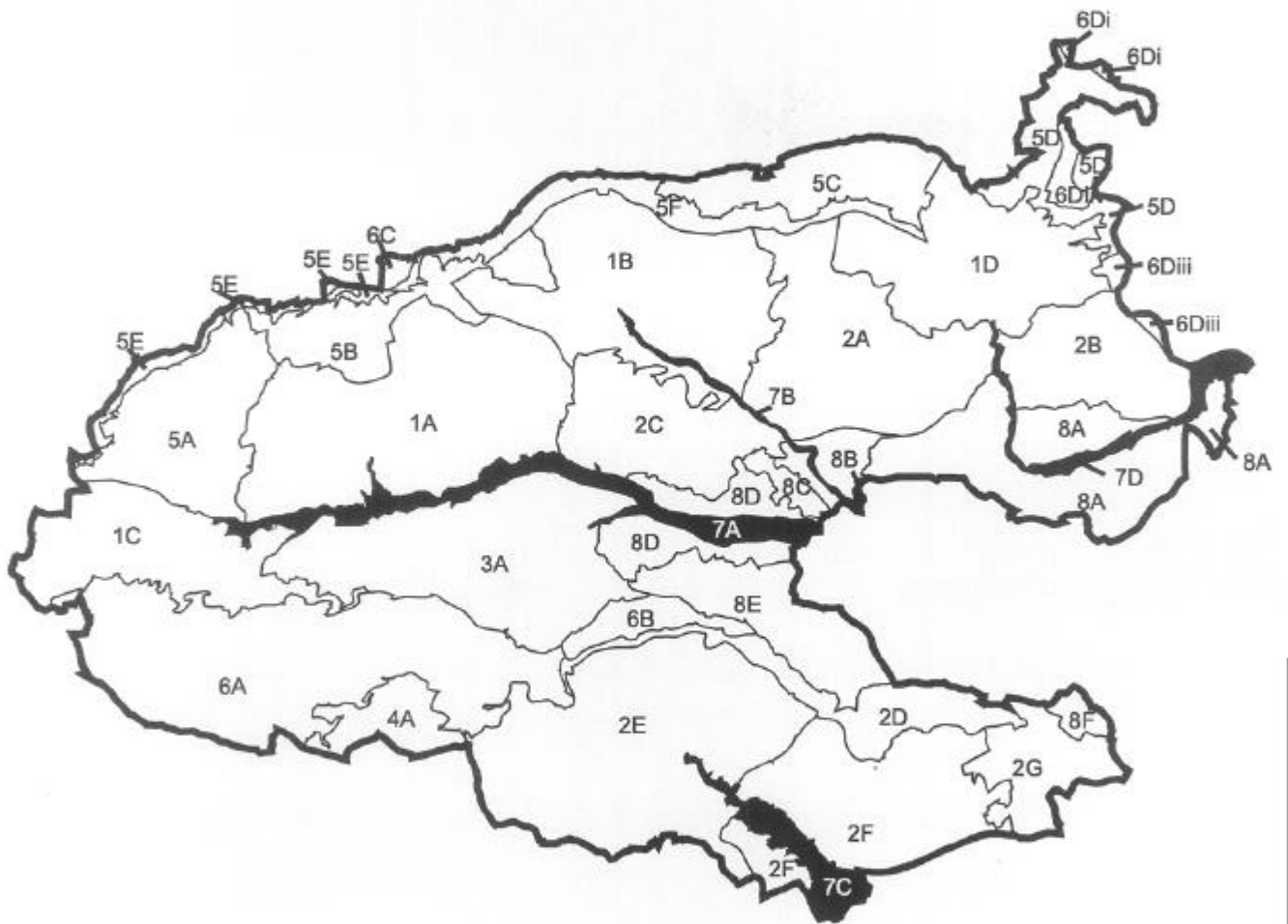


## Landscape Type 7 - River Valleys



## 14. LANDSCAPE TYPE 7: RIVER VALLEYS

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### Location and Boundaries

- 14.1. The River Valleys landscape type incorporates the valleys of four rivers: the Kennet, Lambourn, Bourne and Pang. The general drainage pattern of the area is to the east, determined by the Thames Basin, into which the rivers ultimately flow. The Lambourn joins the Kennet at Newbury, and the Pang flows directly to the Thames at Pangbourne on the border of the AONB. The exception is the River Bourne, which drains southwards to the Test Valley. Within the AONB there are several other minor river valleys such as the Og, plus the Bourne and upper part of the Salisbury Avon in the Vale of Pewsey. The chalk upland is also cut by numerous dry valleys, which sometimes contain ephemeral 'winterbournes'. These minor valleys have not been identified separately as they are considered to be a feature and integral part of the character of the surrounding landscape type.
- 14.2. The boundaries of the River Valleys have been defined topographically. Although all the valleys drain a much wider part of the surrounding area, the immediate river corridor represents a very distinct change in character (a green pastoral valley floor compared to the rolling open arable upper valleys sides). For this reason the boundaries of the river valleys identify a relatively narrow corridor comprising the floodplain and immediate valley sides. The boundaries are usually defined by a physical feature, often a road that follows the first contour above winter flooding level.

### Overview

*The rivers valleys, which incise the chalk uplands of the North Wessex Downs, form very distinct linear landscapes characterised by a rich mix of grazed pastures, water meadows, wetland and woodland. The valleys are enclosed by steeply rising slopes, which limit vistas and create an intimate and enclosed character.*

*Typically, the river valleys have short, steep sides enclosing a narrow, flat alluvial flood plain. The spring-fed chalk streams and rivers with their characteristically clear, fast flowing waters are one of the most distinctive and important habitats of the North Wessex Downs, supporting a large number of rare plant and animal species. Their high ecological value is reflected in a large number of designated sites including SSSI and several candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC). The water and surrounding seasonal flood meadows, grazed pastures, fen, marsh, damp woodlands and lines of pollarded willow create a diverse texture and structure. Ancient woodlands and parklands are distinctive historic features.*

*The green pastures along the narrow valley floors are in strong contrast to the expansive arable fields that characterise the downs. These areas are, nevertheless, closely connected with the surrounding uplands, as evidenced by the numerous roads and lanes that climb the valley sides, perpendicular to the river course. The valleys have long been a focus for occupation, and this is reflected in a range of archaeological sites and artefacts dating from the prehistoric period. One the most notable historic features is the floated water meadows, which by the later 17th century were commonplace in most valleys in the North Wessex Downs. The meadows were carefully constructed with a network of channels and drains to cover the surface with a shallow, rapidly moving sheet of water during the winter, which*

*protected the grass from frost and stimulated early growth. Other distinctive features relating to past management include watercress beds, some of which are still operational and remnants of water mill systems including mill leats and pools.*

*Historically, settlement was concentrated in the valley and this remains the dominant pattern today. Linear and nucleated villages are characteristically located along a road on the first contour above the winter flood level on the south facing side of the valley. The villages have considerable vernacular charm and appeal and include tiny hamlets clustered around a church, many small villages and, in the Kennet Valley, the two market towns of Marlborough and Hungerford. The valleys have long formed important communications routes cutting through the uplands, with rail and road corridors often forming dominant features.*

#### **Key Characteristics**

- the river valleys incised into the chalk uplands are one of the defining features of the AONB landscape with enclosure, pastoral land cover and settlement contrasting strongly with the 'remote' open arable uplands;
- typically the valleys have short, relatively steep sides with a narrow, flat floodplain;
- clear fast flowing waters and important chalk river habitats;
- a diverse and rich mosaic of land cover and habitats including wet woodlands, former 'floated' water meadows, watercress beds, grazed pasture and calcareous fen;
- field pattern of characteristically small hedged enclosures which may reflect medieval strips and furlongs;
- riparian woodlands, lines of poplar along ditches and willow pollards are distinctive features;
- concentration of settlement including tiny hamlets clustered around a church, many small villages and the two market towns of Marlborough and Hungerford;
- significant recreational opportunities including several promoted linear routes as well as the Kennet and Avon Canal which provide opportunities for boat trips and watersports. The chalk rivers are a prime location for salmon fishing;
- the river valleys have been a focus for occupation reflected in the range of archaeological sites and artefacts from the prehistoric period onwards. Continuity of settlement including numerous manors and villages, many of which are recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086;
- attractive villages plus accessibility makes the river valleys a popular location, reflected in a considerable population increase. Many settlements are now predominantly 'commuter villages', with associated traffic impacts on the rural lane network.

### **Physical Influences**

- 14.3. **Geology and Soils:** The rivers all cut into the chalk, flowing on a chalk base, with gravels and alluvium deposits confined to a narrow belt on the valley floor.
- 14.4. **Landform:** The chalk river valley landform typically has short relatively steep sides enclosing a narrow flat floodplain, forming a distinct linear landscape type.

### **Biodiversity**

- 14.5. The spring fed streams and rivers, which incise the chalk upland are extremely rich in plant and animal communities, deriving, in part, from the high-quality of the base-rich water which is naturally clear and fast flowing. The rivers irrigate the valley

floodplain to create a rich mosaic of associated wetland habitats including fens, water meadows, damp pasture, carr and wet woodland. The high ecological importance of the river valley landscape type is reflected in the large number of designated sites including SSSI and several candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). The riparian copses and linear woodland, in combination with the hedgerows, provide a valuable habitat network throughout the whole of the valley and link into the designated sites.

## Historic Environment

- 14.6. **A Focus for Occupation and Communication:** River valleys have long been a focus for occupation, partly because of the range of resources they supply (for example, fish, fowl, rich alluvial deposits, and characteristic fast-flowing clear streams) and this is reflected in the range of archaeological sites and artefacts from the prehistoric period onwards.
- 14.7. Historically, settlement was concentrated in the river valleys, close to the water supply is, as reflected in the numerous manors and villages, many of which are recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086.
- 14.8. The structure of the land also defines communication patterns. The Kennet, Lambourn, Pang and Thames Valley which drain the downlands in the north of the AONB, traditionally look towards Reading and London, ultimately leading to Europe. The Kennet Valley historically was a key east-west communication corridor, formalised by the building of the London to Bath Roman road through it and, subsequently, by the building of the Kennet and Avon canal in the nineteenth century, linking Bristol to London. By contrast, the Hampshire chalklands, drained by the Bourne, look naturally towards the Solent and the English Channel.
- 14.9. **Field patterns:** The fields within the river valleys are characteristically small with sinuous boundaries, which may reflect the shape of former medieval strips and furlongs.
- 14.10. **Watermeadows, Mills and Watercress Beds:** The fast flowing chalk streams provided ideal conditions for creating water meadows and by the later seventeenth century water meadows were commonplace in most valleys within the AONB. These meadows were carefully constructed with a network of channels and drains to cover the surface of the meadow with a shallow rapidly moving sheet of water during the winter, which protected the grass from frost and stimulated early growth providing feed for lambs and ewes. Other distinctive features relating to past management include watercress beds (some still operational) and remnants of mill systems including leats and pools.

## Settlement and Building Character

- 14.11. The river valleys contain a concentration of settlement, following a very distinctive pattern. Both nucleated and linear villages occur at regular intervals along the valley sides, at a height just above the winter flood level, frequently on south facing slopes - as exemplified in the Kennet Valley. The settlements include tiny hamlets clustered around a church, many small villages and the two market towns of Marlborough and Hungerford. This concentration of settlement within the valleys, in contrast to the

almost uninhabited Open Downland, is one of the defining characteristics of the AONB.

## Recreation Character

- 14.12. The River Valleys provide many opportunities for walking, riding and cycling along the numerous Public Rights of Way, including several promoted linear routes including Walks from Pangbourne Station, the Lambourn Valley Way, the Test Valley Way and the canal tow path along the Kennet and Avon Canal. The canal and rivers also provide opportunities for boat trips, watersports (canoeing) and fishing. The chalk rivers provide a prime location for salmon fishing.

## Social and Economic Characteristics

- 14.13. The river valleys are distinguished by the presence of attractive settlements, which vary considerably in size, from the market town of Marlborough to smaller villages and hamlets. Parishes within the River Valleys have all increased in population since 1981, some quite considerably. Marlborough, for example, has experienced a significant increase in population of almost 40%. The Kennet Valley and the Lambourn Valley are also an increasingly popular place to live, with the Motorway (M4) enhancing accessibility.
- 14.14. The level of services available within parishes varies considerably. Ramsbury, for example, in the Kennet Valley, has a relatively high population and has a range of services. In contrast, St Mary Bourne in the Test Valley is poorly serviced and its parishioners must be heavily reliant upon the use of the car to get to facilities in the neighbouring town of Andover. The significant market town of Marlborough serves not only its resident population but also those in villages on its peripheral edge and a wider catchment, within the Downs. This concentration of service provision in the market towns further increases reliance on transport (usually by private car) resulting in congestion and traffic concerns in the valleys and surrounding areas. The valleys have long been important communication routes, however high traffic levels and road improvements are having an impact on the vernacular charm and appeal of the area.

## Key Issues

- in the past, **low flows** in the chalk rivers has been a major cause for concern, particularly with increased abstraction requirements. More recently **flooding** within the valleys has been an issue for local residents;
- maintenance of **high water quality** in the streams and rivers, particularly by the nutrient pollution from riverside arable land plus road and urban run off;
- intensification in farming leading to **loss of environmental assets** particularly **drainage and improvement of permanent pasture** and water meadows on the floodplain and loss of riparian vegetation;
- potential changes in farming practices - including loss of livestock with some remaining valley pastures and meadows no longer being grazed with consequential **scrub encroachment**;

- maintenance of traditional valley features including **watercress beds** and historic features - **water meadow systems, mills and leats**;
- **loss of hedgerows boundaries** and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus **poor management** of remaining hedgerows;
- **climate change** - potential impacts including increased abstraction and low flows, as well as autumn/winter flooding, concentrated levels of water pollution and drying out of wetland habitats. Potential impacts on woodland and parkland include increases in non native species and tree loss (drought/windthrow);
- localised intrusion of **roads (M4 and A4), overhead power lines and pylons** all of which are highly visible in the context of the small scale enclosed, intimate valley landscape;
- **increased traffic on the road network**, plus improvements to the lanes including kerbing, widening, signing and new river crossings which, in places create a more 'urban' character;
- potential future demand for **aggregate extraction** altering the form and character of the valleys;
- **development pressures**, particularly for new housing affect the character of the small settlements - discrete villages may appear to coalesce along the valley side roads;
- **loss of rural tranquillity**, resulting from the combination of the above factors.

## Key Management Requirements

14.15. The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the River Valley landscapes with their intimate, pastoral and tranquil character. This includes:

- the chalk streams and rivers with their characteristically clear, fast-flowing waters;
- the adjacent seasonal flood meadows, grazed pastures, fen, marsh, damp woodlands and historic parklands.

14.16. The small-scale character of the valleys mean that they are potentially sensitive to any development, including large scale farm buildings, new housing and communication infrastructure. The aim should be to maintain the distinctive pattern of settlement with discrete villages, hamlets and two market towns.

## Character Areas

14.17. The River Valleys landscape type is divided into four geographic character areas. These comprise.

7A: Kennet Valley

7B: Lambourn Valley

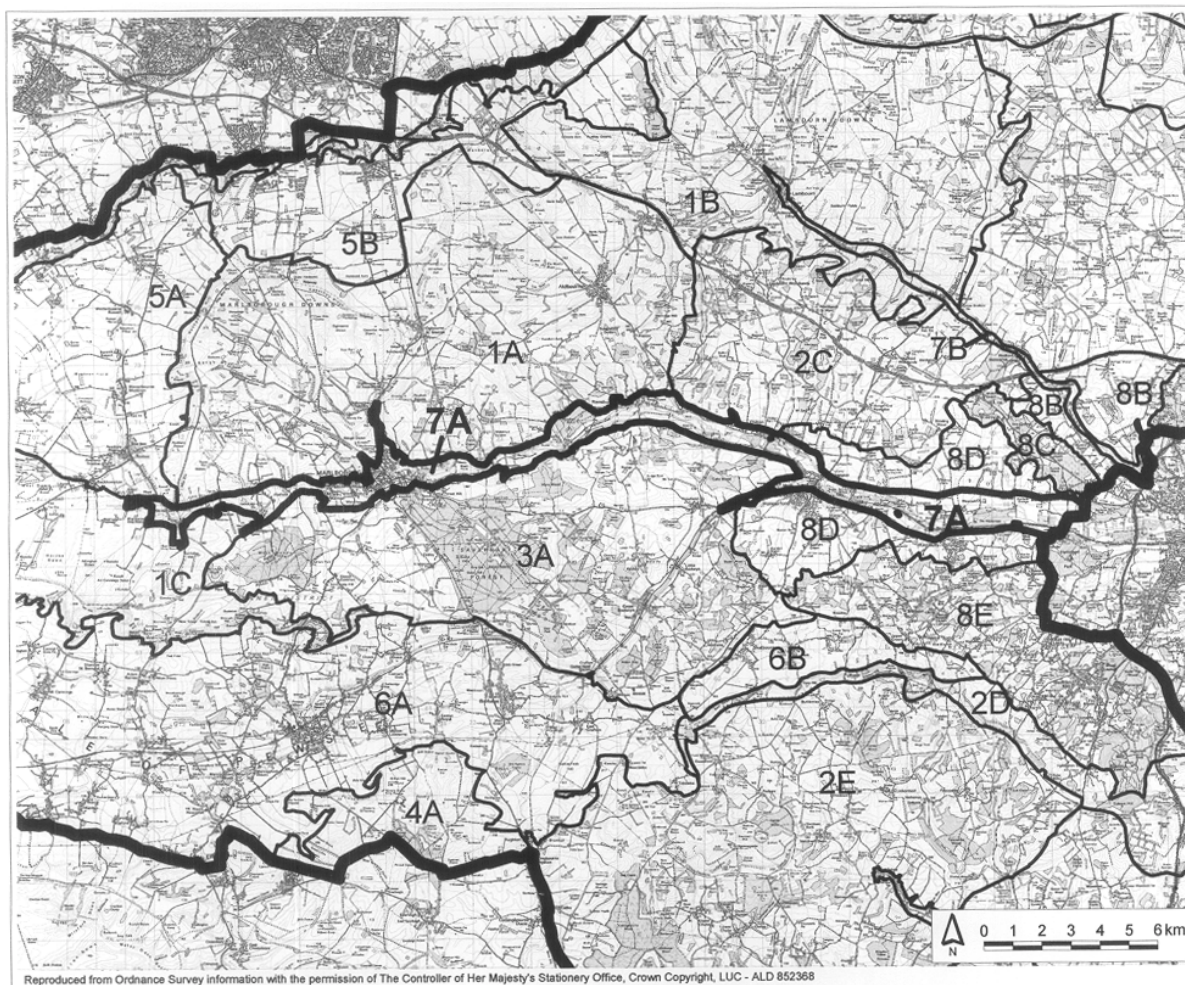
7C: Bourne Valley

## 7D: Pang Valley

(Note: the upper reaches of the Salisbury Avon are included in the Vale of Pewsey character area 6A).

## CHARACTER AREA 7A: KENNET VALLEY

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- 3.18. **Location and Boundaries:** The Kennet Valley drains the majority of the North Wessex Downs and dissects the AONB, virtually dividing it into two halves. The river rises on the chalk near Avebury and flows eastwards to the AONB boundary west of Newbury. The boundaries are defined topographically and generally relate to the mid valley sides, frequently following the line of roads or lanes. Occasionally, the boundaries of the character area have been widened to include the full extent of settlements that have developed within the valley, typically at bridging or fording points, such as at Marlborough and Ramsbury.



## Landscape Character Description

- 14.19. A distinct topographic unit, the Kennet Valley has a narrow valley floor, strongly enclosed by the gentle, but well defined chalk sides widening out to a more open form beyond Hungerford. Landscape character changes distinctly along the length of the valley, from a small spring fed watercourse set within the open chalk landscape near Avebury, to a more substantial river flowing through water meadows, woodland and valley floor pasture between Marlborough and Hungerford. East of Hungerford the valley opens out and the river flows through a larger scale lowland landscape. In the upper reaches of the river, archaeological monuments associated with Avebury World Heritage Site (WHS), including The Sanctuary stone circle, are a prominent feature.
- 14.20. The valley floor is dominated by pasture particularly in its upper length, with the pasture intermixed with arable fields east of Hungerford. Along the whole length, the valley sides are generally under arable cultivation creating a definite and visible landscape boundary mid slope above the floodplain. The diverse vegetation creates a varied and attractive landscape structure with tracts of lush floodplain pasture, marsh and reedbeds. Vertical elements include lines of willow pollards and poplars plus hedgerows enclosing the fields and stands of regenerating alder, birch and oak along the river banks. East of Marlborough the valley is particularly well wooded, with sinuous belts of woodland lining the valley sides and some larger broadleaved woodland blocks on the valley floor. Further diversity is provided by the historic parklands, which are a feature of the middle section of the valley and include Ramsbury Manor, Chilton Foliat and Littlecote.
- 14.21. The River Kennet is an important chalk river habitat and for much of its length downstream from Marlborough is designated as a SSSI. It is especially species rich, having the highest average number of species per site surveyed of any other lowland river in Britain. The rich biodiversity of the floodplain is reflected in the four SSSI sites and its status (with the floodplain of the River Lambourn) as a candidate SAC. Of particular significance are the Kennet Valley Alderwoods which display a complete transition from open water through swamp to relatively dry woodland; a rare occurrence in Europe. There are, in addition, numerous local wildlife heritage sites, representing both wetland and wet woodland habitats. The seasonal flood meadows, riparian woodlands and pastures are an important plant habitat and refuge for a number of rare species.
- 14.22. Providing a main east-west communications corridor, the route of the A4 road follows the valley from its source to Marlborough. To the east of Hungerford the river has been modified by the construction of the Kennet and Avon Canal, which in some places merges with the river as a single water channel. This stretch of the valley is also shared with the railway line. A minor road set above the winter flood level follows the valley in its upper reaches. It is frequently joined by roads at right angles descending from the downs and across the valley, as at Stitchcombe and Axford, with the brick bridge crossings being a distinctive feature.
- 14.23. Attractive settlements are located along the whole valley, typically on the south facing valley side. Many illustrate a long continuity of settlement including those of Saxon and

Medieval origins. They include tiny hamlets (Fyfield, Stitchcombe, Axford, Knighton, Chiton Foliat), villages (Manton, Ramsbury, Mildenhall, Kintbury) and the busy market towns of Marlborough and Hungerford. Originally nucleated near bridging or fording points, just above the valley floor, some now extend as linear settlements along the valley or expanding out onto the valley sides as at Marlborough, Ramsbury and Hungerford. Ramsbury is a particularly attractive linear village settlement. Building materials generally reflect the local geology, with brick/flint and clay tile dominating east of Marlborough, and sarsen stone and brick dominating to the west. Mills and churches are distinctive built features within the valley.

- 14.24. Overall, the valley has an intimate, pastoral, riparian character, with attractive nucleated valley settlements and a rich ecological resource.

#### **Key Characteristics**

- relatively steep sides and a narrow valley floor providing a strong sense of enclosure in its upper reaches, broadening out to a wider lowland landscape east of Hungerford;
- valley floor dominated by pasture, although east of Hungerford pasture is intermixed with arable fields. Valleys sides are generally under arable cultivation;
- diverse vegetation including lush floodplain pasture, marsh and reedbeds, lines of willow pollards and poplars;
- varied field pattern including some small fields with sinuous boundaries near Overton, which may date to Saxon enclosure. Boundaries are formed by hedgerows;
- remnants of valley floor floated water meadows;
- historic parklands, based on medieval sites, are a particular feature of the middle section of the valley;
- sinuous belts of woodland line the valley sides and some larger broadleaved woodland blocks on the valley floor. More wooded character east of Marlborough;
- an important lowland chalk river - much of the length downstream from Marlborough is designated as a SSSI. Many important wetland and woodland habitats within the wider valley which includes four SSSI;
- many archaeological features, including the Sanctuary (part of the Avebury monument complex). Continuity of settlement e.g. Saxon settlement at Marlborough;
- the Kennet and Avon Canal is a dominant feature merging with the river east of Hungerford and includes industrial archaeological sites (sluices, locks and warehouses etc.) and World War II military structures;
- many attractive settlements of detached houses are located at regular intervals along the whole length of the valley, typically on the south facing side and range from tiny hamlets to the two market towns;
- varied built form reflects the local geology including brick/flint and clay tile dominating the area east of Marlborough, and sarsen stone and brick dominating the west. Mills and churches are a distinctive landmark and feature;
- overall, an intimate, pastoral rural valley character.

## Physical Influences

- 14.25. The Kennet Valley cuts through the chalk upland forming a distinct topographical unit. The river starts as minor stream in the chalk near Avebury at approximately 155m and flows along a gentle gradient to approximately 85m at the eastern AONB boundary. It has a smooth valley form, with relatively steep sides and a narrow valley floor, providing a strong sense of enclosure in its upper reaches and broadening out to a more open lowland landscape east of Hungerford. Alluvium and gravel deposits line the valley floor along its entire length.

## Historic Environment

- 14.26. **Prehistoric Landscape:** Archaeological evidence demonstrates that humans have exploited the Kennet valley for at least 10,000 years. However, prominent remains date from the Neolithic period and include The Sanctuary - the stone circle that the Beckhampton Avenue leads to - which must be considered in relation to the rest of the Avebury monument complex (character area 5A).
- 14.27. The Marlborough Mound, in the grounds of Marlborough College, was a motte for a Norman motte and bailey castle, but it has been suggested that this may have reused or been built over a Neolithic mound that may have been a smaller version of Silbury Hill. Several Bronze Age round barrows lie at the head of the Kennet valley near The Sanctuary stone circle, and to the east on the western outskirts of Speen and Newbury. Linear earthworks on and around Postern Hill to the south of Marlborough may be later prehistoric land divisions.
- 14.28. **Saxon Settlement:** Villages tend to cluster in sheltered sites above the floodplain and tend to be dominated by a manor house and church. Several, such as Overton and Marlborough, appear to have Saxon origins. Ramsbury is first documented in the tenth century as a Saxon bishopric, and may have been the principal administrative centre in the area at the time. Some surviving bank and ditch earthworks, and some of the more sinuous modern field boundaries represent Saxon estate boundaries, such as those between the parishes of East and West Overton, once belonging to separate Saxon estates. East Overton has since been absorbed into West Overton, which used to be located further to the west.
- 14.29. **Medieval Settlement and Land Use:** Ramsbury Manor and Littlecote are medieval sites and earthworks of medieval date which survive on the northern edge of Marlborough. From the medieval period onwards mills, water meadows and various drainage channels were constructed to utilise, improve or control water-flow. At West Overton, the earthworks of a managed watermeadow system, which probably originated in the seventeenth century, are still visible
- 14.30. **The Kennet and Avon Canal:** Just downstream and to the east of Hungerford, the River Kennet joins the Kennet and Avon Canal (opened in 1811). Along both forks of this area there are sluices, lock gates, warehouses and other industrial archaeological sites from the nineteenth century. There are also a number of World War II military structures along the canal as it was an important 'stop line' to prevent an invading

German army from pushing further north into England. The Great Western Railway, which opened in 1847, is a further important industrial feature.

## Biodiversity

- 14.31. The Kennet Valley is characterised by a number of wetland sites. It has retained a number of important sites, including 5 SSSI's, two of which, namely the Kennet and Lambourn floodplain (SSSI), and the Kennet Valley Alderwoods (SSSI) have been considered for SAC status. The area also contains 35 sites with non-statutory designation, including an old railway line, around 14 grasslands, 13 wetlands and 7 woodlands.
- 14.32. The Kennet Valley Alderwoods (SSSI) is composed of two woodlands, the Wilderness and part of Ryott's Plantation. It supports a large proportion of the plant species associated with this woodland type and is particularly notable for exhibiting the complete transition from open water to swamp, and through to wet and dry woodland.
- 14.33. The 3 remaining SSSI's are Chilton Foliat Meadows (SSSI), the River Kennet (SSSI) and Freeman's Marsh (SSSI). Chilton Foliat Meadows (SSSI) comprises an extensive system of wet neutral meadows, watercourses, tall fen vegetation and scrub. These meadows are in the most part managed traditionally as hay meadows, and support a variety of birds, including high numbers of breeding waders. The meadows are also rich in plants species and more than 10 species of sedge can be found, including the flea sedge (*Carex pulicaris*), and tawny sedge (*C. hostiana*).

## Key Issues

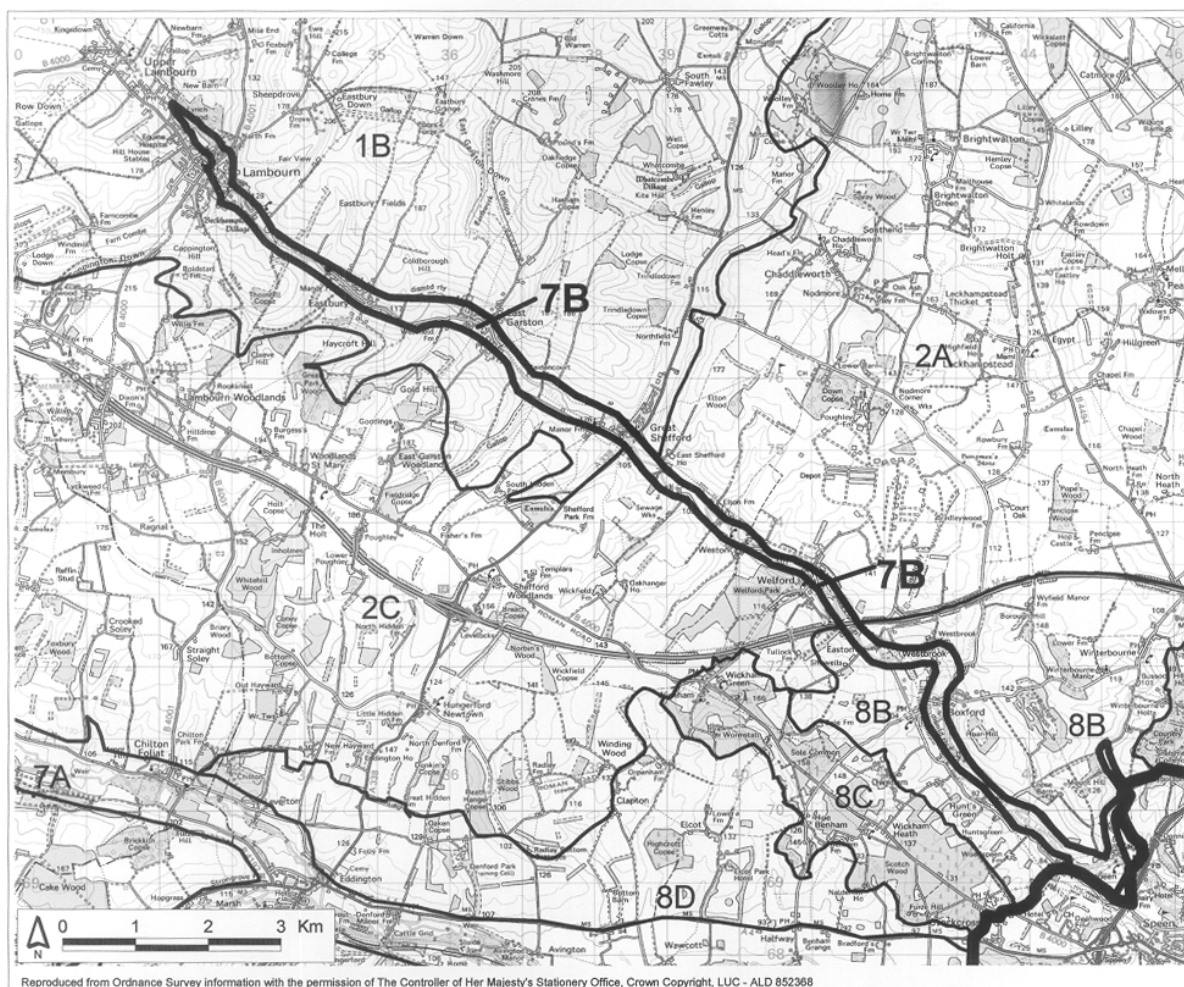
- **maintenance of water quality and flows.** More recently impact of localised flooding has been an issue for local residents;
- intensification in farming leading to **loss of environmental assets** particularly drainage and improvement of permanent pasture and water meadows on the floodplain and loss of riparian vegetation;
- potential changes in farming practices including loss of livestock, with some remaining valley pastures and meadows no longer being grazed resulting in **scrub encroachment**;
- maintenance of **historic features** including water meadow systems, mills and leats and **industrial features** associated with the **Kennet and Avon Canal** and Great Western railway;
- **loss of hedgerow boundaries** and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus **poor management** of remaining hedgerows;
- localised **intrusion** of roads (A4) and rail line;
- **increased traffic on the road network**, plus improvements to the lanes including kerbing, widening, signing and new river crossings which, in places create a more 'urban' character;

- **development pressures**, particularly for new housing on the edge of Marlborough and other smaller valley settlements. Sensitivity of narrow, intimate scale valley to any form of large scale development;
- management and enhancement of **historic parkland** and estate landscapes.

## Key Management Requirements

- 14.34. The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the tranquil, intimate character of the Kennet Valley. This will include maintenance of key features including permanent pasture, wet grassland and riparian woodlands and historic features associated with the mills and water meadows, historic parklands and industrial archaeology associated with the Kennet and Avon Canal. There are opportunities for restoration of waterside pastures, replanting and management of hedgerows and limited native tree planting/regeneration.
- 14.35. The small-scale intimate character of the Kennet Valley is potentially sensitive to any new development. The aim should be to maintain the distinctive pattern of settlement, with discrete villages characteristically located along a road on the first contour above the winter flood level.

## CHARACTER AREA 7B: LAMBOURN VALLEY



- 3.36. **Location and Boundaries:** The River Lambourn, a tributary of the Kennet, rises in the Lambourn Downs and flows south eastwards to the AONB boundary at Newbury. The boundaries are defined topographically, and generally follow the contour along the top of the immediate valley sides enclosing the floodplain. The river itself drains a much wider area of the surrounding chalk uplands within which land slopes gently down to the river. The valley widens out at the head, at the village of Lambourn, beyond which it forms a dramatic dry valley cutting into the chalk. This higher area is subsumed within the adjacent landscape type, namely the Open Downland of Lambourn Downs (1B).

## Landscape Character Description

- 14.37. The River Lambourn flows within a narrow and visually contained valley, forming a small scale landscape of great interest, intimacy and detail within the context of the surrounding open chalk downland. Known as the 'Valley of the Racehorse' the race horse training industry is prominent, manifest in a very distinctive landscape of stables, stud farms and a series of horse paddocks enclosed within white-painted wooden rails. In addition to training the area supports many associated industries creating a distinct local economy and community.
- 14.38. In the upper part of the valley, above Great Shefford, the River Lambourn flows through a confined narrow corridor with mainly pasture and some arable landuse. It is a small scale landscape with fields bounded by fences or hedgerows, often in poor condition. South of Great Shefford the valley form is slightly wider and the river flows in a meandering and braided channel through a mosaic of former water meadows, cattle grazed wet pastures and broadleaved woodlands. Ornamental parkland at Great Shefford, Woodspeen and Welford is an important feature. The river itself is small scale and is not always evident on the valley floor, although lines of pollarded willow signal its course. Throughout its length areas of marsh and scrub are present creating a diverse landscape texture and structure contributing to the sense of enclosure and intimacy.
- 14.39. The River Lambourn is a classic example of a lowland chalk river, with the whole of the valley forming a rich ecological resource. The river and the floodplain (with the floodplain of the Kennet) are both candidate SACs. Along the wider lower reaches of the valley are Easton Mill and Boxford Water Meadows. These comprise flood pastures and disused water meadows, which would have been traditionally managed as 'floated' meadows with controlled flooding and secondary channels to encourage early sward growth for grazing. Numerous channels, weirs and mill pools along the valley floor indicate former water management practices.
- 14.40. The valley is characterised by the string of attractive linear settlements along the valley. These include Lambourn at the head of the valley, with the smaller and regularly spaced villages of Eastbury, East Garston, and Great Shefford. Below Great Shefford the villages are not as frequent but include Weston, Westbrook, Boxford and Bagnor. Occasional farmsteads are scattered through the lower part of the valley. Building materials include red brick, stone, flint and chalk with numerous timber framed buildings. Red clay tile is the most common roofing material, although there are also some thatched and slate roofs. Minor roads that run along the valley floor, crossing the river at several points, serve the villages. The M4 crosses the valley, south of Welford, on an embankment. This infrastructure is difficult to assimilate within the small-scale valley landscape, however, the visual and noise impacts are limited to an extent by the abundant tree cover. The Lambourn Valley Way, partly following the line of a dismantled railway, runs along the entire length of the valley, which provides an opportunity to explore the local detail and character of this attractive rural, valley landscape.

### Key Characteristics

- the river, rising as a spring on the chalk uplands, flows through a narrow corridor along a gentle gradient to the Kennet. The valley sides form a close horizon, a contained visual setting and a strong sense of enclosure;
- mix of arable and pasture in the upper valley. South of Great Shefford the river meanders through a mosaic of former water meadows, cattle grazed wet pastures and broadleaved woodlands;
- varied field pattern including small fields with sinuous boundaries that may date to the Saxon period plus informal and later formal enclosures;
- large manor houses and manor farms with ornamental parkland are a feature;
- the Lambourn with its swift, clear flowing waters is a classic example of a lowland chalk river with valuable wetland habitats including flood pastures and water meadows;
- continuity of settlement with many villages, e.g. Lambourn, having Saxon origins. Medieval mills and weirs survive along the river e.g. at Weston. Remnant floated meadows are also a feature;
- regular spacing of attractive linear settlements along the valley with detached houses. Building materials include red brick, stone, flint and chalk with numerous timber framed buildings. Red clay tile is the most common roofing material with some thatched and slate roofs;
- Lambourn Valley Way, following the line of a dismantled railway provides an opportunity to explore the local detail and character of the valley;
- strong associations with the race horse training industry creating a very distinctive local landscape;
- overall, an attractive quiet river valley landscape.

## Physical Influences

- 14.41. Rising as a chalk spring at 152 m at Lynch Wood, the River Lambourn cuts through the chalk, and flows through a narrow corridor south-eastwards along a relatively gentle gradient to join the Kennet at Newbury. Drift deposits of chalk drift plus small amounts of gravel and alluvial deposits overlie the valley floor. The valley sides form a close horizon and a contained visual setting, and a strong sense of enclosure. In its lower length, south of Great Shefford, the valley widens slightly with the river flowing within a meandering and braided channel.

## Historic Environment

- 14.42. **Saxon Settlement:** The main settlement of Lambourn, at the head of the valley, is first documented in a will made by King Alfred around 888 AD, and may have been a royal residence. The oval street plan at the heart of Lambourn, and the possible Saxon origins of the church on the edge of this area, suggest that this settlement began as a Saxon *burh* or defended settlement. The manor house at Lambourn was also located within this oval area.
- 14.43. **Medieval Settlement and Land Use:** Lambourn expanded during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to the outside of its Saxon core, and to the south the streets and property boundaries are typical burgage plots. Some earthworks survive to the north of



the town centre, but medieval almshouses adjacent to the churchyard were rebuilt in the nineteenth century. Other medieval remains in the Lambourn Valley include the deserted medieval village of Bockhampton, and the moated manor site at East Shefford House. There would have been mills and weirs along the River Lambourn, some of which survive today, such as the mill at Weston. Water meadows and fish traps would have been important. Manor houses and churches located at regular intervals along the Lambourn Valley such as at Manor Farm, Welford and Boxford suggest that parishes were laid out approximately at right angles to the river.

- 14.44. **Field Patterns:** Some of the more sinuous fields orientated at right angles to the river may reflect medieval boundaries. Occupants of the valley settlements almost certainly exploited the chalk downland on the valley sides for agriculture and to provide grazing for their stock. Medieval and open field systems and downland were largely replaced by enclosure through informal means during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and later by Parliamentary enclosure.

## Biodiversity

- 14.45. Within the boundaries of the Lambourn Valley Character Area there are 5 SSSI's, and 12 sites with non-statutory designation. The majority of these sites support wetland communities, but there are also 8 locally important grassland sites with non-statutory designation.
- 14.46. The River Lambourn (SSSI) is particularly notable as it has been proposed as a Special Area for Conservation (pSAC), because of the presence of good populations of bullhead (*Cottus gobio*) and brook lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*), two fish both of which are rare / threatened in a European context. This River supports one of Britain's best examples of floating vegetation dominated by water crow-foots (*Ranunculus* section *Batrachium*).
- 14.47. The Kennet and Lambourn floodplain (SSSI) is a good example of a nationally important wetland area, and is particularly notable for supporting one of the most extensive known populations of Desmoulins' whorl snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*) in the UK. It is one of two sites selected to represent the species in the southwestern part of its range.
- 14.48. The Lambourn Valley also contains part of the River Lambourn (SSSI), Boxford chalk pit (SSSI), Easton Farm Meadow (SSSI), Boxford Water Meadows (SSSI)

## Key Issues

- **maintenance of water quality and flows.** More recently the impact of localised flooding within the valleys has been an issue for local residents;
- intensification in farming leading to **loss of environmental assets** particularly drainage and improvement of permanent pasture and water meadows on the floodplain and loss of riparian vegetation;
- potential changes in farming practices including **loss of livestock** with scrub encroachment on some valley pastures. Many areas being managed as horse paddocks with associated visual impacts;

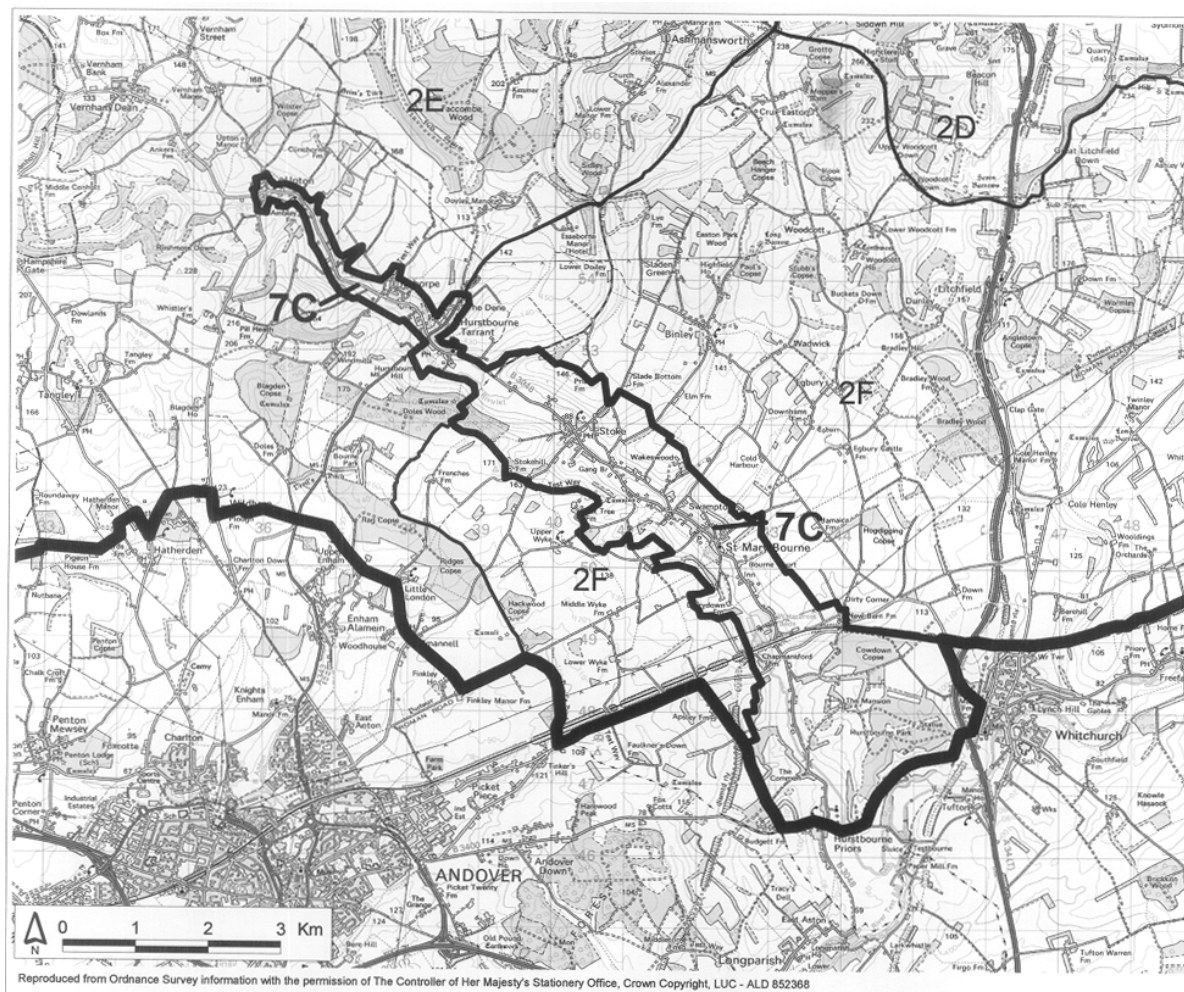
- maintenance of **historic features** including water meadow systems, mills, weirs and leats;
- replanting and management of the pollard willows which are a feature of the valley;
- **loss of hedgerows boundaries** and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus **poor management** of remaining hedgerows;
- localised **intrusion** of roads including M4 which cuts the lower part of the valley on a embankment with visual and noise impacts;
- **increased traffic on the network of minor roads**, plus improvements to the lanes including kerbing, widening, signing and new river crossings which, in places create a more 'urban' character;
- management and enhancement of **ornamental parkland** as at Great Shefford, Woodspeen and Welford;
- management of the **small semi-natural woodlands**;
- **pressure for residential development** with expansion of small scale villages within the narrow river corridor out onto the downland sides (e.g. Lambourn) or amalgamation into a continuous ribbon along the valley;
- **sensitivity** of the narrow, intimate scale valley to any form of large scale development.

## Key Management Requirements

- 14.49. The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the intimate pastoral character of the Lambourn Valley. This will include maintenance of key features including permanent pasture, wet grassland, field patterns, riparian woodlands and historic features associated with the mills, water meadows and historic parklands. There are opportunities for restoration of waterside pastures and replanting and management of hedgerows and limited native tree planting/regeneration.
- 14.50. The small-scale intimate character of the Lambourn Valley is potentially sensitive to any new development. The aim should be to maintain the distinctive pattern of settlement, with the regular spacing of attractive villages. There are opportunities to contain and minimise the impact of larger infrastructure, including the M4.



## CHARACTER AREA 7C: BOURNE VALLEY



- 3.51. **Location and Boundaries:** The River Swift and then the Bourne, a tributary of the River Test, flows south-eastwards from its source near Upton and joins with the Test at Hurstbourne Priors on the southern boundary of the AONB. The boundaries of the character area have been defined to include the relatively narrow corridor of the immediate river valley, with its pastoral floodplain and settlement.

## Landscape Character Description

- 14.52. The valley of the River Bourne with its narrow floor and abruptly rising valley sides is an enclosed and intimate landscape set within the surrounding chalk uplands. The valley is initiated at the spring at Upton where the River Swift issues. The Swift disappears into the chalk further downstream and emerges at Hurstbourne Tarrant as the Bourne Rivulet.
- 14.53. The Bourne is a minor feature, little more than a stream, although it can be glimpsed from many attractive crossing points. The floodplain is predominantly under pasture with small copses, typically of willow and alder, picking out the course of the river. The small fields of the valley floor are enclosed by hedgerows, which contribute to the intimate scale and enclosed character of the landscape and limit longer views within the valley. Thin linear beech plantations are a particular characteristic of the lower valley sides, which are otherwise mainly in arable use. Operational watercress beds, utilising the clear chalk stream waters, occur south of St. Mary Bourne.
- 14.54. The river corridor provides a communications route with a road connecting the numerous small settlements within the valley. These include Upton at the valley head and the small villages of Ibthorpe, Hurstbourne Tarrant, Stoke and the larger village of St. Mary Bourne. Some settlements have taken on a linear form extending along the valley, others are clustered on the valley side above crossing points. Buildings are largely of the local vernacular brick and tile. Numerous lanes and small tracks branch perpendicularly from the road to climb the valley sides creating a grid-like road pattern. These minor lanes frequently terminate on the higher downs or lead to a single isolated farm emphasising the interconnectedness of the downs and valleys landscapes. At its lower end the railway track and a line of pylons also intersect the valley.

### Key Characteristics

- a flat, narrow floor, enclosed by relatively steep valley sides, creating a small scale intimate landscape;
- the valley is initiated at the spring at Upton where the River Swift issues, disappearing into the chalk further downstream and emerging at Hurstbourne Tarrant as the Bourne Rivulet flowing to the Test (beyond the AONB);
- narrow floodplain predominantly under pasture set in small fields enclosed by hedgerows and punctuated by small woodland copses, which pick out the course of the river;
- lower valley sides are mainly in arable use with thin linear beech plantations being a particular characteristic of these slopes;
- parkland is an important feature, with Hurtsbourne Park incorporating a medieval deer park and an early designed landscape park;
- operational watercress beds south of St. Mary Bourne are a distinctive feature;
- varied field pattern. Some fields are small and irregular and may represent late medieval or post-medieval enclosure, with the more regular, straight-edged fields resulting from formal Parliamentary enclosure;
- numerous small settlements - some extend in a linear form along the valley, and others cluster on the valley side above crossing points. Buildings are largely of the local vernacular brick and tile;

- distinctive pattern of roads, lanes and byways - many branching from the principal valley road creating a grid-like pattern.

## Physical Influences

- 14.55. The river cuts through the Upper Chalk, exposing the Middle Chalk on the valley sides. Valley Gravel deposits overlay the valley floor, with some small patches of alluvium and peat. At its head, the dry valley cuts back into the downs terminating in a dramatic coombe at Vernham Dean. The upper part of the valley contains a true winterbourne, which uniquely floods in winter creating a large water pool high in the downs. This higher area has been included as apart of the wider Chute Forest - Faccombe character area (2E). The valley has a distinctive form with a flat, narrow floor enclosed by relatively steep valley sides, creating a small-scale intimate landscape. The river flows down a gentle gradient from around 115m at its source at Upton to 60m at the confluence with the Test.

## Historic Environment

- 14.56. **Settlement and Land Use:** The present landscape was probably initiated in the early prehistoric period (Neolithic and Bronze Age) when the original forest cover was largely cleared for arable agriculture and grazing, and after which only very limited patches of woodland survived or regenerated. Occupants of the early valley settlements almost certainly exploited the chalk downland on the valley sides for agriculture and to provide grazing for their stock. This pattern of movement is still visible in the landscape today with numerous roads and tracks leading from the valley floor on to the surrounding downs. Watercress is an unusual land use with operational beds outside St Mary Bourne.
- 14.57. **Medieval Settlement:** Many of the villages along the valley floor are one-street linear settlements, with an occasional side street, indicative of early medieval origins. Hurstbourne Tarrant, for example, dates from at least the eleventh century. Later the village expanded to incorporate the hamlet of Ibthorpe.
- 14.58. **Field Patterns:** Many of the modern boundaries in the Bourne valley are at right angles to the river, and some might reflect medieval parish boundaries. Some fields are small and irregular, and may represent late medieval or post-medieval piecemeal enclosure. The more regular, straight-edged fields are probably the result of more formal eighteenth or nineteenth century parliamentary enclosure.

## Biodiversity

- 14.59. The Bourne Valley Character Area contains 13 sites with non-statutory nature conservation designation. There are no sites with statutory designation in this Character Area.

## Key Issues

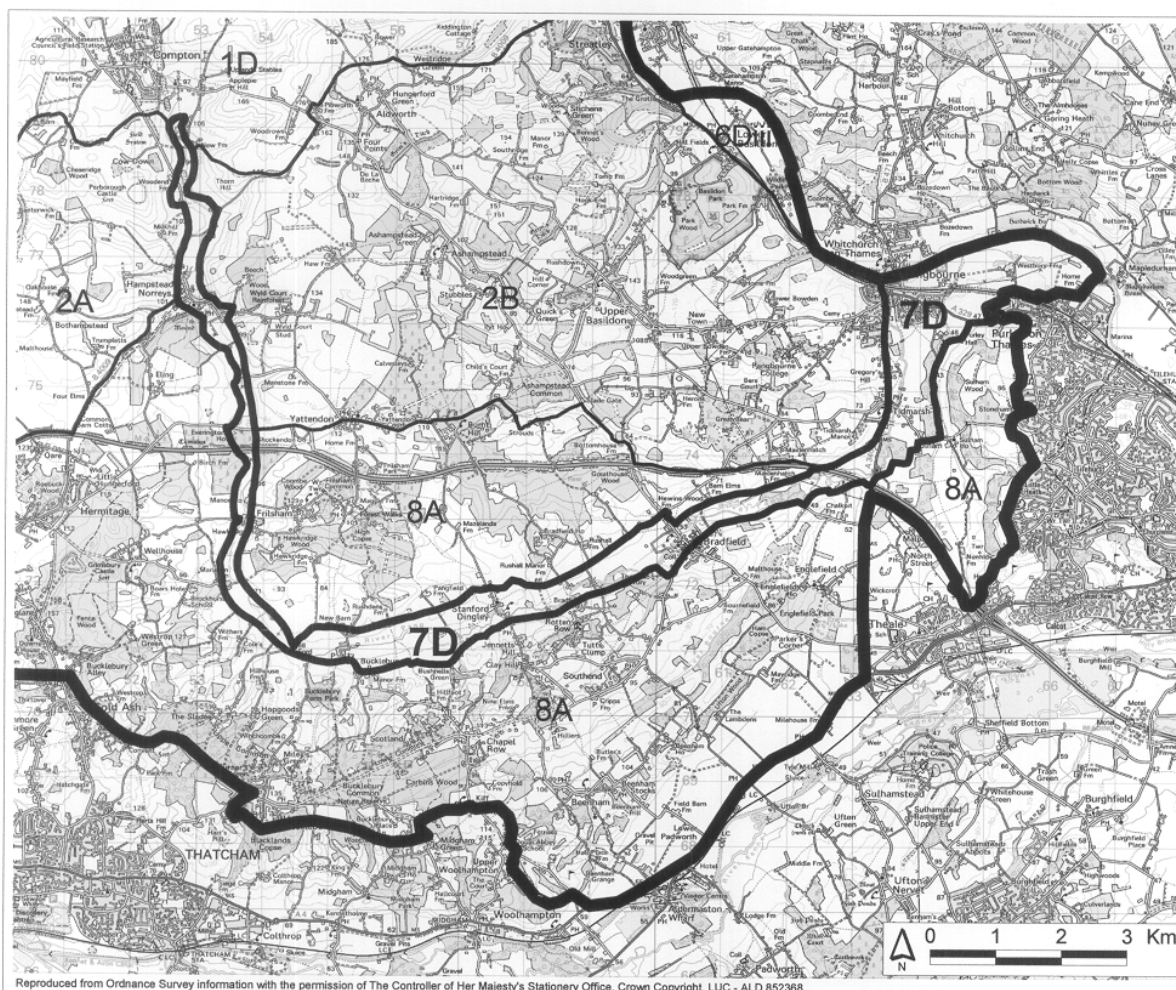
- **maintenance of water quality and flows.** More recently the impact of localised flooding within the valleys has been an issue for local residents;
- intensification in farming leading to **loss of environmental assets** particularly drainage and improvement of permanent pasture and water meadows on the floodplain and loss of riparian vegetation;
- potential changes in farming practices including **loss of livestock** with resulting scrub encroachment on some valley pastures and meadows;
- maintenance of **historic features** including watercress beds and management of historic parkland;
- **loss of hedgerows boundaries** and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus **poor management** of remaining hedgerows;
- high **traffic levels** on the valley floor road and requirements for improvements to the road network (kerbing, etc.) resulting in a more urban character in places;
- management of the small streamside copses and **woodlands**;
- pressure for **residential development** with expansion of small scale villages within the narrow river corridor and amalgamation into a continuous ribbon along the valley;
- localised visual intrusions, e.g. pylons in lower valley, plus sensitivity of the narrow, intimate scale valley to any form of new **development**.

## Key Management Requirements

- 14.60. The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the intimate, secluded character of the Bourne Valley. This will include maintenance of key features including permanent pasture, wet grassland, the field pattern, woodland copses and historic features including the lane network, watercress beds and historic parkland. There are opportunities for restoration of waterside pastures, replanting and management of hedgerows and limited native tree planting/regeneration.
- 14.61. The small-scale intimate character of the Bourne Valley is potentially sensitive to any new development. The aim should be to maintain the distinctive pattern of settlement, with the string of discrete hamlets and villages.



## CHARACTER AREA 7D: PANG VALLEY



- 3.62. **Location and Boundaries:** The River Pang drains the chalk upland in the north-western part of the AONB and flows through a narrow valley to the River Thames at Pangbourne. The boundaries are defined topographically and generally follow the contour along the top of the immediate valley sides enclosing the floodplain. For the lower part of its course the river flows through the clays and gravels of the lowland landscape of Hermitage Wooded Commons (8A).



## Landscape Character Description

- 14.63. The River Pang flows within an open shallow valley, a landform that is less distinctive than the more incised valleys of the Bourne and Lambourn. It has a very varied character along its course with diverse vegetation cover, varying from open arable to enclosed and wooded. In its upper course the valley contains large arable fields descending from the surrounding downland, with a narrow arable-dominated valley floor. Here, only a thin belt of broadleaved woodland marks the presence of the river. The middle section of the valley turns to the east, where it has an asymmetrical cross section, with steeper slopes rising to the gravel capped plateau to the south. Willow pollards, poplar, alder and strips of pasture line the river banks. Low flailed hawthorn hedges and post and wire boundaries enclose medium to large fields and the valley retains a more open character. East of Stanford Dingley, towards Bradfield, the river flows through a noticeably more wooded landscape. At Bradfield Hall this includes an area of formal parkland, with mature oaks and lime scattered in pasture. The valley widens out significantly north of Bradfield, where it merges with the surrounding wooded farmland around Tidmarsh. In these lower reaches, the river flows through a mosaic of damp alder copses and seasonally flooded meadow on the valley floor, much of which is designated as a SSSI.
- 14.64. The settlement pattern consists of scattered farms situated at regular intervals on the valley floor and tiny hamlets, such as Bucklebury and Stanford Dingley, clustered around a church, plus the two villages of Hampstead Norreys and Bradfield. The dominant building material is red brick, with the white weatherboard church at Stamford Dingley being a distinctive feature. The attractive settlement of riverside Pangbourne is situated at the confluence of the valley with the Thames. The majority of the valley is comparatively isolated and contains only minor lanes and tracks linking the farms and settlements, with numerous bridges and fords providing crossing points over the watercourse. There are many sunken lanes overhung by banks of broadleaved woodland, such as at Brocks Lane, which creates a more intimate and secluded character. The M4 cuts across the grain of the valley in both its upper and lower reaches and has a high visual and noise impact. It is particularly intrusive in the upper reaches, where it severs the valley on an embankment.

### Key Characteristics

- the River Pang flows through a more open, shallow landform - a less distinct form compared to the more incised valleys of the Bourne and Lambourn;
- varied land cover with arable farmland dominant in the upper sections, a more wooded middle course and widening out to flow through a lowland mosaic of woodland and wet meadows in the lower section;
- generally medium/large fields enclosed by low flailed hawthorn hedges and post and wire boundaries. Field boundaries include 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century piecemeal enclosure plus regular straight edge fields of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century formal enclosure;
- willow pollards, poplar, alder and strips of pasture line the immediate river banks;
- manor houses and manor farms, particularly in the middle section of the valley and areas of formal parkland at Bradfield Hall;

- relict features on the valley floor including former watermeadows and watercress beds;
- settlement consists of scattered farms situated at regular intervals on the valley floor, a number of hamlets clustered around a church plus two villages. The small attractive settlement of Pangbourne is situated at the confluence of the valley with the Thames;
- the dominant building material is red brick, with the white weatherboarded church at Stamford Dingley being a distinctive feature;
- in parts, comparatively isolated, containing only minor lanes and tracks linking the farms and settlements (M4 is dominant in some areas). A sense of intimacy is afforded by the sunken lanes overhung by banks of broadleaved woodland.

## Physical Influences

- 14.65. The River Pang rises on the chalk upland, with its source near Compton. Beyond this, the valley head cuts back into the downs as a series of steep dry valleys. However, this area and the shallow valley between Compton and Hampstead Norreys is assimilated as a feature of the surrounding landscape type - Blewbury Downs (1D). The river cuts through the chalk, which outcrops along the tops of the valley sides. Gravels and alluvium overlie the valley floor. It flows southwards initially, from Hampstead Norreys, through an open shallow valley. Close to Bucklebury it swings to the east and flows within a wider more open channel to the Thames.

## Historic Environment

- 14.66. **Prehistoric Settlement:** Between Pangbourne and Purley, on the gravel floodplain of the Thames, aerial photographs show trapezoidal and oval enclosure patterns, linear ditch boundaries and a trackway. These may all be prehistoric in origin and are a vivid illustration of the length of continuity of human exploitation of the valley.
- 14.67. **Saxon and Medieval Settlement:** The village of Bradfield may be of Saxon origin and had a minster church. There is a medieval moated manor at Stamford Dingley, and there were also manors at Hampstead Norreys, Frilsham Manor and Bucklebury. Immediately south of Westbury Farm is the deserted medieval village of Purley Parva. Some relict water meadows survive in the area, including possible examples at Westbury Farm and Stamford Dingley.
- 14.68. **Field Patterns:** Many of the modern boundaries in the Pang valley are at right angles to the river, and some might reflect medieval parish boundaries. Many modern fields are small and irregular, and may represent late medieval or post-medieval piecemeal enclosure. The more regular, straight-edged fields are probably the result of more formal, eighteenth or nineteenth century parliamentary enclosure.

## Biodiversity

- 14.69. The Pang Valley supports one SSSI, namely Sulham and Tidmarsh woods and meadows (SSSI) and 19 sites with non-statutory designations. Of the 19 regionally important sites, approximately 8 are wooded, 8 are grassland and 2 are wetland.
- 14.70. The nationally important Sulham and Tidmarsh woods and meadows (SSSI) comprise a broad valley of varied alluvial loams, gravel terraces and peat deposits. These complex soil patterns have resulted in a mosaic of damp copses and seasonally flooded meadows. The copses are dominated mainly by alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), but also with a number of other trees and shrubs including ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), birch (*Betula pendula*), and hazel (*Corylus avellana*).

## Key Issues

- **maintenance of water quality and flows.** More recently the impact of localised flooding within the valleys has been an issue for local residents;
- intensification in farming leading to **loss of environmental assets** particularly drainage and improvement of permanent pasture and water meadows on the floodplain and loss of riparian vegetation;
- potential changes in farming practices - including **loss of livestock** with scrub encroachment on some valley pastures and meadows;
- maintenance of **historic features** including the field patterns and historic parkland;
- management of the **pollards** and **lines of poplar** which characterise some sections of the valley;
- **loss of hedgerows boundaries** and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus **poor management** of remaining hedgerows;
- localised **intrusion of roads** including the M4 which cuts valley in both its upper and lower reaches, the former being on a embankment and particularly intrusive;
- **increased traffic on the network of minor lanes**, plus improvements to the lanes, which are particularly harmful to the character of the sunken lanes;
- management of the small **semi-natural riparian woodlands**;
- pressure for **residential development** with expansion of small scale villages within valley;
- sensitivity of the valley to any form of **development**.

## Key Management Requirements

- 14.71. The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the intimate, secluded character of the Pang Valley. This will include maintenance of key features including

permanent pasture, wet grassland, field pattern, willow pollards, riparian woodlands and historic features including historic parkland. There are opportunities for restoration of waterside pastures, replanting and management of hedgerows and limited native tree planting/regeneration.

- 14.72. The small-scale intimate character of the Pang Valley is potentially sensitive to any new development. The aim should be to maintain the distinctive pattern of settlement, with tiny hamlets, two small villages and scattered farms. There are opportunities to contain and minimise the impact of larger infrastructure, including the M4.

## Landscape Type 8 - Lowland Mosaic

