

LCT9 Semi Enclosed Clay Plateau Farmland

General Description

The Semi-enclosed Clay Plateau Farmland is a mix of medium and open tracts of large scale arable fields, with smaller fields of pasture associated with the settlements and dry river valleys. Settlements are long and linear, generally located within the more fertile valleys.

Location

Semi-enclosed Clay Plateau Farmland is found on the lower slopes below the North Wessex Downs and, although similar, differs from LCT8 in its geology, topography and landscape pattern. There is one area of the Test Valley Borough, north of Andover.

■ LCA9A North Andover Plateau

Physical Influences

Geology and Soils: The plateau is made up of Upper Chalk which is a soft white chalk with flint nodules, with dry river valleys with River and Valley Gravel on the valley floor.

Landform: A plateau landform, with gentle dry river valleys.

Drainage: A well drained area within the River Test catchment.

Biodiversity and Vegetation Pattern

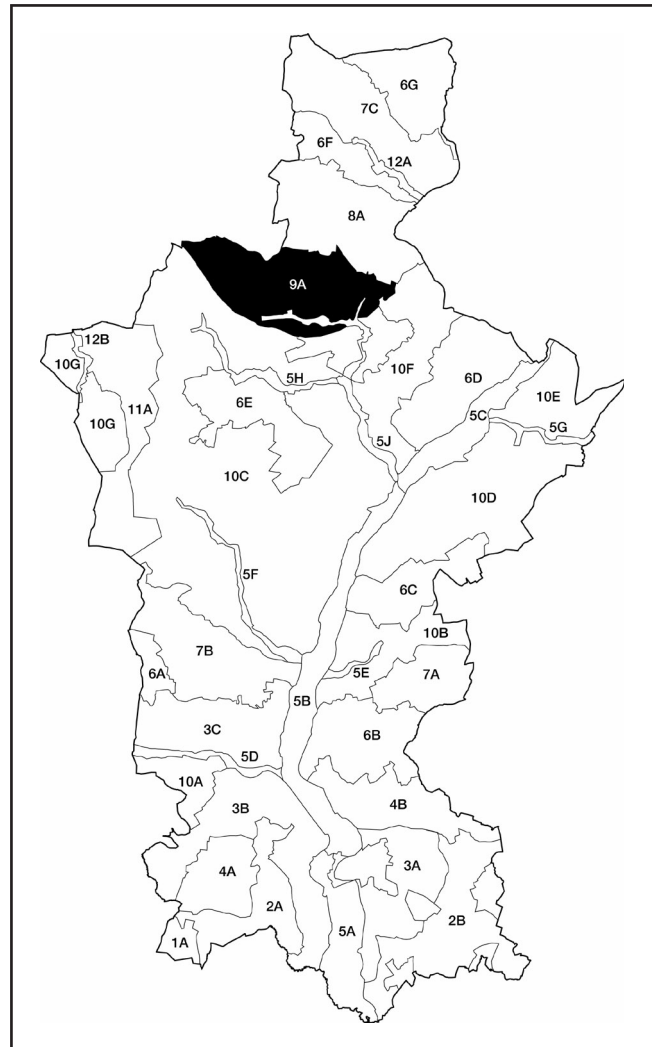
This landscape is predominantly arable farming, with fields divided by hedgerows. Patches of grassland are found in small fields bounded by hedgerows. Several areas of parkland and wood pasture are found, alongside small patches of broadleaved semi-natural woodland and small plantation woodlands.

Notable Habitats

Broadleaved semi-natural woodland

Historical Influences

Semi-enclosed Clay Plateau Farmland is characterised by large areas of informal enclosure typified by the predominance of regular fields with wavy boundaries. The Hampshire Historic Landscape Character Analysis identified 'regular fields with wavy boundaries as being a type normally related with late medieval to 17th/18th century informal enclosure, predating the period when boundaries were carefully surveyed. Some evidence of parliamentary enclosure is present but only in isolated instances and then generally closely associated with the formal parkland of the larger country houses. This may indicate a driving force for enclosure by the larger landowners and often from the aristocratic landowning families (with more to gain from enclosure). This would explain the focus of parliamentary enclosure around the formal parkland estates linking it with the redevelopment of estate farm complexes.



Compact areas of woodland can be seen to the east and west of this landscape type and are suggestive of the area being previously wooded, cleared and then replanted. It can be presumed that, due to their close proximity to parkland, they were part of a landscape design plan.

Settlement Pattern

There are two types of settlement visible in this character type – Clay River Valley settlement type and Clay Upland and Plateau settlement type. One example of the former (Penton Mewsey) is present on the valley floor close to a tributary of the River Test. It is a nucleated settlement. The others in this landscape type are Clay Upland and Plateau settlements. They are located on the chalk upland areas and tend to be linear in nature along a single road.

Communication Network

Roads which extend through the landscape of informal enclosure are clearly influenced by this process being generally wavy and following the contours of the land.

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Key Issues

- Intensification of farming, in particular conversion of permanent pasture to arable
 - Loss of contrast with the intricate landscape of the dry river valleys with the simpler landscapes of the higher ground
 - Lack of appropriate management of woodlands
 - Infill development within the linear settlements located within the valleys
 - Loss of hedgerow boundaries, mature hedgerow trees and adjacent grass verges
 - Localized intrusion of roads on adjacent quiet areas
 - Increased traffic on the road network, with road improvements creating a more urban character
 - Communication masts and transmitters, and wind turbines, which, if not carefully sited, will be particularly visually intrusive on the predominantly open skyline and have an impact on the sense of remoteness
 - Intensification of farming and extensive fertiliser applications, resulting in large fields and the loss of archaeological features and biodiversity in particular the loss of unimproved mesotrophic grassland
 - Amalgamation of farms resulting in large areas managed as single units and a greater requirement for large buildings
 - Conversions 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
 - Isolation of small patches of habitat
 - Hedgerow fragmentation and loss
 - Declining farmland bird populations.
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