May 2015
Land South of Brackmills

Appendix 8. Extracts from Northampton Current Landscape Character Assessment, Strategy and Guidelines

Limestone Valley Slopes (Landscape Character Type)
- 12a Wollaston to Irchester (Landscape Character Area)

Undulating Claylands
- 6b Hackleton Claylands

Bred River Valley Floodplain
- 18c The Nene, Duston Mill to Billing Wharf
CHARACTER AREAS

12a Wollaston to Irchester
12b Higham Ferrers to Thrapston
12c Thrapston to Warmington
12d Harper’s Brook
12e Aldwincle to Oundle
12f Oundle to Nassington

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

• Transitional landscape displaying characteristics of surrounding landscape character types;
• limestone geology evident in local buildings;
• gently undulating farmed slopes bordering the Nene and its principal tributaries;
• expansive long distance views and wide panoramas across the valley to neighbouring landscapes;
• predominance of arable land with isolated areas of improved and semi improved pasture and setaside land;
• very sparse woodland cover comprising small deciduous and occasionally coniferous shelterbelts limiting the sense of enclosure locally;
• fields predominantly large, and medium to large;
• small to medium sized pasture fields conspicuous surrounding villages;
• fields generally enclosed by hedgerows with intermittent mature hedgerow trees, often showing signs of decline;
• numerous villages display close relationship to landform in their morphology and orientation; and
• communication routes principally limited to direct roads parallel to the course of the main river channel, minor roads connecting small settlements and individual dwellings running along tributaries at right angles to the main route.
LOCATION AND INTRODUCTION

The Limestone Valley Slopes mark the transition between the low, flat and predominantly pastoral landscapes of the Nene floodplain and the varied and more elevated landscapes that are to the east and west, principally comprising the Wooded Limestone Hills and Valleys, the Wooded Clay Plateau, Undulating Claylands and the Farmed Claylands. Limestone and mudstone geology predominates although is present in varying amounts on the valley sides.

The Limestone Valley Slopes border the Nene to the east of Northampton and extend northwards to the county boundary at Elton to the east of the Nene, and Nassington to the west. The Limestone Valley Slopes also encompass tributary valleys the most prominent of which is the Harper’s Brook valley, which joins the Nene to the north of Islip, together with other minor tributaries that enter the main river channel at Oundle, Cotterstock and Perlo Mill.

The valley slopes are relatively well set, with numerous linear villages occupying sheltered positions. A number of larger settlements are also present, overlooking the Nene and often extending onto neighbouring landscape types. These are classified as ‘urban’ in the landscape character assessment.

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and Soils

The Nene, and its tributary Harper’s Brook, have both carved gentle valley sides along which a succession of Jurassic rocks have been exposed. The youngest rocks, comprising the Oxford Clay Formation and Kellaways Beds, occupy the upper section of the Nene Valley, followed by the progressively older Cornbrash, Blisworth Clay Formation and the Blisworth Limestone Formation, which forms a notable linear outcrop along the middle slopes of the Nene Valley. To the north, where the Nene has cut deeper into the underlying bedrock, Rutland Formation and Grantham Formation rocks have been exposed although these are often cloaked in river terrace gravels. Drift deposits are not characteristic, however, tending to be present on the plateau landscapes above the valley slopes and along the floodplain of the Nene. Despite this, a narrow band of glacial till may be observed on the upper slopes of the valley sides where they border the Wooded Clay Plateau, Undulating Claylands and Farmed Claylands landscape character types.

Soils across the landscape type vary, and whilst a number of character areas offer simple soil coverage, others display a much more complex range of soil types. Soils within the most southerly character area are particularly variable. The area supports well drained calcareous clayey and fine loamy soils over limestone, which in places are shallow and brashy. Other soil types comprise slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged fine loamy over clayey; fine silt over clayey and clayey soils, fine loamy over clayey and clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging, and well drained brashy fine and coarse loamy ferruginous soils over ironstone. By contrast, the Higham Ferrers to Thrapston Limestone Valley Slopes is overlain entirely by well-drained calcareous clayey and fine loamy soils over limestone, in places shallow and brashy. Moving further north and west towards the Irchester to Warrington Slopes and Harper’s Brook, this dominance of a single soil type gives way to areas of fine loamy over clayey, and clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging; slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils, and isolated pockets of shallow, well-drained brashy calcareous fine loamy soils over limestone. The Aldwincle to Oundle character area is dominated by well drained calcareous clayey and fine loamy soils over limestone, in places shallow and brashy with smaller areas of slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged clayey, with similar fine loamy over clayey soils. The most northerly edge of the landscape type has a relatively complex soil coverage, including soils found throughout other areas of the landscape type as well as areas of stoneless clayey soils, in places calcareous, and largely affected by groundwater; and well drained and in places shallow, fine and coarse loamy soils, locally calcareous, and overlying limestone gravel.

Landform

The valley sides have been carved by the action of the Nene and its tributaries and are typically broad and gentle, rising to a maximum elevation of 100m ASL from the valley floor, which is generally between 10 and 20m ASL. Steeper sections are limited but do exist, most notably marking the break of slope fringing the western limits of the Farmed Claylands, and along the valley of the Harper’s Brook. The sloping landform defines the limits of neighbouring plateau landscapes and marks the edge of the extent of the Broad River Valley Floodplain Landscape.

Hydrology

The limestone slopes bordering the Nene are dissected by numerous tributary streams that drain the neighbouring plateau landscapes and lowlands. The Nene itself defines the main axis of the landscape. However, the series of tributary streams that flow at right angles into the main channel have created an undulating landscape along the slopes that fall to the river valley. The impact of the tributaries on local landscape character is limited although the principal tributaries of Harper’s Brook and Willow Brook, which flow off the Wooded Clay Plateau and the Wooded Limestone Hills and Valleys, respectively, are significant landscape features. Beyond these main tributaries and to the east of the Nene, tributaries are shorter and rise at the fringes of the valley sides, beyond which watercourses tend to flow eastwards to the River Great Ouse.
Streams have been dammed in the vicinity of Castle Ashby to form lakes, which are an important component contributing to local landscape character. There are few other hydrological features of note in the landscape. A small number of ponds are evident, although their impact on local landscape character is limited. Although some appear to be natural others, such as the water bodies to the south of Old Sulehay Forest, appear to have been established in former quarry workings.

To the east of the Nene arable farming predominates, with large fields of crops extending off the Upland Claylands and the intensively farmed Farm Claylands down the valley sides. Localised variations are evident, however, with small pockets of semi improved and improved pasture on land bordering villages, for example at Wollaston, Grendon, Titchmarsh, Achurch, Barnwell and Aughton. To the west of the Nene, land cover patterns are more intricate with linear belts of semi improved and improved pastures on steeper slopes and on land bordering watercourses. Arable land remains the predominant land use, particularly to the north of Oundle, where patterns mirror those on the Limestone Hills and Valleys.

In contrast to landscapes to the west, namely the Wooded Limestone Hills and Valleys, and the Wooded Clay Plateau, the Limestone Valley Slopes contain few sizable or noteworthy areas of woodland, wide areas having been cleared for farmland. The majority of woodlands are located to the north of Thorpe Waterville, and comprise small broadleaved copses and moderately sized mixed plantations. A large area of new planting is also evident to the south of Brackenhills Industrial Estate. Woodlands in the landscape are not ancient in origin. The only area of ancient woodland remaining is Siley Coppice, an area of semi natural woodland bordering the road that runs parallel to Lyeveden Brook.

Hedgegrow trees and small areas of tree planting surrounding farmsteads are important locally as they often represent the only strong vertical elements in these agricultural landscapes. However, many hedgerows are neat, low and well clipped and do not contain trees. Many fields are also large and the landscape therefore retains an open character. Poplar shelterbelts are also a strong visual element, but not frequent in the landscape.

**HUMAN INFLUENCES**

The Limestone Valley Slopes are strongly influenced by five of the county’s fifteen urban areas. It is likely that these settlements were strategically located at crossing points over the Nene, beyond the maximum extent of the floodplain and expanded up onto the valley slopes as populations grew. This is likely to be the case with Oundle, where the historic core of the town is sited on a sloping spur of land which projects into a meander in the course of the Nene. In recent centuries, housing has been built further up the slope. Northampton has also expanded from its historic core on the Rolling Ironstone Valley Slopes across the Nene where new industrial estates have been established on and bordering the Limestone Valley Slopes.

The wider landscape is relatively well settled with numerous villages and hamlets. To the south of Thrupston east of the Nene, these tend to be compact settlements centred around a junction of two or more roads, as at Bozeat, Wollaston, Incham, Stanwick, Ringstead and Denford. More typical, however, are linear villages such as Great Houghton, Briggstock and Sudborough in the valley of Harper’s Brook. The morphology and orientation of these linear settlements is dictated by landform patterns. For example, Wadenhoe is located on the slopes bordering the main channel of the Nene and is therefore orientated north–south. By contrast, Woodnewton and Southwick fringe tributaries flowing eastwards off the neighbouring hills to the Nene and are therefore orientated east–west.

There are few visible historic monuments or features evident on the Limestone Valley Slopes. However, areas of ridge and furrow are more common than on the neighbouring Clay Plateau, Wooded Limestone Hills and Broad River Valley Floodplain landscape character types, with particular concentrations around Tilstock, Aldwincle and Wadenhoe. Clifford Hill is also an important and imposing site. The Motte marks the site of a once imposing castle and is one of the largest of its type of medieval fortification in England. The cores of a number of villages are also important features of the historic landscape, many containing old stone churches and attractive stone cottages. Perhaps the most striking is at Fotheringhay. Here, the church, village and remains of a once impressive castle dominate the banks overlooking the river at an old bridging point. The church is a particularly striking landscape feature, begun in 1434 as an addition to the now removed chancel and collegiate buildings. It lies adjacent to the castle, the birthplace of Richard III and the site of Mary Queen of Scots’ trial and beheading. The castle was demolished in 1635 and its stones were used in the construction of many of the houses in the village.

In the wider landscape a noteworthy heritage feature is the course of a Roman Road. This runs along the lower and middle slopes of the Limestone Valley Sides parallel to the course of the Nene. Between Thrupston and Barnwell its course is marked by the Akhs. North of Barnwell the route is preserved as minor roads and footpaths, notably the course of the Nene Way, which follows the route for a short distance.
Historic country houses and their landscapes, grounds and gardens also represent an important heritage resource but are not frequent in this landscape character type. Castle Ashby is a notable site, however, and here, Grade I registered gardens contain remains of areas of ridge and furrow. The Park was enclosed soon after Conquest and landscaped from 1761 onwards by Capability Brown. It retains late 17th Century features, a particularly notable feature is a mile long avenue, which extends across the Inclutulating Claylands onto the low Wooded Clay Ridge.

**Boundaries and Field Patterns**

Large, regular and sub regular fields are characteristic of the Limestone Valley Slopes, particularly in areas under arable cultivation. Within the areas surrounding villages, where improved and semi improved pastures are most frequent, a more intricate pattern of small and medium size regular fields is evident.

Field boundaries are generally defined by low, well-trimmed hedgerows. Where arable farming predominates, these are sometimes gappy and show signs of decline. Significant stretches of hedgerow contain few hedgerow trees, which in places are stag headed and showing signs of die back. In the absence of significant woodland this leads to an open character.

**Communications and Infrastructure**

In order to avoid the seasonally wet floodplain bordering the Nene, direct arterial routes tend to run along the boundary of or along the Limestone Valley Slopes parallel to the main river channel. It is likely that this has been the nature of routes through the landscape for thousands of years. Indeed, the Roman Road from Thrapston to the Roman town of DVRORIVAE (Water Newton) runs along the Limestone Valley Slopes and parts of its course are now occupied by the A605. To the west of the Nene, minor country roads predominate, although the grain of the landscape dictated by the course of the river is again mirrored in the alignment of roads along the lower and mid slope. On both sides of the river, numerous minor minor roads run at right angles to the Nene and link villages and the wider landscape beyond the valley to the river. Many of these secondary routes run alongside tributaries, with linear villages bordering them in many instances, further reinforcing the strong grain of the landscape.

Major infrastructure developments are not evident in the landscape although overhead transmission lines are conspicuous in the valley of the Harper’s Brook, in the tributary of the Nene that flows through Glatthorn, and in the vicinity of the electricity sub station at Grendon.

**Recreation**

Brigstock and Irchester Country Parks represent the principal recreational resources in the landscape. Brigstock Country Park (situated on glacial deposits and formerly worked for sand), has been developed to include trails with links to surrounding Fernym Wood and picnic meadows. Irchester Park has been developed within a former ironstone quarry, and contains an interpretation centre. Fotheringhay church and castle are also popular visitor attractions.

The Nene Way diverts from its course through the Broad River Valley Floodplain at A chirch and traverses the Limestone Valley Slopes northwards to Warmingthorpe. In the wider landscape, public rights of way offer a limited network that is generally confined to the periphery of larger villages and towns, and tend to radiate out into surrounding landscape types.

**Aesthetic and Perceptual Qualities**

The landscape is characterised by gently undulating, productive farmland and stretches gently to the Nene. From elevated areas, wide views are possible over the landscape to the course of the valley, and beyond into neighbouring landscape types. Here, the landscape is perceived as relatively open and elevated, an absence of woodland and hedgerow trees increasing the frequency of long distance viewing opportunities. By contrast, on the lower slopes of the valley towards the Nene and along stretches of the more significant tributaries to the west of the Nene, views are more limited and a more intimate and human scale character is experienced.

**Local Distinctiveness, Landscape Condition and Landscape Change**

The landscape marks the transition between the flat riverine landscapes of the Broad River Valley Floodplain and contrasting agricultural and wooded landscapes, comprising the Farmed Claylands, the Wooded Clay Plateau and the Clay Plateau beyond the valley. As a result, the Limestone Valley Slopes display characteristics of each and are distinctive for this reason.

The predominance of arable farming has resulted in the reduced need for well-maintained boundaries and consequently hedgerows are showing signs of decline. In many areas, however, low, neat and well-maintained hedges are in evidence and give the landscape a productive and managed character. The absence of woodlands indicates that widespread clearance for agriculture has taken place, and indeed the proximity to the heart of Rockingham Forest to the west of the Nene suggests that prior to intensive agriculture practices, the landscape would have been more heavily wooded.

The expansion of urban areas in recent years has resulted in the despoiling of some areas of the landscape on the urban fringes of settlements, although the impact is relatively localised. Elsewhere, attractive villages, such as Fotheringhay, have retained their historic character. They make a significant contribution to local landscape character and distinctiveness.
12a  Wollaston to Irchester

The Wollaston to Irchester Character Area extends from Northampton to Rushden. Bordering the River Nene Broad River Valley Floodplain to the north and Undulating Claylands and Low Wooded Clay Ridge to the south, the character area generally slopes towards the floodplain from more elevated land to the south.

The area is characterised by a predominance of large scale fields of arable cereals and horticulture cloaking the gently undulating landform. Smaller improved pastures with grazing sheep and cattle are frequent, however, around settlements such as Little Houghton, Cogenhoe, Castle Ashby, Grendon, Bozat and Wollaston. ‘Horsiculture’ is also frequent in such areas, conspicuous in the landscape through the use of white ribbon temporary fencing. Within many areas of improved pasture, small pockets of calcareous grassland are evident with larger areas of neutral grassland located around Irchester Country Park. Boundaries across the area vary, including low hawthorn hedgerows, both clipped and overgrown, and post and wire fencing. Although overgrown, scrubby hawthorn is evident along boundary lines, but hedgerows trees are infrequent.

Woodland in the character area is relatively varied although, as is typical of the landscape type, it is limited. South of industrial development at Brackmills, significant areas of young tree planting have been established on the north facing slopes with smaller areas of broadleaved woodland located within the central section of the area, including Coney Green Plantation and woodland surrounding Castle Ashby. Mixed woodlands are evident around Castle Ashby, with a significant area at The Firs and Irchester Country Park, with coniferous planting also found around the latter two areas. Although woodland within the character area is limited, woodland in surrounding landscape types of the Undulating Clay Plateau and Low Wooded Clay Ridge forms horizon features and a wooded backdrop to the area.

The character area is reasonably well settled, with a number of villages of varying morphology extending across the undulating landform. Church spires are prominent in a number of the villages, including those found at Irchester, Wollaston, Bozat, Easton Maudit, Grendon, Whiston and Little Houghton. Beyond the area boundary, east of Wollaston, a water tower also creates a prominent vertical feature. Beyond the villages are isolated farms and dwellings. Minor roads as well as more major routes connect the settlements in the area, of which a number are prominent in views, and also create areas of localised noise intrusion. The A509 and B570 are such examples. Also intrusive in views are high voltage pylons crossing the landscape, extending into the area from the adjacent Nene Valley. The permitted sand and gravel extraction site northwest of Bozat is notable within the character area. The quarry occupies sloping land to the west of the A509.
12 LIMESTONE VALLEY SLOPES

Heritage features are limited in the area with Castle Ashby providing the main area of interest. Located within the woodland and mature parkland setting is an Elizabethan/Jacobean house with a serpentine park and Victorian garden. The park, designed by Capability Brown after 1761, contains a ha-ha and a series of ponds. In the 1860s, a terrace garden was made and the old kitchen garden was transformed into an elaborate Italian garden with parterres. The Grade II listed park and garden occupies a significant area with a tree avenue extending southwards into the surrounding landscape types. Isolated fields of ridge and furrow can be found along the northern slopes of the character area. Also located along the northern edge are the outer limits of Chester House, a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Avenues of trees are also an important element of the landscape and extend southwards from the core of the gardens onto Yardley Chase.

There is evidence of former quarrying activity within the character area, with remnants of quarries in infilled and restored ground to the south of the Gipsy Lane (B570), west of Irchester and north of Wollaston. The former ironstone quarry that is now occupied by Irchester Country Park is of particular note. Located on the northern section of the character area, it provides the main recreational opportunity. The 200 acres of woodland and meadow within the Country Park are accessible to the public through a network of footpaths, with parking and picnic facilities available. The woodland comprises larch, Scots pine, oak, ash, cherry, hazel and beech. A number of rights away criss cross the landscape, with stretches of the Nene Way extending into the area from the surrounding Broad River Valley Floodplain.

12b Higham Ferrers to Thrapston

Extending from Higham Ferrers to Thrapston, this area of the Limestone Valley Slopes is the most southern of the sequence of character areas. It is bordered by the River Nene Broad River Valley Floodplain to the west, and Chelveston and Caldecott Farmed Claylands to the east. The area rises gently from the broad, flat floodplain of the River Nene to the surrounding Farmed Claylands.

The Higham Ferrers to Thrapston Character Area is characterised by a predominance of arable cereals interspersed with fields of arable horticulture, generally large, and medium to large in size, and regular in shape, emphasising the subtle undulations of the area. Small pockets of improved pastures and calcareous grassland are evident, however, around settlements, including Denford, Ringstead, Stanwick, the northeastern edge of Higham Ferrers, and on the western edge of the character area adjacent to the site of the medieval village of Mallowes Cotton. Fields in close proximity to settlements are also generally smaller in size.

As is typical of the type, woodland cover is limited to scattered broadleaved copses and areas of young tree planting in the northern section of the character area, north of Denford, and scattered hedgerow trees, including ash and stag headed ash. Distant views towards scattered woodlands within the Farmed Claylands create a greater sense of cover, however, despite the overall lack of woodland.
CHARACTER AREAS
12a Wollaston to Irchester
12b Higham Ferrers to Thrapston
12c Thrapston to Warmington
12d Harper’s Brook
12e Aldwincle to Oundle
12f Oundle to Nascotting

KEY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER FEATURES

- **Transitional landscape displaying characteristics of surrounding landscape character types.** The area is underlain by a complex and changing geology. This sequence of rock types is matched by local and often subtle variations in landform, soils and changing patterns of land use. The overall character, however, is that of a quiet, productive and managed landscape with a local diversity of patterns of field scale, cropping and tree cover.

- **Limestone geology evident in local buildings.** This provides a strong connection with the underlying geology and relationship between built and natural elements. The distinctive local vernacular enriches the character and quality of the built environment.

- **Expansive long distance views and wide panoramas across the valley to neighbouring landscapes** emphasises the more open character of some parts of the Valley Slopes.

- **Predominance of arable land with isolated areas of improved and semi improved pasture and setaside land.** This is a predominantly managed and productive landscape with a mosaic of intensively farmed arable fields balanced by intermittent more gentle pastoral areas.

- **Very sparse woodland cover confined to small deciduous and occasionally coniferous shelterbelts,** particularly to the north of Thorpe Waterville, **limiting the sense of exposure locally.** Elsewhere, beyond these intermittent woodlands, an open character prevails.

- **Fields predominantly large, and medium to large; small to medium sized pasture fields conspicuous surrounding villages; fields generally enclosed by hedgerows with intermittent mature hedgerow trees, often showing signs of decline.** The patchwork of fields and hedgerow enclosure is clearly evident across the rising slopes of the valleys, and form an important feature.
Numerous villages display close relationships to landform in their morphology and orientation, and demonstrate the organic growth of the settlements, and their wider context and setting in the landscape. The proximity of larger settlements adjacent to and within the Valley Slopes, together with road infrastructure, influences the character and imparts a settled and busier character than in the more secluded sections.

Communication routes principally limited to direct roads parallel to the course of the main river channel, minor roads connecting small settlements and individual dwellings running along tributaries at right angles to the main route. The network of roads demonstrates the relationship between form and function, with the principal roads located along the valley bottom or lower slopes, and crossing the valleys at key bridging points.

LIMESTONE VALLEY SLOPES

The Limestone Valley Slopes are located at the transition between the low lying riverine landscapes and floodplain of the Nene, and the more elevated land that rise above these slopes. Between Northampton and the county boundary at Wansford, the Limestone Valley Slopes extend along the east side of the Nene Valley, and also along the west bank north of Thrapston. The section of the Harpers Brook from Islip to Stanion on the southern perimeter of Corby is also included within this landscape type, together with further minor tributary valleys of the Nene.

The landscape is characterised by a gently undulating and productive farmland with a predominance of arable land, although pastoral areas are also evident particularly on the lower slopes. Woodland cover is generally sparse, although a pattern of intermittent broadleaved copses and plantations woodlands is evident to the north of Thorpe Waterville. Hedgerows, although generally low, together with intermittent hedgerow trees, are often the only vegetation cover. This is generally an open landscape, with long distance views possible, although more enclosed areas can occur where local landform and woodlands contain views.

In view of the proximity of many urban areas within and surrounding the Limestone Valley Slopes, and the series of villages that thread though this rural area, this is a settled and sometimes active landscape, particularly in the vicinity of the principal roads that follow the grain of the landform and the valley side slopes. The underlying limestone bedrock is evident in many of the local buildings, strengthening the connection with natural and built elements.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

New development, and land use and land management changes should be controlled and encouraged to conserve and enhance the diversity of this settled and productive rural landscape of the Limestone Valley Slopes. In view of the very limited woodland cover, existing woodlands should be retained wherever possible, and enriched to strengthen this resource and its biodiversity value. However, the changing patterns of openness and enclosure that form an integral part of the diversity of the landscape should remain. In view of the proximity of the many urban areas within and surrounding this landscape, it is likely to be vulnerable to development pressures and change. It is therefore particularly important that where development is considered, the subtle variations in the landform are responded to and incorporated in a creative and positive way. Reference should also be made to the locality to integrate with particular details of local vernacular building styles, materials, and layout.
## Key Landscape Character Features

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landform and Views</th>
<th>Landscape Guidelines</th>
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<td><strong>Transitional landscape displaying characteristics of surrounding landscape character types.</strong> The area is underlain by a complex and changing geology. This sequence of rock types is matched by local and often subtle variations in landform, soils and changing patterns of land use. The overall character, however, is that of a quiet, productive and managed landscape with a local diversity of patterns of field scale, cropping and tree cover.</td>
<td><em>Conserve</em> the intrinsic character of the quiet, productive and managed landscape, retaining the local diversity of field scale, cropping and tree cover.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Expansive long distance views and wide panoramas across the valley to neighbouring landscapes</strong> emphasises the more open character of some parts of the Valley Slopes.</td>
<td><em>Conserve</em> opportunities to experience long distance views across the landscape to the wider landscape by encouraging sensitive woodland planting and agricultural land use, and hedgerow management.</td>
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## Land Management

| Predominance of arable land with isolated areas of improved and semi improved pasture and setaside land. This is a predominantly managed and productive landscape with a mosaic of intensively farmed arable fields balanced by intermittent more gentle pastoral areas. Fields predominantly large, and medium to large; small to medium sized pasture fields conspicuous surrounding villages; fields generally enclosed by hedgerows with intermittent mature hedgerow trees, often showing signs of decline. The patchwork of fields and hedgerow enclosure is clearly evident across the rising slopes of the valleys, and form and an important feature. | *Conserve* the distinctive patterning of medium and large arable fields, with strong network surrounding villages, enclosed by hedged boundaries.  
*Conserve* hedgerow patterns and where appropriate, manage more sympathetically for their nature conservation value and encourage more hedgerow trees to develop to further contribute to the character of the landscape. Whilst encouraging a more sympathetic hedgerow management regime, seek to ensure that the pattern of fields can still be appreciated.  
Discourage hedgerow removal and field amalgamation that lead to broader areas of monoculture, and a consequent reduction in the visual interest associated with the mosaic of fields and cropping patterns. |

![Predominance of arable land with isolated areas of improved and semi improved pasture and setaside land](image-url)
Woodland and Trees

Very sparse woodland cover confined to small deciduous and occasionally coniferous shelterbelts, particularly to the north of Thorpe Waterville, limiting the sense of exposure locally. Elsewhere, beyond these intermittent woodlands, an open character prevails.

- Conserve and Enhance existing woodlands and shelterbelts on valley slopes by appropriate management and encouragement of natural regeneration. Where possible initiate replanting of native species in favour of coniferous species.
- Conserve the open character of the valley slopes by discouraging extensive woodland planting and particularly in locations where these would restrict long distance or expansive views.

Settlement and Infrastructure

Limestone geology evident in local buildings. This provides a strong connection with the underlying geology and relationship between built and natural elements. The distinctive local vernacular enriches the character and quality of the built environment.

- Conserve buildings, and their setting that express the local limestone geology and strengthen the connection between built development and the underlying geology.
- Create new buildings that utilise local stone sources. In the absence of viable quarrying, source appropriate building stone, including reclaimed stone for re-use. Seek wherever possible to respect local building vernacular, but not necessarily to directly copy detailing, or building styles.
Numerous villages display close relationship to landform in their morphology and orientation, and demonstrate the organic growth of the settlements, and their wider context and setting in the landscape. The proximity of larger settlements adjacent to and within the Valley Slopes, together with road infrastructure, influences the character and imparts a settled and busier character than in the more secluded sections.

- **Conserve** the simple pattern of small, nucleated villages along principal routes across the uplands and wider pattern of isolated farms off tracks.
- **Conserve and Enhance** the setting of villages in particular in respect of new development on the edges of villages. Undertake research into the setting of villages, and village features such as materials, architectural detailing, layout and massing, in advance of any settlement expansion.
- **Create** a vibrant and visually appealing urban rural fringe or interface that is functional, visually appealing and sensitive to variations in local landscape and townscape character.

Communication routes principally limited to direct roads parallel to the course of the main river channel, minor roads connecting small settlements and individual dwellings running along tributaries at right angles to the main route. The network of roads demonstrates the relationship between form and function, with the principal roads located along the valley bottom or lower slopes, and crossing the valleys at key bridging points.

- **Conserve** the rural character of the network of minor roads throughout the Limestone Valley Slopes. Ensure that the alignment and detailing of any new road construction is responsive to the local landform. Avoid road improvement schemes that bring urbanising influences, such as kerbs, roundabouts, and lighting to otherwise rural locations.
18 BROAD RIVER VALLEY FLOODPLAIN

CHARACTER AREAS

18a  The Nene – Long Buckby to Weedon Bec
18b  The Nene – Weedon Bec to Duston Mill
18c  The Nene – Duston Mill to Billing Wharf
18d  The Nene – Billing Wharf to Woodford Mill
18e  The Nene – Woodford Mill to Thrapston
18f  The Nene – Thrapston to Cotterstock
18g  The Nene – Cotterstock to Warmington
18h  The Nene – Warmington to Wansford
18i  The Welland – Market Harborough to Cottingham
18j  The Welland – Cottingham to Wakerley
18k  The Welland – Tixover to Woitherpe

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

• Broad, flat and predominantly wide floodplain surrounded by rising landform of adjacent landscape types;

• deep, alluvial clay and silt with sand and gravel, masking the underlying geology;

• river channel with slow flowing watercourse with limited bank side vegetation in areas;

• predominance of unimproved pasture with pockets of both neutral and improved grassland and scattered arable land in fields of varying size; arable land becomes more frequent within the western section of the Nene Valley;

• limited woodland cover confined to occasional broadleaved copses scattered throughout the floodplain;

• hedgerow trees, although infrequent, are an important feature where they do occur, creating localised well treed areas;

• hedgerows are generally overgrown and reinforced with post and wire fencing with intermittent sections showing evidence of decline;

• settlement is very limited within the floodplain with a sequence of small nucleated villages on the lower valley slopes, along the western section of the River Nene;

• wider settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and individual dwellings;
18 BROAD RIVER VALLEY FLOODPLAIN

- urban influences arising from the proximity of large urban areas and associated road infrastructure on the perimeter of some sections of the floodplain;
- minor roads generally cross the floodplain landscape at right angles to the river, with major roads also following the valley course and marking the boundary of the type;
- evidence of long periods of gravel extraction and restoration within the Nene Valley, particularly along the middle section of the Valley, with patterns of restored landscapes with numerous areas of wetland and lakes; and
- significant recreational activities within the Nene Valley landscape, mainly focused on the restored lakes.

LOCATION AND INTRODUCTION

The Broad River Valley Floodplain landscape character type occurs in two separate areas within the county, in association with the two major river valleys of the Nene and Welland. The principal area, comprising the Nene Valley, extends across the central and eastern part of the county from the west of Northampton towards the northeastern section of the county and beyond towards Peterborough. A further section of the character type is also located along the northern boundary of the county where Northamptonshire adjoins Leicestershire, adjacent to the River Welland. A total of eleven character areas have been identified, eight within the Nene Valley and three within the Welland Valley.

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and Soils

Although the rivers flowing through the Broad River Valley Floodplain have cut down through the underlying rocks, the valley floors have been overlain in areas with glacial till (diamicton) dating from the Quaternary period, and sand and gravels, which mask the rocks beneath. Deep alluvial clay and silt deposits have enriched the valley floors, creating soils of good quality for agricultural use. Isolated areas of river terrace gravels can also be found scattered along the upper reaches of the river floodplain.

Soils within the valleys are characteristically of a good quality and fertile, due to the rich alluvial deposits. A broad band of stoneless clayey soils, in places calcareous, and variably affected by groundwater are evident along the base of the river valley. Soils vary along the lower valley slopes and along the course of the rivers. In the River Welland and western section of the Nene these mainly include slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged, fine loamy over clayey soils, fine silt over clayey and clayey soils, and fine loamy over clayey and clayey soils, with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonally waterlogging. Small pockets of deep well drained coarse loamy and sandy soils, locally over gravel and slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils are also evident. In the central section of the Nene, soils mainly comprise deep permeable, mainly fine loamy soils variably affected by groundwater, and slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged, clayey soils with similar fine loamy over clayey soils. Lower valley slopes in the eastern section of the River Nene are dominated by well-drained calcareous clayey and fine loamy soils over limestone, in places shallow and brashy.

Landform

The Broad River Valley Floodplains comprise some of the lowest areas in the county, in places reaching a height of only 20m ASL. They form distinctive riparian landscapes with the main rivers and tributary streams following a meandering course across the floodplain. In the northeast of the county, the Nene Valley floodplain comprises a low-lying, almost flat area that progressively merges into the flat and extensive landscape that characterises the Cambridgeshire Fens to the east beyond the county. In contrast, at its source close to Badby, the Nene Valley floodplain is more confined, surrounded by the more elevated land of the Undulating Hills and Valleys. In localised areas, the floodplain is narrower when surrounded by rising landform, such as areas adjacent to the Limestone Valley Slopes, adjacent to the Nene, and where the Farmed Scarp Slopes form a backdrop to the floodplain landscape, as in the case of the Welland. Generally, however, the floodplains of the river valleys are predominantly broad.

Hydrology

The river channels of the Broad River Valley Floodplain are intrinsic to the character of this landscape type. For the majority of their course, the rivers give the impression of being slow flowing, with variable depth and height of the surrounding river banks. Bankside vegetation in general is sparse with only limited areas of the riverside being well treed. Marginal vegetation is more abundant, however. As a consequence, in a number of areas the rivers lose their dominance within the floodplain landscape.

Chains of former sand and gravel pits are located within the Nene valley, a large number of which have been flooded to form artificial lakes and combine to create local nature reserves. The earliest of these support dense vegetation and wet scrubland around their margins and provide valuable wildlife and wildfowl habitats.
**Land Use and Land Cover**

There is generally a dominance of grassland within the floodplain, with calcareous grassland frequently occurring adjacent to the watercourse, indicated by areas of unimproved permanent pasture with pockets of both neutral and improved grassland. Arable fields are scattered throughout the valleys, which become more frequent within the western section of the Nene Valley and throughout the Welland Valley.

In the central section of the Nene Valley, in particular, the sequence of lakes and wetland habitats, following restoration of sand and gravel extraction areas, is a dominant influence on the landscape character.

**Woodland and Trees**

Woodland blocks of any significant size are absent from the Broad River Valley Floodplain, with tree cover being restricted to smaller broad-leaved copses and areas of young tree planting. Scattered tree planting, including ash, willow, elder and oak is also evident along the riverside along with areas of scrubby vegetation. In some areas, hedgerow trees are frequent within the hedged field boundaries, creating localized areas with a well-treed character. Overall, however, tree cover is very limited, with the wooded backdrop of surrounding landscape types having more significance. A sense of openness therefore prevails within the floodplain.

**HUMAN INFLUENCES**

Settlement is generally restricted to only a small number of scattered dwellings and farmsteads, and associated river buildings such as mills. The western side of the Nene Valley is slightly more heavily settled, however with occasional nucleated settlements, including Nether Heyford and Kislingbury rising on the slopes of the valley. In some areas, dwellings are located extremely close to the river's edge. Overall settlement is limited within the floodplain itself but towns and villages are frequently located on the edge of the floodplain landscape.

The Broad River Valley Floodplain is bordered by seven of the county's fifteen urban areas, so urban areas have a more significant influence on landscape character than the pattern of intermittent individual dwellings. Influences upon the landscape type are both direct and indirect. Direct influences include views to the urban areas and, during hours of darkness, the distinctive arc of light that rises above the town. The largest of the urban areas is Northampton, which surrounds significant proportions of the Duston Mill to Billing Wharf section of the Nene Valley. Wellingborough, Rushden and Irthlingborough also have a significant influence on the Billing Wharf to Woodford Mill character area of the Nene. These areas occupy hillside locations, are visible over wide areas, and create a backdrop to the Nene Valley Broad River Valley Floodplain. Although these areas are smaller and more compact settlements, they still exert a strong influence on the rural landscape. Indirect urban influences, which become less conspicuous with distance from each urban area, include suburban building styles and materials in otherwise rural locations, and busy infrastructure development such as motorways, 'A' roads and railways. The resulting influence on the floodplain is therefore on that which varies between being significantly urban, to one that is deeply rural and relatively remote.

**Heritage Features**

Few areas of historic interest are evident across the landscape. A limited number of pastural fields show evidence of ridge and furrow, although this is not widespread throughout the area and only glimpsed in views. Occasional examples of preserved medieval fields are evident, the most significant of which occur around the settlement of Kislingbury within the Nene Valley. Other elements of interest include scattered individual features. Most notable are the registered battlefield at Delapre Golf Course, the site of Mallow Cotton medieval village; and the outskirts of the registered park and garden at Brockhill Manor, all of which are located within the Nene Valley.

**Boundaries and Field Patterns**

Hedgerows are typically overgrown hawthorn, reinforced with post and wire fences, including the use of stock proof netting. Occasional gappy stretches are evident; here, post and wire fencing becomes more prevalent. Limited examples of wooded post and rail fencing can also be found within the floodplain along with areas of hazel hedgerow. Where hedgerow trees are present they frequently comprise mature or semi-mature oak and ash, along with scattered riverside vegetation, including willow, sycamore and elder. These provide important landscape features contributing a degree of woodland cover to an otherwise sparsely wooded landscape. The river itself frequently forms the boundary to fields adjacent to the watercourse with only scattered riverside vegetation evident. Field sizes vary along the length of the Broad River Valley Floodplain with evidence of subdivision of medium sized fields by post and wire fences and lines of field trees illustrating possible field amalgamation. The field shapes are consistent, however, and include both regular and sub regular fields. By contrast, limited areas of discontinuous fields are evident around land once used for sand and gravel extraction. Drainage ditches often marking field boundaries are bordered by vegetation, including mature willow trees.
The majority of roads providing access across the floodplain landscape are minor in character, often connecting settlements on either side of the river. Nevertheless, a number of major roads are present. In general, these are associated with larger settlements and provide connecting routes between development within the county and beyond. Although major roads provide direct access across the river, they principally follow the course of the river and are located along the edge of the floodplain marking the boundary, in contrast to the minor roads that often cross the river at right angles. Sections of railways also occupying the valley floodplain landscape are, and include both dismantled sections and lines in current use. Along with the development of road and rail networks impacting upon the character of the river valleys, the presence of sewage treatment works are now a frequent occurrence within this landscape. Despite a number of areas within the Broad River Valley Floodplains retaining a rural character, large proportions have been affected by communications and infrastructure development, in particular in the Nene Valley around Northampton.

There are numerous recreational opportunities within the Broad River Valley Floodplain. Public footpaths and bridleways occur relatively frequently, including large stretches of the Nene Way, Grand Union Canal Walk and Midshires Way stretching across the landscape. Other recreational activities exploiting the river valley include marinas, fishing, and water activities such as water skiing. Numerous caravan, camping and picnic sites are also located within the valley, along with country parks and local nature reserves. A single golf course is located on the gentle slopes of the valley side east of Far Cotton.

Aesthetic and Perceptual Qualities

Contrasting agricultural uses of arable and pastoral land with riparian vegetation, interspersed with some significant areas of man made wetland landscape create a patchwork of colours within the landscape. Despite the variety of the land uses, however, the continuity of intrinsic elements such as hedgerows, field shape and river create a strong landscape pattern. The overgrown hedgerows, along with surrounding woodland, continue to create an intimate character, although panoramic views are frequently available along the river channel. Whilst large areas are quiet and inaccessible, a busier and intrusive character prevails where urban centres are in close proximity. For many sections of the floodplain, it is a well-managed landscape showing evidence of occupation for many centuries. Nevertheless, there are more degraded sections where current gravel extraction is operational, and where inappropriate or incomplete restoration of gravel extraction also detracts from an otherwise riparian landscape.

Local Distinctiveness, Landscape Condition and Landscape Change

The condition of the landscape varies and is dependent on various factors. These range at a local level from the extent to which hedgerows are managed to the influence of development, including current gravel extraction within the Nene Valley, the extent and type of restoration of workings, development such as marinas, high voltage pylons crossing the landscape, to the nature of the surrounding urban development on the edge of the landscape type. Where urban development is extensive and insensitive to the landscape character, the condition of the landscape can be regarded as low. Elsewhere, however, where the river and floodplain remains largely unspoilt, a tranquil riparian landscape of higher scenic quality prevails.
18c  The Nene – Duston Mill to Billing Wharf

Located to the south of Northamptonshire, the Duston Mill to Billing Wharf Character Area is heavily influenced by the close proximity of significant areas of urban development. Dominating the area are large man made lakes occupying the valley floodplain, which have been created following the restoration of gravel extraction areas. The River Nene, railway lines of high voltage pylons and a section of the Grand Union Canal to the west, all combine to provide a character influenced by the use of the floodplain as a communications corridor. Despite the influence of these urban and infrastructure elements, peaceful rural areas still remain. Surrounding the river and lakes is a landscape characterised by predominantly medium to large-scale pastoral fields occupied in areas with grazing cattle. Often overgrown and gappy hawthorn hedge rows divide the fields, with significant evidence of the use of post and wire fences.

Although land use within the character area is dominated by large-scale lakes developed on the site of former sand and gravel pits, in places they are inconspicuous despite the large number of major roads traversing the valley, since there is limited vehicular access to the water’s edge. Pedestrian access is more extensive, however, and includes the Grand Union Canal Walk, Nene Way and numerous public footpaths.

There is a concentration of recreational opportunities within the valley, including Billing Aquadrome to the east, which comprises 235 acres of land, nine lakes with water sports and fishing, a marina and various caravan parks, camping sites, retail outlets and restaurants. Located in the most southern section of the area is the parkland landscape and golf course at Delapre Abbey and Gardens, which provides a valuable resource for the surrounding urban population. The site is also a Registered Battlefield commemorating the Battle of Northampton, fought during the War of the Roses on the 10 July 1406. Queen Eleanor’s Cross, located at the most southern point of the Abbey grounds, represents one of the points at which the cortege carrying Queen Eleanor, wife of King Edward I, rested on her way for burial at Westminster Abbey. It also provides a prominent landmark within the area. Areas of the river and floodplain have also been developed as local nature reserves. Settlement is limited within the character area, incorporating only office and industrial development. Rising land surrounding the floodplain is heavily developed, with residential, industrial and commercial development creating a backdrop to the Broad River Valley Floodplain. Prominent buildings within Northampton and surrounding areas, including the Express Lifts Tower, provide important visual landmarks from both the character area and wider landscape.
CHARACTER AREAS

18a The Nene – Long Rutby to Weedon Bec
18b The Nene – Weedon Bec to Duston Mill
18c The Nene – Duston Mill to Billing Wharf
18d The Nene – Billing Wharf to Woodford Mill
18e The Nene – Woodford Mill to Thrapston
18f The Nene – Thrapston to Cotterstock
18g The Nene – Cotterstock to Warmington
18h The Nene – Warmington to Wonsford
18i The Welland – Market Harborough to Cottingham
18j The Welland – Cottingham to Wakerley
18k The Welland – Tixover to Wothorpe

KEY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER FEATURES

- **Broad, flat and predominantly wide floodplain** with a generally open character surrounded by rising landform of adjacent landscape types. The character can vary from deeply rural and remote in more secluded locations to busy and settled in the vicinity of the surrounding urban areas and extractive industry operations.

- **River channel** with the impression of a slow flowing watercourse, with limited bank side vegetation in areas. Where river edge vegetation and trees are absent the course of the river is difficult to perceive.

- Predominance of unimproved pasture with pockets of both neutral and improved grassland and scattered arable land in fields of varying size; arable land becomes more frequent within the western section of the Nene Valley. The mosaic of pastoral land, with valuable areas of biodiverse rich grasslands and riparian vegetation, and arable land contributes to the changing patterns along the valley.

- **Limited woodland cover confined to occasional broadleaved copses scattered throughout the floodplain** together with areas of emerging young woodland, and scrub vegetation. The sparse woodland cover contributes to the generally open character of the floodplain.

- **Hedgerow trees, although infrequent, are an important feature where they do occur, creating localised well treed areas** and more intimate and enclosed areas in contrast to the generally more open character elsewhere. **Hedgerows are generally overgrown and reinforced with post and wire fencing with intermittent sections showing evidence of decline** and a neglected character. Where hedgerows are mature, these can combine with the hedgerow trees to create local enclosure.
BROAD RIVER VALLEY FLOODPLAIN

The Broad River Valley Floodplain occurs within the valley bottom of the county’s two major rivers comprising the River Nene, which flows through the central and eastern part of the county, and the Welland, whose course defines the northern boundary of Northamptonshire. The main rivers, and the tributary watercourses that flow into them, follow a meandering course across the floodplain, which is clearly distinguishable by the flat, low lying riparian landscape. The drift deposits within the floodplain, including alluvium, silt, glacial tills and sand and gravel have influenced the land use pattern that has evolved across the floodplain including, within the last century, extraction of the substantial reserves of sand and gravel from sections of the Nene Valley, particularly between Northampton and Thrapston. Restoration of worked areas has resulted in the creation of a mosaic of lakes and wetland areas, which now support important bird communities and are designated for their biodiversity value. This extensive man made landscape and emergent and newly restored land has changed the character of this central section of the Nene Floodland to a wetland dominated landscape.

The floodplains are generally flat and broad, merging into the adjacent gently sloping valley sides. Variations are evident, however, where the river courses are contained by rising landform, such as the sections of the Nene adjacent to the Limestone Valley Slopes, and along the Welland where the steeply rising scarp slopes form a backdrop to the floodplain landscape. Apart from the lakes and wetland areas, and active gravel extraction sites, much of the floodplain comprises a pastoral landscape including some species rich unimproved grasslands, together with arable land particularly in the west of the Nene Valley. Woodland cover is limited so when present, small woodlands and mature hedgerow trees assume local importance. The course of the river is often unnoticable as bankside vegetation is often sparse.

While settlement is generally absent within the floodplain due to flooding constraints, a series of settlements have developed on the rising land immediately adjacent to the floodplain, often at bridging points. These range form small rural villages to major urban areas, notably Northampton and Wellingborough, resulting in very contrasting contexts to the Broad River Valley Floodplain setting. In addition to local roads that cross the floodplain a number of major road and rail routes pass through or close to the valley, either skirt or within the floodplain, taking advantage of the gentle gradients and connectivity through the area. These intrude into the otherwise quiet and peaceful riparian landscape as a result of traffic noise and movement.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

New development, change and land management practices should be controlled or encouraged to conserve and enhance the simplicity of the quiet and open pastoral landscapes that characterise many sections of the Broad River Valley Floodplain, particularly within the Welland, and downstream from Thrapston in the Nene Valley. In view of flooding constraints and regulations, there would be a presumption against development within the floodplain. However, potential limited built development may arise in association with farming practices or for new infrastructure requirements, such as roads. Here,
particular care is needed to integrate change into this simple and often very visible landscape that is overlooked from more elevated land. Reference should be made to the locality for appropriate building styles including local vernacular, materials, layout and arrangement of features in the landscape. Woodland cover within the floodplain is low, with the local pattern of tree lines along watercourses, canals and roads forming important local features. The introduction of extensive woodlands would be inappropriate, but this more intricate pattern of tree cover should be conserved, and where possible enhanced. The enhancement of hedgerows to strengthen their visual contribution to the landscape as well as their biodiversity value should also be encouraged.

The legacy of sand and gravel extraction in the middle section of the Nene Valley has resulted in a progressive change in the floodplain's character to a predominantly wetland landscape. Future extraction and restoration operations should seek to limit the creation of further lakes and encourage the establishment of a mosaic of pasture, and where possible, wet grasslands supported by traditional management systems, in order to re-establish this much diminished habitat that once formed a much greater part of the intrinsic character of the floodplain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Landscape Character Features</th>
<th>Landscape Guidelines</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Landform, Hydrology and Views</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad, flat and predominantly wide floodplain with a generally open character surrounded by rising landform of adjacent landscape types. The character can vary from deeply rural and remote in more secluded locations to busy and settled in the vicinity of the surrounding urban areas and extractive industry operations.</td>
<td><em>Conserve and Enhance</em> the identity of the floodplain as a separate morphological unit by strengthening its distinctive character in comparison with the changing character of the rising valley sides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River channel with the impression of a slow flowing watercourse, with limited bank side vegetation in areas. Where river edge vegetation and trees is absent the course of the river is difficult to perceive.</td>
<td><em>Strengthen</em> the identity of the river course within the floodplain through the Creation of further areas of river edge trees and small-scale linear woodlands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land Management</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominance of unimproved pasture with pockets of both neutral and improved grassland and scattered arable land in fields of varying size; arable land becomes more frequent within the western section of the Nene Valley. The mosaic of pastoral land, with valuable areas of biodiverse rich grasslands and riparian vegetation, and arable land contributes to the changing patterns along the valley.</td>
<td><em>Conserve</em> and where possible Encourage the diversity of land use with a predominance of pastoral land, including areas of species rich grasslands, and areas of arable cultivation. Encourage the reversion to wider areas of pasture to strengthen the association of a pastoral landscape within the floodplain. <em>Conserve</em> existing areas of neutral grassland and seek to enhance the resource by arable reversion and expansion of non improved pasture. Encourage the creation of areas of neutral grassland by appropriate intervention and management.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Woodland and Trees

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<tr>
<th>Limited woodland cover confined to occasional broadleaved copses scattered throughout the floodplain, together with areas of emerging young woodland, and scrub vegetation. The sparse woodland cover contributes to the generally open character of the floodplain.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conserve and Enhance the existing small linear woodlands and copses and river edge trees by appropriate management and support the continued use of broadleaved native species.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create new small-scale woodlands in appropriate locations to continue the pattern of an intermittent intricate mosaic of small, mainly linear woodlands. Encourage the use of broadleaved native species for woodland planting to enhance biodiversity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Hedgerow trees, although infrequent, are an important feature where they do occur, creating localised well treed areas and more intimate and enclosed areas in contrast to the generally more open character elsewhere. Hedgerows are generally overgrown and reinforced with post and wire fencing with intermittent sections showing evidence of decline and a neglected character. Where hedgerows are mature, these can combine with the hedgerow trees to create local enclosure.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Conserve and Restore hedgerow and river edge trees to provide local features and enrich the riparian landscape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserve mature hedgerow trees and encourage their replacement and continuity as features in the landscape through natural regeneration within hedgerows, or by new planting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserve hedgerows through appropriate long-term management that encourages diversity. Where declining, seek opportunities to gap up hedgerows where previous management has removed them or prevented natural regeneration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance hedgerow biodiversity by encouraging natural regeneration and appropriate long-term management.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hedgerow trees, although infrequent, are an important feature where they do occur

Occasional broadleaved copses scattered throughout the floodplain
### Heritage, Settlement and Infrastructure

**Settlement is very limited within the floodplain** as a consequence of the flooding constraints, with a sequence of small nucleated villages on the lower valley slopes and occasional settlements adjacent to the river and floodplain as at Nether Heyford on the Nene and Duddington on the Welland, together and a wider settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and individual dwellings. The settlements on the rising land immediately adjacent to the floodplain are indicative of the close relationship between settlement location and river accessibility, including bridging points.

**Urban influences arising from the proximity of large urban areas and associated road infrastructure on the perimeter of some sections of the floodplain**, and introducing a busier and developed character, and detracting from the otherwise rural and more remote character of the floodplain.

**Minor roads generally cross the floodplain landscape at right angles to the river, with major roads following the valley course and marking the boundary of the type.** Traffic on the network of roads, particularly the principal roads, introduces movement and noise to an otherwise generally quiet rural landscape.

- **Conserve** the sparsely settled character by resisting significant new development and also taking account of the limitations imposed by the floodplain constraints. Where new development is considered, this should be located in close proximity to existing villages, and farmsteads and where flood risk is minimised and within acceptable levels.

- **Seek to limit the effects of infrastructure and urban influences on the wider rural landscape through sensitive siting of any necessary developments and through creative mitigation that is in keeping with local landscape character.**

- **Conserve** the existing network of roads and where possible retain its largely rural character where it links rural settlements. Ensure that the alignment and detailing of any new road construction is responsive to the local area and rural context, avoiding the introduction of urbanising features such as kerbing, roundabouts and other features such as lighting.

- **Seek to minimize the noise and urbanising effect of the principal roads through the floodplain areas through sensitive mitigation.**
Mineral Extraction

Evidence of long periods of gravel extraction and restoration within the Nene Valley, particularly along the middle section of the Valley, with patterns of restored landscapes with numerous areas of wetland and lakes. These have had a significant effect on the character of the floodplain within this section of the Nene Valley changing the floodplain from a simple pattern of arable and pastoral land to one dominated by active mineral extraction and significant areas of man made wetland and lakes interspersed between retained agricultural activities and scrub areas.

- Seek to limit the creation of further lakes in connection with any future extraction and restoration operations. Encourage the Creation of a mosaic of pasture, and where possible, wet grasslands supported by traditional management systems, in order to re-establish this much diminished habitat that once formed a much greater part of the intrinsic character of the floodplain.

Recreation

Significant recreational activities within the Nene Valley landscape, mainly focused on the restored lakes but also extending into the wider riparian landscape creates a range of experiences from active to passive for the local communities and visitors to the area.

- Conserve and Enhance the wide ranging recreational activities that have developed in association with the restored gravel extraction lakes and also in association with the River Nene.
- Encourage the Creation of further developments to serve the recreation and leisure requirements of local and wider communities, but ensuring that they appropriately and sensitively sited in relation to landscape character, and accord with the principles of sustainable tourism.
6 UNDULATING CLAYLANDS

CHARACTER AREAS

6a The Tove Catchment
6b Hackleton Claylands
6c Bozeat Claylands

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Boulder Clay deposits overlie almost the entire landscape, revealing little surface expression of the varying underlying solid geology;
- alluvium conspicuous along the tributaries and upper reaches of rivers that drain the area;
- broad, elevated undulating landscape that is more elevated to the west shelving eastwards and drained by numerous broad, gentle convex sloped valleys;
- wide panoramic views across elevated areas, though the undulating landform creates more contained and intimate areas;
- a productive rural landscape with an equal balance of arable and pastoral farming with the former predominating on more elevated land and often larger in scale, although arable land can be found along valley bottoms where sand and gravel deposits are located;
- improved and semi improved pastures located along narrow floodplains and sloping land bordering them, often more intricate and smaller in scale;
- large woodlands are not a characteristic feature, although woodland in surrounding landscape types, small deciduous copses and hedgerow trees can together create the sense of a well wooded character;
- concentrations of small woodlands apparent around designed parklands;
- hedgerows are often low and well clipped emphasising the undulating character of the landscape with scattered hedgerow oak and ash trees;
- post and wire fencing frequently reinforces gappy hedgerows, in particular where pasture is the current land use;
- numerous villages located throughout the landscape with varying morphology;
6 UNDULATING CLAYLANDS

- settlement beyond the villages include scattered Enclosure age farmsteads and isolated dwellings, located at the end of short access tracks and adjacent to the roadside;

- a long settled landscape with evidence dating back to the Bronze Age and evidence of Roman occupation;

- many historic remnants evocative of the medieval period, including rural villages, moated sites, and extensive areas of ridge and furrow;

- historic parklands provide important landscape features along with remnants of the industrial age, including disused railways and canals;

- minor roads located on interfluves avoiding river valleys and emphasising the natural grain of the landscape; main routes take a direct course from the northwest to southeast; and

- recreational opportunities are diverse, including listed manors and parkland estates, canal trips, llama trekking and numerous national trails.

LOCATION AND INTRODUCTION

The Undulating Claylands are located in the south of the county stretching from Brackley in the south, northeastswards to Irchester. This landscape type covers a significant area and appears as a wide belt of rolling countryside that becomes less extensive as it extends eastwards. It borders the distinctive Low Wooded Clay Ridge landscapes to the south, and is bounded to the north by the Undulating Hills and Valleys landscape character type.

This landscape character type is similar in many respects to the Undulating Hills and Valleys to the north. However, a thick mantle of boulder clay has created a soft, undulating landscape where the influence of the underlying solid geology has been obscured. The landscape is deeply rural and sparsely settled, with small villages and farmsteads scattered throughout the undulating topography.

The principal area of the Undulating Claylands lies to the north of the Whittlewood Plateau and Low Wooded Clay Ridge. It forms the catchment of the Tove, which originates to the north of Sulgrave. The river is fed by numerous tributaries and becomes a significant landscape feature east of Towcester. From here it forms part of the River Valley Floodplain landscape character type. As the fringes of this character area drain into the River Cherwell and River Great Ouse it cannot be regarded as a true river catchment. In the context of the county assessment, however, it forms a separate physiographical unit related to the Tove catchment area. To the east of the M1 a second character area has been identified, comprising the Hackleton Claylands. This character area is adjacent to the Tove catchment. However, it drains into the Nene and as such has been assessed as being a distinct character area. A third area of the Undulating Claylands is located to the south of the Nene around Brontead. Physically, the area shares many characteristics with the Salcey Forest and Yardley Chase character area. Due to the marked absence of woodland, however, it has not been included as being a part of the Low Wooded Clay Ridge landscape character type.

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and Soils

Beneath a mantle of boulder clay, the Undulating Claylands are underlain by various geological formations, including Blisworth Limestone and Northampton Sand Formation. These rock units tend to form the more elevated areas, with Whitby Mudstone Formation of the Lower Jurassic being more extensive in low-lying areas. Whilst the underlying solid geology has influenced the main landform features and patterns of drainage, it has little surface expression due to the thick mantle of boulder clay. This superficial covering was deposited by glacial ice and formed from un lithified rocks, sands and clays that have their origins as far north as Derbyshire and Lincolnshire. The mantle has been removed in a few isolated areas, principally bordering streams draining the plateau, where, in the past, water flows have been of sufficient power to wash the drift geology off the hills and valley slopes downstream to be sorted and re-deposited as river terrace gravels and alluvium. Indeed, limited areas of river terrace gravels are conspicuous along many river channels. Where glacial deposits are absent, small former quarrying sites are conspicuous, particularly on limestone and on thin bands of ironstone. This is evident around the upper reaches of the Tove near Sulgrave.

Alluvium is conspicuous along the upper reaches of the Tove, and its numerous tributaries, where it forms a narrow band bordering watercourses. To the east of Towcester, the floodplain becomes wider and a more significant feature of the landscape, and has been classified in the county’s River Valley Floodplain landscape character type.
Soils throughout the landscape are characteristically stony and contain a wide range of pebbles and rock fragments. Characterising the western section of the landscape type is a predominance of slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged clayey and fine loamy over clayey soils with smaller pockets also showing evidence of fine silty over clayey and clayey soils. Occasional isolated areas of well-drained brashy fine and coarse loamy ferruginous soils over ironstone are also apparent. To the east of the landscape type, slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils become more predominant with a large area of fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging, associated with similar but wetter soils to the northeast. Small pockets of shallow, locally brashy well-drained calcareous fine loamy soils over limestone are evident throughout the eastern section of the landscape type, along with small areas of slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged clayey and fine loamy over clayey soils.

Landform
Glacial deposits are of sufficient thickness to have formed a soft, undulating landscape. However, the underlying landform is influenced more directly by the underlying geology. The general pattern is that more elevated landforms are located on the western limits of the landscape type. Here, ironstone interfluves around the headwaters of numerous streams to the north of Canons Ashby and Melford rise to 180m ASL. To the south, ironstone and limestone geology has formed an area of high ground rising to 170m ASL. This forms the boundary of the landscape type and the watershed between the Tove and Cherwell catchments. The landscape slopes eastwards from these high points. Rivers and streams have dissected this general pattern to create a dendritic pattern of narrow valleys draining through the landscape to the main rivers of the Tove and Nene. As the streams are of limited scale the subtle form of the many undulations do not ‘read’ in the landscape as river valleys. This leads to the landscape appearing as a complex series of interlocking undulations. The scale of the undulations varies and, therefore, influences the sense of intimacy and enclosure within which areas where undulations are gentle, and woodland sparse, wide panoramic views are possible giving the landscape an open, plateau like character. The lowest areas of the landscape occur bordering the Nene and Tove River Valley Floodplains. From these locations, undulating landform creates a more intimate landscape where views are restricted to the middle distance.

Hydrology
Streams originating on the uplands drain the majority of the Undulating Claylands to the Tove, a tributary of the River Great Ouse, which runs eastwards through the centre of the Tove Catchment landscape character area. The river originates to the north of Sulgrave and is fed from the north and south by a dendritic pattern of streams. Character areas to the east both drain northwards into the Nene through neighbouring areas of the Undulating Hills and Valleys landscape character type. Gently flowing streams have eroded broad, gentle, convex sloped valleys that are responsible for creating the landscape’s undulating landform. The lower reaches of the Tove and a number of its tributaries have narrow belts of alluvium along the floor of the valley. However, the course of the rivers and streams is difficult to discern in the landscape. Streams tend to be small, and landform, streamside vegetation and hedge lines often obscure views to them. It is often only possible to trace the course of a stream by identifying linear belts of riparian habitat and tree species such as alder and willow. To the east of Towcester, floodplains become wider and a more significant landscape feature.

Land Use and Land Cover
Across much of the landscape, there is a roughly equal balance of arable and pasture farming. Improved and semi-improved pastures tend to be located along the narrow floodplains of streams and rivers but are also evident on sloping land bordering them and in close proximity to the numerous small villages that are located throughout the landscape. Here, field patterns are more intricate and variations in colour, texture and land use pattern ensure that local character is more intimate than elsewhere. These verdant fields are interspersed with small areas of calcareous and neutral unimproved grasslands. Unimproved pastures are not prominent in views due to their being located along valleys that are not often visible from roads travelling through the landscape. Arable farming tends to be located on the more elevated interfluves but can also be found along valleys, particularly on sand and gravel deposits. Due to the nature of landform, most views across the landscape encompass wide areas of arable farming and cereal cultivation appears, therefore, to be the predominant land use. Indeed where large, monochromatic fields fill wide panoramas, the landscape resembles the Clay Plateau landscape to the north.

Woodland and Trees
Whilst large wooded areas are not characteristic of the Undulating Claylands, the landscape can sometimes appear well-wooded. This occurs where woodlands on the neighbouring Low Wooded Clay Ridges, and the small belts of deciduous woodland, coalesce with the occurrence of hedgerow trees and shelterbelts surrounding farms and houses. Where present, woodlands tend to be narrow belts of deciduous trees, often following contours and thus emphasising landform. Concentrations of small woodland belts can be observed in designated parklands such as Easton Neston Park, Stuke Brune Hill and Courten Hall to the north of Roade. Whilst the majority of woodlands are contained within the parkland boundary, the surrounding countryside is often more heavily wooded, reflecting the strong influence county estates had on wide tracts of the landscape. Few woodlands are ancient in origin. Where present, many appear to comprise mixed or coniferous tree species, indicating that significant replanting has taken place. The Forestry Commission own and manage a number of these.
Woodlands are often visible on the southern horizons forming a dark backdrop to agricultural landscapes that ‘fill’ the foreground. They are an important means by which distances can be judged and also serve to emphasise the relative openness of some areas of the Undulating Claylands.

Hedged field boundaries often contain ash and oak as mature and semi-mature hedgerow trees. Where present, they are important in filtering long distance views and, therefore, help to reduce the openness and scale of the landscape where woodlands are not significant.

### HUMAN INFLUENCES

#### Buildings and Settlement

Numerous villages are located throughout the landscape. They tend to be small, with settlements often sited on elevated areas above watercourses. Village morphology varies. Linear settlements are aligned along roads passing through the landscape. Nucleated settlements tend to occur at the junction of numerous roads, with the junction often marked by a church, around which sit the settlement’s oldest dwellings. A number of nucleated villages have expanded since the post war period, and the outskirts are now marked with post war housing.

Beyond the villages the landscape is well settled, with numerous enclosure age farms located throughout the hills and valleys. The position of farms varies. Some are located along road sides, whereas others occur at the end of tracks at right angles to the main route through the area.

#### Heritage Features

This is a long settled landscape, with visual evidence for occupation stretching as far back as the Bronze Age. To the north of Sulgrave is an oval-shaped mound known as Barrow Hill. This is the remains of a Bronze Age bowl barrow, built as a funerary monument some 3—4,000 years ago. Large exposed stones on the west side hint at internal burial chambers. The barrow is mostly intact, although the ditch that would have surrounded the mound has been lost. Wide views over the surrounding landscape are possible from this location and offer an opportunity to observe the landscape as a territory for which the monument was probably constructed to demarcate. Later evidence for occupation can be found in the form of Watling Street, which runs through the Tove Catchment character area. This Roman Road is a significant landscape feature and was built to link London to the port in Holyhead and continues in use to this day as a major route through the county.

Beyond these specific sites, many rural villages and areas of countryside are evocative of the medieval period. The rural landscape contains numerous small villages, often containing an old stone church and vernacular stone buildings. Many are designated as Conservation Areas on account of the fine architectural heritage they contain. A number of villages are closely bordered by a Manor Farm or moated site indicative of the settlements medieval past. This is echoed in the large areas of ridge and furrow that can be observed in fields around many of the villages. Indeed some boundary hedges that define the outer limits of fields containing ridge and furrow, such as the one along the parish boundary to the south of Sulgrave, pre-date many of the surrounding hedges. By analysing the number of species present in the hedge it is believed to be over five hundred years old. A significant area of ridge and furrow may be identified on the outskirts of Weedon Lois beneath areas of permanent pasture. Here, a manor house and fish ponds are also evidence of occupation during the medieval period. A prominent mound next to the village green was the site of the Norman Noble, Gilo de Pinkney’s castle, itself sited on the hill with the temple from where the village’s Saxon name is believed to originate. A similar castle is thought to have also been built by Gilo on his lands at Sulgrave.

Historic parklands and gardens are also an important feature. Easton Neston is perhaps the most prominent, its influence extending beyond the boundary of the early 18th Century park in to the surrounding landscape in the form of long avenues of trees. Long avenues running south from Castle Ashby are also evident in the landscape within the countryside to the east of Denton.

Industrial age sites are also an important landscape feature in places. Numerous sections of disused railways criss-cross through the landscape and are often visible as raised linear embankments, often choked in hawthorn and scrub. The Blisworth Tunnel is also a prominent feature, if limited in its visual influence. This was constructed through the Undulating Claylands between Stoke Bruerne and Blisworth in the late 18th and early 19th Century and links London Canals to those in Birmingham.

### Boundaries and Field Patterns

Large and medium to large fields predominate across the Undulating Claylands, particularly on the more elevated areas, although this is not always the case. These fields are often used for arable production. Small and small to medium sized fields are more common where rolling landscape and steeper slopes are prevalent, and also in the vicinity of villages. Sub regular field shapes are prevalent across the landscape. Discontinuous fields are significant in some areas, notably on the Ironstone to the north of Canons Ashby and the limestone around Piddington.
Field hedges tend to be low and well clipped and give the landscape a well-maintained and managed character. Field boundaries are often aligned to follow landform and thus emphasise the undulating character of the landscape. Where hedgerows are gappy, post and wire fencing is used to reinforce field boundaries; particularly where pasture is the current land use, and along road verges. Hedgerows characteristically contain hedgerow oaks and ash. These are important landscape elements and filter long distance views to limit the large-scale character of the landscape and provide some shelter where woodlands are not prominent landscape features.

Roads through the Undulating Claylands tend to follow elevated interfluves to avoid river valleys and the pattern of roads therefore mirror that of rivers and streams, further emphasising the natural grain of the landscape. Field boundaries similarly follow this alignment, and the general grain dictated by landform and associated road alignment. Settlements are also influenced by the road patterns with numerous ancient villages sited at the junction of two or more roads, or simply along them where roads do not intersect. The main routes through the landscape do not follow this pattern, however, and take a direct course from the northwest to the southeast. The A5 Watling Street is perhaps the most interesting. Although forming a linear route across the landscape, typical of Roman Road construction, the alignment has influenced the subsequent pattern of fields that occur along its route. By contrast, the M1, and the mainline railway between Milton Keynes and Northampton, are much more of a recent imposition on the landscape and whilst sharing their alignment with the A5 they do not have the same relationship with boundary features that abut it. The orientation of these routes through the Undulating Claylands has less to do with local landform and more to do with the proximity of London and the arrangement of key destinations in the Midlands and the northwest.

Urban areas, although on the edge of the landscape type and relatively limited in scale, are visible and have an impact on this rural, yet well settled landscape. High voltage pylons passing over the Undulating Claylands also provide prominent vertical elements in this relatively open landscape.

Recreational opportunities vary across the landscape type to include manor houses and parkland landscapes open to the public, such as the National Trust’s Canons Ashby Manor and woodlands managed by the Forestry Commission that are open for public enjoyment. Access across the landscape is relatively extensive, with the Macmillan Way, Knightley Way, Grafton Way, Grand Union Canal Walk and Midshires Way crossing the landscape type. A number of minor footpaths and bridleways also provide access to areas that would otherwise remain inaccessible. From the village of Stoke Bruerne canal trips are possible along the Grand Union Canal and Llama Trekking is available at Weston. Heritage features such as Barrow Hill also provide areas of interest.

AESTHETIC AND PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES

Re-occurring land cover within the landscape type creates a strong angular pattern imposed on an undulating, curved landform. Hedgerows containing the fields rolling over the landscape emphasise its undulating form. From elevated areas where particularly long distance, panoramic views are possible, a sense of openness prevails. A more intimate character exists, however, where views are limited by woodland in surrounding landscape types. Woodlands within the Undulating Claylands, where present, also combine with the undulating topography to contain longer distance views. This is a simple, and in places colourful landscape, with texture provided by hedgerow and streamside trees and occasional woodland blocks punctuating the landscape. A sense of unity prevails over the landscape due to the continuity of land cover. In places, gappy hedgerows and stag headed trees provide a sense of fragmentation.

LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS, LANDSCAPE CONDITION AND LANDSCAPE CHANGE

On the whole the Undulating Claylands are a well maintained and managed landscape of moderate scenic quality. Local variations in condition are apparent, however, and frequently depend on the extent to which hedgerows are managed. Across the landscape type, a number have become gappy and seen the introduction of post and wire fences. A number of trees have also become stag headed. The introduction of water towers has created prominent vertical elements across the landscape along with new infrastructure elements and associated facilities, such as the M1, lighting and signage. At a county scale the landscape is generally unremarkable although occasional estate houses and associated parkland are of note and the wooded horizon of the surrounding Low Wooded Clay Ridge are distinctive from the landscape type. Despite the open and expansive character from more elevated areas of land, the landscape overall has a relatively sheltered character due to the undulating landform and intervening vegetation.
The landscape is relatively well settled with numerous villages scattered throughout the area. Whilst the majority are relatively small in size, Blisworth, Roade and Greens Norton are slightly larger with evidence of post war development on the edge of the settlements. Village morphology varies greatly within the area. Villages such as Moreton Pinkney have a linear form, whilst Blakesley has developed around road junctions. Prominent within many villages are church spires, providing local landmarks throughout the area and punctuating the horizon. Spires at Blisworth, Stoke Bruerne, Tiffield, Green Norton, Wappenham and Weedon Lois are particularly notable. The landscape beyond the villages is generally well settled with numerous farms and dwellings, although some areas are devoid of any development and often have an unoccupied character. Communication routes are extensive in the area, including the A43, A5 and A508. Glimpsed views are also possible towards the M1 on the northeastern edge of the character area.

Various features of heritage interest are scattered across the Tove Catchment. Areas of ridge and furrow are evident and may generally be found in close proximity to villages. However, isolated patches can also be observed throughout the rural landscape. As well as the three registered parks and gardens, Canons Ashby village located along the western boundary is home to Canons Ashby House. Owned by the National Trust, the Elizabethan manor has remained largely unaltered since around 1710 and the formal gardens created by Edward Dryden provide panoramic views of the surrounding parkland and church, which is all that remains of the Augustinian priory. Sulgrave Manor also provides an important heritage feature within the landscape. It is a modest manor house from the Shakespearean period, and was home to the ancestors of George Washington. The site of two medieval villages, Kirby and Radstone can also be identified in the landscape by various earthworks overlain by pastoral grazing land. Recreational opportunities in the character area include sections of the Grand Union Canal Walk, Midshires Way, Knightley Way, Grafton Way, canal trips at Stoke Bruerne and Llama Trekking.

6b Hackleton Claylands

The Hackleton Claylands Character Area, located on the northeastern edge of the Tove Catchment, comprises a number of tributary streams draining into the River Nene, which have created the landscape’s undulating landform. Land cover across much of the area is characterised by a general predominance of arable land in large fields. Areas of improved pasture, however, located around village settlements, including Denton and Quinton. These are frequently smaller in scale. Pockets of calcareous grassland are also evident, in particular adjacent to the stream northeast of Quinton and along the line of the dismantled railway. Woodland cover within the character is generally limited. Small broadleaved woodlands dominate, including High Covert, The Oaks and streamside woodlands northwest of Quinton. Preston Wood is also of a broadleaved composition and the only ancient woodland in the character area. The woodlands in the surrounding area, including Salcey Forest and Yardley Chase, have a significant influence on the area, limiting views south and southeast. Wide panoramic views are otherwise possible over the undulating landscape.
The landscape is moderately well settled, the villages of Denton, Brafield-on-the-Green, Hackleton, Piddington and Quinton generally lying on the mid valley slopes above streamlines. The village of Denton, however, descends the valley slopes with dwellings located immediately adjacent to the watercourse. Hackleton, also situated on the lower slopes, remains at a distance from the stream. Beyond the villages are a number of farmsteads and dwellings, frequently accessed via a track from the main road. Whilst many individual dwellings are situated on the mid to upper slopes, they sit in a nestled position within the landscape. Although not within the area, the urban edge of Wootten is prominent to the northwest. A limited number of roads connect the settlements within and beyond the area although large areas remain inaccessible. In particular north of Hackleton. Bordering the area to the southwest is the M1, of which there are glimpsed views. Other prominent landmarks in the character area comprise Piddington's prominent church spire and a water tower south of Brafield-on-the-Green.

Features of historic interest are extremely limited. Scattered areas of ridge and furrow are evident, often in close proximity to settlement, and also close to streams. The remains of a manor house are located in the village of Quinton, and to the northeast of the area, an old avenue forming part of Yardley Chase is a distinctive feature within the landscape.

6c Bozeat Claylands

The Bozeat Claylands Character Area is the most eastern character area and the smallest area of Undulating Claylands. This rural landscape is characterised by a general predominance of arable land in large-scale fields, interspersed with smaller fields of improved pasture with grazing cattle, frequently surrounding settlements. A number of larger pastoral fields are present; however, generally with post and wire fencing sub-dividing them. Whilst the shape of fields varies considerably across the area, regularly shaped fields are often found surrounding villages with other fields combining both a sub-regular and discontinuous form. Woodland cover is extremely low, the broad-leaved geometric Bozeat Wood providing the only cover within the area. Mature oak and ash scattered along hedgerows and a number of well treed streams provide the only other tree cover in the character area, creating texture in an otherwise smooth landscape. Woodlands associated with Yardley Chase provide a wooded horizon to the southeast, however, forming a backdrop to the undulating agricultural landscape.

Settlement is extremely limited, with isolated farmsteads and dwellings located along minor roads and at the end of tracks positioned at right angles along the minor road network. In general, these are located on the upper slopes and higher elevated areas of land. On the edge of the character area the settlements of Bozeat, Wollaston and Irchester that lie within the surrounding Undulating Hills and Valleys landscape type, provide village settlements within close proximity. Distant views are possible of the outer edges of Wellingborough. Access to the Bozeat Claylands is limited, with only a few minor roads passing through the landscape. The larger A509, however, provides access along the western edge of the area, linking to the villages within the surrounding landscape type.

Habitat features are confined to scattered areas of ridge and furrow, evident in pastoral fields. Generally, these are located around settlements, most notably on the edge of Bozeat. Landmark features are limited to the water tower northeast of Wollaston, providing a prominent vertical element in the landscape, and church spires located in surrounding villages.
6 UNDULATING CLAYLANDS

CHARACTER AREAS

6a The True Catchment
6b Hackleton Claylands
6c Bozeat Claylands

KEY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER FEATURES

- Wide panoramic views across elevated areas, although the undulating landform creates more contained and intimate areas. The shallow valleys are generally not perceptible below the more open, elevated areas and interfluves, resulting in expansive views and wide horizons.

- A productive rural landscape with an equal balance of arable and pastoral farming with the former predominating on more elevated land and often larger in scale, although arable land can be found along valley bottoms where sand and gravel deposits are located. Improved and semi improved pastures located along narrow floodplains and sloping land bordering them, often more intricate and smaller in scale. This mosaic of agricultural land enriches the landscape and emphasises the interrelationship between land use and landform.

- Large woodlands are not a characteristic feature, although woodland in surrounding landscape types, small deciduous copse and hedgerow trees can together create the sense of a well-wooded character. Where this coalescence of woodland and trees occurs, the sense of enclosure results in the perception of a smaller scale landscape.

- Concentrations of small woodlands apparent around designed parklands. This further enriches the woodland cover and provides memorable landmark features, including distinctive avenues as at Castle Ashby.

- Hedgerows are often low and well clipped emphasising the undulating character of the landscape with scattered hedgerow oak and ash trees. The pattern and scale of the hedgerow network is an important feature within the landscape and reinforces the relationship between land use and grain of the landform.

- Numerous villages located throughout the landscape with varying morphology. Settlement beyond the villages includes scattered Enclosure farmsteads and isolated dwellings, located at the end of short access tracks and adjacent to the roadside. The settlement pattern is indicative of a quiet and deeply rural landscape focused on agricultural production.
UNDULATING CLAYLANDS

- A long settled landscape with evidence dating back to the Bronze Age and evidence of Roman occupation. Many historic remnants evocative of the medieval period, including rural villages, moated sites, and extensive areas of ridge and furrow. Historic parklands also provide important landscape features along with remnants of the industrial age, including disused railways and canals. These wide ranging heritage features contribute to the local diversity and richness of the landscape and are tangible evidence of occupation over a long period of time.

- Recreational opportunities are diverse, including listed mansions and parkland estates, canal trips, llama trekking and numerous national trails. These are indicative of a busy and well frequented landscape serving the needs of both local communities and visitors from a wider area.

THE UNDULATING CLAYLANDS

The Undulating Claylands extend across the southeastern perimeter of the county and form the broad upper catchment areas of the Tove to the west and Nene to the east. A broad mantle of boulder clay has largely obscured the complexity of the solid geology that underlies the areas. A dendritic pattern of watercourses and tributaries of the Tove and Nene drain the Undulating Claylands. These have eroded through the boulder clay to create a succession of shallow valleys and rounded interflus to form the elevated, soft and gently undulating landform that characterises the landscape.

A land use of mixed arable and pasture extends across the landscape creating a patchwork of fields. Smaller scale fields are generally confined to the valley areas. With a predominance of arable fields on the elevated interflus, views across these areas can give the impression that the area is confined to arable cultivation.

Although this is not a well wooded landscape, the combination in some areas of small belts of woodland, together with shelterbelts and trees associated with farmsteads, and also hedgerow trees, can coalesce to give the impression of a well treed landscape. Woodland associated with historic parklands and estates are also notable features, such as at Stoke Bruerne Park and Courteen Hall. The woodland and avenue associated with the park at Easton Neston, and the long avenue running south from Castle Ashby are also distinctive landmarks.

This quiet, rural landscape is well settled with numerous small villages evident across the landscape. Beyond the villages, the scattered farmsteads emphasise the focus on agricultural production.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

New development, change and land management practices should be controlled or encouraged to conserve the simplicity and the limited palette of characteristics that define this generally quiet and settled rural landscape. Intrusion of development onto the more elevated sections and interflus within the Undulating Claylands should be resisted to retain the open and unobstructed views to the wider landscape. New landscape elements that are introduced should make reference to the locality for particular details of local vernacular building styles, materials, layout and arrangement of features to ensure they integrate into the landscape. Further areas of broadleaved woodland planting may be appropriate, particularly in the lower valley areas to emphasise the landform pattern and its undulating form that derives from the succession of valleys and interflus.
## Key Landscape Character Features | Landscape Guidelines

### Landform and Views

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wide panoramic views across elevated areas, although the undulating landform creates more contained and intimate areas. The shallow valleys are generally not perceptible below the more open, elevated areas and interfluves, resulting in expansive views and wide horizons.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conserve</strong> wide panoramic views across the landscape from elevated areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enhance</strong> the contrast between open elevated areas and more intimate and visually contained areas along shallow valleys by appropriate land management regimes and development planning.</td>
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</table>

### Land Management

<table>
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<tr>
<th>A productive rural landscape with an equal balance of arable and pastoral farming with the former predominating on more elevated land and often larger in scale. Although arable land can be found along valley bottoms where sand and gravel deposits are located. Improved and semi improved pastures located along narrow floodplains and sloping land bordering them, often more intricate and smaller in scale. This mosaic of agricultural land enriches the landscape and emphasises the interrelationship between land use and landform.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conserve</strong> and <strong>Enhance</strong> the characteristic patterns and distribution of agricultural land use to further emphasise the relationship between land use and landform.</td>
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<th>Hedgerows are often low and well clipped emphasising the undulating character of the landscape with scattered hedgerow oak and ash trees. The pattern and scale of the hedgerow network is an important feature within the landscape and reinforces the relationship between land use and grain of the landform.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conserve</strong> and <strong>Enhance</strong> hedgerows by sensitive management that encourages diversity, whilst maintaining a neat network of boundaries that reinforce the relationship between land use and emphasise the grain of the landscape and landform features. Replace post and wire fencing where possible and gap up hedgerows with new hedgerow planting of appropriate species.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Woodland and Trees

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<tr>
<th>Large woodlands are not a characteristic feature, although woodland in surrounding landscape types, small deciduous copses and hedgerow trees can together create the sense of a well-wooded character. Where this coalescence of woodland and trees occurs, the sense of enclosure results in the perception of a smaller scale landscape.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conserve</strong> the predominantly unwooded character of the landscape by discouraging the planting of large scale woodland planting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conserve</strong> and <strong>Enhance</strong> the smaller scale woodlands and copses and hedgerow trees that contribute to the changing pattern and mosaic of a perceived local enclosure within a wider open character.</td>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>Concentrations of small woodlands apparent around designed parklands. This further enriches the woodland cover and provides memorable landmark features, including distinctive avenues as at Castle Ashby.</th>
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<td><strong>Conserve</strong> and <strong>Enhance</strong> the characteristic pattern of small woodlands and particular those associated with historic and designed parklands. Create new small woodlands, ideally on the site of ancient woodlands to further strengthen this characteristic feature.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although not a characteristic feature, Plumpton Wood and the hedgerow trees give sense of a well-wooded character.
6 UNDULATING CLAYLANDS

Heritage and Settlement

Numerous villages located throughout the landscape with varying morphology. Settlement beyond the villages includes scattered enclosure age farmsteads and isolated dwellings, located at the end of short access tracks and adjacent to the roadside. The settlement pattern is incitative of a quiet and deeply rural landscape focused on agricultural production.

- **Conserve** the diversity of settlement morphologies evident throughout the landscape and enhance local variations through sympathetically sited and well planned and designed new development.
- **Conserve** the character and integrity of enclosure age farmsteads and associated structures, in addition to field patterns. Avoid new development that compromises the intact rural and historic character of the rural landscape.

A long settled landscape with evidence dating back to the Bronze Age and evidence of Roman occupation. Many historic remnants evocative of the medieval period, including rural villages, moated sites, and extensive areas of ridge and furrow. Historic parklands also provide important landscape features along with remnants of the industrial age, including disused railways and canals. These wide ranging heritage features contribute to the local diversity and richness of the landscape and are tangible evidence of occupation over a long period of time.

- **Conserve** historic sites and features that contribute to an understanding of time depth in the landscape. Seek to **Enhance** the setting of these sites and monuments.

Recreation

Recreational opportunities are diverse, including listed manors and parkland estates, canal trips, llama trekking and numerous national trails. These are indicative of a busy and well frequented landscape serving the needs of both local communities and visitors from a wider area.

- **Conserve** the existing network of recreational opportunities that have developed and **Encourage** the provision of further developments to serve the leisure requirements of local and wider communities, but ensuring that they are appropriately and sensitively sited and accord with the principles of sustainable tourism.

The locks and canal museum at Stoke Bruerne