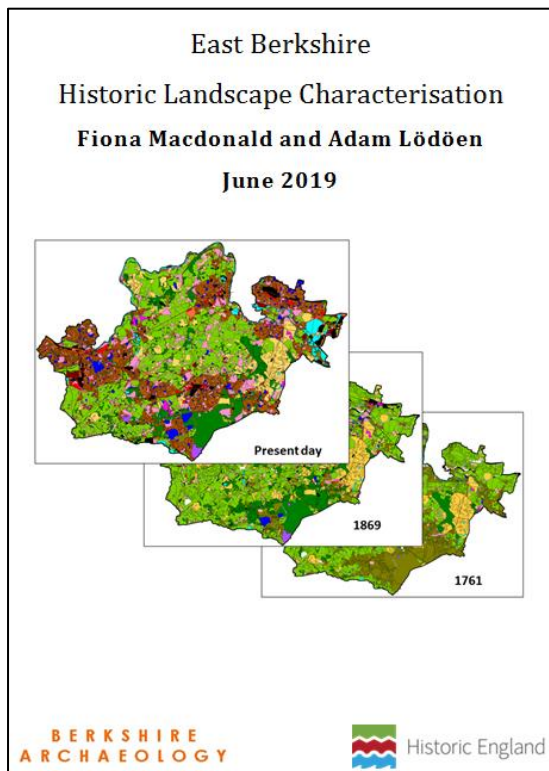


East Berkshire Historic Landscape Characterisation

October 2019

The Historic England-funded East Berkshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) project was carried out by Berkshire Archaeology on behalf of the five unitary authorities in East Berkshire (Reading, Wokingham, Slough, Bracknell Forest, and Windsor and Maidenhead).

East Berkshire was one of the last substantial areas in England to be covered by HLC. The East Berkshire HLC complements the existing HLC projects in the neighbouring areas of West Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Surrey, Oxfordshire and the Colne Valley Park. The HLC database and linked GIS mapping provide detailed information about the history and changing character of the landscape in the area since the mid-18th century and sometimes earlier. The accompanying report provides a detailed summary of the results of the project and of the contents of the HLC database and mapping.

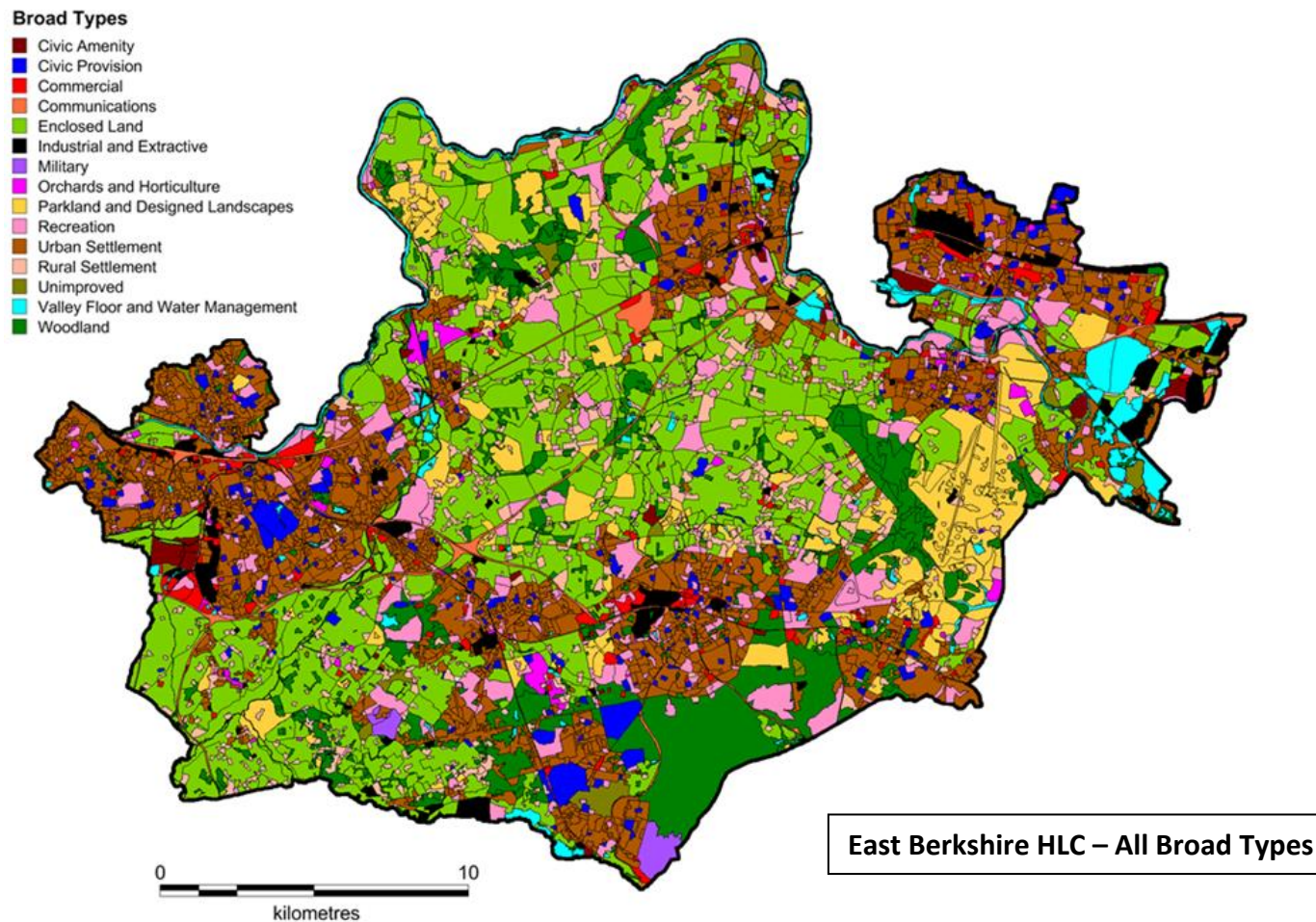


In assessing and describing historic landscape in East Berkshire, fifteen "broad types" were identified as relevant - Civic Amenity, Civic Provision, Commercial, Communications, Enclosed Land, Industrial, Military, Orchards & Horticulture, Parkland & Designed Landscapes, Recreation, Rural Settlement, Urban Settlement, Valley Floor & Water Management, Unimproved Land, and Woodland. Each broad type has a number of sub-types ("narrow"/HLC types), and is discussed in the report in terms of character, HLC types, distribution, time-depth and change, with a selection of maps to illustrate.

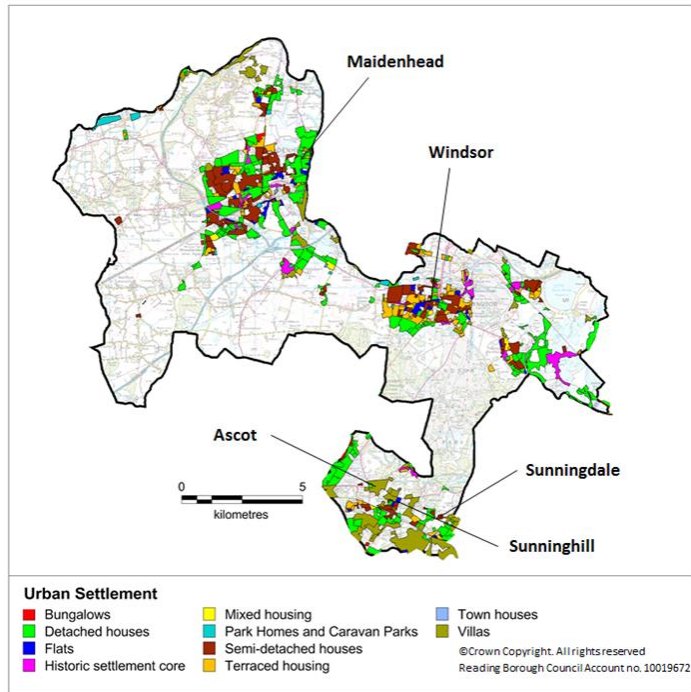
The methodology used in the East Berkshire HLC, along with other similar projects, involves dividing the combined area of the five unitary authorities into parcels of land, each having characteristics that allow it to be allocated to a broad type - and within that broad type, a narrow type. A database record and GIS polygon are then created for each parcel of land, incorporating a range of data (see below for further detail). Across the five authorities, over 6100 records are covered by more than 150 narrow types, such as "Heathland", "Business Park", "Ancient Woodland" and "Terraced Housing", to name just a few.

The completion of the HLC marks the broadening of the Berkshire Archaeology Historic Environment Record, to add a historic landscape perspective, informing the important processes of planning policy and development management, land management, conservation of heritage assets and historic environment and other research.

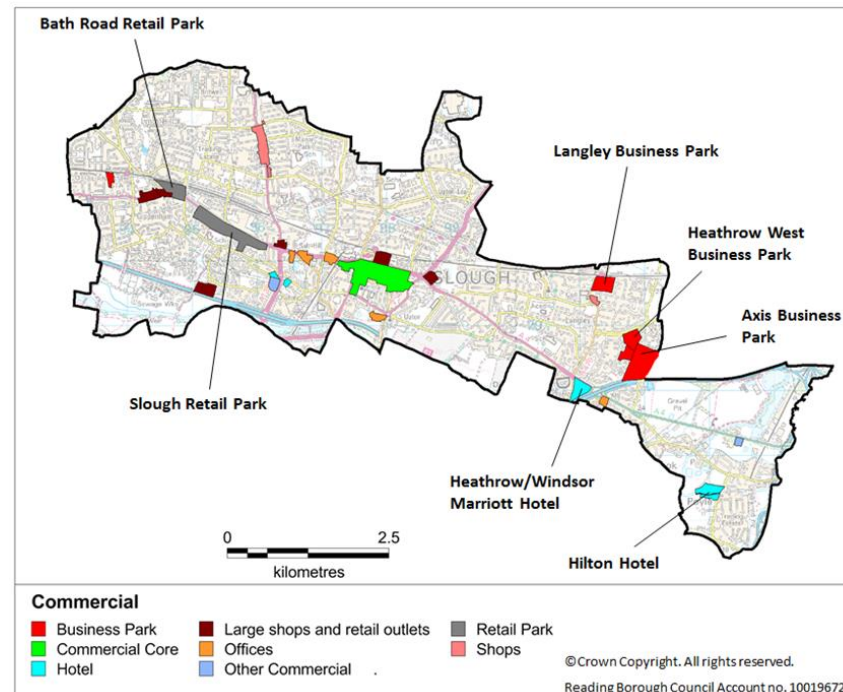
This “broad types” map shows the area of East Berkshire colour-coded by current land character. Note that the main urban settlements of Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell, the Ascots, Maidenhead, Windsor and Slough are immediately recognisable in brown, with large open areas of agricultural “enclosed land” surrounding (bright green), swathes of woodland in the south and east (dark green), and the River Thames with its hinterland, winding its way along the northern border and then around Windsor. Even at this scale, large man-made features such as reservoirs (shown in turquoise) and their adjacent quarries (shown in black, along with industrial areas) in the east of the area, the Great Western Railway (orange) and major roads (also orange) can clearly be seen.



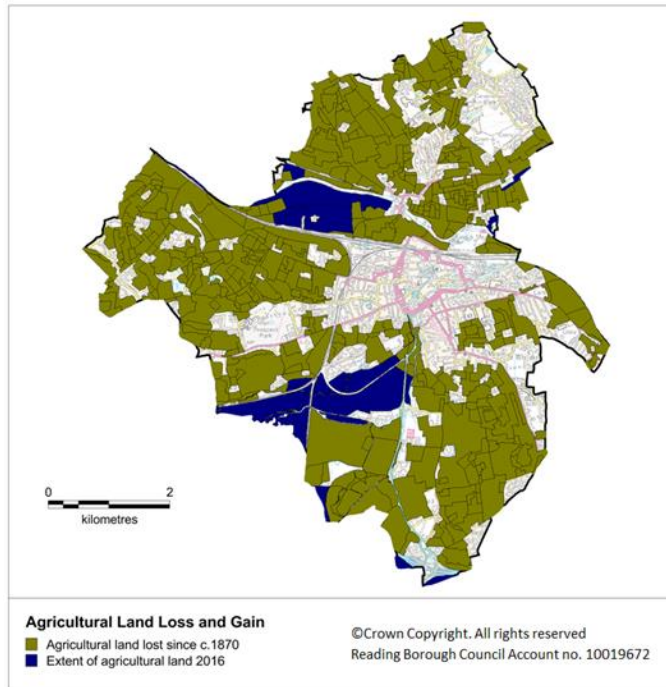
Each parcel of land (or “HLC polygon”) is named and described in a database linked to the Berkshire HER, with previous land character noted, as identified from a range of historic maps, the HER and other reference sources. The database is fully searchable, allowing detailed maps showing specified current and/or previous HLC (narrow) types to be generated for closer study and comparison. Using GIS programmes, parts of the dataset can also be displayed together to demonstrate landscape change through time. Each borough is considered separately, as well as combined with neighbouring areas to give a general overview in the report.



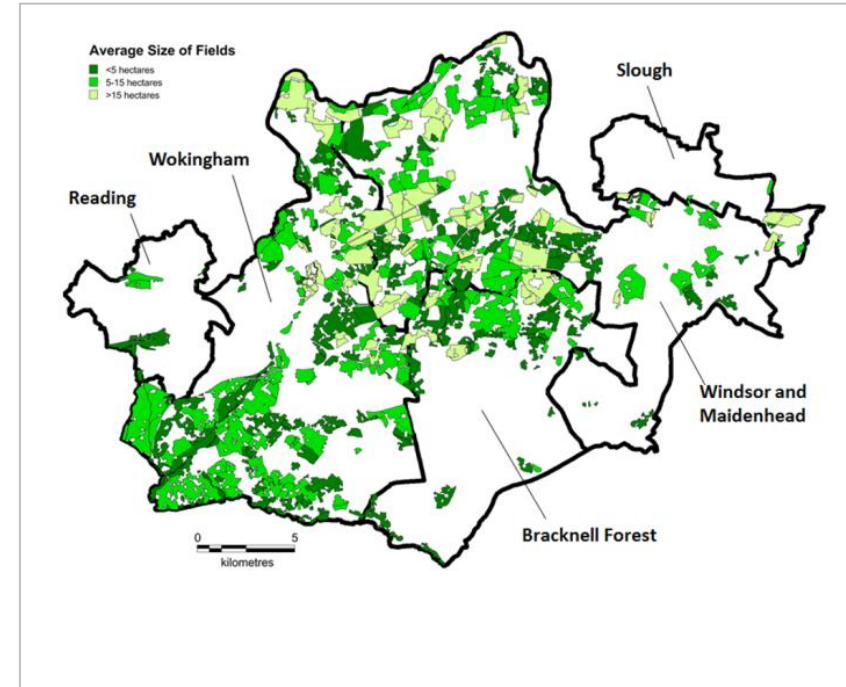
The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead demonstrates a wide range of housing styles and ages, which all add to its unique character



Commercial areas in the borough of Slough, such as business parks and offices, are concentrated along the A4 Bath Road, an important route to London from the west for centuries



Displaying data for “enclosed land” for key dates shows the extent of agricultural land lost in Reading Borough



Additional data recorded as “attributes” for each land parcel can be compared across the whole area – such as field size, type of boundary or date of housing

Further information on HLC can be found on the [Historic England website](https://www.historicengland.org.uk)

The full report for the East Berkshire Historic Landscape Characterisation project will shortly be available for download via the Archaeology Data Service at www.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk

Consultants wishing to include HLC data in reports, or researchers requiring assistance should contact Berkshire Archaeology’s HER Officer at info@berkshirearchaeology.org.uk or telephone 0118 937 3976