



Executive Summary

This report details the results of the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) project undertaken by Oxfordshire County Council and funded by Historic England between 2012 and 2017.

The aim of the project was: to characterise, digitally map and make available in a web-based format, the historic dimension of the current landscape of Oxfordshire, in order to inform its management, conservation, and understanding at a local, county, regional, and national level. The project, therefore, followed the principles of historic landscape characterisation set out by Historic England and pioneered in Cornwall in 1993. It joins a family of projects, typically conducted by Local Authorities with the support of Historic England, which now cover the majority of England.

HLC projects used a broad-brush approach to the landscape, grouping units of land larger than two hectares (or one hectare within settlements) with shared current and previous characteristics and assigning them to a higher level Broad Type and a narrower HLC Type. In Oxfordshire, 15 Broad Types were identified. These were subdivided into 109 HLC Types. For example, the Woodland Broad Type was divided into Ancient Woodland, Secondary Woodland, Plantation, and Woodland Pasture HLC Types.

As well as being assigned to a type, a range of attributes for each grouped unit was recorded. These attributes and types were stored within the HLC module of HBSMR. This software, developed by Exegesis, links a Microsoft Access Database to a Geographic Information System (GIS). In the Oxfordshire project, the GIS used was MapInfo. By using an HBSMR module, the Oxfordshire HLC can be directly linked to the county's Historic Environment Record, which also uses this software.

In total, over 16,000 units of land were identified and recorded across Oxfordshire. This report provides information on how this dataset was compiled, its significance and its limitations, and details how HLC can be used to better manage the landscape. It is divided into the following sections: the development of the HLC principles and the Oxfordshire project; the methodology; the occurrence and distribution of individual Broad and HLC Types; the character of the county and its five districts; a selection of analyses and case studies to illustrate how HLC data can be used; further applications; and dissemination.