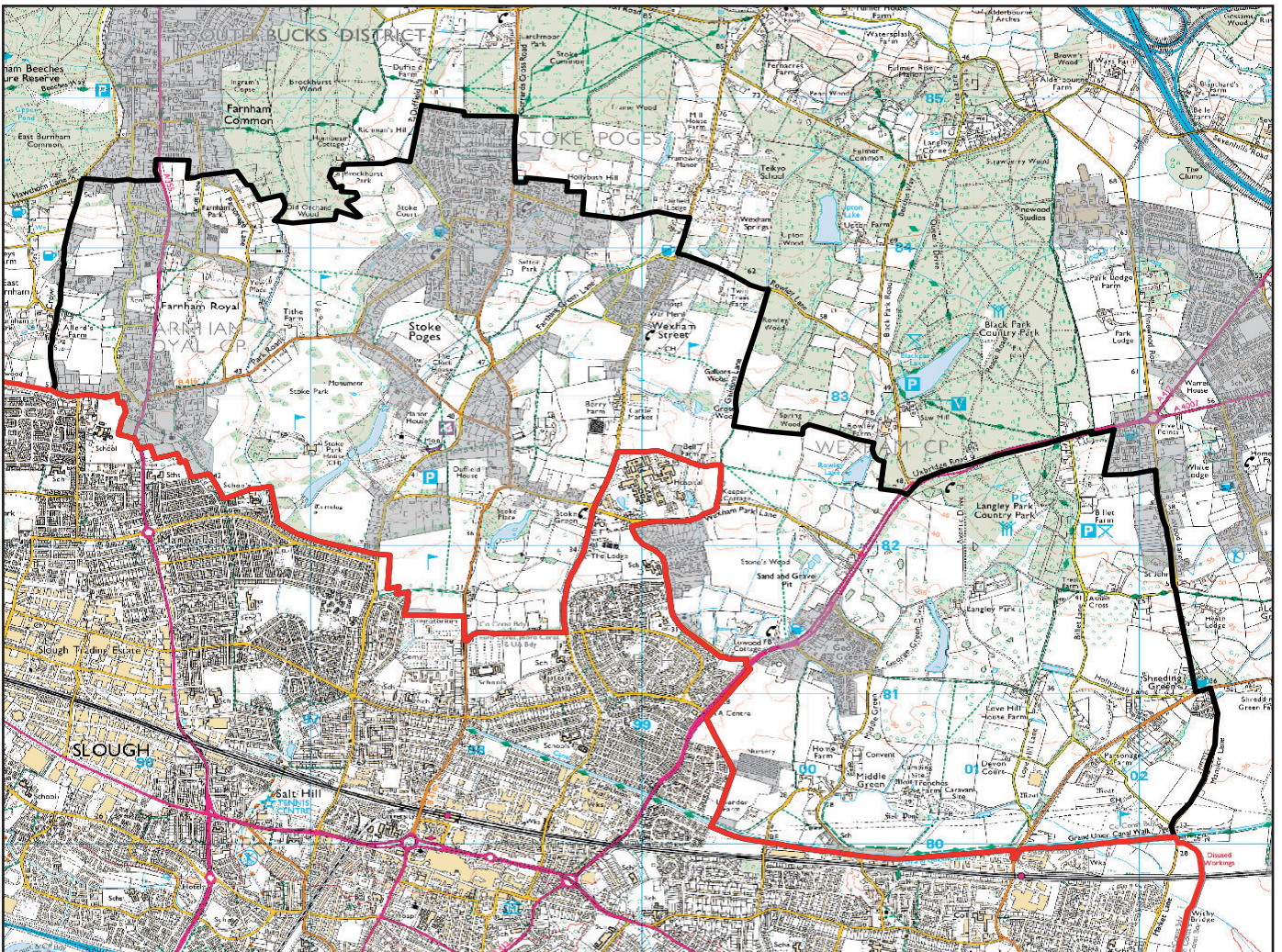
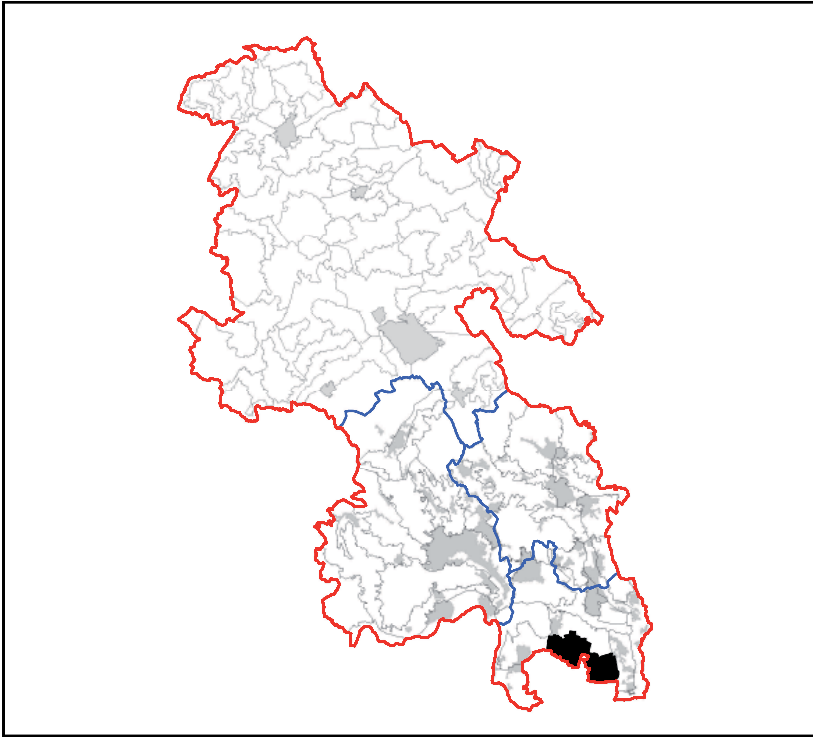


LCA 25.1 STOKE AND LANGLEY PARK LOWLAND FRINGE



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KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Flat lowland topography, gently rising northwards and gradually becoming more undulating. The area is predominately underlain by Boyn Hill Gravel Formation, with a swathe of River Terrace Deposits along the southern periphery.
- A mixed use landscape, which is characterised by urban development. Settlement surrounds the character area and is linearly spread through the landscape along a network of roads.
- Parkland at Stoke Park and Langley Park provides important historical, ecological and recreational value. These spaces provide a distinctive rural character, within an otherwise busy landscape.
- Tree cover is sparse, and scattered along field boundaries or roads. The exception is Langley Park and Stoke Park, which provide more extensive tree cover, including significant concentrations of veteran trees, and create a sense of intimacy and enclosure.
- Areas of rough grazing and paddocks are interspersed, often located close to settlement.
- Several large designed lakes and ponds associated with golf courses and parkland landscapes.
- 20th century field enclosures dominate with earlier enclosures interspersed, comprising 19th century and pre 18th century co-axial enclosures.
- Extensive views can be experienced across open fields, particularly southwards, over lowland, towards Windsor Castle.
- The mixed land use and overt human influence, creates a fragmented landscape, often lacking unity, and visually busy. The sense of tranquillity is diminished by high levels of movement and noise within urban areas, however pockets of calm exist within parkland areas.

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DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: *Stoke and Langley Park Lowland Fringe* lies entirely within South Bucks District. It occupies the transitional lowland area, and is confined along the southern edge by Slough. The South Bucks District Council boundary also runs along this edge. Farnham Royal village occupies the western border and the north is dictated by the changing topography and woodland cover which characterises the transition to the adjacent landscape character area of *Farnham and Stoke Common Wooded Terrace*.

Landscape Character: An open, low lying landscape, rising steadily towards the north, and becoming more undulating. A mixed use, with a strong human influence. Settlement is dispersed linearly through the area, with a strong modern influence. Golf courses and parkland compose a large proportion of the landscape, with historic parkland located at Stoke Park and Langley Park, both providing woodland cover, and a sense of enclosure. Tree cover elsewhere is sparse, allowing for extensive views southwards, over lowland areas and towards Windsor Castle. The mix of land cover and land use creates a visually busy landscape, often fragmented by settlement. Close to urban areas, the sense of tranquillity is diminished by high levels of movement and noise. However, pockets of calm and a strong rural character is maintained between settlement and within parkland areas.

Geology: The area is predominately underlain by Boyn Hill Gravel Formation, with a swathe of River Terrace Deposits along the southern periphery. Slowly permeable, seasonally wet, loamy and clayey soils prevail within the character area, however loamy soils with a naturally high groundwater levels, are evident in the south, largely corresponding to river terrace deposits.

Topography/Landform: Transitional lowland topography, gently rising towards the north. A largely flat landscape, however, demonstrating a more undulating landform further north.

Hydrology: A number of small rivers cut through the character area, north to south, which feed into the River Thames. Some areas in the south are classed as EA floodzones. A number of relatively large designed lakes and ponds are largely associated with golf courses and parkland landscapes, and scattered throughout area. The Grand Union Canal runs along the south eastern boundary.

Land Use and Settlement: A mixed use landscape characterised by urban development, which bounds and infiltrates the area. Settlement is spread continuously through the landscape, in a linear pattern along roads and in nucleated clusters. The town edge of Slough encompasses the southern boundary, with Farnham Royal and Stoke Poges occupying west and northern boundaries respectively. Smaller villages and

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hamlets, such as George Green and Wexham Street, are dispersed throughout the character area. Much of the landscape is designed, with golf courses and parkland constituting a large proportion of the land use. Langley Park is located in the east of the character area, a wooded 18th century park, with more recent plantation, and public access. Stoke Park, is situated just north of Slough and adjacent to Farnham Royal, a landscape park and country house, enclosed by broadleaved woodland, now used as a golf course. Pockets of rough grazing and paddocks are interspersed, often associated closely with settlement, and occupying small to medium sized fields. Several B roads, and minor A roads wind through the landscape, connecting settlement areas, with the A412, cutting through north to south in the west of the character area. Numerous public rights of way also transverses the character area, with the long distance footpath, the Grand Union Canal Walk, running along the south eastern boundary.

Tree Cover: Small pockets of woodland are well dispersed, with tree cover largely associated with designed landscapes, specifically parkland and golf courses. Large scale wooded grounds are located at Stoke Park and Langley Park, with woodland clumps and scattered trees throughout. Langley Park has a typical open parkland character, comprising largely of scattered trees. Stoke Park consists of scattered trees and broadleaved woodland clumps. Outside of these areas, tree cover is relatively sparse, with some scattered trees along field boundaries, along road side edges and within settlement areas. Generally within the character area, woodland cover shows a slight increase northwards, away from the dense urban development of Slough. Several areas of intensively managed orchards are located in the east of the area.

Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape: This is a large scale and open landscape, which is principally as a result of the low lying, flat topography and limited woodland cover. The exception is parkland areas, specifically Langley Park, which provides a sense of enclosure and intimacy. The mixed land use and urban development within this area, generates a complex landscape, which is often lacking unity, fragmented by settlement, and visually discordant. Close to these urban areas, the sense of tranquillity is diminished by high levels of movement and noise. Traffic along the A412, also presents a significant audible and visual influence. Small pockets of tranquillity do however exist away from these areas, within parkland and in small historical villages such as Stoke Poges. The serenity of Stoke Poges church is believed to have been the inspiration for poet Thomas Gray's masterpiece - *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard (1742)*; the poem is regarded as the greatest Elegy written in English literature.

There are extensive views are possible across open fields, particularly south over lowland areas, and towards Windsor Castle. However, views are sometimes fragmented by settlement and urban development.

Biodiversity: Much of the landscape comprises improved grassland, which is of limited ecological value; however, small fragments of species rich grassland persist near to Farnham Royal and Stoke Poges. Occasional hedgerows and scattered trees provide some biodiversity benefits. Langley Park and Stoke Park are important ecological sites

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within the character area, both of which are Biological Notification Sites. Langley Park supports heathland, grassland and extensive scattered trees, including many old and over-mature individuals (veteran trees), which support a nationally important assemblage of invertebrates associated with deadwood habitats. Numerous small broadleaved woodland clumps cover Stoke Park. A large proportion of the character area is within the South Bucks Heaths and Parklands Biodiversity Opportunity Area.

Historic Environment: Much of the landscape is given over to recreation use and urban development. As a result, many historic field systems are no longer evident. Some small pockets of coaxial field patterns and pre 18th Century field enclosures remain. There are several Registered Parks and Gardens within the character area. Grade II listed historic parkland is located at Langley Park and Stoke Park. Langley Park is an 18th Century designed wooded park, with evidence to suggest that it was once a medieval deer park. It also has influences of Capability Brown, and has designations at both local and national level. Stoke Park, dates back to the 14th Century, with an 18th Century country house occupying the grounds, Stoke Park was converted into country club in 1908 and contains one of the earliest and most prestigious golf courses the county, it is often a favoured location for film and television. Stoke Poges Garden of Remembrance, an early 20th Century memorial garden, was originally part of Stoke Park, and is a Grade II listed garden. Other archaeological remnants include Roman settlement, medieval fishponds, Roman and Iron Age enclosures, moated site and a Bronze Age barrow.

Designations:

- Registered Parks and Gardens: Stoke Park Garden of Remembrance, Grade II; Stoke Park, Grade II; Langley Park, Grade II
- Scheduled Monuments: Bowl barrow in Stoke Park playing field; East Burnham Animal Pound.
- Conservation Areas: Farnham Royal, Stoke Green and Stoke Park
- Archaeological Notification Sites: 25 No.
- Priority BAP Habitats: 2 types
- Biological Notification Sites: 8 No.
- Biodiversity Opportunity Areas: 1 No.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 2 No.

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are:

- Historic parkland at Stoke Park and Langley Park, and their setting, which contributes to strength of character and time depth.
- The open views south across lowland areas, particularly towards Windsor Castle.
- Woodland and heathland areas, particularly within parkland, which provides peaceful enclosure and biodiversity value.
- Small pockets of tranquillity, away from developed areas, and are vulnerable to settlement expansion.
- Hedgerows and scattered trees, which provides visual unity and ecological connectivity.
- Large scale, flat and open character which accentuates the visual sensitivity of the landscape.
- Water bodies, such as lakes and ponds, which are often within designed landscapes, providing ecological and recreational opportunities.
- Early field enclosure, pre 18th century co-axial field systems, which provide time depth and evidence of past use.

Strength of Character/Intactness: The strength of character and intactness of the *Stoke and Langley Park Lowland Fringe* is **moderate**. The strong urban development, such as settlement, the A412, and golf courses fragments the landscape and reduces the distinctiveness of character. Field boundaries are often, unmanaged, and with gappy hedgerows.

Strategy/ Vision: The overall strategy for *Stoke and Langley Park Lowland Fringe* is to conserve the lowland landscape, and to enhance and restore parkland and the setting for built development, with the potential for more tree planting.

Landscape Guidelines:

- Conserve historic parkland, encouraging management and restoration of grassland, heathland, scattered trees, woodland and important features of these landscapes.
- Conserve the veteran tree resource, promoting management of the existing resource and planting to ensure succession and habitat continuity.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries to provide visual unity and intactness and increase biodiversity, linking agricultural land with woodland. Promote growth of hedgerow trees.
- Consider opportunities for further tree (in-field) and woodland planting to reduce the visual impact of urban development

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- Monitor the expansion of the urban edge of Slough and Farnham Royal.
- Maintain the open green space between settlements, and restrict development within these areas.
- Conserve views to the south, over lowland areas and particularly towards Windsor Castle.
- Conserve historic elements, such as archaeological features and early field enclosures, which provide evidence of past use of the land.

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Stoke Park Golf Course, with woodland surroundings.



Langley Park, heathland and scattered trees.



Extensive views south towards Slough.



Slightly undulating topography in the north.



Large designed lake at Stoke Park.



Tranquil setting at Stokes Poges church.