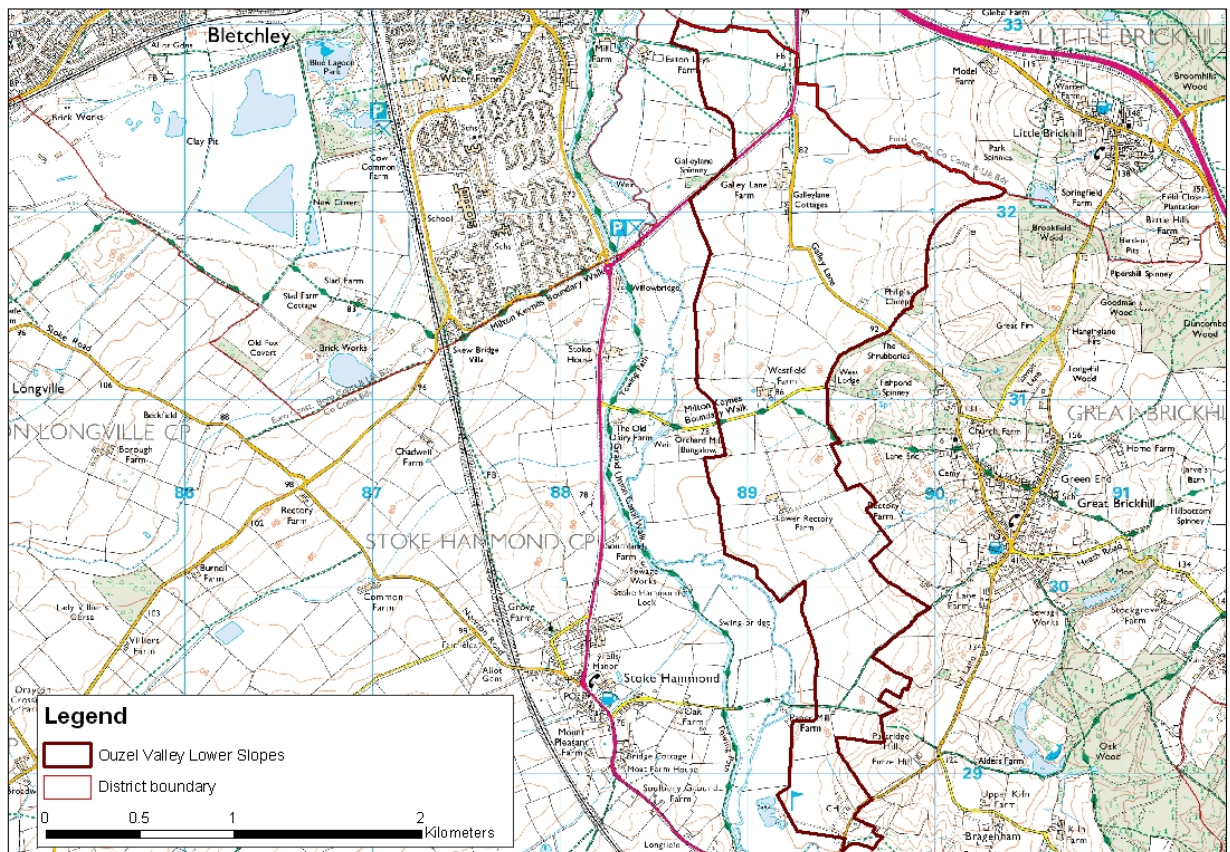
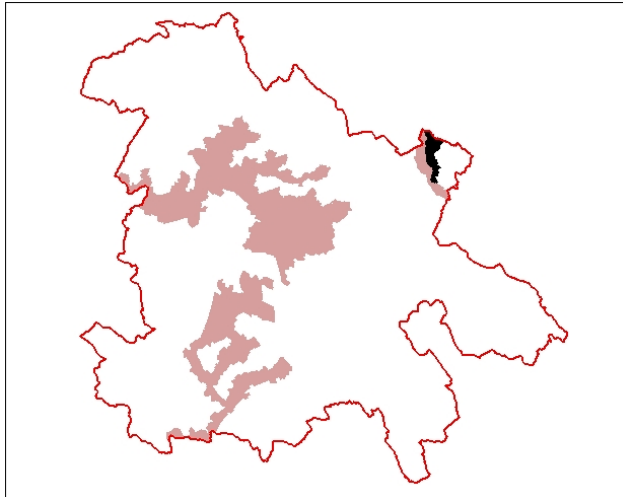


## 5.3 Ouzel Valley Lower Slopes

### Landscape Character Type: LCT 5 Shallow Valleys



## LCA 5.3 Ouzel Valley Lower Slopes (LCT 5)

### Key Characteristics

- Gently sloping valley side
- Large arable fields
- Small parcels of woodland and shelter belts
- Narrow lanes climbing up the valley sides
- Parliamentary and 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosure fields

### Distinctive Features

- Arable intensification
- Hedgerows removed or in poor condition
- Acidic and neutral grassland

### Intrusive Elements

- Views of Milton Keynes
- Traffic on A4146
- Golf course landscape in the south

**Location** Covers a narrow wedge of land between the course of the river Ouzel and the Brickhills Scarp LCAs which diverge north of Great Brickhill.

**Landscape character** This narrow tract of land forms the shallow, gently sloping, west facing valley sides of the river Ouzel that lies between the scarp face of the Greensand Ridge to the east and the flatter river valley bottom. Some small watercourses drain east to west across the area from the base of the Greensand, to eventually meet the river Ouzel.

These claylands support mostly arable fields but with some pasture and there is notably very little woodland. The field structure consists of rectilinear fields, and in places there is evidence of field amalgamation and loss of hedgerows, usually associated with arable cultivation. Hedgerows are predominantly of hawthorn with elm in places. The presence of field boundary trees is variable and in some areas the landscape pattern is breaking down where hedges are becoming gappy, sometimes through heavy annual flailing and sometimes through apparent neglect.

**Geology** Predominantly Oxford clay with deposits of head and river terrace on the lower slopes. Small local exposure of calcareous mudstone at the southern tip of the LCA.

**Topography** The northern and District/County boundary follows the falls from east to west from a level of 100m AOD south of Little Brickhill to approximately 75m AOD at the A4146 boundary. The southern part of the area narrows to a point where the boundary intersects with the 100m AOD contour.

**Hydrology** The area is crossed by a small number of streams running off the scarp to the east and feeding the river Ouzel to the west of the area.

**Land use and settlement** Predominantly arable land use but with parcels of grassland at the northern and southern ends of the LCA. This also includes the golf course east of Three Locks. No major settlement but there are dispersed farmstead and dwellings.

**Tree cover** There is no significant woodland cover but occasional hedgerow trees, predominantly oak and ash are present.

**Biodiversity** The habitat range is limited due to the dominance of arable land. This is relieved by some grassland, mostly confined to the south of which some is neutral or acidic, both broad habitat types. Other habitat includes broadleaved woodland which comprises only a tiny fraction of the LCA. Watercourses and areas of standing water are limited but locally add further to the habitat range. Habitat connectivity is provided by the hedgerows and the streams. The golf course may add some potential for wildlife.

**Historic environment** The northern end of this area lies within 500m of the Roman town of Magiovinium on Watling Street. Predominantly parliamentary and 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosures. Some pre 18<sup>th</sup> century irregular enclosures on the northern fringe.

### Designations

Archaeological Notification Areas – 1 No.  
BNS – 1 No.



**LCA 5.3 Ouzel Valley Lower Slopes (LCT 5)**



Galley Lane looking north toward the urban fringe of Milton Keynes.



Golf course at the southern end of the area includes distinctive planting of poplars.

## LCA 5.3 Ouzel Valley Lower Slopes (LCT 5)

### Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Moderate</b>
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Visual detractors:	Few
Visual unity:	Unified
Cultural integrity:	Poor
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Functional integrity:	Very weak

<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Moderate</b>
Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Weak
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Open
Visibility:	High

**Guidelines**                      **Conserve and Enhance**

### Condition

Overall the condition of the landscape is considered to be moderate. The area covers the transition between the Ouzel Valley and the Brickhill Scarp. The pattern of elements is coherent however, field pattern has been eroded by arable intensification in the north and golf course development in the south. There are few visual detractors. Cultural integrity is poor as the area has a somewhat fragmented historic landscape, limited known archaeology and no designated historic buildings. Ecological integrity is weak despite good connectivity because of the low level of areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance present compared to other parts of the District. Functional integrity is perceived as being very weak.

### Sensitivity

The area's distinctiveness has been dissipated through arable intensification and loss of hedgerow trees. Field pattern remains a key feature in a comparatively open landscape. Sense of place is perceived as being weak. The landform which gradually rises to meet the scarp in the east, in conjunction with the lack of tree cover, allows long distance views over the Ouzel Valley and the urban edge of Milton Keynes. Overall the degree of sensitivity remains moderate.



Looking north from the A4146 towards the suburban fringe of Milton Keynes.



## LCA 5.3 Ouzel Valley Lower Slopes (LCT 5)

### Landscape Guidelines Conserve and Enhance

The landscape guidelines for the Ouzel Valley Lower Slopes are as follows:

- Encourage the retention and strengthening of the historic hedgerow pattern by infilling gaps and establishing new hedgerow trees.
- Promote management of hedgerows by traditional cutting regimes.
- Maintain the extent and condition of neutral and acidic grassland wherever possible. Encourage good management practices.
- Encourage the establishment of buffer zones of semi-natural vegetation along watercourses in arable areas to enhance biodiversity, interconnectivity and landscape quality.
- Encourage landowners to improve ecological diversity by and maintaining varied land maintenance regimes to benefit landscape and habitats.
- Maintain connectivity of habitats.
- Identify key views in the valley from publicly accessible locations. These viewpoints may be outside this LCA but open 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 views to ensure that the landscape character of the valley is maintained and enhanced.



View from the A4146 looking east along the line of the new road.