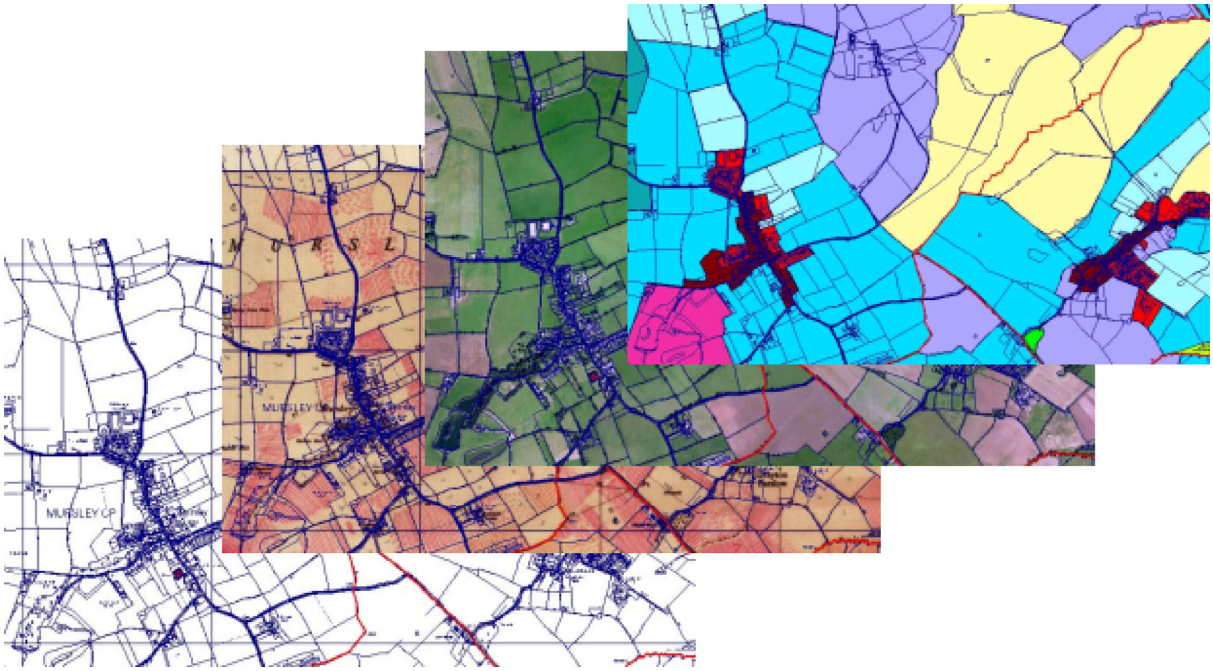
Buckinghamshire Historic Landscape Characterisation

Project Methodology



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Introduction

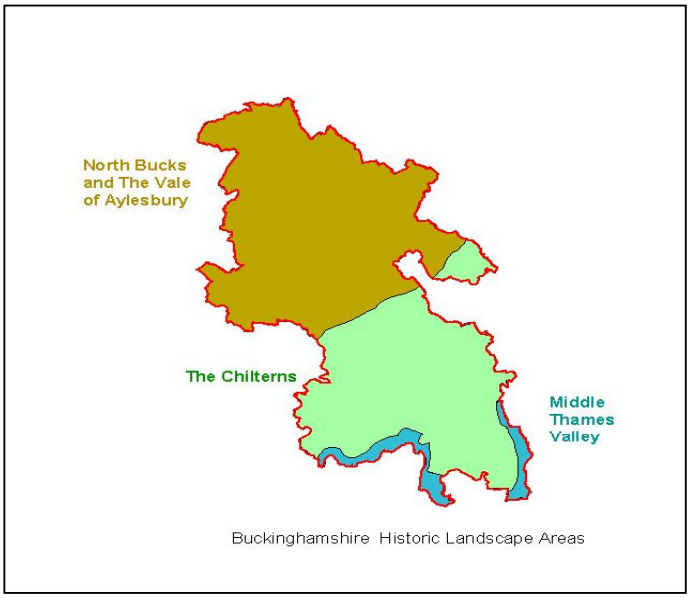
1.1. Summary

The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) funded by English Heritage, is a GIS based archaeological method for defining the historic and archaeological dimension of the present day landscape. It can explain how and why the landscape looks as it does, identify time depth and facilitate sustainable management. This document details the methodology with which to undertake the HLC project for Buckinghamshire and also acts as a guide to the process. The project methodology for Buckinghamshire has been devised by the analysis of other HLC projects that have been successfully completed or are currently in progress. Among the projects reviewed were, Cumbria, Cheshire, Devon, Lancashire, Shropshire and the East of England. In addition the demands and idiosyncrasies of the Buckinghamshire Landscape have also been taken into account and new approaches and techniques have also been introduced.

1.2. Location and Description of the Project Area

The project area comprises the modern administrative county of Buckinghamshire covering some 1500km^2 and comprising 161 modern civil parishes excluding the Unitary Authority of Milton Keynes. Milton Keynes covers an additional area of c 300km^2 and 44 civil parishes.

The major historical influences on Buckinghamshire's landscape have been described in *"A future for our past"* (The Buckinghamshire Archaeological Management Plan). Essentially, the county has three distinct historic landscape zones – North Bucks and the Vale of Aylesbury, the Chilterns and a sliver of the Middle Thames Valley. North Bucks and the Vale are part of the classic "planned landscape" of the English Midlands – an area defined as the "Inner Midlands" of the Central Province by Roberts and Wrathmell (2000). In contrast, the Chilterns and Thames are regarded as "ancient countryside" – distinctive local regions of Robert and Wrathmell's South-eastern Province – although the Thames landscape is greatly changed by the modern development related to the expansion of London. There are great historical differences between these zones in terms of topography, settlement patterns, age of enclosed field systems, extent of woodland, modern development etc. This dichotomy presents both a challenge to the HLC methodology (previously mainly applied to "ancient countryside") and an opportunity to explore its application to "planned landscapes".



Buckinghamshire Historic Landscape Areas

1.3. Reasons for Project

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) aims to identify, describe and map the main historic influences which have formed and define the present day landscape and provide tools which are readily understandable by the non-specialist and useable in a variety of land management contexts. The principal products of an HLC exercise are typically a series of GIS- based data sets and a supporting report. The Bucks HLC will help develop tools for practical input into landscape management decisions at a local level including, if appropriate, further supplementary planning guidance. The overall outcome should be a heightened understanding and appreciation of the historic landscape across the community and in all aspects of planning and land management. The potential uses of HLC are numerous – in Buckinghamshire the following are likely to be the main immediate uses:

- Landscape Characterisation - provision of historical depth to support and complement the *Landscape Plan for Buckinghamshire*

- Land Use Planning**:** – especially informing strategic planning, contributing to supplementary planning guidance and providing a context for archaeological development control advice.

- Conservation**:** - particularly in relation to the Chilterns AONB, the County Council's proposed "Bernwood Project" in northwest Bucks and the targeting of MAFF agri-environment grants.

- Public Outreach**:** – On-line access to the Bucks HLC will be an important component of the "Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past" SMR Outreach Project. Opportunities will be sought to engage local communities through this project and the interpretation strands of conservation projects.

- Research**:** – HLC will help stimulate research into the county's historic landscapes (for example in relation to the Bernwood & Whittlewood Projects and by feeding into the proposed Solent-Thames sub-Regional Research Frameworks Project)

2. Resources

The Buckinghamshire HLC will be undertaken using Bucks County Council's GIS ArcView 3.2 and utilising other electronic spatial data. The project will involve the creation of data by digitisation of polygons selected from land parcels. Rather than utilise an external database, the metadata for the project will be self-contained, using the database tables within the application.
There are a myriad of sources that are potentially suitable for incorporation within the HLC, but these have been pared down to set number of core and ancillary sources. Few datasets provide consistent coverage at county level. The Buckinghamshire HLC will therefore rely upon the modern Ordnance Survey maps (digital Land- Line and 1:25000 Explorer), vertical aerial photographs (1999) and first edition map as core sources. The ancillary sources such as Ridge and Furrow mapping, Bryant's and Jeffreys' county maps will be employed to aid further interpretation. The acquisition of data from other historic maps such as tithe and estate plans, presents significant logistical problems within the constraints of this project. It is consequently necessary to utilise these resources in a more strategic manner, using historic maps to inform the characterisation of key areas of the landscape and then extrapolating data to the surrounding areas.

Core Data	**Format**	**Bucks Coverage**	**Location**
Vertical Aerial Photographs	GIS & Hard Copy	All	SMR/Network
OS Land Line Data	Digital	All	BCC
OS Raster Map 1:10,000	Digital	All	BCC
OS Explorer 1:25,000	Hard Copy	Part	SMR
OS 1950s 6" maps 1878-70	Hard Copy	Part	BCC
OS 1st edition 6" maps	Hard Copy	All	SMR
OS 1st edition 2" surveyors	Micro Fiche	All	SMR

Ancillary Data	**Format**	**Bucks Coverage**	**Location**
Jefferys County Maps 1774	Maps	All	SMR
Bryant County Maps 1825	Maps	All	SMR
Enclosure Maps	Maps & text	Part	Local Studies
Ridge & Furrow Mapping	Maps	Part	SMR
Tithe Maps	Maps & text	Part	Local Studies
Sites and Monuments Data	GIS	All	Network
Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland	GIS	All	Network
EH Register of Parks and Gardens	GIS	All	Network
Geological Maps	GIS	All	Network
Roberts & Wrathmall Data	GIS		Network
Contouring Mapping	GIS	All	Network
Buckinghamshire SMR	DB and GIS		BCC
Estate plans	Hard copy maps	Part	BRO
Conservation areas	Digital , hard copy maps	All	BCC, District Councils
NT landscape surveys	Hard copy maps and text; digital soon	Limited	NT
Landuse data (Landscape Change project)	Digital	Part	
Countryside Character areas (Countryside Agency)	Hard copy text and maps	All	Published material

BCC- Buckinghamshire County Council
BRO – Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies
NT – National Trust (South Regional Office, Cirencester)
EH – English Heritage
EN – English Nature
BGS – British Geological Survey

3. Methodology Process

3.1. Paper Mapping

The first task is to undertake a paper mapping exercise. Using coloured pencils, the surviving fields from parliamentary enclosure maps in the Buckinghamshire Record Office (BRO), are annotated onto the Ordnance Survey Explorer 1:25,000 maps. Buckinghamshire's parliamentary enclosed land is well documented and covered 37% of the historic county. Enclosure was principally concentrated in the north of the county where it affected almost the entire landscape of many parishes (Turner, M. 1973). In view of the dominant importance of parliamentary enclosures in these areas, it is considered essential that this project properly characterises the impact of parliamentary enclosure on the modern landscape both to understand its distinctive forms and recognise the contributions of earlier landscapes which may have been preserved by the parliamentary commissioners in much the same way that contemporary landscape parks often did. It is also worth noting that north Bucks has some of the best preserved medieval open field systems in Midland England (Hall, 2001) and it is hoped that a better understanding of the process of enclosure may help understanding of this resource and the targeting of conservation strategies. It is hoped that this study will begin to challenge notions that parliamentary enclosures are simply modern, standardised, ubiquitous and uninteresting – at their best they can probably be regarded as "designed landscapes" which are as worthy of preservation as earlier field systems or even some contemporary landscape parks. In this study it is proposed to map the extent of land affected by parliamentary enclosure as recorded on Inclosure maps available in the Buckinghamshire Record Office.

The analysis of the 1:25,000 paper maps will also be an opportunity to discern distinct areas for digitisation by looking at the morphology of fields and settlement areas and annotating distinctive land parcels on the maps, (see below).

3.2. Data Capture /Recording Polygon Data

After the annotation of the paper maps the next step is to digitise the defined landscape areas using ArcView 3.2 and record the values in its database table. Only areas greater than *c*. 6 hectares in area are to be apportioned and digitised. Smaller elements of the landscape will be noted as a 'primary' or 'secondary attribute' within the polygon, on the grounds that these are too small to contribute decisively to historic landscape character.

The database recording of the values for each polygon is laid out in *Table 1* and the definitions for each field are elaborated below. The structure of the recording is designed to be a deductive process that will hopefully aid decision making for each historic land parcel.