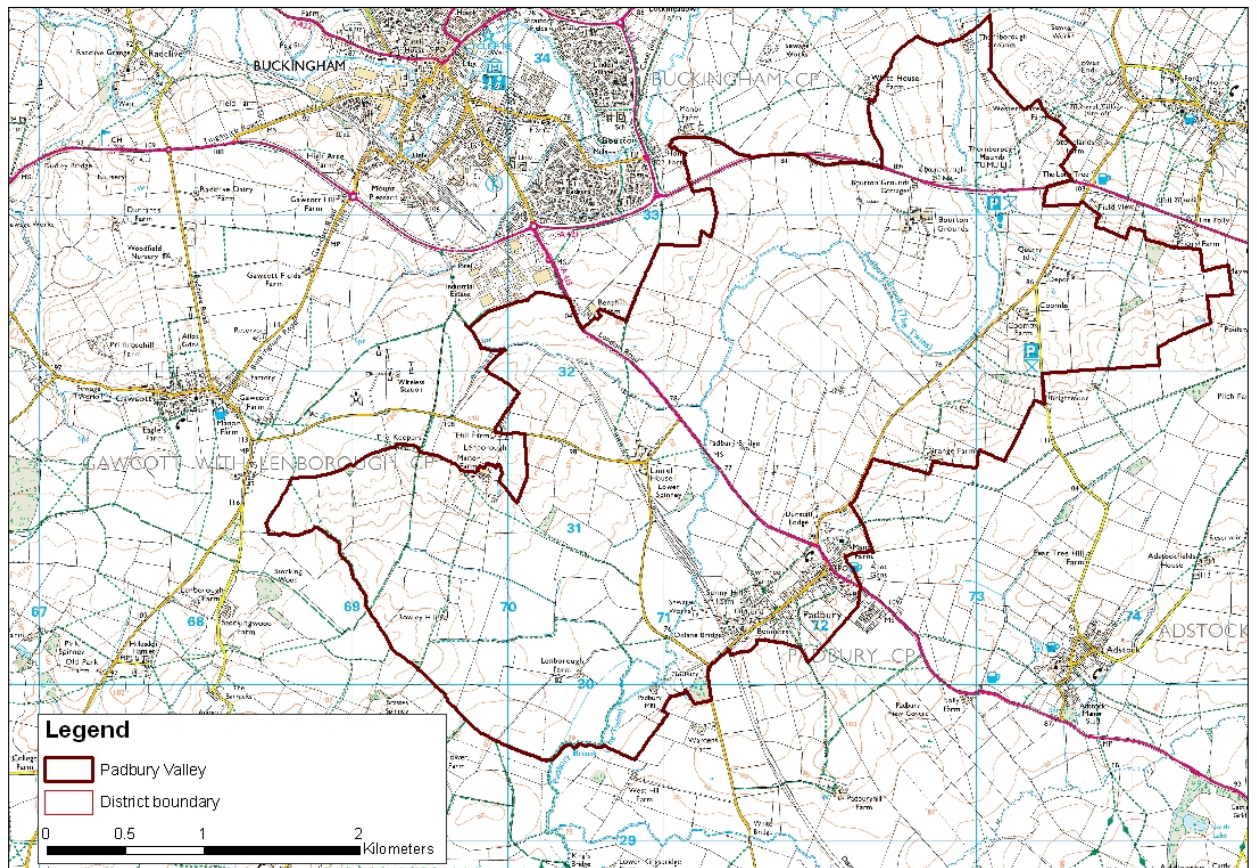
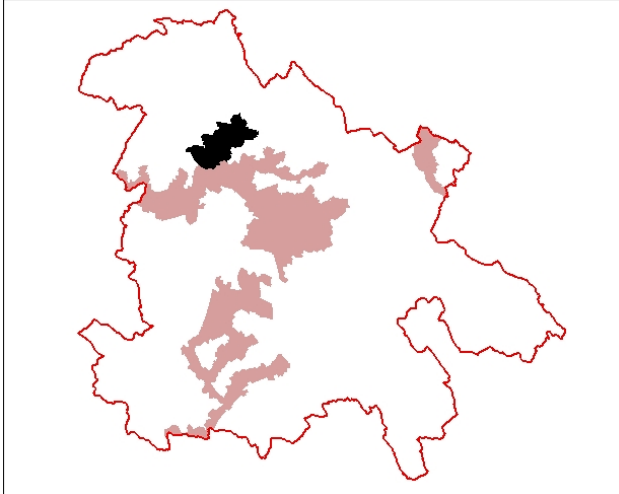


LCA 5.1 Padbury Valley

Landscape Character Type: LCT5 Shallow Valleys



LCA 5.1 Padbury Valley (LCT 5)

Key Characteristics

- Shallow valley with gently sloping or flat wide valley bottom
- Predominantly arable land use
- Medium sized regular fields
- Course of meandering Padbury Brook marked by bank side trees
- Willows and small patches of wet woodland adjacent to the brook
- Lack of settlement close to the valley floor
- Good views across valley from upper slopes

Distinctive Features

- Remnants of disused railway on embankment
- Thornborough Medieval Bridge
- Iron Age and Roman archaeology, including Thornborough burial mounds
- Farms away from valley floor
- Thatched and stone houses in Padbury
- Padbury Church
- Ridge and Furrow
- Padbury Brook
- Neutral and unimproved grassland

Intrusive Elements

- Localised impact of the southern edge of Buckingham
- Pylon lines
- Traffic on main roads
- Small sewage works

Location The town of Buckingham defines the north and northwest boundary. It sits between the Great Ouse valley on the town's eastern side and the higher ground of the ridge extending up to the southwest margins of the town. The valley is crossed by the A421 and the A413 as they approach Buckingham.

Landscape character The distinctive shallow valley landform is characterised by the meandering brook, field patterns and lack of settlement. The wetter valley floor including small woodlands, contrasts with the drier valley sides. The valley retains a strong rural character despite its close proximity to the southern edge of Buckingham.

Views across the valley from the upper valley sides are an attractive feature of the area. Away from the main roads the valley has a tranquil character.

Geology There are several underlying rock formations. In the east where the brook cuts through the higher ground to join the valley of the Great Ouse, Oolite and Cornbrash limestone occurs in the valley floor, whilst up valley the Kellaways Formation underlie the route of the stream. The valley sides are predominantly of Lower Oxford Clay (Peterborough Formation). Alluvium overlies the solid geology along the course of the stream and locally there are river terrace deposits on either side.

Topography This section of the Padbury is distinguished from the rest of the catchment area in that the Brook is set within a defined valley with high ground to the north and south and a flat or gently sloping valley floor. To the south of this area the valley is less distinct and there are mounds within the valley floor. To the north the valley joins the Lower Great Ouse valley.

The landform is very gentle the top of the valley sides are generally around 110m AOD and the floor of the valley descends from about 79–73m AOD.

Hydrology The Padbury Brook meanders through the length of the valley but doesn't appear to have been significantly straightened. The brook is joined by one major meandering tributary, which rises on the high ground on the southern edge of Buckingham. Further south there is another small ditch tributary, which follows the field pattern in very straight lines.

On its journey the brook passes beneath Oxlane Bridge, Padbury Bridge and Thornborough Bridge before joining the Great Ouse just outside the character area. There are a few ponds on the valley sides.

Land use and settlement Agriculture is the dominant land use overwhelmingly arable in medium sized fields, mostly in a regular field pattern defined by hedgerows of very variable condition. Around Padbury there are some much smaller fields and more pasture. There is also a notably different field pattern on the steeper more undulating eastern valley side around Coombs where there are smaller fields of pasture and several fields of recent planting along with a small car park and picnic area.

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Most of the valley is notable for its lack of settlement - there are only a few scattered farms and isolated barns. The south eastern edge however, includes most of Padbury, which has many traditional buildings of stone, brick and thatch and little recent development.

In the north Thornborough Bridge is a significant local feature and attraction and has an associated small car park, interpretation and a circular walk connecting to the Great Ouse valley and the edge of Thornborough. The narrow stone bridge is of medieval origins, probably in the location of a much earlier crossing, but is now bypassed by the A421.

Tree cover The valley has only a few small pockets of established woodland. There are several small areas of new tree planting to the north of Padbury and on the valley sides above Coombs but these are not yet sufficiently established to change the character of the valley.

Trees established along the disused railway significantly increase the visual appearance of tree cover within the valley. The meandering course of the brook is marked by trees most notably willow. A few pollards are present but most appear to be unmanaged.

Tree cover in hedgerows is very variable being generally better on the valley sides than close to the valley floor. Patches of elm regeneration are dying back again, the victim of Dutch elm disease.

Biodiversity The area is divided roughly in two, north and south by the Padbury Brook which threads through the agricultural mix of arable and grassland habitats and provides the main aquatic habitat supplemented by the nearby ponds and the tributary stream.

The arable and grassland habitats are unevenly distributed, with two distinct areas dominated by arable, and two dominated by grassland. The more southerly area of grassland is purely improved, whilst the more northern one contains relatively large areas of neutral and unimproved grassland.

Small patches of broadleaved woodland are scattered throughout and comprise the bulk of the area's broad habitat type.

Historic environment The historic landscape of the area can be characterised into two distinct areas either side of the Padbury Brook, to the south. The land adjacent to the brook is made up of flood meadowland, while the landscape to the southeast is well preserved parliamentary enclosure fields of the parishes Padbury (enclosed 1796) and Thornborough (enclosed 1800). The landscape to the northwest of the brook consists of pre 18th century irregular enclosure fields.

The settlement pattern of the area is predominantly nucleated in form presented by the village of Padbury and the hamlet of Lenborough. Padbury in particular contains a number of listed buildings including the Grade II* listed church of St Mary. The setting and historic nature of Padbury has afforded its designation as a conservation area.

The archaeology of this area is rich and ranges in date from the prehistoric through to the 19th century. To the west of Padbury along the course of Padbury Brook are the earthworks of the Iron Age hill fort of Norbury Camp. The most prominent remains are two Roman barrows

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off the A421. These were partly excavated in the 19th century. Further archaeological investigation has determined that the surrounding landscape contains a concentration of Roman sites including a temple, roads, ford, and cremation cemetery and lots of pottery probably indicative of settlement. It is thought that three Roman roads passed through the parish in total.

The landscape also has a number of medieval sites, the most visible is Thornborough Bridge on the A421. The landscape around Thornborough and Padbury also contains some well preserved medieval ridge and furrow earthworks. At the hamlet of Lenborough there are the earthworks of deserted medieval settlement.

This area has a number of Rights of Way which are actively promoted as part of the Bernwood Jubilee Way and Bicester Buckingham loop. There are also picnic site along the A421 which promotes the heritage of the area, including the displayed Combe Quarry and limekiln.

Designations

Conservation Area at Padbury

Scheduled Ancient Monuments: Norbury, Slight Univalled hillfort east of Padbury Mill, Roman barrows, Thornborough Bridge

Archaeological Notification Areas – 22 No.

CWS – 2 No.

BNS – 4 No.

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View from the north side of Padbury looking northeast.

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Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

Condition **Very good**

Pattern of elements:	coherent
Visual detractors:	few
Visual unity:	unified
Cultural integrity:	Good
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity **Moderate**

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

Guidelines **Conserve and Reinforce**

Condition

The condition of the valley is considered to be very good. Although the condition of the hedgerows is variable they do create a strong pattern across the landscape. The coherent pattern of elements with few visual detractors creates a unified landscape. The cultural integrity is good the area containing well preserved historic fields and meadows, ridge and furrow and other important archaeological monuments, although the field pattern is weaker in the arable areas close to the southern edge of Buckingham. Ecological integrity is moderate due to good connectivity and the large areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance. The overall functional integrity is strong.

Sensitivity

This landscape is considered to be of moderate sensitivity. It has a distinct character with a good sense of historic continuity stemming in most of the area from the hedgerow pattern, but much stronger close to Thornborough Bridge the tumuli and the village of Padbury. The landform is apparent but not dominant. The tree cover is variable and is considered to be intermittent as a whole giving a moderate level of visibility.



The valley viewed from near Dunstall Lodge, Padbury.

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Landscape Guidelines Conserve and Reinforce

The landscape guidelines for the Padbury Valley are as follows:

- Encourage the preservation of historic earthworks and ridge and furrow by maintaining a continuous grass sward.
- Encourage the retention and strengthening of the historic hedgerow pattern by infilling gaps and establishing new hedgerow trees. Oak and ash trees are a feature of hedgerows in this area.
- Maintain and improve condition of existing hedgerows through traditional cutting regimes.
- Promote the management and conservation of vegetation adjacent to the meandering watercourses including the pollarding of willow.
- Encourage less intensive agriculture close to watercourses.
- Encourage local woodland management schemes of wet woodland close to valley bottom.
- Encourage tree planting to reduce the visual impact of built development on the southern edge of Buckingham.
- Encourage the management of existing woodland and promote the establishment of new woodland particularly where it will reduce the visual impact of pylon lines.
- Maintain and improve the extent and condition of unimproved, neutral and semi-improved grassland wherever possible. Encourage good management practices.
- Close to watercourses promote the use of permanent pasture, with low stocking density and flooding regimes to promote biodiversity and landscape enhancement.
- Maintain and enhance connectivity of habitats.
- Promote the conservation and interpretation of rich historic environment.
- Identify key views from publicly accessible land and promote the preservation and enhancement of these views.
- Maintain the historically open landscape by discouraging the planting of new woodlands and sub-division of fields.
- Encourage arable reversion or minimum cultivation to protect buried archaeological remains.



The historic Thornborough Bridge with tumuli in the background.