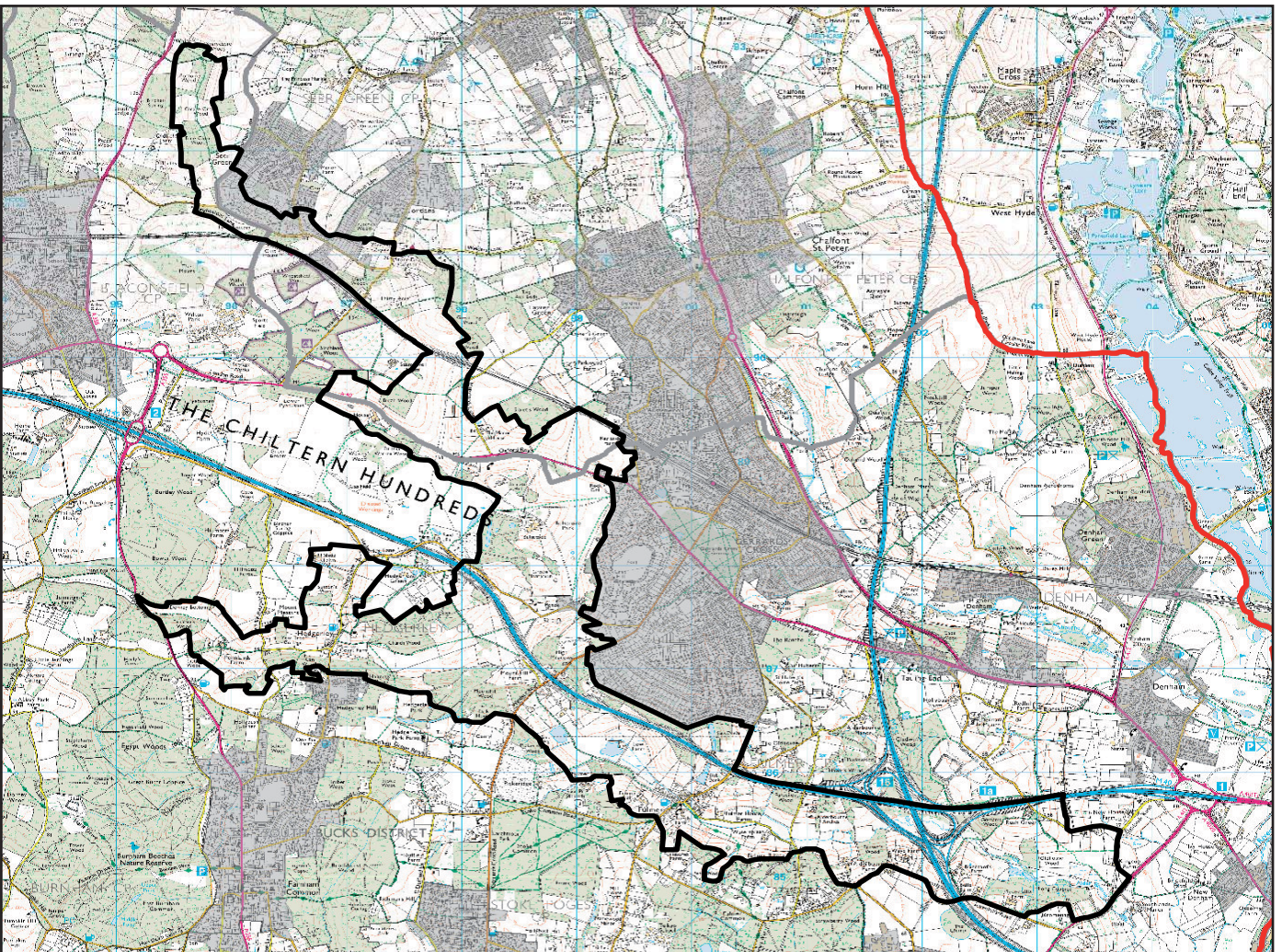
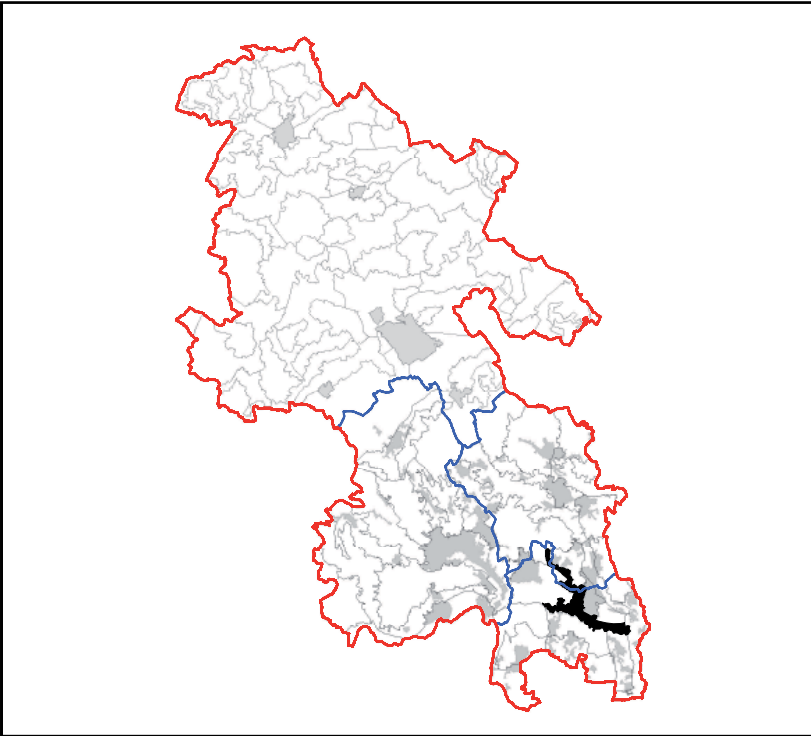


LCA 23.1 ALDER BOURNE RIVER VALLEY



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A small scale river valley, with a broad, shallow main valley landform, and steeper, narrow tributary valleys.
- The narrow, meandering Alder Bourne River, flows through the lower part of the valley in the east, with scattered ponds dispersed along the valley bottom, owing to the slowly permeable, loamy/clayey soils which are found in these parts.
- Land use is largely farmland, with a mix of rough grazing, pasture and paddock. Occasional arable production occupies larger fields.
- Woodland dominates the higher valley sides, enclosing the character area and providing a distinctive visual boundary. Dominated by deciduous, broadleaved woodland, a significant number being ancient woodland.
- An extensive network of hedgerows and hedgerow trees delineate field boundaries.
- Isolated farmsteads and villages are dispersed along the valley floor. Suburban expansion of Seer Green and Jordans encroaches upon the northern extent of the area.
- The historic park and garden of Bulstrode Park (Grade II*), lies within the valley; its parkland has a distinct open character, with scattered trees and woodland blocks.
- A diversity of field enclosures and sizes, largely irregular, pre 18th century fields, but also including small geometric modern paddocks, and occasional larger irregular enclosures, dictated by woodland and indicative of medieval assarts.
- Centrally cut by the M40, which fragments the valley and has a strong visual and audible influence on the landscape, particularly in the east. Away from this, roads have a rural character.
- Views within the valley are often limited, and fragmented by topography, field boundaries and trees. Occasional long views exist from valley sides.
- Woodland enclosure along the valley edge, results in low inter visibility from adjacent character areas.

DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries: The *Alder Bourne River Valley* is situated largely within South Bucks District, with a relatively small proportion of the area in the north located within the Chiltern District. The boundaries of the character area are formed largely by the valley topography with the woodland on the valley tops creating a visual boundary when viewed from the valley floor.

Landscape Character: A small scale river valley, with broad and shallow main valley landform, and narrow, steep tributary valleys. The Alder Bourne River meanders through the lower valley floodplain, with isolated scattered ponds dispersed along its course. Land use is predominately farmland, with a combination of rough grazing, pasture and paddock, and occasional arable cultivation. Field sizes and enclosure vary and are delineated with a strong network of hedgerows and further wooden post and wire sub divisions. Woodland blocks occupy the upper valley slopes, occasionally extending into the valley floor, providing a high level of enclosure and creating an intimate character. Settlement is focussed along the valley floor and is comprised of nucleated and dispersed forms including, isolated farmsteads, occasional small hamlets and village edges. The mix of land uses and land cover create a varied landscape pattern, which is intensified by the major transport route of the M40. This dissects and fragments the landscape, creating local noise and visual intrusion. Tree cover and the enclosed landscape topography, help to provide a sense of mystery and calmness, and maintain a level of rural naturalness, despite the close proximity to the transport corridor. Views along the valley floor are often limited, and enclosed by topography, field boundaries and trees. Valley sides however, present occasional long views across the character area.

Geology: The river cuts down through the clay and chalk with London Clay underlying the upper slopes and Upper Chalk forming the middle section of the valley sides. The valley floor of the two main tributary valleys is comprised of Head (undifferentiated), whilst the main valley floor, is underlain with Alluvium. The western part of the character area (concerning the tributary valleys), is comprised of free draining soils. The main valley floor is overlain with loamy/clayey floodplain soils, with the valley sides largely comprising slowly permeable, seasonally wet loamy/clayey soils.

Topography/Landform: The main part of the valley has relatively gentle valley sides, and a broad valley floor, with the two main tributaries forming slightly steeper valley sides and a narrower valley floor. Small tributaries, which feed into the valley, take on a distinctly steep and narrow form. The landform is therefore quite varied and irregular, often with a strong sense of enclosure. Topographic variation ranges from approximately 45m on the valley floor to 90m in some of the highest reaches.

Hydrology: The Alder Bourne is a winterbourne river which meanders along the valley floor in the main valley. The river forms a narrow and quiet course through the valley floodplain, and is well hidden in the landscape. The main valley floor is

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classified as Environment Agency Flood Zones 2 & 3. Isolated scattered ponds are located along the valley floor in this part of the character area, which are most likely a result of the loamy/clayey, slowly permeable soils.

Land Use and Settlement: The land use is principally mixed farmland, with a combination of rough grazing, pasture and paddock, and occasional arable cultivation. Field sizes vary, with smaller scale fields often located closer to settlement. Hedgerow and hedgerow trees dominate the field divisions, with wooden post and wire fencing more typical of valley floor field boundaries. Many of the fields in the valley bottom have a rough and unmanaged appearance. Woodland clumps and blocks largely occupy the upper slopes, occasionally diffusing into the valley floor.

Bulstrode Park is located centrally in the character area, a landscape estate parkland, demonstrating an open parkland landscape character, with scattered trees and woodland blocks.

Settlement is nucleated and dispersed along the valley floor, comprising isolated farmsteads, occasional small hamlets and village edges. Settlement is relatively low density, although the central part of the character area abuts the urban landscape of Gerrards Cross and Chalfont St Peters.

The valley also acts as a transport corridor, with the M40 running along the northern ridge of the character area, including a large motorway junction in the eastern part of the valley. The A40 also bisects the landscape, and the Chiltern Railway cuts through a small portion of the character area in the north. Elsewhere, accessibility is relatively limited, with fewer, small, rural lanes. A high voltage pylon line passes through the eastern part of the character area. A number of public rights of way cut through the character area, with a small section of the long distance footpath; the Beeches Way, passing through the south of the area. An existing railway line cuts into the character area in the northern tributary.

Tree Cover: Woodland occupies a large proportion of the upper and middle valley slopes. Tree cover is predominated by broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland. Occasional stands of conifer occur. A significant number of ancient woodland are dispersed across the character area, such as, Church Wood, Bower and Burley Wood and Pennlands Wood.

Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape: The woodland blocks and valley topography provide a high level of enclosure and an intimate landscape character. The tree cover also provides a sense of mystery and calmness, and maintains a level of rural naturalness, despite the close proximity to the transport corridor. Woodland cover also delivers a variety of textures and colours.

The M40, however, creates local noise and visual intrusion, and the character of the landscape here, is more open and large scale. This major transport route reduces the perceived naturalness of the landscape. However, away from here, transport routes are small scale and quiet, gently winding through the valley and often enclosed by tall hedgerows and trees.

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The mix of land uses and land cover create a varied landscape pattern, which is intensified by the major transport routes which dissect and fragment the landscape.

Views within the valley floor are often limited, and fragmented by topography, field boundaries and trees. From the valley sides however, occasional long views exist. Inter visibility from adjacent character areas, is relatively low, despite the elevated aspects of these areas, which is largely due to woodland enclosure.

Biodiversity: Improved grassland dominates the valley floor. Scattered copses and a relatively intact hedgerow network, provides important wildlife habitats, enhancing habitat connectivity within a predominately agricultural landscape. Woodland blocks dominate upper valley sides, with some ancient woodland. Common woodland species include oak, ash, beech, birch and sycamore, and these provide important wildlife habitats. Small areas of wetland, and other associated river habitats, provide additional wildlife and biodiversity.

Kingcup Meadows and Oldhouse Wood, an SSSI located in the east of the area, is a purple moor grass and rush pastures habitat, including *Carex disticha* and *Senecio aquaticus*, both rare to the county. Areas of wetland are also found here, with water mint, fen bedstraw and marsh ragwort. Other habitats found in this area include several Priority BAP Habitats; Chalk Rivers, lowland beech and yew woodland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland and wet woodland and a number of biological notification sites. Local wildlife sites are dispersed throughout, and include Bower and Burtley Wood, Gossams Wood and Kiln Wood.

Historic Environment: Historic landscape character comprises a mixture of landscape types with no one form predominating. Enclosures are made up of irregular pre 18th Century enclosures and possible medieval assarted fields, while smaller, modern enclosures of pony paddocks are found adjacent to villages and farms.

Located centrally within the character area is the historic landscape of Bulstrode Park, a late 17th, early 18th century, large, formal gardens and woodland estate, with open undulating landscape and scattered trees, contrasting with blocks of woodland. Bulstrode Park is on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England, (Grade II*),

The historic cores of villages and hamlets contain vernacular buildings, typically of timber framed. These settlements possess a strong historic character. Distinctive churches are often a feature. The villages of Fulmer, Jordans and Hedgerley are designated as Conservation Areas.

A range of archaeological sites occur across the valley including a, medieval pottery, cropmark enclosure, a series of medieval fishpond and a medieval ice house.

Designations:

- Chilterns AONB

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- Registered Parks and Gardens: Bulstrode Park, Grade II*
- Archaeological Notification Site: 11 No.
- Conservation Areas: Fulmer and Hedgerley Village
- Local Wildlife Sites: 7 No.
- SSSI: 1 No. Kingcup Meadows and Oldhouse Wood.
- Priority BAP Habitats: 5 types.
- Biological Notification Site: 21 No.

EVALUATION

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

Potential landscape and visual sensitivities are:

- The woodland cover on the upper slopes, particularly ancient woodland, which provides enclosure, texture, colour and important habitat and biodiversity interest.
- Network of intact hedgerows, which line roads and delineate field boundaries, and provide important ecological and visual connectivity within the agricultural valley landscape.
- The intimate and contained nature of the valley.
- Bulstrode Park, and the characteristic parkland character, of historic significance.
- Variety of field enclosures, which provide time depth of the landscape, including areas of assart.
- The low density of settlement, the dispersed nucleated pattern of villages/hamlets and the strong historical character.
- Some long views from higher ground.
- Small ponds along the lower part of the valley.

Strength of Character/Intactness: The strength of character and intactness of the *Alder Bourne River Valley* is **moderate**. Within this relatively small scale and intimate landscape, and the M40, has a significant impact reducing its strength of character and diminishing its intactness. Many of the fields in the valley bottom have a rough and unmanaged appearance.

<p>Strategy/ Vision: Conserve and manage the mosaic of farmland, woodland and parkland, and maintain a rural character, seeking to reduce the impact of the motorway where appropriate.</p>
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Landscape Guidelines:

- Manage and conserve woodland blocks, particularly ancient woodland.
- Conserve and manage hedgerow boundaries, which provide visual unity and intactness and biodiversity interest.
- Conserve the character setting of the Grade II listed Bulstrode Park.
- Conserve the nucleated form and rural character of villages and hamlets, and maintain the low level of dispersed settlement.
- Conserve the diversity of field patterns, particularly the assarts.
- Conserve small ponds, which are a feature of the lower valley area
- Seek opportunity to reduce visual and audible impact of the M40, through extending woodland planting.

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- Maintain open views from higher valley sides, which contrast the more enclosed areas elsewhere in the area.

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Gently sloping rough pasture, with wooded backdrop.



St Mary the Virgin's Church, Hedgerley, with strong historic character.

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Enclosed winding rural roads.



Parkland landscape at Bulstrode Park.

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Pastures near Hedgerley.

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