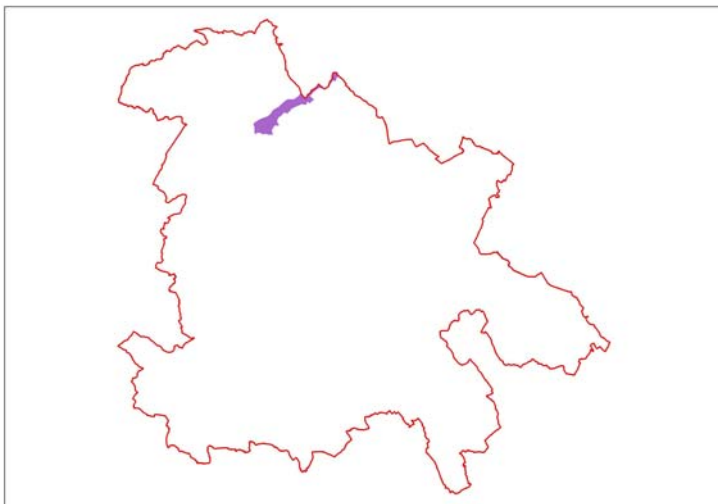


LCT 3 Valley Bottom



Constituent LCAs

LCA 3.1 Lower Great Ouse Valley



Great Ouse valley looking east showing floodplains adjacent to the meandering river.

LCT 3 Valley Bottom

Key Characteristics

- Shallow river valley
- Gentle upper slopes
- Meandering river
- Wide floodplain
- Elevation range 70M to 85M AOD
- Predominantly grassland
- Small woodlands
- Medium sized fields
- Low density of settlement
- Sensitive historic landscape beside river
- Variable levels of tranquillity

Distinctive Features

- Willows adjacent to meandering river
- Wet grasses, reeds and rushes in wet areas
- Remnants of Buckingham Arm of the Grand Union Canal
- Hyde Lane Reservoir
- Weirs and mill houses
- Main roads on upper slopes
- Flood meadows
- Views enclosed by landform

General Description

Accords generally with CA 88 Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands identified by the Character of England Map and with LCT RCN identified by the National Landscape Typology.

The Valley Bottom is located to the east of Buckingham and extends eastwards across the district boundary into Milton Keynes. The valley is shallow with gently sloping sides and narrow valley floor; most of which is floodplain. The Great Ouse drains to the north out into the Wash. In geological terms the valley comprises cornbrash overlain by boulder clay and river gravels.

To the north lies LCT 2 Incised Valleys, to the south LCT 4 Undulating Clay Plateau, whilst to the southwest is a section of LCT 5 Shallow Valleys. The natural extent of the valley is confined by Buckingham to the west.

The Ouse floodplain contains biodiversity features such as the Hyde Lane Reservoir and the local Wildlife Trust nature reserve associated with the disused Buckingham Arm of the Grand Union Canal. The majority of the wildlife interest centres on the river itself, which supports bird species such as kingfisher, and otter, which have been extending their population along watercourses such as the Great Ouse.

About half of the type is identified as historic landscape of high sensitivity. This is largely due to the pre eighteenth century meadows adjacent to the river, but also a small area of parkland at Thornton. The enclosure pattern tends to be pre eighteenth century to the south of the river and Parliamentary enclosure to the north. The river valley has high archaeological potential, which includes a Scheduled prehistoric "hillfort".

The character of this area varies dramatically from the valley sides where the A422 and the A421 have a significant impact and includes more arable fields and open views, to the intimate, often enclosed, landscape adjacent to the river. The riverside landscape is enhanced by a variety of bank side vegetation including wetland trees, shrubs, grasses and reeds. The valley has a good network of footpaths, with wooden footbridges across the river and tributary streams and ditches. Weirs and historic mill buildings add visual interest adjacent to the river. The hedgerow pattern remains largely intact but some of the hedgerows are in poor condition and have few hedgerow trees. The reservoir and remnants of the Buckingham Arm of the Grand Union Canal are attractive features close to the river. Woodlands tend to be very small pockets, often adjacent to the river although there are larger areas around the reservoir and at Thornton Park. The main visual detractors are the pylon lines and the localised impact of the urban edge of Buckingham and the main roads along the valley sides. It is however the condition of hedgerows and intensification of farming which most threatens the high quality landscape of the valley bottom.