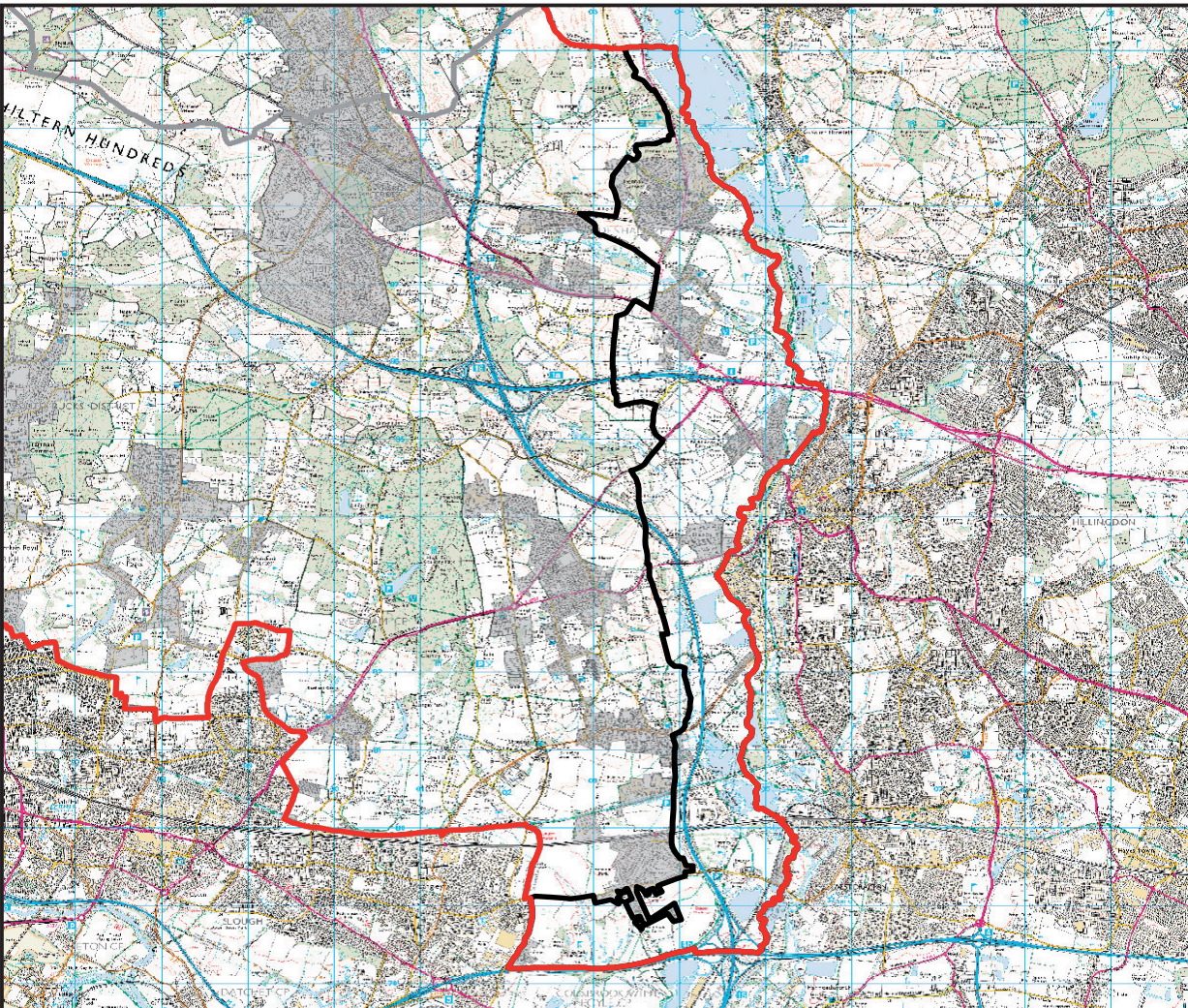
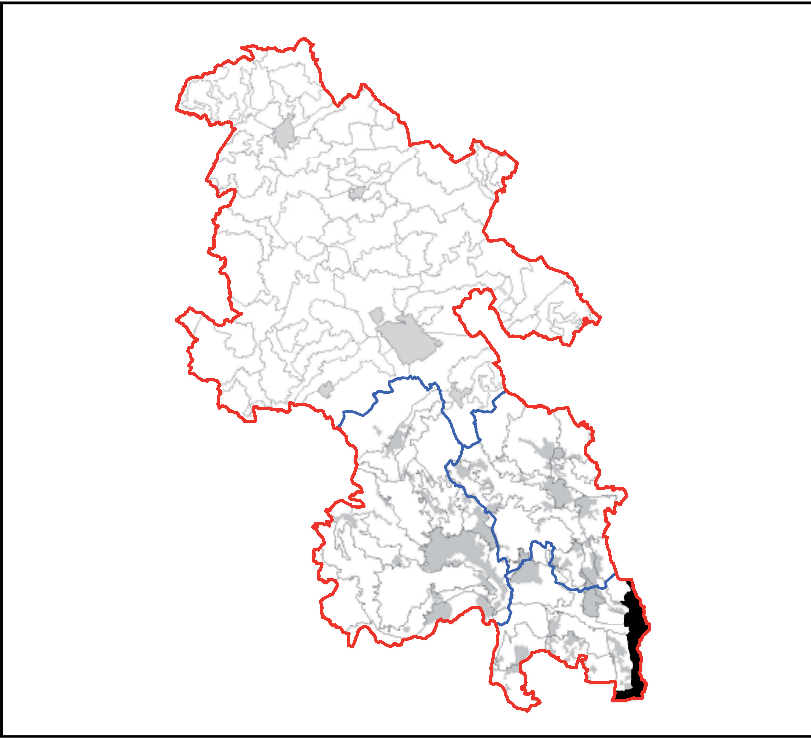


LCA 26.3 COLNE VALLEY FLOODPLAIN



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KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Flat, wide lowland floodplain, with very little topographic variation, on alluvium and loamy/clayey floodplain soils, with naturally high groundwater levels.
- Dominated by rough grazing and pasture, interspersed with arable fields and paddocks. Predominantly geometric field patterns, enclosed by low hedgerows.
- Tree cover is sparse, and largely confined to field boundaries. Small ancient woodlands are occasionally found in the north, close to settlement.
- Three small settlements, Denham village, New Denham/Willowbank and Denham Green, are located in the north of the area. Denham has retained a strong historical character with numerous vernacular building. Elsewhere settlement density is low, comprising isolated farmsteads and occasional small nucleated hamlets.
- Gravel extraction has shaped the landscape, with former gravel pits restored into a string of water bodies. A network of meandering rivers and streams, occupy the floodplain, and the River Colne runs largely along the east boundary. These provide a valuable wildlife resource and recreational opportunity.
- Fields are a mix of pre 18th century irregular and 20th century regular enclosures.
- Grade II listed historic parkland located at Denham Place, north of Denham, a late 17th century country house surrounded by an 18th century landscaped park.
- Numerous archaeological remains, including a Roman cemetery, and a number of Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic remains are located within the north of the area, closely associated with Denham.
- Transport corridors cut the landscape including the M25, M40, which have a strong visual and audible influence. Screening earthworks are associated with these in places. Two railway lines also cross the area.
- The area lies within the Colne Valley Regional Park and a well established network of public rights of way exists, including the Colne Valley Way, the Grand Union Canal Walk, the Beeches Way and the South Bucks Way.
- A number of golf courses are located along the floodplain, including Denham Court, within the site of a former 18th century manor house.
- Intermittent long views are afforded across open fields and across the Colne Valley; however views are often interrupted by roads. Extensive views towards this landscape from the adjacent Hillingdon District.
- Roads and pylons fragment an otherwise simple landscape, and generate a discordant and busy character. Away from these areas, pockets of tranquillity remain associated with water and woodland.

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DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: The *Colne Valley Floodplain* lies entirely within the South Bucks District. It occupies the south east of the South Bucks District, crossing administrative boundaries with the adjacent London Borough of Hillingdon to the east and Unitary Authority of Slough to the south. The character area boundaries are largely dictated by the lowland floodplain topography, with landscape gradually rising in the surrounding areas to the north and west.

Landscape Character: Open, flat, low lying floodplain, dominated by rough grazing and rough pasture, with some interspersed fields of arable and paddocks. An extensive network of hedgerows delineates field boundaries, often low and scrubby. Settlement is low density and dispersed throughout much of the character area, with the exception of three relatively compact settlements in the north. Denham village, has a retained a strong historic core, with distinctive vernacular buildings. Former gravel pits have been developed into a string of water bodies, connected by rivers and streams, and the River Colne passes largely along the eastern edge. These areas provide elements of tranquillity within a landscape interrupted by several major roads and pylons. The area lies within the Colne Valley Country Park, and provides recreational features, such as golf courses, footpaths, cycle routes and other activities associated with open water, such as angling and canoeing. Long views are afforded across the open flat landscape, with extensive vistas across the Colne Valley Lakes from the adjacent Hillingdon District in the west.

Geology: A large part of this area is underlain by alluvium, with pockets of river terrace deposits interspersed in the north. The south comprises a mosaic of alluvium, Shepperton Gravel, Taplow Gravel Formation, London Clay Formation, Langley Silt Formation and head. Loamy and clayey floodplain soils largely dominate, with naturally high groundwater levels. In the far north and south, some areas of freely draining, slightly acidic loamy soils are evident.

Topography/Landform: Low lying flat, floodplain topography, with very little topographic variation. A slight increase in topography occurs along the western edge, with adjacent character areas. Topography varies between 30m and 55m.

Hydrology: Hydrological features are an important characteristic of this landscape, comprising the River Colne which runs largely along the eastern edge, the Colne Brook and numerous other small rivers and streams, the Grand Union Canal passing through the south, and several manmade lakes. Extensive gravel and sand extraction has occurred within the valley, with pits subsequently flooded to produce this network of lakes, which are prominent within this character area, particularly in the south.

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Land Use and Settlement: The land is predominately rough grazing and rough pasture, with a small amount of arable cultivation and paddocks. Field enclosures are generally small to medium, and divided by low, scrubby hedgerows.

Three compact settlements are located in the north of the character area, namely; Denham village, which has retained a strong historic character, and the modern settlements of Denham Green and New Denham/Willowbank. Elsewhere settlement is relatively low density and highly dispersed, largely comprising of isolated farmsteads and occasional small nucleated hamlets. The modern urban edge of Uxbridge is prominent along the eastern edge. A number of golf courses are located throughout the character area.

The character area is cut by several busy roads; the M25, M40 and many A roads, which are dominant visual and audible features in the landscape. In some areas, earthwork screening is associated with motorways. Electricity pylons also cut through the landscape, and associated infrastructure such as sub stations are noticeable features. Two railway lines cross the character area in the north and south.

Gravel extraction has had an obvious impact on the landscape of this character area. A distinctive feature of the landscape is the prevalence of large water bodies, which have often been created from former gravel pits. Many of these lakes are now used for recreational purposes, for example angling, canoeing and bird watching. Some gravel extraction continues in the area. The Grand Union Canal also passes through the south of the area.

The character area lies within Colne Valley Park, and has a comprehensive network of footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes through the area, including several long distance footpaths, namely; the Colne Valley Way, the Grand Union Canal Walk, the Beeches Way, and the South Bucks Way. Footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes offer good views across the Colne Valley.

Tree Cover: Tree cover is limited, with very small patches of woodland across the area. The largest area is Nightingale Wood in the north, by Denham Green, which is ancient woodland. Occasional scattered trees can be found within fields, and trees are often used as screening along the M25.

Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape: This is an open and large scale landscape, dominated by rough textured farmland, which generates a simple, consistent land cover. The presence of built development, such as settlement, major road systems and pylons combine to fragment the landscape, and are visually and audibly intrusive. The vertical pylons are especially prominent in such a flat and open landscape. Noise associated with motorways has an impact throughout the area. Water bodies generate a sense of calm, and provide a degree of tranquillity, and the River Colne provides a strong natural character, pools and riffles. Long views are afforded across open flat landscape, with

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occasional long views across the Colne Valley Lakes, and from the adjacent Hillingdon District in the west. Roads sometimes interrupt views.

Biodiversity: The character area is dominated by rough grazing, with occasional arable fields, and very sparse tree cover. Hedgerows often delineate field boundaries, which contribute to the areas biodiversity, but these are often gappy and unmanaged. The string of lakes, ponds and rivers (including the River Colne) through the area provide valuable wetland habitats and an important biodiversity resource. Mid Colne Valley SSSI, in the north of the area, is a large area of beech and hornbeam broadleaved woodland, with significant ornithological interest, specifically the diversity of breeding woodland, wetland birds and winterfowl interest. Priority BAP habitats in this area are, chalk rivers, lowland meadows, and reedbeds. Two area of ancient woodland are locate in the north, which have a rich understorey of flora and fauna.

Historic Environment: The archaeological record shows that there have been a number of sites discovered along the Colne dating from the prehistory to post medieval period. These include Palaeolithic and Mesolithic settlement, Roman cemetery and fields, and pottery kilns found at Denham, dating to the 14th and 17th centuries.

The historic landscape is comprised of a mixture of pre 18 century irregular enclosure, and 20th century regular enclosures. There are two historic parklands that flank the village of Denham; Denham Place, a late 17th century country house surrounded by an 18th century landscaped park; and Denham Court a pre 18th century country house with 19th century alterations. Much of the parkland of Denham Court is now used as a golf course. Denham village has a strong historic core, with many preserved historic buildings, and a strong vernacular character. Buildings are a mixture of brick and timber framing. The majority of modern settlement is concentrated away from the historic core to the south. Also of note is the grade I listed building of the Savay.

Designations:

- Registered Parks and Gardens: Denham Place.
- Scheduled Monuments: Mound with ditch, south of Savay Farm; Two ditches at Thorney.
- Conservation Area: Denham, Uxbridge Lock
- Archaeological Notification Areas: 28 No.
- Priority BAP Habitats: 4 types.
- Biological Notification Sites: 10 No.
- Biodiversity Opportunity Areas: 2 No.
- Local Nature Reserve: 1 No.
- Local Wildlife Sites: 1 No.

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- SSSI: 2 No. Fray's Farm Meadow; Mid Colne Valley.

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are:

- River courses (including the River Colne), and associated ponds and lakes, with their strong ecological and recreational importance. Especially SSSI's and priority BAP habitats.
- The natural setting of the River Colne Valley
- Occasional long views within the area and across the Colne Valley Lakes, including towards this area from the adjacent Hillingdon District.
- Hedgerow field boundaries and scattered trees.
- Ancient woodland and rich understorey and associated flora and fauna
- The public rights of way access and opportunities for recreation, particularly within the Valley.
- The flat landscape and the limited woodland, accentuates the visual sensitivity of the landscape.
- Historic elements, such as parkland, building and historic core of Denham and archaeological features, which are visible reminder of the historic use of land.

Strength of Character/Intactness: This is a landscape of contrast and in places the strength of character and intactness of the *Colne Valley Floodplain* is **weak**, where high levels of human impact, unmanaged fields and boundaries, with gappy hedgerows, reduce the distinctiveness of character. However, pockets of areas with a stronger character and intactness exist throughout, which provide an important natural setting for the River Colne and Colne Lakes.

Strategy/ Vision: To conserve and enhance the character and setting of the Colne Valley. To conserve the floodplain landscape and series of water bodies, valuable ecological, recreational and green infrastructure resource, and elements of historic interest within the valley.

Landscape Guidelines:

- Ensure management of this part of the Colne Valley occurs as part of a wider improvement across the Colne Valley which straddles a number of local planning authorities.
- Monitor water quality in the rivers, lakes and ponds, in order to reduce run off and water pollution from surrounding farmland and roads.
- Manage and protect water bodies and water courses, and enhance biodiversity interest.
- Manage and restore hedgerows, filling in gaps where necessary and seek opportunities to recreate and extend these habitats.

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- Maintain the compact nucleated form of the villages and conserve the historic character of Denham.
- Conserve open views, particularly across the Colne Valley, to and from this area.
- Restrict further incremental development along the floodplain, particularly vertical development, which will impact greatly on the low lying, open character.
- Consider opportunities to minimise traffic noise, and consider further screening/buffering of motorways through sensitive tree planting.
- Protect and ensure good management of public rights of way and improve role of the Colne Valley as key green infrastructure asset.
- Conserve the character, fabric and appearance of historic buildings, particularly within Denham. Prevent inappropriate new development which would compromise the intactness of historic villages or further extend settlement into the rural landscape.
- Conserve historic elements, such as archaeological features and parkland, which provide evidence of past use of the land.
- Enhance areas of degraded landscape through positive restoration plans.

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Open, flat floodplain topography with low hedgerows and occasional scattered trees.



Dominated by rough grazing and pasture. Predominantly geometric field patterns. Electricity pylons cut through the landscape.



Gravel extraction has shaped the landscape, with former gravel pits being restored into water bodies. Providing recreational and ecological benefit.



Denham village has retained a strong historical character with numerous vernacular building, often with red brick building materials.



Grand Union Canal at Denham.