

# North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment

## Landscape Character Assessment

LCT 7

### North Wessex Downs National Landscape

**Draft report**

Prepared by LUC

July 2025

## LCT 7 River Valleys

**Figure 5.138: The River Kennet near Kintbury**



## Location and overview

**5.520** The River Valleys LCT 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 National Landscape. The exception is the River Bourne, which drains southwards to the Test Valley. Within the National Landscape 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.

**5.521** 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.

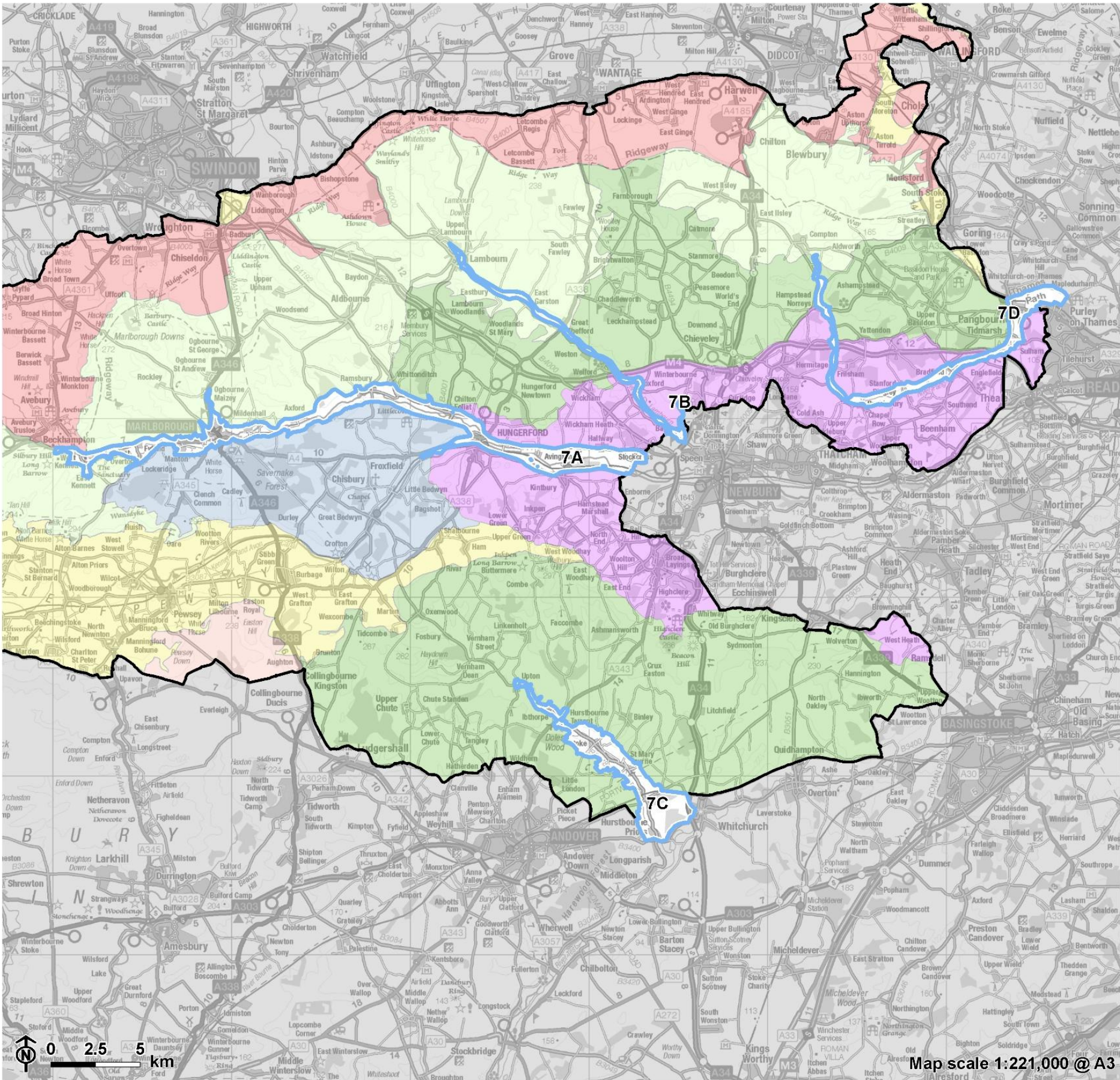
**5.522** The River Valleys landscape type is divided into four geographic character areas. These comprise.

- 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).



Figure 5.139: Location of LCT 7 River Valleys

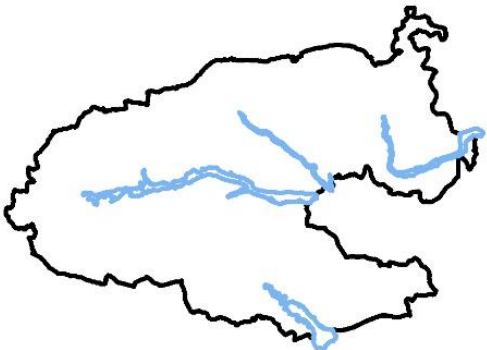


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LCT 7 - River Valleys

- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- Landscape Character Type
  - 7: River Valleys
    - 7A: Kennet Valley
    - 7B: Lambourn Valley
    - 7C: Bourne Valley
    - 7D: Pang Valley



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**5.523** The river 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.

**5.524** 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 internationally designated Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). 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.

**5.525** The green pastures along the narrow valley floors contrast with 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. Floated water meadows are one of the most notable historic feature, which by the later 17<sup>th</sup> 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.

**5.526** 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.

## LCT 7 River Valleys: Key Characteristics

- The river valleys incised into the chalk uplands are one of the defining features of the National Landscape with enclosure, pastoral land cover and settlement contrasting strongly with the remote open arable uplands.
- Short, relatively steep valley sides with a narrow, flat floodplain.
- Clear fast flowing waters and important internationally and nationally designated 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.
- Riparian woodlands and lines of poplar along ditches and willow pollards are distinctive features.
- Field pattern of characteristically small hedged enclosures which may reflect medieval strips and furlongs.
- Concentration of settlement including tiny hamlets clustered around a church, many small villages and the two market towns of Marlborough and Hungerford.
- Long history of 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.
- Significant recreational opportunities including several promoted linear routes as well as the Kennet and Avon Canal which provide opportunities for boat trips and water sports. The chalk rivers are a prime location for salmon fishing.
- Many transport routes follow the river valleys, utilising the flat valley bottoms, which provides considerable access but also reduces tranquillity.



## LCT 7 River Valleys: Evaluation

### Forces for change

**5.527** The following are identified as forces for change common to the River Valleys as a whole:

- Eutrophication from excessive nutrients results in high levels of algae, changing the clear character of the chalk streams and can cause bad smells which affects their recreational use. Phosphate is the main cause of eutrophication, which can enter rivers from wastewater treatment works and agricultural fertilisers.
- Chalk streams are under threat from abstraction both for household water use and agricultural irrigation. This leads to low river levels and potentially changes the ecosystem the river is able to support.
- Changes in agricultural practices including the loss of grazing on valley pastures leading to scrub encroachment.
- Positive changes in water management through catchment partnerships to allow storage within the catchment, including natural flood management, physical modification of the river channel and riparian habitat restoration.
- The incremental changes to the road network including curbs, widening, and signage create a more urban character in the river valleys.
- Development in the setting to the National Landscape including large-scale and / or tall development on the edges of Newbury and Reading could affect views from the river valleys.
- Development pressure from settlements within the river valleys, particularly Marlborough, Hungerford, Kintbury, Compton, Lambourn, and Pangbourne which would increase development in an already well-settled landscape.
- Limited access to the river and its floodplains for recreational access in places.
- The River Valleys landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
  - Hotter, drier summers have led to chalk streams drying up, and ephemeral winterbourne streams not flowing, even in wetter years.
  - Hotter drier summers and wetter winters and winter flooding could result in changes to wetland and riparian plant community composition;

some non-native species may become invasive, and other currently geographically restricted species may spread more easily. This would change the character of the rivers.

- Drier summers and wetter and stormier winters may lead to an increase in insects, pests and pathogens, which could lead to a reduction in key hedgerow tree species.
- Increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran hedgerow trees.
- Wetter winters may mean woody species in hedgerows are exposed to prolonged flooding in the growing season and will be at risk of dying, and winter trimming will become more difficult due to wet ground (preferred to autumn trimming to ensure food supply for birds).
- Intensification of adjacent land use leading to increased impacts on hedgerows such as pesticide drift and nutrient enrichment.
- Wetter winters and higher peak river flows may lead to increased flood defence activity, creating more physical habitat degradation and introducing potentially detracting features.

## Landscape guidance

**5.528** The following are identified as guidelines for protecting and enhancing valued characteristics of the River Valleys, taking into consideration the forces for change which are affecting, or which are expected to affect, this landscape:

- Engage with the Kennet Catchment Partnership, Test & Itchen Catchment Partnership and Thames21 to consider actions across the whole of the catchments which will positively impact the River Valleys in the North Wessex Downs.
- Continue to encourage Catchment Sensitive Farming to reduce agricultural run-off into and eutrophication of the rivers and improve waterscape quality and character.
- Improve the landscape and waterscape character and quality of watercourses and waterways, where appropriate increasing riparian vegetation and tree cover, to provide additional filtration, flood mitigation, and habitat.
- Conserve and enhance the pattern of lowland meadows, floodplain grazing marsh and riparian vegetation along the river, to enhance their contribution to landscape character and their nature conservation value;



encourage greater diversity through sympathetic management such as grazing where appropriate.

- Seek opportunities to enhance connectivity with other habitats nearby by creating green corridors and networks, including to the chalk grassland and woodland found on the valley slopes.
- Manage arable land to benefit landscape character and biodiversity, by maintaining soil health and minimising erosion and run off through enhancement of biodiverse hedgerows, linear scrub and buffer strips.
- Conserve and enhance heritage assets for their physical and cultural contribution to landscape and waterscape character and quality.
- Retain the existing settlement patterns of riverside towns and villages, avoiding development creeping up the valley sides or ribbon development diminishing settlement separation.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape on public rights of way. Consider opportunities to improve public right of way connections, infrastructure and signage, including providing greater access to the rivers.

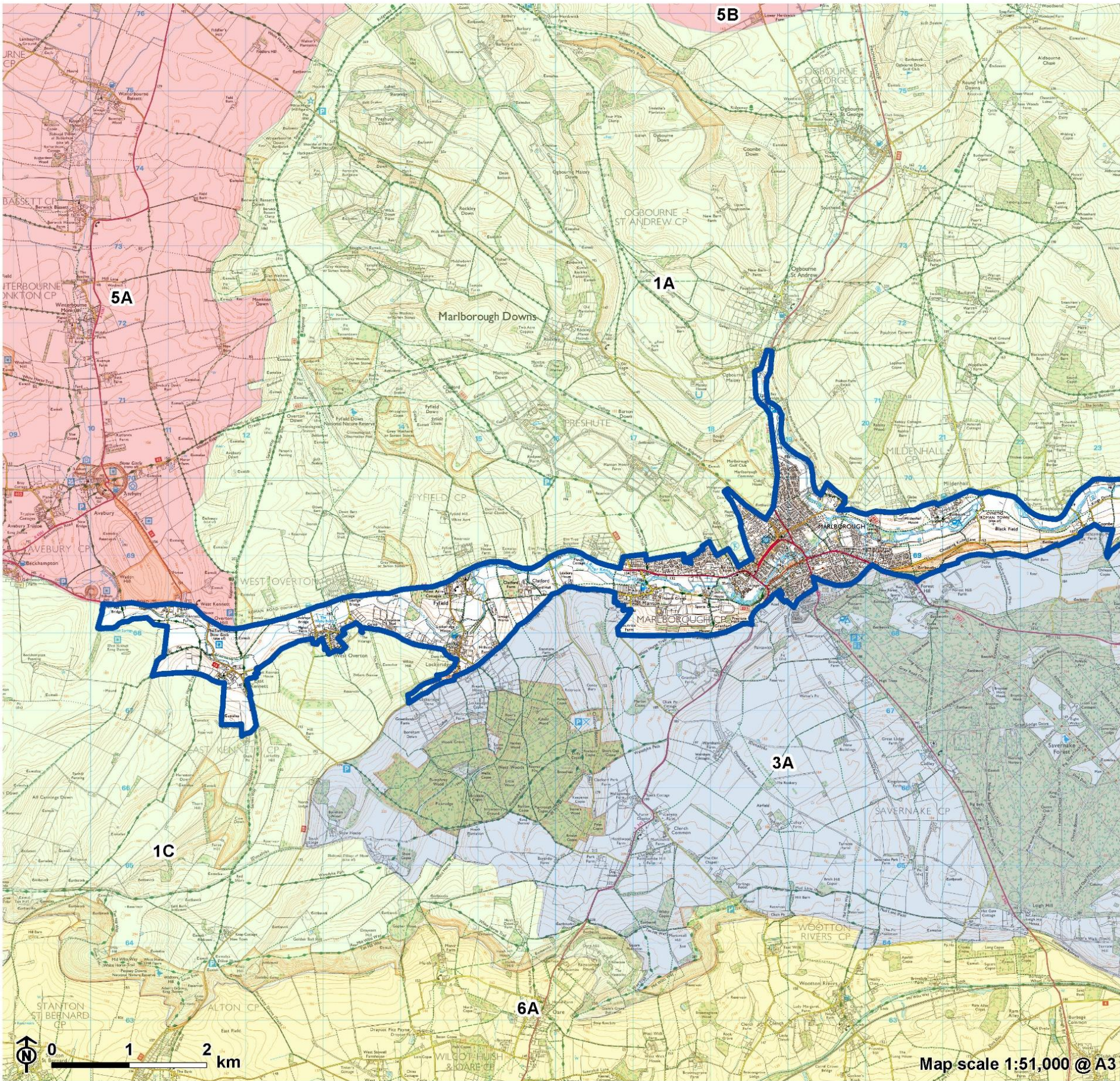
## LCA 7A Kennet Valley

**Figure 5.140: Willow trees lining the River Kennet at Hamstead Lock**





Figure 5.141: LCA 7A: Kennet Valley: Location (west)

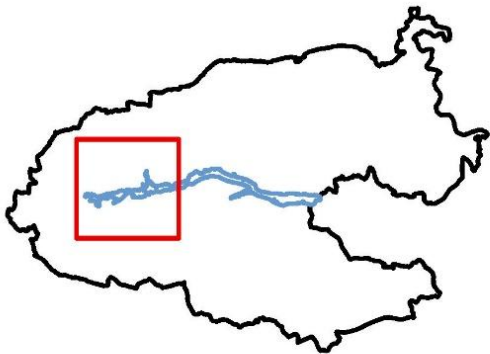


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7A: Kennet Valley (west)

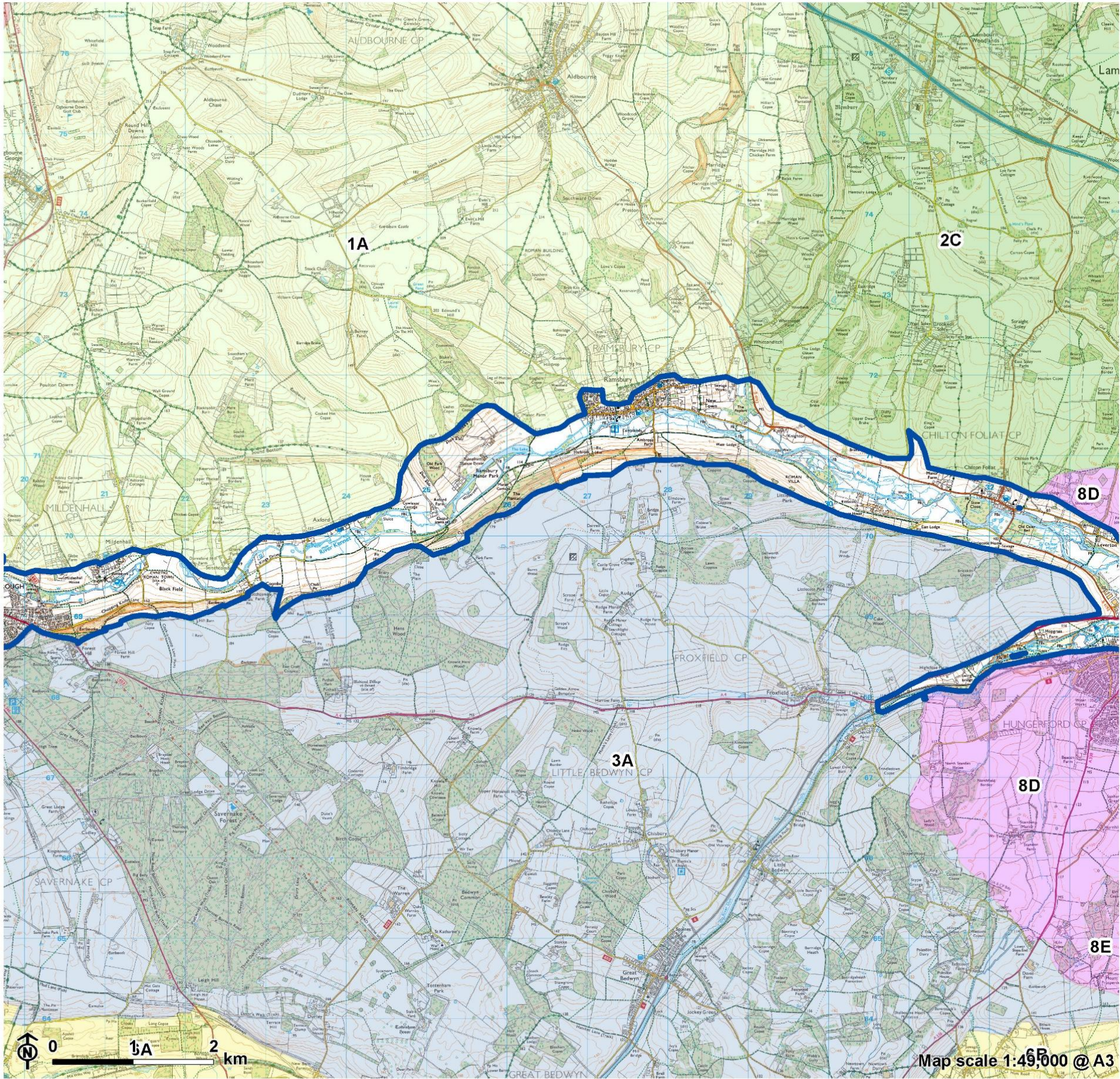
- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- Landscape Character Area**
- 7A: Kennet Valley
- 1A: Marlborough Downs
- 1C: Horton Downs
- 3A: Savernake Plateau
- 5A: Avebury Plain
- 5B: Chiseldon - Wanborough Plain
- 6A: Vale of Pewsey



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Figure 5.142: LCA 7A: Kennet Valley: Location (centre)

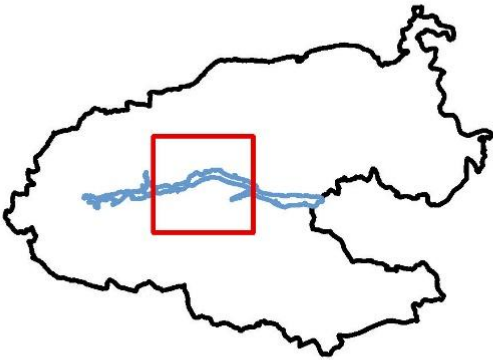


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7A: Kennet Valley (centre)

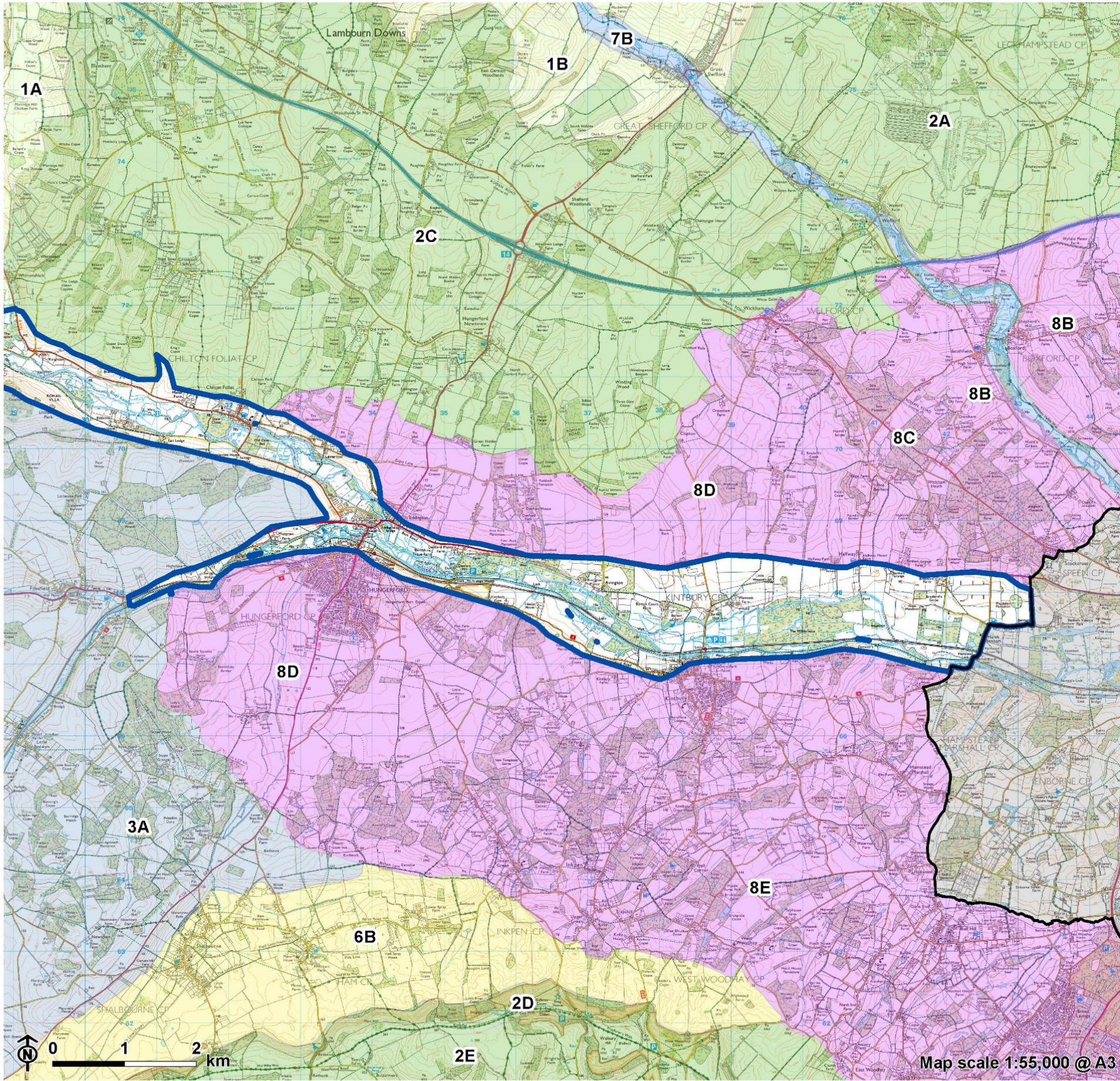
- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- Landscape Character Area
- 7A: Kennet Valley
- 1A: Marlborough Downs
- 1B: Lambourn Downs
- 2C: Lambourn Wooded Downs
- 3A: Savernake Plateau
- 5B: Chiseldon - Wanborough Plain
- 6A: Vale of Pewsey
- 6B: Shalbourne Vale
- 8D: Hungerford Farmland
- 8E: Highclere Parklands



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Figure 5.143: LCA 7A: Kennet Valley: Location (east)

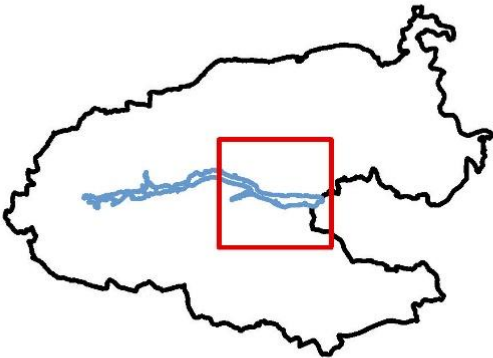


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7A: Kennet Valley (east)

- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- Landscape Character Area**
- 7A: Kennet Valley
  - 1A: Marlborough Downs
  - 1B: Lambourn Downs
  - 2A: Brightwalton Downs
  - 2C: Lambourn Wooded Downs
  - 2D: Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp
  - 2E: Chute Forest - Facombe
  - 3A: Savernake Plateau
  - 6A: Vale of Pewsey
  - 6B: Shalbourne Vale
  - 7B: Lambourn Valley
  - 8B: Winterbourne Farmland
  - 8C: Wickham Wooded Heath
  - 8D: Hungerford Farmland
  - 8E: Highclere Parklands



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**Figure 5.144: River Kennet at Marlborough**



**Figure 5.145: View over Marlborough to the downland beyond**



## LCA 7A Kennet Valley: Description

**5.529** The Kennet Valley drains the majority of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and dissects the area, virtually dividing it into two halves. The river rises on the chalk near Avebury and flows eastwards to the National Landscape 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

### Natural Influences

#### Landform, geology, water and soils

**5.530** 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 155 metres and flows along a gentle gradient to approximately 85 metres at the eastern National Landscape boundary. Alluvium and gravel deposits line the valley floor along its entire length.

**5.531** The Kennet Valley has a narrow valley floor, strongly enclosed by the gentle, but well defined chalk sides in its upper reaches. The valley widens out to a more open lowland landscape east of Hungerford.

#### Biodiversity

**5.532** The River Kennet is a nationally and internationally important chalk river habitat. The mosaic of wetland habitats include the chalk stream itself, wet natural meadows, tall fen vegetation and scrub. The floodplain is designated as part of the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SSSI. The riverside 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, with three meadows designated as SSSI. The Kennet Valley Alderwoods (SSSI) exhibit the complete transition from open water to swamp, and through to wet and dry woodland.

**5.533** The Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain and Kennet Valley Alderwoods are internationally designated as SAC for the presence of the Desmoulin's whorl snail and the alluvial alder woods on the floodplain. The seasonal flood meadows, riparian woodlands and pastures are an important plant habitat and refuge for a number of rare species.



**5.534** Sinuous belts of woodland line the valley sides, with some larger broadleaved woodland blocks on the valley floor, particularly to the east of Marlborough.

## **Cultural Influences**

### **Land use and field patterns**

**5.535** 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.

**5.536** There is a varied field pattern including some small fields with sinuous boundaries near Overton, which may date to Saxon enclosure. Boundaries are formed by hedgerows.

### **Historic features**

**5.537** 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 (in LCA 5A).

**5.538** The Marlborough Mound was a motte for a Norman motte and bailey castle. It may have reused or been built over a Neolithic mound that was a smaller version of Silbury Hill. It was incorporated into an 18<sup>th</sup> century garden, and now lies in the grounds of Marlborough College, as part of a Registered Park and Garden. 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.

**5.539** Historic parklands are a feature of the centre of the valley and include Ramsbury Manor, Chilton Foliat and Littlecote. Ramsbury Manor was built in the 1680s with the surrounding parkland and woodland dating from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century with improvements including the lake and orangery made in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**5.540** 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 water meadow system, which probably originated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, are still visible.

**5.541** To the east of Hungerford the River Kennet joins the Kennet and Avon Canal (opened in 1811). Along both forks of the river 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.

### Settlement pattern

**5.542** Attractive settlements are located along the whole valley. Villages tend to cluster in sheltered sites above the floodplain, typically on the south facing valley side. They tend to be dominated by a manor house and church. 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.

**5.543** 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.

**5.544** 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.

## Principal settlements

**5.545 Marlborough** has a long history of settlement with evidence of prehistoric occupation from the Marlborough Mound, as well as Roman and Saxon habitation. The town became a royal residence and hunting ground through Savernake Forest in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, received its first market charter in 1204. The town was historically a major staging point on the road between Bath and London. The famously wide High Street was built following major fires in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Conservation Area covers the High Street, Marlborough College, and the St Martins area. The introduction of the Swindon, Marlborough and Andover railway created a barrier to expansion to the east and south, and therefore prompted Victorian and Edwardian expansion to the north. Post-war development expanded Marlborough to the west, and further north and south up the valley sides. Further expansion followed the opening of the M4 motorway in 1971 as more commuters moved to the area. Marlborough's character is typified by its unified townscape of red tiled roofs, gable ends facing the street and tile hung walls. The town has a heavy Georgian influence with many high classical facades, pedimented doorways and Palladian windows.

**Figure 5.146: The wide Marlborough High Street**



**5.546** Marlborough has expanded from the floodplain of the Kennet valley up the valley sides to the north and south. Savernake Forest to the south-east forms a distinctive wooded backdrop to the town, with views to the open Marlborough Downs forming contrasting views to the north.



**Figure 5.147: Looking north across Marlborough in the Kennet valley**

**5.547 Ramsbury** is a village located on the steep northern slope of the Kennet valley between Marlborough and Hungerford. Like many settlements in the area Ramsbury developed around agriculture and milling, with the Grade II listed Old Mill on Scholards Lane still standing today. The village began as a linear settlement along Oxford Street and the High Street, with the 13<sup>th</sup> century Grade I listed Holy Cross Church in the centre. The settlement pattern has been largely unchanged, although Ramsbury has expanded to the east and north-west in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The local vernacular represents available local materials with brick, flint, and clay tile common. present in the majority of the Conservation Area.

**Figure 5.148: Red brick, tile and flint vernacular in Ramsbury**

**5.548** Ramsbury is located on the steep northern hillside at a narrow part of the river valley, creating an enclosed and intimate character. Views north are to the vast open fields of the rolling Marlborough Downs and to the south to the elevated wooded plateau of Savernake Forest.

**Figure 5.149: Holy Cross Church seen from the south**

**5.549 Hungerford** is a historic market town between Marlborough and Newbury on the south side of the Kennet valley. It developed as a ford at the confluence of the Rivers Dun and Kennet and retained importance as a coaching town on the route between London and Bath. The town retains a strong sense of identity through its historic core centred on the north-south 13<sup>th</sup> century High Street,



which crosses the Kennet at Eddington Bridge. The village of Eddington on the north bank of the Kennet has now coalesced with Hungerford. The construction of the Kennet and Avon Canal and Great Western Railway in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries increased the population size and expanded the town on the southern banks of the Dun. Recent housing developments from the 1970s onwards have grown on either side of the A338 to the south of the town. Hungerford Port Down to the east is a distinctive parkland grazing landscape of ancient and veteran trees with views north across the Kennet Valley. This large area of common land has created a strong barrier to development on the eastern edge of Hungerford.

**Figure 5.150: Historic buildings along Hungerford High Street**



**5.550** The landform north of Hungerford is lower and flatter as part of the Kennet valley floor, with views to the rolling downland beyond. The west of the town is highly visible from the rolling downland to the north as well as from the rising slopes to the south-west. Longer distance views towards Hungerford are often screened by intervening woodland associated with the Savernake Forest or the wooded downlands.



**Figure 5.151: Western edge of Hungerford seen from the south-west**

**5.551 Kintbury** lies on the southern bank of the River Kennett between Hungerford and Newbury. It was a Saxon Minster on the river, and may have been a Royal estate. The medieval layout of a linear settlement has largely been retained in the Conservation Area along High Street, Church Street, and Newbury Street. Kintbury originally surpassed Hungerford in commercial importance holding a weekly market, and was a centre for the silk industry during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The architecture in this area is characterised by red and grey brick cottages with mostly tiled and occasional thatched roofs. The introduction of the Kennet and Avon Canal and the Great Western Railway had a more limited influence of settlement expansion than other settlements. The village has expanded to the south-east onto the valley sides, away from the river corridor.

**5.552** The historic core of Kintbury lies within the Kennet valley, with the modern expansion to the south climbing the gentle valley sides. Riparian vegetation and wetland habitats in the wider valley (part of the Kennet Valley Alderwood SAC and SSSI) provides a wooded backdrop to the village and largely screens the settlement from view from the north. The canal, river and associated towpaths provide a strong visual connection to the area's industrial heritage as well as to recreational links to the wider landscape. Land south of Kintbury is more agricultural, although the falling topography and areas of woodland to the south also provide screening of views to the village.

## Communications and infrastructure

**5.553** The river valley has long been exploited for transport routes, providing an important east-west communications corridor. The A4 (Bath Road) follows the valley from its source to Marlborough. A number of minor roads cross the river valley, linking the two areas of chalk downland. Brick bridge crossings, such as at Stitchcombe and Axford, are a distinctive feature.

**5.554** 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. The canal opened in 1811, and the sluices, lockgates and warehouses provide a link to the industrial past. This stretch of the valley is also shared with the Great Western Railway, built in the 1840s. One overhead electricity line crosses the Kennet valley running from the west of Kintbury to Halfway to the east.

**5.555** Public rights of way cross the Kennet valley including the White Horse Trail and Ridgeway in the west and follow the Kennet and Avon canal in the east. There are fewer cross-valley rights of way east of Ramsbury. The river also provides recreational opportunities such as boating and fishing.

## Perceptual Influences

**5.556** The Kennet valley has an intimate character due to the considerable riparian vegetation and enclosure provided by the relatively steep valley sides, particularly in the west. Views are generally enclosed, with few opportunities for views along the river corridor. The surrounding landscapes provide a wooded backdrop to glimpsed longer distance views from the valley.

**5.557** Despite the presence of a number of settlements and transport infrastructure the landscape retains a rural character, with a good experience of dark night skies outside of Marlborough and Hungerford.

**5.558** Marlborough College is one of the oldest boarding schools in the UK, and has a number of alumni including William Morris, John Betjeman, Nick Drake and the Princess of Wales.

## LCA 7A Kennet Valley: Evaluation

### Kennet Valley valued qualities

**5.559** The key valued qualities identified for LCA 7A Kennet Valley are:



- The sense of place created by the distinctive steep-sided valley with a narrow floor which provides an enclosed character in the west, contrasting with the broadening lowland east of Hungerford.
- Internationally and nationally important habitats related to the chalk River Kennet and its tributaries, with a rich mix of floodplain pasture, marsh and riparian woodlands, creates a rich ecological resource.
- The sense of time depth and heritage associated with the mills, water meadows, historic parklands and industrial heritage associated with the Kennet and Avon Canal.
- The pattern of attractive valley villages and towns which have a strong continuity of settlement and provide time-depth. The vernacular reflects the local geology, moving from brick and sarsen stone in the west to brick, flint and clay tiles in the east.
- The importance of the valley for transport links, including the Kennet and Avon Canal, Great Western railway and A4 Bath Road, as well as for recreational activity including boating on the river and canal, and public rights of way.
- The pastoral, rural character of the landscape with a good experience of dark night skies away from Hungerford and Marlborough.

### **Kennet Valley local forces for change/issues**

**5.560** In addition to the forces for change set out at LCT level, local forces for change and issues affecting LCA 7A Kennet Valley are:

- Modifications are being made to the River Kennet to improve, create and restore river and wetland habitats. An example is at The Wilderness, Kintbury where proposals are underway to reshape the existing channel and create new channel sections to re-naturalise the river. These works will help improve the condition of the River Kennet SSSI (currently in an unfavourable condition).
- Recent flooding along the Kennet valley including in Marlborough and Hungerford could lead to pressure for hard engineering solutions to flood management, which could impact the natural character of the valley.
- Development pressures, particularly for new housing on the edge of Marlborough and Hungerford, which could impact the narrow, intimate scale valley landform.

**Kennet Valley strategy and local guidelines**

**5.561** In addition to the guidelines set out for the River Valleys LCT, the following guidelines are of particular relevance to the Kennet Valley:

- Engage with the Kennet Catchment Partnership and its strategies to use natural flood management (NFM) and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to manage flood risk.
- Ensure new developments in the river valley are in keeping with the historic settlement pattern and do not cause the coalescence of any smaller settlements.



## LCA 7B: Lambourn Valley

**Figure 5.152: The River Lambourn at Bagnor**





Figure 5.153: LCA 7B Lambourn Valley: Location (north-west)

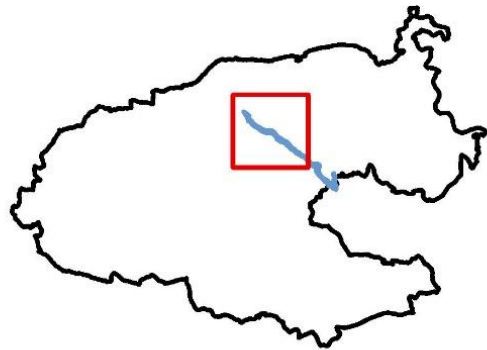


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7B: Lambourn Valley (north west)

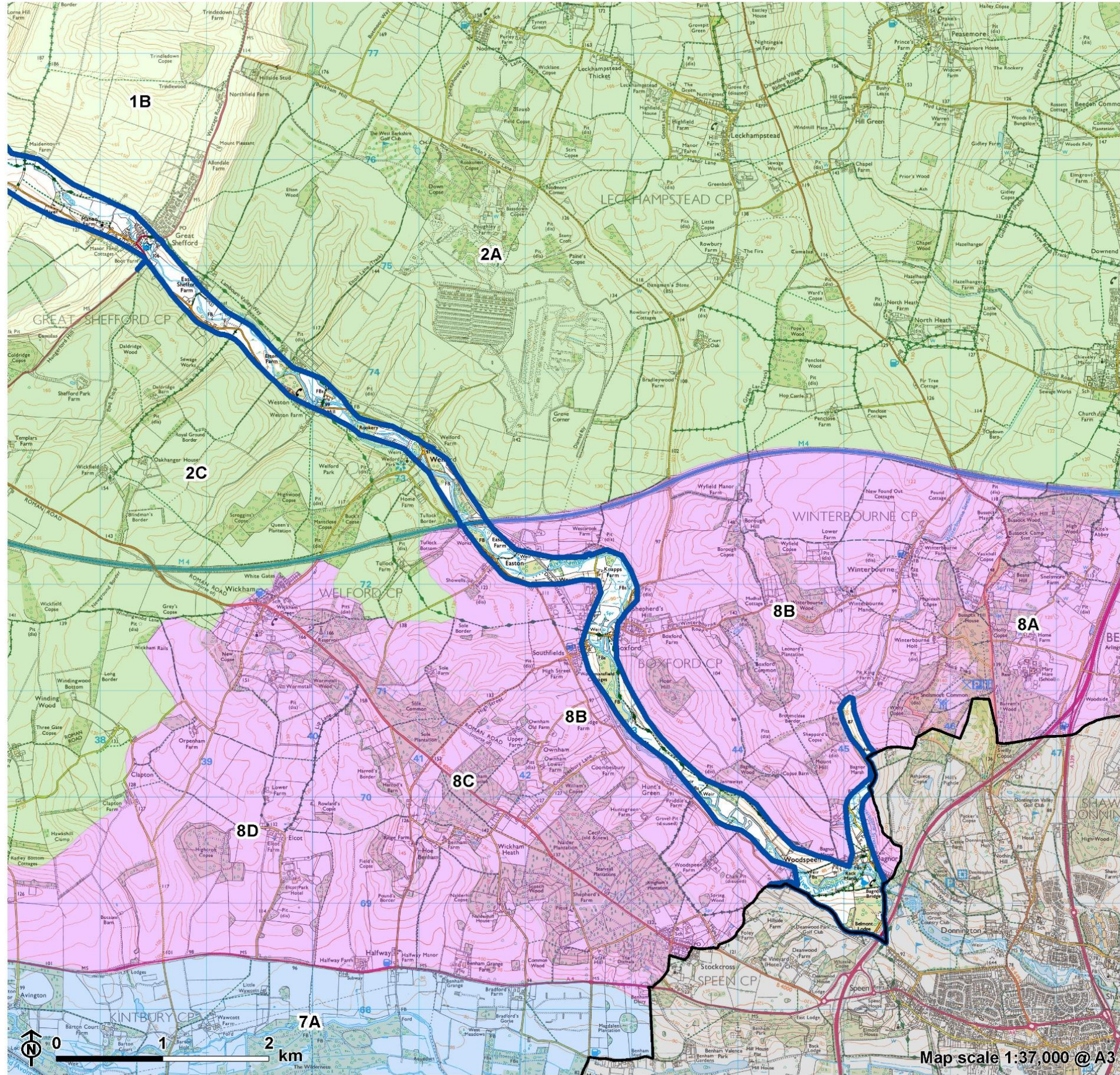
- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- Landscape Character Area
- 7B: Lambourn Valley
- 1B: Lambourn Downs
- 2A: Brightwalton Downs
- 2C: Lambourn Wooded Downs
- 8B: Winterbourne Farmland
- 8C: Wickham Wooded Heath



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Figure 5.154: LCA 7B Lambourn Valley: Location (south-east)

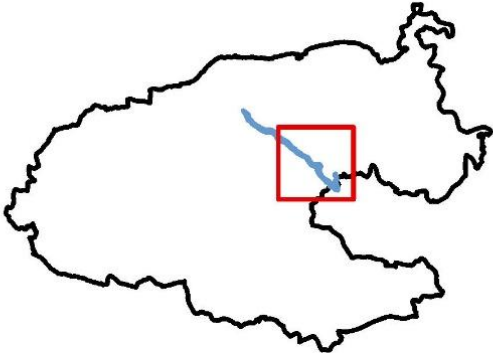


North Wessex Downs  
Landscape Character Assessment  
North Wessex Downs National Landscape



7B: Lambourn Valley (south east)

- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- Landscape Character Area
- 7B: Lambourn Valley
- 1B: Lambourn Downs
- 2A: Brightwalton Downs
- 2C: Lambourn Wooded Downs
- 7A: Kennet Valley
- 8A: Hermitage Wooded Commons
- 8B: Winterbourne Farmland
- 8C: Wickham Wooded Heath
- 8D: Hungerford Farmland



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**Figure 5.155: Floodplain pasture fields at Great Shefford**



**Figure 5.156: Algae in the Lambourn at Welford**



## LCA 7B: Lambourn Valley Description

**5.562** The River Lambourn, a tributary of the Kennet, rises in the Lambourn Downs and flows south eastwards to the National Landscape boundary at Newbury. The boundaries are defined topographically and generally follow 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 (LCA 1B).

### Natural Influences

#### Landform, geology, water and soils

**5.563** Rising as a chalk spring at 152 metres at Lynch Wood, the River Lambourn cuts through the chalk, and flows through a narrow corridor south-eastward along a relatively gentle gradient to join the Kennet at Newbury. Drift deposits of chalk drift and small amounts of gravel and alluvial deposits overlie the valley floor. In its lower length, south of Great Shefford, the valley widens slightly with the river flowing within a meandering and braided channel.

#### Biodiversity

**5.564** 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 internationally designated as SAC. The Lambourn is designated for its populations of bullhead (*Cottus gobio*) and brook lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*), two fish both of which are rare / threatened in a European context. The Lambourn also supports one of Britain's best examples of floating vegetation dominated by water crow-foots (*Ranunculus section Batrachium*).

**5.565** Along the wider lower reaches of the valley are Easton Mill and Boxford Water Meadows, both designated as SSSI. 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.



## Cultural Influences

### Land use and field patterns

**5.566** 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.

**5.567** Lambourn is known as the 'Valley of the Racehorse' as the racehorse 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.

**5.568** 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.

#### **5.569** Historic features

**5.570** 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. 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 alms houses adjacent to the churchyard were rebuilt in the nineteenth century.

**5.571** Other medieval remains in the Lambourn Valley include the deserted medieval village of Bockhampton, and the moated manor site at East Shefford House.

**5.572** 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.

### Settlement pattern

**5.573** 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.

**5.574** 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.

### Principal settlement

**5.575 Lambourn** is a village in West Berkshire positioned at the source of the River Lambourn. The village is centred on the crossroads of the High Street and the old Market place, which is designated as a Conservation Area. The village contains many clear examples of buildings constructed using the squared local sarsen stone and brick quoining. The Grade II\* College House and Grade II former Red Lion Hotel at the crossroads are particularly prominent. The original settlement pattern has been largely retained, although 20<sup>th</sup> century development has expanded the village up the valley sides to the east, west and north. Infill development has also created a denser village. The village has a long association with the racehorse industry and has a number of equine related businesses.



**Figure 5.157: Flint and red brick vernacular within Lambourn**

**5.576** The village lies at the head of the River Lambourn, a chalk stream, which originates in the village. The surrounding rolling downland can be seen from the village edges, although the settlement is largely hidden from view from the elevated downs by the topography and tree cover.

**Figure 5.158: Rising downland seen from within Lambourn**

### Communications and infrastructure

**5.577** Minor roads serving the villages run along the valley floor, crossing the river at several points. The M4 crosses the valley, south of Welford, on an embankment. The motorway 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.

**5.578** The Lambourn Valley Railway was constructed through the area in the 1890s. It was closed in 1973 and most elements, including stations, were removed. The line of the railway is largely preserved as a wooded earthwork and forms the basis of the Lambourn Valley Way. This runs along the entire length of the valley and provides an opportunity to explore the local detail and character of this attractive rural, valley landscape.

### Perceptual Influences

**5.579** The valley sides form a close horizon and a contained visual setting, which limits outward views, creating a strong sense of enclosure.

**5.580** There is a good experience of dark night skies across the Lambourn valley, with light pollution only coming from Lambourn in the north and proximity to Newbury in the south-east.



## LCA 7B Lambourn Valley: Evaluation

### Lambourn Valley valued qualities

**5.581** The key valued qualities identified for LCA 7B Lambourn Valley are:

- The narrow river corridor creates a contained visual setting and a strong sense of enclosure, creating a strong sense of place.
- The Lambourn chalk river creates important wetland and riparian habitats, which are designated internationally and nationally. These are an important ecological resource and landscape feature.
- Grazed pasture fields and water meadows are traditional rural land uses, providing a link to the past.
- The historic pattern of small linear settlements along the Lambourn valley creates a sense of continuity and time-depth.
- The Lambourn Valley Way provides often the only recreational access to the valley.
- Associations with the racehorse industry in the upper reaches as part of the 'Valley of the Racehorse' creates a distinctive local landscape.
- A rural and peaceful valley landscape, with a good experience of dark night skies.

### Lambourn Valley local forces for change/issues

**5.582** Local forces for change and issues affecting LCA 7B Lambourn Valley are:

- The River Lambourn SSSI is in unfavourable, recovering condition. The Kennet Catchment Partnership is working on a number of habitat improvements, including channel enhancement works upstream of Great Shefford and between the M4 and Boxford. The Partnership has identified further work to install fish passes and introduce woody debris would improve the water quality and ecological conditions. The Partnership have identified road runoff from the M4 as a key source of pollution, and is working with Highways England to find ways to better manage runoff.
- Potential changes in farming practices including loss of livestock resulting in scrub encroachment on some valley pastures. Some areas are being

managed as horse paddocks with associated visual impacts from the associated structures.

- Incremental effects of converting barn and farm buildings into residential development, reducing the rural character of the valley.
- Pressure for residential expansion of the small villages within the narrow river corridor either out onto the downland sides (e.g. Lambourn) or with the potential for coalescence forming a continuous developed ribbon along the valley.

### **Lambourn Valley strategy and local guidelines**

**5.583** In addition to the guidelines set out for the River Valleys LCT, the following guidelines are of particular relevance to the Lambourn Valley:

- Engage with the Kennet Catchment Partnership and its strategies to use natural flood management (NFM) and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to manage flood risk.



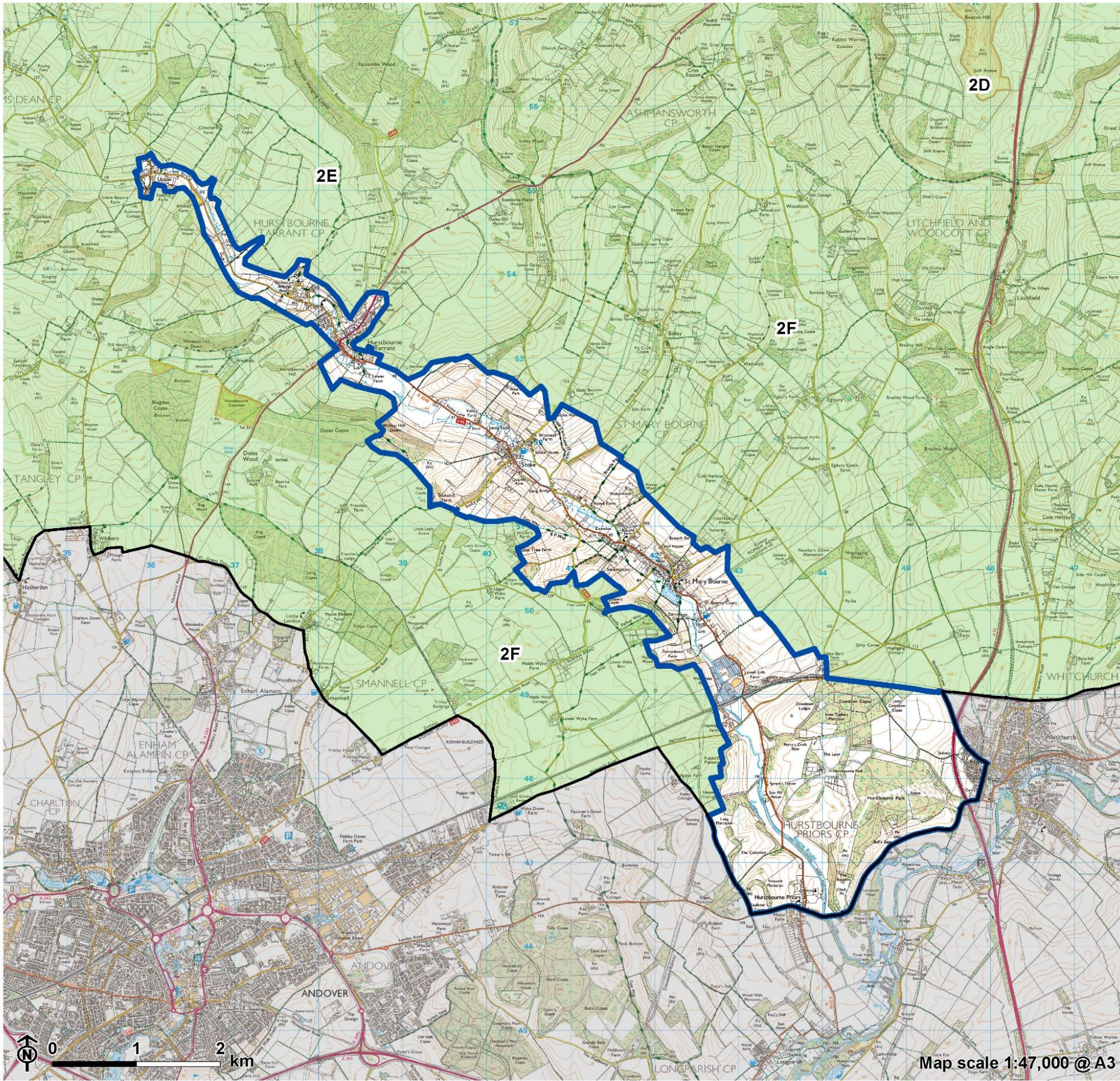
## LCA 7C: Bourne Valley

**Figure 5.159: The River Bourne**





Figure 5.160: LCA 7C: Bourne Valley: Location

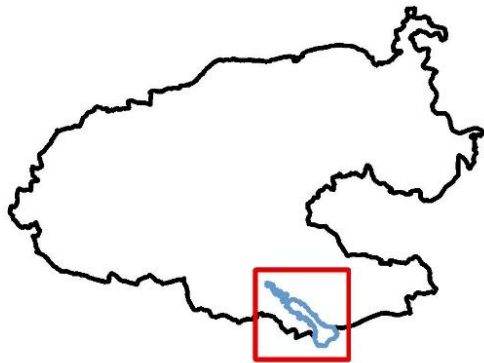


North Wessex Downs  
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7C: Bourne Valley

- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- Landscape Character Area**
- 7C: Bourne Valley
- 2D: Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp
- 2E: Chute Forest - Facombe
- 2F: Litchfield Downs



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**Figure 5.161: Thatched roofs in St Mary Bourne**



**Figure 5.162: Pastoral floodplains with riparian vegetation**



## LCA 7C: Bourne Valley Description

**5.584** 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 National Landscape. 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.

### Natural Influences

#### Landform, geology, water and soils

**5.585** The valley of the River Bourne has a distinctive form with a flat, narrow floor enclosed by abruptly rising valley sides, creating a small-scale intimate landscape. 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. The river flows down a gentle gradient from around 115 metres at its source at Upton to 60 metres at the confluence with the Test.

**5.586** 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 a part of the wider Chute Forest - Faccombe character area (LCA 2E).

#### Biodiversity

**5.587** The River Bourne is recorded as a chalk stream, an internationally and nationally rare habitat. Extensive priority habitat coastal and floodplain grazing marsh is found along the river floodplain. Deciduous woodlands line the steeper valley slopes, with a concentration at Hurstbourne Park in the south-east. Thin linear beech plantations are a feature of the lower valley sides. Some woodlands including Doles Wood in the north and Cowdown Copse in the south-east are recorded as ancient woodlands.



## Cultural Influences

### Land use and field patterns

**5.588** 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. Arable fields occupy the lower valley sides. Operational watercress beds, utilising the clear chalk stream waters, occur south of St. Mary Bourne.

**5.589** Many of the modern field 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.

### Historic features

**5.590** The present landscape was probably originated in the early prehistoric period (Neolithic and Bronze Age) when 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.

**5.591** The manor of Hurstbourne, encompassing Hurstbourne Tarrant, St Mary Bourne and Hurstbourne Priors was owned by the Bishop of Winchester until the dissolution. Hurstbourne Park, now a Registered Park and Garden, is largely the result of the ownership of the Earls of Portsmouth and includes surviving features from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century designs of Thomas Archer.

### Settlement pattern

**5.592** The river corridor provides a communications route with a valley floor 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

**5.593** 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.

**5.594** Buildings are largely of the local vernacular brick and tile, with red clay tile and thatched roofs common.

### Principal settlement

**5.595 Hurstbourne Tarrant** is a small village located on the valley floor of the winterbourne River Swift, which has now coalesced with the small hamlet of Ibthorpe a mile to the north-west. The village appears to have developed along the main road, east-west valley road and staggered crossroads, which was an important staging post for travellers on the Andover to Newbury route. The village and hamlet have retained much of their historic settlement pattern, and is covered by a Conservation Area. Ibthorpe historically maintained its independence from Hurstbourne Tarrant, declaring in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that residents were freeholders and all the land around the village, including the Common Land, belonged to them. Although modern development is generally limited, 20<sup>th</sup> century development at Dines Close has effectively coalesced the two settlements.



**Figure 5.163: Thatched roofs, Church Street Hurstbourne Tarrant**

**5.596** Hurstbourne Tarrant and Ibthorpe are located within the shallow winterbourne valley of the River Swift in the south of the National Landscape. The wooded chalk downland to the south, including ancient woodland at Doles Wood, Hurstbourne Common, and Blagden Copse, provide a dramatic backdrop to the village. From the top of Hurstbourne Hil far reaching views of undulating farmland with hedged fields and tree-lined horizons from key vistas. The area to the north-east of the village known as the Dene is part of a dry river valley that once fed into the Bourne Valley.

**Figure 5.164: Wooded chalk downland provides a backdrop to views to the south**



### Communications and infrastructure

**5.597** A main road runs the length of the valley floor, connecting the villages. 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 West of England Main Line railway crosses the valley, including over an impressive viaduct south of St Mary Bourne. A line of electricity pylons also intersect the south of the valley.

**5.598** The promoted route the Test Way provides access between Hurstbourne Tarrant and St Mary Bourne. A number of other public rights of way link the valley with the downlands to the north and south, although few provide access across the valley. There is more limited access around Hurstbourne Priors, and generally limited access to the river itself.

### Perceptual Influences

**5.599** 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. There are views to the surrounding downlands with pockets of



deciduous woodlands, which add to the enclosed character. There are also occasional long-distance views to Watership Down.

**5.600** This is a generally rural landscape, with high levels of tranquillity. There is generally a good experience of dark night skies, although this is impacted in the south by proximity to Andover and Whitchurch, as well as some light pollution from the industrial watercress beds south of St Mary Bourne.

## LCA 7C Bourne Valley: Evaluation

### Bourne Valley valued qualities

**5.601** The key valued qualities identified for LCA 7C Bourne Valley are:

- The flat, narrow valley floor enclosed by steep valley sides creates a distinctive sense of place and an intimate, enclosed landscape.
- The chalk river characteristics of the River Swift and Bourne Rivulet are internationally and nationally rare. Extensive areas of floodplain grazing marsh are an important ecological resource.
- Pasture fields are a traditional land use along the river floor, with small woodland copses on the valley sides providing enclosure and variation in the landscape character.
- The historic character of Hurstbourne Park provides a sense of time-depth and distinct sense of place in the south of the valley.
- The settlement pattern of small settlements either in a linear form along the valley or on the valley side at crossing points provide time-depth.
- Small roads, lanes and byways provide access by car and on foot, creating a rural character.

### Bourne Valley local forces for change/issues

**5.602** In addition to the forces for change identified at LCT level, local forces for change and issues affecting LCA 7C Bourne Valley are:

- The River Bourne has been part of the Watercress and Winterbournes Landscape Partnership Scheme from 2020-2025, through the Test and Itchen Catchment Partnership. This has provided chalk stream habitat restoration, natural flood management and other initiatives. This Heritage Lottery Funded project is a positive force for change.
- Recent residential development north of the railway line which is out of keeping with the existing settlement pattern.
- Increase in large commercial sheds at the Vitacress watercress beds. Although the watercress industry is an important part of the history of this landscape, the associated built development is out of keeping with the rural character of the Bourne valley.



- High traffic levels on the valley floor road, reducing tranquillity, and adding pressure for improvements to the road network (such as kerbing) resulting in a more urban character in places.
- Incremental changes to residential buildings including extensions and conversion of outbuildings to residential use which may result in a more suburban character to the small settlements.

### **Bourne Valley strategy and local guidelines**

**5.603** In addition to the guidelines set out for the River Valleys LCT, the following guidelines are of particular relevance to the Bourne Valley:

- Continue to engage with the Watercress and Winterbourne project, and other initiatives from the Test and Itchen Catchment Partnership to improve water quality and access to the river.
- Ensure new developments in the river valley are in keeping with the historic settlement pattern and do not cause the coalescence of any smaller settlements.
- Any new commercial or agricultural sheds should be carefully sited and use a suitable colour palette to avoid being visually intrusive.

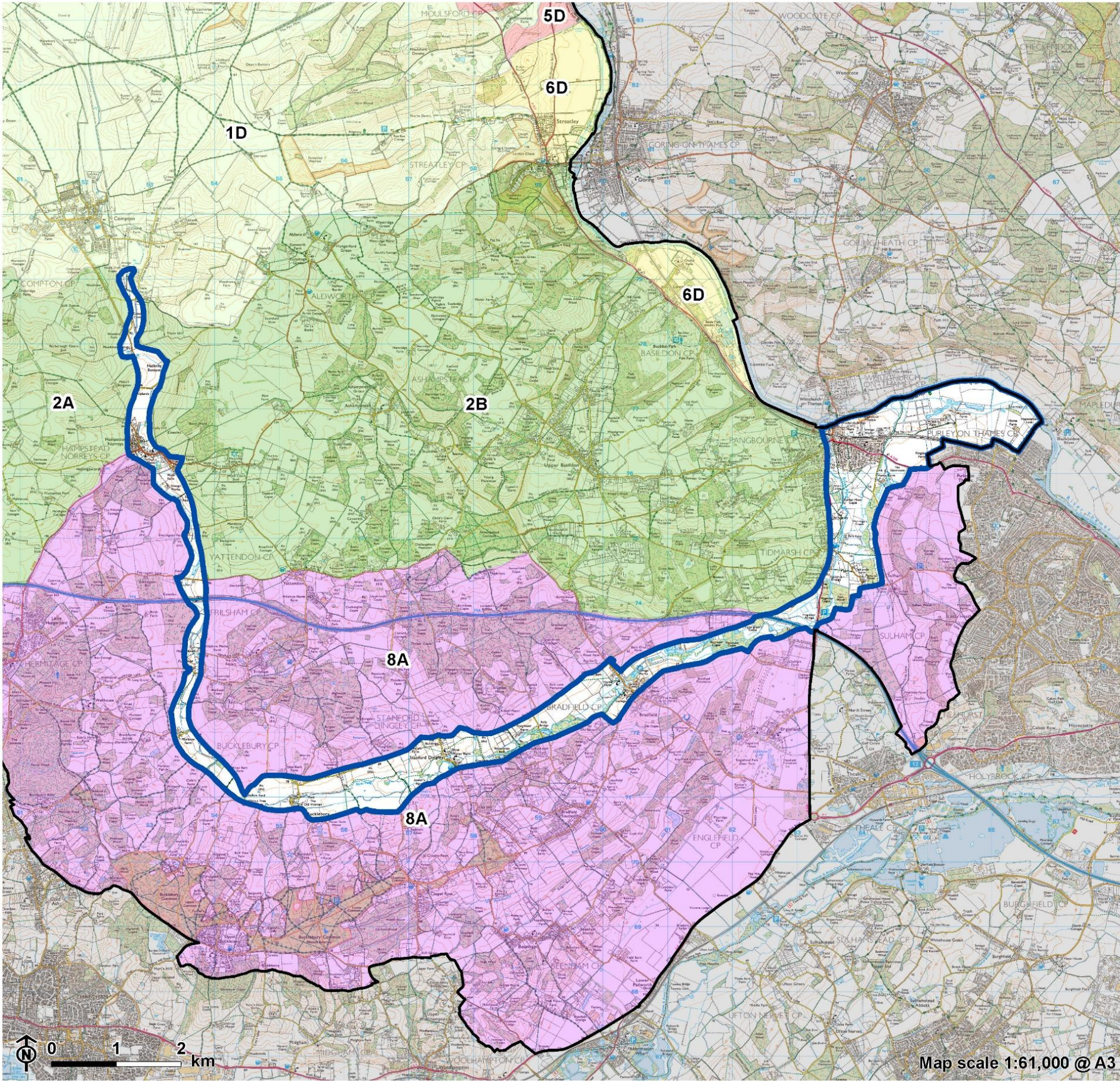
## LCA 7D: Pang Valley

**Figure 5.165: River Pang near Parsonage Farm**





Figure 5.166: LCA 7D: Pang Valley: Location

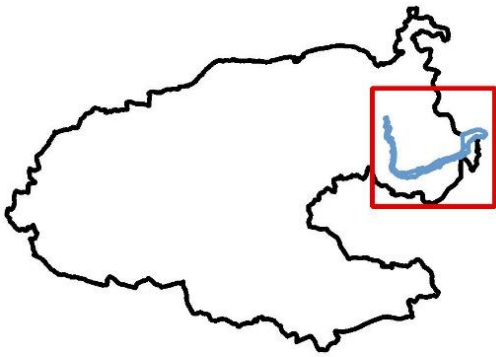


North Wessex Downs  
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North Wessex Downs National Landscape



7D: Pang Valley

- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- Landscape Character Area
- 7D: Pang Valley
- 1D: Blewbury Downs
- 2A: Brightwalton Downs
- 2B: Ashampstead Downs
- 5D: Moreton Plain
- 6D: Thames Floodplain
- 8A: Hermitage Wooded Commons



Map scale 1:61,000 @ A3

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**Figure 5.167: Horse grazing with views across wooded Pang Valley**



**Figure 5.168: Wooded horizon across Pang Valley around Buckleberry Ford**





## LCA 7D: Pang Valley Description

**5.604** The River Pang drains the chalk upland in the north-west of the National Landscape 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. The lower part of the river flows through the clays and gravels of the lowland landscape of Hermitage Wooded Commons (LCA 8A).

### Natural Influences

#### Landform, geology, water and soils

**5.605** 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 Blewbury Downs (LCA 1D).

**5.606** 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.

**5.607** 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.

**5.608** East of Stanford Dingley, towards Bradfield, the river flows through a noticeably more wooded landscape, before widening out significantly north of Bradfield, where it merges with the surrounding wooded farmland around Tidmarsh.

#### Biodiversity

**5.609** The upper course of the chalk River Pang is marked by a thin belt of broadleaved woodland. Occasional small linear woodlands are found on the valley sides. East of Stanford Dingley, towards Bradfield, the river flows through a noticeably more wooded landscape. The wider valley floor has created space for floodplain grazing marsh and seasonally flooded meadow. 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.

**5.610** The floodplain near Tidmarsh east of the M4 is designated as the nationally important Sulham and Tidmarsh Woods and Meadows SSSI. The complex soil pattern of alluvial loams, gravel terraces and peat deposits 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*).

## Cultural Influences

### Land use and field patterns

**5.611** Land cover varies across the course of the River Pang. In its upper course the valley contains large arable fields descending from the surrounding downland, with a narrow arable-dominated valley floor. The middle section of the valley as it turns to the east has a mixture of pasture and arable fields. The lower reaches of the Pang are generally in pastoral use.

**5.612** Many of the modern field boundaries in the Pang valley are at right angles to the river, and some might reflect medieval parish boundaries. Purley, Westbury Farm and Stanford Dingley have fields that are likely to be relict water meadows which could date back to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. 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 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century Parliamentary enclosure.

### Historic features

**5.613** Trapezoidal and oval enclosure patterns, linear ditch boundaries and a trackway between Pangbourne and Purley, on the gravel floodplain of the Thames, may be prehistoric in origin. They are a vivid illustration of the length of continuity of human exploitation of the valley.

**5.614** The village of Bradfield may be of Saxon origin and had a minster church. Many of the settlements developed around medieval manor houses, such as Hampstead Norreys, Frilsham and Bucklebury. There is a medieval moated manor at Stanford Dingley. Immediately south of Westbury Farm is the deserted medieval village of Purley Parva.



**5.615** Areas of formal parkland with mature oaks and limes scattered in pasture are found at Bradfield Hall and Purley Hall – the latter is a Registered Park and Garden. The manor at Bradfield was converted into public school, Bradfield College, which opened in 1850.

### Settlement pattern

**5.616** Settlements are located on minor roads crossing the valley. These include scattered farms situated at regular intervals on the valley floor, tiny hamlets such as Bucklebury and Stanford Dingley and the two larger villages at Hampstead Norreys and Bradfield. The attractive riverside settlement of Pangbourne is situated at the confluence of the valley with the Thames.

**5.617** The dominant building material is red brick, and the white weatherboard church at Stamford Dingley is a distinctive feature. The small villages and hamlets are all covered by Conservation Areas.

### Principal settlements

**5.618 Pangbourne** is a rural service village of approximately 3,300 inhabitants set on the valley sides of the River Pang. The Roman road between Silchester and Dorchester ran through the area and it is likely that a Romano-British settlement existed here. A settlement is first recorded in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and two mills are mentioned in the Domesday Book. The introduction of the Great Western Railway in 1870 connected the village directly to Reading, and increased residential development. 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century development has further expanded the village, which has spread west up the valley sides into the Ashampstead Downs (LCA 2B) and further east along the River Pang floodplain. It has also expanded south along the A340.

**Figure 5.169: Pangbourne**

**5.619** Pangbourne is located at the confluence of the River Thames and the River Pang. This creates a scenic riverside setting with wide meadow and wetland areas on the eastern edges of the village. In contrast, the west of the village climbs the valley sides of the Pang and is set among semi-natural woodland. This coupled with the local rural lanes and dense hedgerows help to create a sense of enclosure and tranquil atmosphere to the area around Pangbourne.



**Figure 5.170: The River Pang south of Pangbourne**

### Communications and infrastructure

**5.620** 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.

**5.621** The Great Western Mainline railway crosses east-west cross the valley at Pangbourne. The M4 cuts across the grain of the valley in both its upper and lower reaches. Electricity pylons cross the valley between Sulham and Purley, and are a visible vertical presence in the landscape.

**5.622** Public rights of way are concentrated on the edges of Pangbourne and between Bucklebury and Bradfield, where there are some tracks which cross the valley floor. Upstream of Bucklebury there is more limited recreational access, and limited access to the river across the whole river valley. The Thames Path follows the southern bank of the River Thames at the eastern edge of the LCA.

### Perceptual Influences

**5.623** The M4 has a high visual and noise impact on the landscape. It is particularly intrusive in the upper reaches, where it severs the valley on an

embankment. Away from the M4 there is a sense of enclosure and isolation, increased by the valley landform, sunken lanes, and woodlands.

**5.624** There is a good experience of dark night skies in the north and centre of the river valley. The east of the landscape is impacted by proximity to Reading and Pangbourne.



## LCA 7D Pang Valley: Evaluation

### Pang Valley valued qualities

**5.625** The key valued qualities identified for LCA 7D Pang Valley are:

- The woodlands and wetland habitats relating to the internationally and nationally rare River Pang chalk stream. These include floodplain grazing marsh, and the nationally designated Sulham and Tidmarsh Woods and Meadows SSSI, are ecologically important habitats.
- The attractive rural settlement pattern formed around manor houses and farms provides a sense of time-depth and continuity of settlement.
- Areas of parkland, medieval village patterns and historic former water meadows and watercress beds create a sense of time-depth.
- The enclosure formed by areas of woodland, valley sides and rural sunken lanes creates a rural and tranquil landscape, with an isolated character at times.

### Pang Valley local forces for change/issues

**5.626** In addition to the forces for change identified at LCT level, local forces for change and issues affecting LCA 7D Pang Valley are:

- Wastewater is discharged into the River Pang from a wastewater treatment works at Hampstead Norrey. Action for the River Kennet are proposing river restoration works to realign the river channel upstream of the discharge point and use wetland planting to naturally filter the discharges. This is a positive force for change which should enhance the landscape character and water quality of the River Pang.
- The recent electrification of the Great Western mainline railway has resulted in further vertical infrastructure in this landscape. To combat this, Network Rail have created the Mend the Gap programme, to enhance the areas of the National Landscape negatively impacted by the electrification. Funds are available to support hedgerow and tree planting to mitigate the ganties, and for enhancement projects. There are positive opportunities for landscape improvements within this LCA, landscape/access/habitats.
- Using funds from the Mend the Gap programme, Action for the River Kennet have recently created a wetland at Sulham Woodmeadows to take advantage of existing seasonal flooding. This will allow water to be kept on

the land for longer, increasing the wetland habitat and increasing biodiversity. This will improve the landscape character of former arable fields.

- Development pressures, particularly on the edge of Pangbourne, could impact the valley landscape and detract from the distinctive rural character of the valley villages.

### **Pang Valley strategy and local guidelines**

**5.627** In addition to the guidelines set out for the River Valley LCT, the following guidelines are of particular relevance to the Pang Valley:

- Engage with the Kennet Catchment Partnership and Action for the River Kennet to use natural flood management (NFM) and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to manage flood risk and improve water quality.
- Conserve the rural sunken roads, minimising small-scale incremental change such as signage, fencing and kerbing, or improvements to the road network which could change their character. Promote the use of traditional signage features, using local styles and materials. Ensure any road lighting schemes retain the experience of dark night skies within the river valley.
- Maintain the network of public rights of way and consider opportunities to improve access in the upper reaches of the Pang valley as well as access to the river itself.