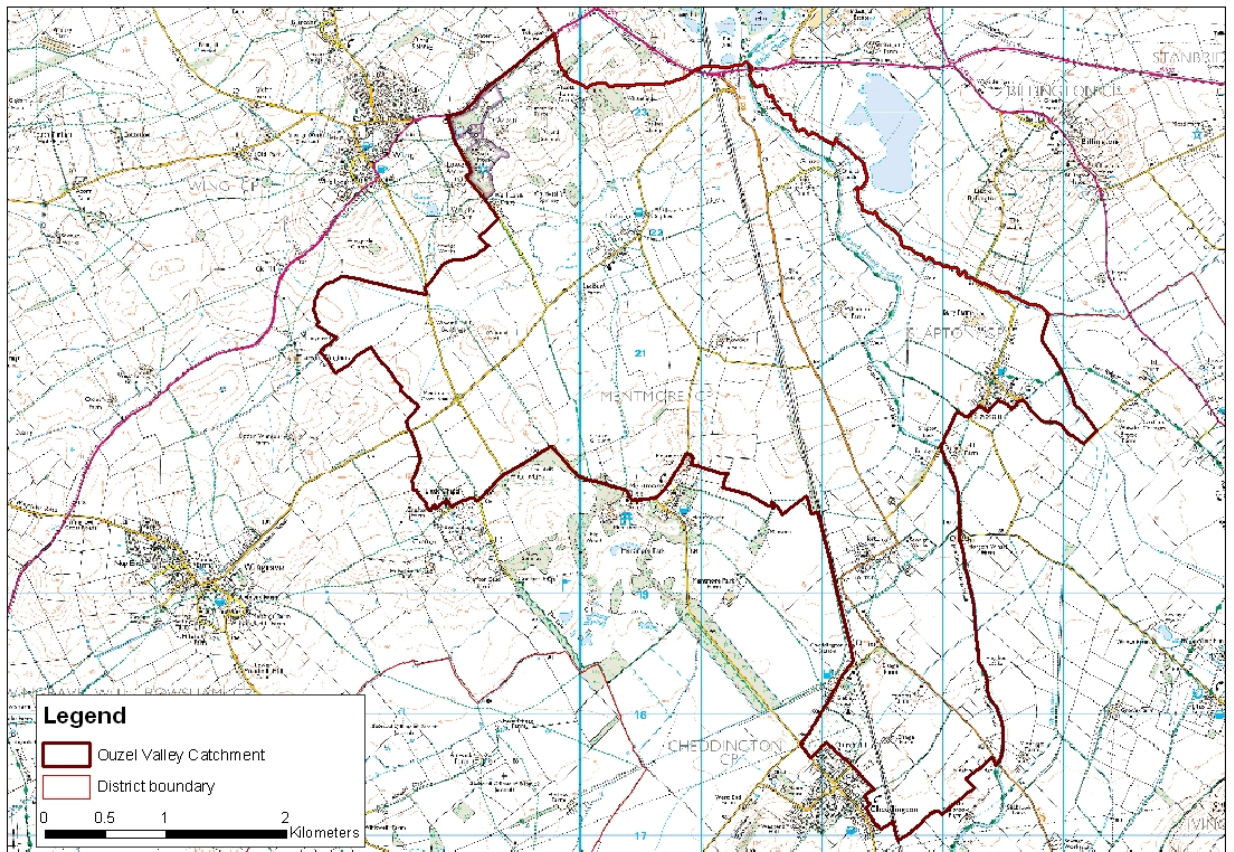
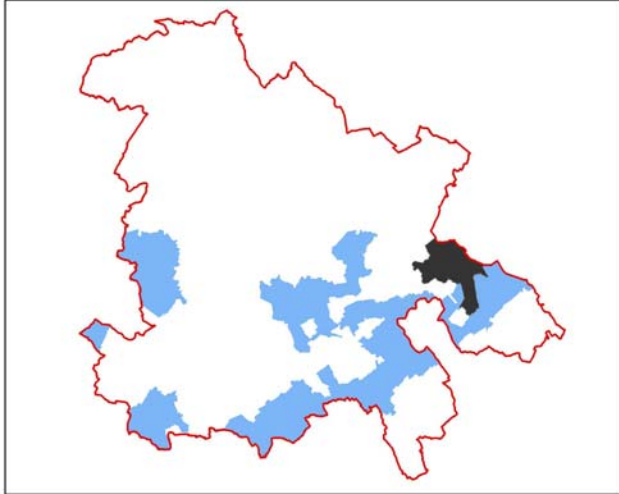


LCA 8.3 Ouzel Valley Catchment

Landscape Character Type: LCT 8 Vale



LCA 8.3 Ouzel Valley Catchment (LCT 8)

Key Characteristics

- Wide shallow valley
- Meandering stream in valley fed by ditches
- Large open arable fields
- Mosaic of pastoral fields running parallel with the canal corridor
- Well trimmed hedges with occasional mature hedgerow trees
- Sparse distribution of settlements

Distinctive Features

- Ascott House parkland
- Grand Union Canal
- Orchards
- Circular clumps on low hills
- "Train Robbery" Bridge
- Three small settlements at Ledburn, Slapton and Horton

Intrusive Elements

- West coast mainline railway
- Pylons
- Traffic on A505

Location Directly south of Leighton Linlade and extending south to the village of Cheddington. The eastern boundary of the area is jointly formed by the county boundary to the northeast and the alignment of the Grand Union Canal to the southeast. To the west it includes the lower part of the valley between Wing and Mentmore.

Landscape character The area is shallow falling towards the river Ouzel to the east. The area also incorporates some local low lying hills. There are well defined valley edges to the north and south. Ascott House and parkland sits on the northern valley edge. The area is traversed by the Grand Union Canal and west coast mainline railway. It is predominantly an arable landscape crossed by meandering streams and with numerous ponds. Sparse woodland cover is limited and generally associated with parkland in the north and with local settlements, although it also can be found along the line of the canal as well as contributing to the scrub cover found on the railway embankments.

Geology An extensive area of Gault clay with deposits of glacial till, head deposits and other undifferentiated glacial deposits around the northern fringes. Deposits of alluvium occur along the tributaries that feed into the river Ouzel.

Topography The confluence of the stream with the River Ouzel lies at a level of 85m AOD and rises to the west and to the south to levels of 100m AOD in both instances.

Hydrology The south of the LCA has few watercourses other than a couple of small streams within the Ouzel catchment to the east. To the north a number of streams run off the clay plateau west of Wing and meet with small streams from the Wingrave to Mentmore ridge before forming a large stream that runs between Ascott House and Ledburn. The stream is culverted beneath the west coast mainline railway and the Grand Union Canal before it joins the Ouzel south of Leighton Buzzard.

Land use and settlement An area of predominantly arable land use, but with a belt of pastoral land following the canal corridor containing three settlements at Ledburn, Slapton and Horton.

Tree cover A number of ornamental trees are located at Ascott House. Circular clumps of broadleaved tree cover are associated with the Ascott parkland. Tree cover elsewhere is sparse with the exception of occasional hedgerow trees, shelter belts and spinneys at Horton and groups of willow and poplar adjacent to the canal. There is also an orchard at Cheddington

Biodiversity The Ouzel Valley Catchment is dominated by arable and grassland habitats. Their distribution is uneven with a large area of arable present in the west. The grassland is almost entirely improved.

There is however a good distribution of other potentially more interesting habitats. A small area of the priority habitat type of parkland is present in the northwest, associated with several strong blocks of woodland of in both the priority and broad habitat categories. Aquatic habitats are represented by the streams and the Grand Union Canal and there are a number of ponds scattered throughout the centre of the area.

Several hedgerows around Slapton have high woody species counts and so form a valuable network in conjunction with the nearby canal and its

LCA 8.3 Ouzel Valley Catchment (LCT 8)

abundant wildlife. A CWS has been designated here for Green Lane where three habitats hedgerow, damp and dry grassland benefit a number of insects including butterflies. The hedgerow species include field maple, dogwood and wayfaring tree, all species associated with ancient hedgerows.

Historic environment The area includes Iron Age, Roman and medieval settlements suggesting significant occupation in these periods. The historic landscape comprises pre 18th century enclosures around the settlement of Ledburn and to the east of the railway. 19th century parliamentary enclosures to the west on the upper valley slopes. Large prairie fields over the core of the area relate to existing arable land use. There are historic orchards at Cheddington. In the north is Ascott House, a late 19th century Rothschild mansion and park. The Grand Union Canal opened in 1805 runs through the area.

Designations

EHRHP&G at Ascott House

Archaeological Notification Areas – 14 No.

CWS – 1 No.

BNS – 4 No.

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View from Mentmore towards Ascott parkland.



View from Ascott over Ledburn.

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Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis		Condition
Condition	Moderate	Overall the condition of the landscape is considered to be moderate. The shallow valley which drains towards the River Ouzel is crossed by a number of linear features. These include the Grand Union Canal and the west coast mainline railway. This latter feature is the key visual detractor in the area. Overall the pattern of elements remains coherent as does the visual unity of the area. Cultural integrity is variable and is mainly identified with the parkland at Ascott and the historic cores of the settlements at Slapton, Ledburn and Horton. Ecological integrity is moderate due to reasonable connectivity and areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance. Functional integrity remains coherent
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	
Visual detractors:	Some	
Visual unity:	Coherent	
Cultural integrity:	Variable	
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	
Functional integrity:	Coherent	
Sensitivity	Moderate	
Distinctiveness:	Distinct	
Continuity:	Historic	
Sense of place:	Moderate	
Landform:	Apparent	
Tree cover:	Intermittent	
Visibility:	Moderate	
Guidelines	Conserve and Enhance	

Sensitivity

The intrinsic rural character contributes to the distinctiveness of the area. Historic continuity is supported by moderate sense of place. The landform is distinctive around the valleys south of Ascott however, the sense of visual containment dissipates towards the east and south of the area. Overall the landform is comparatively low lying and therefore is considered to be only apparent. Tree cover is intermittent but tends to be localised. There are smaller parcels of grazing land and associated concentrations of tree cover following the canal corridor. Overall the degree of sensitivity remains moderate.



West coast mainline railway from Horton Road.

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Landscape Guidelines Conserve and Enhance

The landscape guidelines for Ouzel Valley Catchment are as follows:

- Restore and enhance the original field pattern, where practical, including support for initiatives for management and replanting of hedgerows and infilling of gaps.
- Encourage the management of hedgerows through traditional cutting regimes.
- Encourage the establishment of new hedgerow trees.
- Maintain connectivity of habitats.
- Maintain extent of parkland.
- Consider encouraging the establishment of additional small copses, extending the existing landscape pattern to reduce the impact of visually intrusive elements.
- Where arable farming occurs next to watercourses encourage the creation of buffer strips of grassland and bank side vegetation to provide more diverse habitats enhance the landscape and reduce impact of run off of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers.
- Promote the retention and restoration of local orchards and the establishment of new orchards particularly around Cheddington. Encourage the establishment of local varieties of fruit such as the Aylesbury Prune to promote local distinctiveness.
- Encourage the conservation and interpretation of the areas historic environment including that of the canal.
- Encourage the conservation and interpretation of Ascott House, gardens and parkland to benefit the historic and ecological environment as well as the landscape character of the area.



View across shallow valley from Ascott Gardens towards Mentmore ridge.