

LCT7 Semi Enclosed and Clay Farmland

General description

The Semi-enclosed Chalk and Clay Farmland shares some of the characteristics of the Open Chalklands landscape type but has a greater incidence of hedgerow and tree cover where the clay overlies chalk on the ridges and hilltops.

Semi-enclosed Chalk and Clay Farmland consists predominantly of large and medium scale arable fields, with some smaller fields adjacent to settlements with areas of pasture. The presence of woodland and a more undulating landform gives this landscape type some visual containment and enclosure but the scale of the field pattern allows distant views and creates a more semi-enclosed character.

This is a sparsely settled landscape with a limited number of small linear settlements often located on areas of clay with flints or in sheltered valleys. Farmsteads are also scattered throughout the area.

Location

This landscape type can be found throughout the Chalk Downlands, where clay and flint over lay the Chalk. South of Stockbridge the type is found as a transition from the small enclosed character of LCT6 to the open chalklands of LCT10. To the north it forms a part of a matrix of enclosed to semi-enclosed landscapes rising up into the North Wessex Downs.

- LCA7A Ashley Downs
- LCA7B Broughton Downs
- LCA7C Linkeholt Downs

Physical Influences

Geology and Soils: Areas of Clay with Flints, predominantly located on hill tops and ridge lines, forming a softer relief. The soil in these areas is generally loamy.

Landform: A rolling landform of pronounced ridges and valleys, predominantly grassland and woodland. A feature of this landscape is the dramatic steep scarps which encircle valleys and overlook more extensive vales.

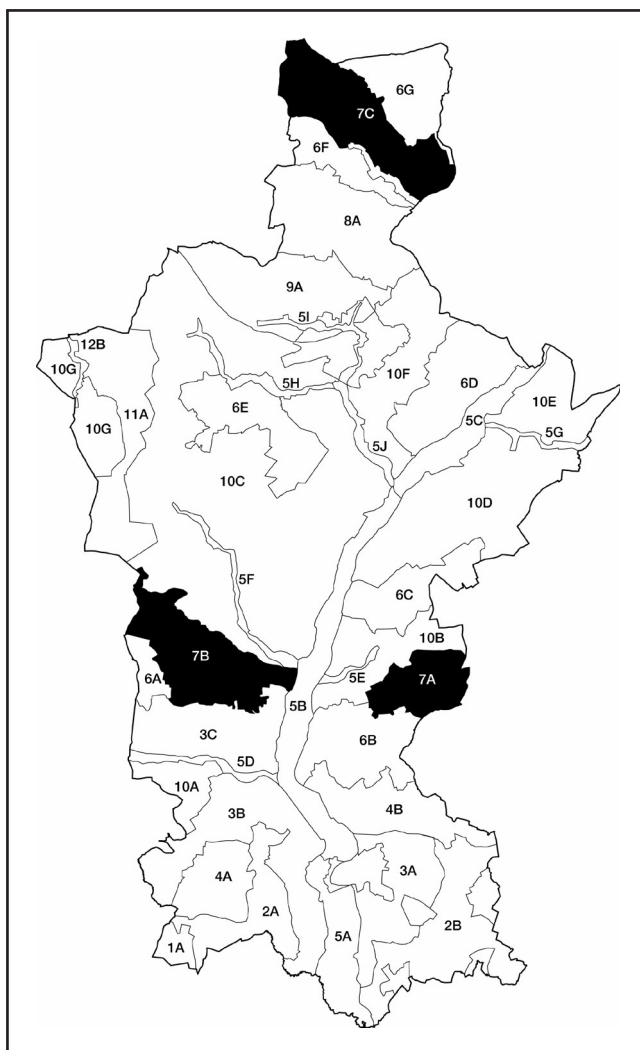
Drainage: Due to the pervious nature of the chalk there is no evidence of surface water features.

Biodiversity and Vegetation Pattern

This type is dominated by medium scale arable and pasture farmland. The hedgerows are relatively intact and link with small areas of woodland. There are remnants of unimproved calcareous grassland that have great conservation value.

Notable Habitats

Unimproved and semi-improved chalk grassland



Historical Influences

The principal historic landscape type across this LCT 7 is the parliamentary field system with some areas of later prairie field development. More upland areas still retain some scattered woodland and earlier elements of field systems such as small regular fields with wavy boundaries and irregular fields bounded by roads, tracks and paths. Also present within this Landscape Character Type are several extant areas of downland ridge which traditionally functioned as open pasture for the surrounding villages.

Settlement Pattern

Settlements within this Landscape Character Type tend to be small with a dispersed pattern and one or more medieval or early post-medieval 'historic core' elements. This would indicate the development of a widely spread settlement focused upon one or more older farmsteads. These settlements tend to be Chalk Downland: Hilltop Settlement and Clay Upland and Plateau Settlement types which, in some cases display evidence of settlement drift at some point in the past away from the more exposed hilltops and ridgelines down slope and towards shelter and water.

Communication Network

The road systems through the parliamentary enclosures have clearly been planned at the time of the surveying out of the fields. These roads run alongside the field boundaries and are, in almost all cases, straight. Where earlier field systems survive, the associated road pattern changes to become more sinuous following the boundaries of the older and more 'wavy' fields.

Key Natural and Cultural Landscape Issues

- Continuing intensification of farming, in particular conversion of permanent pasture to arable resulting in loss of biodiversity and archaeological features
 - Lack of appropriate management of woodlands
 - Loss and fragmentation of hedgerow boundaries, mature hedgerow trees and adjacent grass verges
 - Scrub encroachment on scarps
 - Potential change in farming practices, with increased areas managed as 'hobby farms' or as horse paddocks, characterized by rank weedy grassland and poorly managed boundaries
 - Increased traffic on the road network, leading to road improvements to the lanes, creating a more urban character
 - Communication masts, transmitters, and wind turbines, if not carefully sited, will be particularly visually intrusive in the predominantly open skyline, eroding the present sense of remoteness
 - Amalgamation of farms resulting in large areas managed as single units and larger farm building
 - Conversion of farm buildings
 - Loss of chalk downland to arable or scrub encroachment
 - Lack of coppice management leading to a reduction of specialised species such as butterflies
 - Declining farmland bird populations
 - Loss of unimproved mesotrophic grassland to arable or through application of fertilisers, leading to isolation of small patches of habitat.
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