

## **Aylesbury Vale New Settlement Scoping Study – Appendix A**

### **Review of Landscape Character Guidance in regard to potential New Settlement Locations – undertaken by LDA Design**

#### **Relevant Documents used to inform the review:**

- Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment (2008) Jacobs Babbie
- Landscape Advice to Aylesbury Vale DC (March 2015) LUC
- Defining the special qualities of local landscape designations in Aylesbury Vale District (October 2015) LUC

#### **Overview of Landscape Character Baseline**

Land Use Consulting (LUC) in their Landscape Advice report to Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) advise 'that in general the 2008 character assessment is fit for purpose in accordance with current LCA guidance'. The only factor that could be improved is the clarification of how 'sensitivity' is established and interpreted. They suggest using the terminology 'visibility' and 'sense of place' instead of 'sensitivity' all which are mentioned in the 2008 report. LUC also suggest that in accordance with 2014 LCA guidance, *'elements and features that are sensitivity, or vulnerable, to changes of whatever kind should also be noted'*. This is not explicitly set out in the 2008 report. They have also provided an update on major developments and changes in the character areas since 2008 which is useful to consider.

LUC advise AVDC, in line with best practice, that a *'more evidence based character approach'* to county and local landscape designations would be beneficial, by *'highlighting the key valued features and characteristics of each LCA'*. However, AVDC have decided not to pursue this route and commissioned LUC to retain the existing county and local landscape designated area boundaries and provide the necessary justification. LUC's October 2015 report therefore does this.

In the March 2015 report, LUC also advise that a sensitivity assessment should be undertaken for *'areas in the district where development is likely to be directed in the new Local Plan, to inform the distribution and development and location of strategic sites.'* This obviously feeds into/runs parallel to the new settlement scoping study.

#### **LDA Design Review of Landscape Character**

13 landscape types and 79 landscape areas have been established as part of the 2008 LCA review. In order to use the information provided for each landscape character area and to help inform judgement on areas suitable for new settlement, a simple spreadsheet has been created. This tabulates the recorded 'Condition' (rated as very poor, poor, moderate, good, or very good) and 'Sensitivity' (rated as very low, low, moderate, high, or very high). The breakdown of 'Sensitivity' also sets out ratings for 'Sense of Place' and 'Visibility'. As LUC highlight these as alternative approaches to describing sensitivity, and also relevant to siting development. The spreadsheet therefore tabulates 'Sense of Place' (rated as very weak, weak, moderate, strong, or very strong) and 'Visibility' (rated as very low, low, moderate, high, or very high). The table includes key descriptive information from the 2008 LCA review that is of relevance to the condition/quality of the landscape;

its ability to accommodate change; and opportunities to enhance character and/or mitigate the impact of any new development.

### Review of Potential New Settlement Locations

15 potential locations have been identified for a new settlement within Aylesbury Vale District. This is based on the mapping of preliminary constraints and opportunities and forms the first stage of identifying locations.

While the mapping of constraints and opportunities has included statutory and local landscape designations, namely the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and 'Areas of Attractive Landscape' (ALL), it does not include information derived from the landscape character baseline. The tables below provide an overview of the landscape character baseline for each of the 15 potential locations; indicate the suitability of the landscape character area to accommodate new development; and consider whether any of the locations should be excluded on landscape grounds.

It should be noted that this (as set out in this appendix) is strategic, desk-based review of the published district-wide landscape character assessment, and has not benefited from field study. Further desk/field study and analysis will be required to investigate the suitability of specific locations in terms of the landscape context.

Option	<b>Haddenham – extension</b>
Primary LCA	8.9 Haddenham Vale
Summary Description of Landscape Character	<i>This relatively large low lying area spreads out from the foothills of the Chiltern escarpment making a marked contrast with the chalk hills. The escarpment is a constant factor in many views which otherwise have an uncontained and remote feel due to the limited topography and the lack of settlement, woodland and infrastructure.</i>
Condition	Good
Sensitivity	Moderate
Visibility	Moderate
Sense of Place	Moderate
Landscape Designations	AAL to the north of Haddenham, within A418 Ridge LCA
Notes	Few landscape constraints. Any extension should be to east, south, or west to avoid the ridgeline to the north and encroaching on the AAL. Tree planting is characteristic and could be used to integrate development and reinforce landscape structure.
Recommendation	Further investigation - high potential

Option	<b>Haddenham – new settlement near Aston Sandford</b>
Primary LCA	8.9 Haddenham Vale
Summary Description of Landscape Character	<i>This relatively large low lying area spreads out from the foothills of the Chiltern escarpment making a marked contrast with the chalk hills. The escarpment is a constant factor in many views which otherwise have an uncontained and remote feel due to the limited topography and the lack of settlement, woodland and infrastructure.</i>
Condition	Good
Sensitivity	Moderate
Visibility	Moderate
Sense of Place	Moderate

Landscape Designations	AAL to the north of Haddenham, within A418 Ridge LCA
Notes	Few landscape constraints and would need to avoid the more sensitive ridgeline/AAL to the north. Also potential impact on setting on the Chilterns AONB to the south, albeit this is approximately 5km away. Tree planting is characteristic could be used to integrate development and reinforce landscape structure. Small scale woodland blocks could also aid landscape integration, especially in long distance views from the AONB.
Recommendation	Further investigation – high potential

Option	<b>Marsh Gibbon – extension</b>
Primary LCA	8.1 Marsh Gibbon Vale
Summary Description of Landscape Character	<i>This vale landscape is unified by its landform and strong hedgerow pattern. It remains predominantly pastoral with significant areas of archaeological and biological interest. Fields are generally medium sized and regular in shape. The wetland nature of the area is evident in the frequent tree-lined meandering watercourses. Views are generally medium distance and focus on the higher ground on the edge of the area or the settlement of Marsh Gibbon. There is also often great visual interest along the watercourses themselves with a variety of bank side vegetation from large trees to reeds and rushes. The area is generally sparsely settled with farms on the higher ground at the edges of the area. The village of Marsh Gibbon in the north of the area is quite large and has many interesting vernacular buildings. Traffic on the A41 and the nearby pylon line are visually intrusive but away from this there is a tranquil and sometimes remote character to the area.</i>
Condition	Very good
Sensitivity	Moderate
Visibility	Moderate
Sense of Place	Moderate
Landscape Designations	None
Notes	Strong character and sense of openness potentially makes landscape integration more challenging but extension to Marsh Gibbon likely to be preferable to new stand alone settlement in this area.
Recommendation	Further investigation

Option	<b>Land in between Oakley/Little London and Long Crendon along B4011, near Hornage Farm – new settlement</b>
Primary LCA	8.11 Peppershill Arable
Summary Description of Landscape Character	<i>An area of gently sloping ground, which is notable for being about three quarters arable, a much higher proportion than in the surrounding areas. The historic predominantly pre 18th century field pattern remains and the hedgerows are generally strong. There are some notable small fields of arable with strong hedgerows close to Peppershill Farm in the centre of the area. There is very limited road access with a large part of the centre having no through road access, this has lead to a remote and hidden quality to the centre. This is strengthened by the generally strong hedgerow pattern. The area has a good network of bridleways and footpaths. Hedgerows often limit views; there are some good short distance views along tree-lined bridleways. An area of variable landscape quality which is highest where there are small fields with good hedgerows and becomes open and bland where there are large arable fields or prairie farming.</i>

Condition	Good
Sensitivity	Moderate
Visibility	Moderate
Sense of Place	Moderate
Landscape Designations	None
Notes	Potential to erode remote character in the centre of the area, but new tree and hedgerow planting could be used to integrate development and improve landscape pattern.
Recommendation	Further investigation – high potential

Option	<b>Land southwest of Granborough – new settlement</b>
Primary LCA	5.7 Hogshaw Claylands
Summary Description of Landscape Character	<i>A gently sloping bowl of low ground in mixed agricultural use. There is a small settlement and access is via narrow lanes and a good network of Public Rights of Way. Hedgerows are good and often have mature oak trees. The main meandering watercourses tend to have trees and shrubs along their banks. Small plantations of mature poplars in a grid are a feature of the area. Views tend to focus on the surrounding higher ground. The two pylon lines through the area are visually intrusive. There is an electricity grid sub-station just to the north of the area, within Claydon Valley LCA 5.6, which these lines join. The sub-station and other pylon lines are visually intrusive in the very north of the area. The area is quiet but not wild or remote.</i>
Condition	Moderate
Sensitivity	Moderate
Visibility	Moderate
Sense of Place	Moderate
Landscape Designations	None
Notes	Topography could help to assimilate development and power lines which are an existing detracting feature. Tree planting and small woodlands are characteristic and could be used to integrate development and reinforce landscape structure
Recommendation	Further investigation – high potential

Option	<b>Land northeast of Granborough and south of Winslow – new settlement</b>
Primary LCA	5.6 Claydon Valley
Summary Description of Landscape Character	<i>The shallow valley has a strong agricultural character notable for its lack of settlement and locally strong field pattern. The area has very small blocks of woodland and variable tree cover in hedgerows. There are good views across the valley from the upper valley sides.</i>
Condition	Good
Sensitivity	Moderate
Visibility	Moderate
Sense of Place	Moderate
Landscape Designations	None
Notes	Development would need to be carefully located to ensure identity/degree of separation is maintained between Granborough, Winslow and the new settlement, and to retain strong character. Small woodland blocks are characteristic could be used to integrate development and reinforce landscape structure.

Recommendation	Further investigation – high potential
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Option	<b>West of Steeple Claydon – new settlement</b>
Primary LCA	5.4 Twyford Vale
Summary Description of Landscape Character	<i>The shallow valley of the Claydon and Padbury Brooks and their confluence. The valley has gently sloping sides with areas towards the centre which seem almost flat. The farming is mixed with slightly more pasture particularly close to the rivers. The area has a low density of settlement. There are good views across the valley, which often focus on villages and church spires on the valley sides. There is little woodland and tree cover in hedgerows is variable. The strongest tree lines and the greatest visual interest is generally adjacent to the meandering watercourses, where pollarded willows are a feature. Remote and tranquil close to watercourses.</i>
Condition	Good
Sensitivity	Moderate
Visibility	Moderate
Sense of Place	Moderate
Landscape Designations	None
Notes	Few landscape constraints, however, consideration would need to be given to setting/coalescence with local settlements and key views. New tree and hedgerow planting could be used to integrate development and improve landscape pattern.
Recommendation	Further investigation

Option	<b>Stewkley – new settlement</b>
Primary LCA	4.13 Cublington - Wing Plateau
Summary Description of Landscape Character	<i>Clay plateau landscape with a gently undulating landform eroded by local streams. The core of the area consists of large arable fields with degraded or well trimmed hedgerows with few hedgerow trees. Paddocks and smaller parcels of grazing land are located around the settlements. There is mixed farming use and concentrations of smaller fields on the western fringes of the LCA. The extensive former WWII airfield is now used as a poultry farm with some remnant runways and MOD buildings and more recent woodland planting. There is a golf course southeast of Stewkley. Generally sparse woodland cover across the area and long straight roads connecting settlements. The settlement of Wing sits on a small promontory of land overlooking the valley to the south.</i>
Condition	Very good
Sensitivity	Moderate
Visibility	High
Sense of Place	Weak
Landscape Designations	None
Notes	The area has a distinctive character and high degree of visibility, but sense of place disrupted by airfield and sheds. Despite moderate-low suitability, areas in closer proximity to the former airfield may be better able to accommodate new development.
Recommendation	Further investigation

Option	<b>Whaddon – new settlement</b>
Primary LCA	4.5 Grove Farm Shallow Valley
Summary Description of Landscape Character	<i>A wide shallow valley, crossed by numerous streams draining off the Chase to the south, which is defined by the Shenley Ridge to the east and the Nash to Beachampton Road to the west. The western boundary is less clearly defined. The area is sparsely populated with a few dispersed farmsteads, intrinsically rural and predominantly in arable use. There are large fields with some woodland and shelterbelts on the fringes including recent woodland planting. Grazing and improved pastureland is found on the southern fringe adjacent to Whaddon village.</i>
Condition	Moderate
Sensitivity	Moderate
Visibility	Moderate
Sense of Place	Moderate
Landscape Designations	None
Notes	Few landscape constraints and would need to avoid the AAL to the south. Tree and hedgerow planting is characteristic could be used to integrate development and reinforce landscape structure.
Recommendation	Further investigation – high potential

Option	<b>Waddesdon – new settlement</b>
Primary LCA	5.9 Westcott Claylands
Summary Description of Landscape Character	<i>A large area of gently sloping low ground in predominantly pastoral use. It is united by a good hedgerow pattern around small or medium fields. The condition of hedgerows is very variable with noticeable areas where the hedgerows are very gappy and fragmented. There is little woodland. The village of Quainton with its landmark windmill lies on the area's northern edge. Quainton and Waddesdon just over the LCA boundary are larger villages than found in most of the surrounding countryside. Views from the area tend to focus on Quainton Hill or Waddesdon Manor estate. The area comprises three small stream valleys; each has a slightly different character. In the southern part of the area where the stream feeds into the Cheersley Narrow Valley LCA 5.10, there is a remote and tranquil character and it is not accessible by roads. In the central section there is some visual intrusion associated with the A41 and adjacent development. Westcott airfield is extensive and includes an industrial area. The sheds, runway and chain link fencing are visually intrusive in a small area close to the A41. In the north the area is predominantly agricultural with the hills to the north being the focus of views. The area generally has an open agricultural character, which is in places disrupted by land uses other than agriculture.</i>
Condition	Very good
Sensitivity	Moderate
Visibility	Moderate
Sense of Place	Moderate
Landscape Designations	None
Notes	Despite some variations, distinctive overall character and number of important landmark/heritage features within the local area. Woodland is a characteristic feature and new woodland block/belts would be particularly effective at integrating development.
Recommendation	Further investigation

Option	<b>Winslow – new settlement</b>
Primary LCA	4.10 Greenway Open Farmland
Summary Description of Landscape Character	<i>The character of the area is defined by the narrow ridge of higher ground and the arable land use in medium to large fields. The construction of a now disused airfield over a large section of the ridge has destroyed much of the original hedgerow pattern. Those hedgerows that remain vary but are generally cut low and contain few trees so there are wide unobstructed views across and out of the area. The lack of field pattern, flat landform and pylon line combine to make this area more bleak than open in character.</i>
Condition	Very poor
Sensitivity	Moderate
Visibility	High
Sense of Place	Weak
Landscape Designations	None
Notes	Generally poor condition due to a large part of the area being a disused airfield where the ground has been levelled and the field pattern removed. Opportunities to improve landscape structure as part of any new development.
Recommendation	Further investigation – high potential

Option	<b>Turweston, Turweston Airfield – new settlement</b>
Primary LCA	1.6 Oatley's Plateau
Summary Description of Landscape Character	<i>An open, agricultural landscape with predominantly arable farming. The hedgerow pattern is variable and in places has been lost, this coupled with gently sloping nature of the landform, which provides little sense of enclosure means that the landscape is quite open and bleak. Close to the airfield sheds are used for light industry, which along with perimeter fencing and the flat landform create little sense of place. The areas of greatest visual interest tend to be associated with areas where the tree cover is stronger such as around Oatleys Hall or Ash Furlong Lane (Bridleway), which is bounded by strong high hedgerows. The edges of the area afford good views out across the Great Ouse valley.</i>
Condition	Moderate
Sensitivity	High
Visibility	High
Sense of Place	Moderate
Landscape Designations	Part ALL
Notes	Distinct character although this is weaker around the airfield, where field pattern has been removed. Opportunities to improve landscape structure as part of any new development.
Recommendation	Further investigation –high potential

Option	<b>Cheddington - new settlement</b>
Primary LCA	8.3 Ouzel Valley Catchment
Summary Description of Landscape Character	<i>The area is shallow falling towards the river Ouzel to the east. The area also incorporates some local low lying hills. There are well defined valley edges to the north and south. Ascott House and parkland sits on the northern valley edge. The area is traversed by the Grand Union Canal and west coast mainline railway. It is predominantly an arable landscape crossed by meandering streams and with numerous ponds. Sparse woodland cover is limited and generally associated with parkland in the north and with local settlements, although it also can be</i>

	<i>found along the line of the canal as well as contributing to the scrub cover found on the railway embankments.</i>
Condition	Moderate
Sensitivity	Moderate
Visibility	Moderate
Sense of Place	Moderate
Landscape Designations	AONB setting
Notes	Intrinsic rural character but relatively few landscape constraints, however, consideration would need to be given to setting of the AONB and key views. Tree and hedgerow planting could be used to integrate development and improve landscape pattern.
Recommendations	Further investigation

Option	<b>Land near Upper South Farm/Dodershall, Aylesbury Hp22 4DG off Quainton Road (near Waddesdon) – new settlement</b>
Primary LCA	5.9 Westcott Claylands
Summary Description of Landscape Character	<i>A large area of gently sloping low ground in predominantly pastoral use. It is united by a good hedgerow pattern around small or medium fields. The condition of hedgerows is very variable with noticeable areas where the hedgerows are very gappy and fragmented. There is little woodland. The village of Quainton with its landmark windmill lies on the area's northern edge. Quainton and Waddesdon just over the LCA boundary are larger villages than found in most of the surrounding countryside. Views from the area tend to focus on Quainton Hill or Waddesdon Manor estate. The area comprises three small stream valleys; each has a slightly different character. In the southern part of the area where the stream feeds into the Chearsley Narrow Valley LCA 5.10, there is a remote and tranquil character and it is not accessible by roads. In the central section there is some visual intrusion associated with the A41 and adjacent development. Westcott airfield is extensive and includes an industrial area. The sheds, runway and chain link fencing are visually intrusive in a small area close to the A41. In the north the area is predominantly agricultural with the hills to the north being the focus of views. The area generally has an open agricultural character, which is in places disrupted by land uses other than agriculture.</i>
Condition	Very good
Sensitivity	Moderate
Visibility	Moderate
Sense of Place	Moderate
Landscape Designations	None
Notes	Despite some variations, distinctive overall character and number of important landmark/heritage features within the local area. Woodland is a characteristic feature and new woodland block/belts would be particularly effective at integrating development.
Recommendation	Further investigation

## Conclusions and Summary



Of the potential new settlement locations, all of the relevant landscape character areas are considered as having potential to accommodate new development.

The following 9 are considered to have most potential, mainly due to relatively few landscape constraints and or the ability to integrate new development into the landscape through landform and/or new planting:

- Haddenham – extension
- Haddenham (near Aston Sandford) – new settlement
- Land in between Oakley/Little London and Long Crendon along B4011 – new settlement
- Land southwest of Granborough – new settlement
- West of Steeple Claydon – new settlement
- Whaddon – new settlement
- Winslow – new settlement or extension
- Turweston, Turweston Airfield – new settlement
- Cheddington - new settlement

In landscape terms, a new settlement at either Winslow or Turweston, at the former airfield sites, would have particularly high potential due to the poor condition and generally weaker character of the particular sites, and opportunities to improve landscape structure as part of any new development. However there are evidently wider factors to consider in deriving conclusions on appropriate locations for strategic development.