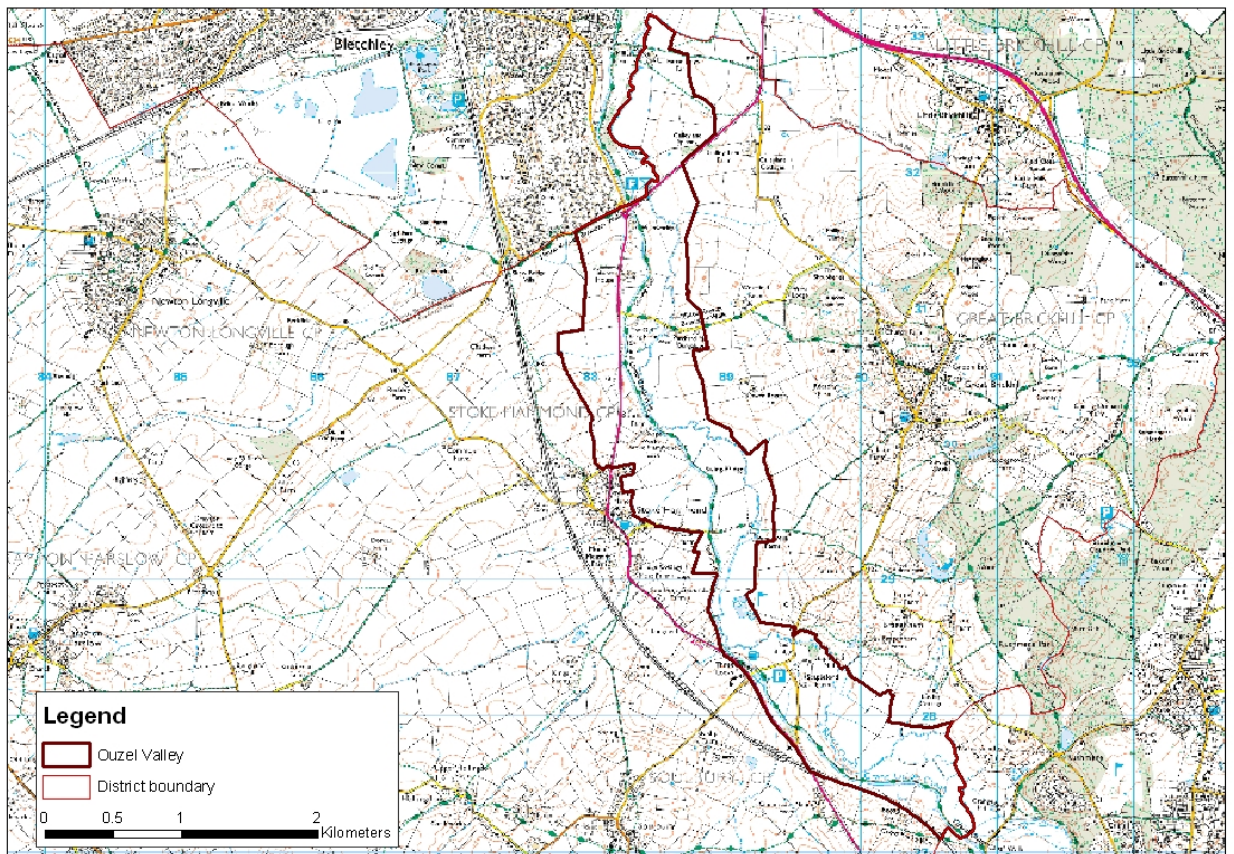
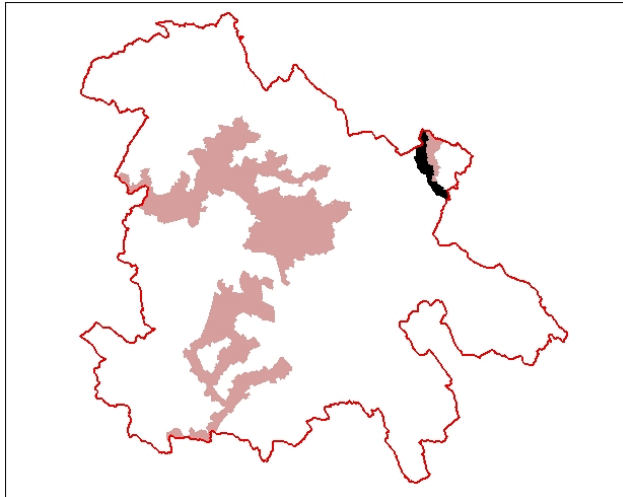


LCA 5.2 Ouzel Valley

Landscape Character Type: LCT 5 Shallow Valleys



LCA 5.2 Ouzel Valley (LCT 5)

Key Characteristics

- Flat valley bottom drains from south to north
- River Ouzel follows meandering course
- Grand Union Canal
- Narrow meandering lanes cross the valley

Distinctive Features

- Mixed arable and grassland
- Mixture of mature and clipped hedges
- Willow and poplar trees along watercourses
- Canal infrastructure and local marina
- Historic meadows
- River Ouzel
- Neutral grassland
- Fen

Intrusive Elements

- Views of Milton Keynes
- Traffic on A4146 and link road
- Views of Stoke Hammond Bypass

Location The LCA follows the course of the river Ouzel which runs between Leighton Linlade and Bletchley. It covers the valley bottom extending to Stoke Hammond in the west and the lower slopes of the Brickhills Scarp LCA to the east.

Landscape character This floodplain clay land landscape contains a mixture of arable and grazing land use with small to medium sized fields hedged with hawthorn and regeneration elm suckers. There are only occasional hedgerow trees. Mature tree belts often with ash and willow are associated with the canal and to a slightly lesser extent, the river. This distinctive vegetation pattern is an important landscape feature which filters the views. Elsewhere there are often views out to the higher Ouzel valley lower slopes and Brickhills scarp. At its northern end the LCA abuts the suburban edge of Milton Keynes. The junction of the A4146 and the Stoke Hammond Bypass link road has a significant visual impact at this point.

The river and canal are important for recreation, and the presence of the navigable canal with its narrow boats and associated historic bridges and locks is a distinctive element. The towpath is well used for walking. Similarly the meandering river course is an important landscape feature.

Geology Extensive areas of alluvium with river terrace deposits along the edges. Alluvium and river terrace drift give rise to clayey and loamy soils that are slowly permeable and seasonally waterlogged.

Topography The valley bottom drops only about 5m along its course. The valley is narrower to the south of three locks having steeper slopes that rise from about 85m AOD in the valley bottom to a level of over 110m AOD on the A4146 south of Chelmscote Manor. In the north the valley is shallower and wider varying between lower and upper levels of 70 – 90m AOD.

Hydrology The Ouzel which flows from Leighton Linlade in the south is fed by a number of smaller streams that rise on the Brickhills to the east and the clayland plateau to the west. The Grand Union Canal runs parallel to the Ouzel.

Land use and settlement Predominantly pastoral land use in the south with a higher proportion of arable land use in the north. Fragmented distribution of small woodland parcels and copses. No major settlements but dispersed farmsteads and former mills. There is a marina and some light industrial units at Willowbridge.

Tree cover Mature trees associated with the Grand Union Canal predominantly willow and ash. Occasional poplar trees

Biodiversity Aquatic habitats are a feature provided by the Ouzel and its tributaries and the nearby canal. In addition a few small areas of standing water are present, predominantly in the northern two thirds.

Terrestrial habitats are dominated by grassland, including a small area of unimproved pasture in the north, and large areas of the broad habitat type neutral grassland in the south. Some arable habitat and very small patches of broadleaved woodland are also present throughout. The area also contains a fragment of fen in the south.

LCA 5.2 Ouzel Valley (LCT 5)

Historic environment The northern end of this area lies within 500m of the Roman town of Magiovinium on Watling Street. Prehistoric and Roman occupation along the valley is indicated by cropmarks, finds and an Iron Age sites on the Stoke Hammond Bypass. The historic landscape is predominantly historic flood meadows and pre 18th century irregular enclosure. The sites of several mills are known. Some parliamentary enclosure fields exist in the centre of the area. The area is traversed by the Grand Union Canal, opened in 1805. There are listed canal structures at Fenny Lock and Three Locks.

Designations

Archaeological Notification Areas – 8 No.
BNS – 4 No.

LCA 5.2 Ouzel Valley (LCT 5)



River Ouzel looking south from the A4146.



Mature vegetation along the River Ouzel looking south from Stapleford Mill Bridge.

LCA 5.2 Ouzel Valley (LCT 5)

Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

Condition	Very good
Pattern of elements:	Unified
Visual detractors:	Few
Visual unity:	Strongly unified
Cultural integrity:	Good
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity	Low
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Insignificant
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Low

Guidelines	Reinforce
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Condition

Overall the condition of the landscape is considered to be very good. The valley bottom is well defined by the course of the River Ouzel and the parallel alignment of the Grand Union Canal. The pattern of elements which is unified links landform and field parcels to these two dominant elements. There are few visual detractors and these tend to be on the western fringe of the area or related to the development of Milton Keynes which lies beyond the area. The valley bottom is strongly unified as a distinctive linear feature in the bottom emphasised by the belts of mature vegetation that follow the water courses. Cultural integrity is good with the historic meadows and a number of water related structures along the canal and river. Ecological integrity is moderate due to good connectivity and the areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance. Overall the functional integrity is strong.

Sensitivity

The area is distinguished by the character of the river and canal corridors. There is a strong historic continuity in these features. Overall the area has moderate sense of place. The landform of the valley is apparent becoming a more dominant feature of the landscape beyond the area. The degree of visibility is considered to be low primarily due to the mature tree cover in the valley bottom. This dissipates over the upper slopes. Overall the degree of sensitivity remains low.



The Grand Union Canal is often hidden by bank side vegetation.

LCA 5.2 Ouzel Valley (LCT 5)

Landscape Guidelines Reinforce

The landscape guidelines for the Ouzel Valley are as follows:

- Promote management of hedgerows by traditional cutting regimes and the establishment of new hedgerow trees.
- Maintain the existing extent and condition of neutral, unimproved and semi-improved grassland wherever possible. Encourage good management practices.
- Consider encouraging the establishment of small areas of woodland and trees to reduce the impact of intrusive elements particularly to enhance views from recreational routes along canal and river.
- Encourage the establishment of buffer zones of semi-natural vegetation along watercourses in arable areas to enhance biodiversity, interconnectivity and landscape quality.
- Conserve and enhance the distinctive character of settlements, individual buildings and canal infrastructure.
- New housing and alterations to existing housing should be designed to reflect the traditional character of the area and be consistent in the use of locally occurring traditional materials.
- Retain visually rich environment along river and canal.
- Encourage landowners to improve ecological diversity by and maintaining varied land maintenance regimes to benefit landscape and habitats.
- Maintain and enhance connectivity of habitats.
- Identify key views from publicly accessible locations and promote the management and enhancement of these viewpoints.
- Encourage the conservation and interpretation of the historic canal environment.
- Encourage the recreational use of the area for non-car based recreation.
- Identify key views in the Ouzel valley from publicly accessible locations. These viewpoints may be outside this LCA but views across this area essential to maintaining views along the valley and up to the wooded slopes of the Greensand Ridge. Promote the management and enhancement of these viewpoints to ensure the character of the valley is maintained.



Grand Union Canal Three Locks flight at Stapleford Mill Bridge.