

Character Area

115 - Thames Valley

Landscape Character Zone

Z13 - Wooded Plateau



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Key Features

Many woodlands are unfenced - Burnham Beeches

- A gently sloping wooded plateau of a wild unkempt character
- Woodland dominant land cover, approximately 24%
- Unfenced woodland and common land with public access
- Mature English oak important as a boundary feature
- Quarries and major roads intrusive
- Inappropriate security fencing, imposing gateways, signage and lighting

Z13.1 The Wooded Plateau lies between the Chilterns, Slough and the Colne valley. The ground slopes gently towards the Thames forming an upper terrace of the river which is dissected by several small incised streams. Historically the zone is associated with large areas of heathland, wood-pasture and grazed common land. Today it is distinguished by the very high level of woodland cover, approximately 24%. Much of this is concentrated in the centre of the zone creating a large woodland core where woodland is the dominant land cover.

Z13.2 The woodland core runs across the zone from Hedsor Park through several commons to Black Park Country Park. The predominantly ancient woodland is largely unfenced creating a wild untamed character when viewed from narrow winding lanes. Much of the woodland has free and open access on foot, giving a great sense of freedom to wander. Burnham Beeches contains areas of wood-pasture, a very ancient management practice producing widely spaced pollarded trees which live to a great age. Lack of management has

resulted in the death of many ancient trees, but the wood-pasture system is now being reintroduced. Small areas of heathland including Stoke Common SSSI remain and add to the sense of wide open space. Active management is now taking place to ensure their survival. Between the woodlands there are small fields of pasture surrounded by strong hedges with mature oak trees. Houses are scattered thinly, their impact and that of Farnham Common and Stoke Poges is limited by the surrounding woodland. The greatest threat to the untamed character comes from new security fencing around woodlands, large imposing gateways to houses and signage.

Z13.3 Around the woodland core to the north, east and west is a well wooded agricultural landscape containing a concentration of designed parks and gardens. The associated landscape presence is limited as they are largely contained within woodland or the parkland is in arable use. The agricultural land varies from large arable fields with poor hedgerows to small fields of pasture used for horse grazing. Oak trees are a dominant feature in hedgerows. Many of the woods are

unfenced reflecting the untamed character of the core. Areas of urban development encroach on all sides with the M40, M25, other major roads and sand and gravel workings degrading the landscape character on the fringes of the zone.

Z13.4 A narrow band south of Stoke Poges and the Farnhams close to the edge of Slough has less woodland, several golf courses, the Slough Arm of the Grand Union Canal and, in places, an urban fringe character. Fields are generally small with high unmanaged hedgerows, many with extensive elm regeneration. There are also commercial orchards, soft fruit and market gardening.



Stoke Common - a heathland remnant and SSSI

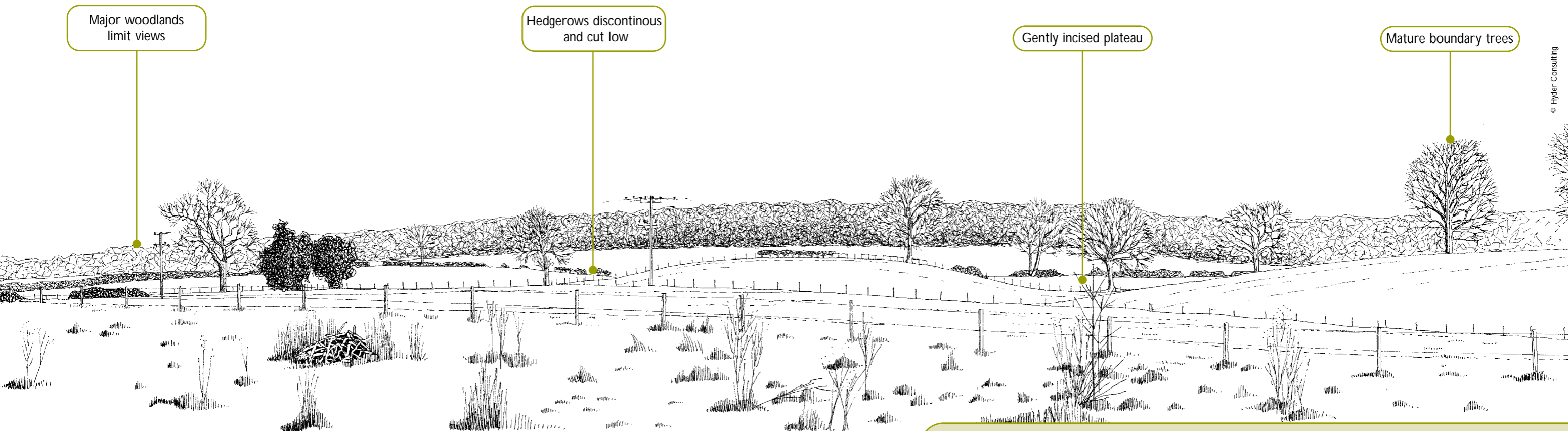
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Zone Priorities

- Increase woodland cover on fringes especially to restore mineral extraction sites and reduce impact of main roads
- Promote the planting of English oak as the primary hedgerow tree
- Support the continuation and expansion of traditional woodland management
- Manage derelict hedgerows
- Increase heathland cover as opportunities arise
- Improve landscape adjacent to Slough Arm of the Grand Union Canal

Current Trends

- Sensitive untamed character of core easily weakened by small changes
- Designed parkland features disappearing
- M40, M25 and gravel workings cause visual intrusion
- Urban fringe influences close to Slough
- Development pressure



Mixed farming is interspersed with woodland in the northern part of the zone

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