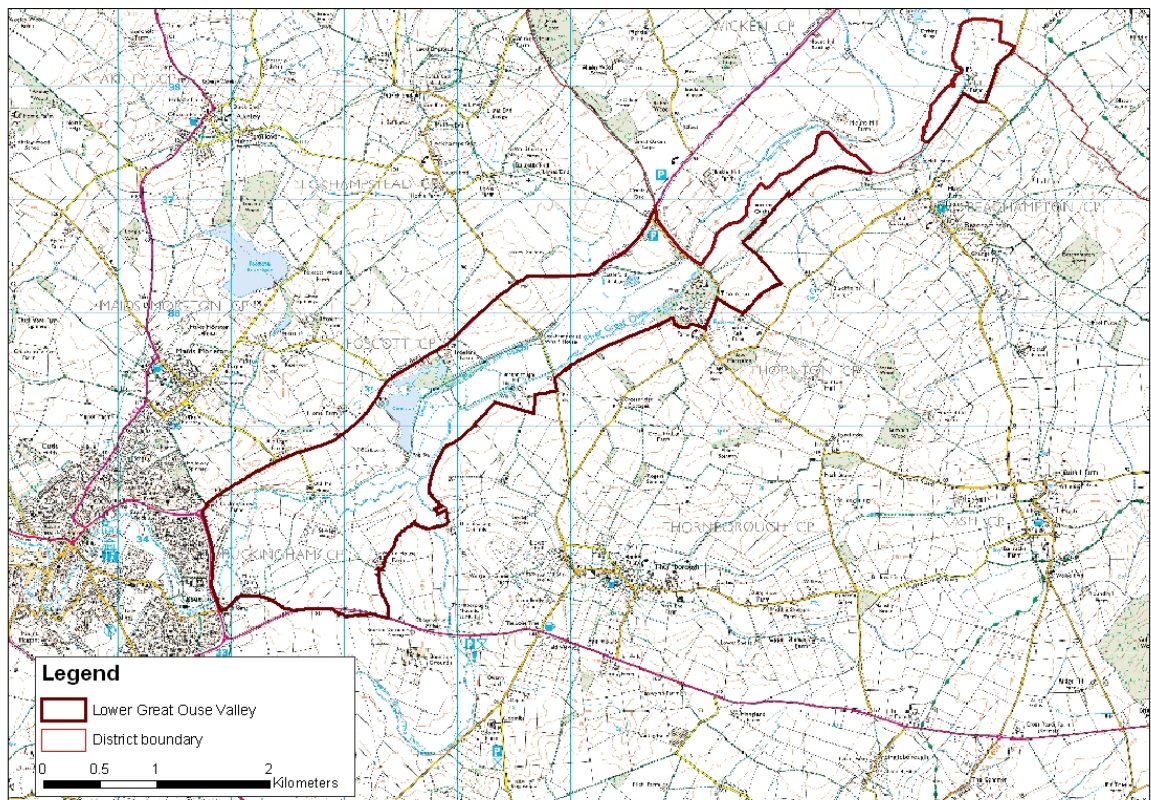
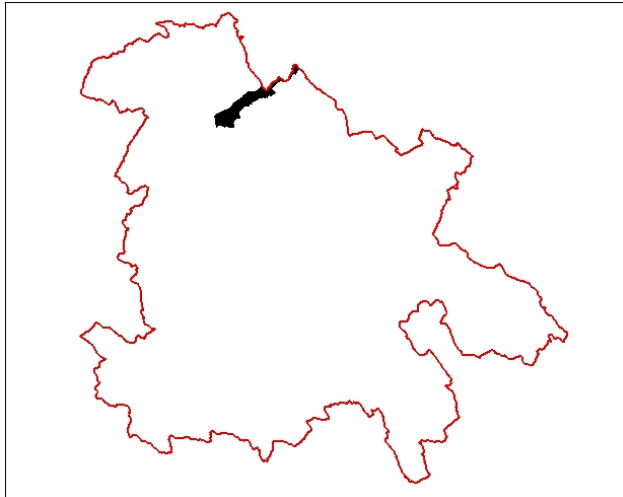


LCA 3.1 Lower Great Ouse Valley

Landscape Character Type: LCT 3 Valley Bottom



## LCA 3.1 Lower Great Ouse Valley (LCT 3)

### Key Characteristics

- Shallow river valley
- Meandering river marked by bank side willows
- Streams and ditches
- Historic meadows
- Flat valley floor in pasture often with fragmented hedgerows and post and wire fencing
- Arable farming with some field amalgamation on gently sloping valley sides
- Farms on valley sides
- A422 along bottom of northern valley side

### Distinctive Features

- River Ouse
- Hyde Lane Reservoir
- Original watermill houses adjacent to the river remain as domestic residences
- Remnants of the infrastructure of the now dry Buckingham Arm of the Grand Union Canal
- Short sections of limestone walling close to settlement
- Earthworks on south side of reservoir
- Weirs on river
- Footbridges across the river and streams
- Prehistoric and Roman archaeology
- Wet grassland and areas of reeds and rushes

### Intrusive Elements

- Two pylon lines close to the eastern side of Buckingham
- Traffic on the A422
- Small sewage works

**Location** Divided into two sections, the main part extends eastwards from Buckingham towards Stony Stratford. The Buckingham ring road forms the boundary with the town. Higher ground with large woodland areas lying to the north on the Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire border. Higher claylands with a network of villages spread across it to the southeast; whilst to the south Padbury and Claydon Brook catchments are on lower ground. To the east the area extends into Northamptonshire. A small part at Mill Farm is separated from the remainder by a meander in the river and county boundary.

**Landscape character** A small river valley typically with gently sloping valley sides and a fairly wide flood plain. The river is not a dominant feature in the landscape but the bank side vegetation, predominantly of willows and the floodplain are distinctive. Some small parts of the valley, most notably to the south of the reservoir, have a slightly remote wild character but mostly it appears settled.

**Geology** Superficial deposits of alluvium and river terrace deposits occur throughout the valley with locally glaciofluvial deposits on the margins. The underlying geology is Oolite limestone.

**Topography** The landform is a small river valley with gently sloping sides and a wide flat floodplain. However, close to Buckingham the north slopes are steeper.

**Hydrology** The Great Ouse meanders down the valley with floodplains either side and distinctive bank side vegetation. The section to the south of the reservoir looks as if it may have been straightened. There are two weirs and two old mill houses within this area.

The Padbury Brook joins the river just to the east of Buckingham. This is a significant tributary having been joined by the Claydon Brook southwest of Padbury. These two brooks (The Twins) drain a large section of the Aylesbury Vale to the north of the Oving and Quainton Hills. There is another stream coming down from Leckhamstead to join the Great Ouse and several other minor streams from the south.

North of the Great Ouse is a small reservoir close to Hyde Lane Farm fed by the Foxcote stream from the north. There is a flat wet grassland area and several straight water filled ditches to the south of the reservoir. There are more wet ditches to the northeast.

The remnants of the Buckingham Arm of the Grand Union Canal runs along the northern side of the floodplain. It is now mostly dry.

**Land use and settlement** The land use is mixed with an emphasis on arable on the lower valley sides where some fields have been amalgamated, and pasture on the floodplains either side of the river. Sloping fields on the valley sides are medium or large with a regular pattern, whilst the pastures closer to the valley floor are often small, some having irregular boundaries. The hedgerows are of variable strength with sections of fragmented hedgerow and post and wire fencing. Locally small sections of limestone walling define boundaries close to settlements.

There are no villages within the valley. Although the area abuts the eastern edge of Buckingham the town has limited visual impact. There are several farms on the lower valley sides and two old mill houses. Thornton

## LCA 3.1 Lower Great Ouse Valley (LCT 3)

College lies close to the southern bank of the river.

The valley has traditionally been a focus for transport reflected in the positioning of the A422 on its northern side and the canal.

**Tree cover** Woodland is not a major feature but there are two small woodland areas, one to the south of the reservoir and the other around Thornton College.

Trees marking the courses of the river, tributary streams and ditches make the greatest contribution to the tree cover of the valley. The incidence of hedgerow trees is variable but generally strongest where there are small fields of pasture on the valley floor.

The ring road is well screened by vegetation enabling a strong agricultural character to remain close to the urban edge.

**Biodiversity** The area is dominated by grassland habitat, with some zones of arable fields. The grassland is mostly improved with a few small areas of unimproved pasture and a small area of neutral grassland in the east.

The agricultural use is broken by a scattering of broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland throughout and the aquatic habitats include the River Great Ouse and its tributaries, and the Hyde Lane Reservoir which is designated as a CWS.

The biodiversity importance of this mix of habitats which includes broad habitat types is enhanced by the good connectivity between habitats created by the hedgerow pattern and the stream network.

**Historic landscape** The Ouse Valley has been a focus for human occupation from prehistoric times as evidenced by the “ring ditches” (cropmarks of ploughed down burial mounds) found along this stretch of the river. An Iron Age hillfort and Roman settlements also lie along the valley and more sites are likely to remain undiscovered beneath alluvium and meadow grassland. In historic times the river has been used for mills and a duck decoy pond at Thornton. Over half this area has retained the features of a pre 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape of which a further half is meadows adjacent to the Great Ouse. The remainder is enclosure with a small area of parkland and settlement at Thornton. Later enclosure is mainly to the north of the river and includes both parliamentary enclosure and 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosure. There are also four small 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century woodlands in the east. The Buckingham Arm of the Grand Union Canal ran just to the north of the river but is now disused. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century the landscape was changed by the creation of the Hyde Lane Reservoir and a small sewage works. The main settlement is the small village of Thornton, notable for the Victorian Thornton College built around a medieval hall and the 14<sup>th</sup> century Grade I listed building of St Michael’s church.

### **Designations**

Scheduled Ancient Monuments: Slight Univallate Hillfort Southeast of Home Farm

Archaeological Notification Areas – 8 No.

CWS – 1 No.

BNS – 10 No.



**LCA 3.1 Lower Great Ouse Valley (LCT 3)**



View of the river from near Old Mill House.

## LCA 3.1 Lower Great Ouse Valley (LCT 3)

### Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Good</b>
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Visual detractors:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Coherent

<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Moderate</b>
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

<b>Guidelines</b>	<b>Conserve and Reinforce</b>
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### Condition

The condition of this landscape is generally considered to be good. There is a strong field pattern of medium sized regular fields on the valley sides with some small irregular fields closer to the river. There are few detracting features the most notable being the two pylon lines close to the eastern edge of Buckingham and traffic on the A422 and ring road. This is considered to be a unified landscape. The cultural integrity is considered to be variable being strongest in fields of pasture close to the river with buildings giving strong historic associations and archaeological time-depth, and weakest in large amalgamated arable fields on the valley sides with fragmented hedgerows. Ecological integrity is moderate due to good connectivity and the relative areas of designated sites and habitats of District

significance compared to other parts of the District. Overall the functional integrity is considered to be coherent.

### Sensitivity

The landscape is considered to be of moderate sensitivity. The character is distinct and the hedgerows and historic features along the river and the disused Buckingham Arm of the Grand Union Canal give the area an historic sense of continuity. This gives the area a moderate sense of place, which is generally highest close to the river and lowest on the arable slopes close to the A422. The landform is apparent and the tree cover intermittent combining to give a moderate visibility.



Footbridge near Old Mill House.



## LCA 3.1 Lower Great Ouse Valley (LCT 3)

### Landscape Guidelines Conserve and Reinforce

The guidelines for Lower Great Ouse Valley are as follows:

- Conserve the historic elements along the river and the redundant Buckingham Arm of the Grand Union Canal.
- Encourage less intensive agricultural management adjacent to watercourses.
- Encourage the replanting of hedgerows where fields have been amalgamated.
- Reinforce the existing field pattern where grazing has eroded hedgerows.
- Preserve the historic meadows and archaeological remains beneath them.
- Encourage recreational access along the valley and the interpretation of historic features.
- Maintain connectivity of habitats.
- Maintain the existing extent and condition of neutral and unimproved grassland.



Area of pasture bounded by limestone walling close to Manor Farm.