

Character Area

88 - Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands

Landscape Character Zone

Z1 - Valley Farmlands



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Key Features

The narrow Ouzel Valley seen from the Brickhills (Z1 from Z3)

- A shallow poorly defined valley with open undulating sides formed by a number of tributaries flowing into the Ouse
- Mixed agriculture in large fields in the bottom of the valley bounded by poor hedgerows and notably little woodland
- An historic landscape with small stone built villages associated with the river.
- Visual intrusion of development around Buckingham, Bletchley and Milton Keynes.

Z1.1 The valley of the Ouse and its tributaries is shallow and often poorly defined, especially to the north-east of Buckingham. The valley sides frequently undulate where tributaries cut through to flow into the Ouse. This is the main valley in the north of the county and has been a focus for agriculture, transport and settlement since at least the Bronze Age. Today, the predominantly mixed agriculture reflects the very variable soils, although the valley bottom contains some of the best agricultural land in the county. The river is an important landscape feature and focus as it meanders through a narrow flood plain of pasture, narrow bridges, cobbled causeways, mill buildings and pollarded willows, creating an intimate landscape. This character is lost where agricultural intensification has created large arable fields, bounded by wire fences, beside a straightened river with steep engineered banks.

Z1.2 The woodland cover is very low at approximately 3%. The landscape becomes quite open where there is a lack of woodland and only poor hedgerows on the valley sides. However, where small blocks of woodland are visible at the tops of the slopes a sense of enclosure occurs in the landscape.

Z1.3 The Ouse valley has visually strong historic associations including stone built villages and designed parklands. There are also medieval remains including fish ponds and moats and at Thornborough some important areas of medieval open fields survive. Apart from the town of Buckingham, the majority of the area is sparsely populated. Infrequent small nucleated villages are interspersed with isolated farmsteads. The villages are often found on higher ground adjacent to the river.

Z1.4 The Ouzel valley tributary contains the Grand Union canal, which adds colour and vitality to the landscape with its brightly painted narrow boats, bridges and locks. Another feature of the Ouzel valley is the views to the wooded slopes of the Greensand ridge and the village of Great Brickhill.

Current Trends

- Development pressure with increasing visual intrusion of the urban edge around Buckingham and the southern edges of Milton Keynes and Bletchley
- Increased recreational use of river and canal corridors
- Agricultural intensification

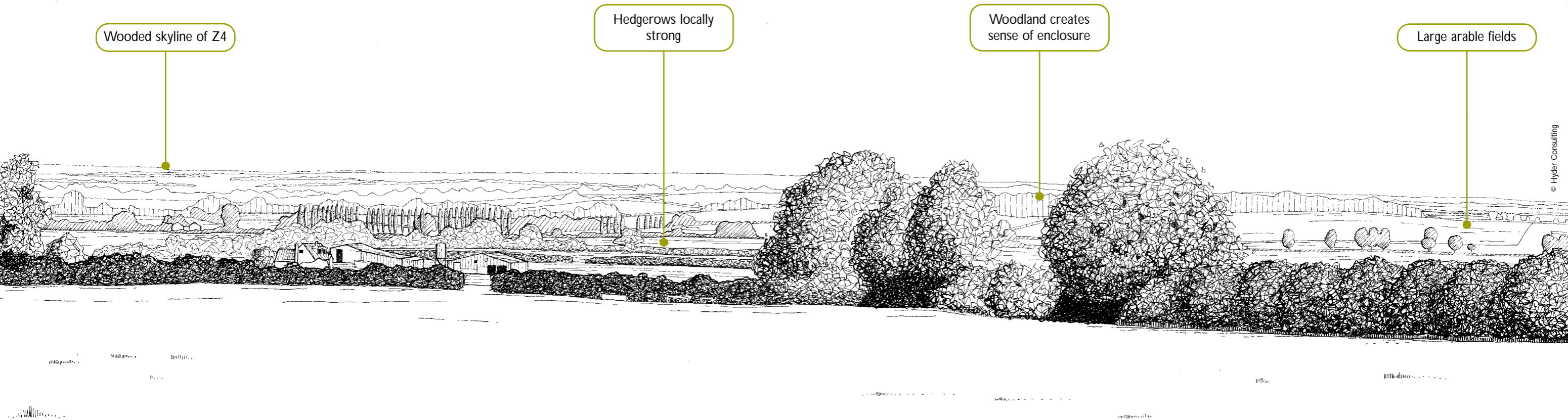


The upper and more well defined Ouse Valley at Radclive

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Zone Priorities

- Encourage less intensive farming along river corridor and positive management of grasslands
- Reintroduce traditional riverside management techniques, such as pollarding of willows
- Improve integration between Buckingham and the valley landscape
- Enhance recreational routes from Buckingham along the Ouse valley
- Encourage the establishment of medium to large deciduous or mixed woodland on the upper valley sides
- Improved hedgerow management and establishment of new hedgerow trees
- Development of a strategy to improve landscape quality on the edge of Bletchley including establishing large new woods with public access
- Conservation of medieval landscape features and patterns



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Near Nash - looking north over the poorly defined valley below Buckingham