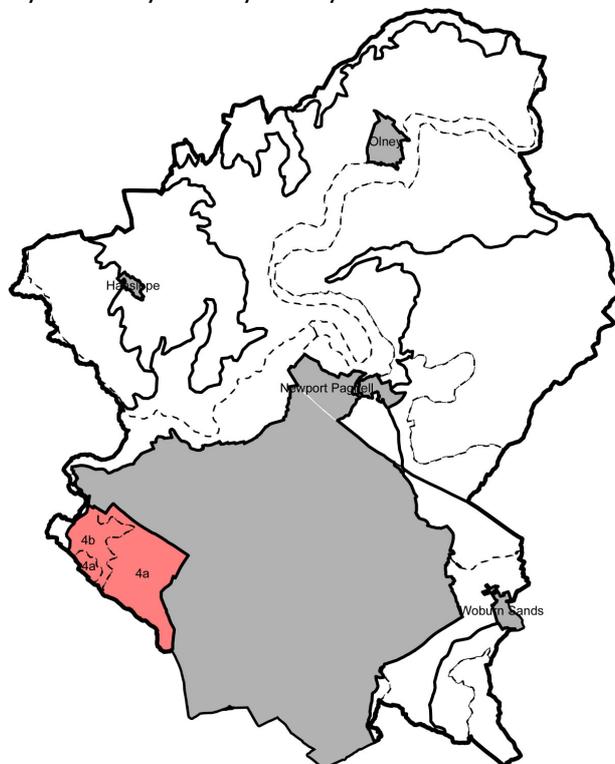


## 4. Shenley Claylands

### Summary Page

#### Location

The area is located west of Watling Street, north of Shenley Church End and south of Stoney Stratford. The authority boundary with Aylesbury Vale District lies to the west.



#### Character Summary

The area comprises the last undeveloped rural part of the authority to the west of the city. Despite its proximity to the urban areas it largely retains a distinctive rural character, which comprises two sub areas as follows:

- a) Shenley Ridge/Upper Weald –an undulating clayland landscape comprising areas of enclosed pasture to the east and partially allocated as the Western Expansion area for Milton Keynes. Beyond the allocated area is Shenley Ridge, which looks westwards over the Aylesbutry Vale and towards Whaddon Chase. (An isolated area of plateau by the Lower Weald valley)
- b) Lower Weald Valley – the valley has an intimate character that leads down to the distinctive hamlet of Lower Weald comprising a number of working farms and traditional vernacular buildings. Sheep pasture is the main land use

#### Key Characteristics

##### Shenley Ridge/Upper Weald

- Gently undulating plateau on existing edge of Milton Keynes
- More pronounced ridge to centre of the area facing south west with panoramic views
- Mixed agriculture with more pasture to the west and edge of Milton Keynes
- Large woods to the south east on higher ground
- Some good tall hedges and mature field trees and tree rows providing enclosure
- Limited settlement and scattered farm houses

##### Lower Weald Valley

- Intimate and enclosed valley- tributary of the River Ouse
- Traditional limestone farms and properties in Lower Weald

- Mixed farming including areas of sheep grazing
- High density of footpaths
- Narrow lanes

### **Distinctive features**

#### Shenley Ridge/Upper Weald

- Oakhill Wood
- North Bucks Way - Green Lane

#### Lower Weald Valley

- Ridge and furrow pasture
- Specimen trees
- Calverton Place and Park
- Calverton Church
- Manor Farm - stone walls and tithe barns

## **Assessment**

### **Geology and Soils**

The Shenley Claylands, as the name would suggest, are predominantly formed on clay. The soils are calcareous clayey soils that are also slowly permeable and seasonally waterlogged over an underlying chalky till (Hanslope Association). Around the stream that flows through Lower Weald the soils are similar, although there may be some silty loams as well, but the underlying geology has higher clay content from the Jurassic or Cretaceous period and there may be occasional landslips (Denchworth and Evesham 2 Associations). Close to the River Ouse, the geology is formed on river alluvium with the overlying soils being stoneless clays or calcareous in nature (Fladbury 1 Association).

### **Topography**

The Shenley Claylands character area has a lot of variety in its topography. There is a relatively level plateau area along the existing built edge of Milton Keynes, to the north east of the area. This rises gently to the 'Shenley Ridge', which runs through the centre of the area and offers panoramic views to the west. The Lower Weald Valley sub area has a more intimate character, produced by the relatively steep valley sides creating a level of enclosure. This narrow valley then runs down to meet the Ouse on the western boundary of Milton Keynes. A further plateau area is present to the south of the tributary of the Ouse, adjacent to the boundary with Aylesbury Vale District Council.

### **Degree of Slope**

The plateau area adjacent to the edge of Milton Keynes built area has average slopes of approximately 1 in 85. Beyond the 'Shenley Ridge' the slopes become much steeper to the south west and can be as great as 1 in 15. To the south of the tributary of the River Ouse, the slopes are generally less steep and the plateau area is much flatter with average slopes of 1 in 30. Along the tributary that passes through the Wealds the fall is more noticeable than for the other rivers and streams within Milton Keynes Council's administrative area and Lower Weald distinctively nestles within the valley landform.

### **Altitude Range**

The Shenley Claylands character area rises from 94m AOD along its boundary with the built up edge of Milton Keynes to a maximum height of 119m AOD on the Shenley Ridge at its most easterly point. The valley of the tributary of the River Ouse rises from approximately 67m AOD at its confluence with the River Great Ouse to 97m AOD at its most southerly point within the administrative area.

### **Hydrology**

A tributary of the River Great Ouse drains most of this character area. The stream, which is prone to flooding in Lower Weald, flows from south east to north west and joins the Great Ouse to the north west of Lower Weald. For part of its length it forms the boundary between Milton Keynes Council and the adjacent Aylesbury Vale District Council. There are a number of smaller streams that flow down the valley slopes to join the tributary, particularly close to Oakhill Wood, as well as a few which flow towards the built up area of Milton Keynes from the plateau area closest to the urban edge. There are numerous small ponds dotted through out the areas of farmland in this character area and fishponds at Lower Weald.

### **Land cover and land use**

The area comprises mixed agriculture but a higher proportion of pasture than found on the claylands in Character Area 5 to the east of Milton Keynes. Sheep grazing is the main pastoral land use and a number of the fields on the Lower Weald valley slopes include prominent examples of ridge and furrow. The main arable areas are south of the Shenley Ridge and adjacent to the A5. Woodland cover is mainly concentrated to the south e.g. Oakhill Wood but there are smaller coverts on the remnant plateau area to the west.

### **Biodiversity**

Oakhill Wood is ancient in origin and formed part of the wider medieval royal hunting ground of Whaddon Chase. The wood now contains a mix of beech and coniferous plantations. The hedges on the plateau sections are generally tall and strong with hawthorn, elm and some mature tree rows including oak and ash.

### **Historical and Cultural significance**

There are signs of Iron Age activity around the edge of the present day Milton Keynes. Each of the hamlets at Calverton has encountered some depopulation with individual plots being abandoned in past centuries. The western facade of Shenley Den farm which sits on the Shenley Ridge is locally considered to be an eye catcher viewed from Whaddon Hall and is the possible location of a former hunting lodge. Whaddon Chase was an important medieval hunting ground that comprised extensive woodland cover mainly located to the south of Whaddon village. The chase was also important for fox hunting in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **Field Pattern**

The majority of the area to the centre and north comprises 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century parliamentary enclosure, some of which was subsequently sub divided providing rectilinear field patterns. To the south around Shenley Den Farm there is a stronger pattern of organic pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosure with some 20<sup>th</sup> century prairie fields leading to Oakhill Wood. The hedgerow structure derived from the enclosures is generally strong with taller hedges and a number of large hedgerow trees closer to Milton Keynes providing relatively good visual enclosure.

### **Transport Pattern**

The old Roman Road, Watling Street and former A5 mark the eastern boundary. The area is served by a few minor roads connecting the hamlets and linking back to Stoney Stratford, the A5 and Whaddon village.

### **Settlement and Built form**

Settlement in the Parish of Calverton is grouped into three hamlets at Lower, Middle and Upper Weald. Lower Weald is the larger of the settlements and contains a number traditional of limestone buildings with thatch and tile roofing. Manor Farm is notable and includes a number of distinctive tithe barns and stone walls. Middle Weald and Upper Weald are smaller hamlets and further settlement is confined to individual farms and isolated properties a number of which are architecturally undistinguished.

### **Useful Links**

Calverton Village <http://www.calverton.org.uk/>

## **Evaluation Page**

### **Visual and Sensory perception**

Despite the relative close proximity to Milton Keynes the character of the area is in marked contrast to the nearby but largely visually separated city. The intimate valley setting of Lower Weald hamlet and its associated pasture is a distinctive feature. The rural areas to the west including the prominent Shenley Ridge, from which there are panoramic views, retain a strong sense of separation from the built edge of Milton Keynes. Planting along the A5 generally provides screening of the city from the west, however there are some local views of industrial units at Fullers Slade and Kiln Farm are visually intrusive. The A5 is also the main existing source of noise. Elsewhere to the south-east within the allocated expansion areas the strong field boundaries create good visual enclosure.

### **Recreational Opportunities**

The North Bucks Way passes through the area along a well vegetated green lane that will be included within the expansion zone. There are a number of other rights of way in the area although there are no facilities in the village apart from one public house.

### **Community Views**

### **Time depth perspective**

## Evaluation Matrix

### 4a Shenley Ridge/Upper Weald

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG	
Impact of landform* Impact of landcover* Historic pattern* Visibility from outside Sense of enclosure Tranquillity Distinctiveness/rarity	Insignificant Insignificant Insignificant Widely visible Open/exposed <b>Discordant</b> Frequent	Apparent Apparent <b>Apparent</b> <b>Locally visible</b> <b>Partial</b> Moderate <b>Unusual</b>	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b> Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b> Dominant/Prominent Concealed Contained/confined Tranquil Unique/rare	
<b>Totals</b> * Prime condition categories if tie	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	
CONDITION	POOR	MODERATE	GOOD	
Landcover Change Age Structure of Tree Cover* Extent of semi-natural habitat survival* Management of semi-natural habitats Survival of cultural pattern (fields and hedges) Impact of built development* Visual unity * Prime condition categories if tie	Widespread <b>Overmature</b> Relic Poor Declining/Relic High Incoherent	<b>Localised</b> Mature/Young Scattered <b>Not obvious</b> Interrupted <b>Moderate</b> <b>Coherent</b>	Insignificant Mixed Widespread/ <b>Linked</b> Good <b>Intact</b> Low Unified	
<b>Totals</b> * Prime robustness categories if tie	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>MATRIX</b>				
	<b>Good</b>	<b>Strengthen and reinforce</b>	<b>Conserve and strengthen</b>	<b>Safeguard and manage</b>
	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Improve and reinforce</b>	<b>Improve and conserve</b>	<b>Conserve and restore</b>
	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Reconstruct</b>	<b>Improve and restore</b>	<b>Restore condition to maintain character</b>
	<b>Weak</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Strong</b>	
	<b>Strength of Character</b>			

### Landscape Strategy = Improve and Conserve

#### Sensitivity

Ecological – Low

Cultural – Moderate

Visual – Moderate

Tranquillity – Very Low

## Evaluation Matrix

### 4b Lower Weald Valley

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG	
Impact of landform* Impact of landcover* Historic pattern* Visibility from outside Sense of enclosure Tranquillity Distinctiveness/rarity	Insignificant Insignificant Insignificant Widely visible Open/exposed Discordant Frequent	Apparent <b>Apparent</b> Apparent <b>Locally visible</b> <b>Partial</b> <b>Moderate</b> <b>Unusual</b>	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b> Dominant/Prominent <b>Dominant/Prominent</b> Concealed Contained/confined Tranquil Unique/rare	
<b>Totals</b> * Prime condition categories if tie	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	
CONDITION	POOR	MODERATE	GOOD	
Landcover Change Age Structure of Tree Cover* Extent of semi-natural habitat survival* Management of semi-natural habitats Survival of cultural pattern (fields and hedges) Impact of built development* Visual unity <i>* Prime condition categories if tie</i>	Widespread Overmature Relic Poor Declining/Relic High Incoherent	Localised Mature/Young <b>Scattered</b> <b>Not obvious</b> Interrupted Moderate Coherent	<b>Insignificant</b> <b>Mixed</b> Widespread/Linked Good <b>Intact</b> <b>Low</b> <b>Unified</b>	
<b>Totals</b> * Prime robustness categories if tie	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>MATRIX</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Strengthen and reinforce</b>	<b>Conserve and strengthen</b>	<b>Safeguard and manage</b>
<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Improve and reinforce</b>	<b>Improve and conserve</b>	<b>Conserve and restore</b>	
<b>Poor</b>	<b>Reconstruct</b>	<b>Improve and restore</b>	<b>Restore condition to maintain character</b>	
	<b>Weak</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Strong</b>	
	<b>Strength of Character</b>			

### Landscape Strategy = Conserve and Strengthen

#### Sensitivity

Ecological – Very Low

Cultural – Low

Visual – Moderate

Tranquillity – Very Low

## **Guidelines**

### **Countryside Management**

#### **Generally**

- Promote the extended use of the area for informal recreation
- Promote indigenous plant species and use of local provenance wherever possible
- Seek additional rights of way connections to enhance linkages within the allocated development and outwards to the rural areas
- Ensure right of way signage is clear but appropriate to the location using local materials where possible
- Protect and seek to extend the network of small to medium scale woodlands in the arable landscape providing enhanced linkage of woodland habitats
- Promote hedgerow restoration and improvements throughout the area to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland
- Encourage appropriate management of all drainage ditches to improve wildlife value, by improving water quality and establishing grass 'verges'
- Encourage the provision of uncropped or grass field margins on arable land to link areas of wildlife importance and /or existing and proposed rights of way
- Retain key views to local landmarks such as Shenley Den Farm and Lower Weald church and Manor Farm
- Promote increased informal recreation activities using minor roads and rights of way including circular routes from the urban areas

#### **4 a Shenley Ridge/Upper Weald**

- Retain the rural character of the landscape to the west of Shenley Ridge and limit the 'urbanizing' influence of any open space/parkland developments
- Encourage progressive conversion of conifer and beech plantations within Oakhill Wood to indigenous native broadleaved tree and shrub species and local provenance stock

#### **4 b Lower Weald Valley**

- Conserve and enhance the intimate character of Lower, Middle and Upper Weald

#### **Guidelines in relation to development**

- Protect and enhance the setting of Calverton and all the hamlets from the expansion zone development to the east. Ensure that residential development includes for substantial and well-managed areas of open space including indigenous species woodland to provide a strong natural buffer between the new urban areas and the retained rural area.
- Protect Shenley Ridge and the agricultural area to the south west including Whaddon Chase from the visual impact of development and lighting arising from the expansion of Milton Keynes.