

# Draft Buckinghamshire Green Belt Assessment

## Appendix 6: Biodiversity

February 2026

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Approach and method .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Summary .....	1
Background discussion .....	1
Detailed discussion .....	7
Discussion of sub-areas .....	10
Outcomes .....	15

# Introduction

A6.1. This appendix Section 5 of the main report and specifically deals with Stage 4 of the footnote 7 assessment method, namely assessment of AAs in terms of biodiversity constraint. This appendix covers:

- Approach and method
- Outcomes

## Approach and method

### Introduction

A6.2. This section covers the following:

- A summary of the approach taken
- Background discussion of GIS based versus qualitative assessment
- Detailed discussion of the approach taken
- Discussion of sub-areas

### Summary

A6.3. The first step is to run **GIS analysis** to understand the spatial relationship between AAs and designated sites, in terms of intersect and proximity.

A6.4. With regards to AAs intersecting a designated site it is clearly the case that the constraint is such that the AA is not grey belt.

A6.5. However, the situation is not clear in respect of AAs that are in proximity to a designated site. In these instances a conclusion constraint can only be reached following supplementary **qualitative assessment**, for two reasons:

- There are no nationally established decision rules regarding proximity to a designated site precluding development or acting as a significant constraint potentially to the extent of precluding grey belt.
- It is appropriate to consider wider qualitative factors beyond proximity in light of an understanding of potential 'impact pathways'.

A6.6. Reliance on qualitative assessment means that AA-specific assessments must be read in order to understand the full reasoning behind assessment findings. However, this appendix aims to provide insights.

## Background discussion

A6.7. At this stage there is a need to account for: A) internationally designated habitats sites;<sup>1</sup> and B) nationally designated SSSIs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar sites

- A6.8. There is no doubt that land intersecting a habitats site or a SSSI is not grey belt but there are no nationally set rules in respect of distance to a habitats site or a SSSI that precludes development let alone precludes grey belt.
- A6.9. This is because distance is a crude indicator of impact risk, due to a need to also factor in 'impact pathways'. For example, the Buckinghamshire Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) discusses:
- Air pollution
  - Loss of functionally linked land
  - Recreational pressure
  - Urbanisation
  - Water quality
  - Water quantity, level and flow.
- A6.10. These are select impact pathways specifically relevant to habitats sites in and around Buckinghamshire, but this list also provides a good starting point for consideration of impact pathways in respect of SSSIs.
- A6.11. Considering impact pathways between AAs and specific habitats sites and SSSIs is challenging. There is a need for detailed qualitative assessment.
- A6.12. As such, what can be achieved through this GBA is inherently limited. Nonetheless, it important that proportionate work is undertaken, as opposed to reaching conclusions on grey belt regardless of impact pathways.
- A6.13. The implication is that:
- This study can only an 'initial' assessment that may well need to be supplemented by detailed work as part of local plan-making and decision-making on planning applications.<sup>2</sup>

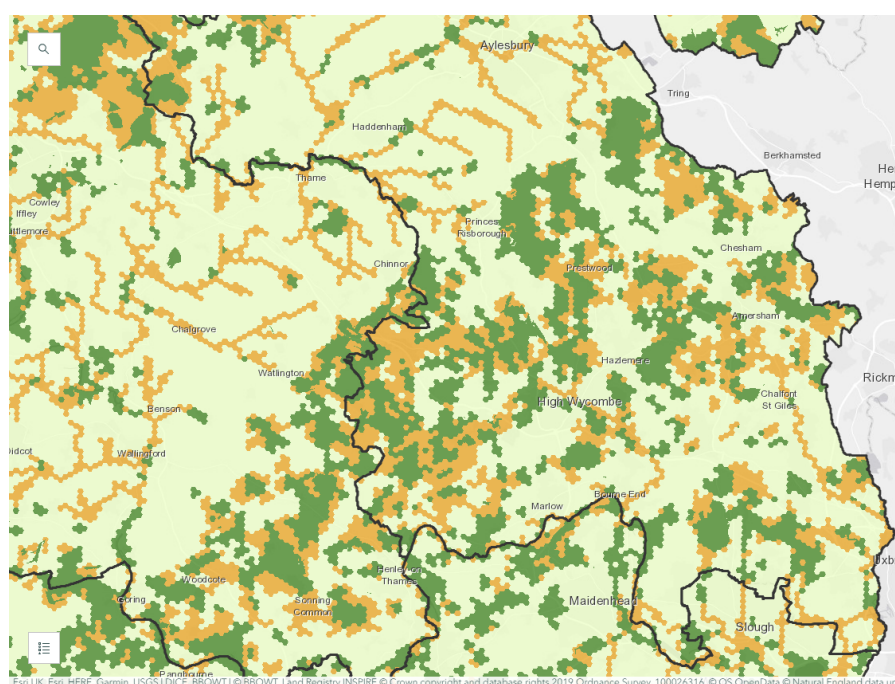
## Ecological networks

- A6.14. An important impact pathway from the list above is 'functionally linked land' which might otherwise be described as 'functional connectivity' (e.g. that is the terminology used elsewhere in similar [guidance](#)).
- A6.15. Functional connectivity can take a range of forms, but in an ecological sense an area of land will be functionally connected to a habitats site or a SSSI where it makes a contribution to an 'ecological network' that includes the habitats site or SSSI. In turn, there is a need to consider AAs that might share an ecological network with a habitats site or a SSSI.
- A6.16. Ecological networks are not comprehensively mapped, but work is underway through the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), following the Environment Act (2023) mandating national coverage of LNRS (following a government commitment to a Nature Recovery Network and, prior to that, the 'Lawton Review').

<sup>2</sup> For example, a recent appeal decision (Appeal Ref: APP/B1740/W/25/3363504) presents a 2,000 word discussion of impact pathways in respect of habitat sites before concluding that concerns are limited to the extent that the site can be grey belt.

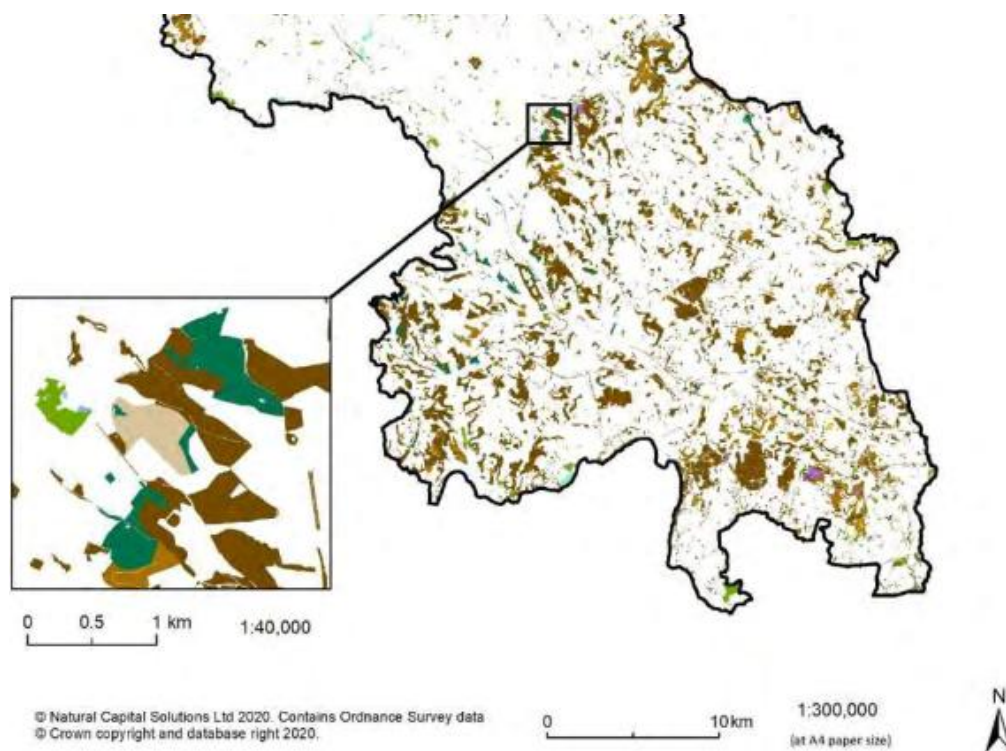
- A6.17. Ahead of the LNRS, the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust ([BBOWT](#)) has undertaken work to define a Nature Recovery Network (NRN) for Buckinghamshire and, whilst an informal study, this provides useful evidence ahead of the Buckinghamshire LNRS.
- A6.18. Figure A6.1 shows the outcome of the BBOWT work for the study area (it shows the south of Buckinghamshire along with the east of Oxfordshire and the north of Berkshire) and attention focuses on the dark green areas, which BBOWT defines as the 'core areas' within the NRN.
- A6.19. Many of these do not include either a habitats site or a SSSI, but where they do the extent of the core area is an indication of land that is functionally connected. 'Core areas' within the study area are clearly extensive within the Chilterns NL and in the far south of Buckinghamshire.

**Figure A6.1: Screenshot showing part of the BBOWT NRN**



- A6.20. A similar picture is also shown by Figure A6.2, which is taken from the [Buckinghamshire Natural Capital Mapping Report \(2020\)](#). Specifically, the figure shows "high quality habitat" and serves to highlight a very high density not only within the Chilterns but also in the far south of Buckinghamshire.
- A6.21. Whilst only a modest proportion of this high quality habitat comprises a habitats site or a SSSI, the high density is an indication of ecological connectivity / networks. In turn, where an AA includes high quality habitat that might share an ecological network with a habitats site or a SSSI there is a need to carefully consider whether it can be green belt.
- A6.22. One other source of evidence is Natural England's [Habitat Network Maps](#).

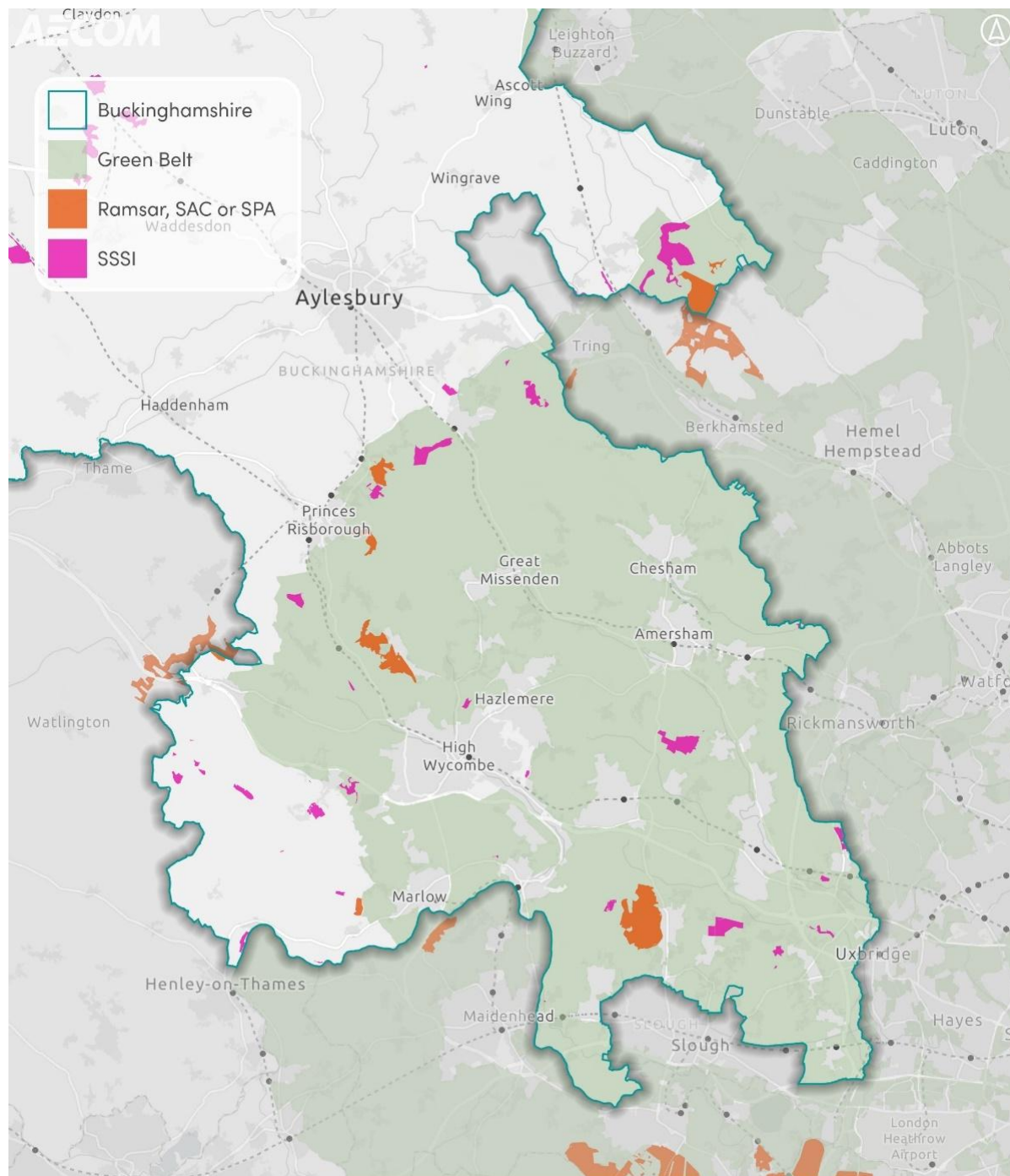
**Figure A6.2: High quality habitat in the south of Buckinghamshire**



A6.23. Finally, by way of context to consideration of ecological networks:

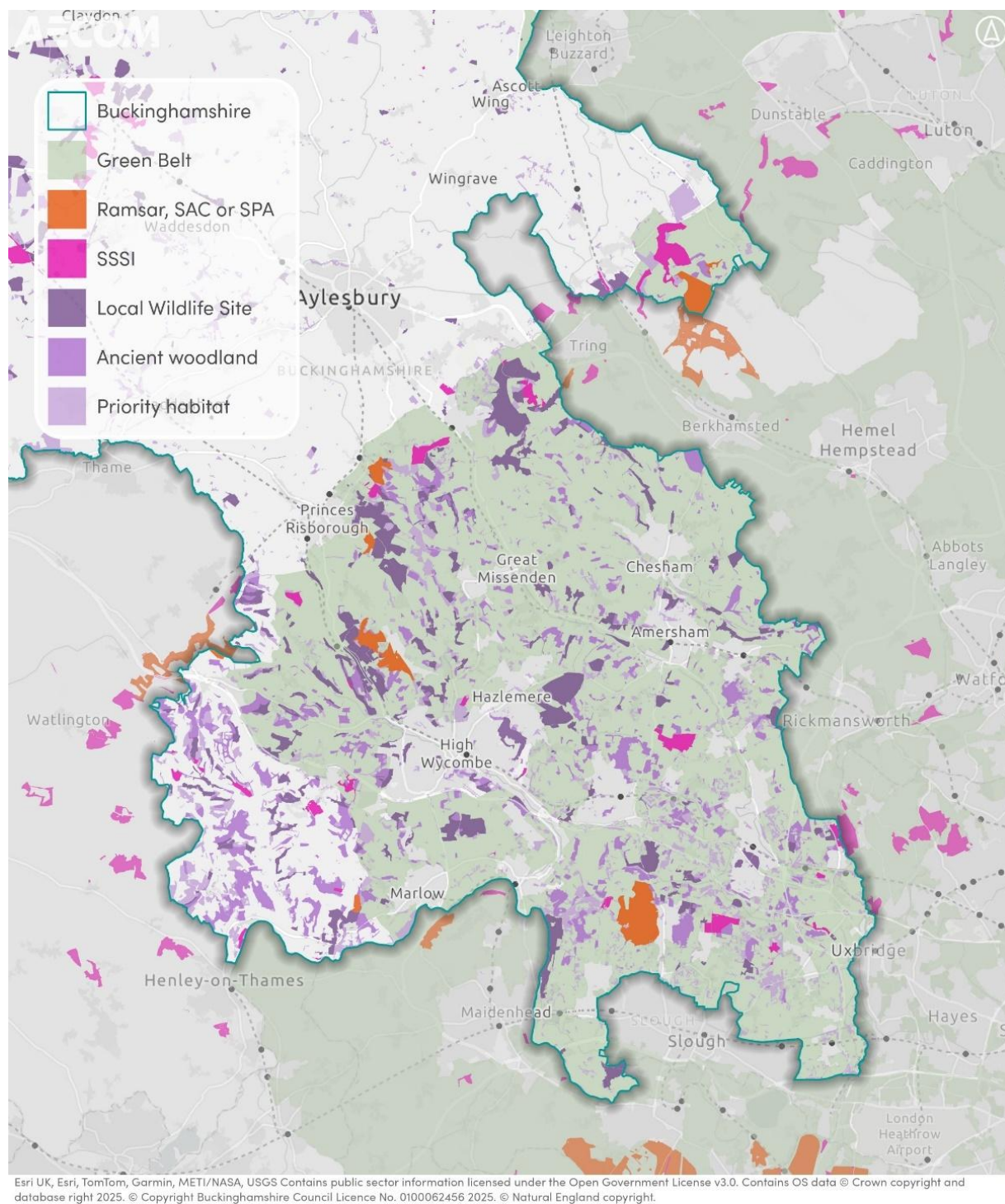
- Figure A6.3 shows designated sites.
- Figure A6.4 shows designated sites alongside other areas of designated habitat that may contribute to ecological networks in combination with habitats sites and SSSIs. Specifically, the figure additionally shows:
  - Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) which contribute strongly to networks;
  - Ancient woodland (where not designated as an LWS); and
  - priority habitat (where not a LWS nor ancient woodland).



**Figure A6.3: Habitats sites and SSSIs in and around Buckinghamshire**

Esri UK, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, METI/NASA, USGS Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government License v3.0. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2025. © Copyright Buckinghamshire Council Licence No. 0100062456 2025. © Natural England copyright.

### Figure A6.4: Habitats sites, SSSIs and other designations





## Detailed discussion

A6.24. The following ten AAs are **constrained** with a high degree of confidence:

- Four AAs that significantly intersect a SSSI (>10%)
- One AA that intersects a SSSI by 4% but also includes much priority habitat including ancient woodland. Specifically, this is a very large AA defined to align with Black Park, and it includes an entire SSSI. It is also in proximity to two further SSSIs.
- Five AAs that are adjacent to or modestly intersect Burnham Beeches SAC. These are all large AAs which on the one hand is suggestive of concern given the possible scale of development but, on the other hand, suggests good potential for mitigation including Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). Four of the five include significant onsite habitat (one includes a SSSI) but one includes limited priority habitat, namely FC003. This is a large AA (178 ha) adjacent to the south of Burnham Beeches (in the direction of Slough) and includes many small patches of woodland, including two ancient woodlands, as well as historic mature hedgerows in some areas, although one notable part of the AA appears to have limit constraint (there is recent quarrying activity).

A6.25. A further 15 AAs are then adjacent or near adjacent (within circa 20m) to a SSSI are also judged **constrained**. Some of these are also associated with wider factors indicative of constraint, for example OGB59-2 is located in between Stoke Common SSSI and Burnham Beeches SAC, but this is not the case for all 15. In particular, there is a large AA adjacent to Hodgemoor Woods SSSI with limited onsite priority habitat and where the potential for a logical urban extension to effectively buffer the SSSI can be envisaged. However, it is considered appropriate to take a precautionary approach and conclude that AAs adjacent to a SSSI are constrained as a rule.

A6.26. The next AA to consider is then FC002-b, which is judged **constrained** because it is 285m from Burnham Beeches SAC at its closest point and this closest point is a likely logical location to concentrate development within the AA. The context is that there is a 500m 'exclusion zone' surrounding the SAC where there is a presumption against *net one additional* dwelling; however, on the other hand, the AA is separated from the SAC by the built up area of Farnham Common.

A6.27. The final four AAs judged **constrained** are associated with a lower degree of certainty, such that the conclusion is flagged as 'marginal'.

A6.28. Specifically, these AAs are as follows:

- OGB63-4 – includes some built form but is near adjacent (30m) to Old Rectory Meadows SSSI and includes priority habitat, plus topography could suggest some risk of hydrological connectivity.

- WD002 – 100m from Weston Turville Reservoir SSSI and separated by a small modern cul-de-sac (Willowbrook) but clearly functionally linked by the Wendover Brook Corridor, which is described in the SSSI citation as a chalk stream feeding the SSSI. The brook corridor is quite strongly associated with priority habitat and has strong wetland characteristics. The eastern part of the AA away from the brook corridor is less constrained, but there are historic field boundaries that link the brook corridor to priority habitat along the canal corridor.
- SP006 – circa 200m of Stoke Common SSSI and very well linked by footpaths. Also comprises land that is the separation between the SSSI and a large ancient woodland.
- OGB56-3 – circa 800m from Burnham Beeches at its closest point. Includes extensive priority habitat (it is a registered park and garden).

A6.29. It is also important to note that three of these four, and specifically all bar WD002 at Wendover, are located in the far south of Buckinghamshire where, as discussed above, there is considered to be a strategic constraint relating to extensive ecological networks that include one or more SSSIs. This matter is discussed further below under the 'sub-areas discussion'.

A6.30. A further 253 AAs are then judged **provisionally constrained**. This is on the basis of quite a wide range of factors that need not be summarised here in full (see the AA-specific assessments), but points to note include:

- Many are distant from a designated site but within a defined recreational pressure zone of influence (Zol), specifically either that for the Ashridge SSSI component of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC (12.6km) or Burnham Beeches SAC (5.7km). For example, 248 are more than 200m distant, 230 are more than 400m distant and 188 are more than 1km distant.
- One includes a SSSI, but this is a geological SSSI. This AA (OGB73-2) is also within a recreational pressure Zol and, as it happens, is subject to significant local level biodiversity constraint in the form of a very large Local Wildlife Site (the AA comprises Cliveden).
- One AA (OGB63-3-a) is adjacent to a SSSI but comprises quite high density existing built form.
- Three further AAs are within 200m of a SSSI, with the assessments explaining matters as follows:
  - ND002 – a large AA that is around 100m from a SSSI at its closest point, although the SSSI is upstream. Includes a small area of priority habitat. Also, another SSSI is located not far to the northeast (again, located upstream).
  - IH004 – around 200m of a SSSI at its closest point, but this part of the AA comprises built form. The wider AA is around 400m distant. There is limited priority habitat and extensive accessible greenspace in the vicinity other than the SSSI.
  - HW105 – around 200m of Widdenton Park Wood SSSI but does not include any priority habitat (it is an airfield) and there would be good potential to deliver mitigation.

#### A6.31. The remaining 114 AAs are judged **unconstrained**:

- For 21 of these AAs the conclusion is flagged as marginal, and within this points to note are:
  - OGB40b-3-b – a large AA that is around 450m from a SSSI, but there are few concerns noting that the AA comprises an airfield, plus the A412 is a barrier to accessing the SSSI and there is little to indicate that hydrological connectivity would be an issue.
  - OGB66-3-b – a large AA located in between Old Rectory Meadows SSSI along the River Misbourne and two adjacent SSSIs to the southeast along the River Colne. However, relatively distant (650m to the nearest SSSI) and does not contain priority habitat.
  - OGB63-3-b – upstream of Old Rectory Meadows SSSI, which is mostly in unfavourable condition. However, separated by Higher Denham. Contains significant priority habitat, although not along the river corridor. This part of the AA is not linked by footpath to the SSSI, but it is functionally linked by the river corridor.
  - The remaining 18 AAs are distant from a designated site but are within 5km of the Southwest London Waterbodies SPA / Ramsar.<sup>3</sup>
- A further 25 AAs warrant an assessment on the basis of proximity to a designated site, but in each case the AA is judged **unconstrained** with considerable confidence. Points to note are as follows:
  - Three AAs are within 400m of a SSSI, but this is a geological SSSI.
  - The next closest AA is CG023, for which the assessment explains:
 

*“Around 400m from Hodgemoor Woods SSSI. Linked via Bottrells Lane, which is a rural lane that could potentially be used by dog walkers. A modest-sized AA that does not contain priority habitat and is quite well-contained by built form.”*
  - The next closest AA is HW059-a, for which the assessment explains:
 

*“Around 600m from Gomm Valley SSSI at its closest point, but the walking route is ~1km. Includes priority habitat but also built form, and it is noted that most the priority habitat woodland is not shown on historic mapping.”*
  - The next closest AA is OGB60-2, for which the assessment explains:
 

*“Limited concerns regarding recreational pressure on Bisham Wood SSSI component of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC nor Cock Marsh SSSI given the intervening River Thames.”*

<sup>3</sup> AAs to the south and west of Richings Park are judged to be ‘clearly unconstrained’ but are just within 5km of South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar. Recreational pressure is listed as a threat for the SAC/Ramsar, but there is not a defined ZOI nor is there an established mitigation strategy. Where this is the case, it is common practice to consider recreational pressure within a 5km zone. However, much of Slough falls within this zone, which reduces concerns. Also, large parts of the SPA/Ramsar are not accessible including that part in closest proximity to the AAs (Wraysbury Reservoir). A further consideration is that the recreational pressure sensitivity primarily relates to the winter months (wintering wildfowl) and there is a need to question whether residents of the Richings Park area would be likely to travel to the SPA/Ramsar in the winter months recognising that there are alternative destinations for recreation, e.g. Langley Park / Black Park and the River Colne Regional Park. It is considered likely that recreational pressure affecting the SPA/Ramsar comes more from West London.

- The final 68 are beyond 1km of a designated site and there are no wider factors suggestive of impact pathways. These AAs are **unconstrained**, and the assessment simply records “no notable constraint”.

## Discussion of sub-areas

A6.32. In order to provide further insights, set out below is a discussion of specific sub-areas across the study area (broadly north to south).

### Leighton Buzzard

A6.33. One AA here is just under 1km distant from Nares Gladley Marsh SSSI.

A6.34. This AA is judged **unconstrained** noting that the SSSI does not appear to be accessible and regardless is not easily accessed from the AA. Also, the distance recorded is from the northern extent of the AA whilst any development would likely be considerably more distant. Beyond recreational pressure there are no clear concerns regarding wider impact pathways.

### Wendover

A6.35. Key considerations relating to habitats sites and SSSIs in this area include:

- All of Wendover falls within the defined 12.6km ‘Zone of Influence’ (Zol) surrounding the Ashridge SSSI component of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC and, in practice, Wendover is well linked to Ashridge by road. There is often good potential for development to come forward within the ZOI in line with the adopted Mitigation Strategy;<sup>4</sup> however, it is appropriate to take a precautionary approach for the purposes of this current GBA.<sup>5</sup>
- There two further components of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC in closer proximity than Ashridge and both are quite highly accessible woodlands and easily accessed from Wendover, although recreational pressure is not known to be a particular issue at either site, and there are many other less sensitive woodlands in close proximity to Wendover.
- There are four SSSIs in close proximity, two comprising woodlands, one comprising wetland and open water and one comprising chalk grassland.

A6.36. There are 10 AAs in this area and the first point to note is that all are judged **provisionally constrained** on account of the Ashridge Zol.

A6.37. 4 of the 10 are then judged **constrained** accounting for proximity to a SSSI alongside wider factors including functionally linked habitat and walking links. The average distance to a SSSI across these four AAs is 196m. Two of the AAs are near adjacent whilst the others are more distant, with the conclusion for the two more distant AAs flagged as ‘marginal’.

<sup>4</sup> For example, all of Dacorum falls within the Zol and the emerging Dacorum Local Plan supports around 16,000 homes.

<sup>5</sup> Of note is a recent appeal decision in New Forest District (Appeal Ref: APP/B1740/W/25/3363504; 18<sup>th</sup> July 2025), where a site proposed for two homes within the Zol for the New Forest SAC/SPA was determined not to be grey belt because the scheme could not mitigate for recreational impacts on the SAC/SPA.

## Chesham Amersham and Little Chalfont

A6.38. All of this area falls within the Ashridge Zol and so all AAs are judged **provisionally constrained**.

A6.39. No AAs are judged constrained because there are then no habitats sites or SSSIs in this area (but there is locally significant biodiversity constraint).

## High Wycombe

A6.40. There are a number of AAs in this area that require assessment because they are not already ruled out on NL or flood risk grounds.

A6.41. As an initial point, it can be noted that all fall *outside* of the Ashridge Zol.

A6.42. There are three SSSIs close to High Wycombe, of which two are small and then one is larger (Widdenton Park Wood). Also, not far to the north is a component of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC (Naphill Common).

A6.43. Taking sectors of the High Wycombe edge in turn:

- North – there is a cluster of AAs for assessment at Holmer Green but all are **unconstrained**. The nearest SSSI is ~1,300m from a very small AA.
- East – there is a SSSI here, namely Gomm Valley SSSI, which is considered to be sensitive on account of the scale of adjacent committed growth.<sup>6</sup> In this context, the two closest AAs are judged **constrained** having also accounted for walking links and onsite priority habitat. These AAs are circa 250m and 400m from the SSSI respectively.
- Southeast – there are no SSSIs in this area and so many of the AAs are judged **unconstrained**.<sup>7</sup> However, the AAs at the southeast of this sector (Woodburn Green) fall within the 5.7km recreational pressure Zol for Burnham Beeches SAC. Here the situation is as per Ashridge, in that sites must come forward in line with the adopted Mitigation Strategy and so it is appropriate to take a precautionary approach, for the purposes of this GBA, and conclude that these AAs are **provisionally constrained**.
- West – there are three small AAs here that are clearly unconstrained and then there are two large adjacent AAs including Wycombe Air Park. These AAs are adjacent to / in proximity to (c.200m) Widdenton Park Wood SSSI and so are judged **constrained**. The woodland is easily reached and somewhat accessible but, on the other hand, there are a range of alternative accessible woodland options in the nearby area.

## Marlow and Bourne End

A6.44. There are three broad considerations here:

<sup>6</sup> Gomm Valley SSSI is a small chalk grassland / scrub SSSI managed as a nature reserve. The SSSI is in favourable condition and no key pressures on the SSSI are noted by Natural England. However, there is an adjacent committed strategic urban extension, such that in combination / cumulative recreational pressure is a factor, as well as the possibility of cumulative pressure in terms of wider impact pathways.

<sup>7</sup> The small SSSI west of Bourne End is a geological SSSI and so impact pathways are very limited.



- West of Marlow – there is a significant cluster of AAs within 1 to 1.5km of a component of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC, namely Hollowhill and Pillingshill Wood SSSI. Recreational pressure is not defined threat for this SSSI and, accordingly, there is no defined recreational pressure Zol. Also, there are alternative accessible woodlands / areas of common land in the area. However, the SSSI (SAC) is highly accessible, easily accessed from the AAs by footpath and there is convenient parking. On balance, these AAs are judged to be **provisionally constrained**.
- Marlow to Bourne End – there are two SSSIs to the south of the River Thames, which must be accessed via the A404 or Cookham Bridge. In particular, attention focuses on the western SSSI which is also a component of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC, namely Bisham Woods SSSI which, again, does not have a defined recreational pressure Zol. There would be a need to drive to the SSSI (SAC) from the AAs, but this would be a very easy drive from the western-most AA, and so this AA is **provisionally constrained**. The other AAs are clearly unconstrained.
- Bourne End – remaining AAs surrounding Bourne End are unconstrained by nearby SSSIs but fall within the Burnham Beeches Zol and accordingly are judged **provisionally constrained**.

## Beaconsfield

- A6.45. AAs for assessment here are not constrained by nearby SSSIs but all AAs to the south of Beaconsfield are **provisionally constrained** on account of falling within the Burnham Beeches Zol.

## Seer Green, Chalfont St Giles and Chalfont St Peter / Gerrards Cross

- A6.46. This discussion covers the penultimate sector of land to the north of the M40. There are five sectors of land to consider:
- Southwest – land between Gerrards Cross and Seer Green / Beaconsfield is distant from a SSSI but all of this land falls within the Burnham Beeches ZOI and so all AAs are **provisionally constrained**.
  - Northwest – the issue here is proximity to Hodgemoor Woods SSSI, which is a large and highly accessible woodland with a large car park. There are many interesting ancient pollards close to the car park and there is also some historic environment interest. The SSSI is in favourable condition and Natural England lists deer browsing as the key pressure. Three large AAs are adjacent or near adjacent and so are **constrained**, but then it is more challenging to reach a conclusion regarding four AAs that are circa 400 – 600m distant. On balance, the closest of these is also judged **constrained** including noting that it is a large AA, and two others are judged **provisionally constrained** noting onsite priority habitat.
  - Northeast – there are no habitats sites or SSSIs in the vicinity of AAs to the east of Chalfont St Giles and Chalfont St Peter, such that AAs here **unconstrained** from a footnote 7 biodiversity perspective.

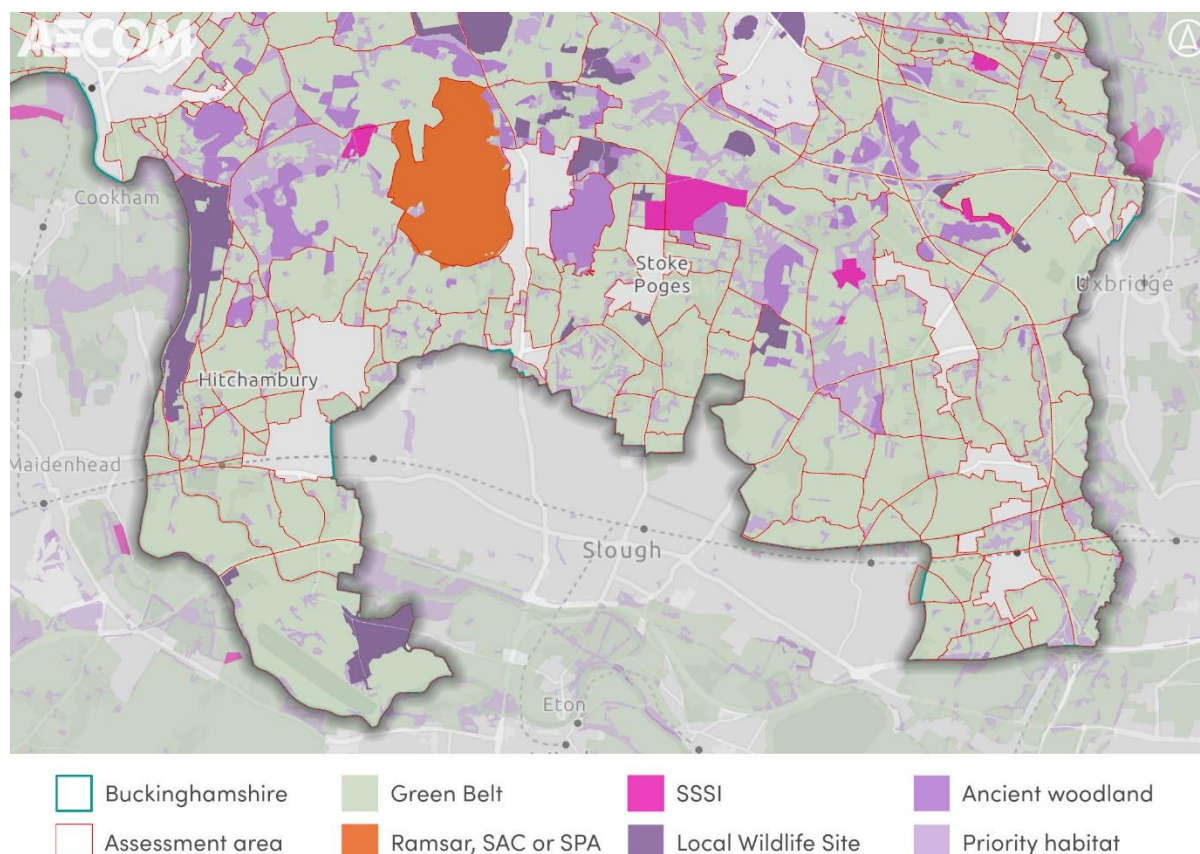
- Southeast – see discussion of ‘Gerrards Cross to Denham Green’ below.
- South – there are four AAs here immediately north of the M40 and then, to the south of the motorway, is a series of SSSIs (discussed below). The AAs are around 800m to 1,000m from a SSSI and it is also the case that the M40 is clearly a barrier to ecological and wider functional connectivity. However, there is extensive ancient woodland and wider priority habitat across these four AAs, which must also factor in. The conclusion reached is that one AA the comprises a large ancient woodland is **constrained**, and two further AAs are **provisionally constrained**.

## Gerrards Cross to Denham Green

- A6.47. This is the final sector of land to the north of the M40.
- A6.48. This is a sensitive sector due to the confluence of the Rivers Misbourne and Colne, with a total of four SSSIs in this area. Also, and importantly, three of these SSSIs are in either unfavourable or unfavourable declining condition, either in whole or in part. Natural England has defined key pressures for all of these SSSIs and in all cases water levels / abstraction is a key pressure, plus transport infrastructure is a key pressure at two of the SSSIs. Recreational pressure is not listed as a key pressure at any of these SSSIs.
- A6.49. Some of the AAs in this area are not assessed because it has already been determined that they are not grey belt due to flood risk. Of those AAs that remain and need assessment, several are judged **constrained**, although this is ‘marginal’ in some cases. A large AA to the southeast of Gerrards Cross is judged **provisionally constrained** recognising that this is land separating the River Misbourne Corridor to the north and the Alder Bourne (river) to the south (beyond the M40), along which there is a further SSSI. Also, this AA includes significant ancient woodland and wider habitat.

## The South East of Buckinghamshire (south of the M40)

- A6.50. This is a key area for consideration, as has already been discussed. Specifically, that is because this is the location of:
- Burnham Beeches SAC
  - Three quite closely related woodland/heathland SSSIs
  - A further SSSI along the Alder Bourne
  - Very extensive wider habitat including LWSs and ancient woodland.
- A6.51. Figure A6.5 shows AAs alongside both: A) the international and national designated sites that are a focus of assessment; and B) wider locally significant areas of habitat that can factor into the assessment on the basis that locally designated habitat may contribute to an ecological network that includes an internationally or nationally designated site.
- A6.52. A further consideration in this area is the presence of important populations of bat species which forage across woodlands and along hedgerows at a landscape scale.

**Figure A6.5: Habitats sites, SSSIs and other designations**

Esri UK, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government License v3.0. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2025. © Copyright Buckinghamshire Council Licence No. 0100062456 2025. © Natural England copyright.

#### A6.53. Taking sectors of this broad area in turn:

- West – these AAs are **provisionally constrained** due to the Burnham Beeches Zol. The shortest distance to Littleworth Common SSSI is c.1,200m and the shortest distance to Burnham Beeches SAC is c. 1,700m+. Several of these AAs do contain significant ancient woodland and wider priority habitat but are judged ‘at most provisional’ on balance.<sup>8</sup>
- Central area – this is a key area as it contains Burnham Beeches SAC, three further SSSIs and extensive wider habitat including high quality habitat. Proximity and links to Burnham Beeches or one of the SSSIs is clearly an important factor, given the importance of recreational pressure (it should be noted that the Burnham Beeches Mitigation Strategy is currently being reviewed). However, there is also a need to layer-on wider factors including relating to ecological networks / connectivity, and this is the aim of the detailed assessments presented within the AA proformas. Ultimately most of the AAs within this area are judged to be **constrained**.

N.B. there is a 500m zone surrounding Burnham Beeches within which there is a presumption against any proposal for net one additional home. This is an indication of the SAC’s sensitivity and serves to highlight that AAs with potential to deliver 100s of homes located beyond 500m might be considered constrained such that they are not grey belt.

<sup>8</sup> AAs adjacent to the south west of Slough are also just within 5km of Windsor Great Park SAC. Recreational pressure is listed as a threat for the SAC, but there is not defined Zol nor is there an established mitigation strategy. Also, the closest part of the SAC is not accessible and there is alternative accessible green space in the vicinity.

- East – this is land associated with the Alder Bourne (river), along which there is a SSSI, and then the sector of the River Colne between the M40 and the M4 along which there are no SSSIs. AAs in proximity to the SSSI are judged **constrained** or **provisionally constrained**.

However, other AAs are judged **unconstrained** by habitats sites or SSSIs, including as they fall outside of the Burnham Beeches Zol.<sup>9</sup>

## Outcomes

A6.54. Of the 399 AAs assessed at this stage:

- 30 AAs are **constrained** and so are ruled out at this stage of the footnote 7 assessment process as not grey belt. The conclusion is flagged as marginal for 4 of these AAs.
- 253 AAs are **provisionally constrained** such that they are taken forward for assessment at Stage 4 but can ultimately only be 'provisional grey belt' or 'not grey belt' where a final decision must also factor in the subsequent footnote 7 assessment stages and also the purposes assessment.
- The remaining 116 AAs are **unconstrained** such that they are taken forward to Stage 5 and all three ultimate conclusions (not grey belt, provisional grey belt, grey belt) remain a possibility subject to subsequent footnote 7 assessment stages and also the purposes assessment. The conclusion is flagged as marginal for 21 of these AAs.

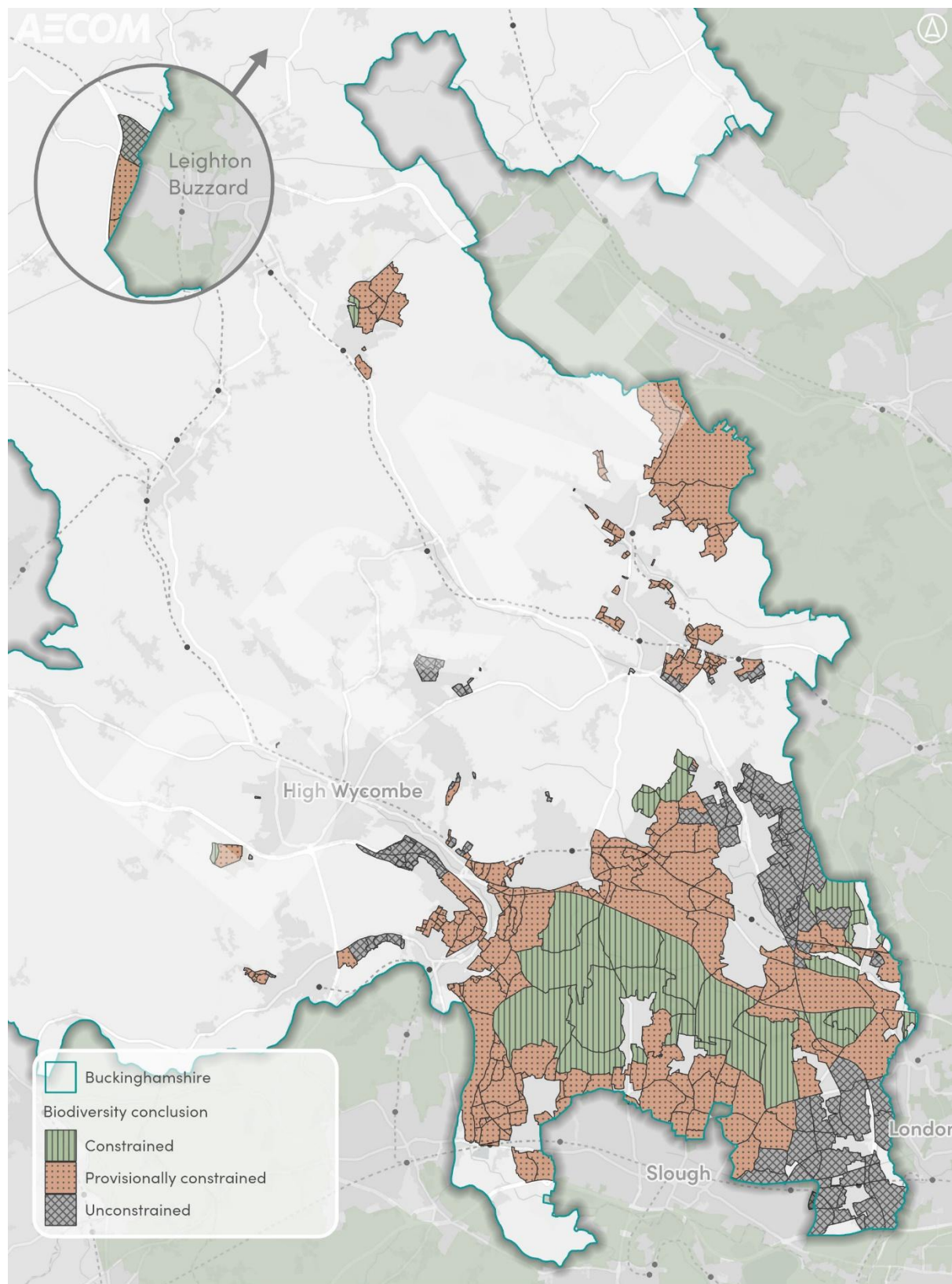
A6.55. Detailed assessment findings for each AA are presented in Section 6 of the main report which signposts to assessment proformas in Appendix 10.

**Table A6.1: Biodiversity constraint assessment findings**

Conclusion	Implication for grey belt	Number of AAs
Constrained	Not grey belt	30
Provisionally constrained	Can be provisional grey belt	253
Unconstrained	Can be grey belt	114

<sup>9</sup> AAs to the south and west of Richings park shown as 'clearly unconstrained' are also just within 5km of South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar. Recreational pressure is listed as a threat for the SAC/Ramsar, but there is not a defined Zol nor is there an established mitigation strategy. Where this is the case, it is common practice to consider recreational pressure within a 5km zone. However, much of Slough falls within this zone, which reduces concerns. Also, large parts of the SPA/Ramsar are not accessible including that part in closest proximity to the AAs (Wraysbury Reservoir).



**Figure A6.6: Biodiversity constraint assessment findings**

Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government License v3.0. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2025. © Copyright Buckinghamshire Council Licence No. 0100062456 2025.



