



## LCA 2.5 Foxcote Valley (LCT 2)

### Key Characteristics

- Small enclosed valley
- Hidden remote character within the lower valley
- Some arable intensification of fields
- Small fields of pasture with good hedgerows
- Small woodlands and copses
- Good vegetation along meandering stream
- Parliamentary and pre18<sup>th</sup> century fields

### Distinctive Features

- Foxcote Reservoir
- Uneven ground in lower valley - remnants of former mineral working
- Some steeply sloping pasture
- Historic settlement at Foxcote valley
- Foxcote Reservoir and Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Calcareous grassland.

### Intrusive Elements

- Concrete dam to Foxcote Reservoir, which has a very localised impact
- Non-farming use of land immediately around farmhouses

**Location** Foxcote is a small valley immediately to the east of Buckingham. The valley begins to the north of Maids Moreton and curves round the eastern edge of Buckingham before descending in to the Great Ouse valley.

**Landscape character** The character is predominantly that of a small, secluded valley in pastoral use, which seems somewhat removed from the surrounding landscape. An area close to the top of the valley includes a small reservoir where the character is more open with views up to the edge of Maids Moreton. Small woodlands and copses of trees are a feature.

**Geology** The underlying geology is varied comprising mudstones and limestones of the Kellaways Formation and Great Oolite Group respectively. A mosaic of till, head and glaciofluvial deposits overlie the solid geology.

**Topography** The valley landform cut by a small stream has some comparatively steep sides creating a small enclosed and winding valley. The ground flattens out towards the plateau above where a dam has been constructed across the valley to create the reservoir.

**Hydrology** A stream that drains the high ground of the Maids Moreton Plateau and to the north and east down into the Great Ouse valley to the east of Buckingham. Foxcote reservoir fills part of the upper valley and lower down there is a small lake to the west of Foxcote Manor. The stream does not feed directly into the Great Ouse but into a reservoir on the valley floor adjacent to Hydellane Farm (within LCA 3.1). The stream meanders and appears to have been largely unmodified.

**Land use and settlement** There are no villages within the area but there are several farms on the valley sides, a few houses adjacent to the roads and Foxcote Manor. The Manor lies on the eastern side of the valley and has gardens and a lake within the valley but the main aspect faces towards the Lower Great Ouse valley.

The land use of the valley is predominantly small fields of pasture defined by strong hedgerows often containing trees. Elsewhere there is a small reservoir in the upper part of the valley and on the gently slopes around the reservoir and the higher valley sides there is more arable farming.

**Tree cover** The valley generally gives the impression of having a good level of tree cover. There are several small woodlands within the lower narrower valley and where the valley opens up around the reservoir there are the larger stands of Foxcote and Long Wood. These are still relatively small woodlands but within the fairly small scale enclosed landscape they have a significant visual presence. The tree cover in hedgerows is variable. The stream is marked by a generally good line of diverse trees and shrubs, which in places widens to become very small woodlands. There is also quite good tree cover along some banks of the reservoir.

**Biodiversity** In biodiversity terms the area can be subdivided generally in two. In the north the Foxcote Reservoir and Wood SSSI contributes significant areas of semi-natural habitat interest including the priority habitat types – lowland mixed deciduous woodland and eutrophic standing waters. There is also a small lowland meadow, a further priority habitat type associated with Long's Wood and Meadow CWS in the northwest of the area where areas of neutral grassland and calcareous grassland, both broad habitats of District significance, also occur.

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In contrast the southern two thirds is a farmed landscape comprising arable and improved grassland habitats, however the presence of small copses a stream and a hedgerow network suggests potential for biodiversity interest in this area.

**Historic environment** The area is traversed by Roman roads and contains a villa and other prehistoric/Roman settlement. Just under half of this area retains features of a pre 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape. The majority of this is enclosure, but there is also ancient woodland and assarts in the high reaches of the valley. The rest of the enclosure pattern is predominantly parliamentary enclosure. The 20<sup>th</sup> century reservoir in the north of the area has lost the historic field pattern as has small areas of new enclosure and prairie farming on the edges of the area. There are also medieval settlement remains and historic buildings at Foxcote.

**Designations**

Archaeological Notification Areas – 5 No.

SSSI: Foxcote Reservoir and Wood

CWS – 1 No.

BNS – 2 No.

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The lower part of the Foxcote valley.



The wider upper part of the valley. Foxcote Reservoir is visible in the background.

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### Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

**Condition** **Very good**

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Visual detractors:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Strong
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 this landscape is considered to be very good. There is a strong hedgerow pattern over a distinct landform creating a coherent pattern of elements. The fields in the lower parts of the valley are small with irregular boundaries whilst the more gentle upper slopes have medium sized fields in a more regular pattern. The detracting elements are few and very localised. Cultural integrity of the landscape is variable. Ecological integrity is strong due to good connectivity and relatively large areas of priority habitat types and a large Site of Special Scientific Interest. Functional integrity is strong.

### Sensitivity

The landscape is considered to be of moderate sensitivity. It has a distinct character with a good sense of historic continuity stemming from the field pattern and land uses. These combine to give a moderate sense of place. The valley landform and intermittent tree cover combine to give a moderate visibility. The overall sensitivity is moderate being highest in the small scale landscape close to the meandering streams and lowest on upper slopes used for arable farming.

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### Landscape Guidelines Conserve and Reinforce

The landscape guidelines for Foxcote Valley are as follows:

- Conserve the pattern of small fields of pasture close to the stream.
- Conserve the slightly remote hidden character of the valley.
- Introduce buffering habitat and/or encourage sensitive farming methods surrounding the Foxcote Reservoir SSSI as a priority, but consider also farmland along the stream and adjacent to copses and hedgerows.
- Maintain and enhance the existing network of hedgerows and copses to benefit the visual and ecological aspects of the LCA.
- Encourage recreational access on foot to the area from adjacent settlements.
- Conserve and enhance views from publicly accessible land.
- Encourage the conservation and restoration of the parkland around Foxcote manor this appears to extend into the adjacent LCA 2.6.
- Maintain the existing extent and condition of calcareous grassland and habitats within Foxcote Reservoir and Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest.



Looking south westwards across the dam of the reservoir.