenced by its proximity to Bedford where urban edge industrial and commercial estates and recent residential development create the perception of a more developed/ urban fringe area

Biodiversity

- 5D.4 Stewartby and Brogborough Lake are the largest areas of open water in the county. The water bodies are especially valued for breeding and over wintering wetland birds as well as a range of other wetland habitats including reed beds, marshy grassland and willow scrub. The Millennium Country Park has valuable wetland habitat including reed beds and wet grassland. Such habitats would have formerly been widespread in the area but have mostly been lost as a result of drainage and intensive farming. Several small watercourses and ditches also cross the vale. The largest area of woodland within the unitary authority is Marston Thrift (SSSI) ancient semi-natural woodland. Elsewhere mature woodland is sparse although new planting by the Community Forest is becoming increasingly apparent, such as at Conquest Wood, creating a stronger, more visible wooded framework.

Visual and perceptual character

- 5D.5 Distant views across the flat vale contrast with elevated landscapes of the *Mid Greensand Ridge* (6b) and the *Cranfield to Stagsden Clay Farmland*(1a) - containing the vale and forming a prominent backdrop to the south and west. Perceptual character is affected by the mix of land uses which add urban fringe qualities to the landscape, and fragment it.



Views over Lidlington Lake – a disused brickworks pit - to the slopes of the *Wooded Greensand Ridge* (6b) beyond



Roads such as the A421 cut through the landscape

Cultural pattern and historic character

- 5D.6 Although not an area favoured for early prehistoric occupation, later prehistoric and Roman settlement has been recorded on the lower slopes surrounding the Marston Vale, and associated with the streams which dissect it. Medieval settlement followed a similar pattern:
- 5D.7 The open common fields surrounding the settlements were enclosed in the late 18th/early 19th century, but many of the enclosure boundaries have subsequently been removed. Around the perimeter of the vale on the lower slopes of the clay plateau and Greensand ridge, smaller irregular fields survive. These originated either from early piecemeal enclosure of open fields, or from expansion of settlement and agriculture into former woodland areas.
- 5D.8 Brickmaking developed in the 18th and early 19th century as a seasonal industry in most parishes, but expanded dramatically in the later 19th and 20th century to create the industrial landscape which dominated the centre of the Vale.
- 5D.9 The most numerous visible earthwork sites are medieval moats associated with dispersed settlements. Those at Thrup End (Lidlington), Marston Moretaine, Kempston Hardwick and Houghton Conquest Rectory are scheduled monuments, but many others (and small areas of settlement earthworks) are unscheduled. There are small pockets of surviving ridge and furrow throughout the area.

Settlement pattern; built character

- 5D.10 Settlement traditionally focussed on the lower slopes of the higher landscapes surrounding the vale and the tributary streams crossing the vale. Settlements of medieval origin such as Houghton Conquest developed to the edge of the Vale, while Marston Moretaine is located adjacent to the Elstow Brook. Several smaller settlement foci throughout the Vale have been largely abandoned or shrunk in size, e.g. Wootton Pillinge, Marston Pillinge. The presence of small 'Ends' detached from the village is a particular characteristic of the *North Marston Clay Vale*.
- 5D.11 Stewartby is located just across the border within Bedford Borough. It is a model village begun in 1926 by the Stewart family, owners of the London Brick Company, and is characterised by consistent early 20th red brick housing focussed around large greens and flanked by the Stewartby Chimney Stacks - striking landmark features that are highly visible across the open plain.
- 5D.12 New planned development, together with the increase in woodland cover, will reduce the open character and create a new landscape structure within the Vale, which will include the Waterway Park and other green infrastructure.



Extensive views gained from Houghton House

Evaluation

Landscape Change

Past Change	Potential Future Change
<p>The legacy of clay extraction and subsequent large scale landscape restoration including creation of lakes e.g. at Marston Vale Millennium Country Park; restoration of Brogborough Landfill Site.</p> <p>Woodland planting as part of the Forest of Marston Vale.</p> <p>Modern residential expansion and significant transport corridors (e.g. A421), new interchanges, and views to large scale development e.g. Marston Gate .</p> <p>Marston Vale wind turbine at Millenium Country Park.</p>	<p>Pressure for future growth in the Vale.</p> <p>Continued residential expansion e.g. Wixams</p> <p>Improvements to the railway line between Milton Keynes and Bedford as part of East West Rail.</p> <p>Development of the Bedford- Milton Keynes Waterway Park.</p> <p>Ongoing woodland planting as part of the Forest of Marston Vale.</p> <p>Increased development at Millbrook Proving Ground.</p> <p>Development at low level within former clay pits.</p>

Key positive landscape features/ strategic sensitivities of the landscape

- 5D.1.13 The flat, open character, which can be disrupted by inappropriate bunding, earth mounding, tree screening or creation of domed landforms on landfill sites which appear as incongruous features within the vale context.
- 5D.1.14 Public rights of way which provide connections to recreational routes in adjacent areas and links to the urban area, often bordered by woodland or hedgerow providing integrated green infrastructure.
- 5D.1.15 Surviving areas of mature woodland including the Marston Thrift SSSI.
- 5D.1.16 Small irregular fields of medieval origin around the perimeter of the area, some associated with ancient woodland.
- 5D.1.17 Areas of medieval settlement earthworks and moat remains, only a few of which are scheduled.
- 5D.1.18 The village of Stewartby (lies within Bedford Borough) with its consistent, intact red brick character and large areas of green space. The industrial character of Marston Vale has its own historic significance.
- 5D.1.19 Landmark chimney stacks associated with the former brick works, which are a landmark and focus in the open landscape.
- 5D.1.20 The extensive lakes and wetlands associated with the restoration of former brick pits that have developed considerable ecological interest and require long term management to conserve and enhance their value.

Visual Sensitivity

- 5D.1.21 Extensive views - any development/ significant change within the vale is therefore likely to be visible over long distances. Some local containment provided by embankments and tree cover. Visibility will reduce as younger woodland matures .
- 5D.1.22 Visual relationship with the *Woburn and Mid Greensand Ridge* (6a and 6b) and the *Cranfield to Stagsden Clay Farmland* (1a) – particularly the largely undeveloped base of the wooded slope where the contrast between the wooded landform and the open vale is an important element.

Landscape Strategy

This is a landscape that has been disturbed and interrupted due to industrial activity, urban fringe development and the presence of major transport corridors. As a result the character of the landscape has become highly fragmented. The overall strategy therefore is to continue to **enhance/renew** the landscape of the Marston Clay Vale. In addition, the history of mineral extraction provides opportunities to continue to create new landscape character - as is evident through large scale restoration.

The Forest of Marston Vale Forest Plan should be referred to as the endorsed strategy for environmentally-led regeneration of the area. A planned approach to managing and enhancing the Vale will be crucial to the integration of growth and conservation of the landscape resource.

Guidelines for New Development

- 5D.1.23 Conserve local variation in character within the vale through a consistent and co-ordinated approach to landscape masterplanning within the growth area.
- 5D.1.24 Take opportunities for further landscape enhancement along the rail and road corridors such as hedgerow or native woodland planting where appropriate to reduce visual impact of the transport corridors.
- 5D.1.25 Continue to create new areas of woodland under the Forest of Marston Vale Programme whilst ensuring the open character of the vale is not completely compromised and key views to the elevated landforms are conserved.
- 5D.1.26 Ensure any new development at the edge of settlements is integrated with the adjacent countryside – e.g. through woodland planting with public access and reinforcement of existing hedgerow boundaries.
- 5D.1.27 Retain the separate identity of surviving dispersed settlements and 'Ends' of historic origin. Restrict further linear expansion that could lead to the merging of villages e.g. Marston Moretaine and Lower Shelton.
- 5D.1.28 Conserve the unique, historic character of Stewartby and conserve the Stewartby chimney stacks as landmark features.
- 5D.1.29 Avoid development of land at the base of the *Woburn and Mid Greensand Ridge* (6a and 6b) and to the clay ridge at Cranfield in order to conserve the distinct visual contrast between the flat vale and steep slopes and so maintain the important views to the *Wooded Greensand Ridge* (6a and 6b) and the *Clay Farmland* (1a).
- 5D.1.30 Avoid creation of bunding or land raising in an attempt to conceal development or restore disused pits. Such features are inappropriate in the context of this flat, open landscape.
- 5D.1.31 Improve public rights of way access within the vale, and enhance connectivity across the boundary with Bedford Borough e.g. from the edge of Bedford (at

Kempston) to Marston Vale Millennium Country Park and to link with the Greensand Ridge.

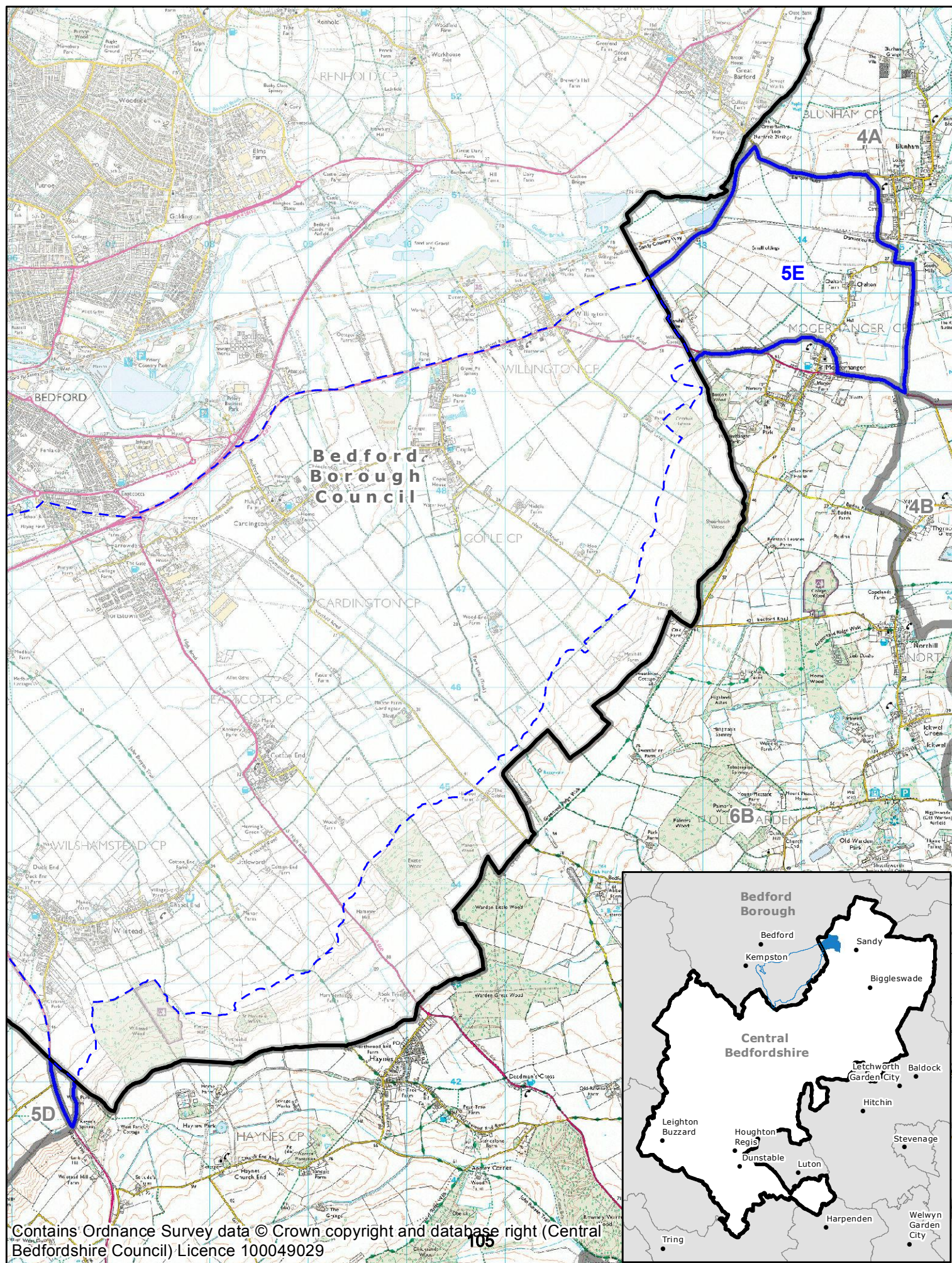
Landscape Management Guidelines

- 5D.1.32 Explore opportunities for establishment of small farm woods - copses and spinneys - as well as more diverse grassland in order to improve the visual environment and nature conservation value.
- 5D.1.33 Apply a consistent approach to landscape restoration that responds and enhances the objectives of the Forest of Marston Vale Plan and the Mid Bedfordshire GI Plan.
- 5D.1.34 Retain elements of the brick industry as a significant part of the history of this part of Bedfordshire, and of potentially national importance.
- 5D.1.35 Explore opportunities to safeguard the scale and tranquillity afforded by the major clay workings as part of the industrial legacy.
- 5D.1.36 Implement appropriate planting e.g. native hedgerow/ tree planting surrounding the landfill sites (domed landforms) to link with agreed restoration planting, in order to mitigate their visual impact in the landscape.
- 5D.1.37 Aid the integration of the Waterway Park through landscape enhancement of new growth and within the setting of the canal.
- 5D.1.38 Renew field boundaries where these are gappy and apply a consistent management strategy to enhance the field and land cover pattern.
- 5D.1.39 Conserve the ecological integrity of the SSSI at Marston Thrift.
- 5D.1.40 Safeguard the historic landscape of older fields around the edge of the Vale.
- 5D.1.41 Discourage the planting of coniferous shelterbelt planting that does not respond well to the character of the vale, encouraging instead the planting and management of broadleaved shelterbelts, where screening is required.

Also refer to the following documents:

- Mid Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan: Marston Vale
- Marston Vale Forest Plan

5E: East Marston Clay Vale



5E East Marston Clay Vale

Location and Boundaries

- 5E.1 The majority of the *East Marston Clay Vale* character area lies within Bedford Borough: refer to the companion Landscape Character Assessment for Bedford Borough for description of the landscape outside of Central Bedfordshire. Within Central Bedfordshire, a small area north of the A603 is within the character area including the village of Chalton and a very small area to the east of the A6. The landscape of the character area is flat and open and defined to the south by the elevated landform of the *Mid Greensand Ridge* (6b).

Summary of landscape character: Key characteristics

- 5E.1.1 A large scale, flat, open vale landscape underlain by Oxford Clay.
- 5E.1.2 Expansive views across the vale to the *Wooded Greensand Ridge* (6b) that forms a prominent backdrop to the vale and provides some sense of containment.
- 5E.1.3 Formerly meadow pasture, land use is now predominantly defined by intensive arable cropping contained within medium to large arable fields. Some smaller fields given over to pasture and horse grazing remain.
- 5E.1.4 A regular parliamentary enclosure landscape - variable field and roadside boundaries characterised by short flailed, gappy hedges, with some large open fields where boundaries have been removed.
- 5E.1.5 Woodland is sparse across the character area.
- 5E.1.6 The Cardington aircraft sheds (in Bedford Borough) are a landmark heritage feature and widely visible across the vale.
- 5E.1.7 Views towards large scale industrial features outside the character area in Bedford Borough punctuate the flat vale landscape such as distribution warehouses south of Bedford, plus former and current mineral workings at Willington.
- 5E.1.8 Generally small to medium scale, linear villages with varied settlement character. Locally distinctive influences in the brick, for example Arlesey whites from the Gault Clay and Blunham Brick (yellow) from the Oxford Clay.
- 5E.1.9 Post-war and more recent development has occurred within and on the edge of villages, resulting in a range of building styles and materials, as at Wilstead.
- 5E.1.10 Individual farmsteads and associated agricultural buildings are scattered throughout the landscape located along road corridors.
- 5E.1.11 The recreational route of the Ouse Valley Way follows the river to the north of the character area. The Bedford to Sandy Country Way/ Cycle Route 51 follows the route of the dismantled railway, connecting the towns of Sandy and Bedford.

Landscape Character Description

Physical and natural landscape

- 5E.2 This is a large scale, flat and open clay vale with expansive views to the contrasting elevated landscape of the *Wooded Greensand Ridge* - containing the vale and forming a prominent backdrop to the south and east.
- 5E.3 The vale is principally defined by intensive arable farming - contained within large open fields - forming an important open, agricultural setting to the southern, urban edge of Bedford (more important further to the west in Bedford Borough).
- 5E.4 Surviving characteristic features contributing to a distinct sense of place include small access bridges and walkways over the deep drainage channels associated with the tributaries of the River Great Ouse (largely in Bedford Borough). Woodland is sparse across the open vale but the existing trees and linear belts of the vale are important in creating the foreground setting to the Greensand Ridge.

Biodiversity

- 5E.5 A low lying, mostly open landscape - this area is part of the floodplain of the Great Ouse. Arable farming is the predominant land use with some pasture associated with intervening tributary valleys and around settlements. Farmland is intensively managed and woodland cover is sparse.



A tributary stream and wetland habitats adjacent to Barford Road, near the Bedford to Sandy Country Way

Visual and perceptual character

- 5E.6 The character area lying within Central Bedfordshire is relatively unsettled and rural apart from the linear settlement along Blunham Road. Views to the wooded ridge to the south create a sense of containment and backdrop to the character area.
- 5E.7 There are attractive long distance views to the north across the Ouse valley.

Cultural pattern and historic character

- 5E.8 The wide Ouse valley to the east of Bedford saw extensive prehistoric and Roman occupation of the gravel terraces, beginning with a Neolithic interrupted ditch enclosure (scheduled) north-east of Cardington.
- 5E.9 Most of this area was occupied by common open fields in the medieval period. The belt of land along the lower slopes of the Greensand escarpment was subject to early private

enclosure, which retains the layout of the furlongs (blocks of ridges) of the open fields. Elsewhere there is good survival of parliamentary enclosure fields and their associated farmsteads south-east of the main row of villages, extending towards the east into northern part of Moggerhanger parish. To the north-west there has been significant boundary loss and reorganisation associated with new development & transport infrastructure on the southern edge of Bedford.

- 5E.10 A ridge of land elevated slightly above the rest of the valley provided a suitable site for Cardington airfield and its early 20th century airship sheds.

Visible archaeological sites are not common in this area. Elstow Abbey to the north-west is still a significant landscape feature, in spite of being constrained by new housing to the north, the A6 bypass to its west and Bedford bypass to its south. Its complex comprises earthworks, the ruins of a post-dissolution mansion, the parish church (which was formed from the abbey nave) and detached tower, and it retains its relationship with the historic core of Elstow village.

- 5E.11 There are medieval settlement earthworks at Harrowden, a few moated sites (of which one at Cardington Manor Farm is a scheduled monument) and pockets of medieval ridge and furrow. The listed hangars at Cardington are a dramatic visual reminder of the importance of the area in aviation history.

Settlement pattern; built character

- 5E.12 The villages are mostly nucleated linear settlements. Moggerhanger is located at the base of Greensand scarp; Chalton lies further north along Blunham Road on slightly higher ground. Settlement is varied in character. Locally distinctive influences in the brick, for example Arlesey whites from the Gault Clay and Blunham Brick (yellow) from the Oxford Clay are a further notable element of buildings within the Vale.

Evaluation

Landscape Change

Past Change	Potential Future Change
<p>Increased urban fringe characteristics at Shortstown e.g. urbanised road infrastructure, lighting, new unsympathetic housing estate development. New Residential developments at Wilstead and Cotton End.</p> <p>Development of roads e.g. A603, increasing vehicle activity and associated noise levels.</p> <p>Access improvements including the national cycle route 51 between Sandy and Bedford.</p>	<p>Further access improvements related to the River Ivel to the east.</p> <p>Additional development at Shortstown and Willington.</p>

Key positive landscape features/ strategic sensitivities of the landscape

- 5E.1.12 The striking flat, open character, which can be disrupted by inappropriate bunding, earth mounding, tree screening or creation of domed landforms which appear as incongruous features within the vale context.

- 5E.1.13 Historic field patterns with good survival of parliamentary enclosure landscape. Old enclosures on the lower slopes below the *Greensand Ridge* (6b) to the south preserve evidence of the medieval open field pattern.
- 5E.1.14 Clear views to the prominent *Greensand Ridge* (6b) and contrast of the flat vale with this ridge landform.
- 5E.1.15 The centre of the village of Moggerhanger characterised by whitewashed walls, picket fences and thatched roofs.
- 5E.1.16 Low density, dispersed settlement evoking a strong rural character.
- 5E.1.17 The recreational route of the Ouse Valley Way which follows the river to the north of the character area. The Bedford to Sandy Country Way/ Cycle Route 51 follows the route of the dismantled railway, connecting the towns of Sandy and Bedford.

Visual Sensitivity

- 5E.1.18 The flat, open landscape with the potential for any large scale development to be highly visible. Large scale development has the potential to be highly visible. Views to the *Mid Greensand Ridge* (6b) are long ranging and impart a sense of place. However, views are often limited by blocks of woodland and high hedges along road corridors.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the East Marston Clay Vale is to **renew/create** features of the landscape. The area should continue to provide an open, agricultural setting to Bedford and contrast to the Greensand Ridge. The aim should be to create a high quality urban edge to Bedford and enhance the entrances and gateway to the town. Renewal of features of this landscape including field boundaries, and small scale tree and woodland planting around villages and farm buildings will strengthen the pattern of the landscape.

Guidelines for New Development

- 5E.1.19 Create areas of woodland in the landscape to enhance ecological and recreational resource - e.g. linking to woodland created by the Forest of Marston Vale in Bedford Borough.
- 5E.1.20 Small scale planting around villages, particularly areas of new development, and around individual farm buildings is a key opportunity and will help integrate these features into the landscape. Seek to limit the use of coniferous shelterbelt planting that does not respond well to the character or landform of the vale.
- 5E.1.21 Conserve the dispersed pattern of settlements - preventing linear expansion and the merger of villages e.g. Moggerhanger/ Chalton/ Blunham.
- 5E.1.22 Conserve the rural character of the roads and associated woodland, trees, grass verges and ditches - and ensure that traffic management measures are sympathetic to the rural character.
- 5E.1.23 Improve settlement edges where these form an unsympathetic relationship with the open countryside - small scale woodland planting is a key opportunity but should not obscure views to the *Mid Greensand Ridge* (6b).
- 5E.1.24 Conserve locally distinctive influences such as the palette of bricks used in buildings.
- 5E.1.25 Conserve the clear views and visual relationship with the *Mid Greensand Ridge* (6b). Avoid development of land at the base of the ridge to retain the dramatic visual contrast between the flat vale and steep slopes.

- 5E.1.26 Conserve and enhance access and connections from the urban area into the vale e.g. the Ouse Valley Way and National Cycle Route 51. Avoid severance of existing routes.

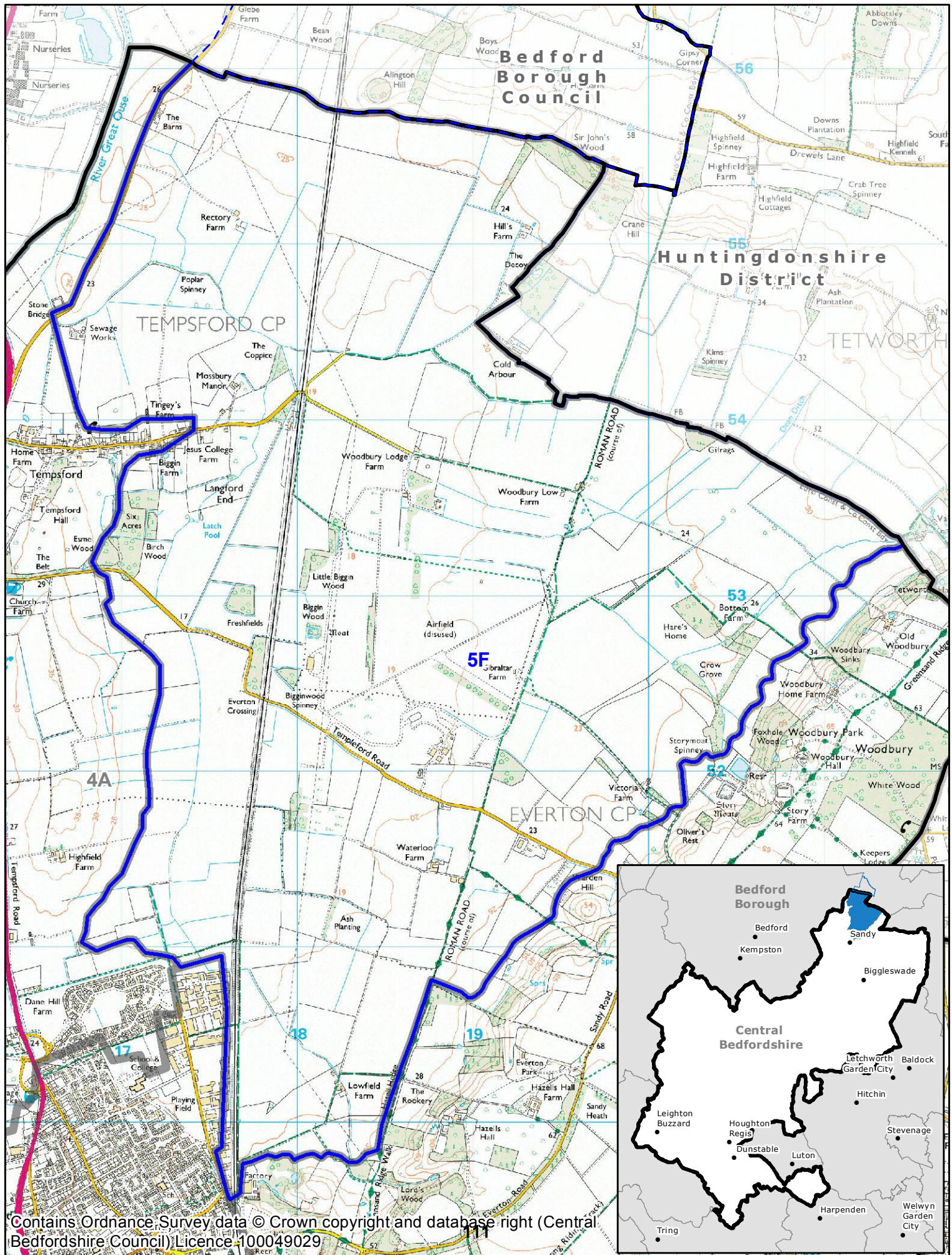
Landscape Management Guidelines

- 5E.1.27 Renew field boundaries where these are gappy and apply a consistent management strategy to enhance the field and land cover pattern.
- 5E.1.28 Enhance the condition of roadside lay-bys and eroded grass verges flanking roads.
- 5E.1.29 Conserve areas of pasture which form links with the adjacent *Clay Valleys* (4).
- 5E.1.30 Conserve the historic field pattern – intact areas of Parliamentary Enclosure and old enclosure fields below the *Greensand Ridge* (6b) to the south.
- 5E.1.31 Conserve the characteristic deep drainage channels associated with tributaries of the River Great Ouse.
- 5E.1.32 Restore areas of floodplain landscape (adjacent to the tributaries) with wet meadows, marshes and floodplain woodland - where appropriate (reversion of arable farmland may be an opportunity).
- 5E.1.33 Conserve the areas of existing woodland and apply an appropriate woodland management strategy to enhance their ecological value.
- 5E.1.34 Conserve the recreational links provided by the Ouse Valley Way and the Bedford to Sandy Country Way/ National Cycle Route 51 linking the urban edge of Bedford and Bedford River Valley Park.

Also refer to the following documents:

- Mid Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan: Ivel Valley
- Sandy Green Wheel
- Bedford River Valley Park Masterplan
- Marston Vale Forest Plan

5F: Biggin Wood Clay Vale



5F Biggin Wood Clay Vale

Location and boundaries

- 5F.1 The open landscape of the *Biggin Wood Clay Vale* (5f) is in the far northwest of Central Bedfordshire. A small part of the character area surrounding the railway line lies within Bedford Borough – see the companion Landscape Character Assessment for Bedford Borough. The character area lies to the east of the *Great Ouse Clay Valley* (4a) at Tempsford/Blunham, while to the south west the vale adjoins the prominent, elevated landscape of the *Everton Heath Wooded Greensand Ridge* (6c). Character area boundaries largely relate to topography and geology.

Summary of landscape character: Key characteristics

- 5F.1.1 A medium scale, open vale landscape underlain by Oxford Clay. A predominantly flat landscape with dominant open skies.
- 5F.1.2 Area forms a transition between the valley of the *Great Ouse Clay Valley* (4a) to the west and the *Everton Heath Wooded Greensand Ridge* (6c) to the east.
- 5F.1.3 Clear views across the vale terminated by the backdrop of the *Everton Heath Wooded Greensand Ridge* (6c) provide a sense of containment. To the west the more wooded landscape of the river valley is defined by willows and poplars.
- 5F.1.4 Land use is predominantly defined by arable cropping contained within medium to large arable fields, with hedgerow boundaries in variable condition.
- 5F.1.5 Roadside hedgerows are an important feature and include tall overgrown mixed hedgerows creating a shaded wooded context as well as wide grass verges and mature hedgerow and roadside trees (ash, field maple and oaks).
- 5F.1.6 Presence of small field ditches draining to the Great Ouse, plus occasional field ponds.
- 5F.1.7 Small woodland blocks, hedgerow trees and copses provide texture, variety and enclosure in close range views, as well as forming a valuable biodiversity resource.
- 5F.1.8 Occasional small scale industrial units with associated industrial boundaries (chain-link fencing/ access splays and gates) interrupt the rural agricultural character.
- 5F.1.9 Former Tempsford airfield, now under arable cropping at Gibraltar Farm - used during wartime espionage operations. The airfield includes a memorial to WW2 pilots.
- 5F.1.10 A bridleway running north south through the area and linking to Sandy to the south preserves the line of the White Way Roman Road between Baldock and Godmanchester.
- 5F.1.11 The area is severed by the main LNER rail line which runs north south across the vale. It is crossed by two roads (bridge and level crossing) - although much of the area to the east of the railway line is isolated and 'remote' with access limited to unmarked tracks.
- 5F.1.12 Locally, the overhead electric lines associated with the railway and line of pylons which cross the area form visually dominant built elements. The transitory noise from the railway also impinges on the quiet rural character.
- 5F.1.13 Settlement is limited to occasional solitary farms and buildings - often isolated at the end of unmarked lanes. The village of Tempsford on the boundary is associated with the valley of the Great Ouse. The interface with the market town of Sandy to the south is contained by the railway line.

Landscape Character Description

Physical and natural landscape

- 5F.2 This area of vale has a simple, unified character being dominated by arable land cover, with settlement limited to occasional isolated farm complexes, little through access and a consequent strong sense of isolation. The large scale, flat and open vale provides good views to the contrasting elevated landscape of the *Wooded Greensand Ridge* - containing the vale and forming a prominent backdrop to the south east. To the west, the presence of willows and poplars mark the transition to the valley of the Great Ouse. A number of small woodlands and copses punctuate the arable farmland providing texture, variety and a sense of enclosure within short range views. The network of hedgerow boundaries and woodlands provide an important visual and ecological resource.
- 5F.3 Features distinctive to the vale are the network of tributary streams and ditches that cross the area and feed into the Great Ouse and the former Tempsford Airfield. The airfield is locally valued for its associations with war time espionage activities and includes a memorial to WW2 pilots. The airfield is now under arable cropping but is discernible within the landscape by the absence of field boundaries.
- 5F.4 The area is severed by the main LNER rail line which runs north south across the vale. Much of the area to the east of the railway is isolated and 'remote' with access limited to unmarked tracks. Settlement is limited to occasional solitary farms and buildings. The interface with the market town of Sandy to the south is contained by the railway line. The north south route of the rail line is echoed by the line of a former Roman Road which cuts through the area preserved as a right of way link.

Biodiversity

- 5F.5 A low lying, mostly open landscape - this area is part of the floodplain of the Great Ouse. Arable cropping is the predominant land use with some pasture associated with intervening watercourses - the main biodiversity interest here relating to the hedgerow and linked network of scattered small and medium copses and woodland which occurs across the farmland. A network of small tributaries and water-filled ditches cross the area and these are also of interest with some marshy vegetation in lower lying areas and lines of willow and poplar marking the transition to the Ouse valley.

Visual and perceptual character

- 5F.6 The character area has a strong sense of isolation as a result of a relatively unsettled landscape and few access paths. There are distant views to the contrasting elevated landscape of the *Wooded Greensand Ridge*, trees and hedgerows punctuate the landscape, providing texture, height and enclosure. More industrial elements dominate locally, including lines of pylons and the railway line. A localised enclosed character is created by woodlands of the Woodburry estate.



Vertical features such as the overhead lines of the railway dominate the landscape locally, providing contrast with flat agricultural fields such as here at the level crossing on Tempsford Road.



Tall hedges and trees provide a sense of enclosure and isolation, particularly towards the east of the character area. This shows Tempsford Road close to the Roman Road bridleway

Cultural pattern and historic character

- 5F.7 Lying between its associated villages, most of this area was formerly common open field land, enclosed either by private agreement or by parliamentary act. The exception is a small area around the east end of Langford End, Tempsford, where some small irregular fields survive.
- 5F.8 Some of the early enclosure boundaries survive along the lower slopes of the Greensand escarpment to the east, reflecting the pattern of furlongs (blocks of strips) of the former open field. Elsewhere, many of the later enclosure boundaries have been removed, especially in the area covered by Tempsford airfield.
- 5F.9 The line of the Sandy-Godmanchester Roman road is a rare survival of a visible pre-medieval landscape feature. Other earthworks in the area include the scheduled moat in Biggin Wood and medieval settlement earthworks in some of the small fields adjacent to Langford End.

Settlement pattern; built character

- 5F.10 This area was formerly common open fields lying between the associated adjacent village of Tempsford in the Ouse Valley and Sandy and Everton at the base of the Greensand Ridge. Small fields are associated with the adjacent linear settlement of Langford End, Tempsford. Today, the area is distinctive for its general absence of settlement limited to occasional solitary farms and farm buildings often isolated at the end of unmade lanes. The main built feature is the rail line with its associated overhead electric lines and a main pylon line which are locally dominant. The transition with the town of Sandy to the south is largely contained by the railway line and there are limited views into the settlement.



Settlement in the character area is sparse, and characterised by individual houses or farm buildings often hidden from the road. The roof of the building on Tempsford Lane in the east of the character area is partially hidden by high hedges

Evaluation

Landscape Change

Past Change	Potential Future Change
Overhead cables and lines associated with the electrified railway and pylon lines.	Deterioration in hedgerow boundaries and loss of patchwork pattern.
Some increase in industrial units within the rural landscape and associated industrial/urban influences.	Further upgrading of the East Coast Mainline, and potential route of East West Rail Central Section.
Increase in traffic on the Tempsford/Everton Road as a main through route.	Development of new industrial and business units within farm buildings .
	Renewable energy developments e.g. solar.

Key positive landscape features/ strategic sensitivities of the landscape

- 5F.1.14 Open agricultural setting to the Great Ouse Clay Valley (4a) and the Everton Heath Wooded Greensand Ridge (6c).
- 5F.1.15 The quiet, peaceful, isolated rural character which persists within areas of this vale.
- 5F.1.16 Clear views to the prominent *Everton Heath Wooded Greensand Ridge* (6b) and contrast of the flat vale with this ridge landform.
- 5F.1.17 Hedgerow boundaries and the patchwork pattern that they create in views from the adjacent elevated ridge.
- 5F.1.18 The early enclosure boundaries along the base of the Greensand escarpment and small fields associated with the linear settlement of Langford End, Tempsford.
- 5F.1.19 The historic importance of Tempsford airfield.
- 5F.1.20 Small farm woodlands and copses which create texture, variety and enclosure in local views and contribute to the biodiversity resource.

- 5F.1.21 The regular pattern of hedgerow and roadside standard trees (oaks).
- 5F.1.22 Low density dispersed isolated settlement pattern with scattered farm houses at the end of narrow unmarked tracks.
- 5F.1.23 The route of the old Roman Road.

Visual Sensitivity

- 5F.1.24 The flat, open landscape with the potential for any large scale change to be highly visible.
- 5F.1.25 Clear views across the landscape to the *Everton Heath Wooded Greensand Ridge* (6c) and panoramic views from the ridge back over the Vale.
- 5F.1.26 Views are filtered by small blocks of woodland and high hedgerows.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Biggin Wood Clay Vale is for **landscape enhancement**. The aim should be to enhance and reinforce the patchwork pattern of the landscape created by the integrated field boundary network. There are also opportunities to manage and enhance the woodland cover within the landscape and restore elements of floodplain character.

Guidelines for New Development

- 5F.1.27 Consider opportunities for further small scale woodland creation within the vale – particularly where there is an opportunity to provide links between existing woodland blocks or join access routes such as the Old Roman Road bridleway.
- 5F.1.28 Conserve the sparse settlement of occasional isolated farms along narrow unmarked tracks.
- 5F.1.29 Conserve the Tempsford airfield and memory of its role in war time history.
- 5F.1.30 Conserve the rural character of the roads and lanes.
- 5F.1.31 Consider opportunities for landscape enhancement (woodland creation and hedgerow restoration) to provide a well-integrated edge to Sandy.
- 5F.1.32 Conserve the clear views and visual relationship with the *Everton Heath Wooded Greensand Ridge* (6c). Retain the dramatic visual contrast between the flat vale and steep slopes.
- 5F.1.33 Conserve the recreational links through and across the landscape and safeguard the line of the Roman Road.

Landscape Management Guidelines

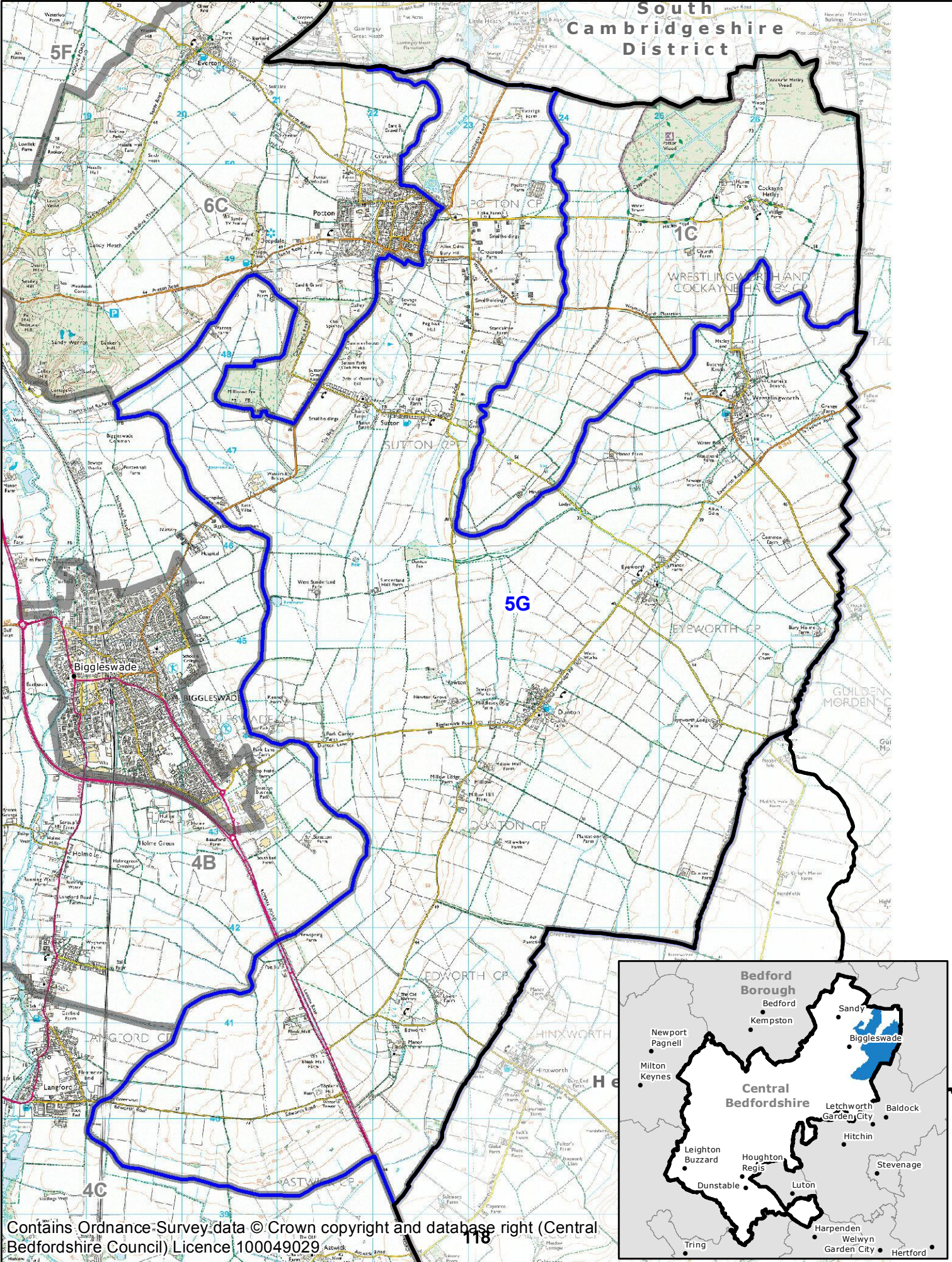
- 5F.1.34 Renew field boundaries where these are gappy and apply a consistent management strategy to conserve the structure and pattern of boundaries and reflect the historic enclosure patterns. Conserve and enhance historic boundaries particularly those at the base of the Greensand escarpment and around Langford End.
- 5F.1.35 Conserve hedgerow trees (field maples, ash and oaks) and promote growth of a new generation of hedgerow and verge trees.
- 5F.1.36 Apply appropriate management of the small farm woodlands and copses in order to conserve them as landscape features and enhance biodiversity value. Hedgerows linking woodland blocks should be a target for restoration and management.

- 5F.1.37 Conserve the characteristic drainage channels associated with the Great Ouse corridor.
- 5F.1.38 Encourage the appropriate management of ditches in the area.
- 5F.1.39 Restore areas of floodplain landscape (adjacent to the tributaries) with wet meadows, marshes and floodplain woodland - where appropriate (reversion of arable farmland may be an opportunity).

Also refer to the following documents:

- Mid Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan: Ivel Valley
- St Neot's Green Infrastructure Plan
- Sandy Green Wheel

5G: Dunton Clay Vale



5G Dunton Clay Vale

Location and Boundaries

- 5G.1 The *Dunton Clay Vale* (5g) lies at the east of Central Bedfordshire. It extends to the County boundary with Cambridgeshire to the east and this landscape continues as part of the 'Western Claylands' landscape within Cambridgeshire. The vale is bordered to the north by more elevated landscape of the *Everton Heath Wooded Greensand Ridge* (6c) and the west by the *Lower Ivel Clay Valley* (4b) and to the south by the *Upper Ivel Clay Valley* (4c). The area marks the transition between *Clay Plateau* and *Clay Valley* and has a more undulating elevated landform compared to the other vales within the landscape type.

Summary of landscape character: Key characteristics

- 5G.1.1 A undulating 'vale' extending into Cambridgeshire with an elevated ridge rising to about 45m AOD and broad valleys. This is not technically a vale and forms a transition between the *Clay Valley* (4) and *Clay Plateau* (1) landscape types.
- 5G.1.2 Strong ridge of land between the Ivel and upper reaches of the Cam containing the settlements of Edworth, Millow, Dunton and Eyeworth.
- 5G.1.3 Some expansive views across the vale but generally views are more enclosed than other vale areas due to undulating landform. Long range views from higher points across Cambridgeshire.
- 5G.1.4 Land use predominantly defined by intensive arable (cereal) cropping contained within medium to large fields. Orchards were formerly common, although are now lost.
- 5G.1.5 To the north east of Potton, smallholdings with market gardening/ glasshouses associated with a former Land Settlement Association are visible.
- 5G.1.6 Field boundaries are largely characterised by short flailed, gappy hedges. Old hedgerow lines are marked in places by surviving hedgerow trees.
- 5G.1.7 Essentially an open arable landscape with limited woodland cover. Occasional mature hedgerow trees and roadside oaks on wide grass verges are a distinctive feature.
- 5G.1.8 Tributary streams and drainage channels run through the landscape. These are largely imperceptible but are picked out by vegetation aligning the corridors or white railings along the roadside. The brook, ford and bridge at Sutton village are distinctive features.
- 5G.1.9 Minor 'parkland' landscapes associated with the area to the south around Edworth plus Sutton Park (now part of a golf course to the north).
- 5G.1.10 Absence of main roads with minor rural roads and secondary routes traversing the landscape and connecting the villages.
- 5G.1.11 Dominant line of pylons across the southern part of the landscape. Crossed by the A1 south of Biggleswade preserving the line of the White Way Roman Road between Baldock and Godmanchester.
- 5G.1.12 A series of small settlements at Edworth, Millow, Dunton, Eyeworth, Sutton and Wrestlingworth - generally loosely linear in form with varied settlement character.
- 5G.1.13 Individual farmsteads and associated agricultural buildings occur occasionally throughout the landscape. Farm buildings and red brick barns are a feature of villages e.g. Sutton.
- 5G.1.14 Presence of sandstone vernacular in buildings for example churches at Sutton and Potton with prominent sandstone towers forming local landmarks, plus occasional sandstone walls and bridges.

Landscape Character Description

Physical and natural landscape

- 5G.2 The *Dunton Clay Vale* (5g) is an undulating 'vale' on the eastern edge of the county extending into Cambridgeshire and formed by a central elevated ridge bordered by broad valleys. The varied landform is a reflection of the underlying geology with Gault Clay in the east and an outcrop of Greensand in the west. The solid geology is masked in the central part of the area by deposits of Boulder Clay which forms the more elevated ridge and provides medium-long range views into Cambridgeshire. The ridge forms part of the watershed between the Ivel to the west and the Rhee, a tributary of the Cam to the east.
- 5G.3 The area is predominantly defined by intensive arable (cereal) cropping contained within medium to large fields, with limited woodland cover creating a very open landscape contained only by topographical variation. Orchards were formerly common, although these features have now been lost. To the north east of Potton on an area of lighter Greensand soils, small holdings with market gardening and glasshouses associated with a former Land Settlement Association are visible. Throughout, field boundaries are largely characterised by short flailed, gappy hedges, with former hedgerow lines marked in places by surviving hedgerow trees. Mature hedgerow trees surviving along road verges are a further important feature. Some smaller enclosures survive around villages such as at Westlingworth.
- 5G.4 Tributary streams and drainage channels feeding the Ivel and Rhee cross the landscape. These are largely imperceptible but are picked out by vegetation aligning the corridors or white railings along the roadside. The stream, ford and associated bridge at Sutton village are a distinctive feature. Minor 'parkland' landscapes associated with the area to the south around Edworth plus Sutton Park (now part of a golf course to the north).

Biodiversity

- 5G.5 The area is dominated by arable cropping, with biodiversity interest limited largely to the hedgerow network. The network of small tributaries and water-filled ditches cross the area and these are also of interest. There are no designated sites of nature conservation importance.

Visual and perceptual character

- 5G.6 This character area has some long ranging views into Cambridgeshire from the elevated ridges but has a sense of enclosure as a result of the undulating topography. The area is rural dominated by arable cropping - an absence of hedgerows creates an open character. There are views from some parts of the area towards the urban edge of Biggleswade to the south. The area is considered to have a high degree of tranquillity, a quality extending over a significant part of the character area.



The undulating, open landscape on Sutton Lane, south of Millow

Cultural pattern and historic character

- 5G.7 Historically, this landscape has developed in diverse ways, influenced by the different circumstances in the individual historic parishes. The enclosure landscape in the western and northern part has been subject to much reorganisation and loss of field boundaries. East of Potton, where there is an area of lighter Greensand soils, the impact of the Land Settlement Association is still visible.
- 5G.8 Between Edworth and Wrestlingworth, along the Dunton ridge, the differing landscape histories of the separate parishes are particularly apparent. Eyeworth and Edworth were subject to early private enclosure, leaving a pattern of smaller less regular fields. Dunton and Wrestlingworth were enclosed formally in the late 18th/early 19th century, and the more regular enclosure field pattern still survives, particularly in Dunton parish. There are small old enclosures around Wrestlingworth village, with some medieval settlement earthworks.
- 5G.9 The medieval settlement pattern was nucleated, with few outlying 'ends' (though Dunton parish was divided between the townships of Dunton and Millow). The south-west end of the ridge (Topler's Hill) retains some enclosure field boundaries, but has been subject to much clearance.
- 5G.10 Medieval earthworks, representing the former extent of the medieval villages, have been recorded at Millow, Eyeworth, Wrestlingworth and Edworth. The moated site at Newton Bury (Dunton) and the ringwork known as John o'Gaunt's Hill in Sutton Park are both scheduled monuments.

Settlement pattern; built character

- 5G.11 The scattered small settlements are connected by a series of minor rural roads and secondary routes. Settlement consists of small villages with vast tracts of land between unsettled with only occasional isolated farm buildings. The villages of Sutton, Dunton, Eyeworth and Wrestlingworth are set along roads with some evidence of linear expansion. Edworth, Dunton and Eyeworth are located on a ridge of land with far reaching views across into Cambridgeshire. Sutton is designated as a Conservation Area and has particular appeal with pastoral qualities including arts and crafts style buildings, a ford and associated sandstone bridge over the brook and landmark church. The village has a parkland setting with Sutton Park immediately to the west.
- 5G.12 A distinctive settlement pattern of particular note is the area of small holdings in the north of the area (east of Potton) with 'colonies' created by the Land Settlement Association, still evident in the form of small plots and glasshouses (now redundant) and providing an important contribution to the social history of market gardening.

- 5G.13 Building materials are varied but typically include redbrick, sandstone, render and tile roofs. There are some larger scale industrial buildings.



The water tower at Topler's Hill is a local landmark



The distinctive sandstone bridge and ford impart a strong sense of place in Sutton Conservation Area

Evaluation

Landscape Change

Past Change	Potential Future Change
<p>Loss and decline of hedgerows and hedgerow trees changing the landscape pattern and reducing ecological value.</p> <p>National grid infrastructure - with line crossing the Vale.</p> <p>Impact in views of the commercial development on the eastern edge of Biggleswade.</p> <p>Wind farm to the east of Langford in the far southwest of the character area.</p>	<p>Potential for future development within small villages.</p> <p>Completion of development on the eastern edge of Biggleswade, which may be visible in views from elevated parts of the landscape.</p> <p>Increasing clutter and signage associated with village edges.</p> <p>Renewable energy developments.</p>

Key positive landscape features/ strategic sensitivities of the landscape

- 5G.1.15 Remaining hedgerows - indicating historic field patterns.
- 5G.1.16 Medieval settlement earthworks which survive in small old enclosures around many of the villages.
- 5G.1.17 The differing enclosure history (and subsequent land management) which is evident in the agricultural landscape of parishes along the Dunton ridge.
- 5G.1.18 The subtle tributary valleys that thread through the area.
- 5G.1.19 Scattered mature trees - marking the position of former hedgerow lines, plus hedgerow and roadside oaks which are a distinctive feature.
- 5G.1.20 The high degree of tranquillity, particularly as experienced from the rights of way network.

Visual Sensitivity

- 5G.1.21 The long far reaching views to the east Cambridgeshire plus some local views towards Biggleswade. However, the gently undulating landform provides a relatively high degree of containment. Unlike many other areas of vale landscape within Bedfordshire, this area is not located at the foot of a steep elevated landform. Here, the *Everton Heath Greensand Ridge* (6c) to the north dips gently to the vale) and it is therefore not especially visually sensitive in terms of its role in views. The area of most sensitivity is the elevated edge to the east, for example around Eyeworth where long views into Cambridgeshire can be obtained.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for Dunton Clay Vale (5g) is for **enhancement/renewal** of the landscape. Enhancing the condition of the landscape by restoring and repairing elements that have been lost or degraded (such as the hedgerow network) will significantly strengthen character.

Guidelines for New Development

- 5G.1.22 Conserve the settlement pattern of small villages and seek to limit linear extension of development along roads.
- 5G.1.23 Consider the potential effect of any expansion of development east of Biggleswade on the character of this area. Thickening of the hedgerow network and promotion of a new generation of mature hedgerow trees to filter views is a key opportunity.
- 5G.1.24 In considering any plans for settlement extension - conserve the pattern of small old enclosures around the historic villages with their settlement earthworks.
- 5G.1.25 Conserve the pattern of small old enclosures around the historic villages with their settlement earthworks. Conserve and enhance the private or parliamentary enclosure field boundaries.
- 5G.1.26 Consider opportunities for enhancing the woodland resource by extending and connecting the existing (very limited) areas of woodland.
- 5G.1.27 Seek to retain mature hedgerow trees and trees on verges and encourage regeneration of replacement stock.
- 5G.1.28 Conserve remaining orchard trees and seek to replant orchards where appropriate.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- 5G.1.29 Restore and improve the condition and structure of hedgerow boundaries.
- 5G.1.30 Enhance the ecological value and visual presence of and access to the tributary streams crossing the vale. These areas are a priority for establishing areas of pasture.
- 5G.1.31 Enhance arable field habitats.
- 5G.1.32 Conserve areas of unimproved grassland along roadside banks and verges.

Also refer to the following documents:

- Mid Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan: Ivel Valley.