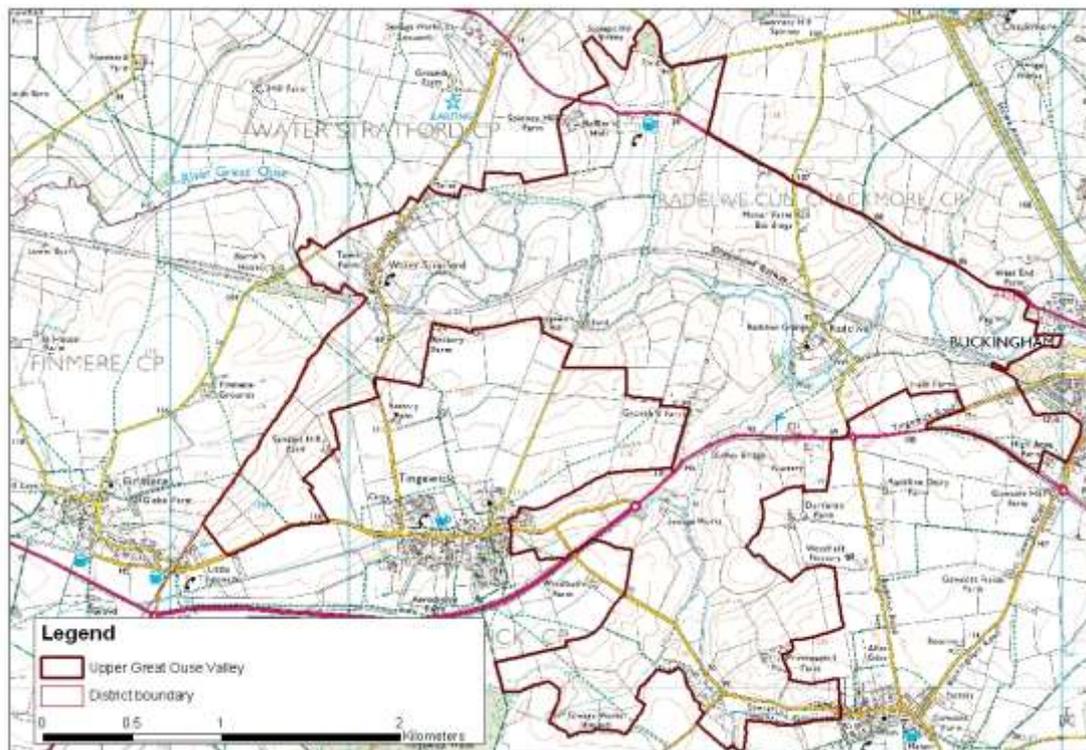
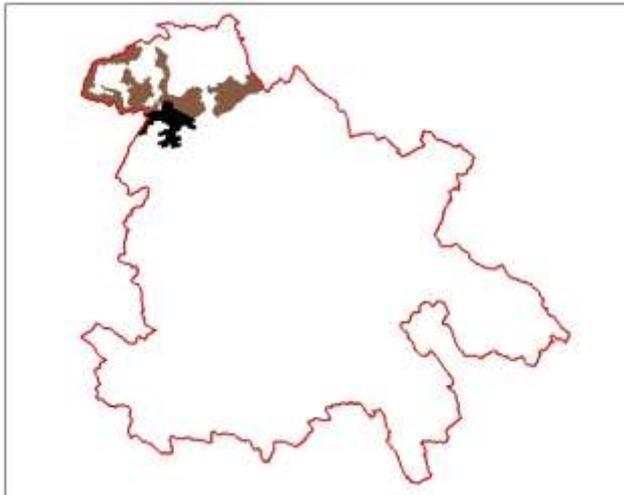


## LCA 2.7 Upper Great Ouse Valley

### Landscape Character Type: LCT 2 Incised Valleys



## LCA 2.7 Upper Great Ouse Valley (LCT 2)

### Key Characteristics

- Small river valley with stream tributaries
- Meandering river marked by bank side vegetation
- Historic meadows along river
- Relatively steep, folded valley sides and narrow valley bottom
- Good tree cover
- Generally good hedgerows with species diversity
- Predominantly pasture in small fields with good hedgerows
- Some arable fields with poor hedgerows

### Distinctive Features

- River GreatOuse
- Small villages in valley floor with some stone houses
- Disused railway line often on embankment
- Strong tree and shrub vegetation along disused railway
- Narrow bridges across rivers and streams
- St.Rumbold's Well and views to Buckingham
- Neutral grassland

### Intrusive Elements

- Traffic on A421 and A422
- Golf course
- Small sewage works

**Location** The area extends westwards from Buckingham to the county boundary. The A421 and A422 are located on parts of the southern and northern valley sides respectively.

**Landscape character** A small well defined river valley with steep valley sides and narrow flood plain characterised by the meandering Great Ouse and its tributaries marked by vegetation, and by well defined settlements and pastoral land use. This area has an intimate character in marked contrast to the more open valley of the Great Ouse to the east of Buckingham.

There are some good views down the valley towards Buckingham in which the church tower is a focus. However, most views are enclosed by vegetation or landform. In some areas away from the roads and golf course, the character is remote and hidden but not particularly wild. The edge of Buckingham is generally well screened although there is a little visual intrusion and non-agricultural use.

**Geology** Superficial deposits of alluvium occur close to the course of the river, elsewhere there are deposits of till and glaciofluvial deposits. The underlying geology is Oolite limestone.

**Topography** The landform is a small river valley having a generally narrow valley bottom with little flat ground either side of the river. The valley sides are generally steeper and folded.

**Hydrology** The Great Ouse has a very meandering course with no evidence of straightening. There are narrow bridges over the river at Water Stratford and Radclive, two weirs at Radclive and a ford near Tingewick Mill. Five meandering tributary streams join the river from the north and south.

**Land use and settlement** The land use is predominantly pasture in small fields with strong high hedgerows; some particularly in the narrower valley bottom have irregular boundaries. There are larger arable fields notably in the wider floodplains immediately west of Buckingham and small areas with fragmented hedgerows and post and wire fencing. Other land uses include a golf course and a garden centre.

The main settlement comprises the small villages of Radclive and Water Stratford adjacent to the valley bottom and Tingewick and Gawcott at the top of tributary streams. There is very little other settlement - farms tend to be on the top of the valley sides at the boundary with surrounding character areas. Tingewick Mill is the only other building close to the valley bottom.

The settlements are predominantly traditional buildings of stone or brick with slate or tile roofs and with some stonewalling.

The proximity of the urban edge of Buckingham appears to have little impact on the adjacent agricultural land. The A421 and A422 have a localised impact only. The lanes crossing the valley are narrow and winding and in places slightly sunken below the surrounding ground level.

## LCA 2.7 Upper Great Ouse Valley (LCT 2)

**Tree cover** Woodland is limited to a few very small stands close to the valley floor however, the presence of small copses and good hedgerows give the appearance that many parts of the valley have a good level of tree cover. The most notable areas are along the disused railway line and on the banks of the Great Ouse and its tributary streams.

The settlements are also the focus for large mature trees with some ornamental trees in Radclive. There are significant numbers of trees on the golf course, but the layout and ornamental species tends to be discordant with the surrounding landscape.

Tree cover in hedgerows is very variable but there are significant numbers of strong hedgerows with continuous tree cover.

**Biodiversity** The habitats of the Great Ouse valley are predominantly a mix of arable and grassland habitats. Much of the grassland is improved with the exception of areas of neutral and unimproved pasture, often closely associated with the Great Ouse. Neutral grassland and the watercourses are broad habitats of District significance.

There are no significant stands of woodland but small blocks of woodland and copses are present.

The biodiversity interest is significantly enhanced by the Great Ouse meandering from east to west and its tributary streams which together bisect the area, and by the woodland habitats associated with the line of the disused railway which again runs east to west crossing the Great Ouse at several points. These relationships and the hedgerow network provide good connectivity between habitats.

**Historic environment** The Upper Ouse Valley is likely to have provided a focus for settlement from prehistoric times. An enclosure and ring ditch, both probably of later prehistoric date are recorded on aerial photographs. Two Roman roads traverse this area and a Roman villa and burial site are recorded. Medieval evidence is focused on the villages, surviving patches of ridge and furrow cultivation and, on the extreme eastern edge of the area, around the site of St.Rumbold's Well from where there are good views of the historic county town. About a third of this landscape has retained features of a pre 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape. This is mainly in the form of meadows adjacent to the river but also some pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosure mainly around Radclive and Water Stratford. There is also a small area of fossilised strips to the south of Water Stratford. Later enclosure is predominantly parliamentary enclosure in the west of the area. There are also scattered fragments of 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosure. Recently large areas of prairie farming have been created around Radclive. There is also a golf course on the sloping valley side, to the south of Radclive. There are conservation areas and listed buildings in the small villages of Radclive and Water Stratford; the later comprises a nucleated row set along the Roman road linking Alchester to Towcester. The dismantled Banbury-Verney Junction railway runs along the valley.

### **Designations**

Conservation Areas at Radclive and Water Stratford

Archaeological Notification Areas – 11 No.

CWS – 1 No.

BNS – 5 No.

## LCA 2.7 Upper Great Ouse Valley (LCT 2)



View towards Buckingham from the small area of floodplain. The church spire is visible on the skyline.

## LCA 2.7 Upper Great Ouse Valley (LCT 2)

### Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Good</b>
Pattern of elements:	Unified
Visual detractors:	Few
Visual unity:	Strongly unified
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Coherent

<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Moderate</b>
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

**Guidelines**                      **Conserve and Reinforce**

### Condition

The condition of this landscape is considered to be good overall. The pattern of elements is unified and the few distracting features have only a localised impact. This combines to give a visually strongly unified landscape. The cultural integrity is considered to be variable being strongest near historic villages and St. Rumbold's Well and weakest in the large arable fields with post and wire fencing. Ecological integrity is moderate due to good connectivity and the incidence of designated sites and habitats of District significance. Overall the functional integrity of the landscape is considered to be coherent.

### Sensitivity

This landscape is considered to be of moderate sensitivity based on the distinct character and a good sense of historic continuity combining to give a moderate sense of place. The landform is apparent but not dominant and the tree cover is intermittent. This combines to give a moderate level of visibility.



The village of Radclive with its narrow brick bridge and tree cover.

## LCA 2.7 Upper Great Ouse Valley (LCT 2)

### Landscape Guidelines Conserve and Reinforce

The landscape guidelines for the Upper Great Ouse Valley are as follows:

- Conserve the historic field pattern and encourage hedgerow management to enable new hedgerow trees to establish.
- Encourage less intensive agricultural and golf course management adjacent to watercourses.
- Reinforce the existing field pattern where arable intensification has eroded hedgerows.
- Encourage local woodland management schemes of wet woodland close to valley bottom.
- Encourage planting of locally occurring native tree species on the boundaries of the golf course to improve integration with the surrounding landscape.
- Consider the use of tree planting to reinforce the visual screen on the urban edge.
- Enhance connectivity where possible.
- Maintain the existing extent and condition of neutral grassland.



Looking west along the valley north of Radclive.